

9/18/21

HAROLD

*The name of this play is Reporting 1-0-1
It will last as long as it needs to last
Which I hope won't be too long
Because I can only handle something that lasts no more than 75 minutes
Provided there's no intermission.
My name is Harold.
I'm twenty-three and a half.
Even though this is a monologue,
There are other characters in this play.
Sometimes the actors will play more than two roles.
Sometimes this is intentionally metaphorical
Sometimes it is a device used to save funds
And make the experience more engaging for the actors.
Since most of the play takes place in my head,
There will be some bouncing around.
Don't worry if you lose track.
I'll aim to create clarity where I can.
Although I wonder if that's the point.
To not trust the Narrative
Even if it's written in a newspaper,
The first scene takes place in a bar.
It's probably early afternoon.
I'm not sure because it's super dark.
I'm with Stevie
A peer
Who's the most important person in the world to me right now
Mainly because he's present.
The play is dedicated to Ed Shockley
And all people who are doing political canvassing for causes they're not sure about.
Time no longer matters to me, but it might matter to you
So let's say it's the mid 1980s
1985 to be exact.
If you need a place more specific than a bar
We can say we're in New York City.*

*****.

STEVIE

It's bullshit, bullshit, bullshit.
I can understand

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When they say "fuck you" to me.
But your story, man.
Your story.
Was better than
Anything else
In that God damned paper.
And I'm not talking about sports
But everything
Including the lingerie ads.
They don't deserve me.
They don't deserve you.
If I were you,
I'd go back there
And demand an explanation
Cause don't you think you're good?
I think you're excellent.

HAROLD

At least we got paid.

STEVIE

Twenty-five bucks?!
Plus we had to pay for our own transportation?!
When I net out our travel time,
I figure we made a buck fifty an hour.
Plus we had to buy the God Damned newspaper
To read our own stories
Which didn't even carry our byline.
Can you fucking believe that?
It's the exploitation of the worker.
It's the exploitation of us.
I'm now officially a Marxist.
Smoke?

HAROLD

No, thanks.

STEVIE

You should smoke.
It's good for you.
It gives you something to do
With your hands.
Plus it keeps the edge off.
Or maybe it puts the edge on.

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Something
That makes you feel alive.

HAROLD
Do you have any other leads?

STEVIE
I was going to try The New York Times
But they say fuck you
Before you contact them.
You gotta know someone
And even then
They say
Fuck you.
Only nicer.

HAROLD
You're going to give up on it?

STEVIE
I'll go back to selling ice cream in the park.
I hate ice cream.
I hate the people who eat it.
But at least I see things.
I hear things.
That makes me feel like I'm part of the action.
You?

HAROLD
I tried the Village Voice
But they said not to come back
Until I had meaningful experience.

STEVIE
What did they mean by meaningful?

HAROLD
I guess a story with my name on it.

STEVIE
Did you tell them who you are,
Superman?

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HAROLD

I'm not Superman.

I'm not sure I'm cut out to be Clark Kent.

STEVIE

People think they want to do something meaningful with their lives,

But there's something to be said for just getting by.

At least until it's time.

HAROLD

I thought my story was good.

STEVIE

It was excellent

I loved the way you compared the condition of the field to sponge cake.

HAROLD

That's not exactly what I wrote.

I said that when the closer came in

The kids on the bench were eating Pan di Spagna

To show how confident there were about a kid

Who signed a scholarship to go to St. John's.

STEVIE

I made a mistake in my story

By describing the Loudon coach as a drunk.

You should've smelled the alcohol on his breath.

I got tipsy talking to him.

That's a good line, isn't it?

I guess it wasn't right

For a newspaper story.

Though it made an impression

And sometimes an impression

Is all you're able to make.

HAROLD

Your story had a lot of color.

STEVIE

I think I injected too much of myself in it.

That's my trouble.

I talk too much.

Without thinking.

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You.

You listen.

You're going to have success.

If you keep with it,

Superman.

I'd bet all my money on it.

If I had money.

More than 25 bucks.

Which is worth nothing

Since I'm going to frame the check

To prove I once worked for Newsday

Which is better than the News

But worse than the Post

If anyone ever read it.

I mean who reads Newsday?

Who reads any newspaper?

Hell, even if it was given away for free.

HAROLD

Maybe this isn't the right path to go.

STEVIE

It's a bullshit path.

But I think you should keep with it.

I have a gnawing feeling

You're going to go some place with it

Even if that place is hell.

HAROLD

Maybe you'll get some story ideas
working in the park.

STEVIE

If I do,

I'm gonna pass them

onto you.

Drink?

HAROLD

I promised my Dad I wouldn't drink.

I didn't exactly promise him

After I saw what it did to him,

I promised myself.

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STEVIE

I promised my Dad I wouldn't be a fuck up.
He didn't believe my story was in Newsday
Until I showed him my notes.
Even then, he said it was a shit story.
He thinks I should get a Union job.
That's the last thing I want.
Predictability.
I'd rather fail as a piece-of-shit entrepreneur.

HAROLD

My father said to live each day like it was your last
Because some day it'll be your last.
He said to dream
But not too big.
He said comfort was the antithesis of risk
I wasn't exactly sure what he was promoting
Comfort Or Risk.

STEVIE

Did I tell you about Mike,
My Accountant friend?
You know what he does on the side?
He strips.
He's looking for free publicity.
You want me to give you his number?

HAROLD

Maybe tomorrow.

STEVIE

Fuck.
Don't let the dream die.
Even
If
it
kills
you.

HAROLD

I'll keep that in mind
As I continue my search.
For

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The Promised
Land.

STEVIE
Cheers.

WENDY
You didn't get the job with Newsday?

HAROLD
I got 25 bucks.

WENDY
Didn't that story take you 15 hours to write?

HAROLD
Less.
If I don't include the time I spent waiting for the bus.

WENDY
In the same amount of time,
You could've picked bottles out of the trash
And made four times as much from recycling.
I say that
Only as a matter of
Perspective.
Not to make it sound like I'm a shrew.

HAROLD
I'm motivated by more than money.

WENDY
You'll say that until you get kicked out
Of your Dad's rent-stabilized apartment.

HAROLD
That gives me motivation to make things happen fast.

WENDY
You're making spaghetti again?
Generic?
With tomato paste?

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HAROLD

I'm adding raisins
As part of the celebration
For having my story
Make it into Newsday.
I got two copies.
Maybe you could show one to your family
Or anyone else who needs to be impressed.

WENDY

The story doesn't have your name on it.

HAROLD

I can still prove I wrote it.

WENDY

Did they say what they didn't like about you?

HAROLD

They said I was raw.
And asked why I didn't write
In high school
Or college.
When I told them I was an athlete,
They weren't impressed
I was a long-distance runner.

WENDY

Running away or towards?
Shit.
I'm sorry.
I want you to do well.
But may it's time
To be
Realistic.

HAROLD

I can handle rejection.

WENDY

Maybe it's not rejection
But a sign you should try something with more...
Sustainability.

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HAROLD

I checked with the Village Voice
They said not to come back until I had meaningful experience
No, I didn't ask what meaningful experience meant.
Yes, that would've been a good question to ask.
I didn't think of it until now.

WENDY

My father thinks the Voice is a rag.
He thinks all newspapers are rags
Except The New York Times

HAROLD

Stevie said my story was superb.
He read the original version.
Where they didn't shove the score into the first paragraph

WENDY

Is Stevie in a position of power?

HAROLD

Stevie's the guy who failed the tryout with me
Who now sells ice cream in the park.
Who knows an accountant named Mike
Who's a stripper.
Stevie hates ice cream
But he's going to find me some good stories.
He calls me Superman.
He says I have powers I haven't tapped into.
He says I shouldn't give up hope.

UNCLE MAX

I can give you a job.
Not just a job.
A career.
Not just a career.
A piece of the action.
I'm not saying it'll be easy,
I'm not saying I won't work your ass off.
At the end of the day,

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It'll be our name over the door
Mine at first
Then yours.

HAROLD
I'll consider it, Uncle Max.

UNCLE MAX
You'll never find anything more secure.

INTERVIEWER
This is your resume?

HAROLD
I tried to be honest.

INTERVIEWER
It doesn't give me much of a picture.

HAROLD
I didn't put in a lot of made-up stuff.

INTERVIEWER
Is this the way "Arizona"'s supposed to be spelled?

HAROLD
Fuck.
At least I got six out of the eight letters right.

INTERVIEWER
Seventy-five percent?

HAROLD
I'm better with people than math.

INTERVIEWER
It doesn't seem you have a lot of experience with people.

HAROLD
I was a lifeguard for two summers.

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INTERVIEWER

Did you save anyone?

HAROLD

No.

No one needed to be saved.

INTERVIEWER

Did anything interesting happen?

HAROLD

Mercifully, no.

INTERVIEWER

Why don't you come back when you have more to say?

HAROLD

Am I too temporary for a temporary position?

INTERVIEWER

We need people who can type, proofread and pretend they're more than they are.

WENDY

My parents know someone.

High up.

Who can make something happen.

If you want it to happen.

You gotta want it.

Don't say you want it because you think you want it.

You really have to want it, want it.

Do you want it?

Once you play a card

You can't play it again.

STEVIE

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Financial services.
Fuck.
Investment banking..
An even bigger fuck.
I say screw it.
There's gotta be more to life than making money.
If you're making money
You might as well do something good with it.
Like buying me another drink.

UNCLE MAX

I'm not doing this to be nice.
I'm not doing this because your father drank himself to death.
I'm doing this because I need someone.
From the family.
To step up.
Who'll treat this business as their own.
Do you understand the gift I'm offering?
None of my sons want this.
They think they're above.
Plumbing fixtures.
Failing to see
How we help get
Rid
Of
The
Stench.

WENDY

It's your life,
But don't you think you need to find something
More permanent
Than dog walking
Bussing tables
Helping a friend sell ice cream in the park?

STEVE

Politics.
That's the way to change the world.

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The only problem with politics
Is politicians.
And the people
Who try to influence them.
They eat too much ice cream

UNCLE MAX

I paid off your father's gambling debts.
Not that I'm looking for gratitude.

WENDY

Even if the landlord
lets you stay
in your Dad's rent-stabilized apartment,
How will you afford it?

STEVIE

Your Dad left you 25,000 bucks?
Is that good or bad?
If 25,000 bucks fell into my lap right now, I could make some good things happen.
Like pay off my tab
I'm not sure that's enough to last me the rest of my life.
Unless I die tomorrow.
I have a big tab.
But 25,0000 bucks.
I don't think that's enough
For me to ask to borrow some of it.

HAROLD

*Everyone walks away.
Except Harold.
He comes forth on stage.
Trying to be the hero of his own narrative.
He thinks he's alone
He's not.
There's a young woman in the distance.*

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*She could be played as the same actor as Wendy
Or not.
Here she comes!*

VERONICA

I can't keep waiting.
My time is valuable.
Death awaits.
Someone will get killed.
More than metaphorically.

HAROLD

Who are you?

VERONICA

Who do you need me to be?

HAROLD

A figment of my imagination?

VERONICA

Maybe *you're* a figment of *my* imagination.

HAROLD

I'm not good at this.
Repartee.
I mean, I'm good at it
Only in my own head.

VERONICA

Maybe this is a conversation you're having with yourself.
Or a conversation I'm having with myself.
I refuse to take a back seat.

HAROLD

Can you tell me where we are?

VERONICA

Looks like a stage.

HAROLD

Who are those people?
End of excerpt. More to come in the play.