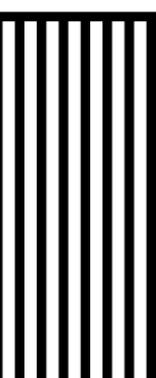




ANY GIVEN MONDAY

BY BRUCE GRAHAM



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Original production co-produced by Theatre Exile, Philadelphia, PA,
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and Act II Playhouse, Ambler, PA,
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and was directed by Harriet Power.

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*For Joe Canuso
and with thanks to Harriet Power, Bud Martin and Mark Simperts*

ANY GIVEN MONDAY was presented at 59E59 Theaters in New York City, opening on October 17, 2011. It was directed by Bud Martin; the set design was by Dirk Durossette. The cast was as follows:

SARAH Lauren Ashley Carter
RISA Hillary B. Smith
LENNY Paul Michael Valley
MICKEY Michael Mastro

ANY GIVEN MONDAY was originally co-produced by Theatre Exile (Joe Canuso, Producing Artistic Director) and Act II Playhouse (Bud Martin, Producing Artistic Director). It opened at the Plays and Players Theatre in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on February 4, 2010, and moved to Act II Playhouse in Ambler, Pennsylvania on March 5, 2010. It was directed by Harriet Power; the assistant director was Noah Herman; the stage manager was Debbie Lau; the assistant stage manager was Anya Anthony; the costume design was by Alison Roberts; the set design was by Dirk Durossette; the lighting design was by James Leitner; the sound design was by Mark Valenzuela; and the dramaturg was Michele Volansky. The cast was as follows:

SARAH Geneviève Perrier
RISA Catharine K. Slusar
LENNY Joe Canuso
MICKEY Pete Pryor

CHARACTERS

SARAH

RISA

LENNY

MICK

ANY GIVEN MONDAY

ACT ONE

Most of the action takes place in Lenny's den. It's a little too tasteful to be completely comfortable; it is designed around the flat-screen TV that we occasionally hear but do not see. A large couch dominates the room facing the television. There is a coffee table in front of it with a plethora of remotes. Stage left is a small wet bar; the entrance into the rest of the house is stage right.

On each side of the den are two neutral areas which will be used by Sarah, Risa and eventually, Mickey.

As the houselights fade we hear the soundtrack of Lenny's favorite movie. The glow of the black-and-white film is dim and barely shows Lenny on the couch.

Lights rise on Sarah in one of the neutral areas. She's 22 and pretty without makeup, which she rarely uses. She listens to the music for a moment, then looks out at us.

SARAH. My father always cries at the end of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. You know, where Atticus Finch goes up to Boo Radley and says something like, "Thank you for my children. Thank you for my family." Something like that. Gregory Peck in his horn-rimmed glasses and his white linen suit with the suspenders — (*Her phone goes off. She pulls it from her pocket and glances at it. It's a text message.*) Sorry. My mother. (*She texts back a short note without missing a beat.*) And it's always right at that line: "Thank you for my family." The music swells and ... and Dad doesn't, like, weep or

anything but his eyes just kind of well up. Every time. And considering he's taught the novel to three classes a year for twenty-four years — and shown them all the movie, plus all the times he showed it to me — I mean, do the math. You'd think he'd get over it. So I asked him a couple years ago, you know, why does the end of this movie always make you cry and he said, "Because I'll never be as good as Atticus Finch." I hate to break it to him but if Atticus Finch were practicing law today, he'd probably be advertising on cable. "African-American? Accused of raping white trash? Call me *now!*" I don't know. I think he saw the Finches as this kind of ... idealized family unit. Which is a bit ironic when you think about it because — if you remember the story — the mother's dead. (*Lights and music fade and rise on Risa on the opposite side of the stage. Risa is in her late 40s but still a very attractive, if slightly over accessorized woman. She has a large Starbucks cup in her hand. She speaks to Frank and appears a bit nervous.*)

RISA. People seem to think an affair is the easiest thing in the world to pull off. Just show up, do it — bang — all over, everybody go home. Wrong. Soooo wrong. The easier it looks, the harder it was, trust me. I've been doing this for years. (*Her phone beeps.*) Last week, a bat mitzvah — a very nice affair — tasteful, unlike some of these you see nowadays. There's bacon in the potato salad. (*She pulls out her phone, reads a text.*) Sarah. (*As she texts back.*) Do you believe that? This is not a firehouse, Frank, this is not an Elk's Lodge, this is a top-notch country club ... and they put bacon in the potato salad for a ballroom full of Jews. Luckily I caught it. (*Frank has taken her hand; she pulls back.*) Not here. There's ... people. Somebody could ... just — don't, okay? Not here. (*Sips her coffee.*) So I have to go into the kitchen and make a scene and the chef starts to give me attitude. I hate working with people. I swear, I don't know what I loathe more — rude Americans or polite Hindus who do tech support. I don't want to be your best friend, I just want my email. (*Silence; she sighs.*) Don't pressure me, Frank. That's the last thing I need. (*She sips her coffee.*) I wish this was wine. Because I'm nervous, okay? (*Glancing around, she takes his hand.*) My palms are sweaty. Isn't that romantic? I'm hyperventilating, my stomach is flipping and I feel like I'm having a heart attack. Because I feel guilty, okay? I can't help it, I do. Why am I here — right now — with you, even contemplating this? I have never done anything like this in my life. I have no reason to even think about ...

this. And I just want some sort of ... logical reason, I guess. And I don't have one. Not one ... My stomach, right now, it's like I'm on a roller coaster. That's just what it feels like. (*She shrugs awkwardly.*) Haven't been on a roller coaster in years. Let's go to your place. (*Lights fade on her, rise on Sarah.*)

SARAH. "We live in a world that is bursting with sin and sorrow." Samuel Johnson. Now, if that's true — why? Well, we could probably blame it on the fact that there's a lot of evil in the world. (*Lights rise on Risa, who now speaks directly to Sarah.*) Which brings us to the next question: Why is there evil?

RISA. There just is, honey.

SARAH. But why, Mom? Why?

RISA. I don't know. Makes things interesting. Why do you ask these questions?

SARAH. Because they're important.

RISA. This is why you were asked to leave the Girl Scouts.

SARAH. (*Plowing on.*) Atheists will tell you there's evil because there is no God. Christians will tell you that there's nothing wrong with evil as an activity if it is used to prevent a greater evil. For instance, going back in time and killing Hitler as a baby.

RISA. Again with the Holocaust. You're obsessed with this.

SARAH. No, I'm not.

RISA. When you were seven we showed you *The Diary of Anne Frank*. The next day you moved all your stuff up to the attic.

SARAH. It's important not to forget.

RISA. I know it's important not to forget, honey. But a day or two won't hurt. People like to talk about other things at dinner. This is why you have trouble keeping a boyfriend. (*Lights fade on Risa.*)

SARAH. I hate when she's right. When I date a guy, I won't even think about having sex with him until we watch *Schindler's List*. Just to get their reaction. A litmus test. Most of them fail miserably. Ten minutes into it one guy asked if the whole movie was in black and white. I told him no — it was like *The Wizard of Oz*. As soon as they got to Auschwitz it turned to color. You see, I really do believe there is a God but that he or she just kind of ... doesn't care anymore. And if you believe in the theory of free will — then see what we've done with it — can you blame God for feeling that way? When you think about it it makes a lot of sense. Wittgenstein said, "Philosophy is not a theory but an activity." It's like some kind of sport or something. You have to keep in shape. Like this morn-

ing I got into a discussion with a theology major friend of mine. He really overdoes it with the whole “God is love” — God is warm, compassionate — all that stuff. If you ask me that makes God so uninteresting. Like he’s some omnipotent Care Bear or something. So I reminded him of an Arabic proverb: “When you see a blind beggar on the street, what should you do? Kick him. Why should you be kinder to him than God was?” I think that says a lot about God. And Arabs. (*She thinks a moment.*) I came to a really frightening conclusion the other day. In seven months I will be graduating from a very prestigious university with a Bachelor of Arts degree in “philosophy.” And I don’t want to teach. I am so screwed ... (*Lights fade on her and rise on Lenny in his den. He’s late 40s, dressed in sweats. Usually a very neat man, he looks a little ruffled at the moment. He lies on the couch staring listlessly at the television. We hear snippets from the black-and-white movie he’s watching. A half-empty screwdriver sits on the coffee table. The doorbell rings, but Lenny doesn’t hear it. It rings again, then is followed by some pounding, bringing Lenny out of his reverie.*)

LENNY. Open.

MICK. (*Offstage.*) Yo.

LENNY. Den. (*Mickey enters. Late 40s, blue-collar work clothes. He also wears a brand-new, black, hooded sweatshirt and carries a paper coffee cup. Mick has a natural abundance of energy but tonight it seems to be working overtime. Those who know Mick well realize early on that you cannot take everything he says too seriously. If the world took his occasional rants as gospel, he’d have been put in a straitjacket years ago.*)

MICK. Whatta ya doin’ — havin’ a seance in here or somethin’? (*He throws on the lights. Lenny reacts to it.*) Not watchin’ the game?

LENNY. Oh ... Christ, yeah. Monday. (*During the course of this scene Mickey will pick and discard various remotes while trying to put the game on.*)

MICK. Monday.

LENNY. I’m all thrown off.

MICK. No shit.

LENNY. Monday. Wow.

MICK. What’d ya think? (*He moves to the bar.*)

LENNY. I don’t know. What’s the difference?

MICK. Need one?

LENNY. I’m okay. (*Noticing the cup.*) Drinking coffee at this hour? (*Mick gets a beer.*)

MICK. Sarah called me.

LENNY. Oh Christ.

MICK. You talk to her?

LENNY. Yeah. What'd she want?

MICK. Worried.

LENNY. What'd you tell her?

MICK. Nothin'. What do I know? All I got was a voicemail —

LENNY. You never answer your cell —

MICK. I'm underground. And you said don't call back, wanta be alone — so I left you alone.

LENNY. No you didn't. You're here.

MICK. Okay, that was Saturday. How long am I s'posed ta — you could be dead in here or somethin'. But then I figure you got all that stuff goin' at school — take your mind off it, bullshit, bullshit — so I'd wait.

LENNY. Till now.

MICK. You want me to leave?

LENNY. No. I'm surprised you waited this long.

MICK. Jude's idea, not mine. I was gonna come right over —

LENNY. Just wanted to be alone.

MICK. Scared the shit outta me.

LENNY. Sorry. *(Lenny watches as Mick chugs down the beer and moves for another.)* Thirsty.

MICK. First of the night.

LENNY. Behind schedule.

MICK. Yeah, well, busy. Places to go, people to see. *(Moving back to Lenny.)* I never liked that prick —

LENNY. I know —

MICK. Told ya Fourth of July at the barbecue. Wanted to smack that fuckin' guy.

LENNY. I know. *(Mick opens a pizza box. Empty.)*

MICK. Pig. *(Mick grabs a remote, changing the channel.)*

LENNY. You hungry?

MICK. Nahh, just, ya know — if it was there. Oh, Jude made ya a meatloaf.

LENNY. Great.

MICK. But I forgot it. Drop it by tomorrow. *(Tossing the remote.)* All these fuckin' remotes. Too complicated. Went to my brother's the other day, hadda get my nephew to turn the TV on. Put the game on will ya? *(Lenny does as Mick sits on the couch.)* Giants,

ANY GIVEN MONDAY

by Bruce Graham

2M, 2W

Lenny is a great guy: a good teacher, an excellent father and a loving husband. So when his wife leaves him for a smooth-talking lothario who builds Walmarts, his life is shattered. While Lenny consoles himself with pizza and Monday Night Football, his best friend Mick takes matters into his own hands. Now Lenny must decide what he will stand up for and who he will stand up to. How far is too far to get back to happily-ever-after?

“A drawing room fable in which the ends justify the means, and happily ever after includes rooting for injuries — and waiting for the police reports.”

—**The New York Times**

“Graham raises existential quandaries and showcases dramatic actions that illuminate them ...”

—**BackStage**

“A dark comedy so offensive, so amoral and so generally unpleasant that you’ll hate yourself for laughing at it. The problem is, you’ll hate yourself a lot.”

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