

# Push and Pull

By Terry Gabbard

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**DEDICATION**

*to Sadie*

**STORY OF THE PLAY**

Joel Pulley, a struggling comic book artist, has his narrow world turned upside down when an over-eager stray dog shows up at his door... repeatedly! This excitable canine is unwavering in his pursuit to be Joel's best friend. And Joel, not exactly an animal lover, is just as unwavering in his attempts at getting rid of the dog, especially after a messy fiasco between the dog and Taylor, Joel's shallow new girlfriend. It isn't until the escape-artist canine is almost run over in the street by Monica, a vet, that things change... for everyone. She convinces Joel to adopt the dog, who is quickly named Push for being so pushy and determined. Soon Push pushes Joel's life in fresh directions. Joel finds success through his new comic strip "Push and Pull," and with Monica, he finds a happiness he never knew. Push, of course, loves Monica, her cat, and especially the cat's pungent-smelling litter box! Told through dialogue and the comic visual art Joel creates, this one-act is both playful and poignant. It shows us the life of a dog, and the human lives the dog helps to shape into a family. Approximately 45 minutes.

**ORIGINAL PRODUCTION**

*Push and Pull* was first performed by the students of Ardrey Kell High School in Charlotte, NC. The show debuted at the 2016 North Carolina Theatre Conference, where it was awarded "Distinguished Play" and progressed to the state festival at Greensboro College. The show was directed by the playwright and original art work used in the production was created by Sophie Feher. The original cast: JOEL PULLEY: Gabe McGee; PUSH: Anish Pinnamaraju; MONICA: Devon Mandell; MAXINE: Jubitza Figueroa; TAYLOR: Kiera Smith; HAL/ BURGLAR: Brendan O'Malley; DAPHNE: Sophie Feher; Stage Manager: Emilie Osborne.

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(2 m, 3 - 4 w, 1 flexible)*

**JOEL PULLEY:** Early 20s, struggling comic book artist.

**PUSH:** A dog, friendly and loyal, can be cast as a female.

**MONICA PEARSON:** Late 20s, a veterinarian, a woman of strong convictions.

**MAXINE:** A cat. Non-speaking but very expressive.

**TAYLOR:** Late 20s, shallow and materialistic.

**HAL:** Late 20s, an animal control officer, not great at his job.

**INTRUDER:** Any age, must be menacing.

**DAPHNE:** A 6-year-old girl. (Optional, nonspeaking role.)

\* Roles of HAL and INTRUDER can be doubled.

## **IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS**

### **The Comic Strip**

The story is told through scenes with dialogue but can also be told through the comic strip *PUSH AND PULL*. In the original production, the USC wall doubled as a projection screen in which images of the comic strip were projected during scene transitions. *The PUSH and PULL* comic strip is essentially JOEL narrating his life. If the director chooses to use this method, the style of the comic strip does not matter. Contact the publisher to purchase an optional image CD.

### **Playing PUSH and MAXINE**

Actors should embody the essence of animals. They should not crawl around the stage but should stand on their own two feet. Costumes should be similarly suggestive of animals.

### **The Litter Box**

For the original production, Rice Krispies were used to represent litter and Tootsie Rolls were used to represent cat poop. If you do not have both cats and dogs, you might not know that dogs like to eat cat poop. Hopefully your Push will like Tootsie Rolls.

### **SETTING**

The main living space of the sparsely decorated home of Joel Pulley. There is a drafting table center stage. Behind the drafting table there is a framed picture depicting a science fiction scene, his own work. A cork board also displays sketches in various stages of completion.

A window is placed USR of the drafting table and there is a sitting area DSL with a futon sofa and coffee table. USC is a flat that doubles as a projection screen. The front door of the home is USL. The rest of the home is through a door SR.

### **PROPS**

Wastebasket overflowing with discarded sketches	Large litter box for Maxine
Soda cans, bag of potato chips, ½ eaten hamburger	Handbag for Monica
Dog collar for Push	Flyer
Cell phone	Tennis ball
Jacket and bag for Taylor	Family photo drawing
Dogcatcher's pole for Hal	Baby
Drink	Artist portfolio
Chips	Pacifier
Scrap paper and marker	Medicines
Dog bed and dog bowl(s)	Magazine
Large pet crate for Maxine	Coloring book and crayons

### **SFX**

Scene transition music	Clock ticking
Doorbell	Baby crying
Car screeching to a halt	Cell phone ring
Text ding	Dog barking

**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: It is the present day. Early evening. LIGHTS come up on JOEL PULLEY sitting at his drafting table, busy at work on his comic strip. Next to him, a wastebasket is overflowing with discarded sketches. There is a mess of half-eaten food, soda cans, and bags of potato chips in his work space. Joel is dressed in pajama pants and a graphic t-shirt. He is messy in appearance, exhausted, and frustrated. His work is suddenly interrupted by a SOUND. What starts off as a tap becomes an incessant pawing at the door. Joel rises, angrily crosses to the door and throws it open.)*

**JOEL:** What?

*(PUSH pushes past JOEL and enters the house. He is poorly dressed and appears homeless. He has an intense friendliness and enthusiasm about him. It may not be immediately clear that he is a dog.)*

**PUSH:** Wow. Look at this home. Oh hello. Hi. You are so nice.  
*(PUSH immediately makes himself at home and begins exploring.)*

**JOEL:** Oh my god. What are you doing? *(In shock. Chasing after PUSH as he rummages through all of Joel's things.)*  
Excuse me ... no, not that ... stay away from that ... what are you doing here? Get out of that.

**PUSH:** This is a really nice home. You are so nice. What's this? Where do you go to the bathroom? It smells so good in here. This smells delicious. *(PUSH finds a half-eaten hamburger on the drafting table and begins to eat it.)* That is so good.

**JOEL:** What are you doing? That is my dinner.

**PUSH:** This is so great. You are a great guy!

**JOEL:** Look. Ok, you need to go home. Shoo. Shoo. *(JOEL tries to physically move PUSH but is clearly uncomfortable handling a dog. Getting an idea.)* Are you hungry?

**PUSH:** Yes. Yes. I'm so hungry! Thank you, guy. What a nice man guy.

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**JOEL:** I have some chips. Do you like chips?

**PUSH:** Yes, I love those things.

**JOEL:** Have some.

*(JOEL hands PUSH some chips but instead of grabbing them, he eats them out of Joel's hands.)*

**PUSH:** You are so nice.

**JOEL:** Hey, check it out. I'm going to put these chips out here.  
You can have as much as you want.

**PUSH:** Yeah baby. I love those things. Gimme some of those things! What a nice man guy.

**JOEL:** Here ya go.

*(JOEL throws the chips out onto the front porch. PUSH enthusiastically goes after them. Joel slams door shut, and breathing a sigh of relief, sits back down to draw.)*

**PUSH:** *(With the cadence of a bark.)* Hey. Hey. Hey. The things are all gone. Hey, the things are gone. I'm sure you want to give me more of those things. Hey dude, the things are all gone. The things are gone. The things are gone.

**JOEL:** Go away!

**PUSH:** You aren't understanding me. Those crunchy things that you gave me. I ate them all.

*(JOEL opens the door slightly and PUSH forces his way back inside.)*

**JOEL:** Get out of here!

*(JOEL grabs PUSH by the collar, pulls him forcibly out, and slams the door.)*

**JOEL:** *(Cont'd.)* Go away. *(Going back to continue his work.)*

**PUSH:** *(At the window.)* Hey. Hey there. Hey. Hey. Hey. Hey. Hey there, dude. *(Ad libs as many "Heys" and "Hey theres" as necessary.)*

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