

M.O.I.N.D.O Pizzicato (!!!)

By ... George ... Freek

WHY I LIKE IT: *Drama Editor JANET EHRLICH COLSON writes... This is a longer one, but it's two acts and you can't really do the one and not the other 'cuz face it, you'll want to see how it's going to pan out. Welcome to the marvelous mayhem of playwright George Freek (and if you want more time to crawl inside his twisted mind, check out the interview we conducted via psychic messages and fortunes from cookies that were tenderly wrapped around shivs hidden in cakes – oh, come on, it was a f—king pen!), which continues to dazzle in his play, MONDO PIZZICATO (A Comedy in Two Acts (I already told you that, but it's part of the title)). The play takes place in older brother Danny's home, set specifically in "A Midwestern City of 160, 000." The time, "recently," is right about now. And the story begins kind of where Leave it to Beaver leaves off and Friends picks up, but with a modern bent that includes coming out gay, coming out straight, and a couple of musical theater-worthy hijinks. All this while Danny's thinking about getting hitched, younger brother Jimmy is trying to finish his thesis symphony, their neighbor Freddy is hell-bent on getting wasted, and life seems to be getting in the way of everybody's best-laid plans. We all know what that's like! No, this isn't a musical comedy, it's a comedy comedy, but there's a sprightly musicality in the plucky dialogue and tone that signals everything's going to work out somehow. And you know what? I think we deserve that once in a while. Or at least once per issue.*

DANNY

I'm sorry, brother. You're probably right. I'm upset and angry, and it's probably not the best time to go and drink, but that seems to be the time when we most often do it! But I don't have any reason to be upset with you, do I? (JIMMY looks a bit guilty) Why don't you come with me? We'll get a little pleasantly plastered and do a little male-bonding, just the two of us. What do you say?

Spacing is playwright's own. JEC

MONDO PIZZICATO

(A Comedy in Two Acts)

by

GEORGE FREEK

THE CHARACTERS

JIMMY, A Music Student, 20s

DANNY, His Brother, An Accountant, 30

PEGGY, A Grade School Teacher, 20s

FREDDY, Jimmy's and Danny's Neighbor, 20s

PROFESSOR PADEROFSKY, A Music Professor (May be played by a male or a female)

THE PLACE

The Kitchen/Living-room of Danny's Home

A Midwestern City of 160, 000

THE TIME

Recently

ACT ONE

(The kitchen/living-room of DANNY'S home; JIMMY is making a pot of coffee; He pours two cups, as DANNY enters in a white shirt and a tie)

JIMMY

Good morning, Danny. Coffee's all ready.

DANNY

(Grouchy) Jimmy, how many times do I have to tell you? You don't need to make coffee for me

every morning.

JIMMY

You're practically supporting me until I get my MFA. I guess making coffee is the least I can do.

DANNY

(As if this were a sudden thought) You know something. It might be nice to have some feminine help around this place.

JIMMY

You mean because my coffee's lousy?

DANNY

No. No. But it would be nice if you could make coffee as well as you play the piano. I really enjoyed listening to you again last night.

JIMMY

I'm glad you enjoyed it.

DANNY

(Pause) And, um, Peggy had a real great time, too.

JIMMY

I notice she's been coming down with you a lot lately.

DANNY

(Awkward moment) Um, speaking of Peggy—

JIMMY

Were we speaking of Peggy?

DANNY

You like her, don't you?

JIMMY

Sure, I do... But why are you asking that?

DANNY

And you'd agree with me that she's good-looking, wouldn't you. And wouldn't you say she was honest and sincere?

JIMMY

Just like Mary Poppins?

DANNY

Well, she has her teaching job, but she still comes over to do our cleaning. I think that's pretty decent of her.

JIMMY

(Uneasy) I suppose it is.

DANNY

And nobody could deny she's a hard-worker and dependable. I mean after her ma died in that horrible accident and her dad never recovered, she put herself through college and got that job teaching third grade at Bennett School, and she manages to take care of her dad and still finds time to clean for us—

JIMMY

So what are we doing here? Writing her a job recommendation?

DANNY

Well... I guess that's one way of looking at it.

JIMMY

It is? One way of looking at *what!*

DANNY

Well, what would you think about Peggy becoming a member of the family?

JIMMY

Our family...Now wait a minute! Just exactly what has she been telling you?

DANNY

Huh? I'm just asking what you'd think if I asked Peggy to marry me.

JIMMY

(Spills his coffee) If YOU asked Peggy to marry YOU!

DANNY

Would you have a problem with that?

JIMMY

No. Why would I?

DANNY

Then you wouldn't mind?

JIMMY

(Pause) No.

DANNY

I'm glad to hear you say that, brother!

JIMMY

But suppose Peggy already has a boy friend?

DANNY

If Peggy already has a boy friend, why wouldn't she tell me? I guess I'd know that. I mean almost every night lately before we go down to Marco's to hear you play, we go somewhere for dinner.

JIMMY

(Surprised) You do?

DANNY

And we have long talks about all kinds of things. We've become extremely comfortable with each other.

JIMMY

I never knew that.

DANNY

So if she had a boy friend don't you think she would have told me?

JIMMY

Yes, I certainly think she would have!

DANNY

Of course I realize I'm a few years older than she is.

JIMMY

That's no problem. I don't think Peggy likes younger men.

DANNY

Did she tell you that?

JIMMY

I'm simply going by what I'm learning about her. For instance, I'll bet she thinks some younger man, you know, someone younger, maybe better-looking—

DANNY

Hey, I'm not that....er, old!

JIMMY

The point is she might think someone like that would probably be more self-centered, so maybe he'd be more in love with himself than he would with her.

DANNY

Yeah, that's possible.

JIMMY

Right! And I suppose she imagines that a younger guy would be more likely to play around on her and spend more time out carousing with friends than being with her!

DANNY

Boy, you seem to know her pretty well!

JIMMY

(Emphatic) Oh no! No way! I don't know her at all!

DANNY

Oh. Well, I just wanted you to know what I was thinking, to make sure you wouldn't have any problem with it because if she said yes, she'd be living here with us.

JIMMY

Then you think she'll say yes?

DANNY

Well, look, I know I'm a few years older, and I'm not the best-looking guy in the world. But like

you say, looks aren't everything—

JIMMY

I never said that

DANNY

Well, I'm not a *monster*, and I have a decent job! (He looks nervous) Listen, Jimmy, you could help me.

JIMMY

How could I do that?

DANNY

Well, maybe you could sort of feel her out.

JIMMY

I could WHAT!

DANNY

I mean you could sort of find out what she thinks about the idea.

JIMMY

What is this! You want me to propose to Peggy for you?

DANNY

No, no! Just see how she feels about the idea.

JIMMY

I don't care how she feels about the idea, and I'm not going to ask her!

DANNY

Okay, I get it. You think she'll say no, and you'd be embarrassed. I understand.

JIMMY

No. (Pause, thinks) You know, maybe I should 'feel her out,' as you put it.

DANNY

That's all I'm asking, brother. And thanks! I knew I could depend on you. (He stands) Well, I should be getting to work.

JIMMY

Danny, wait a minute.

DANNY

I'm going to be late.

JIMMY

Look. You can't do this.

DANNY

I can't go to work?

JIMMY

No. No. What I mean is...*I* can't do it.

DANNY

You mean you can't speak to Peggy? But for heaven's sake, why not?

JIMMY

Well... because I have to see Professor Paderofsky.

DANNY

I didn't mean you had to do it in the next twenty minutes!

JIMMY

And you're really serious about this?

DANNY

I'll tell you something, brother. I hate to say it, but I'm thirty years old. I know, I know, that's not OLD. But I see people I went to school with, and they're all married and they already have kids. Now are they happy? Well, some are, and some aren't, but the thing is, I find that I envy them. I envy them that experience.

JIMMY

Can I say something?

DANNY

I know. You're going to ask me if I'm in love with Peggy. Well, if I'm really honest I must admit, I'm not sure. But I do know this: I like her a lot and I care about her, and I'd like her life to be happy and I'd like to have something to do with that. Now I'm not exactly sure what that adds up to, but I will tell you this: I am definitely serious. Okay?

JIMMY

If you say so.

DANNY

I just hope I'm not making a complete ass of myself! (He starts out the door).

(As DANNY begins to exit, He nearly knocks over FREDDY, who's entering)

FREDDY

What's the rush?

DANNY

Sorry. Hello, Freddy, see you later, Freddy.

FREDDY

You're leaving?

DANNY

Have to get to work.

FREDDY

It's Saturday.

DANNY

Tax time.

FREDDY

Wait! I wanted to ask you something.

DANNY

I'll be home this afternoon. (He rushes out).

FREDDY

That brother of yours is so rude! There's a party tonight I wanted to ask him to. Everyone is supposed to come as characters from a Rodgers and Hammerstein show. (Sourly) Danny would make a very good Billy Bigelow! He was a bastard, too! (He looks rather glum).

JIMMY

Is that the only thing that's bothering you?

FREDDY

Jimmy, how long have we been neighbors?

JIMMY

More than a year, I'm sure.

FREDDY

Would you agree we've become pretty good friends?

JIMMY

We know you're gay, Freddy.

FREDDY

But did you know I have a thing for Danny?

JIMMY

(Pause) Does HE know it?

FREDDY

What can I say? I find him attractive, in his own unique way, but we also have many things in common. I mean we laugh at the same things... *when* he laughs... And I'll tell you, I truly believe Danny has his own little secret, too....

JIMMY

Wait a minute! You think Danny is gay?

FREDDY

People get a feeling for these things.

JIMMY

I'm afraid it's called wishful thinking.

FREDDY

Look, I know these days they claim it's all genetic, but sometimes a background check helps, and frankly, your brother has always been very close-mouthed about that. So maybe you can help me out. Tell me. Was your father very strict?

JIMMY

Our father was a Baptist minister.

FREDDY

That answers that one!

JIMMY

I guess Danny and I both had some identity problems when we were younger. Our father was extremely rigid. I think his role models were the Old Testament Prophets. I guess mother tried to compensate for that by being overly protective and emotional. The result is, as kids we were constantly pushed and pulled between those two extremes. In the end, I found an escape in my music. I guess I always felt that Danny was able to deal with it, until he finally went away to college.

FREDDY

Maybe you're right about wishful thinking, but I'll tell you, I've always felt he was attracted to me, too.

JIMMY

Freddy, there's something you need to know.

FREDDY

I need to know I'm wrong?

JIMMY

Danny is going to ask Peggy to marry him.

FREDDY

Huh? You mean I'm VERY wrong!

JIMMY

I'm afraid so.

FREDDY

Well, I'm just glad I didn't make a complete ass of myself.

JIMMY

(Pause) And now I hope I don't do that.

FREDDY

Maybe I'd better get out of here before you do. (He starts to go).

JIMMY

(He pulls FREDDY back into the chair) Freddy, wait a minute...

FREDDY

(Stands again) I really think I should leave.

JIMMY

Don't do that! (He pulls on FREDDY'S shirt, tearing the sleeve) Oh boy, now look what you made me do!

FREDDY

(Sits down) I'm sorry. I can probably mend it.

JIMMY

You're not the only person with a problem.

FREDDY

Everyone has problems, Jimmy. And they all think theirs is the worst and the most important. Why can't people just suck it up and get on with things? I ask you—

JIMMY

I'm in terrible situation, Freddy! You were surprised when I told you Danny plans to ask Peggy to marry him. I was even more surprised than you were. One night last week when Danny brought Peggy to Marco's, he had to get home early, but Peggy stayed on after he left. Well, when I finished playing, Peggy and I had a few more drinks, and we got to talking and having a good time, and one thing led to another... So anyway, I suppose you get the picture—

FREDDY

You're saying you and Peggy—

JIMMY

I had no idea there was something between Danny and Peggy!

FREDDY

What did Peggy tell you?

JIMMY

We didn't talk about Danny that night.

FREDDY

Oh boy.

JIMMY

I wonder if I should tell Danny.

FREDDY

That depends. What do you think of Peggy?

JIMMY

JIMMY

Look, Freddy, I don't really know what to think. I like her, but if she's dating Danny, why the heck did she get involved with me? I don't want to hurt Danny, but shouldn't he know about it?

FREDDY

For heaven's sake, blockhead, talk to Peggy.

JIMMY

What happened that night was a very spontaneous thing. The fact is we'd both had too much to drink. Look at my situation for a minute. I don't know what I think about Peggy, but I do know that I'm still working on my MFA, and I don't have a real job, so I'm dependent on Danny. Even if I did care for Peggy, and I am not saying I DO, I'm still not ready for a major commitment! God! And now I learn Danny actually wants to ask her to marry him! So what would you do?

FREDDY

Well, I'd talk to Peggy.

JIMMY

That's a very sensible idea. When are you going to talk to her?

FREDDY

Hey, I meant if I were *you* I'd talk to her.

JIMMY

That won't work! Because of Danny I'd feel too embarrassed to discuss it with her.

FREDDY

That doesn't mean I have to embarrass myself!

JIMMY

But you won't do that! She knows you, she trusts you. She likes you.

FREDDY

It looks as if she likes ALL of us.

JIMMY

Thanks, Freddy! You really are a friend!

FREDDY

Oh boy! You know I have this terrible sense of déjà vu.

JIMMY

You mean you've done this before?

FREDDY

I feel like I've been in a situation like this my entire life! It all began with my sister, Ruth. When she was about ten and I was eight, my mother decided to sign her up for ballet lessons. But Ruth didn't want to take ballet lessons, and so I let Ruth talk me into taking them in her place.

JIMMY

Your mother must have been surprised.

FREDDY

Mom was kind of spacey.

JIMMY

Well, I promise I won't forget this! I'll owe you a big favor.

FREDDY

I know you will. But what the heck am I going to say to Peggy?

JIMMY

(JIMMY thinks it over) Just say that what happened the other night was a mistake. And I think it should be forgotten.

FREDDY

But are you sure that's how you really feel about it?

JIMMY

(Pause) Look, it's almost nine. Peggy comes today, and she'll be here in a few minutes to clean. So I'm going to collect my music and get going. I have to give my revisions to Professor Paderofsky at nine-thirty. And thanks for everything, Freddy. I mean that. Now wish me good luck on my symphony. (JIMMY then exits, hurriedly).

(As he is about to exit, he encounters PEGGY, who is coming into the room)

JIMMY

Peggy! You're early!

PEGGY

I know. I wanted to talk to you, Jimmy.

JIMMY

I don't have time now. Talk to Freddy.

PEGGY

But I don't want to talk to Freddy!

FREDDY

Thanks a lot!

PEGGY

I'm sorry, Freddy. I didn't mean it that way.

JIMMY

Good. And now I have to go. I'll see you later. (He exits).

PEGGY

Wow! That seemed like a brush-off.

FREDDY

No. Jimmy has an important appointment. He's taking Professor Paderofsky the revisions on his symphony.

PEGGY

Well, I wanted to talk to him about something important, too. But I guess that doesn't matter.

FREDDY

(Pause) What was it?

PEGGY

It was personal.

FREDDY

Would you like to tell me?

PEGGY

(Glumly) It was VERY personal, Freddy. (She now takes a mop and bucket out of the closet, fills the bucket with soap and water).

FREDDY

Let me make a guess. Did it have to do with the other night?

PEGGY

(She stops mopping, looks at FREDDY) What other night!

FREDDY

Jimmy told me all about it.

PEGGY

You mean *that* night?

FREDDY

Yes. Because he feels bad about what happened.

PEGGY

Oh wow! That's flattering!

FREDDY

What I mean is he feels guilty about it. He said you were both drunk.

PEGGY

Well, at least he feels guilty about it!

FREDDY

He felt like it was a mistake.

PEGGY

Is there anything he didn't tell you?

FREDDY

Well, I wouldn't know what he didn't tell me.

PEGGY

(She starts mopping again) Well, anyway, that tells me what he thinks of me!

FREDDY

(He thinks a moment, then stops her from mopping) Peggy, just a minute, there is something else I need to tell you.

PEGGY

Oh sure! I suppose now you're going to tell me that Jimmy is gay.

FREDDY

(Thinks) Jimmy is gay?

PEGGY

Right! I knew that's what you were going to tell me! (She starts mopping violently).

FREDDY

(It suddenly strikes him as the perfect ploy) That's right, Peggy, Jimmy is gay.

PEGGY

That's ridiculous!

FREDDY

You see he's having trouble accepting it.

PEGGY

(She stops mopping again) I'm sorry, but I find that impossible to believe.

FREDDY

Because of his family background, he was ashamed to admit it.

PEGGY

But Jimmy and I made love last week!

FREDDY

Jimmy and I made love last night!

PEGGY

(Stares at him) No! I can't believe it!

FREDDY

I suppose I should feel insulted by that.

PEGGY

No! I'M the one who's insulted! (She starts mopping violently again).

FREDDY

I'm sorry, Peggy, but it seemed like you should know.

PEGGY

But it's such a surprise! I don't know what to think! (She starts mopping pensively).

FREDDY

Well, I've done what I had to do. Do you mind if I leave now?

PEGGY

No. I wish you would.

FREDDY

(Breathing a sigh of relief) Thanks. (He exits).

PEGGY

(Stops mopping, is pensive) But I don't believe that. I CAN'T believe it! (She starts to mop again, her thoughts otherwise engaged).

(JIMMY now enters, stops when he sees PEGGY and almost leaves again)

PEGGY

(Still pre-occupied) No! (This freezes JIMMY who thinks she's noticed him)

JIMMY

Um, hello, Peggy...I was in such a hurry I forgot my revisions. Where's Freddy?

PEGGY

Freddy's gone.

JIMMY

(He looks around frantically for FREDDY) I guess he has. I thought you were talking to him.

PEGGY

I was talking to myself.

JIMMY

You were talking to yourself?

PEGGY

Do you think that makes me crazy!

JIMMY

I guess that depends on what you were saying to yourself.

PEGGY

I was saying 'I don't believe it.'

JIMMY

Oh.

PEGGY

(Pause; She stops mopping) Jimmy, don't you think we really need to have a talk?

JIMMY

But didn't you talk to Freddy?

PEGGY

That's what I want to talk about. Jimmy, I know we live in very open times, and that can be quite confusing. It can make us confused about who we are, and so people do a lot of experimenting, trying to discover their identities. And sometimes they make mistakes, or they do things they later regret.

JIMMY

(Certain she is talking about their encounter) That's right. I'm glad you understand that, Peggy.

PEGGY

(Relieved) Of course I do, Jimmy. We ALL make mistakes.

JIMMY

Yes, Peggy... In fact, I guess I made one.

PEGGY

I've been trying to talk to you for a week—

JIMMY

I've been making the final revisions on my symphony. Right now, that is the most important thing in my life.

PEGGY

I understand. But is it the *only* important thing in your life.

JIMMY

I suppose not.

PEGGY

I only wanted to tell you that I had a wonderful time the other night.

JIMMY

You did? What did you do?

PEGGY

JIMMY!

JIMMY

Oh. *that* night!

PEGGY

Have you already forgotten about it?

JIMMY

Of course not, but didn't you agree with me it was a mistake?

PEGGY

(Pause) Well... Yes, I guess, in a way, it was.

JIMMY

I mean I thought that's what you were telling me.

PEGGY

Well, I wouldn't want you to get the wrong idea about me. I don't usually do that sort of thing.

JIMMY

No, no! But the important thing is we agree it was a mistake.

PEGGY

(Not so sure) Yes... in a way.

JIMMY

And since we agree, there's something I'd like to ask you.

PEGGY

Yes?

JIMMY

What do you think of Danny?

PEGGY

Huh? What do I think of Danny... your brother?

JIMMY

I know he's been bringing you down to Marco's a lot recently.

PEGGY

Yes. To hear you play.

JIMMY

Let me tell you, Peggy, Danny is a wonderful person and he means a lot to me. And he thinks the world of you, Peggy.

PEGGY

What does that mean? You're telling me I have Danny's approval?

JIMMY

In fact, he'd like to see you become a member of our family.

PEGGY

Wait a minute! Are we talking about MARRIAGE?

JIMMY

Well...what do you think of the idea?

PEGGY

I'm sort of confused. What do *you* think of the idea?

JIMMY

I know it's a big step, Peggy, but if you're for it, then I am.

PEGGY

You are? (Pause) Boy, this comes as a surprise, but okay, I guess I am.

JIMMY

Yeah? That's wonderful!

PEGGY

I have to say it's a little sudden.

JIMMY

No, not really.

PEGGY

Well, I guess we have known each other for quite a while.

JIMMY

It almost seems like forever.

PEGGY

And I guess I can say it now, Jimmy... I do love you—

JIMMY

You love *me*?

PEGGY

I just wasn't sure how you felt.

JIMMY

Hold on a minute, Peggy. Uh, you've got it a little wrong!

PEGGY

Aren't you asking me to marry you?

JIMMY

To marry me! No, that's impossible!

PEGGY

Oh, thanks!

JIMMY

But I mean we hardly know each other/

PEGGY

I thought it seemed like forever!

JIMMY

And I'm still in school. I have no money and no job to speak of—

PEGGY

You don't have to say any more.

JIMMY

You simply made a mistake.

PEGGY

I sure did! You know what. Maybe Freddy was right after all. Maybe you are gay!

(Before JIMMY can respond to that, DANNY re-enters, looks at them uneasily)

DANNY

(To JIMMY) Did you tell her?

JIMMY

Um...

PEGGY

Freddy told me! But I find the whole idea ridiculous!

That bad? DANNY

Now wait a minute here— JIMMY

No, it's all right. Boy, you know something? I have to admit I suddenly feel very embarrassed. DANNY

Well, I feel HUMILIATED! PEGGY

Look, may I say something— JIMMY

No, there's no need for anybody but me to say anything. Listen, Peggy...(He walks towards her)... DANNY

DANNY! JIMMY

WATCH OUT! PEGGY

Whoa! (He trips over PEGGY'S bucket and falls over). DANNY

(They immediately rush to help DANNY off the floor; there is a quick BLACKOUT, and....)

THE FIRST ACT IS OVER

ACT TWO

(That evening; DANNY sits glumly at the table; JIMMY pours him coffee)

DANNY

I feel like drinking something other than coffee.

JIMMY

I just put in a frozen pizza.

DANNY

I'm not hungry.

JIMMY

That's no problem. I'm very hungry. So what did the doctor say?

DANNY

I'm okay.

JIMMY

So your ankle is all right?

DANNY

It was only a slight sprain.

JIMMY

Danny, why are you angry with Freddy?

DANNY

He upset me.

JIMMY

Did he say something to upset you?

Yes!

DANNY

What DID he say?

JIMMY

For one thing, he told me he didn't believe I really cared for Peggy in a romantic way.

DANNY

Oh. Well, he was probably just trying to make you feel better.

JIMMY

Well, he didn't do it!

DANNY

Is that the only reason you're upset with him?

JIMMY

I don't want to talk about it!

DANNY

All right.

JIMMY

I mean he realized I was already upset!

DANNY

But you don't want to talk about it.

JIMMY

It wasn't so much what he said. It was his timing.

DANNY

But you don't want to talk about it.

JIMMY

Nope.

DANNY

JIMMY

Fair enough.

DANNY

(Pause) He said he likes me.

JIMMY

Of course he likes you.

DANNY

He said he REALLY likes me!

JIMMY

He told you that?

DANNY

In so many words.

JIMMY

In how many words?

DANNY

I don't want to talk about it!

JIMMY

Fine.

DANNY

But will you tell me something?

JIMMY

Are you sure you want to talk about it?

DANNY

Do you think it's possible for someone to live thirty years and then, suddenly realize he doesn't actually know himself?

JIMMY

Yes, I do. For one thing, it's never easy to be honest with yourself. Anyway, that's what I think... What do you think?

DANNY

I don't think I want to talk about it!

JIMMY

I don't think I do, either.

DANNY

Listen...I'm going out for a drink.

JIMMY

You really feel like doing that?

DANNY

If I didn't feel like doing it, I wouldn't do it!

JIMMY

You'll probably be a barrel of laughs at Monohan's tonight!

DANNY

I'm sorry, brother. You're probably right. I'm upset and angry, and it's probably not the best time to go and drink, but that seems to be the time when we most often do it! But I don't have any reason to be upset with you, do I? (JIMMY looks a bit guilty) Why don't you come with me? We'll get a little pleasantly plastered and do a little male-bonding, just the two of us. What do you say?

JIMMY

I'd like to do that, but I'm waiting to hear from Professor Paderofsky.

DANNY

About your revisions?

JIMMY

He was showing my revisions to the committee this morning and he promised he'd get back to me when he got their response, but I haven't heard from him, and I'm getting a little nervous.

DANNY

Well, he likes it, doesn't he?

JIMMY

To be honest, after everything that's happened in the last week, I'm not really sure that I care any longer!

DANNY

You're just worried.

JIMMY

I'm *just* worried? That's like saying. It's just your left testicle that's gone! I'm sorry! I've been working on it for so long, I've lost my perspective. I'm beginning to feel like I'm revising it, but I don't feel like I'm improving it! So I'll tell you, whatever the committee thinks, I'm finished with it!

DANNY

Now wait a minute, brother—

JIMMY

No. I mean that!

DANNY

Well, I guess we both need some time to think.

JIMMY

I'll tell you what. I might be joining you later!

DANNY

I'll be at Monohan's.

(As DANNY rises, FREDDY enters, wearing a rather showy 'cowboy' costume)

FREDDY

Hello, everyone. How do you like my costume?

DANNY

(Pushing past him) *What* costume?

FREDDY

Hey! It's for the Rodgers and Hammerstein party! From OKLAHOMA! (DANNY exits, ignoring FREDDY) Where's he going?

JIMMY

He says he's going to Monohans.

FREDDY

I'm afraid I did something I shouldn't have.

JIMMY

I know about it.

FREDDY

Danny told you?

JIMMY

Yes.

FREDDY

Well, I'm not ashamed of what I did! I simply expressed my feelings honestly, and I don't think we should ever be ashamed of doing that. Of course I have to admit my timing could have been better, but I was thinking I might never get another opportunity.

JIMMY

Well, at least you had the courage to be honest.

FREDDY

If I'd had the brains to be patient, I might've gotten better results!

JIMMY

Don't knock yourself, Freddy. I didn't even have the courage to be honest and tell Danny Peggy thinks she's in love with me!

FREDDY

That shouldn't be a problem.

JIMMY

What? Did you tell him that, too!

FREDDY

No, but I told Peggy.

JIMMY

Peggy already knows it!

FREDDY

No. I mean I told Peggy you were gay.

JIMMY

So that's what she meant!

FREDDY

(Pause) And I also told her you and I had slept together.

JIMMY

What! For crying out loud!

FREDDY

Well, you wanted me to talk to her!

JIMMY

That not what I had in mind!

FREDDY

Now look, you had a problem, but you didn't want to handle it yourself. You told me you didn't want to get involved with Peggy, so I thought telling her you were gay was a good way to solve your problem. Now if you're embarrassed someone thinks you're gay, that's too bad, but you could have told her something yourself!

JIMMY

You're right. And I wouldn't be ashamed of it if I was gay.

FREDDY

Then what's the problem?

JIMMY

Well, for one thing, I'm NOT gay!

FREDDY

So now YOU'RE angry with me, too!

JIMMY

No, I'm not angry with you. It's just that.... Oh, forget it!

FREDDY

How can I forget 'IT', if I don't know what 'IT' is?

JIMMY

'It's' nothing.

FREDDY

Jimmy, for heavens' sake, you can tell me.

JIMMY

It's not important.

FREDDY

(Mildly insulted) Oh, all right, then let's forget it.

JIMMY

Okay! Look, if you really want to know—

FREDDY

I don't care.

JIMMY

But if you're going to keep nagging me to tell you—

FREDDY

Who's nagging? I have my own problems.

JIMMY

But if it's that important for me to tell you—

FREDDY

It's not important.

JIMMY

All right. You win. I'll tell you. The problem is I'm not so sure how I feel about Peggy.

FREDDY

You're *what*!

JIMMY

Are you happy? You dragged it out of me!

FREDDY

Wait a minute. Are you telling me you're in love with Peggy?

JIMMY

No, I'm not!

FREDDY

You're not?

JIMMY

I'm simply saying I have some deep feelings for her.

FREDDY

When did you come to this decision?

JIMMY

I haven't actually decided anything yet. But this morning, when Peggy said she was in love with me, it affected me. I mean she practically said she was willing to marry me, and I have to admit that was an emotional experience for me.

FREDDY

It's going to come as a surprise to Danny, too!

JIMMY

Naturally I'm concerned about that.

FREDDY

And don't forget. You're also not prepared to make a commitment.

JIMMY

I'm not?

FREDDY

That's what *you* told me!

JIMMY

You mean because I don't have my degree and I'm broke and I don't have a real job?

FREDDY

Well, Peggy has a decent job.

JIMMY

And now I have to convince her I'm not gay.

FREDDY

(Laughs) I don't think that would be a problem?

JIMMY

Boy! I feel like an ass!

FREDDY

You do? Okay, listen. All you have to do is tell her the truth.

JIMMY

It sounds simple, but this has become a complicated mess.

FREDDY

You want my help?

JIMMY

Good God no!

FREDDY

I understand. (He starts out the door).

JIMMY

Where are you going?

FREDDY

To find Danny.

JIMMY

Be tactful.

FREDDY

Well, naturally! That's my middle name! Look, Jimmy, Danny is still my friend, and he is upset and it's partly my fault. The least I can do is apologize.

JIMMY

Just be careful, Freddy. You're going into a bar, and you know how alcohol affects you!

FREDDY

For heaven's sake, one drink has never made me sick!

JIMMY

Yes, it has!

FREDDY

Oh. THAT time. But I was very upset that night.

JIMMY

You're upset now.

FREDDY

I know. Sometimes I really screw up! (He looks nervous).

JIMMY

Look, you can handle it, and I want you to know that I love you. (As JIMMY is saying this, PEGGY appears, but quickly backs away).

FREDDY

I know that, and I love you, too. (They hug).

(After they have embraced, PEGGY comes in, looking extremely awkward)

PEGGY

I guess I'm always interrupting.

JIMMY

Peggy! I'm really glad to see you!

FREDDY

I'm just leaving. Ta Ta!

PEGGY

No, Freddy, I wanted to talk to you, too.

FREDDY

I'm sorry, I don't have time. I'll see you both later. (FREDDY exits).

PEGGY

(Looking after FREDDY) Is there some kind of gay rodeo going on?

JIMMY

Peggy, I'm really glad you came back. I was about to call you.

PEGGY

I feel I owe you an apology.

JIMMY

You owed ME an apology? For what!

PEGGY

I made a stupid mistake this morning, and it was embarrassing for you..

JIMMY

I think you were the one who was embarrassed!

PEGGY

But I want you to know I'm not angry because you're gay. That would be insensitive of me.

JIMMY

Peggy, for heaven's sake, I'm not gay!

PEGGY

(Genuine surprise) No? Since when?

JIMMY

Good grief! Freddy just made that up!

PEGGY

Why in the world would he do that!

JIMMY

Well, it all began this morning, when Danny told me he wanted to ask you to marry him.

PEGGY

Danny told you WHAT?

JIMMY

Well, you have been going out.

PEGGY

We've just gone to dinner a couple of times before going down to Marco's to hear you play. I had no idea Danny looked at me romantically.

JIMMY

But how could you think that FREDDY and I—

PEGGY

I never believed that!

JIMMY
You had good reason not to!

PEGGY
But Jimmy... now I AM a little upset.

JIMMY
You mean with me?

PEGGY
Well, it seems as if you were trying to talk me into marrying Danny!

JIMMY
I was just trying to find out what you thought about the idea.

PEGGY
For goodness sake, I didn't even know about the idea! I thought you were asking me for yourself!

JIMMY
(Pause) I think a lot of you, Peggy.

PEGGY
Yes?

JIMMY
But Danny doesn't know what's happened between us.

PEGGY
Danny's a big boy, isn't he?

JIMMY
That's what I told Freddy.

PEGGY
I think Freddy knows it. (She smiles)

JIMMY
(Laughs) Yeah! And I guess if I've learned anything from this whole mess, I've learned you have to face up to your responsibilities and tell the truth! In the end, lies only make things worse,

especially when it's a lie that everybody's going to find out, anyway!
So I suppose now the best thing is to come right out and tell Danny the truth, even if he beats me to a pulp!

PEGGY

What! He'd beat you to a pulp!

JIMMY

He is very upset and now he's down at Monohans drinking!

PEGGY

Oh, great!

JIMMY

Look, Peggy, I'm still financially dependent on Danny.

PEGGY

But you'll be getting your MFA soon now.

JIMMY

(Looks despondent) I'm starting to wonder about that.

PEGGY

But haven't you finished your symphony?

JIMMY

Yes, but it hasn't been accepted by the committee and it's beginning to look like it won't be, and I might as well tell you the truth about that, too. I have decided if it's rejected, I'm going to leave school.

PEGGY

You can't! You've already put so much work into it!

JIMMY

Does the world really need one more second-rate symphony? I'm beginning to feel it's just not important!

PEGGY

All right, Jimmy, I'm not going to lecture you, but I would just like to say one thing. Sometimes we all feel like what we're doing isn't very important. I mean every day I try to teach things to kids most of them don't care about or think are important, and believe me, that can get pretty

discouraging! But I tell myself it's important to me! So I guess you need to ask yourself if your symphony is important to *you*.

JIMMY

(Pause) At this moment, I really don't know.

PEGGY

Oh, Jimmy, be reasonable! (She suddenly sniffs) That stinks!

JIMMY

(Insulted) Thanks!

PEGGY

No, I mean it smells like something's burning in here!

(Suddenly, they both look toward the oven and notice smoke is pouring out of it)

JIMMY

My pizza! Oh my god, what do we do!

PEGGY

For heaven's sake! (She removes the burnt pizza from the oven) You could have started the place on fire!

JIMMY

I'm an idiot!

PEGGY

No you're not. But you're not much of a cook!

JIMMY

You're absolutely right! I need help!

PEGGY

(Sly) It's sure lucky I was here.

JIMMY

I'm very glad you're here!

PEGGY

Are you?

JIMMY

And something else...I think you're wonderful. (Suddenly, he kisses PEGGY).

(As they kiss, the doorbell rings; then PROFESSOR PADEROFSKY enters)

PROFESSOR PADEROFSKY

Jeemy! Hello. Excuse me, but I got to see you!

JIMMY

Professor Paderofsky!

PROFESSOR PADEROFSKY

I haf news, Jeemy.

JIMMY

(Glumly) All right, let's have it.

PROFESSOR PADEROFSKY

Don't look so gloom, Jeemy! It's gooda news!

JIMMY

Professor, Are you telling me the committee has accepted my symphony!

PROFESSOR PADEROFSKY

I already tell them it superb, and now they in agreement!

PEGGY

Jimmy... that's wonderful!

JIMMY

I can hardly believe it! Thank you, Professor, thank you very much! (He kisses him).

PROFESSOR PADEROFSKY

But I not finish yet.

JIMMY

Oh no! I suppose they want me to make MORE revisions. (PEGGY looks nervously at him)
Well... all right, I'll do it!

PROFESSOR PADEROFISKY

No, no! I want to premiere your symphony with the orchestra next fall, and I been given the permission.

JIMMY

What! My God!

PEGGY

Oh, Jeemy! I mean Jimmy!

PROFESSOR PADEROFISKY

Congratulations, my boy, on a fine piece of music!

JIMMY

Thank you very much, Professor, thank you!

PROFESSOR PADEROFISKY

You deserve it. (He sniffs) Whew! It smell really bad in here.

JIMMY

I'm sorry. I was cooking a pizza.

PROFESSOR PADEROFISKY

Ah. Now I know why I hate the pizza!

JIMMY

But I burned it.

PROFESSOR PADEROFISKY

I think I'm go now.

JIMMY

I owe you a lot, Professor.

PROFESSOR PADEROFISKY

One thing more.

JIMMY

Yes?

PROFESSOR PADEROFSKY

I'm request the University hire you as instructor next semester.

JIMMY

A job!

PROFESSOR PADEROFSKY

(Holds a handkerchief to his nose) But we talk later.

JIMMY

What can I say?

PROFESSOR PADEROFSKY

Say nothing! I gotta get out of here! (He exits).

PEGGY

Jimmy, it's really incredible!

JIMMY

Listen. Why don't we go somewhere to celebrate?

PEGGY

You want me to go with you?

JIMMY

I'll tell you, Peggy, the way I feel right now I want you to MARRY me!

PEGGY

Maybe we'd better think about that one a little more.

JIMMY

Well, I DO think you're wonderful.

PEGGY

And I think we need to tell Danny.

JIMMY

Maybe Freddy's already done that.?

PEGGY

Sometimes Freddy isn't real tactful.

JIMMY

Oh boy is that true! And Danny is already upset!

(And at that moment, DANNY does, in fact, enter the room. He looks at them)

DANNY

Well, what can I say?

JIMMY

What do you WANT to say?

DANNY

(He suddenly smiles broadly) Well, for one thing, congratulations.

JIMMY

(Very relieved) Then Freddy did tell you?

DANNY

Freddy? No. But I ran into Professor Paderofsky as he was leaving. And I think it's really fantastic news!

JIMMY

Oh, that. Yes, it is. Thanks.

DANNY

So I think we should all go celebrate.

JIMMY

Before we do that, however, there's something else you should know.

PEGGY

Wait a minute, Jimmy. Let me tell him.

JIMMY

No, Peggy, I should tell him.

DANNY

Tell me what?

PEGGY

Jimmy... please let me tell him.

JIMMY

No, Peggy, it's my responsibility!

PEGGY

But I really think I should be the one to tell him.

DANNY

For crying out loud! Tell me WHAT!

JIMMY, PEGGY

(Together) Danny, we're in love.

DANNY

You two?... With each other?

PEGGY

That's right, Danny.

JIMMY

And so if you want to hit me, well... go ahead!

DANNY

(He comes at JIMMY, but instead of hitting him, he hugs him) Congratulations, brother. Why would I want to hit you?

JIMMY

Well, this morning you said YOU wanted to marry Peggy.

DANNY

That seems like a year ago! A lot has happened since then.

JIMMY

So it has.

DANNY

Let me tell you it has. You know, they say the hardest thing you ever get to know is your own self, because I guess a lot a times you're not so happy with what ya learn. Well, I spent a whole lot of this day, looking at just who and what I am, and I've come to a few conclusions, and one of them is that I probably do love Peggy.

JIMMY

You do!

DANNY

Absolutely I do! I think the world of you, Peggy, and I really hope you feel the same way about

me.

PEGGY

(Tentatively) Of course I do, Danny.

DANNY

And I think that probably adds up to love. But not necessarily the kind of love people marry for. I guess, in this case, it's the kind of love very good friends feel for each other.

JIMMY

So you're not angry with us?

DANNY

Angry! I'm very happy for both of you, brother!

JIMMY

Thanks, Danny!

DANNY

So now... let's have that celebration. You mentioned something about Freddy. Do you know where he is?

JIMMY

Don't you? He went down to Monohans to talk to you.

DANNY

I never went to Moohans I've just been out walking.

(And at that moment, FREDDY re-enters, with his costume in a bit of disarray)

FREDDY

For one thing, I've had four whiskies!

JIMMY

Uh-oh, he must be drunk.

FREDDY

And they were DOUBLES!

DANNY

He must be VERY drunk!

FREDDY

(Approaching DANNY) No, I'm just fine! But I've got something to tell you....

DANNY

Yeah?

FREDDY

But first I need a glass of water—

DANNY

Help yourself.

FREDDY

I intend to! (He pours a glass of water, but instead of drinking it, he dumps it over his head) There! Now, listen to me! I want you to know it would be absurd for you to marry Peggy!

DANNY

I know.

FREDDY

(Momentarily taken aback) You do?

DANNY

I just told her that.

FREDDY

Well, good for you! And now I'll tell you something else. I believe your feelings for me go a lot deeper than you are willing to admit!

DANNY

(Pause) You might be right.

FREDDY

(Amazement) I *am*?

DANNY

Yes, but I have to think about it a lot more than I have.

FREDDY

(Relenting, mildly stunned) Well yes...sure natchurly—

DANNY

And now I'm going to tell all of you something I've never told anyone before. When I was just a kid, probably twelve or thirteen, I had my first sexual encounter, and it was with another boy, Tommy Olsen—

JIMMY

Tommy! Good God, he became a professional wrestler!

FREDDY

I always knew they were!

DANNY

The point is, it was the kind of youthful experimentation I guess almost all kids go through at one time or another...

FREDDY

Boy, I know I sure did.

DANNY

However, Tommy and I got sort of interrupted... by father.

JIMMY

Oh my God!

FREDDY

What exactly do you mean by 'interrupted'?

DANNY

Fortunately, he didn't actually catch us red-handed, to coin a phrase, so he wasn't exactly sure what we'd been up to. But, of course, he had some suspicion. And I can never forget the 'Sinners Burn in Hell' lecture he gave on Sodom and Gomorrah and every other sinful place. The point being that God knows everything you do, and he makes sure every sin is properly punished. Now at that time, this made a rather strong impression on me, but in time I would have grown out of it if something much worse hadn't happened. About a week later, while riding his bike, Tommy got hit by a car.

PEGGY

Oh no!

JIMMY

Yeah. I kind of remember that.

DANNY

I think he ended up with a broken leg. Of course it could have been a lot worse,, but I was suddenly convinced that was God's punishment for him, so of course I was anxiously waiting to find out what was in store for me! In the end, I did outgrow that kind of superstitious thinking, but I never totally got over the guilty feelings that experience left me with. So what I am saying, Freddy, while I'm not exactly sure what my deeper feelings are for you, it's going to take me some time to work them out.

FREDDY

Don't go off riding a bicycle!

DANNY

But in the meantime, we're going to celebrate Jimmy's good news!

FREDDY

(Cheered immensely) I should say we are!

DANNY

And then I'm going to that Rodgers and Hammerstein party with you.

FREDDY

You are!

JIMMY

But you'll need a costume.

DANNY

Look, Peggy can shave my head.

PEGGY

(Pause) What! You mean... Yul Brynner?

FREDDY

Sure! THE KING AND I! It's perfect!

JIMMY

Hey! This calls for a toast! (He locates a bottle of booze).

FREDDY

A toast! No thanks! (He suddenly looks very sick) Excuse me, you all! (He runs from the room;

the others laugh; There is A BLACKOUT, and....)

THE PLAY IS OVER

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS: *When I wrote Mondo I wanted to see if I could successfully write something a little kinder than my usual rather dark comic satires with characters who actually liked one another, the humor (hopefully not too far-fetched) arising in classical comedy from numerous misunderstandings. It seemed to work happily or at least you thought so!*

AUTHOR BIO: Other plays are published by Playscripts; Off The Wall Plays and Lazy Bee. I've had many poems produced recently, but no reason to list various journals!

