

Only 60,000 Milliseconds

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First Draft

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

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A futuristic game show set - much like the panel shows of today, except that instead of being on a fixed set, each of the player's booths is floating independently in separate sections of the area above the stage with the host's in the center.

We open with dim spots on the four guests and a bright on on the host, as his booth/desk/podium/thing swoops to center-stage and lands.

The host is HORACE SPINELLI, and he's dressed in a futuristic version of a game show host's business suit. He's also green, and has a row of spines across his forehead.

HORACE

Welcome, welcome, Gentlebeings, to tonight's edition of Only Sixty-thousand Milliseconds. As you know, this is a very special episode of our show, because we began five hundred years ago this very night as a radio show - that's just like us, but without a visual component and only available with specific wired receivers and kinda staticky and - well never mind. Anyway, we started as a radio show five hundred years ago tonight on old Earth, and we were called "Just a Minute," but that's too imprecise for modern timers so now we're "Only Sixty Thousand Milliseconds." In any case, at least one of our topics tonight will be inspired by the original show.

Before we can play our game, though, we need some players, so let's introduce tonight's victims, shall we?

Horace gestures to his right.

HORACE

Seated to my far right, please welcome the sector's suavest singer/actor/comic, playing at the MegaLounge most weekends since his spouses won't let him come home, Gary Benedict!

Gary, a tall, lanky man with a mop of dark hair, a long face, framed by wild, dark, eyebrows and an equally dark beard, and dressed in a purple plaid blazer over a MegaLounge t-shirt and jeans, stands up as his booth flies into place far stage left of Horace. He waves at the audience then settles himself.

HORACE

Welcome back, Gary.

GARY

Glad to be here, Horace. Glad to be here.

Another desk starts to fly in, this time, heading to the spot between Horace and Gary.

HORACE

Our next player is a star of stage and screen, most recently in the romantic holo-rom-com "My Stepfather is an Android." Please welcome Cordelia Reynolds!

Cordelia waits until her desk has settled into place before rising to her feet and giving a dignified bow to the audience. She's petite, blonde, her hair is cut in a swingy bob and she's dressed in drapey clothing that shimmers when she moves. She could be hiding an arsenal under all that fabric. We'll never know.

CORDELIA

Good-whatever, Horace. I'm glad you're well. Last time I was here you seemed a bit... under watered.

HORACE

Well, I got some minerals and spent some time under the grow lights. It's all good.

CORDELIA

Glad to hear it.

(to Gary)

Caught your new act. Did Rita, Phil, and Craig kick you out again, or are you just being melodramatic for laughs? Don't answer. Either way it's hilarious.

GARY

Good to see you too, Cordy.

HORACE

Moving on, our next guest is a veteran performer but new to our game, so please be kind to her. Please welcome Dame Sara Hunter!

The next desk flies in and lands immediately stage right of Horace. Sara is an older woman, her once-black hair is shot-through with silver, but she wears it well. She's wearing a black turtleneck and black skinny pants and one of those infinity scarves, except that hers probably holds infinity in its iridescent blue depths. She rises to her feet with stately grace and awaits the audience's acknowledgement.

HORACE

Welcome, Sara - may I call you Sara, or do you prefer Lady Sara?

SARA

Sara is acceptable.

HORACE

I'm glad. Welcome, Sara. We're so glad you're here tonight.

(addresses the audience)

Sara is a descendant of the very first host of the original "Just a Minute" show - isn't that amazing? That also makes her one of the last pure humans left in the galaxy. Try not to stare, folks. Alright, we have one more guest to bring in, he's a regular, and we all love him. Please welcome, to my far left, Trunch!

SARA

Oh, goodie! I was hoping I'd get to sit next to Trunch!

Trunch's desk flies in. If you were expecting Trunch to be a troll-like man, you'd be disappointed. If you were expecting a WWE wrestler, you'd also be disappointed. Instead, Trunch is hot. We're talking male model hot. If someone had sculpted the ideal human male, it would be Trunch. And apparently, someone did, because Trunch is the color of a shiny new copper penny. Even his hair is just a darker shade of copper, which would be disturbing on anyone else, but somehow, on Trunch, it's compelling.

The audience goes wild like teenaged girls at a rock concert when Trunch stands up. He's wearing only a black speedo.

HORACE

Welcome back, Trunch. I see you dressed up for tonight's show.

TRUNCH

Black is appropriate for special events, is it not?

HORACE

Absolutely, absolutely, old friend.

(to audience)

Alright then, we'll take a break to hear from our sponsor and then we'll be back for a refresher of the rules and round one of - say it with me -

EVERYONE

Only Sixty Thousand Milliseconds!

BLACKOUT

SCENE TWO

The same game show set, though all the desks are now linked together and the players and host are raring to go. Theme music fades out as HORACE captures the attention of players and audience.

HORACE

Alright, welcome back, everyone to Only Sixty Thousand Milliseconds. This is the game where each of our players will attempt to speak on a given topic for sixty thousand milliseconds without hesitating, deviating, repeating or Shatnerizing.

EVERYONE

All hail Shatner! All hail the Shat!

HORACE

As well, we have one rule that no one's allowed to break, and that's Wheaton's Law. What's that law everyone?

EVERYONE

Don't be a dick!

HORACE

Right, so what that means is that while you will be buzzed for any of the four listed infractions, you are allowed to repeat the words in the topic, and you're allowed to re-use common words like a, an, the, and, or, is, et cetera. If you are buzzed out and the reason is valid, the person who buzzed you gains a point and takes over the topic and remaining time. If the reason was invalid, the original speaker gains a point and keeps the topic. If you aren't buzzed out you keep speaking until you hear the timer go, and if you're still speaking at the end of sixty thousand milliseconds, you get a point for that, as well. Are you ready to play?

EVERYONE

We're ready, Horace.

HORACE

Alright then, our first topic is a doozy. It was sent in by one of our loyal fans, Fuzzy Fartlebatt, and it is. Warp Drive is Better than Solar Sails for Space Travel. And the first to try this topic will be.... GARY!

GARY

As a frequent traveler from gig to job, I have been on many types of interstellar ship and my experience has been that those vessels equipped with warp drives are typically faster and more efficient than spaceflight machines which use solar sails as - as

Trunch hits his buzzer.

HORACE

Trunch, you've buzzed Gary. Why?

TRUNCH

That was obvious hesitation, Horace. 'As - as - ' was also repetition, but as 'as' is a common word, the correct violation is hesitation.

HORACE

That's correct, Trunch.

(to Gary)

You hesitated. That means....

(MORE)

HORACE (cont'd)

(to Trunch)

You get a point, and you get control of the topic, "Warp Drive is Better Than Solar Sails for Space Travel" and you have sixteen thousand milliseconds left.

TRUNCH

Romance is a key factor in solar sails being better than warp drive for space travel. On a ship with sails deployed one can cruise at a slow pace and enjoy a languid journey with a lover or several -

Gary buzzes Trunch out, interrupting him.

HORACE

Gary, what's that about then?

GARY

He made me feel bad.

HORACE

Excuse me?

GARY

My spouses all dumped me. I can't take a slow solar boat to New China with 'a lover or several' and he made me feel bad about that.

SARA

I'm afraid I'm confused. Is that not an interruption?

GARY

You're not confused.

SARA

I'm not?

CORDELIA

You're definitely not confused. Gary's just being pathetic. Again. Horace, a ruling, please.

HORACE

Ah, yes. Well, Gary, you *are* pathetic. That was an interruption, which means, Trunch gets an extra point for that, and gets to continue the point with, ah, half a millisecond. Trunch?

TRUNCH

Sol -

A whistle sounds, and Trunch stops speaking, his expression distinctly smug.

HORACE

And that's the end of round one, with another point to Trunch for being the last to speak. We'll be back after this break, with Round Two.

BLACKOUT

SCENE THREE

Same time, same place, a few minutes later. All the players and Horace have shiny metal bottles of (presumably) water with metallic straws. Lights flash indicating the commercial has ended and we return to the action.

HORACE

Alright, we're going into round two with Trunch the only player on the board with three points. Still, it's early, it could be anyone's game. Let's make sure all the buzzer's work, shall we?

Everyone tests their buzzers.

HORACE

Great! Great! Okay then, this topic is a twist on a vintage topic from way back in the twentieth century on Earth... or so I'm told. Who knows. It was sent in by the famous artist Emily Shelly: Advice when your offspring is dating someone from another species. And we're going to start with Lady Sara.

SARA

Use protection. It's good advice whether your date is the same species as you or something that's never before been seen on the planet where thy family lives. Prophylactics are friendly things. That's what I told my children, and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren, and great-great-great -

CORDELIA

(pressing her buzzer)

Oooh! Repetition! Repetition!

SARA

Yes, dear, I heard you the first time. You didn't need to... repeat.

CORDELIA

Sorry.

SARA

Of course you are.

HORACE

Now, remember, it's just a game. But, Sara, I'm afraid Cordelia's correct. You are guilty of repetition, so she gets a point and control of the topic, and twenty-three thousand milliseconds. Go.

CORDELIA

Always ensure that the species your offspring is into is compatible with yours. Can they breathe the same mixture of gasses? Food? Is ingesting it a thing, and if so, what sorts are palatable. After all, you wouldn't want to be a bad host to a potential son- or daughter- or other-in-law. Also ensure your -

GARY
(hitting his buzzer and
imitating Cordelia)

Oooh! Repetition! Repetition!

CORDELIA
What did I repeat?

GARY
You used 'ensure' twice.

CORDELIA
Not in a row.

GARY
No, you can't use the same word twice in the same *round*.

CORDELIA
Oh... crap!

HORACE
I'm afraid he's got you there. That means, Gary, you're finally on the board, and you have seven milliseconds. Go.

GARY
When. Your. Child.

SARA
(Pressing her buzzer)
Horace, dear, I believe Gary was Shatnerizing with a *vengeance*.

HORACE
Gary, you *were* Shatnerizing.

SARA
With a vengeance.

HORACE
With a vengeance. So, Sara, *you* are now on the board with... three milliseconds.

SARA
Size does matter.

The whistle sounds.

SARA
Did I say something wrong?

HORACE
No, not at all! In fact, Sara, you said something right... right at the whistle, that is. You were speaking when the time ran out, so you get another point which puts you in second place
(MORE)

HORACE (cont'd)

behind Trunch. Well, Gentlebeings, it's been a great game so far, but we have one more break and then our final round... who will win? You'll find out in Only Sixty Thousand Milliseconds! Or... maybe a few thousand milliseconds more.

BLACKOUT

SCENE FOUR

The same set, for the last time (no, really). It's time for round three, and everyone is antsy, because it may be all in fun, but they all want to WIN.

HORACE

Right, folks, we're at the top of the final round now... and it's anyone's game. Really. Trunch, is in first place with three points. Lady Sara is in second with two points - way to catch up, Lady Sara - and both Cordelia and Gary have one point each. For no good reason whatsoever except that she was chatting me up in the green room before we started and I'm pretty sure she could kill me with her brain, Cordelia will be starting our final round, and the topic that we'll finish on was sent in by the Dickens Uncle of the Jancii, which, as you know, is their supreme leader. Cordelia, your topic is The Fashion Trend I Hope Comes Back. With the final sixty thousand milliseconds on the clock... go.

CORDELIA

The fashion trend I hope comes back is pockets. Have you ever needed to stow something small and not wanted to carry a purse? If only you had a wee pouch sewn into your clothing. It would be so convenient to have a tiny sack seamed into the lining of each piece of couture - just an itsy one, nothing that would mess up the silhouette of a garment or -

GARY

(Pressing his buzzer)

I object!

HORACE

Gary, this isn't court. (beat) What's your objection.

GARY

Deviation. She went from fashion trends - pockets - and, I might ask, when did women's clothing *ever* have pockets? - to talking about making sure that silhouettes didn't get messed up.

HORACE

I'm going to give you this one Gary. It's a bit gray, but... frankly... yeah, definitely outside the approved spacelanes. You have another point, and you have the topic... and fourteen thousand milliseconds.

GARY

The fashion trend I hope comes back is the miniskirt. Whether a woman has two legs or six, or a man has thick thighs or thin, I want to see her or him in a short dresslike thing. The skin-baring miniskirt - Dammit, I've done it to myself, haven't I?

HORACE

Yes, yes you have. Quick someone buzz. First buzz takes over.

Cordelia, Sara and Trunch all hit their buzzers, but
Horace picks Sara.

HORACE

Sara? You have five thousand milliseconds.

SARA

Scarves. I wish for the return of scarv -

TRUNCH

(buzzing in)

Repetition. I apologize Lady Sara.

SARA

Come home with me tonight, and I'll forgive you. You are... completely male, aren't you?

TRUNCH

I assure you, I am capable of satisfying partners of many genders and species, especially human females... and I have no other plans tonight.

HORACE

If date night is through being planned. Horace? Two hundred milliseconds, Trunch, for the game?

TRUNCH

Cleats!

BLACKOUT

CURTAIN