

THE
MORNING
AFTER

a ten-minute play

by

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Cast of Characters

Narrator

Woman

Man

Sonny

*For Todd,
who can bray
with the best of them*

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THE MORNING AFTER

Setting: A mostly bare stage.

At rise: Bright lights up on a stage, bare but for a door frame UL and a sofa set on a diagonal near C. The NARRATOR enters from R. and glares contemptuously around the stage.

NARRATOR

Don't you just hate this story theatre shit? (a condescending sing-song) "Hey Boys and Girls! Let's get ready to use our imaginations!" (a pause, same voice) "If I had wanted to use my imagination, I could have stayed home on a very comfortable sofa and done it for FREE!" Never-the-less, now that we're all here we have to get through the evening somehow. So, what DO we have here?

If we had the budget, we'd have a living room. Middle class, but poorly kept. Good stuff, aging badly. A hallway. A staircase. A door to the world outside. A musty place, half-read books and journals scattered everywhere. Lots of ashtrays. And the debris of a small party, glasses and bottles, strewn about.

The home of a middle-aged college professor, perhaps, and his blowzy, vaguely dissatisfied, slut of a wife.

WOMAN (from off, braying)

WATCH IT!

NARRATOR

Early on a grey Sunday morning.

As the NARRATOR steps into the shadows UR, SONNY enters DL and crosses to the US side of the door frame. SONNY is an oppressively wholesome lad of about 20. Clean cut. Dressed in khakis and a cardigan letter sweater. HE carries two battered suitcases ala Willie Loman at the top of *Death of a Salesman*. HE mimes unlocking and opening the door and steps through the door frame. HE closes the door behind himself. With an elbow, HE flips on a light switch and lights come up some in the room. HE takes a step or two in and surveys the room. HE sets down his suitcase and sighs. HE composes himself and assumes a greatly cheerful demeanor.

SONNY (calling out jauntily)

Mom! Dad! I'm home! (a beat.) Mom? Dad? (no response.) You guys! Come on!

WOMAN (from off)

WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?

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MAN (from off)

What the hell is what, blossom?

WOMAN (from off)

Don't blossom me, you bastard! I heard something downstairs.

MAN (from off)

Sweetheart, you didn't hear anything downstairs. There is nothing downstairs to hear. I locked the door before trudging up here to our sacred marriage bed.

WOMAN (from off)

I don't care if you dug a fucking moat with your goddamned bare hands! There's something down there.

SONNY (forceful and sustained)

Mo-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-om!

Long silence from off.

SONNY

What are you guys up to?

MAN and WOMAN creep on UR, near where the NARRATOR indicated a staircase. SHE is middle-aged, fleshy, voluptuous, a bit of a harridan. HE is middle-aged, graying, worn, resigned, but with more spine than is initially apparent.

SONNY(arms opened wide with delight)

Mom! Dad!

WOMAN

Jesus Christ! Who the fuck are you?

SONNY (sharply)

Mom!

WOMAN

MOM?

SONNY

I know you can't help being colorful, Mom. But do you have to be so profane on Sunday morning?

WOMAN (to MAN)

Get me a drink.

MAN

For once, dear, that may not be a bad idea. (holding up a mostly full fifth of bourbon and a not too dirty glass handed him by the NARRATOR.) Ice, my love?

WOMAN

Just gimme the bottle. (HE does. SHE takes a swig. Offers him the bottle.) For you?

MAN

I think not. Not yet.

WOMAN (shrugs.)

Suit yourself.

SONNY

Mom! I don't want to be a nag, but didn't you promise me you'd try to cut back?

WOMAN

WHAT?

SONNY

Remember our little talk before I went back to school?

WOMAN

I've never talked to you before in my goddamned life.

SONNY

Oh dear. How much has she had, Dad?

WOMAN

"Had Dad!" "Had Dad!" You sound like that vapid little twit from last night!

SONNY

How much, Dad?

MAN

Frankly, I don't see that as any of your business.

SONNY

You have got to stop enabling her. Mom, I know it's hard to beat on your own. Have you tried any AA meetings?

WOMAN

Who the hell ARE you?

SONNY

Maybe we should think seriously about a rehab? Someplace you can dry out and get the help you need. All I really want for my birthday is a sober mom.

WOMAN

Why should I care what the hell you want for your goddamn birthday?

MAN

Dear god.

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WOMAN
What?

MAN
Evidently the joke is on us.

WOMAN
Whaddya mean?

MAN
It seems out little sonny has indeed come home to celebrate his birthday.

WOMAN
WHAT? (Then getting it:) Oh my god! (a huge roaring laugh) Jesus Christ that's funny! (another big laugh) I got to hand it to you ... (smaller laugh. Then to SONNY:) So who are you really? One of those house call strippers? I wouldn't mind seeing you out of the sweater, stud. (Pawing HIM) You gonna do a better job for mommy than old poopy pecker from last night?

SONNY
Mom, I really hate it when you do that.

WOMAN (rubbing against HIM)
Do what?

SONNY (pulling away)
That. Touch me like that. It makes me really uncomfortable.

MAN
I guess your little Sonny has tired of the old games, Marth ...

And before the MAN can finish the name HE was about to say, the NARRATOR, shrieking "NOOOOOOOOOOOOOO OOOOO!" hurtles on from R., races up to the MAN and slaps a hand over HIS mouth.

NARRATOR
No names! You know we can't use names!

MAN (breaking character)
What in the hell's the matter with you?

NARRATOR
We can't use names. You want to get us sued?

MAN (still out)
Y'know, someone ought to just give Albee an enema.

WOMAN (breaking character)
Nah, he'd probably enjoy it.

No, isn't that Sondheim? SONNY (breaking character)

Oh no! I hear Sondheim is into ... WOMAN (still out)

EXCUSE ME! I fear we digress. NARRATOR (firmly)

Right. MAN

Sure. WOMAN

Sorry. SONNY

From, "I guess your little Sonny has tired of the old games." Period! NARRATOR

NARRATOR steps off R. Each actor takes a couple of beats to conspicuously return to character.

I guess your little Sonny has tired of the old games. MAN

What are you talking about? There is no Sonny. There were no old games. He doesn't exist. WOMAN

Here he stands before us. MAN

Have you ever seen this kid before in you life, in your entire pathetic excuse for a life? WOMAN

You know what I love most about you, dear? Even under duress you never lose your gift for poetry. MAN

ANSWER MY GODDAMNED QUESTION! WOMAN

No, dearest, I have never seen this young man before in my life. MAN

Then why are you acting like you think he's our goddamned kid? WOMAN

MAN

It just doesn't strike me as something anyone would invent.

WOMAN

Oh that's goddamn brilliant! Jesus Christ!

SONNY

Mom! I really have to insist that you stop taking the Lord's name in vain. Right now. I really mean it.

WOMAN

He can't be ours. He's a Mormon. Are you wearing that strange underwear?

SONNY

I am not a Mormon. It's simply that I have accepted Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior and I find it very painful to hear his name profaned.

WOMAN and MAN exchange a knowing look and nod sadly.

WOMAN & MAN (in unison)

He's a Jehovah's Witness.

WOMAN

We'll never get rid of him.

SONNY (brightly)

Sometimes I forget what great kidders you two are.

MAN

That's right, lad. We're just full of merry pranks. Aren't we, dear? (a big false smile.)

WOMAN

Sure. Sure. Of course we are. Kidders.

MAN

Now, Sonny, why don't you and Mommy have a seat here on the couch and do some catching up. Tell her all about your Young Republican socials or whatever it is you're studying while I go get your birthday surprise.

SONNY turns to the WOMAN, beaming. MAN stands behind him and mimes cocking a rifle. WOMAN smiles and nods.

SONNY

That sounds just super!

WOMAN

Yeah. Sure. That sounds real nice.

MAN exits R. SONNY and WOMAN sit on the couch, smiling. And smiling.

WOMAN

So, kid, you still a virgin?

SONNY

Well of course I am. If you don't count the times you made me ...

WOMAN

And how are your grades?

SONNY

Don't worry. I've forgiven you. You were the product of a dysfunctional environment, without good therapy you had to turn out the way you did. Thanks to Dr. Welch, all I feel now is unconditional love for everyone.

WOMAN

That must be real nice.

SONNY

Not that it was cheap. Those billable hours can really add up. And since the college doesn't provide Dad with much in the way of insurance, none of it was reimbursable. Is that why you've never gotten help?

The MAN appears behind the sofa with a large double barreled shotgun. The WOMAN catches him out of the corner of her eye and relaxes perceptibly.

WOMAN

Oh let's not talk about me. I want to hear more about you. Do you believe in cremation?

The MAN has the gun cocked and raised and pointed at the back of SONNY's head. HE moves to within a few inches and fires. A resounding retort echoes through the theatre. The MAN is nearly knocked down by the gun's recoil. The WOMAN jumps.

SONNY is unmoved and unruffled.

SONNY

Anything for a laugh, hunh guys? I must be the luckiest kid in the world to have folks like you.

The WOMAN reaches behind the sofa and pulls up an empty liquor bottle and smashes it over SONNY's head. The bottle shatters to bits, HE is again unaffected.

WOMAN

You're not human.

SONNY

That's a little harsh, mom.

WOMAN

What are we going do?

MAN

I really don't know. I gave it my best shot. As it were.

WOMAN

You're a fucking riot.

MAN

You could cook him breakfast, dearest. That should finish him off.

SONNY

Yeah! How about it, Mom? A big plate of steaming flapjacks, some sausage on the side, and a huge glass of orange juice would make a swell birthday breakfast. I have to admit I'm pretty hungry after riding the bus all night to get here.

WOMAN

Sure. Sure. Not only is he my son, but now I'm supposed to be fucking Donna Reed!

MAN

No dear, if you were fucking Donna Reed, this would be *The Killing of Sister George*.

SONNY

Now come on, that's really enough of that!

WOMAN

It sure is. I know I've had all I can take! (grabbing the gun out of the MAN's hand) Are there more shells in the pantry?

MAN

Almost a whole box, dear.

WOMAN

Good. That's real good.

WOMAN runs off R.

SONNY

Gee, I hate to be indelicate, but is mom going through "the change"?

MAN

My dear boy, your mother has been through so many changes in her sordid, but eventful life that it would be difficult to single one out as "the change."

An awkward silence.

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MAN

We see each other so infrequently, I'm not quite sure how to comport myself ...

SONNY

Once I'm out of school I can come home to live and things will get a lot more comfortable.

MAN

That would be one view.

Sound of the gun going off and falling to the floor off R. A moment of stunned silence from the MAN and SONNY. They turn slowly and face R, but do not move in that direction.

MAN (soft, tentative)

Sweetheart?

SONNY (soft, tentative)

Mom?

MAN (loud, firm)

Dearest!

SONNY (loud, firm)

Mommy!

MAN

Do you think I should?

SONNY

I'll wait here.

MAN dashes off R, returns quickly.

SONNY

Well?

MAN nods somberly.

SONNY

Really?

MAN nods again. Their eyes meet and they break into enormous grins.

SONNY

Darling!

MAN

At last!

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They rush into a long, passionate embrace. When they are finally able to pry their lips apart:

MAN

Together at long last.

SONNY

As it always should have been.

They return to their embrace as lights fade to BLACK.

End of The Morning After.