

# It's All an Act

By  
*Carl L. Williams*

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## **Story of the Play**

Here's a delicious trio of short plays about the theatre.

In "Must the Show Go On?" everything goes wrong on opening night. The four actors persevere despite a drunk in the tech booth, a "costume failure," a prop gun that doesn't fire and a sneezing corpse!

In "Can't You See We're Acting?" three older people create havoc from their front-row seats as they unwrap pieces of hard candy, snore, and make loud comments in the midst of a dramatic play. Will the distraught actor's offer of a ticket refund help save the show?

In "Final Curtain," an old actor on his deathbed keeps waking and eloquently delivering lines of Shakespeare as his adult children argue in front of him. He ultimately proves, "All's well that ends well."

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

### **Scene 1: Must the Show Go On?**

*(3 m, 1 w)*

ALEX/GRAYSON: Actor/director, 30s.

SAM/NORRIS: Actor, 30s.

HAROLD/DIXBY: Actor, 40s.

JULIE/EVELYN: Actress, 20s-30s.

### **Scene 2: Can't You See We're Acting?**

*(2 m, 3 w)*

LUCILLE: 60s.

EDNA: 60s.

GEORGE: 60s.

RICHARD: 20s-30s.

CATHERINE: 20s-30s.

### **Scene 3: Final Curtain**

*(3 m, 2 w)*

OLIVER ABBOTT: 60s, Shakespearean actor.

DUFFY ABBOTT: 40s, Oliver's wastrel son.

JULIET ABBOTT: 40s, Oliver's daughter, an attorney.

BRIANA: 20, Juliet's daughter.

DR. VANCE: 30s, free-wheeling hospital doctor.

## **PROPS**

Script, handkerchief, letter, gun, pillow.

Playbills, cane, big purse, bag of potato chips, bag of hard candies,  
camera with flash, wallet, dollar bills.

Basket of flowers.

## ORIGINAL PRODUCTIONS

### **Must the Show Go On?**

Scriptwriters/Houston Ten by Ten, August 2-11, 2002

Directed by Bonnie McFerren, Alex: Herb Wells, Harold: Marc Shellum, Sam: Michael A. Harrett, Julie: Karla Brandau

### **Can't You See We're Acting?**

Scriptwriters/Houston Ten by Ten, July 21-28, 2000

Directed by Herb Wells, Richard: Jason Champion, Catherine: Elizabeth Seabolt, Lucille: Tanya Lunstroth, Edna: Ardyth Graham, George: Marc Shellum

### **Final Curtain**

Theatre Southwest Festival of Originals, Houston, July 17-25, 1998

Directed by Walter McGroary, Oliver Abbott: David Holloway, Duff: Tom Parker, Briana: California Jones, Juliet: Leigh Christensen, Dr. Vance: Jay Menchaca

## AWARDS

**Must The Show Go On?** won the Pacholder Award in 2002 as the first-place winner of Ten by Ten, an annual competition and production of ten-minute plays by Scriptwriters/Houston. It also won competitions for inclusion in these festivals: 2003 Lebanon (PA) Community Theatre Play Writing Contest, 2003 Festival of Ten at SUNY Brockport (NY), 2003 ShowOff! at Camino Real Playhouse (San Juan Capistrano), 2006 EatFest at Emerging Artists Theatre (NYC), In 2003 it was a finalist in the Actors Theatre of Louisville National Ten-Minute Play Contest.

**Can't You See We're Acting?** was a Scriptwriters/Houston Ten by Ten winner in 2002. Also in 2006 EatFest at Emerging Artists Theatre (NYC)

**Final Curtain** was selected for the 1998 Festival of Originals at Theatre Southwest (Houston). Also selected for the 2005 Mary Lou Burkett Texas Playwrights' Festival at Baytown Little Theater.

## **Must the Show Go On?**

*(AT RISE: Lights are muted on the theater stage. The stage is a living room set with sofa, phone, lamp and end table. There are two exits, SL and SR. ALEX, HAROLD, and SAM rush around speaking in loud and frantic stage whispers.)*

ALEX: Harold! Give me a hand—grab the sofa—it goes more that way!

HAROLD: *(Wipes his nose with handkerchief.)* Wait a second! This crummy cold.

*(ALEX and HAROLD move the sofa closer to the lamp table as SAM paces, furiously turning pages of his script.)*

SAM: I don't have these lines down! I told you I couldn't learn the part this fast.

ALEX: It's not my fault I lost an actor two days before opening! Take it scene by scene. The first one's only ten minutes.

SAM: Two lousy rehearsals!

ALEX: Look! I'm directing, I'm starring, I'm moving furniture, I've got a drunk working up there in the tech booth, a hundred people in the audience, and that curtain is going up in less than a minute! What do you want from me!?

HAROLD: *(Sneezes.)* I should be home in bed.

SAM: What happens when I go blank?

ALEX: All you have to do is turn and look at me. I'll prompt you.

*(JULIE runs in from left with the back of a strapless gown half-zipped.)*

JULIE: Alex! The zipper broke!

ALEX: Oh, great! What next? Try to find a safety pin!

JULIE: Maybe another dress—

ALEX: No! The gown's important to the play.

JULIE: But what am I supposed to—

ALEX: Do whatever you have to do!

*(JULIE runs off left. HAROLD blows his nose. ALEX snatches SAM'S script and tosses it to Harold.)*

SAM: I'm not ready!

ALEX: Places! Curtain's going up!

*(HAROLD and SAM rush offstage left, then LIGHTS brighten on the stage. Sam and ALEX will speak in upper-crust British accents. Sam enters.)*

SAM: Grayson!

ALEX: I say, Norris, I didn't expect to see you here tonight.

SAM: No, I don't imagine you did!

ALEX: Now that the maid has let you in, what other unexpected behavior should I expect from you?

SAM: What a first-class rotter you are.

ALEX: And what a paltry little insult. You might at least call me a second-class rotter. Much more odious.

SAM: What have you been doing with my fiancé?

ALEX: What does one usually do with his best friend's fiancé?

SAM: You're a perfect cad. *(Goes blank.)* That's what you are, all right ... a cad ... yes, sir ....

ALEX: *(Prompting.)* You wouldn't have proof of that, would you?

SAM: And I have proof of that!

ALEX: What proof?

SAM: This letter ... the one you sent to Evelyn. *(Pulls letter from coat pocket.)*

ALEX: That only proves you're a mail thief. As for Evelyn ... *(Expectant pause.)* ... as for Evelyn .... *(Glances up toward tech booth.)* I'm expecting a phone call any time. *(Pause.)*

Let me make sure the telephone is working. *(Picks up receiver.)* What? Why, hello! You must've been calling in just as I picked up the phone. *(SFX: Telephone rings.)*

There it goes now. Apparently some malfunction. *(SFX: Telephone rings again.)* Yes, well, let's try this .... *(Hangs up phone, ringing stops, picks it up again.)* Still there? Oh, good .... Yes, I understand ... see you directly. *(Hangs up.)*

## **End of Freeview**

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