

# THE DORMITORY

By Burton Bumgarner

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## **DEDICATION**

*For Rick, Ken and Marc.*

## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

On the campus of an unnamed liberal arts college in an unnamed Midwestern state, a dormitory has served as a home to students for over 100 years. Set in a first-floor room of this dormitory, the play opens in the present when two college freshmen, Jake and Clay, become roommates during the year before the dorm is torn down. Their story is interwoven with a century of college antics and hijinks, hopes and tragedies, as the previous residents act out their moments in the same dorm room. We meet the dormitory's occupants from the early days of the century, the Great Depression, the second World War, the early days of rock and roll, the turbulent '60s and the final decades of the century. Some of the early residents return to visit during reunions and homecomings. Each story leaves behind a momento for the puzzled Jake and Clay. Though rules and times change, it becomes clear at the end that the residents have their effects on one another and that history creates the present at this small college.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**  
(5 m, 3 w)

**JAKE:** A college freshman/the president.

**CLAY:** A college freshman/the delivery man.

**THE CORE**

**ACTOR 1:** Counselor, Wayne, Buster.

**ACTOR 2:** Bill, Phil, Zero.

**ACTOR 3:** Bud, Feet, Dean 1.

**ACTOR 4:** Ginny, Freda, Belinda.

**ACTOR 5:** Sandy, Marion, Ashley, Dean 2.

**ACTOR 6:** Florence, Cynthia, Louise.

*The Dormitory* is to be performed by two actors playing Jake and Clay, and a core of six actors covering the other parts. Jake and Clay also change roles in the final scene of Act II. More may be cast at the director's discretion. The Core offers a group of actors the opportunity to play many characters in the context of a single play. Multiple costume changes are needed and time for these changes has been factored into the script. Music and dress from each of the decades represented should be considered.

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**SET DESCRIPTION**

A window that opens and shuts is UPS along with two beds, two desks, two dressers, a nightstand with a lamp on it, and other dormitory furniture. A door to the hallway is SR, a closet door is SL. There is a telephone on a stand DSL, which is used in the later time periods. A radio is on Clay's dresser. Other items, such as clothes, toiletries, towels, are left in and on the dresser. Lighting is dimmed between each scene to give the illusion of a brief return to the future.

**PROPS**

Several suitcases filled with clothes, binoculars, clipboard, nightgown, coats, hats, scarf, boots, watches, blankets, can of air freshener, towels, soap dish, notebook, books, trumpet case, old-fashioned alarm clock, bathrobes, black dress and bonnet, handbag with Bible in it, gym clothes, potted plant, basketball, envelope, bedspread, toothbrush, paper bag, bottles of soft drink, bottle opener, cigar, train ticket, letter, gloves, walker, small podium, folding chairs, stack of pizza boxes.

**SOUND EFFECTS**

Rock music, ragtime music, flushing toilet, male screaming, old-fashioned alarm clock ringing, 1930s jazz music, big band music, 1940s music, 1950s music, Elvis or Cole Porter song, 1960s music, telephone, sirens, current music.

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

*(During BLACKOUT, current rock MUSIC is heard. AT RISE: JAKE enters with suitcase and begins to unpack. When finished he looks around the room, then takes a pair of binoculars from his suitcase and looks out the window. COUNSELOR enters carrying clipboard. MUSIC fades. The Counselor waits to be recognized and isn't. He clears his throat. Jake doesn't notice. He clears his throat louder. Jake looks around but doesn't notice. Finally, Counselor speaks in a booming voice. Jake jumps.)*

COUNSELOR: Hey! Freshman!

JAKE: *(Startled.)* Huh? What? *(Turns.)*

COUNSELOR: *(Reads from clipboard.)* Welcome to college. I am the first floor counselor. I am responsible for the men on this floor and for the well-being of the physical facilities. The rules are: 1) No rude and/or lascivious behavior; 2) No illegal and/or immoral behavior; 3) No visitors of the opposite sex after nine o'clock on weeknights, and midnight on weekends; 4) Respect quiet time, which begins at 10:00 p.m. on weeknights and midnight on weekends; 5) Keep the bathrooms and hallways clean, and 6) No pets. We still have hamsters, guinea pigs, snakes and alligators loose in the building. They've established their own food chain and we don't want the environmental balance disrupted. Are there any questions?

JAKE: Yeah. *(Pointing.)* Is that a girl's dorm over there?

COUNSELOR: *(Crosses to window and looks.)* That's the School of Arts and Humanities. The girl's dorms are on the other side of the campus.

JAKE: Damn!

COUNSELOR: The bathrooms are at the end of the hallway. If you use the commode and someone is in the shower, yell "Flush" when you finish and count to five before flushing.

JAKE: Why?

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COUNSELOR: Because flushing of the commodes causes the sudden shut down of cold water to the showers, and whoever is in the shower will be scalded. The warning gives the bather's time to step out of the water before it becomes hot enough to boil lobsters.

JAKE: What happens if I forget?

COUNSELOR: Count on being boiled alive next time you're in the shower. Remember to yell loudly. Flushing on the first floor affects the cold water for the entire dorm.

JAKE: This is the worst dorm on campus, isn't it? I knew I'd end up in the worst dorm!

COUNSELOR: This is the oldest dorm on campus. The new men's dormitory in the housing quad will open next fall. This building will be torn down.

JAKE: So, I'm stuck here for the whole year?

COUNSELOR: Look on the bright side. You could always flunk out.

JAKE: It's stuffy in here. Is the air conditioning on?

COUNSELOR: It will be when you open the window.

JAKE: (*Opens window, then looks around.*) Oh. It looks kind of ... well ... have you had a problem with insects?

COUNSELOR: Only termites and cockroaches.

JAKE: Any rodents?

COUNSELOR: Just rats, raccoons, and 'possums that live in the attic.

JAKE: (*Sniffing the air.*) What's that smell?

COUNSELOR: Skunks. They live under the building. After a while you get used to it. But it never quite washes out of your clothes. Of course, most of the men in this dorm never wash their clothes.

JAKE: I knew it! The worst dorm on campus!

COUNSELOR: I reside in Room 101. At the far end of the hallway. Away from the skunks. If you have any problems, try and solve them yourself.

JAKE: You haven't heard from my roommate, have you? That clown should have been here by now.

COUNSELOR: (*Looking at clipboard.*) In fact, I have heard from that clown.

JAKE: Well? Why isn't he here?

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