

**UP, DOWN, STRANGE,
CHARMED, BEAUTY,
AND TRUTH;
LILA ON THE WALL;
AND
MAFIA ON PROZAC**

**THREE PLAYS BY
EDWARD ALLAN BAKER**



**DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.**

UP, DOWN, STRANGE, CHARMED, BEAUTY, AND TRUTH;
LILA ON THE WALL; MAFIA ON PROZAC
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This play is dedicated to my daughter, Marlana Olga-Rose.

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**UP, DOWN, STRANGE,
CHARMED, BEAUTY,
AND TRUTH**

UP, DOWN, STRANGE, CHARMED, BEAUTY, AND TRUTH was first produced at the Ensemble Studio Theatre (Curt Dempster, Artistic Director), in New York City on June 2, 1999, as part of the Marathon of One-Act Plays. It was directed by Ron Stetson; the lighting design was by Greg MacPherson; the set design was by Carlo Adinolfi; and the costume design was by Austin Sanderson. The cast was as follows:

DANNY Bruce MacVittie
MARLEY Amy Love
STEPH Amy Stats

UP, DOWN, STRANGE, CHARMED, BEAUTY, AND TRUTH was subsequently produced by CASA 204 Productions at the Cherry Lane Theatre, in New York City on August 11, 2007, as part of the Annual New York International Fringe Festival. It was directed by Diana Basmajian; the set design was by Rachel Brown; the costume design was by Lynn Wheeler; and the stage manager was Samantha Shechtman. The cast was as follows:

DANNY Greg Drozdek
MARLEY Linnea Wilson
STEPH Megan Hart

CHARACTERS

DANNY

MARLEY

STEPH

PLACE

East Providence, Rhode Island.

SETTING

A small dining room, not overly furnished, dominated by a dining room table and mismatched chairs. There is a stereo in a cluttered bookshelf, a phone on an end table next to a small sofa. A soft-cushioned chair is downstage, a door to a bedroom is upstage left, an opening to the kitchen is upstage right, a door to the outside is stage left.

PRE-SHOW MUSIC

Soulful selections from solo female artists, late '90s.

“For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.”

—Walt Whitman

UP, DOWN, STRANGE, CHARMED, BEAUTY, AND TRUTH

Lights up on Danny, 40ish, and Marley, 16, at the dining room table, schoolbooks and notebooks in front of them. Danny is wearing a baseball cap, T-shirt, paint-splattered jeans, and cheap canvas shoes. Marley is casually dressed, hair pulled back into a ponytail, and impatiently tapping her pen on the table. Danny is flipping through a textbook while sipping from his can of beer. It's mid-afternoon.

MARLEY. C'mon Uncle Danny, find it.

DANNY. I'm lookin', I'm lookin' ...

MARLEY. The heading is "Chaos."

DANNY. You told me that.

MARLEY. C-H-A-O-S.

DANNY. I know how to spell it. I got to the ninth grade in case you didn't know it.

MARLEY. You only got to the ninth grade?

DANNY. Well, yunno, I *was* twenty-five years old.

MARLEY. And in the ninth grade?!

DANNY. I could beat the shit out of everybody.

MARLEY. Please tell me you're kidding ...

DANNY. I can't honey 'cause then my nieces and nephews wouldn't enjoy me as much if they knew the truth of my (*Stops.*) ... Found it, "Chaos."

MARLEY. Ask me anything.

DANNY. All right ... (*Brings textbook closer to his face.*) Um, let's see, you already know how to spell it, um, okay, here we go: "A chaotic system is one in which the final outcome depends on ... " what?

MARLEY. Oh ... uh ... I — I know this ... um, God ... uh ...

DANNY. “ ... the final outcome depends on ... ” what?

MARLEY. I ... I ... can't think. I know the answer but there's like a wall in front of it!

DANNY. Hey, hey, hey, calm down. What's a matter? It's only a test. C'mon, relax. Have a sip of beer, a smoke ...

MARLEY. I'm all right.

DANNY. You want a beer? Shot a vodka? Some pot?

MARLEY. What?!

DANNY. Just trying to get back the smile.

MARLEY. I don't feel like smiling.

DANNY. (*Closes the book.*) No smile, no help from Uncle Danny.

MARLEY. All right, I'll smile. (*She feigns a smile.*) I — I have to ace this test. (*Beat.*) Okay, give me the answer — no, no, wait — “A chaotic system is one in which the final outcome depends on — depends on ... the initial conditions!” (*Danny jumps up to do a celebratory dance, then downs his beer and crushes the can. Tosses it.*) Okay, okay, now ... I wrote out an example. (*Hands him notebook.*) Follow along with me. (*Beat.*) “White water in a stream is a good example of a chaotic system ... ” (*She stops.*)

DANNY. (*After a beat.*) There's more.

MARLEY. (*Snaps at him.*) I know that!

DANNY. Wow, this is a lot of fun.

MARLEY. Sorry, sorry.

DANNY. You're worse than your mother, flyin' off the handle like that.

MARLEY. (*Pointedly.*) I'm *not* my mother.

DANNY. No. Now you're *my* mother.

MARLEY. Let's keep going.

DANNY. But you got me afraid.

MARLEY. (*Closes her eyes to remember.*) “ ... If you put ... ” No, no, “If you *start* a chip of wood at one position, it will come out at a certain point ... ” ... um ... “on the other side of a rapids ... ”

DANNY. (*Following along in the notebook.*) Good, good ...

MARLEY. “If you start the second chip of wood at a position not quite the same as the first, the second chip ... the second chip ... ” um ...

DANNY. (*Interrupts her.*) Don't you want to keep saying “chip of wood” instead of just “chip?” 'Cause “chip” is like ... are you now talking about a potato chip, you know what I'm saying?

MARLEY. (*Looks at him, dumbfounded.*) How could I go from talking about “chips of wood” as an example to “*potato* chips?!”

DANNY. If I’m the one listening, say, I might get confused. (*Marley stares at him in disbelief.*) All right, forget it, forget it ... (*Picks up notebook.*)

MARLEY. God ...

DANNY. Okay, you left off with um ... um ... all right, start right after, “If you start the second chip of wood ... ”

MARLEY. “ ... at a position not quite the same as the first, the second *chip of wood* will come out of the rapids far from where the first one did.” (*Beat.*) Is that right?

DANNY. Yeah, sure, but what’s the big deal here? I don’t get it.

MARLEY. I said everything right?

DANNY. Yeah. You just gave the example of ... of ...

MARLEY. (*In a burst.*) “Of the chaotic system and how the final outcome depends on the initial conditions,” and YES!

DANNY. Why’s *this* test so important?

MARLEY. If I ace this test, I go to High Honors, which gets me all kinds of scholarships for colleges far away from here; get out of this crazy house. Can’t breathe here, so hard to breathe at night here.

DANNY. What the hell you going on about?

MARLEY. If I don’t ace this test ...

DANNY. It’s not the end of the world. (*Pause.*)

MARLEY. How old were you when you first had sex?

DANNY. (*After a beat.*) I haven’t had sex yet.

MARLEY. No, really.

DANNY. How did we get on this all of a sudden?

MARLEY. How old were you?

DANNY. Let’s see ... ninth grade, probly. In fact I’m sure ’cause it was with my homeroom teacher.

MARLEY. How come you never give straight answers?

DANNY. And she was a nun.

MARLEY. You had sex with a...?!

DANNY. (*Stands.*) Just pull the wimple down over her face ...

MARLEY. Gross! Stop! Stop!

DANNY. For five minutes I was Jesus and she was Carmella Peckarinni!

MARLEY. (*Laughing.*) All right, enough, enough!

STEPH. (*Yells from other room.*) Marley! Be quiet! God!

DANNY. *(After a beat.)* What is she doing home? *(Marley shrugs.)*
Steph? Why aren't you at work?
STEPH. *(From other room.)* Got a headache.
DANNY. *(Looks at Marley.)* That true?
MARLEY. *(Vaguely.)* Guess so.
DANNY. Go get me another beer. We'll keep going with this stuff.
(Marley goes to the kitchen. Danny goes to Steph's bedroom door. Knocks softly.) Steph?
STEPH. *(From behind the door.)* Leave me alone, Uncle Danny.
Go help Marley get smarter. I'm just the piece-a-shit daughter.
DANNY. Not to me. To me you're my ... piece-a-shit niece.
(Silence.) Steph, I'm kidding. *(Marley reenters with a can of beer. She hands it to Danny, then returns to the table. Danny opens the beer, drinks some, looks at Marley.)* What's going on with her?
MARLEY. I really think she has to be the one to —
DANNY. *(Interrupts.)* Give me the short version 'fore I smack ya.
MARLEY. She and my mother had a fight.
DANNY. Okay.
MARLEY. A real bad one.
DANNY. I remember those.
MARLEY. Ma caught Steph having sex last night. Walked in on her.
DANNY. Where?
MARLEY. Here.
DANNY. Here?
MARLEY. In our room.
DANNY. Jesus ...
MARLEY. You know what the funny thing was?
DANNY. There's a funny in this?
MARLEY. Ma came home with a guy.
DANNY. Guy she's been going with? Ray?
MARLEY. Newer guy.
DANNY. Why's that funny?
MARLEY. Because, duh, she came back here to have sex with him.
DANNY. You don't know that.
MARLEY. Uncle Danny, this is your sister we're talking about. Don't act dumb on this one.
DANNY. What the hell does that mean?
MARLEY. It means my mother doesn't bring guys home to just wallpaper the living room.

DANNY. All right, all right, don't get smart here, she's still your mother.

MARLEY. It's why sometimes I think me and Steph have different fathers.

DANNY. How did you get that from ... *(Stops.)* Okay, let's drop this and get back to the uh ... the um — “chaos” stuff for the test. *(He sits at the table.)*

MARLEY. *(Hands him the notebook.)* Okay, ask me the definitions from this page.

DANNY. Okay. *(Looks up from the notebook.)* What is G.U.T.?

MARLEY. Grand Unified Theory.

DANNY. T.O.E.?

MARLEY. Theory Of Everything.

DANNY. And this little theory of everything went to market, this little theory of everything stayed home. *(Marley doesn't get it.)*

MARLEY. What's the next one?

DANNY. Just so happens to be one of my favorite words: quark.

MARLEY. “Quarks are locked into particles” ... Um ... You can't see them and ...

DANNY. “Elementary particles” is written here ...

MARLEY. Okay, okay ...

DANNY. How many quarks are there?

MARLEY. Six. “Up, Down, Strange, Charmed, Bottom, and Top,” unless ... and this for bonus points, unless you come from Harvard, in which case it's, “Up, Down, Strange, Charmed, Beauty, and Truth.”

DANNY. I like the Harvard way, don't you?

MARLEY. Who cares? Keep going.

DANNY. There are three kinds of leptons called ...

MARLEY. Neutrinos, and these are ... um ... “particles that have no mass, no electrical charge, and travel at the speed of light.”

DANNY. Shit, if they don't weigh anythin' and don't do anythin', and move that f'n fast, how do you know they're there?

MARLEY. Where's that question?

DANNY. I'm askin' it.

MARLEY. Oh, that's something you learn in the tenth grade, sorry Uncle Danny.

DANNY. I can take it.

MARLEY. Next question.

DANNY. Were you here when Steph brought home the guy to do the “nasty?”

UP, DOWN, STRANGE, CHARMED, BEAUTY, AND TRUTH; LILA ON THE WALL; MAFIA ON PROZAC

by Edward Allan Baker

UP, DOWN, STRANGE, CHARMED, BEAUTY, AND TRUTH. A pair of teenage sisters struggle to escape their drug-addled mother with help from their favorite down-on-his-luck uncle. Thanks to a series of wholly organic yet startlingly unexpected plot twists, neither the characters nor their situations are how they seemed when the play began. (1 man, 2 women.) **LILA ON THE WALL.** Journalist Lila must investigate a three-month-old story about a woman who saw Jesus' face on a graffiti-laden wall. But the woman who saw it is off on a tour in Italy, and Carl, a young cameraman who prides himself in figuring out "emotional landscapes," is determined to make Lila believe in something again. (1 man, 1 woman.) **MAFIA ON PROZAC.** Jay and Tee are a couple of hit-men sitting by the ocean and reflecting on how their lives turned out. Their intended victim, Matt, awaits his fate in a burlap sack. When Al Capone visits in a dream, the outraged and desperate Matt gets dragged into refereeing the hit-men's argument about the mob's future. (3 men.)

"Edward Allan Baker tells a wrenching story of loves found and lost, of broken hearts and betrayal. [UP, DOWN, STRANGE, CHARMED, BEAUTY, AND TRUTH] inflames the scarred tissue of family relationships already torn and raw from the chaos of life."

—The New York Times

"... truly inspired moments of comedy ... [In] Edward Allan Baker's MAFIA ON PROZAC, a pair of hit men, owing more to Tom Stoppard than to Mario Puzo, argue over such highfalutin' issues as fate versus free will."

—The New York Times

"... a stirring little fable. That [LILA ON THE WALL] turns out inspiring rather than maudlin is ... due to the strength of the punchy, honest writing."

—BroadwayWorld.com

Also by Edward Allan Baker
A DEAD MAN'S APARTMENT
THE FRAMER
ROSEMARY WITH GINGER
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