

The Least Offensive Play in the Whole Darn World

by Jonathan Rand

— Revisions rundown —

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This play has been rewritten since publication, so if you've got a book, it's an old version of the play. The latest edits are in this document.

Cast of Characters edits:

- Add GEORGE, FRANCINE
- Remove WILLIAMSON, ROMEO, ABRAHAM, BENVOLIO, PAGE, CHORUS 1, CHORUS 2, CHORUS 3, FEMALE OPERA SINGER, and THE CAST OF PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
- Replace DENNIS with JESSICA
- See very end for cast-expansion options.

Optional opening sequence:

(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 slowing destroying America. *(Claps.)* That was one unforgettable hour and forty minutes. 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.)

...

More dialogue replacement below:

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.*)

...

[For the *Romeo & Juliet* sequence, only keep dialogue from TYBALT and MERCUTIO. Others non-speaking characters (e.g. ROMEO) can appear.]

...

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. It's possible Tom's 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.*)

...

[For the *Medea* scene, cut all dialogue until JASON's line "Remove the bar on the door at once, so I may see two things – my dead sons and their murderer, that woman on whom I shall exact revenge."]

...

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 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 (*Whispered:*) sex, with (*Whispered:*) nudity, all while (*Whispered:*) not married.¹

(*SHELLY hits the button.*)

...

[Keep the same Frankie & Johnny scene, but cut the final two lines: “That was amazing. Was it good for you.” and “Mm.”]

...

(*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 I!*

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.*)

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?

¹ If this line is too racy for your community, you can replace with this: “...where the title characters ‘share their love,’ so to speak.”

(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 homosexuality, 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 MARK² 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

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...

² 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.