



GOOD PEOPLE

BY DAVID LINDSAY-ABAIRE



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GOOD PEOPLE
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GOOD PEOPLE was originally commissioned by the Manhattan Theatre Club
(Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director; Barry Grove, Executive Producer)
with funds provided by Bank of America
and received its world premiere there on February 8, 2011.

GOOD PEOPLE received its world premiere at Manhattan Theatre Club (Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director; Barry Grove, Executive Producer) on February 8, 2011. It was directed by Daniel Sullivan; the scenic design was by John Lee Beatty; the costume design was by David Zinn; the lighting design was by Pat Collins; the sound design was by Jill BC Du Boff; the dialect coach was Charlotte Fleck; the production stage manager was Roy Harris; and the stage manager was Denise Yaney. The cast was as follows:

MARGARET Frances McDormand
STEVIE Patrick Carroll
DOTTIE Estelle Parsons
JEAN Becky Ann Baker
MIKE Tate Donovan
KATE Renée Elise Goldberry

CHARACTERS

MARGARET — white, about fifty.

STEVIE — white, late twenties.

DOTTIE — white, mid-sixties.

JEAN — white, about fifty.

MIKE — white, about fifty.

KATE — African-American, early thirties.

Various offstage voices, probably prerecorded.

PLACE

The play is set in South Boston's Lower End,
and in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts.

NOTES

A slash (/) in the dialogue indicates the start of the next spoken line.

The name "Margie" is pronounced with a hard "g" in the middle, not a "j."

GOOD PEOPLE

ACT ONE

Scene 1

South Boston, Massachusetts. The alley behind the Dollar Store. There's a dumpster back there, a rusty chair, and a door labeled "Dollar Store — Deliveries Only." The back door opens and Margaret, about fifty, comes out with Stevie, her manager, late twenties. Stevie carries a folder.

MARGARET. Did she ever tell you the turkey story? Up at Flanagan's?

STEVIE. No.

MARGARET. When I worked up there, and she came in? She never told you that turkey story?

STEVIE. I don't think so.

MARGARET. She was pregnant with you. No, Jimmy actually — she was pregnant with Jimmy — because it was near Christmas, and your father was locked up in Walpole again, so she didn't have any money for anything.

STEVIE. (*Offers her the rusty chair.*) You wanna sit down?

MARGARET. She had nothing. Except Saint Vincent de Paul's. Thank god for them. They used to give out toys at Christmas to the ones who couldn't afford it.

STEVIE. Margaret, listen for a / second —

MARGARET. (*But she keeps going.*) I don't think they did Christmas dinners though. And your grandmother had passed by then, so there was no dinner to go to. So your mother comes into Flanagan's, and she's out to here. (*Indicates belly.*) When's Jimmy's birthday?

STEVIE. January.

MARGARET. Right, so she's out to here, and in this *big* coat. Remember that blue coat she always wore?

STEVIE. Yeah.

MARGARET. And she's walking up and down the aisles, slipping things in the pockets — potatoes, and cans of cranberry sauce, cookies, because you guys gotta eat, right? So she comes waddling up to my register. And I'm like, "Hey Suzie, how are the kids?" And she doesn't wanna talk obviously, she's just trying to push through the line, "Oh, they're good, I was just looking for something, but you don't have it, so I'm gonna try someplace else." And then the turkey falls out of her coat. It hits the floor right between her legs. A turkey. Boom. And I swear to god, she didn't miss a beat. She looks up, real mad, and yells, "Who threw that bird at me?!" (*Really laughing now.*) Oh, we died. Everybody there. Ya had to laugh. "Who threw that bird at me?!" She was a funny sonofabitch. Pardon my French.

STEVIE. Look, Margaret —

MARGARET. God, she was funny. I think about her all the time. Your mother was a good lady. It's a lesson though. You're lucky you don't smoke. Too young, your mother.

STEVIE. Can we do this?

MARGARET. (*Beat.*) Sure. (*Moves to the chair.*) You gotta make them give you a real office, Stevie. Because these alley conferences? No way to run a business. It smells back here.

STEVIE. I know you don't wanna talk about why I brought / you out here —

MARGARET. No, I know. I was late, I'm sorry.

STEVIE. It's just, the district manager / comes in —

MARGARET. I know. It was my Joycey again. You know I can't leave her alone when she gets outta sorts. And I pay Dottie Gillis a little bit to keep an eye on her, but Dot's not the most reliable.

STEVIE. Right, but the district manager comes down on *me* about it.

MARGARET. No, I know, that guy's an ass — pardon my French.

STEVIE. Maybe, but he's also my boss. And he looks over those punch cards.

MARGARET. Okay.

STEVIE. No, not okay. You're late every day. Twenty, thirty minutes. Yesterday it was almost an hour.

MARGARET. It's not every day.

STEVIE. Pretty much it is, and that reflects badly on *me*. He wants to know why I can't keep my employees in line.

MARGARET. You have to explain about Joyce. She's in a program, thank god, but that's only so many hours a week. I can't / always —

STEVIE. I explained it to him, but there's only so much / I can —

MARGARET. It's not just me, Stevie. Karen calls in sick every couple days.

STEVIE. Yeah, well, I'm talking to Karen next.

MARGARET. Well, while you've got her out here, you should ask her why she tells everyone you're gay.

STEVIE. (*Beat.*) What?

MARGARET. She says you're gay.

STEVIE. (*More bemused than offended.*) I'm not gay.

MARGARET. I know.

STEVIE. So why does she say that?

MARGARET. Because you go to bingo.

STEVIE. That makes me gay?

MARGARET. I'm just tellin' ya what Karen says to people. You go to bingo a lot. More than I do. More than Karen does.

STEVIE. I like bingo.

MARGARET. Obviously.

STEVIE. Plenty of men go to bingo.

MARGARET. I wouldn't say plenty, but yeah.

STEVIE. Freddy Gleason goes to bingo.

MARGARET. Yeah.

STEVIE. Frank Moore.

MARGARET. Yeah. A few old-timers, but yeah, that's what I've been telling her.

STEVIE. Okay, it doesn't matter.

MARGARET. Are you gonna bring it up with her though?

STEVIE. No, I'm going to say to her exactly what I'm saying to you. The district manager came / in —

MARGARET. She's late a lot more than I am.

STEVIE. Okay.

MARGARET. *And* she says you're gay.

STEVIE. Margaret —

MARGARET. I know you're not gay, and I tell her that, because you're dating what's her name. I don't know if that's supposed to be a secret, or whatever, but everybody knows that. Not Karen, obviously, but everybody knows that.

STEVIE. Can you listen to me, please? The district manager came / in —

MARGARET. Okay, I understand. I've been late, and I won't be anymore. You can tell him I got the warning. (*Heads back inside.*)

STEVIE. (*Stops her.*) No, this isn't a warning. You've *had* warnings. I've given you seven warnings in the last two months.

MARGARET. You know I can't leave Joyce alone. You know that. She's like a baby. And Dottie doesn't always show up when she's supposed to. So what am I / supposed to — ?

STEVIE. It's not like I have a choice in this. If I don't let you go then I get fired.

MARGARET. (*Beat.*) What do you mean, let me go?

STEVIE. I told you it could happen.

MARGARET. Now, come / on —

STEVIE. Every week the district manager comes in to look at those punch cards.

MARGARET. I won't be late again. Tell him I promise.

STEVIE. I cover for you all the time, and he won't have it anymore. He wants me to let you go.

MARGARET. I'll get somebody else to look after Joyce.

STEVIE. That's what you always say.

MARGARET. (*Beat.*) This is about the Chinese girl, isn't it.

STEVIE. *No*, and she's not Chinese.

MARGARET. She might be a little faster at the register, but she makes more mistakes.

STEVIE. First of all, she doesn't make mistakes. / Secondly —

MARGARET. She lives two blocks away! It's easier for her to get here on time!

STEVIE. Margaret, stop.

MARGARET. No, that guy comes in, and looks over your books, and who's getting paid what per hour — !

STEVIE. That's not what this is.

MARGARET. And because I've been here three years, I make a little bit more than the other girls, which costs the company a little bit more money —

STEVIE. You're not reliable.

MARGARET. You can't say that. I might be late once in a while but —

STEVIE. They don't want unreliable employees.

MARGARET. This is a *Dollar Store*. Who do they *think* is gonna work here?

STEVIE. Is that what I should tell them?

MARGARET. What they don't want is someone making ninety an hour. And you know that's what this is.

STEVIE. I'll talk to my brother. Maybe he can get you something down at Gillette.

MARGARET. *Gillette?*

STEVIE. I'll call him this afternoon.

MARGARET. That's just your way of getting me out the door.

STEVIE. I'll call Jimmy, I swear to god.

MARGARET. He's not gonna call me in there. Besides, I've been to Gillette, it's all line work. I can't work a line, I'm too old for that. I can't keep up.

STEVIE. I'm trying to help you.

MARGARET. You wanna help me, let me go back to my register.

STEVIE. It's not my choice!

MARGARET. (*Beat.*) I'll take a pay cut.

STEVIE. No. A pay cut? Margaret, listen to yourself.

MARGARET. I know the Chinese girl gets eight-sixty an hour, I can make do on that. It'll be tight, but I can do eight-sixty.

STEVIE. It's not about what you get paid.

MARGARET. That is bullshit. Pardon my French. But that is bullshit and you know it. I never asked for those raises. I only got them because you were required by law to give them to me. It wasn't much, god knows — a nickel here, fifteen cents one time — but I knew when I went over nine dollars, you were gonna start looking for an excuse to get rid of me.

STEVIE. You know that's not true.

MARGARET. Well if not you, then the district manager was. Or whoever adds up the numbers. Why pay *me* when you can give minimum wage to Chow Fun?

STEVIE. That doesn't help your case, you know. The racist stuff—

MARGARET. What racist stuff? That's her name.

STEVIE. (*Writes something down.*) You know that's not her name.

MARGARET. You gonna put that in my file now? How I'm a racist?

STEVIE. You wouldn't even be out here if you weren't late.

MARGARET. And I wouldn't be late if I didn't have to beg someone to watch my daughter! And I wouldn't have to beg someone if I could

GOOD PEOPLE

by David Lindsay-Abaire

2M, 4W

Welcome to Southie, a Boston neighborhood where a night on the town means a few rounds of bingo, where this month's paycheck covers last month's bills, and where Margie Walsh has just been let go from yet another job. Facing eviction and scrambling to catch a break, Margie thinks an old fling who's made it out of Southie might be her ticket to a fresh new start. But is this apparently self-made man secure enough to face his humble beginnings? Margie is about to risk what little she has left to find out. With his signature humorous glow, Lindsay-Abaire explores the struggles, shifting loyalties and unshakeable hopes that come with having next to nothing in America.

"David Lindsay-Abaire pays his respects to his old South Boston neighborhood with this tough and tender play about the insurmountable class divide between those who make it out of this blue-collar Irish neighborhood and those who find themselves left behind. The scrappy characters have tremendous appeal, and the moral dilemma they grapple with — is it strength of character or just a few lucky breaks that determines a person's fate? — holds special significance in today's harsh economic climate."

—Variety

"... shot through with aching authenticity, GOOD PEOPLE is that rare play that is both timeless and completely keyed into a specific moment in American life — without the need to grasp for topicality. Bringing the same clear-eyed emotional observation that distinguished his Pulitzer winner, Rabbit Hole, David Lindsay-Abaire has crafted another penetrating drama about deeply relatable issues, albeit this time with more warming doses of humor."

—The Hollywood Reporter

"... incisively drawn characters and sharp, witty dialogue. The interactions between the characters feel vividly real, from Mike's increasing registers of annoyance to Margie's edgy sarcasm to Kate's genuine attempts at civility. Even Steve, the dollar shop manager who fires Margie, is revealed to have unexpected depths in the bingo playing scenes that amusingly riff on the lower class characters' financial desperation."

—ScheckOnTheater

"Wonderful ... this isn't a manipulative tear-jerker or a simplistic diatribe. GOOD PEOPLE is poignant, brave and almost subversive in its focus on what it really means to be down on your luck."

—The New York Post

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