

YOU CAN TRY IT

(A Comedy in Two Scenes)

by

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YOU CAN TRY ITTHE CHARACTERS

CHRISTINE MANION, Judge's Ezra Manion's widow, 40s

LORRAINE MANION, The Judge's Daughter, 20s

DELMORE MANION, The Judge's son, 20s

CAPTAIN OLE OLSEN, A Captain in the Merchant Marines, 40s

PETER WOOD, In love with Lorraine, a chemist, 20s

DAISY WOOD, Peter's sister, in love with Delmore, 20s

THE PLACE

The Manion home

THE TIME

Recently

YOU CAN TRY ITScene 1

(The MANION livingroom, with breakfast nook to one side. Lights up, CHRISTINE and LORRAINE are sitting at the nook table. Dominating the livingroom is an extremely large, full-length portrait of a stern, forbidding man in a judge's robe)

LORRAINE

(Concerned) Mother, won't you please eat your food?

CHRISTINE

I'm sorry, Lorrie, I don't feel like eating.

LORRAINE

But you have to eat!

CHRISTINE

Why do I have to eat?

LORRAINE

(Sighs) That's a rather stupid question. For heaven's sake, I fixed your favorite for you.

CHRISTINE

I know, dear, and I appreciate it. But it was also your father's favorite food.

LORRAINE

Well, what of it?

CHRISTINE

If I eat it, I'll feel like I'm depriving him.

LORRAINE

Mother... he's dead.

CHRISTINE

I know that, Lorrie. And you know that...

LORRAINE

Well then...

CHRISTINE

But I get the feeling *he* doesn't know it. (She looks fearfully at the portrait).

LORRAINE

Mother! Will you please try to think rationally!

CHRISTINE

I'll try... but I also get the feeling that he thinks I'm responsible for his death.

LORRAINE

He's beyond thinking anything now.

CHRISTINE

But I... deprived him, Lorrie. He must have told me that a thousand times. He said he suffered from pleasure deprivation!

LORRAINE

Pleasure deprivation! Well, what about *you*. You certainly never got any pleasure from *him*. Didn't you deserve any pleasure?

CHRISTINE

But he said that would be sacrilegious.

LORRAINE

What does that mean?

CHRISTINE

I think it has something to do with the fact that Man was created first and Woman was created second, so Man is in the dominant position. Heavens, he used to read that passage from the Bible to me every night before we went to bed.

LORRAINE

Now mother, will you please listen to me. I'm sure that pleasure deprivation is not recognized by the American Medical Association as a certifiable cause of death! If it were, I don't think anybody would be left alive! So will you please be reasonable and eat your food!

CHRISTINE

(She looks at her food, perhaps a sausage) I keep thinking of your father.

LORRAINE

Oh, mother, please! You know you like it.

CHRISTINE

I'm sorry. I just can't.

LORRAINE
(Cajolingly) Oh, come on, just taste it.

CHRISTINE
Ugh!

LORRAINE
(Teasing) Oh, go on! Try it.

CHRISTINE
No!

LORRAINE
(Getting angry) Good grief! Just take a bite!

CHRISTINE
I can't.

LORRAINE
(Puts a piece of meat on her fork) Eat it!

CHRISTINE
Take it away! Get it away!

LORRAINE
(Starts to shove it in CHRISTINE's mouth) Eat it, you silly woman!

CHRISTINE
Ach! I'm... choking! (She has apparently swallowed the food, but is coughing and spitting).

LORRAINE
For heaven's sake! That wasn't so horrible, was it?

CHRISTINE
I'm... choking! (She gags, coughs and splutters).

LORRAINE
Oh, I'm sorry, mother... But you're so *frustrating*!

CHRISTINE
That's what your father used to say!

(Then there is a knock. LORRAINE is about to answer it, when PETER enters.)

PETER

Hello, Lorrie, Hi, Mrs. Manion...

CHRISTINE

(Chokes out) Good evening... Peter. (PETER stares at her).

LORRAINE

(Quickly) Hello, Peter. Peter, tell me, have you—

PETER

Yes, I have those pills you wanted me to analyze right here. (He holds up a bottle of tablets) And you were right, Lorrie. They're simply a strong laxative.

LORRIE

There! You see, Mother! Are you satisfied now?

CHRISTINE

But Peter, could they be... dangerous?

PETER

(A mischevious look) Well... I suppose if you took a whole lot of them, Mrs. Manion, they'd create some, um... powerful problems. (He chuckles).

CHRISTINE

I knew it! I did it! Now he'll never forgive me! (She exits, in despair).

LORRAINE

Why did you have to say that?

PETER

(He shrugs) What did I say?

LORRAINE

Oh, it doesn't matter, anyway!

PETER

(Pause. PETER prepares himself for a 'speech') Now look here, Lorrie... I came over here this evening with something important to say to you—

LORRAINE

Oh Good Grief, Peter! I'm warning you! I'm in no mood to listen to another one of your ultimatums!

PETER

(Immediately crestfallen) You're not?

LORRAINE

No, I'm not!

PETER

But—

LORRAINE

So if that's what you had in mind—

PETER

Now hold on, Lorraine Manion! Just a darn minute! You could at least hear me out! It's been quite a while since I gave you my last ultimatum, but I promise you that this will be the *final* one! I think I've been pretty patient, Lorrie, but everyone has his limit, and I've finally reached mine! So what I am saying is that we set a date for our wedding tonight, or else we just call it off! And I think that's very fair!

LORRAINE

(Pause) Yes, so do I, Peter.

PETER

(Pop-eyed with disbelief) Do you!

LORRAINE

Yes, I do, Peter.

PETER

Well... all right then... Why don't we—

LORRAINE

And that's why we have to call it off.

PETER

Yes, that's exactly what—We *what!* But... I thought you loved me, Lorrie?

LORRAINE

It's not you, Peter. It's someone else...

PETER

You mean there's someone else!

LORRAINE

Oh, Peter, don't be a baboon! You've seen my mother! She is obsessed with the fact that somehow she's responsible for my father's death! Well, I can't marry you until she's gotten over that crazy idea, and I can't promise you when that will be. It's not fair to string you along this way, holding out false hopes—

PETER

Now wait a minute, Lorrie...

LORRAINE

No! It isn't!

PETER

But I think I should decide—

LORRAINE

No, you won't! And so I think you should just get out of here right now!

PETER

(Pause) Lorrie, I take back that final ultimatum.

LORRAINE

You can't do that! You have every right to give me that ultimatum!

PETER

Nonsense!

LORRAINE

The situation isn't fair to *you*, Peter!

PETER

Who says it isn't?

LORRAINE

I do!

PETER

But for Pete's sake! It would be pretty selfish and insensitive of me to leave you high and dry at a time like this! What kind of a person do you think I am!

LORRAINE

Oh, I don't know...

PETER

You don't!

LORRAINE

Well... I do think you're very kind, Peter.

PETER

(Embarrassed) Oh. Well...

LORRAINE

But you also must be a complete idiot!

PETER

Thanks!

LORRAINE

I mean to put up with all of this!

PETER

Now listen, Lorrie... I've been considering your mother problem...

LORRAINE

Peter, I don't have a mother problem. I have a problem mother!

PETER

Be that as it may, I can see no reason why if intelligent people put their heads together, they can't come up with a solution to this mess!

LORRAINE

I know two heads are better than one, but if one of the heads is, say, *Delmore's*—

PETER

Now what's wrong with your brother?

LORRAINE

(Shakes her head) I think he's as haunted by father as my mother is!

PETER

Huh! You know I always thought Delmore was a mother's boy.

LORRAINE

Oh, he is! That's the point! He's *exactly* like her!

(Then, DELMORE enters. He does look a lot like CHRISTINE. He is also a bit dazed)

DELMORE

Do I resemble that remark?

LORRAINE

Delmore! Where have you been?

DELMORE

I've been talking to mother.

LORRAINE

Good. Then you must realize that we have a problem.

DELMORE

Oh boy, do we!

LORRAINE

I mean you've seen how bizarrely mother has reacted to father's death.

DELMORE

(He looks at the portrait, shivers slightly) Well, he does have that effect, doesn't he?

LORRAINE

Yes, I know... but after all he *is* dead.

DELMORE

(He smiles eerily) You'd like to think so, wouldn't you?

LORRAINE

And so it is up to us to convince mother that she is mistaken.

DELMORE

Boy, I'm with you there!

LORRAINE

Thank heavens!

DELMORE

Um... mistaken about *what*?

LORRAINE

Listen, I know it sounds strange, Delmore... but I think mother actually believes that father is haunting her!

DELMORE

(He stares at LORRAINE) And you *don't*! Let me tell you when I look at that portrait I get the chills up my spine... And my blood runs cold! (He shivers, has a haunted look)

PETER

(Pause) That's not good.

LORRAINE

Peter! Now listen, Delmore... are you a man or a wimp!

DELMORE

(He shivers again) What do *you* think!

LORRAINE

But... I know you disliked father.

DELMORE

Oh Lordy yes! The things he did to me I wouldn't do to my worst enemy! (He gets a gleam in his eye) Well, yes, maybe to my *worst* enemy! So I guess that gives you an idea of what we're talking about! I mean there was that cute puppy he brought home, and then gave it to the neighbor's kid! The kid who had beat me up! And those camping trips when he left me alone in the woods without food! Oh, I know, I know! He said he wanted to make a man of me... but at *six*! I ask you! And then the ladies of the evening...

LORRAINE

(Shocked) He didn't!

DELMORE

No, he didn't! That's something else I hold against him. I tell you he still gives me the willies!

LORRAINE

All right... but Delmore, you have to get over it! He is dead!

DELMORE

But that's just my problem. Don't you see?

LORRAINE

(Pause) No, I don't. (To PETER) Do you!

PETER

(Shrugs) Delmore often has me stumped.

DELMORE

The point is I never had a chance to tell him how I felt about him. Whenever I tried, I got weak-kneed and backed down. And then he goes and *dies* on me! And so I feel that wherever he is, he's laughing at me knowing I never had the courage to face up to him... Knowing that I was a *coward*! (He turns and buries his face in his hands, but peeks out to see what effect he's having).

PETER

(Shakes his head) Not nice...

LORRAINE

Oh good grief!

(Suddenly, a knock, and then DAISY enters. She is small but feisty, a little 'manly')

DAISY

Hello, everyone. Oh boy, now what gives with Delmore!

LORRAINE

Maybe you can help us, Daisy. We're having some trouble with him.

DAISY

Oh, maaan! Not that father hang-up again!

LORRAINE

We can't get him to see reason.

DAISY

(She raises her fist humorously) You know there are times when I'd like to get him to see stars!

DELMORE

(To DAISY) And there are times when you remind me of father! What does *that* say?

DAISY

Oh, I'm sorry, babe! It's just that some times you get me soooo upset!

LORRAINE

We know what you mean!

DAISY

But then I say... (She shrugs)... if you can't beat 'em, join 'em!

LORRAINE

Daisy!

PETER

(Rather admiringly) You can say what you will! My sister is certainly practical!

DAISY

(To DELMORE, but with a wink at LORRAINE and PETER) Now come here, babe, and give me a big hug!

DELMORE

That's more like it! (He does so)

PETER

(Aside to LORRAINE) But if I know her she's got something up her sleeve.

DAISY

Oh... will you look at the time! (She takes out an extra large pocket watch) How do you like my watch, babe?

DELMORE

Your watch? (He looks at it, however, as she begins to swing it back and forth) It is very nice, isn't it? In fact... it's quite... soothing...

DAISY

It is, isn't it? Now... just keep looking at it. (As she swings the watch back and forth, DELMORE continues to stare at it, becoming mesmerized) Are you beginning to feel... relaxed?

DELMORE

Yes...I... am...

DAISY

Very relaxed...

DELMORE

(Head moving back and forth with the watch, speaking slowly) If I was any more... relaxed... I'd be... dead...

DAISY

Good. And now you are feeling very calm and very serene... aren't you?

DELMORE

(Like an automaton) Yes, I am feeling very calm... and very serene...

DAISY

And you feel like you want to take me to dinner, don't you?

DELMORE

Yes, I feel like I want to... take you to dinner...

DAISY

At a very expensive restaurant...

DELMORE

At a very expensive restaurant...

DAISY

(She stops swinging the watch) Okay. Delmore... Delmore! (She gives him a good slap on the side of the face. He shakes his head).

DELMORE

(Shaking his head) What happened?

DAISY

Nothing much... How do you feel, babe?

DELMORE

I don't know. I feel... strange.

DAISY

(To herself) Uh-oh! I wonder if it worked?

DELMORE

I mean I thought I was *upset*, but suddenly I feel very calm and serene! (Shakes his head again) And I feel like I want to take you to dinner... at a very expensive restaurant.

DAISY

Well then, come on, what are we waiting for? (She takes his arm and they start off)

PETER

Just a minute, Daisy! Where did you learn to do that?

DAISY

There's nothing to it. It's a little trick I picked up in my psych class. We'll be seeing you.

DELMORE

(In high spirits) Yes, we'll be seeing you! (They exit).

LORRAINE

That was amazing!

PETER

(Light bulb over his head, if possible) Yes, it was! And Lorrie, that gives me an idea!

(Before PETER can elaborate, there is another knock on the door, and CAPTAIN OLE OLSEN enters. He's VERY fat, wears an oldstyle naval outfit, and an eye patch)

CAPTAIN OLSEN

Hello der, Miss Lorrie, I vant to speak vith yore mudder, if dats awright vith you.

LORRAINE

Oh, it's all right with me, Captain Olsen, but I'm not sure about mother.

CAPTAIN OLSEN

(Alarmed) Py Yiminy! Is she feelin' poorly?

LORRAINE

Yes, she is. (She looks at him) Captain, I don't quite know how to say this...

CAPTAIN OLSEN

Vell now, maybe I jüst got it figgered out myself...

LORRAINE

Maybe you do at that. Tell me Captain. Did you know my father?

CAPTAIN OLSEN

Oh yah! And I know your mudder before your fadder efen!

LORRAINE

Did you!

PETER

(Quietly to LORRAINE, rather confused) Did he... *what?*

CAPTAIN OLSEN

Oh yah, now I ain't one to be disrespectin' the departed, put Py Yiminy, yore fadder vas a real shtinker! God Forgif me! But he vas rich and respected and yore mudder vas yust a poor voman! Must I say more?

PETER

(Aside to LORRAINE) What *did* he say?

LORRAINE

Perhaps you'd better say more, Captain.

CAPTAIN OLSEN

You t'ink so! Vell den, Py Yingo, I'll belay my cards on da table! Miss Lorrie, I vas always in luf vith yore mudder! And I always figger dat she and me ve would be married! But I had no right to ask her ven I was yust a poor sailor, so I vork myself up to Captain, but Yumpin'Yehosaphat, py dat time yore mudder had married yore fadder. So it vas pack to the sea vit me, until I hear dat yore fadder has suddenly drop dead!

LORRAINE

And you've been in love with my mudd—I mean with my mother all these years!

CAPTAIN OLSEN

Yah! Of course I vent trew a coupl' a vives in da meantime. Der's no point in peing a pig fool!

LORRAINE

I understand. I... think. Captain, what I'm trying to say is that mother has been acting very strangely since father died.

CAPTAIN

Yah! Py Yiminy I seen dat! But den I figger it's pen many long year since I last seen yore poor mudder! And den losin' yore fadder like dis...

LORRAINE

No, it's not that. In fact, just between you and me, Captain, I don't think mother ever really loved father...

CAPTAIN OLSEN

No! Vell vat about dat!

LORRAINE

That's right. Mother is upset... about something else.

CAPTAIN

Vell vat can I do! I'll do anyt'ing for yore mudder, Py Yolly!

LORRAINE

Well, the truth is mother feels that father is still exerting an influence over her... even from the *grave*!

CAPTAIN OLSEN

Frum da Grafe! Now hold on! Yore making my hair stant on ent, yung laty!

LORRAINE

But then you see our problem?

CAPTAIN OLSEN

Yah! I see dat somepody's off der nut!

LORRAINE

But it's only temporary, I assure you! Can you help us!

CAPTAIN OLSEN

I'm sorry, Miss Lorrie, but I don't mix vit spooks! Us seafarin' men are a superstitoos punch o' lubbers! I'm sorry. (He backs quickly out of the room, tripping as he does).

LORRAINE

But Captain...

PETER

Oh, forget him, Lorrie. Besides, I can't understand a word he says. Listen to me. I have a plan! Now do you think you can get everyone together here tomorrow night around nine?

LORRAINE

(She stares at him) I suppose so... but why so mysterious?

PETER

Now listen, here's what we're going to do... (As he whispers in her ear...)

BLACKOUT

