

Even Steven

By
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Even Steven

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DEDICATION

*For Mary,
who didn't want any of the characters in the play to be her.*

STORY OF THE PLAY

Sarah and Teddy, who used to be a couple and have not seen each other since the break-up, meet by chance. Both pretend to be in relationships that don't really exist, because neither wants to appear unsuccessful to the other. They agree to get together with their (imaginary) significant others. This leads Sarah to contact Steven Ames, who is not only the proprietor of a local café, but also runs an unusual side business called Even Steven, which helps its clients to get even with people who have wronged them.

Sarah arranges with Steven to provide a boyfriend to fill in for Robert, the successful lawyer whom she is no longer dating. Steven then contacts Teddy and provides him with a fill-in girlfriend. Steven uses Jack, his long-time friend, as the fill-in boyfriend, and coerces Morgan, an attractive woman with a felonious past, to be the fill-in girlfriend.

The two couples meet at the café, under Steven's watchful eye, and jockey for position. Sarah and Teddy secretly hope to reconcile. Steven and Jack plan to play Sarah and Teddy off against each other, in the hopes of getting at least one of them angry enough to want to get even with the other. But Morgan has her own agenda.

Even Steven is an amusing look at the politics of relationships, the competitive nature of social status, and the innate human desire to get even, if not to come out ahead.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(3 m, 2 w)

SARAH: female 20-40; the ex-girlfriend; insecure, hyper-critical, very concerned about appearances.

TEDDY: male 20-40; the ex-boyfriend; good-natured nerd, loves fantasy, easily distracted.

STEVEN: male 20-40; owner of the café and the Even Steven agency; cynical, Machiavellian.

JACK: male 20-40; a.k.a. "Robert"; a method actor, capable of playing a leading man; Steven's long-time friend.

MORGAN: female 20-40; very attractive, intelligent; has a hidden agenda.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

This play originally premiered under the title "Prevailing Wins" at the Midtown International Theatre Festival in New York on July 14, 2010. It was directed by Michele Pace with the following cast (in order of appearance):

<i>Allison Unger</i>	<i>Sarah</i>
<i>Josh Sauerman</i>	<i>Teddy</i>
<i>Jason Altman</i>	<i>Steven</i>
<i>Emilea Wilson</i>	<i>Morgan</i>
<i>Daniel Cibener</i>	<i>Jack/Robert</i>

NOTE: Instances of mature language may be altered to suit community standards.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: In front of the café. SARAH is standing, looking around impatiently. She checks her watch. TEDDY enters from one side, engrossed in a comic book that he is reading. He walks towards Sarah without looking up, and bumps into her.)

SARAH: Teddy?

TEDDY: Oh...sorry. I...oh...hi.

SARAH: Teddy! Are you stalking me?

TEDDY: What? No! This is a complete surprise! I never expected to bump into you here.

SARAH: I saw you standing behind that mailbox across the street, watching me.

TEDDY: No, I wasn't. I mean, I was standing there. I was just waiting for something...uh...someone, but I didn't see you here.

SARAH: You were looking right at me.

TEDDY: The sun was in my eyes.

SARAH: Well, whatever. It's really good to see you, Teddy. How've you been?

TEDDY: Fine. Great. Never better.

SARAH: How long's it been? I haven't seen you since...well since—

TEDDY: Since you dumped me.

SARAH: Well, yes, I suppose...I'm sorry I didn't return any of your calls.

TEDDY: Yeah, and you changed your phone number. I wasn't able to get the new one.

SARAH: It's unlisted.

TEDDY: That explains it.

SARAH: Sorry. I intended to call...sometime.

TEDDY: *(Shrugging.)* That's okay. It wasn't anything important. Just stuff I thought you might be interested in.

SARAH: You know how it is. I've been very busy.

TEDDY: I suppose, with your lawyer friend and all. How's that working out for you?

SARAH: Uh...great. His career's really taking off. We've been invited to lots of important dinners, and we've been to the theatre with his clients, and the opera—

TEDDY: So you guys are still together?

SARAH: Why wouldn't we be?

TEDDY: No reason, I guess. I just thought maybe the novelty would wear off. Maybe you'd realize all that glitter, life in the fast lane and that sort of stuff, I mean, isn't it all really superficial?

SARAH: We're not in university anymore, Teddy. You've got to stop looking down your nose at success. It's a weird sort of reverse superiority complex, and it really doesn't make a lot of sense.

TEDDY: Yeah, but trying to be so trendy, that's just not me.

SARAH: No. Unfortunately not. I see you're still buried in your comics. Some things never change.

TEDDY: I'm working on a new one. I think maybe this is the one.

SARAH: How's it different from all the other ones?

TEDDY: It's a whole new concept, a completely new line of comics. Reality comics.

SARAH: I thought people read that stuff to escape reality.

TEDDY: But this gives them an alternate reality. Like we've got our main character, The Prevailer—

SARAH: The Prevailer?

TEDDY: I know. It's not great. All the good names are already taken.

SARAH: Apparently so.

TEDDY: But this is a character who's gonna prevail in the end. You know, overcome adversity. He kind of waits it out.

SARAH: Sounds passive-aggressive. Besides, all your superheroes are always overcoming adversity. What makes this one different?

TEDDY: There's more backstory. People really like the backstory. It makes the characters more real. So this comic sort of follows the hero around. You know? Shows him trying to deal with everyday life—work, dating, even mundane things like making dinner or cleaning his apartment.

SARAH: Sounds kind of boring. Why would anyone be interested in—?

TEDDY: People love reality TV. Why do they watch that stuff? Who knows? But they do, and this is just like that. It's a chance for people to see someone just like them, struggling with everyday life, but maybe they have a few superpowers.

SARAH: But if there's no plot, no story—

TEDDY: (*Holding up the comic.*) There's lots of story. It's sort of a morality tale. You see, the source of The Prevaler's power is confidence. The more confident he becomes, the more connected to reality, then the better he does everything. But he's got this arch-enemy villain named Negatron, who's always criticizing him, putting him down, telling him he's a loser, and everything he does is a waste of time, and he's just never going to—

SARAH: Let me see that. (*SHE snatches the comic out of HIS hand and studies it.*) Why does Negatron look just like me?

TEDDY: Does she?

SARAH: Working out some issues, are we?

TEDDY: No. I...uh...I just thought that it would be more three-dimensional—you know?—if there was this self-destructive love interest angle.

SARAH: Is that how you view me, always being negative?

TEDDY: You did criticize my job, and my leisure activities, and how I looked, and how I dressed, and how I ate, and the noises I make when I sleep, and—

SARAH: Okay. Maybe I was a little tough on you, Teddy, but it came from a good place. I criticize because I care. I wanted you to be better. That shows I care.

TEDDY: But don't you like anything about me, just as it is?

SARAH: Of course. We were together for three years, weren't we? I loved lots about you, Teddy. I just thought it could be improved.

TEDDY: But then you found something better.

SARAH: Teddy, this is getting awkward. This is why I didn't return any of those phone calls.

End of Freeview

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