

# **EARLY LIBERTY**

A full-length drama play

By

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<http://offthewallplays.com/>

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

(4M, 4W)

MARK	Frustrated hero, stammers when stressed, 32.
SELMA GALL	Party-girl daughter of the proprietor. Creative but diffused, almost 30.
WILLIAM GALL	Cheapskate workaholic, owns the hotel but never travels. Aging Dean Martin type. <i>Shoulda been a contendu</i> , 49.
ZELDA GALL	William's mentally-ill wife. A fading beauty of undefined foreign heritage. Delicately intuitive, almost prophetic, 49.
JUDE	Calls himself Mark's best friend. Ne'er-do-well, 30.
CONNIE	Mark's wife. Lady Macbeth of the bar scene, 23.
EVERYMAN (M)	plays a cowboy, a biker, an MP and a police officer, 19-30.
EVERYMAN (F)	plays a redhead, a brunette, an MP, and a honeymooner, 19-30.

## **TIME**

Action spans late-winter to the first day of spring, 1985.

## **SETTING**

An out-of-date hotel in Norfolk with a nautical theme.

NOTE: Much of the dialogue is quick and overlaps at the ends.

“I Miss Reagan.”  
*popular bumper sticker* (2013)

“Ronald Reagan was a president of strength. His philosophy  
was a philosophy of strength: a strong military, a strong economy, and strong families.”  
Mitt Romney (2013)

"You can tell how far a society is going to go by how it treats its women and girls.  
And if they're doing well, then the society is going to do well; and if they're not, then they  
won't be." President Barack Obama (2013)

Scene 1: Deep winter, 1985. Lights up on the unattended front desk of a hotel in Norfolk on the Atlantic shore. The family-owned venue has fallen upon hard times in what seems to have become a permanent *offseason* due to Reaganomics. Lanterns and fishing gear is hung to affect a nautical décor. [A beacon, if not visible, is implied.] A “VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS” bumper sticker adheres to the wood under the counter, and Ronald Reagan’s picture is mounted center stage next to a framed dollar bill, the first money the hotel made. A bell sits on the counter by a sign, “RING FOR SERVICE.” Another bell over the door clangs as SELMA trips in with a drinking buddy who wears a ten-gallon hat. Dressed like the new pop diva, Madonna, SELMA slams the counter bell a few times before falling on her boytoy. MARK, the new Night Manager, runs out of the inner-office, swiping sleep from his eyes.

MARK

Uh. “Ahoy, Maties. Welcome to The Lighthouse.” No, wait, to “Lighthouse Ca-cove.”

SELMA

All ashore who’s going ashore!

MARK

Ma’am?

He leans over the long counter to see two bodies wrestling on the floor.

And Sir? The two of you need a room then.

SELMA

Daddy didn’t say you were handsome. Your first night. And you’re sleeping on the clock already?

MARK

No, I mean, yes. That was our arrangement, Mr. Gall’s and mine. I have to report to my regular job in the morning.

SELMA

And you sleep in your clothes? That's kinda hot. Like a fireman (to date) Hold your horses. (to MARK) So whaddo you call this, if tha's your *job*, the a.m. gig? Wait. Who you calling?

MARK

Sorry, Ma'am, but I'll have to ask you to leave unless you're ready to conduct business. Quiet time's after 10. It's 3 o'clock in the morning.

SELMA

Another uptight dickwad. Fine, then jus gimme the room key.

MARK

Which room key?

Cowboy gropes SELMA.

SELMA

My room key. (to date) And cool it already! You're lookin for love in all the right places but I gotta secure our love nest first.

MARK

Like to help, Ma'am, but I don't know who you are or what you're talking about.

SELMA (ashamed)

Knock off the Ma'am garbage. I'm Mr. Gall's daughter. William Gall, your boss? And. . . I live here.

MARK

He didn't mention—

SELMA

Course not. I'm a bleeding boil on the ass of the family name.

MARK

(under breath) Do you kiss your mother with that mouth?

SELMA

What'djew say to me?

MARK

Do you, Miss, have some other ID, then?

SELMA

D'ya think I'd be in here messin with your REM, if I. It's in my purse—and it was so cute, the purse—made it myself out of stuff people'd left in the hotel. So yeah, somebody

stole it, not that I blame em, cause that bag was one-of-a-kind, along with the damned room key which is lost or *stolen* so would you please just—

MARK

Calling Mr. Gall then.

SELMA

Don't.

MARK

But it'd clear everything up and make it—

SELMA

Worse, yeah. He'd kill me.

MARK

It's an honest mistake. People lose . . . things.

SELMA

Said yourself, it's 3 a.m. And he warned me last time'd be the last time.

MARK

Doesn't your boyfriend have any cash?

SELMA

He's not my boyfriend and he's broker'n me. Can't you cut me some slack? I'm cold and my head is splitting. I need to lay down. Lie down, whatever.

SELMA goes to step behind the counter to help herself. MARK bars her entrance.

MARK

Sorry but I need this job more than you know. I cannot afford to screw up.

SELMA

Don't talk to me about screw ups, ok? I screw up, I've screwed down, and now it looks like I've corkscrewed myself into the corner. —Oh, I know! There's an emergency police button under the cash drawer.

MARK shrugs, too easy.

Fine. In the second drawer under the old log books is a bottle a rum. Go see for yourself.

MARK confirms its location, holds up rum.

MARK

Mr. Gall's informal wine cellar?

SELMA

Daddy only drinks the good stuff. No, it was Lou's.

MARK

Lou?

SELMA

The guy that did this suck-ass job before you.

MARK

How do I know you weren't just drinking buddies? No offense, Ma'am. Sorry. Don't mean to keep calling you that but I don't know your name, though I only meant it out of r-ra—

SELMA

It's Selma—and respect me a little less then, Mr. By-the-Book. Never mind. I'm gonna crash in cowboy's car. Just don't call the tow truck. And, if my father comes lookin in the morning, tell him you saw me leave for school.

MARK

And like *my* father said, Don't ask me to do anything illegal, immoral or unethical.

SELMA

Come again?

MARK

I won't lie, Selma. Don't ask me to.

SELMA

(sighs) Gimme the gun then. Not sure how safe these grounds are. Everything's kinda gone to shit in this town.

MARK

The gun?

SELMA

What kinda training dijew receive? Yeah, it's Gall's state of the art security system—the pistol in the shoe box under the TV?

MARK exits and returns, motioning for SELMA to enter.

SELMA (con't)

Man, that is so great. About time! But nice a you, thanks. I owe you one for this, uh—

MARK

I'm Mark. And no, you don't.

SELMA

This takes care of tonight. Tomorrow, I worry about tryin to get this remade. They charge extra for keys like this—or they won't normally copy them.

MARK

I'm a locksmith. Got some tools at uh. (a hard word for him) Home. I could do it for you.

SELMA

So that's your day job?

MARK

No, Navy. Stationed at the base.

SELMA

Navy's nice and I should know. Had one a each of the military, scratched it off my Things To Do Before I Die list. . . Obviously *not* an officer, then.

MARK

But I *am* so tired I can't see straight, going on 36 hours with no sleep.

SELMA

You have trouble sleeping too?

MARK

Sleeping's not my problem.

SELMA

Then why didn't you sleep? You just said you didn't sleep last—

MARK

And I've got an even longer day tomorrow so. . .

SELMA

No need to get shitty about it.

MARK

Beg your pardon?

SELMA

What're you doing here, Mark, *really*?

MARK

Trying to keep a roof over my head! (covering tracks) I'm sleeping, Selma. Or trying to.

SELMA

And the key business?

MARK

Locksmithing's like a hobby.

SELMA

Not coin collecting—or hording bags of human hair?

MARK

I just think keys are fascinating, all the little facets like a fingerprint.

SELMA

Ah, we're birds a two feathers. (beat) The same bird, Mark, you and me.

MARK

Doubt we're anything alike, Selma, no offense.

SELMA

No, you're talkin to a world-class dabbler. Takes one to know one's all I'm sayin.

MARK

I am *not* a dabbler. Everything I do, I do with pride.

SELMA

But I mean, sure. People must trust you if they're letting you break in, more or less.

MARK

Oh, you have to be bonded, locksmiths, and pass a slew of security type—

SELMA

Won't hold my breath over it but, God, if you could copy that key for me.

MARK

Wouldn't have said it if I wasn't planning on it.

SELMA

People say lotsa things they don't mean. Or they mean it at that second. But, whatever (makes an "L" on her forehead).

MARK

Am I supposed to know what that means?

