

*The Least Offensive Play in
the Whole Darn World*

a play by Jonathan Rand

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Cast of Characters

GEORGE
FRANCINE
SHELLY
TOM
ROMA
LINGK
MERCUTIO
TYBALT
JASON
MEDEA
FRANKIE
JOHNNY
JESSICA
WARREN
HARPER
MARK
ROGER

(See Appendix for cast-expansion options.)

(GEORGE *faces the audience, note cards in hand. A pause. Then he turns and exits.*
FRANCINE *then enters, turns, and speaks to the audience. She is extremely bland.*)

FRANCINE. Everyone put your hands together for George and his thrilling slide show on how Dr. Seuss is slowly destroying America. (*Claps.*) That was one unforgettable four hours. Before our final presentation, a friendly reminder to pay your membership dues, without which the Crazytown Censorship Society would cease to exist. And now, let's give a warm Crazytown welcome for tonight's keynote speakers from everyone's favorite corporate conglomerate. Give it up for You're Welcome, America.

(FRANCINE *exits as spokespeople TOM and SHELLY enter.*)

SHELLY. Good evening, Crazytown Censorship Society members, and on behalf of Tom, myself, and the entire You're Welcome, America family, thank you for having us. So far tonight we've heard much concern about the erosion of family values.

TOM. Well flush those concerns down the concerns toilet!

SHELLY. That's right. Because we're about to introduce a product so useful, and so life-changing, we *know* you'll be satisfied, which is why *we* offer an unprecedented –

TOM. *Thirty minute* money-back guarantee!

SHELLY. Ladies and gentlemen, throughout history, Americans have yearned for three things. One: put a man on the moon. Two: End hunger. And three?

TOM. Do theater without the dirty parts.

SHELLY. Let's review how we're doing so far: Moon? Check. Hunger? Eh, close enough. But producing plays without all the R-rated garbage? *That* has eluded us for *generations*.

TOM. Until now?

SHELLY. Until now indeed. Because You're Welcome, America has developed a breathtaking new product, scientifically proven *by Science*, to be the perfect tool for any family-friendly theater. Introducing...the Play Purifier!

(SHELLY *reveals a button.*)

TOM. I'm intrigued. Tell me more.

SHELLY. Tom: Imagine you're a director...

TOM. (*Closes his eyes:*) Okay.

SHELLY. ...and you're directing the David Mamet play *Glengarry Glen Ross*, but it's just *filled* with ugly words!

TOM. Goodness!

SHELLY. Now in this town, if an actor curses, your directing career is over. So, what do you do?

TOM. Choose a different play by David Mamet, one without swears?

SHELLY. A fine idea, but no.

TOM. Choose a play by a different writer?

SHELLY. Wrong again. The play you'll direct is David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross*.

TOM. *But how??*

SHELLY. With the Play Purifier, a sophisticated computer algorithm automatically censors every offensive word.

TOM. I don't understand.

SHELLY. Well, Tom, you know the saying: actions speak louder than dirty words.

TOM. It's my favorite saying.

SHELLY. So I will *show* you exactly what happens after the play is treated with the Play Purifier. Ladies and gentlemen, we bring you David Mamet, one hundred percent sanitized!

(SHELLY hits the button. Lights shift to ROMA and LINGK in an implied real estate office.)

ROMA. You made the deposit?

LINGK. Last week, sure. I think so.

ROMA. You *think* so.

LINGK. I don't know. I'm pretty sure.

ROMA. *(Quietly, at first:)* You're pretty sure... Y'know what, Jim...? *(Pause; then, with pure vitriol:)* You're a son of a GUN! This was *your* boo-boo! And like all boo-boos, it's gonna hurt like *another* trucker!

LINGK. I'm sorry, Ricky.

ROMA. Ya goofed up, *dummy-pants!* You *silly meany-butt!* This is *Shetland* poop. Y'hear me?! *Shetland* poop!

LINGK. C'mon, Ricky...

ROMA. I got four words for you, duck face, and those four words are gonna be the only four words on your gollyforsaken tombstone. Guess the four words.

LINGK. No...

(With a quiet intensity, ROMA gets right in LINGK's face, counting out each word on his hand.)

ROMA. Jerky jerky jerk jerk.

LINGK. Ricky, please...

ROMA. JERKY JERKY JERK JERK!!

(Lights shift to SHELLY and TOM.)

TOM. That was *amazing!*

SHELLY. Tom, it only gets amazinger. The Play Purifier doesn't just clean foul language. It has literally *tens* of other uses.

TOM. *Tens?*

SHELLY. Let me ask you this: Have you ever heard of William Shakespeare?

TOM. No!

SHELLY. Neither had I, until I was told he's a writer of some local renown. But I'll tell you, Tom: We receive two, sometimes *three* letters *every decade* from customers expressing concern that this "Shakespeare" has *violence* in his plays.

TOM. VIOLENCE?!

SHELLY. That was my exact reaction. Which is why the Play Purifier was developed to automatically clean even the bloodiest of scenes. Let's see how it fixes some play called *Romeo and Juliet*.

(SHELLY hits the button. Lights shift to TYBALT and MERCUTIO, both livid.)

TYBALT. This shall not excuse the injuries that thou hast done me; therefore turn and draw.

MERCUTIO. O calm, dishonourable, vile submission!

(MERCUTIO and TYBALT each unsheathe an uninflated long balloon. They proceed to inflate them, either with their mouths, or with small hand pumps. After that, they fence intensely as the dialogue continues.)¹

MERCUTIO. Tybalt, you rat-catcher, will you walk?

TYBALT. What wouldst thou have with me?

MERCUTIO. Good king of cats, nothing but one of your nine lives.

TYBALT. I am for you.

¹ If a balloon isn't feasible, they can unsheathe their index fingers and intensely fence with those.

(TYBALT *stabs* MERCUTIO. *The balloon protrudes out of MERCUTIO's body as he dies.*)

MERCUTIO. (*Loudly and passionately:*) A plague on both your houses!!

(*Lights shift to SHELLY and TOM.*)

TOM. That was *so* intense.

SHELLY. It only gets better, Tom. It only gets much, much better.

TOM. (*Raises his hand:*) I have a question.

SHELLY. You, Tom, yes.

TOM. Can this product do anything about a scene where the violence has already taken place offstage, but we still see the bloody aftermath?

SHELLY. You may be referring to the Greek drama *Medea*, where the title character appears with her two young children she's murdered.

TOM. I have *always* been anti-child-murder.

SHELLY. Now Tom, you and I both know that nobody wants to even think about double-infanticide.

TOM. Don't tell me this product cleans up double-infanticide!

SHELLY. If I didn't tell you, Tom, I'd be withholding the truth. Which may very well be tantamount to lying. And *lying* is not what America is about. America is about truth, and freedom, and making sure that no one is ever offended by stuff. Which is why we will show these good people how the Play Purifier can automatically transform *Medea* from worthless trash...into pure dramatic gold.

(*SHELLY hits the button. Lights shift to JASON.*)

JASON. Remove the bar on the door at once,
so I may see my dead sons and their murderer, that woman
on whom I shall exact revenge.

(*Very dramatic music plays as MEDEA appears with a large fish in each hand.*²)

MEDEA. Why are you trying to find the bodies and me,
The one who killed them?

Stop trying. If you want something from me,
then say so. But you'll never have me in your grasp.

(*Lights shift to SHELLY and TOM. TOM is crying.*)

² Or a couple of steaks, or chickens – any kind of meat that can be easily perceived from the back row

TOM. That was beautiful...

SHELLY. Now I know some of you may be thinking, “What about vegans?”

TOM. (*Instantly recovered.*) I was just thinking: What about vegans?

SHELLY. Well don’t you fret, because the Play Purifier is always a step ahead.

(*SHELLY hits the button. Lights shift to JASON.*)

JASON. Remove the bar on the door so I may see my dead sons and their murderer.

(*MEDEA appears exactly as before with the same dramatic music, but this time with two large eggplants.*³ *Lights then shift to SHELLY and TOM.*)

TOM. In—credible. Now Shelly, what about plays that deal with—how shall I say it—“night time activities”?

SHELLY. Good question, Tom. Some plays include nudity, and the act of “premarital bedtime intimacy.” Which is not only totally gross, but inaccurate, since according to a recent study, only *one percent* of Americans even *hold hands* before marriage. Tom, I know how you feel about people who hold hands.

TOM. Get a room...

SHELLY. Let’s watch the Play Purifier work its magic on the play *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune* and its infamous opening scene, where the title characters have passionate *sex*⁴, with *nudity*⁵, all while *not married*.⁶

(*SHELLY hits the button. Lights shift to FRANKIE and JOHNNY far apart from one another, sitting up in bed, or in two separate beds, or some representation of beds, like chairs. He wears reading glasses and reads a novel; she knits. They both wear full-body pajamas. Both characters deliver the entire scene completely expressionless and devoid of emotion.*)

JOHNNY. Oh.

FRANKIE. Oh my. Johnny.

JOHNNY. That’s right. Yes.

FRANKIE. You got it.

JOHNNY. All right.

³ Or a couple of large celery stalks, or melons, etc.

⁴ Whispered

⁵ Whispered

⁶ If this line is too racy for your community, you can replace with this: “...where the title characters ‘share their love,’ so to speak.”

FRANKIE. Oh.

JOHNNY. Oh.

(Lights shift to SHELLY and TOM.)

TOM. It was like I watching the original production!

SHELLY. That's the miracle of the Play Purifier.

TOM. Is there any problem it *can't* fix?

SHELLY. I'm glad you asked, Tom. Have you ever had problems with drugs?

TOM. *Have!*

SHELLY. Well, the Play Purifier turns problems into solutions! Never again will audiences have to even *think* about the scourge of drugs. To demonstrate, we'll show a clip from the play *This Is Our Youth*. Let's watch!

(SHELLY hits the button. Lights shift to an apartment in 1982.)

JESSICA. I can't believe you stole all that cash from your dad. What are you gonna do next?

WARREN. Don't know.

JESSICA. Well listen, I got something.

WARREN. What?

JESSICA. Some blow.

WARREN. Yeah? Is it any good?

(JESSICA reaches into her bag and brings out a box of tissues and looks at it reverently. Then she holds it out to WARREN.)

JESSICA. How 'bout you tell me?

(WARREN takes the box of tissues and carefully pulls out a single tissue, then blows his nose quickly and sharply. He leans back and takes it in.)

JESSICA. That's some strong blow, right?

WARREN. Man...!

JESSICA. Hand it over.

(JESSICA grabs the box and likewise partakes of the product. After a moment:)

That's hot.

(Lights shift to SHELLY and TOM.)

TOM. Who needs drugs when you can do *hugs*.

SHELLY. We now move on to something even more damaging than cocaine: gayness. *(Beat.)* What do you know about the gays, Tom?

TOM. A great deal, Shelly. Apparently, my brother's husband is gay.

SHELLY. What's his name?

TOM. Not sure! *(Beat.)* Don't you have a gay co-worker?

SHELLY. That's right, Tom.

TOM. How is that coming along?

SHELLY. I tolerate her every day!

TOM. We are such *good people...*

SHELLY. But next time you put on a play with gay themes, your audiences won't even have to *worry* about tolerance. Because the Play Purifier takes care of everything for you.

TOM. Wonderful!

SHELLY. Let's watch as the play *Angels in America* instantly becomes something *real* Americans can enjoy. The alterations are so subtle, you won't even notice the difference.

(SHELLY hits the button. Lights shift to Harper and Joe's apartment. HARPER is arguing with an unseen and unheard Joe. She plays the scene as if he's there, pausing when he's speaking, and interacting with air. Lines in brackets are Joe's "responses.")

HARPER. Where do you go every night?

[Calm down.]

HARPER. Don't tell me to calm down. Where do you go?

[Why does it matter?]

HARPER. Because it's late, Joe. Because I'm your wife.

[If you're trying to ask me something, then ask.]

HARPER. You want me to ask you? Fine, I will. Are you gay? *Are you?* If you walk away right now, so help me...

[And if I was?]

HARPER. Enough with the *lies!* Give me a real answer, Joe! JOOOOOE!!!!

(She is shaking "Joe" with her hands, pounding his invisible chest in a frustrated rage. Lights shift to SHELLY and TOM.)

TOM. Fun fact: the actor playing Joe won the Tony for that performance.

SHELLY. Speaking of awards: In the nineties, the world was taken by storm by an award-winning musical called *Rent*. *Rent* covers a number of issues, including sex, drug use, strippers, violence, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transvestites, homelessness, suicide, and AIDS.

TOM. But are there curse words?

SHELLY. Hundreds.

TOM. There's no way the Play Purifier can help *that* train wreck.

SHELLY. Ladies and gentlemen, we give you the musical sensation *Rent*, completely free of offensive material!

(SHELLY hits the button. Lights shift to ROGER and MARK⁷ in the opening scene of Rent. They wear the standard Rent costume pieces and ROGER holds a guitar. And...nothing happens. For several seconds, MARK and ROGER simply do nothing, looking around a little. ROGER strums his guitar once or twice. MARK lets out a little cough. But for the most part, nothing. Lights shift to SHELLY and TOM.)

TOM. *(Dancing to himself:)* It's so catchy!!

SHELLY. Ladies and gentlemen, as you've seen with your very own uncorrupted eyes, the Play Purifier is the answer to all your theatrical needs.

TOM. Well, *I'm* ready to buy. *(To the audience:)* And I hope *you* are, too.

SHELLY. Goodnight everybody, God bless, but most of all...

TOM / SHELLY. *We accept some major credit cards!!*

End of Play

⁷ Should you wish to use a male-female combo here, either Mark or Roger can be played by a female, or Mark can be replaced with Mimi.

APPENDIX

Cast expansion options

Glengarry Glen Ross: Add non-speaking real estate agent Williamson.

Romeo and Juliet: Add Romeo and non-speaking Benvolio, Abraham, and Page. Romeo has the below line of dialogue.

TYBALT. I am for you.

ROMEO. Gentle Mercutio, put thy rapier up! Hold, Tybalt!

(*TYBALT stabs MERCUTIO...*)

Medea: Add Chorus 1, 2, and 3, each of which can be played by one actor, or multiple actors speaking in unison, possibly in Greek masks. The following dialogue (along with an additional line from Jason) takes place only during the first *Medea* segment. During the second segment, the Chorus members remain but do not speak.

CHORUS 1. Your boys are dead, killed by their own mother.

JASON. No. What are you saying? You have destroyed me.

CHORUS 2. They are dead. You must focus your thoughts on that fact.

CHORUS 3. Open the doors and you will see them, your slaughtered children.

JASON. Remove the bar on the door at once...