

BOO-WHO

by
Robert Fieldsteel

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Cast of Characters

MAN 1 Mid 30s to late 40s
MAN 2 Mid 30s to late 40s
MASK 1 Mid 30s to late 40s
MASK 2 Mid 30s to late 40s

Notes

The ages of the characters listed above are merely a suggestion and are not imperative.

The MASKs should be dressed neutrally and should not attempt to "characterize" each side of the mask, physically or vocally, with the exception of their growling or wailing sounds. Their general verbal baseline should be that of story-tellers, at times reserved/dry and at times descriptive, depending on the content. When they play the adult MAN 1 and MAN 2 in the final portion of the play, they should play it as a perfectly naturalistic scene.

The flow of the story-telling here is important; pauses throughout the entire play should be avoided except as noted and/or as used very sparingly for emphasis.

Origin of the Script

This script was commissioned by the side project theatre company in Chicago as part of Suzan-Lori Parks' 365 Days/365 Plays project in 2007. Writers were asked to write very short plays (1-4 pages) in response to the titles of the Suzan-Lori Parks short plays that the side project would be presenting for week 51 of the 365 project. This play was written in response to the Parks title B00.

LIGHTS BUMP ON. MAN 2 sits in a chair by the head of a bed. MASK 1 and MASK 2 stand right behind him. All three of them are leaning over, peering at MAN 1 who is lying in the bed, releasing the most blood-curdling scream in the history of theatre.

MAN 2

(Suddenly, to audience)

Let me explain.

(beat)

I never had a younger brother. I was the youngest, by far, the bottom of the shit-streaked hill. And I was not ordinarily vindictive or sadistic, at least not as far as I can remember, at least not actively. However. When the blackout happened and I was home alone --

MASK 1

--briefly--

MASK 2

--only briefly--

MAN 2

--was the plan, I was 10 years old, but when the lights didn't come on again for a half-hour and my father and my brothers still hadn't come home and then Mrs. Merriman came by in her station wagon and brought me to her house, I took the Merrimans up on their offer to have me sleep over.

MASK 1

And share a room with Richard.

MASK 2

Who was two years younger.

MAN 1 (RICHARD)

My mother asked me if I wanted to have him sleep over and I said no--

MASK 2

--which was the wrong answer--

MAN 1

--and she said it would be the charitable thing to do and I said, "Well why did you ask me then?" but I *had* just beaten him at Sorry --

MASK 2

--Richard's favorite game--

MAN 1

--so I figured we could play more Sorry, which made it okay.

MAN 2

My dad and my brothers were home from the shop by then, but when Richard and Mrs. Merriman were in the kitchen, Mr. Merriman started talking to me about how the bushes were going to have to be moved away from the picture windows or they'd eventually burst right through, and you could actually see them in the moonlight pressing up against the glass and this seemed to be an adult kind of conversation I wasn't used to and an interesting problem to have, so yes, I said yes when they asked me to stay.

MASK 1

But when they went to bed--

MASK 2

When they went to bed ...

MAN 1

...in my room, he was on a cot across the room--

MAN 2

-- and I think the night was pretty uneventful, but in the early morning ... with the light dimly coming through the window, ... there on the floor, I saw...

MASK 1

A Mask.

MASK 2

A Mask.

MAN 2

It was a rubber mask, one of the expensive ones that you could slip over your whole head. And the face--

MASK 1

--the face--

MASK 2

--was split in two--

MASK 1

--lengthwise--

MASK 1 & MASK 2

---right down the middle.

MASK 1

One side was of a kind of werewolf, dark brown, vicious, feral, the mouth wide open, roaring, teeth sharpened, the one nostril flaring.

MASK 2

And the other side was a human face ... melting. The flesh was turned to dripping wax, a panicked eye sliding down the cheek, the red half-mouth liquefying into what was clearly a helpless wail.

Simultaneously, quietly, MASK 1 lets out a threatening growl and MASK 2 a mournful wail.

MAN 2

It was irresistible.

(He acts out the following:)

I tiptoed over to it and silently slipped it over my head.

(He does this and then he and

MASK 1 & 2 all turn their

heads as one.)

And then ... I don't know what possessed me ... But then ... I made my way over to Richard's desk chair, lifted it, and placed it right next to his bed. By his head. And there I sat. My face just a foot or so above his. Waiting for him to awaken.

MASK 1

Waiting.

MASK 2

Waiting.

MAN 2

For fifteen minutes

MAN 2 and the MASKS wait in the same position they were in at the top of the play. Periodically, MAN 1 may stir, appear about to awaken, etc., and Man 1 and the MASKS respond physically, subtly, moving in unison. There may be quiet growling/wailing from the MASKS. Finally, MAN 1 opens his eyes, but then, suddenly, sits up and addresses the audience.

MAN 1

And you've already seen what happened.

Beat.

MAN 2

A few years ago I ran into him on the street in Manhattan.

MASK 2/ADULT MAN 2

Hey. Richard?

MASK 1/ADULT RICHARD

Hey. How are you?

MASK 2/ADULT MAN 2

Good. You?

MASK 1/ADULT RICHARD

Very good, thanks.

MASK 2/ADULT MAN 2

Yeah, I don't really get *The Wall Street Journal*, but I've heard your editorials are really well-written.

MAN 2

He wrote editorials under his real name--

MAN 1

And owned several properties in the Bronx under a pseudonym.

MASK 1/ADULT RICHARD

Yeah, it's a good gig. What are you up to these days?

MASK 2/ADULT MAN 2

Keeping busy.

MASK 1/ADULT RICHARD

How's your mom?

MASK 2/ADULT MAN 2

Alive. The same. Yours?

MASK 1/ADULT RICHARD

Great. She and my dad live on Nantucket now. Family?

MASK 2/ADULT MAN 2

Huh? Oh, no -- not yet anyway. I've opened a couple of restaurants over the years. I mean, they're not --

MAN 1

Open.

MAN 2

Anymore.

MASK 2/ADULT MAN 2

The people I've worked with are my family.

MASK 1/ADULT RICHARD

Well good. I'm glad to hear all that. Very glad.

MAN 1

And just like that--

MAN 2

--so suddenly --

MAN 1

--he walked away.

All 4 players smoothly go back to the positions they were in at the top of the play, MAN 2 and the MASKS hovering over MAN 1, contentedly asleep. Quiet growling/wailing sounds from the MASKS: three long, slow ones as the LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.

END OF PLAY