

Auction Day

by

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Auction Day

Cast:

WILLIAM BRADLEY: Male, age 45, Head of a private school, dressed in a blue blazer with tie

LAURA ROBERTSON: Female, age 28, William's assistant, dressed professionally

BOBBY DESTEFANO: Male, age 45, Board Chair of the school, loud sports coat, no tie, lots of jewelry

PHIL MARLEAU: Male, age 45, parent, dressed in sharp suit and tie

Note: Bobby and Phil can be played by the same actor.

KIMBERLY CHILTON: Female, age 38, parent, dressed conservatively but fashionable

MELISSA BLANCO: Female, age 38, parent, dressed very seductively, low cut top

Note: Kimberly and Melissa can be played by the same actor.

Setting: Present day. The office of the Head of a private K-8 school. There is a desk with computer on it. There is an imaginary window facing the audience.

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Scene opens with William at his desk looking at his computer screen. Three seconds later the sound of many phones loudly ringing at once. William doesn't seem to notice. Laura enters. She is perfectly dressed, not a hair out of place.

LAURA:

Mr. Bradley ... Mr. Bradley. (*very loud*) ... Mr. Brad-ley

Laura crosses to William's desk, and waves her hand in front of his face. He shrugs his shoulders, then pulls ear plugs out of his ears and reacts to the sounds.

LAURA (cont):

All the phone lines started ringing at the same time. What's going on?

WILLIAM:

Turn the master switch to silent; let 'em all go to voice mail.

Laura exits, William buries his head in his hands. The ringing stops.

WILLIAM:

You do know what tonight is, don't you?

LAURA:

(*enters*) Yes, it's the night of the school gala and auction. Exciting! I've heard parents talking about it, but never seen it. You hired me the week after last year's auction.

WILLIAM:

Oh that's right. Poor Mr. Garcia went on leave then. I wonder how his therapy is going.

LAURA:

So what about the phone calls?

WILLIAM:

Every year the seating plan for the gala is posted on the website at precisely 11:00. If parents are unhappy about their table, they call to complain. (*beat*) Call them back and tell them you'll pass on their request to the gala director.

Laura exits - From offstage:

LAURA:

Good morning Mr. DeStephano.

William rolls his eyes

BOBBY:

Good morning Laura. I've told you a hundred times, call me Bobby. So I assume he's in.

LAURA:

He is, but let me check and see if he's busy.

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Laura peeks her head in the door.

LAURA (cont):

Mr. Bradley, Mr. DeSteph -

Bobby brushes past Laura and enters

BOBBY:

Hello Will, how goes the big day.

WILLIAM:

It's going fine ... for Armageddon.

(Laura exits)

BOBBY:

Relax. Ever since I became chair of the board, the auction has become hugely successful. Glitzy. Lots of bidding for items. You should love this day. But I didn't come here to talk about the auction.

WILLIAM:

That's good.

BOBBY:

I came here to talk about testing.

WILLIAM:

Oh god!

BOBBY:

We just got Bobby Junior's scores this week, and we're very disappointed. As are a lot of the other parents.

WILLIAM:

But this year's scores were outstanding. We're in the 94th percentile nationally.

BOBBY:

I see that on the report. But look at the local number. The average percentile for a student here is 50!

WILLIAM:

Um ... BOBBY ... That's the average compared to all students here. It HAS to be 50! It's a mathematical tautology!

BOBBY:

Don't start bringing in Greek Philosophy. Maybe that's why the kids aren't doing better. All of this philosophy and classics crap. *(cell phone rings, ring tone is the theme from the*

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Empire Strikes Back, he looks at his phone). I gotta take this. (*Starts exiting office*)
Hello, it's Bobby. (*exits*)

LAURA:

(*enters*) These need your signature. (*puts forms on desk, he starts to sign*). Everything O.K?

WILLIAM:

Just the annual discussion of test scores. 100% of the parents expect their children to be in the top 10% of the class.

LAURA:

(*picks up forms, starts to exit, looks out the window, stops*) Oh my god! ... What ... is ... that?

WILLIAM:

(*joins Laura at window*). I don't know – looks like an ice sculpture of two people.

(*Bobby enters the office, unseen by William and Laura. Slowly moves behind them.*)

WILLIAM (cont):

Is that supposed to be -

BOBBY:

Yep – you and me! I knew you'd love it. It shows everyone how well we work together.

LAURA:

It looks like you're on some type of pedestal. Why are you covered in gold?

BOBBY:

They dyed my jacket with the main school color. As a gift, it shows everyone that the rumors aren't true. I DO support the arts.

WILLIAM:

It's already warm out – maybe it will melt before tonight.

BOBBY:

I didn't think they'd deliver it until later in the day. Laura, be a dear and ask one of the maintenance guys to construct some type of platform to shade it.

William nods at Laura – she exits. Bobby ogles her as she leaves.

BOBBY (Cont):

Talk about art! That's one fine piece of work. So tell me Willy, guy to guy, have you hit that yet?

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WILLIAM:

Bobby, we maintain a respectable work environment. We don't go around "hitting that."

BOBBY:

Whatever. Gotta go now. Time for our executive committee meeting. *(crosses to exit)*

LAURA:

(enters) You forgot to sign this form. *(hands William the form and a pen)* There's a line of parents starting to form outside your office – no one has an appointment.

WILLIAM:

They know we want them to be generous tonight, so they come in with special demands. It's like the wedding scene from *The Godfather*. They think I can't refuse any request on auction day.

(William hands Laura form, and she exits)

KIMBERLY:

(from off-stage, sobbing hysterically)

LAURA:

Ms. Chilton – what's wrong?

KIMBERLY:

(still sobbing) I ...need ... to ... see ... Mr. ... Bradley.

(Laura and Kimberly enter, Laura is supporting Kimberly)

WILLIAM:

How can I help you Kimberly?

KIMBERLY:

(still sobbing) The gala tonight – it's ruined – it will be a disaster!

LAURA:

Is it the seating arrangements?

KIMBERLY:

Don't be silly dear. I wouldn't get this worked up about seating. *(reaches into her bag, pulls out two napkins)* It's ... the ... napkins. *(Hands them to Laura and William, who just stare, Kimberly is frustrated by their lack of reaction)*. Can't you tell? We ordered napkins with the school crest in the middle, and gold borders on the bottom and blue borders on the side, *(pause)* and as you can see, they're reversed.

WILLIAM and LAURA, jointly:

Oh.

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KIMBERLY:

Yes, and we specifically ordered a custom 20 ¾ inch size, and *(pulls out tape measure from her bag)* they're an eighth of an inch larger. *(Burst into tears)*

(William nods to Laura – Laura exits)

WILLIAM:

I'm very sorry you're going through -

KIMBERLY:

I didn't make this decision alone. This was the Ambiance Committee's choice. We talked about it for five hours last October. Look *(pulls out thick binder from her bag)* it's here in the minutes!

WILLIAM:

I understand. Next year I promise to personally make sure the order is accurate. *(starts to lead Kimberly to the exit)*

KIMBERLY:

You know who it is. It's that horrible Melissa Blanco. She must have changed the order. She's so particular and fussy. *(exits)*

(Laura enters, more disheveled)

WILLIAM:

How goes the returning of phone calls?

LAURA:

37 voice mails – I'm just getting started. Why's the seating so important?

WILLIAM:

The power players want to sit near the middle in the front, so that everyone can see them bid and win their items. The near bidders want to -

LAURA:

The near bidders?

WILLIAM:

(increasingly exasperated) They're parents who are bidding, but they really don't want to pay that much for the items – they drop out if they sense they might win the auction. They want to sit just off center, so everyone can see them bid. Except that the experienced near bidders begin to worry that they will be found out, so they ask to be moved more to the side, at different places each year, so no one realizes what they are up to. People with no interest in bidding want to sit on the side, but not TOO far to the side, or else everyone will know that they have no interest in bidding.

Laura, getting bored, starts to exit – William keeps talking – Laura stops

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WILLIAM (cont):

Hanger-ons want to sit with the power players, so when they win items such as vacation homes or special parties, they might get invited to go along.

Again Laura, starts to exit – again William keeps talking – Laura stops

WILLIAM (cont):

And then of course, there are the families who don't want to sit with a particular person at their table, but want to sit with another couple, who don't want to sit with them.

LAURA:

(starts to exit) O ... K.... I'm taking the phones off of silent. *(pause)* Oh, can you see Mr. Marleau?

WILLIAM:

Sure, send him in.

(Laura exits, Phil enters)

WILLIAM:

Phil, it's nice to see -

PHIL:

I'll get right to the point. Matt's getting a B in history. He's always been the best student in his class, and I can't see how all of a sudden he is failing so badly.

WILLIAM:

I wouldn't call a B "failing." We do challenge students a little more in sixth grade.

PHIL:

I've always supported you in the past, but this just won't do. We're trying to get Matt into an Ivy League college. I pay 25 THOUSAND dollars a year in tuition, and for 25 THOUSAND dollars, I don't expect my son to get B's!

WILLIAM:

Oh! That explains it. You're paying the B level tuition! If you want to be guaranteed A grades, you have to pay the A level tuition. That's much higher.

PHIL:

(confused) What's that?

WILLIAM:

Sorry Phil. I was teasing. It's been a long day. *(starts escorting Phil out of the office)* But you need to understand, tuition has nothing to do with grades. And Harvard won't be dissuaded by a sixth grade B.

(Phil exits, Laura enters, more in tatters)

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WILLIAM:

Well you're looking lovely.

LAURA:

I had to break up a fight.

WILLIAM:

Fifth grade boys again?

LAURA:

No – Ms. Chilton and Ms. Blanco. Ms. Blanco was next in line to see you, and Ms. Chilton walked over to her and told her she could take her napkins and stuff them up her -

WILLIAM:

I get the idea. Send her in.

(Laura exits, Melissa enters, wearing a very low cut top)

MELISSA:

(very seductively) Good morning William. I hope you're having a good day.

WILLIAM:

(averting his eyes away from her chest) What can I do for you, Melissa?

MELISSA:

You should know that Ashley Chilton has been publishing hateful things about other classmates on facebook, and she's been purposely excluding some girls from her birthday party.

WILLIAM:

Girls like your daughter, Hannah?

MELISSA:

No, Hannah was invited, but my other daughter, Madison, was not. She's completely humiliated.

WILLIAM:

Ashley and Hannah are in eighth grade, and Madison's only in fifth.

MELISSA:

I think Ashley should be suspended from all extra-curricular activities for the rest of the year.

WILLIAM:

Does this have anything to do with the fact that Ashley has the lead in the school musical?

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MELISSA:

Not at all! But since YOU brought it up, everyone knows my Hannah has an amazing voice. I can't believe Ms. Edwards made her second lead.

WILLIAM:

Ms. Edwards is very experienced at these type of -

MELISSA:

You know, I'm not without my own experiences. I've performed on the stage myself.

WILLIAM:

(starts escorting Melissa out) We WILL look into this facebook thing. If there are issues, we'll talk to Ashley about it.

(Melissa exits)

WILLIAM:

The only stage she ever performed on had a big pole in the middle. *(sits)*

LAURA:

(enters, walks past window) Mr. Bradley, I need to talk to y ... oh my god, look at that.

WILLIAM:

I don't really want to get up, Ms. Robertson. What is it?

LAURA:

The ice sculpture is starting to melt. Particularly the gold dye on Mr. DeStephano's jacket. The water from the ice is running down his front. And then spouting out from between his legs. And then trickling onto your head. It looks like he's -

WILLIAM:

No need to continue. I get the picture. It seems very appropriate on Auction Day. *(pause)*. So you said you had something to tell me?

LAURA:

Yes. *(pause)* Bobby, or I should say, Mr. DeStephano, offered me a job working for him in his store. I like working here, but, he gave me a signing bonus of \$2,000 *(shows the check)*, and I could really use the money. Plus, today has been ... enlightening.

WILLIAM:

I understand – no one ever got rich working as the assistant to a school head.

LAURA:

So I'll keep working here until you can find a replace -

KIMBERLY:

(enters) Now I've really had it. *(Pulls out binder of minutes)* On March 4th the ambiance committee clearly voted to have tulips as part of the centerpieces. The florist just

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arrived ... and *(breaking down)* they're ... chrysanthemums. It's Melissa Blanco again. She's been -

BOBBY:

(enters) William you HAVE to fix this. I planned on a table of 16 for tonight – I'm being told the tables only hold 8-10 people, and we have to split into two parties. I ... don't ... split.

KIMBERLY:

Well of course the tables can't hold 16 – it would ruin the flow of the decorations.

BOBBY:

You and your damn decorations. No one cares about that crap. People come to battle in the auction.

WILLIAM:

If you'll excuse me, I need to take care of something. I'll be right back. *(William exits)*

KIMBERLY:

But we really need to take care of ... *(looks to Bobby and Laura)* He simply must do something to fix the flowers.

BOBBY:

That's why you're here? Flowers? William's a busy man. He doesn't have time to worry about -

KIMBERLY:

Oh, but he has time to worry about your seating? The things you men think are important.

BOBBY:

Look, the people in my group raise ... *(looks out of the window)*. Hey what's William doing. He's pulling two handcarts filled with centerpieces. *(Kimberly and Laura look out window – Bobby laughs)* He's throwing the flowers into the sculpture. Well that might not be what the artist had in mind but it works for me.

KIMBERLY:

That man's a monster. *(bangs on window)* William! Stop! Stop! *(exits)*

BOBBY:

Serves her right. Way to go Will ... *(beat)* Hey, what's he doing with that axe. *(pause)* No! Not the sculpture. Hey watch where you're swinging that. *(grabs crotch)* Ouch, that hurt. I think the sculptor put some type of voodoo curse on it. *(exits)*

LAURA:

(taking in the scene from the window, phone rings, she crosses to phone and picks it up) Mr. Bradley's office. *(pause)* Oh, hello Ms. Sanderson. No, he isn't in right now, he's ... he's making some ... improvements for the auction tonight. *(pause)* You want to sit

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more towards the center of the room? *(pause, rips up check)* Well, I'm sure it was an oversight. I'll talk to our gala director and see if there's anything I can do. *(hangs up phone)* I know where I'm needed.

(Lights down)

END OF PLAY