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The Devil in Sherman Marsh

By Don Zolidis

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This play is dedicated to the students of the Haltom high school theatre department. All royalties from performance and sale of this play benefit Haltom theatre.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

SHERMAN, a nerd
TOBY, a bully
MISS GRACE, a young teacher
JOHN
ROGER
TONYA
JESSICA
AMBER
COUNSELOR JONES
LUCIFER, a devil, not necessarily *the* devil
NORA
MRS PARKER
STEVEN
MRS BELL
ANNOUNCER
ANGELIC LOVE MOTHER
OTHER STUDENTS

Roles may be double-cast as necessary. Genders of characters which are not vital may be switched at the directors' discretion. Please be flexible.

Note: the Monster cards which are played in the final Yu-Gi-Oh tournament may be portrayed by actors in costumes.

(A school. The bell rings. Noise. STUDENTS everywhere. SHERMAN, a nerdy, tweedy looking kid holding an overstuffed backpack and another armful of books, makes his way through the crowd.)

SHERMAN

Excuse me. Excuse me. I'm trying to get to class.

(TOBY, a large kid, walks very slowly in front of SHERMAN. SHERMAN can't get around him.)

Um… hello? Boy we're moving slowly. Hello? Hello? Could you move a little quicker please?

(TOBY slowly turns around.)

TOBY

What?

SHERMAN

Could you move faster please? I don't want to be late for class.

(TOBY takes SHERMAN's books out of his hands and tosses them slowly onto the floor.)

That's not helpful.

(TOBY takes SHERMAN's backpack and opens it, spilling everything on to the floor.)

Hey! No! I have some very valuable Yu-Gi-Oh cards in there.

(TOBY finds some Yu-Gi-Oh cards, crumples them up, and eats them.)

TOBY

Mmmm… Tasty. Now you're gonna be late for class.

(TOBY turns and leaves. The bell rings.)

(Students bring in chairs to form a classroom as SHERMAN gathers up his belongings. A teacher, MISS GRACE enters.)

MISS GRACE

Okay, class. Today we're going to be learning about the Salem Witch Trials of 1690.

(One student, JESSICA, raises her hand.)

Yes Jessica?

JESSICA

My English teacher is a witch. Would she have been burned?

MISS GRACE

Well, if there was a young girl who claimed she did witchcraft on her, then yes.

JESSICA

Sweet.

MISS GRACE

The Salem Witch Trials were not, however, very sweet.

(SHERMAN has finally gathered all of his books and sheepishly enters the class.)

Sherman you're late.

SHERMAN

I'm sorry Miss Grace, but I was accosted by an ogre outside. He scattered my belongings.

ROGER *(coughing)*

Dork!

JOHN *(coughing)*

Huge dork!

MISS GRACE

Try to avoid ogres, Sherman.

SHERMAN

Ogres are large, Miss Grace. They are difficult to avoid.

JESSICA

Seriously, why do you talk like that?

SHERMAN *(mimicking her)*

Seriously, why do you care?

(TONYA raises her hand.)

MISS GRACE

Yes Tonya?

TONYA

How come they got burned if they didn't do no magic?

SHERMAN

If they didn't do *any* magic.

TONYA

What?

SHERMAN

If they didn't do any magic. It's called the English language. Learn how to speak it.

MISS GRACE

Okay Sherman. That's enough.

SHERMAN

I'm tired of these subliterate peasants.

TONYA

I am not subliterate!

SHERMAN

What does it mean? Do you know what the word means?

TONYA

No.

JOHN

It means you're a dork!

SHERMAN

Then you're subliterate.

MISS GRACE

Sherman, please. Let's just work on our word search please.

SHERMAN *(sarcastically)*

Word searches. This is education.

(AMBER enters and sits near SHERMAN.)

MISS GRACE *(walking around the room and checking papers)*

If you're worried about how to spell the words, you can check the word bank on the bottom.

JOHN

How do you spell witch?

ROGER

Your Mom.

(The students laugh.)

SHERMAN

Miss Grace, must we always labor on these mindless projects? Why can't we actually use our minds in class?

JOHN

Shut up loser!

ROGER

Good one.

JOHN

Your Mom.
(They laugh.)

SHERMAN
I don't even know what that means. Your Mom what? What does she do?

JOHN
Your Mom.
(the students laugh.)

MISS GRACE
All right, back to work everyone.
(The students grudgingly go back to work.)

AMBER
Hey Sherman—did you find the Devil?

SHERMAN
Excuse me?

AMBER
The Devil. Did you find the word Devil?

SHERMAN
Oh. Um… third row down six letters from the left.

AMBER
Oh. Thanks.

SHERMAN
So um… Amber.

AMBER
Did you find trial?

SHERMAN
Diagonal backwards from the upper right corner.

AMBER
Oh—there it is.

SHERMAN
So… I've noticed that no one has punched your dance card for the Prom.

AMBER
What?

SHERMAN
The Prom. I've heard it's the social event of the year.

AMBER
What about it?

SHERMAN
I was wondering… if um… you would care to… accompany me to the dance.

JOHN
DUDE! SHERMAN JUST ASKED AMBER TO THE PROM!!!

ROGER
NO WAY!!!

MISS GRACE
Quiet please!

ROGER *(quietly)*
Your Mom.
(everyone laughs.)

TONYA
Who's Sherman?

JOHN
He's that dork over there.

TONYA
Grammar boy? She ain't gonna go to the prom with that loser.

MISS GRACE
Quiet!
(AMBER has pretended not to hear. Embarrassing pause.)

SHERMAN
I cannot offer you much. I am just a simple man. But if sparkling conversation and an awkward, if earnest dance step are appealing to you, say the word.
(Pause.)
I will also pay for dinner. And perhaps ice cream afterwards.

AMBER
Sherman.

SHERMAN

Yes?

AMBER

I think you'd get the wrong idea. We're friends.

SHERMAN

Yes. Friends with romantic possibilities.

AMBER

Sorry. Oh do you have that English paper I had you write?

SHERMAN

Yes.

AMBER

Are there enough grammar mistakes to make it look like mine?

SHERMAN

I did abysmal things with apostrophes.
(He hands over the paper.)

AMBER

You're the best friend ever.

JOHN

Oh! HE TOTALLY GOT SHOT DOWN!!!
(SHERMAN stands up.)

SHERMAN

I have had enough of this neanderthal!

JOHN

What are you gonna do about it, dork?

ROGER

That's what she said.
(Everyone laughs.)

SHERMAN

You don't even make any sense.

JOHN

You know what doesn't make sense? Your Mom.
(they laugh again.)

MISS GRACE

Boys, please! Sherman, stop causing problems.

SHERMAN

What? They're the ones instigating!

ROGER

Your Mom was instigating.

JOHN

Come on, geek. You wanna go? You wanna go?

SHERMAN

Go where?

(JOHN lunges at SHERMAN and gets him in a headlock.)

MISS GRACE

Sherman stop it! You're going to chip the tiles!

ROGER

Kill that dork!

MISS GRACE

That's it! You're all going to the office!

(The bell rings. Lights change as COUNSELOR JONES enters.)

COUNSELOR JONES

Okay… Sherman. This is the first time I've seen you in my office.

SHERMAN

I cannot endure their ridicule any longer.

COUNSELOR JONES

Have a seat.

SHERMAN

I refuse to be intimidated by the dregs of humanity. Which is all we seem to be enrolling at this school.

COUNSELOR JONES

Have a seat, Sherman.

SHERMAN

Fine.

(SHERMAN sits.)

COUNSELOR JONES

Have you ever thought that you seem to be encouraging their behavior? Let me explain. You need to stop acting so intelligent. All these words you use… they confuse and scare normal people. No one knows what you're saying. You stick out, Sherman. And as a result, the ordinary people are going to destroy you. That's what ordinary people do. What you need to do then is… blend in. Watch some television. Try not to do so well on tests. Make a few fart jokes. Really get in there with the common man. That's how people get ahead in the world.

SHERMAN

By pretending to be stupid?

COUNSELOR JONES

By becoming stupid. It really helps you get along with your peers. Tell you what—why don't you go home, open a few bottles of glue and just sniff away for a few hours? You'll be just like everyone else in no time. You really need to trim those brain cells a bit.

SHERMAN

That's the most idiotic thing I've ever heard.

COUNSELOR JONES

Exactly. Which is why I get along well with people. Now… this girl… Amber Thompson. You have a big crush on her?

SHERMAN

How are you aware of that?

COUNSELOR JONES

It's all here in your file. We videotape you every day. It makes for some amusing viewing. Whenever I feel bad about myself, I just pop in your tape and I feel a lot better. At least I'm not you.

SHERMAN

Aren't you supposed to be counseling me?

COUNSELOR JONES

I am. You think I just woke up today knowing how to give this advice? No sir, I went to graduate school for seven years to know all this. Now, you ought to forget about Amber Thompson. You see, she's attractive. And you're not. You need to find someone on the same attractiveness level.

SHERMAN

That doesn't seem to be terribly fair.

COUNSELOR JONES

It's immensely fair. Now, if I were to approximate you with a girl, the girl you should really be dating is… the lunch lady. Oh. Tough break. Although, she's a robust woman—very powerful. Could be rewarding.

SHERMAN

I don't think so.

COUNSELOR JONES

Suit yourself. Have you thought about owning cats? It helps people cope with not being loved. Although, to be honest, a cat doesn't show a lot of love. At least mine doesn't. I try and I try and I try and I give Rascal food all the time and he'd drop me in a minute for someone with a sprig of catnip. I hate him.

SHERMAN

I'll be going now.

COUNSELOR JONES

Oh and you're suspended for three days for fighting. Have a good one.

(COUNSELOR JONES leaves. SHERMAN is left alone.)

SHERMAN

Ignoramuses. Idiots. Morons. They all fall down and worship someone who can throw a ball through a hoop, but when it comes to someone with real intelligence, actual insight? Shoved aside. No, we prefer our mediocrity, thank you. Teachers giving out passing grades to airheaded bimbos and roving sports monsters.

(SHERMAN opens up his backpack.)

Oh my Yu-Gi-Oh deck. Those buffoons nearly destroyed some very rare and valuable cards. I've worked very hard on this collection—

(He begins to spread out his cards)

Oh, Dark Armed Monster, how I wish I could be like you. With Dark Arms. And powerful. If only I could… what's this?

(he takes out a card.)

I've never seen this card before. Why am I talking to myself? But… Lucifer? That sounds interesting. If I were to combine him with my Dark Magician with an upload booster I'd be unstoppable.

(a rumble of thunder)

Hello? Hello?

(another rumble of thunder. Smoke.)

Is there anyone there?

(LUCIFER enters in a cloud of smoke.)

LUCIFER

WHY HAVE YOU SUMMONED ME?

SHERMAN

I apologize, I didn't mean to—

LUCIFER
YOU, SHERMAN MARSH, WHAT IS YOUR BIDDING?

SHERMAN
Um… Bidding?

LUCIFER
EXCUSE ME—
(LUCIFER coughs.)
That's better. Interdimensional travel sometimes gets my throat all scratchy.

SHERMAN
Are you… The Devil?

LUCIFER
I wouldn't go so far as to say *The* Devil. I'd say representative of the nether regions.

SHERMAN
Epic.

LUCIFER
There's a hierarchy, you know. I'm kind of like a regional manager. I have domain over those souls who placed gum underneath desks.

SHERMAN
So if you place gum underneath the desk, you—

LUCIFER
You're going straight to the underworld where countless horrors will meet you. I've devised some pretty cruel tortures—there's the Mariah Carey listening hour, the standardized testing week, the dentist visit, and most… unnatural and soul-crushing of all… the watching of Battlefield Earth.

SHERMAN
Oh.

LUCIFER
Dreadful movie. John Travolta dressed up as a Psychlo? Man, we were cheering in the underworld when that one came out. We were like, `yes! More viewing nightmares for the damned!' In fact, we've been behind a lot of Travolta's movies lately. We're his silent partner.

SHERMAN
This is very educational.

LUCIFER
But… enough about me. Let's learn about you: Sherman Marsh. How's it going?

SHERMAN
Disastrous.

LUCIFER
Uh huh. Do you mind if I write some of this down? I like to take notes.

SHERMAN
Shouldn't you be able to use your unholy powers?

LUCIFER
Of course, but note-taking isn't one of them. All right, so… you're not doing well.

SHERMAN
Everyone else is an idiot.

LUCIFER
And you feel superior to them?

SHERMAN
I am superior to them.

LUCIFER
Even better. What in particular distresses you about the rest of humanity?

SHERMAN
The educational system. It's churning out mindless drones who's only goal is to consume natural resources and gorge themselves on fast food.

LUCIFER
Right. It's doing its job.

SHERMAN
And then… when someone does show a glimmer of intelligence—

LUCIFER
Crushed.

SHERMAN
Exactly.

LUCIFER
And you also have the hots for Amber Thompson?

SHERMAN

She's foxy.

LUCIFER

I see. Well… those are some significant issues. But I might just be able to help you.

SHERMAN

How?

LUCIFER

Just because I'm not actually *the* devil, doesn't mean I can't do some pretty devilish things. I have a few supernatural powers which might be able to assist you.

SHERMAN

Such as?

LUCIFER

Such as let me worry about that. Now, if I have the terms correctly, I think we can get a contract that can get you what you want in no time. You can ride out of here today in a fancy new life.

SHERMAN

I don't want a new life, I want a better life.

LUCIFER

Right, right, but let's try this on for size. Let's say you wake up in the morning, you flex your toned legs, you look in the mirror, sweep the flowing blonde hair out of your gorgeous blue eyes and get ready for a new day. You look good in your clothes. You're able to wear those little short shorts that look really nice.

SHERMAN

Pardon me?

LUCIFER

Your boyfriend picks you up in his red thunderbird, his name is Chip, he works for an investment banking firm, he buys you expensive dresses and you take vacations to Italy together—

SHERMAN

Wait a minute. I'm a girl?

LUCIFER

Yeah.

SHERMAN

I don't want to be a girl.

LUCIFER
Well you could have said that earlier. How am I supposed to know? Most people like you want to be girls.

SHERMAN
I would prefer to stay male please.

LUCIFER
But you'll consider female? Because I've got some great packages—

SHERMAN
Male.

LUCIFER
All right, all right. How about this? You become an extremely talented rock and roll musician, you form a band, put out a few albums, everyone loves you—you go tour, women are throwing themselves at you, you settle for marrying Pamela Anderson, which goes all right for a little while and then you switch to Carmen Electra because she's not quite as crazy, and all you have to do is put a few backwardly masked lyrics in your song.

SHERMAN
What?

LUCIFER
You know, when you play the album backwards it says things like Hate your Parents and Family Guy is smart entertainment.

SHERMAN
If they're recorded backwards how does anyone ever hear it?

LUCIFER
Fine, shoot down all my good ideas. I don't know that we can do a deal here then. I'll be leaving.

SHERMAN
Wait! Wait! I desire to be popular.

LUCIFER
Well, both the rock star idea and the hot chick plan include being popular—

SHERMAN
No, I mean—I want being intelligent to be popular.

LUCIFER
So you want me to warp the entire fabric of reality then?

SHERMAN

Can't you accomplish that?

LUCIFER

Oh I can accomplish that. I just choose not to.

SHERMAN

I don't think you're capable of it.

LUCIFER

I can do it.

SHERMAN

If you could do it, then why don't you do it?

LUCIFER

You think you're the only person I make deals with? What about the politicians that I've got agreements with? You think it'll be easy to explain to them that their whole "I'm a common man" garbage won't work any more and they'll have to be perceived as intelligent in order to be elected? That's a lot of work!

SHERMAN

Okay, fine. You're not terribly powerful. I understand.

LUCIFER

Oh I—I can do it.

SHERMAN

Do it then.

LUCIFER

Fine. I will.

SHERMAN

Right now.

LUCIFER

Fine!

(A boom of thunder. Noises. The lights flicker, then go out.)

(Lights up on a classroom. The students sit in neat, orderly rows. All of them wear glasses. MRS. PARKER stands in front of them, looking very intelligent. The announcements are on.)

ANNOUNCER

In exciting mathematical news, the Academic Decathlon quiz team trounced Phillips Academy by the score of 12 pi x to 70, where x is equal to the square root of the opponent's score. Ha ha. Way to go Academic Decathlon!

(All the students clap and cheer enthusiastically.)

And the basketball team won state.

JOHN

Whatever.

ANNOUNCER

That's all for today. And remember: The unexamined life is not worth living. Oh, and for those of you out there looking for a proper conundrum—please deduce twelve anagrams from the word palimpset. Hint: One of them walks the streets and slaps people. Let's give the Thomas Junction cheer:

(The students all stand up.)

ALL STUDENTS

X plus two is greater than or equal to what we do!

MRS PARKER

Okay. Today we begin a systematic deconstruction of all the tropes involving alienation in the literature of the diaspora. If, as Jacques Derrida teaches, there is a certain amount of space between the signified and signifier, then the entire meaning of the word diaspora is called into question.

(JOHN raises his hand.)

Yes, John?

JOHN

Isn't it true that Derrida later recanted many of his own theories, including the importance of deconstruction? Shouldn't we be looking at this literature from a structural context, which doesn't require a moral framework?

MRS PARKER

You might think that, but I'm inclined to disagree. When one truly considers what—

SHERMAN

Pardon me?

(The class is shocked that someone has interrupted MRS PARKER.)

MRS PARKER

Sherman. In this class we raise our hands to be considered.

(SHERMAN raises his hand.)

If this is another request to go to the bathroom, it will be denied.

SHERMAN

No I was wondering: what is the nature of this discussion?

(The class laughs derisively.)

ROGER *(coughing into his hand)*

Ignoramus!

MRS PARKER

Could someone please explain it for Sherman?

JESSICA

I think it's inherently obvious, Mrs. Parker.

MRS PARKER

I know it is Jessica, but some of us aren't as bright as the others.

JESSICA

Fine. It's like this: Without a proper cultural context from which to explore the iterations of the literature of the diaspora, we cannot hope to truly comprehend the signified symbolic signposts of non-linear construction. Duh.

(she sits down.)

MRS PARKER

Does that clarify things?

SHERMAN

Not even remotely.

ROGER

What a buffoon!

JOHN *(coughing into his hand)*

Dullard!

MRS PARKER

Boys, please, it's not nice to denigrate those who are less fortunate than ourselves. Sherman, do you need to be moved to a special classroom where you can get instruction on your level?

SHERMAN

No I can understand it.

MRS PARKER

Amber, can you help Sherman please?

AMBER

Sure.

(AMBER moves over next to SHERMAN.)

It's not all that hard Sherman. You just have to open your mind.

SHERMAN

Yeah, I know… but my brain doesn't seem to be working at the moment—

AMBER

I have that effect.

SHERMAN

Um… listen, can we forget about the post-structuralist movement for a moment?

AMBER

But I adore the post-structuralists. I think they're really insightful.

SHERMAN

I'm sure they are, but—I was wondering about the prom…

AMBER

The prom?

SHERMAN

You know the dance where—

AMBER

I'm cognizant of the prom, but I'm already spoken for.

SHERMAN

Oh. Um…

AMBER

Toby.

(TOBY enters, looking particularly nerdy.)

TOBY

Darling, who is this nincompoop?

SHERMAN

I ain't no nincompoop!

JOHN

You *ain't*!? Nice language, state college matriculant.

SHERMAN

What's going on? I said *ain't*! What's happening to me?

ROGER

You need to have some respect for proper grammar!

SHERMAN

Shut up!

ROGER

A fine retort!

TOBY

Perhaps it would behoove you to close your mouth, Sherman.

SHERMAN

Your Mom!

(SHERMAN is shocked.)

I'm growing dumber by the minute!

MRS PARKER

Sherman, cease with these disruptions!

JESSICA

Mrs Parker, I would like to learn and he is preventing that from happening.

(The OTHER STUDENTS all raise their hands and begin to speak.)

OTHER STUDENTS

I would like to learn as well! My education is being infringed! I need an orderly classroom!

SHERMAN

Y'all need to shut up! I have a right to be here! You don't know nothing! Y'all think y'all so smart but I knows you ain't so smart cause you ain't no—aaaaaaaah!

(SHERMAN throws his backpack down. He pulls out the Lucifer card from his deck.)

Lucifer! Help me!

(Thunder. Everyone freezes. LUCIFER appears.)

LUCIFER

You called?

SHERMAN

My brain… it's returning to normal. This is inconceivable. These dolts are more intellectual than me.

LUCIFER

Is such a thing possible?

SHERMAN

My unpopularity persists.

LUCIFER

You never wished to be popular. You simply wished that being smart was popular. Let's get these children out of here, shall we?

(LUCIFER points in turn to different students, who exit, leaving only AMBER frozen.)

This is the girl?

SHERMAN

Leave her alone!

LUCIFER

Your wish is my command, Sherman. Would you like a second round?

SHERMAN

You'll simply twist it to your own desires in any event.

LUCIFER

Perhaps. I'm not terribly trustworthy. But if you want—

(LUCIFER produces a contract.)

We can do it in writing. You see, that first wish was a freebie—like the little toy you get in a Happy Meal—and believe me, you get what you pay for. And those toys will break by the time you get them home. But, if you're willing to purchase the wish, why, that's a different story.

SHERMAN

And I imagine the price is my soul?

LUCIFER

What is a soul, anyway?

SHERMAN

I refuse to barter my soul.

LUCIFER

You make it sound so evil. Think of it as investment in the present. Shall we see your present?

(TOBY enters, looking normal.)

Watch.

TOBY

Hey babe.

AMBER

Hey Toby.

TOBY

You're going to the prom with me.

AMBER

Okay.

TOBY

I hope you like beer cause I'm gonna drink a lot of it.

AMBER

Okay.

TOBY

Then we'll go driving at night.

AMBER

Super.

TOBY

Cool.

(Pause.)

You wanna make out?

AMBER

Sure.

(AMBER approaches.)

SHERMAN

Stop it!

(They freeze.)

LUCIFER

Hmm… two lovebirds at the prom, he's drinking beer, they're driving at night… wonder what might happen to them?

(LUCIFER crashes his hands into each other and both AMBER and TOBY fall over.)

Toby lives. Amber… well… not so much.

SHERMAN

What do you want?

LUCIFER

I want a deal, Shermy. I'll give you your heart's desire, you just give me your eensy-teensy little soul. It's not that hard.

SHERMAN

What are the repercussions for not having a soul?

LUCIFER

Oh please. Repercussions. Maybe a puppy will hate you here, a bird might poop on your head there, lots of people don't have souls. Have you ever been to Hollywood? Lots of people make it without souls. What do you say?

SHERMAN

I'll consider it.

AMBER

Hold me, Toby. I love the smell of your big strong teeth.

TOBY

Give me some sugar, baby.

SHERMAN

Very well!

(They freeze.)

LUCIFER

It was just getting good! What's your wish?

SHERMAN

Umm… I… Sherman Marsh, wish that Amber Thompson would fall madly in love with me. Wait, maybe um—

(Boom of thunder. The lights flicker. AMBER and LUCIFER are gone.)

Hello? Hello?

(The bell rings. Students are passing everywhere. They assemble a classroom, a weird new teacher, MRS. BELL, the theatre teacher, sweeps in.)

MRS. BELL

Come on, sit down, sit down. Welcome to theatre class. Gather round. Let's put the chairs in a circle, shall we? Oh boy this isn't much of a circle. Today is a day for exploring. Find a partner, everyone find a partner.

(STUDENTS shun SHERMAN immediately and partner up. He is left alone.)

Does everyone have a partner?

SHERMAN

I'm afraid that I don't.

MRS. BELL

That's okay, Sherman. I'll be your partner. Now, take hands with your partner. And I want you to look into your partner's eyes. Say the first thing that comes to mind.

(She takes SHERMAN's hands. Uncomfortable pause.)

SHERMAN

You have very sweaty palms.

MRS. BELL

That's because I'm passionate. It oozes out of me.

SHERMAN

I'm uncomfortable.

MRS. BELL

Don't let go! What do you see? Tell me what you see.

SHERMAN

A woman.

MRS. BELL

Yes?

SHERMAN

A bizarre woman.

MRS. BELL

Let it out, Sherman. Explore your feelings. That's what we do in theatre class. We delve into the mysteries of our soul—look closer, deeper.

SHERMAN

You have an enormous brown mole just above your lip.

MRS. BELL

What does it remind you of?

SHERMAN

A hairy crater. Like… some kind of squashed spider.

MRS. BELL

Excellent. Now we're getting somewhere. Look into my eyes. Feel my breath.

SHERMAN

I feel fear.

MRS. BELL

Yes. Embrace it.

SHERMAN

I want to flee.

MRS. BELL

Why don't you?

SHERMAN

You're holding my hands too tightly.

MRS. BELL

Brilliant. Physical limitations are imprisoning your soul. Now, one two three, let go! Dance, Sherman, dance!

(Everyone stops and looks at SHERMAN who is utterly confused.)

Let the emotions you are feeling feed your movement. Go!

(SHERMAN begins an interpretive dance about the hairy mole and fear. NORA enters.)

Excellent Sherman. Now all of you! All of you! Dance! Dance! Feel the rhythm of your souls! Go!

(The other students in the class begin to dance very sheepishly.)

NORA

Hey… um… I'm new today. I'm looking for theatre class?

MRS. BELL

Brilliant! You will be partnered with Sherman. He is sensual, like peanut butter.

NORA

Um…

MRS. BELL

Wonderful, children! Wonderful! Explore!

(NORA takes SHERMAN aside.)

NORA

What's going on?

SHERMAN

We're learning about the contents of our souls. It's mind-numbing. I cringe with fear every day I approach this class.

NORA

You're funny. I'm Nora.

SHERMAN

Sherman.

NORA

So what do you do in here?

SHERMAN

You just try to avoid her notice.

MRS. BELL

Okay, everyone stop! Sherman come here and sit in this chair.

SHERMAN

I have difficulties with sitting. I have two vertebrae in my spine which are fused together—

MRS. BELL

This will help then.

(MRS. BELL grabs him and sits him in the chair. She begins rubbing his shoulders.)

SHERMAN

Do you mind not touching me?

MRS. BELL

That's okay, we're not bound by laws in this class, Sherman. Now, I want you to think back to your childhood—yesss, that's it, close your eyes—drift backwards in time—imagine a time of happy bunnies and colored blocks, a simpler time, a happy fluffy cloud time. And it's gone. Gone! Forever!

(AMBER enters upstage, staring at SHERMAN.)

SHERMAN

Forever?

MRS. BELL

Yes! Your See-n-Say, your teddy bear, your pet dog named Funkmeister, all gone! Dead!

SHERMAN

Dead?

MRS. BELL

Yes! Gone! How does that make you feel?

SHERMAN *(unaffected)*

Distraught?

MRS. BELL

Yesssss!

SHERMAN *(getting up)*

Okay, I'm done.

MRS. BELL

Okay, who else would like to travel on this emotional journey?

(No one in the class volunteers.)

Steven!

(She grabs STEVEN and drags him to the chair.)

You have sinewy shoulders Steven, have you been working out?

(NORA takes SHERMAN to the side.)

NORA

Maybe if I fake a stroke or something we can escape.

SHERMAN

I've tried it. She says it's great material and we should explore our pain.

(AMBER approaches.)

AMBER

Hello Sherman.

SHERMAN

Amber! Don't you have another educational engagement at the moment?

AMBER

I took the bathroom pass so I could be with you.

SHERMAN

Oh—

AMBER

Who's this?

NORA

Hi I'm Nora. I'm new.

AMBER

Huh. Why are you talking to her, Sherman?

SHERMAN

She's my partner.

AMBER

Your partner? You expect me to believe that? You leave Sherman alone.

NORA

We were just talking.

AMBER

Uh huh. Well quit it.

NORA

What is your problem?

AMBER

My problem, tramp, is that I was watching you flirting with my boyfriend.

SHERMAN

Boyfriend? Does that mean we're courting?

NORA

I wasn't flirting with him—

MRS. BELL

Yes! Explore everyone!

AMBER

Sherman is mine and if I see you talk to him again I'll run over you with my VW Bug.

NORA

I wasn't doing anything!

SHERMAN

It was a mere conversation—

AMBER

Sherman, I know what's best for you. And this hussy isn't it. If we're going to have a relationship, I need to be able to trust you. Can I trust you?

SHERMAN

Sure. Does that mean we are indeed courting?

AMBER

Of course!

MRS. BELL

What's going on over here?

AMBER

Why were you touching my boyfriend?

MRS. BELL

Excuse me?

AMBER

I saw you rubbing his shoulders. That's sick. You leave him alone.

MRS. BELL

I was just relaxing him—

NORA

This chick's crazy. I'll talk to you later, Sherman.

AMBER

You will not! Sherman doesn't like you! He hates you! He thinks you smell bad and have acne!

SHERMAN

Amber, perhaps we should—

AMBER

Why do you do this me, Sherman? Don't you know I go crazy when I think you're with someone else—

MRS. BELL

Okay, and scene! Very truthful. Let's give them a round of applause, class.

(The class applauds. The bell rings. The students filter out.)

AMBER

Okay, I have our afternoon planned. After school we're going to go to the park—I've made a picnic lunch for us—I spent all week planning it, and then after the park--I love you! I'm sorry that just came right out, didn't it? I didn't mean to tell you that yet! But it's true! I love you!

SHERMAN

Well that's—

AMBER

Don't you love me?

SHERMAN

You didn't give me the opportunity to say anything—

AMBER

If you really loved me you would have said it as fast as you possibly could. But you hesitated. You don't love me. It's because of that harlot, isn't it? That Nora? She's poisoned you against me! I'll kill her! I'll kill her! I love you! I said it again why didn't you say it back? Tell me you love me!

SHERMAN

I…

AMBER

You hesitated!

SHERMAN

No I love you!

AMBER

You don't mean it! You're just saying that! Why do I always fall for the wrong guy?!

SHERMAN

No I do love you, I've been obsessed with you for years! I have the diary entries to prove it!

AMBER

Really? That's the sweetest thing anyone's ever said to me! We're going to be so happy together! Our first baby will be named Elizabeth and she'll have your eyes and my personality and then we're going to have a boy, little Bobby, but we'll call him Bowser, oh he'll be so cute! This is THE MOST FANTASTIC THING EVER!!! I LOVE YOU SO MUCH!! DON'T EVER LEAVE ME!!!

SHERMAN

I won't. I won't.

(NORA passes by.)

NORA

Hey Sherman.

SHERMAN

Greetings.

(AMBER chases down NORA.)

AMBER

What did you just say?!

NORA

I just said Hey.

AMBER

Say that again! SAY THAT AGAIN!

NORA

You're crazy.

AMBER

Oh I'm crazy, huh? I'm not the one trying to STEAL ANOTHER GIRL'S BOYFRIEND!! He doesn't like you! He doesn't want anything to do with you, you Goodwill-shopping gutter tramp!

NORA

You need to chill.

AMBER

Let's go! Let's go! I'll kill you! I LOVE MY MAN AND NO ONE IS COMING BETWEEN US!

NORA

I'll see you later, Sherman.

(AMBER slaps NORA.)

Ow!

AMBER

You want some more? Huh?

NORA

All right, that's it!

(NORA fights back. AMBER flails around like a madwoman. AMBER hits NORA again and again.)

AMBER

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT LOVE IS!!!

(She beats NORA down.)

WE HAVE A VERY SPECIAL BEAUTIFUL RELATIONSHIP!!!!!

NORA

You're insane!

(NORA runs.)

AMBER

Yeah you better run!

(AMBER stops, panting.)

I feel better.

(she sings)

Stand by your man, show him two arms to hold him—

SHERMAN

Um… Amber, I think perhaps we need to discuss our relationship.

AMBER

Oh. Good. Let's do it at my house. I have some wedding dress pictures I want to run by you.

SHERMAN

Maybe um… maybe we should have some space.

(AMBER gets right next to him.)

AMBER

What do you mean, space?

SHERMAN

Well, I think—

(he winces)

Did you pull out some of my hair?

(AMBER puts something in her wallet.)

AMBER

Why would I pull out some of your hair? Wait a minute-space? Space?! Are you breaking up with me?!

SHERMAN

No, no, why would I do that?

AMBER

You are! You are! You're breaking up with me! Oh no!

(AMBER sinks to the ground, crying hysterically.)

SHERMAN

We're not ending our courtship—I just want some space—

AMBER

So you can be with Nora or Mrs. Bell or any of your other girlfriends!!

SHERMAN

No—

AMBER

You think I'm blind?! I know! I KNOW WHAT THEY THINK! They're not going to get you! Do you understand me?! We are soulmates and we will always be together, in this life and the next!

SHERMAN

See, this is a little bit beyond the pale—

(AMBER takes out handcuffs.)

AMBER

They've poisoned your mind, that's what they've done. I've got to help you. I understand now. The Sherman I know and love is being taken away from me and—

(AMBER wrestles SHERMAN and slaps the handcuffs on him.)
I'm not giving up on us!
(AMBER pushes him into a chair and begins tying him up.)

SHERMAN
This isn't what I imagined in a relationship with you—

AMBER
Shhhh! Oh my baby, my sweet baby, what have they done to you? I'll save you. You see, you just need your memory restored about all the great things we've done together.
(AMBER runs and gets her backpack and opens it.)
Look at these photos. Don't you see how happy we were?

SHERMAN
These appear to be of me sleeping at night.

AMBER
You sleep so peacefully with me watching over you.

SHERMAN
How many of these have you taken?

AMBER
Shhhh! And here's a photograph of your dog Spencer.

SHERMAN
I thought he was run over by an automobile!

AMBER
No. I just staged that so I could give him to you as a present on your birthday. It would be so wonderful, just the two of us and Spencer, still alive.

SHERMAN
You're sick.

AMBER
If being in love with you is sick, I don't ever want to be well. If you think that's sick, look at this:
(she takes out a doll made out of hair.)
I call this one Sherman.

SHERMAN
Is that composed of my hair?

AMBER

I've been gathering them for months now. When we can't be together, I just squeeze Sherman here and I smell him and we're together. And now… we're going to be together forever.

(AMBER takes out a knife.)

SHERMAN

What are you doing?

AMBER

Shhhh.

SHERMAN

No, please tell me what you're doing.

AMBER

I always knew this day would come. When you rejected our love. But you won't succeed that easily. Don't you know that Romeo and Juliet are together forever? In the afterlife.

SHERMAN

You see, I have a fairly good idea of where I'm heading in the afterlife, and I'd prefer not to go there.

AMBER

I'll go there with you. Right now. This will only hurt a little bit.

SHERMAN

Help! Help!

(SHERMAN tries to hop up and down in his chair. He manages to reach his backpack.)

Where are my Yu-Gi-Oh cards? Where are my Yu-Gi-Oh cards?!

AMBER

Is there a Yu-Gi-Oh card for true love? Because that's the one I'm playing.

(AMBER snatches the cards from SHERMAN.)

SHERMAN

No, please, listen, Amber, I love you.

AMBER

How much?

SHERMAN *(trying to spread his arms)*

This much. Um… I love you as much as a beached whale loves returning to the ocean. I love you as much as middle school girls love vampire love stories. I love you madly, deeply, passionately, like chocolate pudding.

AMBER

I love you like chocolate pudding.

SHERMAN

Exactly. And I'll show you. Let me see the cards.

AMBER

Okay.

(She hands them over.)

SHERMAN

Lucifer!

(He throws the card down. Nothing happens.)

Oh wait I forgot to combine him Dark Magician and Power up.

(Thunder. The lights flicker. LUCIFER enters in a poof of smoke wearing sunglasses.)

LUCIFER

I was just in the middle of tanning, what?

AMBER

Who's this guy?! Who's this guy?! We're in the middle of a relationship discussion, got it?

LUCIFER

Sweetheart, can it.

(AMBER freezes.)

What seems to be the trouble?

SHERMAN

I do not want her to love me any more.

LUCIFER

Why not? She seems… sweet.

SHERMAN

She's a demented harpy.

LUCIFER

Love makes fools of us all. Enjoy.

(LUCIFER begins to leave.)

SHERMAN

No wait wait! This isn't fair! I tendered you my soul, I should get something extraordinary in return!

LUCIFER

Oh, right. *That*'s how it works.

SHERMAN

Allow me to have another wish.

LUCIFER

What are you going to give me for that? Another soul?

SHERMAN

Indeed.

LUCIFER

You only have one. And it's not all that impressive anyway.

SHERMAN

The quality of my soul notwithstanding, I do have one other that I could trade with you. My mother's. I acquired it during as a present for my ninth birthday.

LUCIFER

Your mother gave you her soul for your ninth birthday?

SHERMAN

I am a shrewd negotiator. She wanted to get me a My Little Pony, I countered with her soul. I thought it might come in handy some day. I was correct.

LUCIFER

I like the way you think. You know, after this is all over, there might be some management opportunities for you down under. Very well, you may have a third wish.

SHERMAN

I, Sherman Marsh, wish that the following be granted unto me without undue complication, hardship, or deleterious side effect, and that said wish be accomplished in a speedy manner and with all goodwill by the supernatural entity known hereafter as Lucifer, be it also resolved that the following wish not be granted in an ironic way, with unforeseen consequences for myself, my loved ones, or my progeny: Clause 1: I wish for seventy years of good health, sound mind and happiness, in a naturally aging and pleasantly unfolding existence where I retain all of my limbs, sanity, hair, memories, athletic prowess, see subparagraph A for complete definitions of all of the above terms. Clause 2: In addition to 70 years of good health and sanity, I further wish that I be blessed with financial stability that weathers the hardships of future economic recessions, peak oil, alien invasion, zombie awakenings, and any and all other problems that may befell the world here, now, and in perpetuity throughout the known universe. Clause 3: Pursuant to clause 2, I wish additionally to be lucky in love and discover my true love in a timely fashion and further specify that said true love must be attractive, retain all her limbs, sanity, hair, and body shape for seventy years before dying with me in a pleasant

and painless manner. And Clause 4: That there be a Yu-Gi-Oh tournament at my high school in the next two days.

(Pause.)

LUCIFER

That's your wish?

(SHERMAN nods.)

Fine.

SHERMAN

I've been thinking about it for some time now.

LUCIFER

So be it. But in seventy years—you watch yourself. I'll be back. Stupid nerds.

(Boom of thunder. Smoke. The lights flicker. AMBER disappears. Students begin to set up the "tournament area.")

ANNOUNCER *(in a nerdy voice)*

And reminding all students that the first annual Yu-Gi-Oh grand master tournament will be held today after school, so prepare yourselves mentally and physically for the duel of your lifetime. Only one duelist will reign supreme!

(in a regular voice)

Seriously, we're having a Yu-Gi-Oh tournament? Are the dorks running the school now? Oh, it's still on? Never mind.

(SHERMAN stands aside as the tournament is assembled. He slowly puts on his dueling outfit, an outlandishly nerdy cape and medieval-looking suit that he pulls from his backpack.)

SHERMAN

My entire existence I have been waiting for the day when my prowess at collectible card games will save the world, and maybe this tournament won't save the world, but it will make me the most popular student at this high school. Ah ha!

(He finishes assembling his outfit, complete with two fingerless card gloves.)

Groovy. My deck is complete. My monsters are ready. Now it is time for battle!

(energetic music plays.)

ANNOUNCER

Oh man I have to announce this now? Oh come on these dorks don't need me to—wait it's still on? Why doesn't some tell me when it's off? How do you turn it off? This button? I thought that was on. Okay, um… round one! Sherman Marsh versus Toby Tripp!

(TOBY emerges with a small deck of cards, looking worried.)

TOBY

Um… I just bought these cards.

SHERMAN

I'm going to enjoy this, noob.

ANNOUNCER

Duel!

SHERMAN

I play Raging Forest which allows me to play two cards at the same time, which allows me to play Dark Monster and cast a spell Rampage on Dark Monster which allows him to go first and with a Bonus Move I cast Action Explosion on him which doubles his attack so when he strikes he inflicts 2000 points of damage!

ANNOUNCER

And Toby Tripp is defeated.

TOBY

Um… do I get to go?

SHERMAN

No, you're dead. That's what's called being powned.

TOBY

This sucks.

(TOBY leaves.)

ANNOUNCER

And round two! How many rounds are we going with this? Sherman Marsh and his deck of many monsters vs. Jessica Chase!

(JESSICA enters.)

JESSICA

Hey Sherman.

SHERMAN

Spare me the niceties, Jessica, and prepare to meet your doom.

JESSICA

You're taking this really seriously. Um…

ANNOUNCER

Duel!

JESSICA

I summon tree sweat monster.

SHERMAN

Okay? Tree Sweat Monster? You think that's going to save you? Suck on an energized Dark Storm Paladin with an anger upboost. He immediately charges your Tree Sweat Monster and destroys him, and then I play Crypt Keeper and steal your Tree Sweat Monster and then he comes back from the dead and bites you with an additional Jaws of Unlife!

JESSICA

Um… okay. Then I play—

ANNOUNCER

And Jessica Chase is defeated!

SHERMAN

Epic win. That's how we play in Sherman's world.

JESSICA

Is this even fair?

SHERMAN

Sometimes life ain't fair, sweetheart. Do me a favor and study some grammar and face me again sometime.

ANNOUNCER

Round three! Sherman Marsh versus Amber Thompson!

SHERMAN

Amber?

(AMBER enters.)

How can I duel with the woman I love?

AMBER

So what is this stupid game anyway?

SHERMAN

You dare to insult the noble art of dueling? I'm afraid you must be schooled.

ANNOUNCER

D-d-d-duel!

AMBER

I summon Happy Tree Friend. I put him in defense mode.

SHERMAN

Oh Amber, that was uber-foolish. I summon Rampaging Underworld Fiend. He eats your Happy Tree Friend and poisons your deck!

AMBER

Does that mean I'm dead?

SHERMAN

I can still save you, my love. But first you must play Unseen Energy.

AMBER

I don't have Unseen Energy.

SHERMAN

Then I'm afraid you have been, as they say, powned.

ANNOUNCER

And Amber Thompson has been defeated!

SHERMAN

That was the most difficult battle of my life. My heart versus my deck.

ANNOUNCER

And now for the championship round—

SHERMAN

Perhaps it's time for some real competition.

ANNOUNCER

Sherman Marsh and his dark deck of many monsters versus Nora Starr! Can I go home after this? These nerds are really bugging me. Is the dang thing still on? Shoot.

SHERMAN

Nora? A girl as a grand champion? Please. I am old-fashioned in some things. Everyone knows that females cannot create as mighty a deck as males.

(NORA enters.)

NORA

Hey Sherman.

SHERMAN

It was nice knowing you, Nora. We must now be enemies. I'm afraid I must destroy you now.

ANNOUNCER

D-d-d-d-duel!

SHERMAN

I summon Planet Eater and immediately imbue him with Arms of the Colossus and Fighting Spirit and he attacks and—

NORA

I counter with Calming sleep!

SHERMAN

Oh really?

NORA

I summon Eyes of the Angels!

SHERMAN

Why would you do that? I summon Strong Jaw Monster with Bad Breath and Spiky Soul! And he attacks—

NORA

I counter with monster bait and destroy him!

SHERMAN

You destroyed my Strong Jaw Monster with Bad Breath and Spiky Soul? How dare you?

NORA

I summon Frost Maiden and imbue her with Special Sauce! She attacks for one thousand points of damage!

SHERMAN

What? What? Special Sauce? I've never even heard of that card.

NORA

It's banned in Japan but still legal in American decks.

SHERMAN

I summon Stool Softener Monster! He strikes fear in the bowels of your monsters!

NORA

I counter with Fiber Fortress!

SHERMAN

Where'd you get that card?

NORA

It came special in my breakfast cereal. I summon Friendly Gnome Helper! He casts Strength of the woodlands on my Frost Maiden! She attacks!

SHERMAN

I counter with Shield of Skulls!

NORA

She breaks through and inflicts 900 points of damage! That's some serious pownage.

SHERMAN

How can this be? I'm going to die! There's only…

(He looks at his deck)

I summon Dark Magician with a power booster and combine them to summon… Lucifer.

(Thunder. Smoke. LUCIFER enters.)

LUCIFER

Hello.

SHERMAN

Attack!

LUCIFER

Let's see… Friendly Gnome Helper? How about Hamburger Helper? Frost Maiden? I like popsicles. I also eat your Eyes of the Angel and for fun I draw a disfiguring moustache on her corpse. I also eat you.

SHERMAN

Sorry, babe. But that's how Sherman plays the—

NORA

I counter with Angelic Love Mother!

(Thunder. Smoke. Choirs of Angels. ANGELIC LOVE MOTHER enters. SHERMAN and NORA freeze.)

LUCIFER

Holy—

ANGELIC LOVE MOTHER

Angelic Love Mother strike!

(She begins an involved dance routine and then looks up to see LUCIFER.)

Steve?

LUCIFER

Hey Katie.

ANGELIC LOVE MOTHER

Oh my gosh!

LUCIFER

What are you doing here?

ANGELIC LOVE MOTHER

I'm acting as a sacred guardian for that girl over there.

LUCIFER

That sounds pretty boring.

ANGELIC LOVE MOTHER

I think it's rewarding. What are you up to?

LUCIFER

Oh I'm stealing that nerd's soul over there.

ANGELIC LOVE MOTHER

That is so evil.

LUCIFER

I know. I can't help it. It's in my nature.

End of Excerpt.
To purchase this play, visit www.concordtheatricals.com