

THE SOFA
(Four Minute Play- #1)
Written by Jon Jory for the Educational
Theatre Association
2018

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Three humans sit on a beat-up couch. The room is a mess. They stare out at a focal point in the audience. They are also pretty much a mess. One wears ratty paamas. The others are, well, informal. Perhaps they are roommates, or just hanging out.

A bell rings. Play starts.

1

What are we watching?

2

Sox and Yankees. Last game of a three-game series. Yankees won the first two. Sixth inning. One out, runners on first and third, sox batting. Count is two and two.

3

How do we know that?

2

(Pointing.) Watch the game.

3

TV's broken.

2

See beyond mere technology.

1

Strike!

2

It was a ball.

1

That was a called strike.

2

Why is your imagination superior to my imagination?

3

No fighting, no biting.

(A pause.)

Do you think visually we're a dynamic picture?

1

Do I really care?

3

Hey, we're acting students, right? Space is a tool.

2

Word.

1

Fine. However, may I point out that this is life and not art. During life I would prefer not to think I'm acting.

3

Yeah, but if we don't, how will we make our acting lifelike?

1

How can we be lifelike if all we're thinking about is acting?

3

Indulge me. Think spatially.

2

The two of you are going to drive me bananas.

3

Five years from now do you want to be starring in a Marvel superhero movie about a simple pest control worker who is actually the Superhero Raid Man, who leads thirty million robot cockroaches over a cliff in the Andes and saves the world?

1

What's my salary?

3

Fifteen million, plus you'll be given a Caribbean Island.

I'm in. # 1

You are soooooo easy. # 2

All right. On three we will create a visually stimulating sofa-look which will rivet the viewer without transgressing reality. # 3

What's the penalty if we fail? # 2

You have to tour as Sneezzy, for three years, in a production of *Snow White* in Iceland. # 3

Heavy. # 2

Keep it down. I'm watching the game. # 1

Ready. # 3

Ready. # 2

Curtain! # 3

(All three, in a frantic move, create a new picture on, or adjacent to, the sofa. Then they freeze.)

2
(All are still frozen.) How did we do?

1
It's dazzling.

3
It's forced. It's coy. We're working too hard. It's fatally cute. Again, Go!
(A complete change.)

It's unbalanced. Go!

(A complete change.)

This is good. This is very good. Solved.

2

Can we watch the game now?

3

There is no game! The screen is blank. Don't talk to me about the television.

2

You want imaginary stage pictures, why can't I have an imaginary game?

(2 pushes 3.)

3

Don't push me, okay?

(3 pushes 2. A fight breaks out.)

2

Wait, wait!

(They stop.)

Is this a real fight or are we in a play?

3

Felt like a real fight.

1

But that's how you'd want it to feel in a play.

2

But we would have to know which. Otherwise the work would be confusing and our lives would be a mess. We would in fact be lunatic. Let's just watch the game, okay?

1 & # 3

Fine.

(They sit and look at the TV. After a moment a bell rings.)

1

Class over. See you guys on Wednesday.

(# 1 leaves. Blackout.)

End of Play

**Fries (or is it Fry's?)
(Four Minute Play- #2)
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We are on a high school campus, a tree shaded retreat behind a classroom building. It is lunchtime. # 1 sits on the ground glancing at an open book. # 2 enters behind # 1. # 2 carries a fast-food bag. Both characters are 17 years old and dressed in a relaxed fashion for school. It's May and surprisingly hot.

2
Hey.
(# 1 startles.)
Sorry, sorry, shoot.

1
No, no problem, you just ...

2
Gave you a heart attack.

1
Bit my tongue though.

2
Really sorry

1
Ummm...

2
I didn't ...

1
I'm not sure ...

2
Good intentions but ...

1

I know you.

2

No reason. I think I'm in that weird sci-fi class ...

1

Right. It's uh ...

2

Big. Big class.

1

But ...

2

No prob. We uh, never talked.

1

Well, that's cool ... I don't mean ...

2

No offense taken, I ...

1

I just meant ...

2

Got it. Got it.

(An awkward pause.)

So, I saw you check out the cafeteria and uh, well, pass on the cardboard pizza.

1

And the dead lettuce with moldy walnuts.

2

Last year I found a tooth in the stew.

1

Human?

2

Don't think so.

1

Probably vampire.

(# 2 chuckles.)

2

(Points at self, says first name.) _____.

1

(Points at self, says first name.) _____.

2

(Picks up bag he brought.)

So, here we have ... I uh ... well, what I've got here are fries ... a lot of fries ... uncountable fries in a massive profusion.

1

No thanks.

2

See, you are rejecting these because fries are everywhere, but these are no ordinary fries, absolutely not run of the mill.

1

No thanks.

2

These are chicken fries, which sit unchallenged atop the fry world.

1

What is this?

2

Fries.

1

No, what is this.

2

Oh, you mean, this.

1

Why is this?

2

(Puts bag down near #1.)

This is fries.

1

This is like a really awkward sympathy thing and uh, I don't mean to ... I'm not really into it so ...

(# 1 pushes fries a little further away.)

Thank you but ... no fries.

2

(# 2 movs fries even further away with foot.)

No fries.

1

No fries.

(A pause.)

2

I'll just sit down over here.

1

Look, I don't want to talk about it. It's not going to help me to talk about it. I don't know you, which is another reason not to talk about it. I don't want to screw up your random act of kindness. Appreciated. Very much appreciated. But I would like you to ... move on now. I would seriously like that. Now would be a good time.

2

Can't be done.

1

What?

2

I'm here, you're there, let it happen.

(Moves fries slightly toward # 1.)

The fries are no good cold.

1

So I have to leave?

2

If that's your thing.

Wow. # 1

Yeah. # 2

(A pause.)

1
She hung herself from a closet door.

(# 2 pushes fries closer with foot.)

2
(Matter of fact.) How exactly does a person do that?

(Blackout.)

End of play

THE LETTER
(Four Minute Play- #3)
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(Four Minute Play- #3)
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Three people sit around a table. Plates and some silver have been used in a meal. Two characters drink Diet Cokes, one has a beer.

1

Hey, thanks.

2

Shoot me, I like to cook.

3

A casserole taken to the level of ... a non-casserole.

1

It's a little sad we're only home for college for this.

2

Really sad.

3

Is she asleep?

2

Out like a light every night by eight.

1

She seemed good though.

2

It's terrible and you know it's terrible.

3

(Going to the window.)

I am seriously not ready for this. Freaked out. I am seriously freaked out. I don't think I can do this.

2

Actually it's worse than you think.

3

Thanks.

2

Sorry, but it is.

1

Not that I want to know, but what is?

2

(Takes an envelope out.)

This is. It's a letter dad wrote to us six weeks before he died, which mom hid in her bedside table and forgot because of ... well, forgot.

3

Because of dementia.

2

Yeah. Because of the dementia.

1

The dementia.

2

Somebody want to read it?

1

And you know she hid it

2

Did she ever give it to us?

3

How would I know until I read it?

(# 2 tosses it on the table. # 3 doesn't move. # 1 picks it up.)

2

Oh man.

1

(Reads.)

Dear children: You know well how I love and admire you. I also know how you love your mother. I ask only one thing, should I be the first, that you keep her in the home she loves until she joins me. Dad.

(Silence. Everybody moves out of different emotions. # 1 tosses the letter on the Table. # 3 goes and picks it up.)

3

I never heard that before.

2

Yeah, well ...

3

Man, this is way too tough. What Dad could leave would buy one of us a good used car if the three of us put it together.

2

I'll cut to the chase. They didn't have a long-term care policy. Yes, there was burial insurance. The house is paid off. She has his social security which is pretty good. The house sits on four acres. She could try and sell off a couple.

1

But there's no money for in-home nursing care. So one of us ...

2

Bingo, one of us would have to be here full time. One of us.

(Picks up the letter and holds it out.)

Any takers? That sort of quieted the room down. Now, if I'm not mistaken, one of us stayed here and went to community college, while others of us have enjoyed the cosmopolitan delights of L.A. and Chicago. Oh my goodness, I forgot! I'm the one who stayed here and lived in the house!

(A long pause. Someone sits. Someone else goes to an imaginary window downstage.)

3

I can't. I have a graduate program at Brown starting in September.

1

I have one year left at USC.

2

And I've served my term, right? I love mom, but I have to get out of here. I am Wyominged out.

(Looks at letter. Reads.)

"I ask only one thing ..."

(Drops it on the table.)

Somebody has to pick it up.

3

Dementia doesn't kill you. Mom could live ten years.

(They look at the table.)

Who are we? If Dad could see this, what in God's name would he think? I am embarrassed. Aren't you embarrassed? We love her. She was on our side every moment of every day. She gave up nursing to make sure we got what we needed.

2

Pick it up then. I had it and now I'm putting it down. Seriously, split it up. You guys each do two and then we'll talk again.

1

I'm getting married.

2

Congratulations.

(# 2 sits.)

1

I can't tell him/her that he/she has to move to Wyoming. That's just not fair. He's/She's a lawyer.

(A pause.)

1

I can't do it.

(# 1 exits. They look after # 1.)

2

She/He folds. Two still in the pot.

(A pause and then # 3 picks it up.)

Thanks.

3

You're welcome.

(Blackout.)

End of play

THE PETZY/SPATHA
(Four Minute Play- #4)
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THE PETZY/SPATHA
(Four Minute Play- #4)
Written by Jon Jory for the Educational Theatre Association
2018

*Two climbers on a ledge nine feet long and four feet wide.
It is almost dark.*

1

What do you think?

2

What do you think?

1

I think we need to do it. Sun's almost down. It's going to be 15 or 20 degrees.

2

How's your leg?

1

I can put weight on it, more or less. Bad sprain maybe. Could be worse.

2

I kind of think we should sit it out. We should have been bak a couple of hours ago. They'll be out looking soon, if they're not already.

1

There's not much they can do after dark.

2

Helicopter can still go out. They could drop supplies get us through the night.

1

We're on some kind of ledge. I don't think a copter can get down here. There's the overhang above us, makes us hard to see. Look, from this ledge to the rock field across from us is only about five feet. You can jump that easy, then it's a pretty simple descent. You have maybe twenty minutes of light. You gotta go.

2

That's a really bad idea, okay?

1

It's a really good idea, a really necessary idea. Bad weather is coming in. Copter won't be able to go out. They'll have no idea where we are. You don't go now and bring them back, they'll only find us in the spring. Do what I tell you and do it now.

2

No.

1

Do it!

2

No.

1

And Plan B is what?

2

Body heat. Two of us, we can make it through the night.

1

And freeze together the next day.

2

Then make the jump with me. You say it's just a sprain.

1

I won't have enough push-off.

2

Push off the good foot!

1

I don't have a good foot!

2

You said only the left one was screwed?

1

Yeah, well, I lied. You're like hysterical so I didn't want to spook you. Look at me. Look at me! Hey! We don't have a choice, so stop jacking me around. Go!

2

You are a piece of work.

1

Give me a hand up.

2

For what?

1

Because I said so.

(A pause and then # 2 helps # 1 up.)

You hit me in the bar, would I take you out? You climbed this, you said, you climbed that. Fine. I take you out. In ten minutes it's clear you don't know a climb from a rhinoceros. You're a rube, a rookie, a nothing. And that, by the way, is how I got hurt. You slacked the line and didn't tell me, you moron. Now, make the jump, do the descent and send them up to get me at first light. You hear me? Do it and do it now.

(Releases # 2 with a push that sends him off balance.)

2

Hey! I could have gone over the edge.

1

(Not sorry.) Accept my profound apologies. Go.

2

Fog's in. I can't see the other edge.

1

We saw it, it's four, five feet. Put your back against the rock wall, take three steps, jump and you're there. A ten-year-old could do this. If I had one foot, I could do it. Now do it.

2

I can't do it.

1

You're kidding me, right?

2

I can't do it.

1

(# 1 grabs # 2 by the hair on the back of # 2's head.)

Okay, I'm going to help you now.

2

Hey.

1

Now you got only two steps because I'm behind you. How I'm going to help you is this: On my count of three ...

2

You're hurting me.

1

... count of three. You're going to put full forward energy into the first step, like you were running the fifty-yard dash. On the second step you plant hard, like you want to put that foot fight through the ground and launch out, throwing your shoulders forward and pedaling like you were on a bicycle, and there you will be on the other wide.

2

I'm not doing this.

1

Or else, I'll give you a good hard push, you'll go off the ledge, fall four hundred feet, high rock and break several dozen bones which really won't hurt 'cause you'll be dead.

2

No.

1

Oh yeah. I'm getting married next month and I'm gong to be there.

2

Please.

1

You feel that little prick in your back? That's my climbing knife. For your novice information it's the Petzul Spatha, the best there is. Here we go.

2

I—can't—do—this.

1

Shows how little you know; on three

2

I'll fall.

1

You won't fall. One, two, three.

(# 2 launches out. Blackout.)

End of Play