

Protected

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A short one-act play by:

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c. 2005
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(A young Woman, SHELLY, Talks on her cell phone.)

SHELLY

Yes, mother. I know, mother...He's a sweet man, mother. The love of my life...Yes, he's a little strange, but he's so sweet...Well, mother, I think sweetness counts for a lot! Remember Rocco? Do you remember Rocco!? Do you wish I'd married Rocco?!...Yes, he had money, but it was all in small, unmarked bills...You are so cruel. How could you say that! Of course I'm going to ask him. Do you think I'm just going to let it lie there?...I have friends too...Yes...Yes!...YES! OK! It's weird! OK, mom, are you happy!? I've admitted it!...Didn't I just say it?...Did you hear what just came out of my mouth?...You're calling *him* crazy? Mother, this rant, it's getting way, way out of hand...Don't panic! He hasn't even asked me yet...No, mother, what I said was, *I think he might ask*...That's a big difference, mother...What do you mean? He hasn't asked me, officially, to marry him, and you've got us having children!...*WE'RE NOT GOING TO HAVE KIDS!!* ...Oh, God...No, mother...Mother...Mom...I'm not saying we're *never* going to have kids...No...No!...Look, just not right now, OK?...*I know you want grandchildren, OK?!!* I Know!...We are not talking about this tight now...I'm done, mother. Done! Donedonedonedonedone!...Good by mother!

(She hangs up, and sits on a bench.)

SHELLY (Continued)

ARRGGH!! *I HATE MY MOTHER!!!*

(ALVIN enters, wearing a helmet. Right. A helmet. Not just a simple helmet, either. Something like a football helmet, it should cover the entire head, and a good portion of the face. If the thing gets laughs a first sight, you're on the right track. He also carries an obviously full backpack or bag.)

ALVIN

What's wrong, Shelly?

(She rises, they embrace)

SHELLY

My mother. My stupid mother.

ALVIN

It's about me, isn't it?

SHELLY
No, no.

(He looks into her eyes)

ALVIN
Don't lie to me Shel.

SHELLY
Oh, Alvin.

(They kiss. The most painfully
awkward thing you've ever seen.)

SHELLY (Continued)
She can be so cruel.

ALVIN
I'm sorry.

SHELLY
She doesn't understand.

ALVIN
It's all my fault!

SHELLY
No, Alvin, no.

ALVIN
Please. Don't lie to me Shelly. I know your mother. She
hates me.

SHELLY
No, not hates...Not you.

ALVIN
I can't change who I am, Shel.

SHELLY
I know that.

ALVIN
I'm a Protestant, and I'm proud of it. If your freaky
Catholic mother can't handle that, well, I'm sorry, but
that's who I am.

(Silence, a beat.)

SHELLY
That's what you think my mother's problem is?

ALVIN
Yes! And it is *your mother's* problem.

SHELLY
Alvin...

ALVIN
I'm sorry. I hate to say it, but it's true.
(She strokes the side of his helmet.)

SHELLY
Alvin, is that what you think?
(Beat)

ALVIN
What other reason is there?
(Beat)

SHELLY
Let's talk.
(She leads him to the bench, they sit.)

SHELLY (Continued)
Alvin, sweet, sweet Alvin, you're wearing a helmet.

ALVIN
Sure.

SHELLY
...No, see...You're wearing a helmet.

ALVIN
Of course.

SHELLY
See, honey, for some people, not me, of course, wearing a helmet, all day, every day, is considered kinda, well, strange.

ALVIN
Really?

SHELLY
Yes, darling. I'm sorry.

ALVIN
You think wearing a helmet is strange?

SHELLY

No, I said I didn't, and I'm sure other people...

ALVIN

This is what your mother's problem is?

SHELLY

Yes, though I'm sure it wouldn't be if you were playing a eternal game of football or lacrosse or even water polo or something...

ALVIN

You think I'm crazy?

SHELLY

No, baby, I said...

ALVIN

It's not crazy! You have no idea. There are literally thousands of head wounds out there, just waiting to happen.

SHELLY

Honey...

ALVIN

The future I see for us, it depends on us being alive! And cognizant! One good blow to the head, and it could all be over.

SHELLY

Isn't that just a little bit reactionary?

ALVIN

You don't know. A tree branch could fall on us, right this second!

SHELLY

We're inside.

ALVIN

What if it happened? What then? What if we were married? I'd have to care for you, watch over you. Watch you suffer, your brain nothing more than a water balloon with a slow leak.

SHELLY

Darling, I understand that, and I love you, but don't you think that it's just a wee bit impractical?

ALVIN

Are you kidding? This is the most practical headgear, ever! No Gary Busey for this fella!

SHELLY

You're afraid of motorcycles.

ALVIN

That's not the point! Motorcycles are only the tip of the iceberg. The nearest fraction of the heavy and/or pointed objects out there that could harm our fragile skulls.

SHELLY

I really think you're making too big a deal out of this. It's not like things are dropping out of the sky left and right.

ALVIN

Tell that to my mother.

SHELLY

What?

ALVIN

Tell that to my sainted mother, who strapped this helmet on me with her own two loving hands. Tell that to her after she saw my grandmother, her own mother, brought low by the flying bricks.

(Beat.)

SHELLY

The what?

ALVIN

The flying bricks.

(Beat.)

SHELLY

Your grandmother was struck by...

ALVIN

...Killed.

SHELLY

You're kidding.

ALVIN

I never kid about Granny Potts.

SHELLY

Did she work on a construction site or something?

ALVIN

Fort Lauderdale. Nineteen Sixty-One. Right on the beach. Crushed her skull like an egg.

SHELLY
What?

ALVIN
Flying brick.

SHELLY
Where did it come from?

ALVIN
Where does any disaster come from? God, Shiva, the fickle
finger of fate? It doesn't matter. One minute you're
sitting there building a sand castle with your daughter.
BAM!! You're lying there with a brick sticking out of your
caved in skull.

SHELLY
That just doesn't seem all that likely...

ALVIN
Fine, fine! But what about low-hanging branches, or overhead
signs. Or birds!? All common, all deadly! All it takes is
one buzzard deciding to have an egg at one inopportune
moment...

(She move to embrace him.)

SHELLY
Alvin, it's all right. I promise.

ALVIN
Or even the simple act of being surprised!

SHELLY
What?

(Alvin slaps his hand against the
helmet in mock surprise.)

ALVIN
That.

(He does it again, harder.)

ALVIN (Continued)
Just like that.

(A third time, even harder.)

ALVIN (Continued)
A moment of surprise, a shock.

(He hits himself again.)

ALVIN (Continued)
You have a physical reaction.

(Again.)

ALVIN (Continued)
Without thinking.

(He slaps again.)

ALVIN (Continued)
And if not for this...

(He taps the side of the helmet.)

ALVIN (Continued)
Subdural Hematoma.

(Beat.)

SHELLY
Some days I'm stunned I love you as much as I do.

ALVIN
You love me?

SHELLY
Of course I do. I kiss you through that thing don't I?

ALVIN
I know, I know, I guess I just needed to let myself believe it. To hear you say it just like that. I thought you would run away like all the others.

(He takes a knee before her. She strokes the side of his helmet.)

SHELLY
Oh, Alvin. You are the most amazing, sweetest man I know. I've cherished every moment with you. Even with that damn thing on your head.

ALVIN
How I've longed to hear you say that, Shelly! I knew, I knew when I saw you today that I would feel this way...Shelly, will you marry me?

(He pulls a second helmet from his backpack. It's white and a veil streams from the back of it. Beat.)

SHELLY
Oh, God.

(She moves away from him. Beat.)

ALVIN

I understand, my darling. I can't say it doesn't hurt, watching my dreams of you slip away. You, and the children...

(She looks at him.)

SHELLY

No...

(He pulls two more miniature helmets from his bag. One is pink, the other baby blue.)

SHELLY (Continued)

Oh my God!

(He puts all the helmets back in the bag.)

ALVIN

It's OK, Shel. I understand...I'm OK, I've dealt with this before...

(He's on his feet now.)

SHELLY

I'm sorry, Alvin.

(She throws herself onto him. She is latched around his shoulders as they struggle. He lurches about the stage, as she strains to pull the helmet from his skull. He cries out as she tears it free.)

ALVIN

NOOO! Shelly! Why? Why!?

(He curls up in a fetal ball.)

SHELLY

Alvin. Alvin. Alvin! It's OK.

(She sits and cradles him. He is weeping.)

SHELLY (Continued)

It's gonna be OK, really. I'm here for you, darling. We're going to be together, and we're going to make each other feel safe.

(She kisses him. A long passionate kiss. His sobs subside, and he responds. Her hands run through his hair.)

SHELLY (Continued)
I do wish you'd taken that off in the shower.

(The kissing continues.)

ALVIN
Oh, lord.

SHELLY
Trust me, Alvin. Love me. I will protect you.

ALVIN
Promise?

SHELLY
With all my heart.

ALVIN
I love you Shelly.

SHELLY
I love you Alvin.

(They rise, embrace, and kiss again.)

ALVIN
Let's go see your mother.

SHELLY
Yes, we have a wedding to plan.

(They begin to move off stage, hand in hand, when a flying brick zips in from the wings (thrown styrofoam, most likely) and strikes Shelly square in the noggin. She goes down like a rag doll.)

ALVIN
NO!! SHELLY!!! NO!!!

(HE drops to his knees, cradles her lifeless body. Sobs and tears erupt from him. He raises a fist to the sky.)

ALVIN (Continued)

*DAMN YOU, GOD!! DAMN YOU AND YOUR FLYING BRICKS!!! DAMN YOU
ALL TO HELL!!!!*