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BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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BIG DOG PUBLISHING
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Fixer-Upper

FARCE/SATIRE. The characters in this collection of three 10-minute plays are in definite need of fixing! In “Fixer-Upper,” a real-estate salesman is desperate to make a quick sale so that he doesn’t have to go back to teaching. With the housing market soaring in Los Angeles, he sets out to sell the only affordable “house” in the area—a cardboard box. In “Blind Date,” two seeing-eye dogs watch with horror as their blind owners go out on a blind date. And in “Don’t Wake the President,” two White House watch officers must decide which major international event warrants waking the President from his deep slumber: a French military installation break-in, major flooding in India, North Korea testing its first nuclear weapon, the Russians losing a submarine, a major hurricane headed toward Cuba, or the recall of the President’s favorite videogame.

Performance Time: Approximately 30 minutes.

Fixer-Upper

(2 flexible)

ED (EDNA) PLUCK: Real estate salesperson.

GILL (JILL) GRAPPES: Prospective client.

Blind Date

(1 M, 1 F, 2 flexible)

(With doubling 1 M, 1 F)

DASH: Dog, hyperactive, impetuous; needs to be reined in.

QUEENIE: Dog, low-key, experienced; elegant.

EVAN: Blind teen, nervous

ELIZABETH: Blind teen, patient

NOTE: The actors playing the dogs can also play the part of the blind couple. The teens can be represented by puppets, dolls, or sock puppets—whatever the director and actors decide.

Don't Wake the President

(2 flexible)

ED LOUT: Watch officer in Situation Room of the White House.

BILL BLIGHT: Watch officer in Situation Room of the White House.

Setting

Fixer-Upper: Los Angeles, a vacant lot near a freeway. There is a cardboard “house,” fragile at best.

Blind Date: A local bowling alley in Las Vegas, NV. There is a table and two chairs.

Don't Wake the President: 2 a.m., Situation Room of the White House. There is a long table, chairs, telephones, computer, printer, map of the world, coffeemaker, and report folders.

Props

Fixer-Upper: Large cardboard box, cell phone, credit card.

Blind Date: Table, chairs.

Don't Wake the President: Long table, chairs, telephones, computer, printer, map of the world, coffeemaker, coffee cups, report folders, reports, playing cards.

Sound Effects

Fixer-Upper: Cell phone ringing.

Blind Date: Sound of bowling pins being hit, muted sounds of bowlers.

Don't Wake the President: Phone ringing.

**“It’s every American’s dream
to own a home.
When you buy a home,
you’re investing
in a piece of America.”**

—Ed

Fixer-Upper

(AT RISE: Los Angeles, a vacant lot near a freeway. There is a cardboard "house," which is fragile at best. Ed, a real estate salesperson, is on his cell and pacing.)

ED: (*Into phone.*) Yeah, I know. It was stupid of me to take the listing. But it's all I could get. Price? You kidding? It's so shabby I'd have to pay sanitation to cart it away. If I don't find a sucker to sweeten this lemonade, it's back to teaching. Not that. You know what I mean. (*Sees Gill approach.*) Hey, got me a sweetener. Gotta go. Later. (*To Gill.*) Hey, howya doing? Beautiful day, isn't it? No fires, no mudslides. No smog. Starbucks down the street. What more could a guy want?

GILL: Some privacy? Could you just leave me alone? This neighborhood gives me the creeps.

ED: Would I be standing here in broad daylight if there was any danger? Me, with a \$1,000 suit and a Mercedes parked on the street. No fear here. Tell me, could you spare—?

GILL: Spare what? Change? You want some change? Okay. I think I got some. Just don't hit me. I've been mugged twice this month. It's somebody else's turn. (*Digs through his pocket.*)

ED: Relax, relax. No, no, I didn't mean that. This isn't a shakedown. I mean, can you spare some time?

GILL: Time?

ED: Ed's the name. Ed Pluck. Just want some of your time.

GILL: Gill Grappes. (*Pronounced "grapes." Spells.*) G-R-A-P-P-E-S. Grappes. Like the fruit.

ED: I got a sweet deal for you, Gill. In the market for a house?

GILL: In L.A.? I can't afford rent. A house is out of the question.

Fixer-Upper

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ED: Gill, baby, the smog's gone to your head. Let me help you think clear. Level with me here. What's your rent, if I may ask?

GILL: [\$1,750] a month. Every month. For a one-bedroom.

ED: Whowee! That's a chunk. How'd you like to get out from under that?

GILL: I don't see how I can afford—

ED: Stop, stop, stop. Why don't you let me lay it out for you?

GILL: Okay.

ED: A starter home. Nothing fancy. Just some bare walls with lots of potential.

GILL: Okay.

ED: Only...get ready...only \$50K.

GILL: \$50K? You got to be kidding.

ED: \$50K, my friend. \$50K. Anyone can get a mortgage for \$50K.

GILL: What kind of house is that?

ED: A fixer-upper.

GILL: Oh, I see. *(Pause.)* Well, I don't know. A fixer-upper...could be a lot of work. Can I have your card?

ED: Gill, baby, you don't need my card. By the time I give you my card, this gem will be gone. Grabbed. Gobbled. *(Spells.)* G-O-N-E. Gone. Hear what I'm saying?

GILL: Well, I don't know. Got a picture?

ED: Gill, baby, who needs a picture when you can see it right now!

GILL: Right now?

ED: Right now. Step this way. *(He leads Gill to the cardboard shack.)* Lots of potential, wouldn't you say?

GILL: You call this a house? It's cardboard! I couldn't fit my dog in it.

ED: Gill, stay with me now. Think out of the box. Think big.

GILL: You're right. I wish it were big.

ED: It's got a lot of space for a [5' x 10'] [*whatever box size is used*], doncha think?

GILL: There's more space between your ears than inside that piece of crap.

ED: Do you know how hard it is to find a house in L.A.? Do you? Do you know the average price of anything is [\$1,300] per square foot? Do you know how hard it was for me to get this listing?

GILL: There's no heating, no cooling, no electricity, no water, no doors or windows, and has an R-factor of two. It might as well be a cardboard igloo, for all I know.

ED: That's the beauty of it. It's a fixer-upper. Get it? Martha Stewart would bust outta jail for this.

GILL: Oh, I get it. *(He leans against the cardboard box and it collapses.)* Not very sturdy, is it?

ED: You've discovered its other advantage. It's portable! Don't like the neighborhood? Just pack it up and move it! How many houses are portable?

GILL: Just the ones you take to the dump.

ED: Gill, baby, think like an American. It's every American's dream to own a home. When you buy a home, you're investing in a piece of America. Imagine how it would look with an American flag on its roof.

GILL: No. No, thanks. I've got to be going.

ED: Wait, wait, wait a minute. Gill, think like an investor. In a few short years—heck, in a few short months—just think how much this beauty will appreciate.

GILL: I haven't a clue.

ED: Forty percent.

GILL: You're not serious.

ED: Okay, a stretch. Twenty to thirty percent for sure. Maybe not months but in a year. Twenty to thirty percent in a year. Can't beat that, can you?

GILL: Twenty to thirty percent? How do you know?

ED: Listen, Gill, I'll level with you. The market is maxed out here. The waiting list for stick-builts is three years. There's nothing left to sell except fixer-uppers like this. When this is

gone, who knows? I may have to go back to teaching clog dancing.

GILL: But it's too small.

ED: Add on to it. Won't cost you anything. You can get boxes anywhere. And the best part is, you don't need a building permit.

GILL: No kidding?

ED: Scout's honor. Just say they're packing boxes until you're ready to sell.

GILL: Twenty to thirty percent. Hmm. Well, it's still a risk.

ED: Okay, you got me. You're good, Gill. Not many people can get the best of me, but you did. Tell ya what I'm gonna do. Tell you a secret. Ready?

GILL: Ready.

ED: I wasn't lying when I said it was portable.

GILL: I can put my house in my car. So?

ED: So you take it to Nevada. Las Vegas. That place is booming. What happens in California happens next in Nevada and Arizona. I tell ya, the next big boom is Nevada. Las Vegas. If you can get 20 to 30 percent here, you can get 40 to 50 percent there. No lie.

GILL: No lie?

ED: No lie.

GILL: Forty to 50 percent?

ED: Forty to 50 percent.

GILL: Wow! Forty to 50 percent!

ED: Forty to 50 percent. Easy.

GILL: Take it to Nevada?

ED: Las Vegas.

GILL: Las Vegas.

ED: City of dreams. Everyone's dream. Your dream, Gill.

GILL: My dream. *(Pause.)* Yeah, Ed, I'll take it. I'll take the house.

ED: Great, Gill. I knew you are a man of vision. And, hopefully, money. How do you want to take care of this?

All I need is ten percent earnest money, and I'll draw up the papers.

GILL: Do you take VISA?

ED: Gill, from you I'll take anything but an ex-wife. That's like an [extra mortgage.] [*Or an extra kid to raise.*]

GILL: Great.

(Cell phone rings.)

ED: Excuse me a minute. *(Into phone.)* Hello? I'm closing a deal. Lemons into lemonade. Can't this wait? What? What? Yes, I just sold the property. The client is about to swipe his VISA. What? I can't believe that. You've got to be kidding me, right? You're not. The feds. Got their hands into every little lemon pie, don't they? Well, okay. I'll tell him. Shoot, that would've been a sweet commission. This is one for the books, I tell ya. Catch ya later. Bye.

GILL: Is there some problem?

[END OF FREEVIEW]

**“Why do humans
beat around the bush?”**

– Dash

Blind Date

(AT RISE: Las Vegas, a bowling alley. There is the sound of bowling pins being hit and dropping and the muted sounds of bowlers in the background. Two blind teens, Evan and Elizabeth, are sitting at a table. They are on a first date. Dash and Queenie, two seeing-eye dogs observe their owners' actions.)

DASH: *(To Queenie.)* Are they gonna sit there all night? Let's see some action! Take her hand, you coward!

QUEENIE: *(Yawning.)* Be patient. Give him time. He's new at this. Elizabeth will encourage him.

DASH: Stop the small talk and kiss her, you idiot! Kiss her!

QUEENIE: You're new at this, aren't you?

DASH: You can tell?

QUEENIE: You're impatient. And you're nervous around blind people.

DASH: Yes, I know. I don't think I'm cut out for this job.

QUEENIE: Then how'd you get this gig?

DASH: It was either this or the kill shelter.

QUEENIE: Look! Evan's going for her hand.

(Actually, Evan's groping for it and plops his hand down on hers like he's landing a fish.)

DASH: Nice catch, Hannibal. Now let's see if he eats it.

QUEENIE: You're cruel.

DASH: Let's say we ditch these two blind mice and scare some bowlers. *(Sniffs.)* Hey, I smell pizza! Do you?

QUEENIE: Where'd you learn obedience training? The Clinton White House? My duty is to Elizabeth.

DASH: Okay, so I failed doggie obedience three times. But I got an "A" in exploratory.

(Dash gives Queenie a lewd sniff. Queenie bats him on the nose.)

QUEENIE: Save it for the tramps, you mutt. *(She turns away, her head held high.)*

EVAN: *(To Elizabeth.)* I don't know what's taking the waitress so long. I'm sorry.

ELIZABETH: That's okay. I'm not really thirsty.

EVAN: Sure?

ELIZABETH: I'm sure. I'm too happy to be thirsty.

EVAN: Why is that?

ELIZABETH: Because you finally asked me out.

(NOTE: Elizabeth and Evan mime talking whenever Dash and Queenie speak.)

DASH: *(To Queenie.)* Let's say we trip the next human who comes by. We'll get somebody's attention.

QUEENIE: Shhh. This is good. Listen.

ELIZABETH: *(To Evan.)* ...that I'm a good candidate for a new procedure. They'll transplant stem cells onto the surface of my eyes and follow that up with cornea transplants. Then it's up to my brain to reprogram, God willing.

EVAN: I don't know if I could go through with it. The operation is one thing. But if it didn't work, I couldn't handle the disappointment.

DASH: *(To Queenie.)* My thoughts exactly. I let a vet cut me once. Never again.

QUEENIE: Apparently, it didn't work. You're still hyper.

[END OF FREEVIEW]

**“Don’t want to wake the president
unless we have to.”**

–Bill

“Don’t Wake the President!”

(AT RISE: 2 a.m., Situation Room of the White House. There is a long table, chairs, telephones, computer, printer, map of the world, coffeemaker, report folders. Watch Officers, Ed Lout and Bill Blight, read incoming news and intelligence reports. There is a stack of playing cards on the table.)

ED: Okay, Bill, your turn. Cut the cards. Low card wakes him.

BILL: Okay. Pick.

(Ed draws a card.)

ED: Eight of spades.

(Bill draws a card.)

BILL: Three of hearts. Schiznit. Twice in a row. The old man’s gonna kick my butt for sure.

ED: Better you than me. I got 12 years to retirement.

BILL: If we get lucky, it’ll be a quiet night.

ED: Have you ever known it to be quiet?

BILL: No. Some butthead always screws up. I’m gonna get some coffee.

(Bill gets up and goes to the coffeemaker to get more coffee. Ed picks up a news flash.)

ED: Hey, look at this. *(Bill comes over.)* Interpol reports thieves broke into a French military installation and stole three kilos of radioactive isotopes. Somebody’s gonna make a nuke. Whaddaya think?

BILL: Naw, those guys might be caught before breakfast. Not important. What else ya got?

(Ed reads another report.)

ED: A 7.2 magnitude earthquake has just hit Italy, the epicenter at the Vatican.

BILL: Shoot! Guess I won't see the Sistine Chapel this summer.

ED: Rock, paper, scissors. Rock, we wake him up. Ready? One, two, three!

(They both have "paper.")

BILL: Both paper. Ol' War'n' Ready sleeps this time.

(Ed reads another report.)

ED: Some traffic about flooding in India. It always floods in India. Pass on this.

(Bill reads a report.)

BILL: Looks like North Korea is going to test its first nuke. We'd better let him know.

ED: Wait a minute. Didn't some double-agent sell plastic relays and refurbished microchips to them?

BILL: Yeah, I think you're right. They were made in New Jersey.

ED: Well, if we made them, we know they're defective! Let them lob it. It's a dud. The old man lucks out again.

(Bill reads another report.)

BILL: The Russians have lost another sub. They're requesting a remote robot to bring it up.

ED: Call Russ at State. Tell him to contact the British. They brought up the last one. Their track record is still sterling.

(Bill reads another report.)

BILL: Okay. What do you want me to do about this? A class one hurricane is on track to hit Cuba in two hours. Winds estimated at 175 miles per hour. Forecasters predict it may veer up the Florida coast.

ED: If it gets Castro, then we wake the old man up. Call the National Weather Bureau for half-hour updates. If it looks like it will hit Disney World, we wake the president immediately.

BILL: Good thinking. By the way, do we know if the president has taken his medication? If he has, it's like trying to wake a coma patient.

ED: We'll check with the Chief of Staff when we need to.

BILL: Right. Don't want to wake the president unless we have to.

ED: When's the First Lady coming back?

BILL: She's due at Langley tomorrow at 6 p.m.

ED: I hear she read to students in Madrid.

BILL: Finally, some good press.

ED: *(Yawns.)* Man, I'm getting too old for graveyard.

BILL: Me too. What else we got?

(Ed reads a report.)

ED: Greg Maddoux [or some other superstar pitcher] won his 25th game last night.

BILL: Wow! The old man'd like to hear that.

ED: In the morning. In the morning. My turn for coffee.

(Ed gets up to get coffee. Bill reads a report.)

BILL: *(Really upset.)* Oh no! Read this!

(Bill hands the paper to Ed.)

ED: (*Reads.*) "A spokesman for Revelation Games announced that the popular Christian videogame, "Daniel and the Lion," is being pulled from stores because a mother discovered that her son had found a way to unlock hidden sex scenes in the game. The company estimates that 15,000 games will be recalled."

BILL: This is worse than "The Little Mermaid."

ED: No kidding. This is the Prez's favorite game. He fantasized he was Daniel and Congress was the lion. He'll go nuts without it.

ED: What do we do?

BILL: Wake him.

ED: Are you nuts?

BILL: I know, but somebody will be in serious trouble unless—

Ed: Unless—

BILL: We get somebody else to wake him.

ED: Who? Who wants to be looking for another job? You?

BILL: No, not me.

ED: Not me.

BILL: Who then?

ED: I'm thinking. I'm thinking.

[END OF FREEVIEW]