

**Shacking Up**  
by Jack Karp

Dialogue Sample:  
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MADDY

I hope you're enjoying yourself.

JEFFREY

As a matter of fact, I am. This is turning out to be a lot more fun than I expected. You don't have to show up until eight at night, the women are hot, and the men are gay. Talk about a dream job.

(MADDY goes to exit.)

Hey, where are you going?

MADDY

We need Sarah for the murder scene.

JEFFREY

Actually, Maddy, I've been thinking about that scene and, well, it just doesn't work for me.

MADDY

What do you mean, it doesn't work for you?

JEFFREY

Well, it seems so out of character. I would never kill someone.

MADDY

You're drunk, Jeffrey. Who knows what you're capable of when you're drunk.

JEFFREY

I'm not drunk. You haven't even let me have one drink yet.

(MADDY goes to the bar, makes JEFFREY a drink, and gives it to him.)

Well, it's about time.

(JEFFREY begins to take a drink and immediately spits it out.)

Ugh! What is this?

MADDY

It's scotch.

JEFFREY

No, it isn't.

MADDY

Yes, Jeffrey, it is.

JEFFREY

I've tasted scotch and this is not scotch. This is... iced tea?

MADDY

For crying out loud. Yes, it's iced tea.

JEFFREY

What's iced tea doing in a scotch bottle?

MADDY

Just because it says scotch on the bottle doesn't mean it's scotch, Jeffrey. You can't even remember any of your lines sober.

JEFFREY

Well, I'm never gonna get drunk on this stuff.

MADDY

(Calling off.)

Can I get a stagehand out here?

(A STAGEHAND enters. MADDY whispers in his ear. He goes over to JEFFREY, picks him up and throws him over his shoulder, spins him around a few times, puts him back down, and exits.)

How do you feel now?

JEFFREY

Dizzy.

MADDY

Funny how quickly it hits, isn't it?

(She goes to leave again.)

JEFFREY

You can't make me do something I don't want to do.

MADDY

Jeffrey, what are you wearing?

JEFFREY

Okay, this doesn't count.

MADDY

Look, Jeffrey, if you don't kill Sarah, then we don't get her money.

JEFFREY

So, who cares? You're a famous actress. We don't need her --

MADDY

I was a famous actress, Jeffrey! I can't get a decent role anymore because someone keeps ruining all the plays I'm in.

JEFFREY

I won't do it.

MADDY

Fine.

(Calling off.)

Can someone send Josh out here?

JEFFREY

No, don't spin me around again.

(JOSH enters. He looks exactly like JEFFREY – same size, same build, same hair – and he is wearing the clothes JEFFREY was wearing before he put on the dress. When he talks, he talks exactly like JEFFREY.)

MADDY

Jeffrey, meet Josh. Josh is your understudy.

JEFFREY

Hey, those are my clothes!

JOSH

Well, it's not like you're using them.

(JOSH walks over to the bar to pour himself a drink.)

MADDY

Josh, what are you doing?

JOSH

I'm having a drink. This show is so boring.

JOSH (cont'd.)

(To the audience.)  
Come on, tell her.

MADDY

That's enough, Josh. Save it for the rest of the play.

JOSH

(Dropping JEFFREY's accent for his normal, British one.)  
My apologies. Just trying to get into form, what.

JEFFREY

You're going to have this uptight little twit kill Sarah?

JOSH

I am trained in seventeen different varieties of stage combat.

(JEFFREY moves in on JOSH, pointing his finger in his chest.)

JEFFREY

Oh, please, you don't scare –

(JOSH grabs JEFFREY's arm and quickly flips him over onto the stage.)

JOSH

That was number twelve.

MADDY

Josh is a classically-trained actor on leave from the Royal Shakespeare Company. I've seen his resumé. Hamlet at Stratford, Lear in London. Jeffrey should be a breeze in comparison.

JEFFREY

A breeze? This is a tough role. You can't just drop him into it in the middle like this. He hasn't had time to get ready.

JOSH

I assure you, I am fully prepared and in character.

JEFFREY

Alright, hotshot, what's my next line?

JOSH

(In JEFFREY's accent.)  
Hey, how'd you do that?

JEFFREY

Hey, how'd you do that?

MADDY

It'll be nice to work with a professional for a change, especially during the sex scene.

JEFFREY

There's a sex scene?

(JEFFREY starts looking through the script for a sex scene. MADDY takes the script from him and hands it to JOSH.)

MADDY

It's in the second act. And I'm sure Josh will be very good at it, won't you, Josh?

JOSH

(In his British accent.)

I have done *Romeo and Juliet* three times, what.

MADDY

Maybe we should rehearse it once just in case.

(MADDY kisses JOSH on the mouth. JEFFREY watches.)

JEFFREY

Alright, I'll do it.

(MADDY continues kissing JOSH. JEFFREY pulls them apart.)

I said, I'll do it!

MADDY

That's what I thought. I'll go get Sarah.

JOSH

What about me?

MADDY

It looks like we won't be needing you after all, Josh. You can go.

JOSH

Go? I flew over three thousand miles for this bloody part.

JEFFREY

You heard her, ol' chap. Bug off.

JOSH

Bloody Yanks. No wonder your theatre is such shite.

(JOSH starts off and then turns around and walks back over to JEFFREY. He grabs JEFFREY and flips him again. Then, he drops the script onto JEFFREY.)

That was number seven.

(JOSH exits.)

JEFFREY

And leave my clothes!

MADDY

I'll be right back, Jeffrey. And don't talk to the audience while I'm gone.

(MADDY exits.)

JEFFREY

(To the audience, as he gets up.)

I don't get it. How can we be so broke? All of you paid money to see this, didn't you? You, how much did your ticket cost?

(He gets a response.)

That can't be right. Let me see your ticket.

(JEFFREY goes out into the audience and takes a look at the ticket.)

You've got to be kidding. You really paid this much to see this show?

(Addressing the person next to the audience member he is talking to.)

Your friend's not too bright, is he?

(Suddenly, we can hear MADDY and SARAH arguing off-stage.)

SARAH

(Off-stage.)

I told you, Madison, I don't feel well.

MADDY

(Off-stage.)

Stop being such a baby.

JEFFREY

Oh, shit!

(JEFFREY returns the ticket and runs back on-stage.)

SARAH

(Off-stage.)

You heard mother. I need my rest.

MADDY

(Off-stage.)

You can rest all you want after this scene.

(Suddenly, SARAH comes rushing out onto the stage as if pushed from behind. JEFFREY quickly looks down at the script and reads his next line.)

JEFFREY

(Reading.)

Oh, Sarah, I thought they'd never let us alone together.

(SARAH doesn't respond. She lies down on the sofa. JEFFREY reads.)

I've missed you, too.

(SARAH still doesn't respond. JEFFREY reads.)

Yes, Sarah, I –

SARAH

Leave me alone. I don't feel well.

JEFFREY

Well, what am I supposed to do about this scene?

SARAH

Do it without me.

(JEFFREY shrugs. Then, he begins doing the scene, reading his lines in his voice and reading SARAH's lines in a falsetto voice, and moving from one side of the stage to the other as he switches characters.)

JEFFREY

Oh, Sarah, I thought they'd never let us alone together.

(Falsetto.)

I know. I've missed you.

JEFFREY (cont'd.)

(Normal.)

I've missed you, too.

(Falsetto.)

You don't know how hard it is being away from you.

(Normal.)

Yes, Sarah, I feel the same.

(Falsetto.)

Oh, Jeffrey, kiss --

SARAH

Would you stop that!

JEFFREY

Hey, I'm just trying to give these people something to watch. Do you have any idea what they paid for their tickets?

SARAH

I don't care. I am not doing the scene.

JEFFREY

This isn't right. Maddy said you'd be putty in my hands once you saw how irresistible I look in this light.

(The spotlight comes on JEFFREY.)

SARAH

Oh, Jeffrey...

(SARAH runs into JEFFREY's arms.)

JEFFREY

Man, where was this thing when I was in high school?

SARAH

... kiss me.

(They kiss. While they are kissing, JEFFREY reaches over to the table for the knife, but he can't reach it. He stops kissing SARAH.)

JEFFREY

Wait. This isn't going to work.



(JEFFREY pulls SARAH closer to the table. He kisses her again and while he is kissing her, he reaches over to the table for the knife. He is close enough to the table now, but the table is too low for him to reach. He begins slowly lowering himself while kissing SARAH. SARAH stops kissing him.)

SARAH

Is something the matter?

JEFFREY

No, no, I just thought you'd be more comfortable on the sofa.

(He sits SARAH down on the sofa and sits next to her.)

There. Let's try this.

(He kisses her again. While they are kissing, he reaches over to the table for the knife, but now he is facing the wrong way – the knife is behind him – and he can't find it. He feels around for it for a moment and then to look for it.)

SARAH

What are you doing?

JEFFREY

These instructions don't make any sense. Look at this. "Jeffrey kisses Sarah and while kissing her, he reaches over to the table for the knife and stabs Sarah." Now, just how am I supposed --

SARAH

What? That is not in the script.

JEFFREY

Sure it is. See, it's right here.

(SARAH takes the script from him and looks at it.)

SARAH

Why isn't this scene in my copy of the script?

JEFFREY

Don't look at me.

(SARAH takes a cell phone out of her purse and begins to dial.)

Hey, what are you doing?

SARAH

I'm finding out what is going on.

SARAH (cont'd.)

(Speaking into the phone.)

Yes, Jack? This is Sarah. I'm over here on the set of your play and it seems there's a small detail of the script you neglected to mention... Yes, I'm talking about the murder scene!... No, I will not look at it as a chance to grow as an actress. Jack! How could you not tell me this was part of the script?... What do you mean, the only role I could get?... Well, I'm sorry, but I won't work under these conditions. I quit!

(She hangs up the phone and goes to exit.)

JEFFREY

Wait. Where are you going?

SARAH

I am getting my husband and I am going home.

(JEFFREY quickly grabs SARAH and reads his next line from the script.)

JEFFREY

You'll leave when I say you can leave.

SARAH

Excuse me? Did you get that off a made-for-TV movie?

JEFFREY

No, I got it out of here.

(He shows it to her in the script.)

SARAH

This scene's full of this trash. "You'll leave when I say you can leave," "Don't make this any harder than it has to be."

JEFFREY

This is my favorite. "If I can't have you, no one else will."

SARAH

I can't believe this is the last scene I'm ever going to be in.