



FIRST PLAY

By Jean Blasiar

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AT RISE, BLAKE ROBBINS (20's, actor) and GARY MEYERS (20's; actor) are sitting alone on two collapsible chairs on an otherwise empty stage with two very large stacks of scripts between them. Blake is reading a script, shakes his head, tosses the script into a pile behind him.

GARY

Keep reading.

Blake picks up another script from the front pile and starts to read.

BLAKE

The mail hasn't even come yet. Whose idea was this?

GARY

Yours. I think I've got one. A two act play about a couple of out of work actors, you and a girl violinist who's pregnant. She gets up one morning... you're not home.

BLAKE

Where am I?

GARY

I don't know where the hell you are. You're waiting tables. What else do out-of- work actors do?

BLAKE

Not mornings. Days are reserved for auditions... or sleeping.

GARY

YOU'RE NOT HOME... OKAY?

BLAKE

Okay.

GARY

The actress miscarries. At home. She can't reach you.

BLAKE

My cell phone's always on.

GARY

BLAKE! She calls a cab...

BLAKE

Are we married?

GARY

I don't think so. The kid may not even be yours.

BLAKE

Go on.

GARY

She calls a cab...

(flips pages)

The sound of a crash. The next scene takes place in a courtroom. Our actress is suing the taxi company for negligence resulting in the loss of her unborn child.

BLAKE

Heavy.

GARY

Yeah. From then on, the play is all about the trial.

BLAKE

Do I know that she miscarried at home?

GARY

Not during the trial. You find out later... at the end. Just before you leave her.

BLAKE

I'm a real nice guy. Do I get the last line in the play?

GARY

Is that important?

BLAKE

Of course, it's important. Every actor wants the last line. It's the star's line. How big is my part?

GARY

It's better than getting the last line. The woman who miscarried gets eleven million. However... you have fallen in love with an actress in your acting company.

BLAKE

And walked away from eleven million? Oh, man!

GARY

You tell the one who miscarried that you're in love with someone else. She screams that she lied, that she actually miscarried before the accident, that she lied for you and your career.

BLAKE

I stay with her.

GARY

You tell her she's sitting pretty now, financially. You don't want any part of the money. You want to get on with your life.

BLAKE

I walk.

GARY

She shoots you.

BLAKE

WHAT? No kidding! All right! I die on stage. I'm very good at dying.

GARY

Especially on stage.

BLAKE

There's something familiar about this play. Who wrote it?

GARY

Alma Ritter.

BLAKE

Alma? Must be an alias. Sounds like Tom Stoppard. You think it's Tom Stoppard under an alias?

GARY

She lives in Pasadena.

BLAKE

A little old lady.

GARY

Probably her first play.

Blake looks at Gary; Gary at Blake; they look out at the audience and grin.

BLAKE

A babe in the woods. But I still think there's something familiar about this play.

Gary takes out his cell phone. Checks the script for the telephone number, dials.

GARY

(on the phone)

Hello, Mrs. Ritter? This is Gary Meyers, the producer. I've read your script, *For Better Or Worse*. It needs lots of work, but we may be able to use... some of it. Could you meet me and my partner at the Barn Theatre in West Hollywood...

Scene Two.

Gary and Blake are sitting at a table.

BLAKE

The playwright has rights?

GARY

According to this Writer's Guild contract. What did you expect?

BLAKE

I say we make up our own contract. What does she know.

Gary and Blake (simultaneously) throw the contracts they have been reading over their shoulders; simultaneously pick up pens and paper and start drafting their own contract.

BLAKE (Cont'd)

Fifty percent of wherever it goes. Including television, movies.

Gary and Blake look out into the audience grinning, rub their hands together.

Dollar signs drop down from the ceiling over each guy's head.

Sound of a door closing offstage.

Blake and Gary stand, tuck in their shirts, straighten their hair, as a little old lady in a squashed hat, large horn rimmed glasses, housedress to mid-calf, sensible shoes, socks, sweater, hair tucked in a hairnet, and a worn black purse over her arm enters.

ALMA

Anyone here named Gary?

GARY

Miss Ritter?

ALMA

It's Alma.

Gary comes rushing over with Blake right behind him.
Gary takes Alma's free hand and shakes it vigorously.

GARY

Alma. What a pleasure. Let me introduce my partner.
Blake Robbins. Blake, this is Alma Ritter.

Blake steps forward and shakes Alma's hand.

BLAKE

Miss Ritter. A pleasure.

ALMA

You two gay?

Gary and Blake are taken back. Look at each other, then at Alma.

BLAKE AND GARY

(in unison)

Us? Gay? Do we look gay?

ALMA

This is West Hollywood, right?

GARY

Not everyone in West Hollywood is gay, Alma.

ALMA

Is that so? Then you must be the only two who aren't.
I parked my car out front. I need a quarter for the meter.

GARY

Blake, take care of her car.

Blake starts to leave, checks his pockets.

BLAKE

Uh... Gary... you got any change?

Gary reaches into his pocket, comes up with some change, which he hands to Blake.

Blake exits, stage right.

GARY

Sit down, Alma.

ALMA

(sits)

How much of the house do I get? I'll take 40 percent.

GARY

40 percent? That's a little steep, don't you think. The Writer's Guild says...

ALMA

Screw the Writer's Guild. This is between you and me. When do we open?