

28 Plays Later – Challenge #28

We started with a "Brave Little Soldier" so let's end with a "Coward Big Pacifist".

Bonus points to anyone who knows how many bonus points they have
and incorporate that in the play.

(Note: Mine is an extremely loose interpretation)

ONE PLAY MORE

By

Melissa A. Bartell

Scene 1 – A bedroom in Texas, January

The writer and her husband (ME and HIM) are getting ready for bed.

ME:

It's supposed to drop to 12 degrees tonight. That wasn't in the brochure. I want my money back.

HIM:

Heh. If only that were possible.

ME:

The thermostat is set to seventy-seven and the temperature in the house is falling. I know a/c is only guaranteed to cool to twenty degrees below the outside temperature, but I didn't realize heat had the same issue.

HIM:

It was seventy-three in my office today.

ME (snarky):

How did you ever cope? (beat, then, in a normal tone) So, Jancis mentioned something on Twitter, and I'd like to sign up. But there's a fee. It's only about thirty dollars, US.

HIM:

If we have the money, go for it. What's the thing?

ME:

You write a play a day during the month of February. (beat) I've never actually written a play, though. But, it can't be harder than writing and producing a podcast every day in August, and I've done that more than once.

HIM:

If you want to do it, do it.

ME:

But what if I suck?

HIM:

What if you don't?

Scene 2 - The Same Bedroom, January 31st

The writer is in bed with her laptop propped on a pillow and her left knee braced by another pillow.

HIM:

How's the writing?

ME:

Not.

HIM:

What's wrong?

ME:

WORD doesn't have any downloadable templates for stage plays. It has one for screenplays, but I feel like I'm fighting the template. It's klunky and not intuitive.

HIM:

So, don't use the template.

ME:

But I don't know the proper formatting for a play.

HIM:

I don't think formatting is as important as content.

Scene 3 – The Same Bedroom in Texas, and a Living Room in California, Saturday February 3rd

The writer is in much the same position she was a few days before. The other side of the stage shows her friend the guru with his laptop on a couch. In reality their conversation is via Facebook Messenger, so let's put them on a phone call.

ME:

So this nightmare challenge... I have zero ideas. I mean, I have vivid dreams, but I'm not willing to share them with a bunch of strangers. And even if I was, I know how to write them in narrative form, but as a play? The things I envision I don't even know how to stage without a ton of technology.

GURU:

Well the brief did say we had an unlimited budget.

ME:

But an unlimited budget can't make the impossible possible, can it? Anyway, I'm too stupid for this challenge. Is day three too soon to quit.

GURU:

Yes.

ME:

If I ask you the same question on day twenty-three will you have the same answer?

GURU:

Yes.

There is silence for several minutes.

ME:

I just feel so stupid and ill-prepared. And I'm this | close to throwing my laptop in the pool. You make this look so effortless.

GURU:

That's just because I've been writing sketches and scenes for other projects for years. Look, you're a level forty-something human, right?

ME:

Well, yes.

GURU:

But you're only a level one playwright.

ME:

Yeah, but I'm a level thirty-seven *writer*.

GURU:

Thirty-seven?

ME:

The first ten years of life don't count, even if you wrote scads. Which I did.

GURU:

Okay, but the point is, you're still using your writing muscles in a totally new way. You'll find a rhythm eventually.

ME:

But what if I hate it?

GURU:

What if you do?

ME:

Then I've wasted an entire month writing crap I'm never gonna use.

GURU:

The problem is, they shouldn't call this '28 plays later.' They should call it '28 shitty first drafts of monologues and vignettes later.'

ME:

You're seriously writing all monologues and vignettes?

GURU:

Well, mostly.

ME (sighing):

Sorry I'm so neurotic.

GURU:

We all have our things.

ME:

I have decided to tell proper formatting to fuck off, and just do my own thing, though.

GURU:

That's a good start.

Scene 4 – A kitchen in Texas.

The writer is pulling sticky-notes off the front of her refrigerator. Her husband is watching her.

HIM:

You're pulling down your notes.

ME:

Only the ones with hashtag 'scenes from a marriage.' We're supposed to 'let ourselves go and write utter shite.'

HIM:

Shite?

ME:

It's British English for 'shit.' But I don't want to write shit, so I'm only adhering to the 'let yourself go' part. And these notecards, put in the write order, tell the story of a relationship.

HIM:

Our relationship.

ME:

You wanted to be my muse.

HIM:

I wanted to amuse you.

ME:

Oh, you do.

HIM:

Will you put them back up after?

ME:

No, I've used them, so they can be trashed.

HIM:

But you can use them again.

ME:

Well, you can take them and stick them in your office if you feel that strongly about it.

HIM:

Hmph.

Scene 5 – A living room in Texas

The writer and her husband are watching the Olympics.

ME:

You know how I'm always asking you to read my stuff?

HIM:

I *do* read your stuff.

ME:

Well, I've just written the worst musical ever conceived. And I don't care. I just... sometimes you have to just write shit and turn it in because you have to be *done*, you know?

HIM:

What's this one called?

ME:

Gingham Style.

HIM (dancing like a fool):

Opa Gingham Style!

ME:

I've created a monster!

Scene 6 – A bedroom in Texas

The writer is working in bed again. Her husband comes in to check on her.

HIM:

Did you find something to write about?

ME:

I didn't think I'd have anything. I don't want to write strings of curse words and I'm so over saturated with politics that I will cry if I try to make a play about that or gun control.

But I DO have an idea now. I mean - I didn't even have an idea for an off-brief play, but then someone posted this thing about how abusers aren't out of control, that they're completely *in* control to the point where they can actually come to consensus that when they start a new relationship, they won't start abusing for at least a year.

HIM:

That's really... I don't want to know these things.

ME:

I don't either... which is why I have to write it. (beat) Come to bed on time, please? I'm probably going to have nightmares because of this play, and I need you to be there if I do.

Scene 7 – A living room in Texas

The writer and her husband are watching figure skating.

ME:

I should have done figure skating.

HIM:

You skated as a kid.

ME:

No... I mean... for the 'sportical' challenge. Instead of writing about luge, I should have chosen figure skating.

HIM:

I liked the luge play!

ME:

You're just saying that so I'll have sex with you.

HIM:

Not only that!

Scene 8 – a LINE chat

The writer is on her laptop in the living room. Well, she's on the couch; her laptop is on a snack tray. STONEFISH and CAPTAIN are on their computers as well. STONEFISH is at a desk somewhere cold. CAPTAIN is on a laptop in a plane.

They speak the words they're typing to each other.

STONEFISH:

It's the twenty-seventh. How is the play-writing going?

ME:

I turned in play number twenty-seven this morning. It was a noir piece using that ridiculous first line from back in challenge five.

STONEFISH:

The one about myrtles and girdles and dicks?

ME:

Something like that. Last time, I went to a science fiction place; this time it was a noir piece. With a classic femme fatale. And cigars.

CAPTAIN:

No whiskey?

ME:

In me, or in the play?

CAPTAIN:

Either. Both. "Write drunk, edit sober;" isn't that what Hemingway advised?

ME:

What makes you think I've been doing any editing? Most of these, I haven't even bothered to spell-check.

STONEFISH:

So, did you enjoy or learn from the experience?

ME:

There was fun in the camaraderie with the other writers. Comparing ideas, complaining about the briefs.

And I did learn a lot.

STONEFISH:

Like?

ME:

I learned that no matter how frustrated you are and how stupid you feel, throwing your laptop in the pool is unwise. I also learned that as much as I love *watching* theatre and performing on stage, I prefer to write in narrative formats and not scripts.

But...

I have to admit that once I got past the formatting issues – Word is *eeeeevilllll* - I found that I liked the ritual of writing a play every day...

STONEFISH:

And?

ME:

And I now have twenty-eight – well, twenty-seven now, but twenty-eight tomorrow – pieces of writing that I can expand on or repurpose as something else... Like turn them into audio dramas and cajole my awesome friends into recording them for me.

CAPTAIN:

Those are some good learnings.

ME:

Also? I've learned that whatever intoxicants Sebastian has must be *really* good... and he ought to share.

Scene 9 – The living room – again.

The writer is standing at the bottom of the steps, singing at the top of her lungs, to the music of *Les Misérables*.

ME:

One play more!

I'm just nine minutes from the final brief

In which Sebastian will cause some grief.

Who knew a month could feel so long?

(This really is a stupid song)

One play more!

HIM (leaning over the half wall of the landing):

Did Sebastian write that?

ME:

No. I did. Just now. Do you think it'll increase my bonus points if I put it in my final play?

HIM:

Dunno. How many bonus points do you have now?

ME:

More than none and less than infinity.

FINALE - The living room.

ME:

Fuzzy! I did it! I just clicked 'send' on the final play!

HIM:

Yay! (beat) Does this mean I don't have to cook dinner any more?

ME:

Finishing this challenge didn't make my torn ACL go away. You'll have to help... I miss cooking though.

BOTH (singing):

One more script!

One more play!

One play more!!!!

The music crescendos until the rafters shake and the neighbors complain, and then, finally, we have...

BLACKOUT!