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ONE, TWO, THREE

A Play In One Act

By David Lohrey

Cast of Characters

DENNY: Fairly good-looking college kid, 21-23 years old. More English major type than computer geek. Not a baseball cap sort of fellow. Perhaps 60's holdover look. Jeans, yes; maybe a sports coat.

LISA: Plain-Jane college scruffy. Same age as DENNY. No make-up. A pot smoker rather than a drinker. The type whose looks change dramatically with minimum effort. Nice body.

MARLBORO MAN: A grand specimen of archetypical masculinity, age unknown and unimportant. The whole get-up, from cowboy hat to boots, preferably with a magnificent red 'kerchief around his neck.

COVER GIRL: A knockout. Perhaps blond, but not necessarily. Well made up in the entire costume of current fashion. Bright red lipstick and nails to match.

SCENE: The play takes place in a college dorm room. The usual squalor.

TIME: The action takes place late one night. It is the present.

Scene 1

(As THEY burst into the dorm room)

DENNY

(Entering first into his room, possibly takes a stab at tidying up)

I didn't say I like it. "I like it," like I'm talking about a piece of candy. I said...

LISA

You said...

I said I respect...

DENNY

OK, OK.

LISA

...the artist's vision, if you'd let me finish...

DENNY

And respect doesn't mean like?

LISA

Well, no. Of course, not.

DENNY

Then what does it mean?

LISA

It means I can appreciate...

DENNY

You can appreciate the fact that the director hates women. That's what I thought you said.

LISA

He does not hate women.

DENNY

Oh? The guy only rapes and mutilates three secretaries and ...

LISA

I thought we were talking about the director.

DENNY

I am. He is the killer.

LISA

The director is the killer?

DENNY

Duh?!

LISA

DENNY

How do you figure that?

LISA

Who else could he be? Who do you think he is?

DENNY

Why does he have to be anybody? The killer is the antagonist.

LISA

The killer is the director. Everybody in the film is the director. He made them.

DENNY

He made them up, to look like.... They're characters.

LISA

You're telling me the Godfather is not Francis Ford Coppola?? You're saying ET is not Steven Spielberg, the little Jew-boy trapped in an anti-Semitic hell called Cleveland, Ohio?

DENNY

You may have a point there.

LISA

So?

DENNY

So that means Alfred Hitchcock is a woman-hater?

LISA

Of course, it does. Even my mother knows that. She told me she never forgave my father for taking her to see *Psycho*.

DENNY

And now you'll never forgive me for liking...

LISA

For *appreciating*.... No, I won't.

DENNY

All right, then. Look, I didn't bring you up here to ...

LISA

...to what? What?

DENNY

To fight.

LISA

Is that what we're doing? I tell you I didn't like the movie you dragged me to, and that means we're fighting.

DENNY

Arguing...whatever.

LISA

What did you bring me here to do?

DENNY

Well...

LISA

Say it! Why don't you have the balls to say it! "I didn't bring you up here to talk, I brought you up here to fuck." Why can't you just say it? Isn't that what you and your friends reduce it to: "You fucked her, didn't you?" "Did you get any?" Grunt, grunt, scratch, scratch. But if your friends argue about a film, it's called a discussion, not a fight.

DENNY

Jesus.

LISA

Yeah, count on you to invoke a man's name, as if that would do you any good.

DENNY

Why are you so fucking hostile? If you didn't want to come, why did you...?

LISA

Oh, but I did. I do. I do want to *come*. So you better be ready when I get back.

(Opens the door, steps out, and slams the door behind her.)

(As DENNY looks toward the door, transfixed, a man emerges from the bed. He simply rises, fully dressed in cowboy attire, a great hat, a red 'kerchief around the neck, magnificent

boots, possibly even chaps. There's even a
toothpick in his mouth.)

MARLBORO MAN

Hey there, sissy boy, you oughtn't to let that little filly talk to you like that.

DENNY

Who the fuck are you?

MARLBORO MAN

You aim to be a man, boy, you're better keep that tongue decent.

DENNY

I said, how did you get in here? Who are you?

MARLBORO MAN

(He grabs hold of DENNY'S neck threateningly)

Don't ride me, boy.

DENNY

(Barely able to speak)

What do you want?

MARLBORO MAN

One. Repeat.

DENNY

One.

MARLBORO MAN

Two. Repeat.

DENNY

Two. Get off me...

MARLBORO MAN

Don't make me hurt you, boy. Now, repeat: three.

DENNY

Three.

(The MARLBORO MAN turns DENNY loose)

DENNY

Damn, man. What'd you do that for? You trying to kill me?

MARLBORO MAN

Just a test.

DENNY

A Test? What are you testing? How long it takes to kill somebody?

MARLBORO MAN

Testing your manhood. You failed.

DENNY

I failed?

MARLBORO MAN

You were a real man, you'd a knocked my arms away and kneed me in the balls. But being a darling, why, you didn't know quite what to do, now did you?

DENNY

I don't know how to fight.

MARLBORO MAN

You into guys' asses or you like broad shoulders?

DENNY

I'm not gay.

MARLBORO MAN

You trying to tell me you're into pussy? You're a tits man? Shit. You wouldn't know the difference 'tween fine virgin twat – which is what just walked out of here – you wouldn't know that from an old mule's butt hole.

DENNY

I think you should leave before I call campus security. Get out.

MARLBORO MAN

I would if I could; only you brought me here.

DENNY

You lie! I don't even know who you are.

MARLBORO MAN

Well, you must think you do. I'm a figment of your imagination. You conjured me up, out of your subconscious.

DENNY

I did?

MARLBORO MAN

You wanted to know how a real man would handle that gal you've got busting your balls, so here I am. Now, we ain't got much time for she gets back. First off, we gotta decide where you're fixin' to be when she walks back in through that door.

(Black Out; END OF SCENE)

Scene 2

(The MARLBORO MAN disappears as LISA reenters. DENNY, an altogether new man, awaits his prey.)

LISA

(As SHE reenters)

There's some asshole in the bathroom sitting on the toilet with the stall door wide open. God, I hate co-ed dorms.

DENNY

(Propped up in bed, like a cowboy on a bale of hay)

You want me to go in there and teach him some manners?

LISA

Teach him what...do what now?

DENNY

He didn't lay a hand on you, did he?

LISA

No, but...what are you talking about?

DENNY

Sweetheart, you give the word, and I'll make that sonofabitch sorrier than a lark at a duck shoot.

LISA

You must be drunk or high or...what are you on? And I told you already, don't call me sweetheart. I don't approve of sexist endearments.

DENNY

Oh, come on now, pussy willow, can't a guy enjoy a little love talk?

LISA

Love talk? You must be kidding. And I thought we were getting ready for bed.

DENNY

I am.

LISA

You're still wearing your jeans.

DENNY

I sleep in my jeans. They're my pajamas.

LISA

They're dirty.

DENNY

You ain't seen nothing yet.

LISA

Listen, jerk-off, just cut the jabber. I don't like it and you know it.

DENNY

Hey, I'm primed for action, baby. What good is a well without a pump?

LISA

You know, I find you incredibly offensive. And, no, I can't take it, if it's meant as some kind of joke, 'cause what happens in a room between a man and a woman gets mirrored in the world.

DENNY

I like that fancy talk, I really do. Now what I'd like is for you to slip off them street clothes, put on a fancy kimono, and show me how you do the Chinese lip lock.

LISA

Show you what? The Chinese what? You insult me, you degrade women, you exploit sexist imagery to satisfy your perverse fantasies. How dare you?

(SHE takes her cup and splashes it full force
into DENNIS's face)

You and your fat fascistic friend Alfred Hitchcock: you're both rapists and killers.

DENNY

(Has leapt up, reaching for a towel or something
to wipe his face)

What'd you do that for? Are you crazy? Damn, you stupid bitch.

(HE storms out of the room)

(A gorgeous apparition appears. She is Helen of
Troy disguised as the quintessential COVER GIRL)

COVER GIRL

(SHE talks as she applies polish to her
toenails)

You were doing all right at first, with the tough-girl act, that was first class, but the Puritan claptrap is over the top. I mean, do you want to have an orgasm or not?

LISA

Who the hell are you?

COVER GIRL

I'm who you want to be.

LISA

I don't think so.

COVER GIRL

I'm your ideal of female beauty and success. I'm your fantasy self. I'm the reason you're in college. I'm the reason you're on a date. I'm your vision of feminine accomplishment.

LISA

You got the wrong woman. I mean, look at me. I don't even wear make-up.

COVER GIRL

Yeah, I can see. Maybe that's why you and boyfriend here are sitting in his shabby dorm room instead of snuggling up at the bottom of a cabin cruiser headed for Catalina. Beggars can't exactly be choosers.

LISA

You're saying...

COVER GIRL

(Giving LISA the once over)

Your body's not bad. In ten years your ass is going to look like a tank if you don't start exercising. Let's see: how are your tits?

LISA

What? My what? I'm not showing you...

COVER GIRL

From the looks of it I'd say you need a boob job, but don't take my word for it. I'd see a professional. What's your opinion? Do you like your tits?

(LISA is dumbfounded. She just stares in wonder)

COVER GIRL (cont'd)

There's gotta be some explanation for this I-hate-men act of yours. You don't like them do you, your tits, I mean? That's the problem, isn't it?

LISA

(Suddenly the little girl inside is exposed)

You know, my breasts aren't even. Can't you see? I try not to draw attention to them. It used to make me feel real self-conscious. I thought the boys would kick me out of bed or something. Anyone can see they're not really straight. This one's kinda higher than the other, and the nipple sorta looks to the side. It's the funniest thing. Nobody even told me about that. I mean, I was always worried that they wouldn't be big enough. I never thought I'd have to think about whether they'd grow straight.

(SHE is almost in tears)

COVER GIRL

Ooohh, honey, is that what this is all about? Lopsided boobs aren't so bad.

LISA

(Beginning to lose it)

Lopsided boobs. That's so cold.

COVER GIRL

Don't take it like that. You oughta count your blessings. At least you've got a problem that can be fixed. I know from experience: Realigning your nips is as simple as sewing on a button.

LISA

Really?

COVER GIRL

Of course. Why, in just a few weeks you'll have this guy nibbling and suckling like a newborn.

LISA

You think so?

COVER GIRL

But listen; if you ask me, your boobs can wait. What really needs work is your attitude.

LISA

My attitude?

COVER GIRL

You've got to be assertive, without being aggressive. And you're too defensive. I mean, what do you want? Why are you here? Why'd you go out with this guy?

LISA

Well, I don't know.

COVER GIRL

And this whiney accusation: "You didn't bring me here to talk, you brought me here to fuck." Please. You give him too much power. Anyway, he probably *did* bring you up here to talk.

LISA

You think?

COVER GIRL

The guy's a wimp. You give him too much credit. You're on the defensive, but you have to put him on the defensive. Tell him you want *his* body. You want to fuck *him*. Be honest. Intimidate him with your sexuality. Don't let him think you don't want to give in to him, make him think sex is all he's good for. Seduce him.

LISA

Wow. But what if he doesn't like me?

COVER GIRL

What do you care? You need more sexual experience and, besides, sleeping with someone is always preferable to sleeping alone. Now, take off all your clothes and hop into bed.

LISA

Well, it's kind of cold.

COVER GIRL

Grab that T-shirt.

LISA

But it's his.

COVER GIRL

He'll think it's sexy. Hurry up; he's on his way.

(Black out; END OF SCENE)

SCENE 3

DENNY

(Reentering the dorm room)

You know, that guy in the toilet stall you found so offensive happens to be having a nervous breakdown. He told me he's been in there all day.

LISA

(Sitting in bed, doing her toenails)

Why?

DENNY

He found his girlfriend in bed with his roommate.

LISA

Oh, poor guy. Has that upset you?

DENNY

Well, yeah, I guess. I mean, Christ, is nothing sacred?

LISA

You're right. Why don't you come over here? I'll give you a massage.

DENNY

That sounds good.

LISA

You're all stressed out. Just close your eyes and let me soothe you.

DENNY

That's great.

LISA

We've been talking too much. I've been talking too much. Let's discover each other's bodies. Can't we just forget everything else? Here, give me your foot.

(SHE's got his foot in her lap, massaging it)

DENNY

Oohhh, that feels wonderful.

LISA

There is such a thing as too much thought, too many words.

DENNY

You can say that again.

LISA

I've always loved running my hand up a man's pants leg.

DENNY

Yeah, well, don't let me stop you.

LISA

I like the feel of making my way, inch by inch.

DENNY

The way you're going, I won't be able to keep them on.

LISA

Take them off then. I'll help you.

DENNY

Here's a challenge: try removing them without your hands.

LISA

Oh, yeah?

DENNY

Try first with your feet, and if that doesn't work, use your teeth.

LISA

If I didn't know better, I'd say you had this all planned out.

DENNY

I did.

LISA

You've got me right where you wanted me, with my mouth on your zipper.

DENNY

You've got that right.

LISA

(Violently pushing away)

God, you sexist bastard, I should have known.

DENNY

What?

LISA

You charmed me; you manipulated me, using your phallo-centric, paternalistic tricks to lure me to bed.

DENNY

Wait a minute. I did not. I didn't even want to go to bed. I wanted to go to the film festival and then talk about the movie. I asked you because you're in my class and you seemed bright and I thought we had a lot in common.

LISA

Really?

DENNY

Listen. I mean, I figured if you wanted to sleep with me, that's great. But, well, it wasn't exactly the furthest thing from my mind. I mean, I admit it was on my mind. I think you're cute and you've got nice breasts...

LISA

I do?

DENNY

But there was absolutely no luring.

LISA

Why don't we just cuddle for a while and see how it goes? I'm too tired to walk home.

DENNY

That sounds great. I'll get the lights.

(HE dims the lights. Then THEY lie down side by side)

COVER GIRL

(Suddenly reappearing)

Don't blow it now, girl. That cuddling shit's for the birds. Keep it up, and he'll just want to be friends.

LISA

Buzz off. I'm happy just the way I am, lopsided tits and all.

MARLBORO MAN

(Steps out from the shadows)

What's the matter with you, dude? You had her right where you wanted her. You still have a chance. Don't miss out on the Chinese lip lock.

DENNY

I prefer things just the way they are.

MARLBORO MAN

Be a man. You're squeezing her like she's a teddy bear.

DENNY

That's all right. I miss my teddy bear.

COVER GIRL

Come on, honey, he'll never be your lover if you're nice to him.

LISA

If that's true, I can do without. I need a friend. Now good night.

COVER GIRL

I can't go to sleep until I've had a man.

MARLBORO MAN

Baby, turn this way, 'cause I'm the man you're looking for.

COVER GIRL

I didn't know they still make 'em like you anymore.

MARLBORO MAN

Only in your dreams.

COVER GIRL

You look good enough to ride bareback.

MARLBORO MAN

Get out your whip. I've got my branding iron.

COVER GIRL

You'll do what I say?

MARLBORO MAN

Just tell me what you want.

COVER GIRL

Bend over and let me hear it loud and clear.

(SHE cracks her whip)

One. Repeat.

MARLBORO MAN

One.

COVER GIRL

(SHE cracks her whip again)

Two. Repeat.

MARLBORO MAN

Two.

COVER GIRL

(SHE cracks her whip even harder)

Three. Repeat.

MARLBORO MAN

Three.

COVER GIRL

Tell me you deserve it. Tell me you'll always want more.

MARLBORO MAN

I do. I will.

COVER GIRL

(SHE cracks the whip once more)

Again. One.

END OF PLAY

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