

Crisis, Inc.

A short romantic farce

by
Daniel Munson

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Wait—start worrying! No wait—don't worry. Let Crisis, Inc. worry for you. This farce takes place in the lobby of a business which provides the service of panicking for people. When you have a panic situation and you can't focus on what to do next, you hire Crisis Inc. to do the panicking so you can move along and get your work done. Two business people, each of them responsible for the other's crisis situation, have come to employ the services of this most unusual company. Realizing the potential for fireworks should the two meet, the receptionist tries hard to keep them apart. Classic farce devices, such as multiple doors and quick entrances and exits, and high energy from the employees who panic on cue, keep the humor rolling.

Approximate running time: 30 minutes.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

The play, under the direction of the author, was first presented to an audience at the regional competition of nine high schools and took third place honors. It later competed in the Minnesota sub-section competition and took first place.

SETTING

The front receptionist's office at Crisis, Inc., a business set up to "panic" for other businesses that are in a crisis situation. There are doors all around, leading to offices, and a main entrance upstage. The receptionist's desk is center stage. On it sits a bell and a phone (multi-line). A table with a coffee machine and supplies is up right. The time: now, today.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 m, 3 w, 5 flexible, extras)

LILA FRILL: Female. Receptionist for Crisis, Inc. Pleasant, non-panicking, glue that holds the office together. She's a romantic at heart.

BELINDA TAGGERT: Female. A student who is panicking over a final exam.

TRACEY: Male or female. A "counselor" for Crisis, Inc. Thought to be one of the best in the business. When not with a client, Tracey's slow movements make us wonder how she can do anything.

TED: Male (or female as TIA). A "counselor" for Crisis, Inc. Every time we see him he is conferring with a client by phone. Always has a phone piece attached to his ear.

ERIN JAMES: Female (or male as AARON). A "counselor" for Crisis, Inc. Perhaps one of the newer members of the staff. Certainly competent.

CONNIE DETOUR: Female (or male as WILLIE). A client at Crisis, Inc. Strong-willed, aggressive. A board member of a corporation whose CEO has just passed away under unusual circumstances.

STEVEN COIL: Male. Transportation manager for Spring Fever, Limited. A first-time client at Crisis, Inc. Single.

JENNY WATERS: Female. An employee at Spring Fever, Unlimited. A first-time client at Crisis, Inc. Also single.

LIONEL TRAX: Male (or female as Minnie). An associate at Trax and Trail Transport Company. Not a client at Crisis, Inc., but there looking to present a bill to a representative of Spring Fever.

CRISIS, INC EMPLOYEES: A slew of employees who panic on cue for visitors and callers.

PROPS

Coffeepot – Lila	Big coffee mug – Tracey
Wireless head phone – Ted	Rubber gloves – Belinda
Invoice and long list – Lionel	Legal papers – Connie
Backpack containing papers and large photos – Belinda	

Crisis Inc.

- 4 -

Crisis Inc.

(AT RISE: MUSIC is playing. Under the music we hear a PHONE RINGING. LILA FRILL enters from SL. Lila is the receptionist for Crisis, Inc. She is carrying a fresh pot of coffee. She puts it in the coffeemaker UR then crosses to the desk, center. Music fades out. We clearly hear the phone ring. She answers it.)

LILA: Crisis, Inc. Don't panic! *(A beat.)* Let us do it for you! This is Lila Frill. What can I do to settle you down? *(A beat.)* Oh, it's you again? You can't make your scheduled appointment ... because of the Chinese?! Well how about three o'clock? No? Tomorrow at ten? Uhn uhn. Noon...ish? Well, how about you call me back when you think you can make an appointment.

(SHE hangs up. Entering is BELINDA TAGGERT. She is a college student on the verge of a final exam. She carries a backpack full of books and papers. She is a nervous wreck.)

BELINDA: H...h...h...hi.

LILA: Welcome to Crisis, Inc. How can I panic for you?

BELINDA: How can you...?

LILA: You've got a problem.

BELINDA: Y...y...y...yes.

LILA: You're panicking. You can't think straight. Mouth is all dry, your hands are shaking, you're putting your clothes on backwards.

BELINDA: *(Realizing it's all true.)* Ack!

LILA: And you need help.

BELINDA: I...I...I do!

LILA: But nobody else can solve your problems, can they?

BELINDA: Y...y...y...no.

LILA: So what are you going to do?

BELINDA: I...I don't know. That's why I'm...I'm...

LILA: That's why you're here.

BELINDA: Yes!

LILA: We can't solve your problem, but we can panic for you!

BELINDA: Yes! *(A beat.)* What?

LILA: If you let us do the panicking, you can get back to work and solve your problems. *(A beat.)* And dress correctly.

BELINDA: But ...

LILA: Listen, ah

BELINDA: Belinda. Belinda Taggart.

LILA: Listen, Belinda, everyone has a crisis now and then. It's nothing to be ashamed of. Now granted, mostly we see panicking in business situations, failed publicity, fourth-quarter profit loss, hostile takeovers, that kind of thing, but we do see our share of first-time fathers, housewives, love-gone-bad situations, students--

BELINDA: That's me! *(So excited, SHE spills the contents of her backpack over Lila's desk.)* Sorry.

LILA: It's okay. You wouldn't believe what gets spilled across this desk. So...you're a student?

BELINDA: Yes. And I've got a final exam coming up. My last one before getting my degree.

LILA: In...?

BELINDA: Animal husbandry. My exam is in artificial insemination.

LILA: Oh. And what do you have to... *(Looks at a photo that spilled across her desk.)* ... Eeeeww.

BELINDA: That's my final exam. And I'm just not sure if I can... I don't know if I'll be able to... I really don't...

LILA: Why don't you have a seat. *(Indicates the couch or chairs on the other side of the stage.)* Over there. I think maybe I can get Ted to come out and help you.

BELINDA: Ted?

LILA: One of our panic consultants. Ted handles all the calls on our hotline, but he does see walk-ins from time to time. *(Picks up the phone and pushes a button.)*

BELINDA: Oh...it would be so nice to have somebody else do the panicking for a change....

LILA: Ted? Are you on the other line? Oh, I'm sorry, but do you think you can come take care of a walk-in? It's a student. That's right, final exam time again. Thanks, Ted. *(To BELINDA.)* He'll be right out.

BELINDA: I know it shouldn't be the end of the world or anything, it's just a college test, but I can't help myself.

LILA: Every crisis is important to somebody, but don't worry, all of our panic consultants are considerate and caring about these issues.

(TRACEY has entered behind BELINDA. She has a coffee mug in her hand. Preferably an over-sized coffee mug.)

TRACEY: Out of my way ... I need coffee.

BELINDA: Ah!

(TRACEY has startled BELINDA, who scatters her papers all over once again. Tracey picks up the special photo while pouring a large quantity of sugar in her coffee.)

TRACEY: I need the caffeine and sugar right now. *(Heads toward Lila's desk, repulsed by the photo in her hand.)*

LILA: Hi, Tracey. Have you ever heard of a college exam situation where *(Sees photo.)* ... Whoa! I guess you have. Hey. Go easy on the coffee there! That must be your sixth cup already!

TRACEY: *(Slowly.)* I know. I'm nothing but a ball of jittery nerves.

LILA: You look it.

TRACEY: But I need this coffee. I haven't had a break since... *(Looks at watch.)* 1998.

LILA: '98...?!

TRACEY: You remember, I started with Hurricane Mitch of '98, went to the tornadoes of '99 and 2000, Enron scandal in '01 -- still dealing with some of that -- Hurricane Katrina of '05, and now....

LILA: Have you asked for a vacation? I should think you deserve it!

End of Freeview

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