

ON HOW TO ACCOMMODATE MARLO'S FRYING PAN

in one-act

by

T.K. Lee



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CAST

MARLO..... any age
JOHN APPLE.....any age
RIDDY POP.....any age
BOON.....any age
SEEDA.....any age

TIME

The present.

SETTING

A room.

FOR CLARIFICATION: Though other things may be added for effect or staging, at director discretion, please make sure the following items are present on stage, at the beginning, as they’re referenced directly by the characters:

- A hat rack
- A trunk large enough to fit BOON
- A potted plastic plant with coffee grounds
- A large box, raised, (they all stand on it) – though it could be done with lighting

In addition, each character must have the following props:

- Marlo, a frying pan
- John Apple, a top hat and phone book
- Riddy Pop, an edible orange circus peanut
- Boon, a rope belt, boots, and a muffin
- Seeda, a boa

SYNOPSIS

Marlo has a problem with her frying pan. She can’t get rid of it. Worse, she never knows what to do with it or why she has it or how she even got it. Every day, it’s the same old, same old, and she feels like everyone else makes fun of her for it—her so-called friends—with all their ideas that also never work out. They have their issues, too! Poor Marlo. She’s frustrated. She’s mad. And she can’t tell anymore if she needs to find out the How or the Why. All she can come up with is a lot of Maybes. Of course, *maybe* it’s never been about Why she is where she is, but about What she is while she’s there. (Right? Maybe). Sigh. Then again, maybe what matters is simply knowing that there’s safety in numbers—even if, and maybe *especially* if, those numbers are all...odd.

LIGHTS UP. RIDDY POP IS HIDING BEHIND THE HAT RACK, ATTEMPTING TO DO SOMETHING IMPORTANT, THOUGH WE'RE NOT SURE WHAT THAT MIGHT BE. HE NEVER QUITE FIGURES IT OUT EITHER AND CONTINUES MUMBLING TO HIMSELF ABOUT IT. WE WATCH HIM FOR A MINUTE OR SO, WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN. NOTHING DOES.

MARLO IS LYING DOWN ELSEWHERE ON THE STAGE. WHATEVER SHE IS DOING, IT SHOULD NOT BE DIRECTLY ADDRESSING THE PAN IN HER HAND, PER SE. (i.e., HER HEAD IS RESTING ON IT; SHE'S DRAGGING HER KNUCKLES ACROSS THE FLOOR, etc.). SHE SIGHS WHEN SHE THINKS SHE MIGHT GET ATTENTION.

JOHN APPLE ENTERS AND FINDS A CHAIR AND DRAGS IT ACROSS THE FLOOR TO SEVERAL SPOTS; FINALLY, HE PICKS A SPOT AND STANDS OPPOSITE THE CHAIR, FACING IT TO READ. MARLO MOVES CLOSE ENOUGH TO HIM SO THAT HE HAS TO SEE HER SIGH, BY CRAWLING IN "AGONY" TO WHEREVER HE IS, TRYING TO GET ATTENTION, etc...

JOHN APPLE

Is there something you'd like to say, Marlo.

PAUSE.

MARLO

I was here first—

JOHN APPLE

(a little aggravated)

Other than that.

(beat; starts to drag the chair away)

I can never find the right spot.

MARLO

Well, I mean, you know that I—

JOHN APPLE

I know. I know. You don't like to listen, never have, blah blah blah, I've half heard it a million times:

(tries mimicking MARLO's voice)

I don't like to listen, never have, blah, blah, blah, blah...

MARLO

I don't talk like—

JOHN APPLE

(overlapping)

Blah. (drags out the vowel sound until discovering MARLO's expression)

MARLO LOOKS AT HIM SHARPLY, STICKS HER TONGUE OUT “PHHHTHT”; A BEAT; STARING; SHE RECOLLECTS HERSELF, NONCHALANTLY.

MARLO

I'm sorry, that was awkward.

JOHN APPLE

It was. It really was.

(beat)

I do my best every time to find a suitable spot. And it's hard to do that when you drag yourself everywhere I go proclaiming you were there first.

(beat)

I realize you never want to be read to.

(encouragingly)

Even though, this is a phone book.

MARLO

...it's just, I'm...(sighs) I'm, I'm worried, John Apple...I stay worried, you know, about—

JOHN APPLE

(he's heard this a thousand times; he opens books again)

Yes, right, I know, about the...

(gestures with his hand to indicate “pan”)

JOHN APPLE HAS STARTED TO READ AGAIN.

MARLO

Right, yes...about this!

(re: the pan)

and what to do with it...again.

JOHN APPLE

(reading)

...yes, yes...

MARLO

It just gets, it, it gets more difficult. I mean, everyday, it's the same th—

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JOHN APPLE

(interrupts; not looking up; turning groups of pages)

Shh. Shh. Shh. Shh. Shhhhhhhhhhhhh. Marlo...some people are trying to read.

JOHN APPLE BEGINS TO READ A MOMENT OR
TWO. MOUTHS OUT NAMES.

MARLO

John Apple...you can read later, can't you...if you don't mind. I need a little help me,
please...before you know who gets here.

(beat; he continues with his reading)

John Apple?

(beat; JOHN APPLE continues, aggressively turns pages, annoyingly, not reading)

John Apple??

(beat; with emphasis)

John Apple?!

JOHN APPLE

Marlo, as I live and breathe, when did you get here?

MARLO

Not now.

JOHN APPLE

Fine.

(toward her; MARLO shakes pan)

The pan, right. Let's see. Well. We could if we had a little...no... maybe if you took it by the and
then...no.

(exhales a long breath, thinkin)

...of course! We can use the frying pan as a holder for my book!

HE PLACES THE BOOK IN THE PAN

MARLO

Yes, that never does get old, does it.

(MARLO turns the pan over; exasperated sigh)

Don't patronize (**spoken with a long "a"**) me, John Apple. With your exploits. If you think that
I'm goi—

JOHN APPLE

(interrupts, picks up book)

Patronize. (**soft "a" sound**) Not patronize; short "a" sound. Most people misuse the word, but it
does have more than one meaning.

MARLO

Excuse me.

JOHN APPLE

No no...please, excuse me...I didn't mean to exploit you...it made perfect sense to me...

MARLO

(overlapping)

...it always does...

JOHN APPLE

(continuing)

...to use the frying pan, with such a flat surface...

MARLO

...it never crosses anyone's mind to help...

JOHN APPLE

When—

(softer)

I apologize.

MARLO

(continuing)

...even though it's almost too...

SEEDA ENTERS AMUSING HERSELF WITH A
BOA

SEEDA

Marlo?!

JOHN APPLE AND MARLO TURN TO STARE AT
SEEDA.

MARLO

Seeda.

JOHN APPLE AND SEEDA TURN BACK TO
MARLO.

SEEDA

Are you trying to cry again?

(beat)

Oh, just stop it, already, Marlo and look at what I found in the vending machine. Out of the usual,
as usual, but full of boas.

(beat; snippily)

I see you still have a frying pan in your hand.

JOHN APPLE

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(goes back to reading his book)

And she's being awful about it.

SEEDA

I feel for you, Marlo. I'm just not sure what. Pity parties always reserve such small tables, how do you manage to eat without staining your shoes?

(a beat)

Or do you dine barefoot? I don't know what to expect from you anymore. Except complaining.

MARLO

I do not always complain.

SEEDA

Day in. Day out. It's always the same conversation. And really, Marlo, if you're bound and determined to hate me, then at least learn an ironic gesture.

(beat; catches herself)

Look, let's just start over, ok?

(beat; she exits and enters again a la pageant; a little flat)

Good Whatever to you both. I made it. Now, would you like to touch me? Or my boa?

MARLO

No.

SEEDA

Good.

(beat, enthusiastic; puts her boa over JOHN APPLE's book)

So, who am I today?

JOHN APPLE

(a beat; closes book)

Yes.

(beat)

Who, Seeda?

SEEDA

I'm not sure; I was looking at you, but I was asking myself out loud. I'm either Mae West, or Gypsy Rose Lee.

JOHN APPLE

What's the difference.

SEEDA

(matter-of-factly)

The size of the feathers.

(beat)

I'd be Tallulah Bankhead. Except, I don't drink.

(beat)

Anymore, obviously. Sooo...I think today...today...I'll be...Gypsy Rose Lee.

JOHN APPLE

Kudos.

SEEDA

You're welcome. So, for the rest of the day, I'm going to be an ecdysiast.

(she does her burlesque number, per se, then notices)

Never mind.

(beat)

Where are Boon? Riddy Pop?...you two, of course, always seem to be here.

MARLO

Riddy Pop is right there.

SEEDA

Where?

JOHN APPLE

You never do notice.

(to MARLO)

Not enough carrots.

(beat)

He's been there since yester-other-day, left in the middle of my reading a delicious recipe for borscht. I was reading from a cook book. Then. Anyway, and he's still there...mumbling to himself.

THEY ALL TURN AND SEE HIM PLAINLY
VISIBLE. AS HE HAS BEEN TO THE
THE WHOLE TIME.

AUDIENCE

SEEDA

About what?

JOHN APPLE

Borscht. It's a hard word to spell. He got to the "r," and then went downhill. I'd say he's his own worst critic but that'd be inaccurate because by definition a critic is supposed to be objective...

SEEDA AND MARLO TURN TOWARDS JOHN
APPLE AND STARE

JOHN APPLE

(continuing)

...and how many of us...are...I. Ask. You.

SEEDA

You have the worst habits.

(to MARLO and JOHN APPLE, whispers)

Excuse me.

SEEDA TIPTOES UP BEHIND RIDDY POP.

SEEDA
(kindly)
Riddy Pop?

RIDDY POP
Yes?

SEEDA
Get out from behind the hat rack. And do so as soon as I finish this sentence. We are about to start pretending over here.

RIDDY POP
Are we? Really.

SEEDA
Yes.

RIDDY POP
Could I bring the hat rack with me? I rather enjoy this hat rack.

SEEDA
You may not. Hat racks cannot be trusted.

RIDDY POP
Why not?

SEEDA
Sh. Sh. Sh.

SEEDA LOOKS AROUND SUSPICIOUSLY,
MOTIONS FOR RIDDY POP TO FOLLOW HER
AWAY FROM THE HAT RACK.

HE DOES SO.

SHE REPEATS THIS PROCESS A FEW TIMES
UNTIL THEY ARE FAR FROM THE HAT RACK.

SEEDA
Thank you.

RIDDY POP
(beat; a little confused)
For what.

SEEDA
For following me...now, stop pretending by yourself. And join us.

RIDDY POP

Oh, is that what you thought I was doing? I wasn't. I wasn't pretending.

SEEDA

Then, what were you mumbling to yourself?

RIDDY POP

Exactly that.

SEEDA

Another lie.

MARLO

Ok, so where's Boon?

RIDDY POP

...in the trunk.

SEEDA

Would you get him out, please?

RIDDY POP

I didn't put him in there.

(SEEDA grimaces)

Ok.

(he goes to the trunk and opens it, and hollers)

Seeda says you have to get out of the trunk!

BOON MAKES SOME MUMBLING NOISE

SEEDA

What is he doing in that trunk?

RIDDY POP

He got in there with a muffin to take a nap.

SEEDA/MARLO

A muffin.

MARLO

Seeda. I was supposed to say that.

SEEDA

Says who.

MARLO

The other day, we decided any discussions or questions of or about muffins would be left to me!

SEEDA

I hate it here.
(beat)
Excuse me.

MARLO
(through gesture, counts to three, starts again)

A muffin?

JOHN APPLE
Yes, I made muffins. I made eleven. From a recipe I read.
(a beat)
There were only six left, last time I checked on them. Boon, how many muffins did you eat in the trunk?

BOON
(as he climbs out)
None.

JOHN APPLE
Well, haven't you been eating at least one in the trunk?

BOON
No. I was napping in the trunk.

JOHN APPLE
And the muffin?

BOON
Wasn't. It was wide awake.

JOHN APPLE
The muffin was in your mouth, wide awake and not napping, but not being eaten? That's seems unnecessarily possible.

BOON
Ok.

JOHN APPLE
But, why would you do that?

BOON
So I wouldn't speak out of turn.

SEEDA
What on earth could you say to yourself alone in a trunk while you were napping with a muffin in your mouth that wasn't? Where would you get such an idea?

BOON
John Apple.

THEY ALL GASP.

SEEDA

What?!

JOHN APPLE

From a book! From a book! Not from me!

(beat)

I would never think of that on my own.

BOON

You could have thought of that.

JOHN APPLE

You think so?

BOON

Yes, you could have.

JOHN APPLE

Yes, I could have. I easily could have—

SEEDA

(interrupting)

Oh who cares. Let's warm-up. I'm almost beyond ready, actually. And I've been waiting since I got here, at the least. Now, go on, get started.

(they each do their respective warm-ups for a moment or so, etc.)

All right then.

SEEDA STOPS PREPARING AND RUNS TO THE BOX, CLIMBS UP, BEGINS A GRAND CEREMONY THEY ALL CIRCLE AROUND HER AND LOOK UP, AS IF THIS IS ROUTINE; IN A BIG BREATH, RUSHING AS IF BORED WITH THIS PART OF THE RITUAL; NOT IMPRESSIVELY.

SEEDA

On this, another day which is right now this hour and minute, in this, the very room itself, pretending is now in session. I'm the ecdysiast.

RIDDY POP

(to SEEDA; with emphasis)

You get more impressive each time, and I'm almost sure I mean that!

MARLO MUMBLES

JOHN APPLE

The very room? What's that? Its name? I never knew the room had a name.

SEEDA

Obviously, John Apple, everything here has a name so everything here is a noun. More or less.

BOON

Even me.

SEEDA

You're certainly not a verb.

(beat)

Riddy Pop, please!

THEY ALL LOOK UP AT HER. A PAUSE.
SEEDA LOOKS IMPATIENT.

RIDDY POP

Ooh, that was quick. But, I, well, what are we playing?

SEEDA

First, we pretend! Like always. And then we make up the game! Has it ever been different?? (she gets off box)

THEY ALL STARE AT HER OUTBURST.

SEEDA

I didn't sleep well last night. There was a rock or an extension cord or a chafing dish under my back.

JOHN APPLE

Why didn't you just...move?

SEEDA

I appreciated the view.

JOHN APPLE, HAS BY THIS POINT, MOVED AND
IS VERY CLOSE TO SEEDA.

SEEDA

You are too next to me.

(beat)

Now, if we can continue...I'm the ecdysiast. Riddy Pop...?

RIDDY POP

Ooh, that was also quick...I'm not ready, I defer to...to Marlo.

MARLO

Me?

(sighs; climbs on the box)

uuuhhh...I'll... .be

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(does several awkward poses, etc.)
...I don't, no, no, or maybe...oh, uh...a flamenco dancer? A flamenco dancer.

SEEDA
You can't be a flamenco dancer. You can't be any dancer; I've got the boa.

JOHN APPLE
Please, Marlo. A flamenco dancer with a frying pan. That's too absurd!

RIDDY POP
But that's her problem, John Apple: what "one more thing" can she be?
(beat)
It seems ideas do not favor frying pans.

THEY PAUSE

MARLO
(aggravated but patient)
I'll be...

BOON
A chef?

MARLO
Stop staring at it. It isn't fair to limit my potential because of a defect.

JOHN APPLE
Or an obsession.

RIDDY POP
(pulls an orange circus peanut from his pocket)
Has this always been in my pocket?
(they look at him)
I should be more careful where I sit. Would you look at that? Now that's orange.
(he eats it)

RIDDY POP HAS HIS BACK TO MARLO. SHE
STARTS AS IF SHE'S GOING TO HIT HIM, TO GET
HIM OUT OF HER WAY, AND THEN IT DAWNS ON
HER.

MARLO
(a beat, as she thinks out loud)
Of course! That's what I'll be!! That's it!!

OTHERS
What.

MARLO
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A frustrated, middle-class housewife...

THEY ARE IMPRESSED BY HER CREATIVITY
AND VERBALLY MURMUR. SHORT AD-

LIBS.

MARLO

...who has recently discovered the husband is an infidel.

RIDDY POP

Marvelous.

MARLO

(slowly, realizing)

Yes. Yes, I am marvelous. And somehow I've done it again.

BOON

You want this muffin, Marlo, for effect?

JOHN APPLE

Good idea! I've known a few housewives and they're very partial to muffins.

BOON

And I really wouldn't mind.

MARLO

No. It doesn't fit my character.

SEEDA

How little you know.

(beat)

Riddy Pop? We're back to you; you're next.

RIDDY POP AND MARLO EXCHANGE PLACES
ON THE BOX.

RIDDY POP

Ooh, that was quick again. But, I'm ready. I think I should like to be...a Ringmaster!

SEEDA

A what.

RIDDY POP

A ringmaster...

SEEDA

Of what?!

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RIDDY POP

...a flea circus.

***The next four lines are said somewhat simultaneously.**

SEEDA
For fleas?

MARLO
Fleas?

JOHN APPLE
Fleas.

BOON (just a beat behind everyone else's lines)

Not ants?

RIDDY POP

No, no, for fleas. I'm not terribly efficient in management, so, I shouldn't like to manage a very large circus, such as I imagine ants would require.

(beat)

But, fleas I believe I can handle. It's been done before.

(beat)

May I borrow your hat, John Apple, for my Ringmaster? I think that'd be a nice touch.

JOHN APPLE

But, I was breeched.

RIDDY POP

I'll just wear the hat until we're finished.

MARLO

Provided we ever get started.

SEEDA

In a moment. We haven't all chosen. Boon, what are you going to be.

BOON

(exchanging places with RIDDY POP)

I have these boots...

SEEDA

You can't pretend to be what you are with what you have. You might as well be a turtle or a fork. Think! Why do you never think, Boon? Think and then speak. You pause before speaking at times, but we all know you are not thinking.

RIDDY POP

How so?

SEEDA

...because your eyes blink, blink, blink. You'll be shocked to make sense of things, I imagine. If that's possible.

BOON

I didn't mean I wanted to pretend to be boots. Or that because...

SEEDA

(cuts him off)

But you spoke too soon.

(beat)

Don't think out loud unless it's in the form of a question? **(SEEDA vocally demonstrates that inflection)**

THEY ALL NOD THEIR HEADS.

RIDDY POP

Wait. Seeda...if that's what he wants to pretend...then

(to BOON)

use the boots...I mean look, you have a boa, Seeda and Marlo has that unfortunate frying pan, and I have John Apple's hat...

JOHN APPLE

(interjecting)

...only until we're finished...

RIDDY POP

...only until we're finished...yes, I got that...so I don't see why Boon couldn't do the same?

SEEDA

Why do I even try.

RIDDY POP

(continuing)

...and, so, then...well, with boots, we could—ok, ok...why don't we pretend it's raining...and we

—

MARLO

What. Wait, no. No. We don't all have to pretend that.

RIDDY POP

All right, then just you, Boon, pretend it's raining and you've put on your boots because—

SEEDA

Let him do it, Riddy Pop...

RIDDY POP

I'm just helping.

BOON
(to MARLO)

He's a good friend.

SEEDA

Let's not stoop to name-calling.

RIDDY POP

Going on.

(beat)

Ok, so, you've got your boots on, and that's because you're walking in...uh, in...mud, is it? Mud?
Rain plus dirt? No, that's not right...

(beat, emphasis)

Have I ever even seen mud?

BOON

I don't know.

RIDDY POP

I think I tend to get the two confused.

BOON

The two what.

RIDDY POP

Dirt and mud.

JOHN APPLE

The only difference is one's wetter than the other. Mud is...hydrogenated dirt.

RIDDY POP

Should he be walking in that? That doesn't sound healthy.

BOON
(to himself)

Hydrogenated.

JOHN APPLE

It's fine.

RIDDY POP

And that's a fact?

JOHN APPLE

Yes.

BOON

(repeats several times; gestures grandly, etc.)

Hy-dro-gen-ate-d.

JOHN APPLE

(looking at BOON; beat)

You're still doing it wrong. Very wrong.

(BOON shakes his head and grins; continues to mouth the word)

RIDDY POP

Are you sure it means the same, thing, though, it means wet?

(JOHN APPLE nods)

And how do you know this word?

JOHN APPLE

I read it somewhere. Probably, from the same book you misread.

RIDDY POP

Mm. Could be, could be. I just like the pictures mainly.

(beat)

But you're sure that's the only difference? Because it seems to me that there's something we're missing about dirt and mud.

JOHN APPLE

Well...if I weren't so afraid of commitment, I'd say yes with certainty.

RIDDY POP

I don't understand that at all.

MARLO

(frustrated)

I've seen mud.

RIDDY POP

(gasps)

Is that so?

MARLO

It is.

JOHN APPLE

You don't say!

MARLO

I do. It's just wet dirt. Just like in the plant pot.

MARLO GOES TO PLANT POT. THEY FOLLOW.

JOHN APPLE

You know Marlo, I don't think you're lying this time. I've read that mud tends to live near articles of interest, like this plant.

RIDDY POP

And see, I've never thought of this plant as interesting.

JOHN APPLE

Haven't you?

RIDDY POP

Not even once.

SEEDA

But you're curious now, aren't you?

RIDDY POP

Yes. I'm sadly too fickle.

(long sigh)

Ooohhh, mothers.

MARLO STICKS HER HANDS IN AND PULLS OUT MUD (which is actually dry coffee grounds). THEY ALL **OOH** AND **AHH**. A MOMENT PASSES AS THE SCENT RISES TO THEIR NOSES.

RIDDY POP

My word. It smells edible. Is it edible? Is mud edible? How have I never known this?!

SEEDA

That's not mud. That's coffee.

THEY BEGIN TO BUILD IN INTENSITY OVER THE NEXT FEW LINES UNTIL MARLO INTERRUPTS THEM.

JOHN APPLE

I think a plant would prefer water to coffee.

(beat)

Don't quote me.

SEEDA

Don't worry.

RIDDY POP

No, this is mud.

SEEDA

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It most certainly is not.

RIDDY POP

Yes, I really most certainly think it is.

SEEDA

It's it's it's—

JOHN APPLE

(interrupting)

Use your words, not just contractions.

SEEDA

It is! It is! It is. **It is** coffee!

(exasperated breaths)

BOON

And what makes you so sure?

SEEDA

(pauses, turns to JOHN APPLE)

Can I scream in acronyms?

JOHN APPLE

By all means.

SEEDA

IDKWIDTBLWYFBGPFM!!!

PAUSE. SEEDA SIGHS AND SEEMS CONTENTED.

MARLO

May I continue?

(SEEDA nods; a teacher's voice)

In the wild, you can always identify mud by its sound. This mud has obviously been domesticated, but you get the point. Here, listen.

MARLO THROWS IT ON BOON'S BOOTS. THEY
ALL **GASP**.

RIDDY POP

Remarkable! Or no, no...I should say re-Marlo-able!

THEY ALL APPLAUD. MARLO AND
SEEDA STARE AT EACH, A TENSE
SECOND PASSES.

SEEDA

Fine, it's mud. I stand corrected.

BOON

I have to write a song about this.

(happy, and sings:)

Sanka, Sanka coffee, and water; plants with, domesticated, mud.

(he repeats this, with a dance)

SEEDA

(after BOON starts his second verse, she cuts him off)

Boon, Boon! Let's not do that with our voice.

THEY ALL REGROUP AGAIN CENTER STAGE
OR THEREABOUTS, WHEREVER THEY

COME

FROM...WHEREVER THE PLANT IS PUT.

JOHN APPLE STARES AT THE PLANT, STILL.

SEEDA

John Apple. Come on. It's your turn.

JOHN APPLE

I have never looked in this plant pot before.

RIDDY POP

I can't see why not. I said it was an interesting plant.

JOHN APPLE

No, you didn't.

RIDDY POP

No, I didn't.

JOHN APPLE

(stares at RIDDY POP)

I haven't really decided what I will be, Seeda. Can I do something where I push buttons?

SEEDA

Buttons?

JOHN APPLE

Yes, buttons. I know buttons.

MARLO

There's no such thing as being just a button pusher. You have to pick something.

JOHN APPLE

I know that.

