

**PLEASE
EXCUSE MY
DEAR AUNT
SALLY**

BY KEVIN ARMENTO



**DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.**

PLEASE EXCUSE MY DEAR AUNT SALLY
Copyright © 2017, Kevin Armento

All Rights Reserved

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that performance of PLEASE EXCUSE MY DEAR AUNT SALLY is subject to payment of a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth), and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including without limitation professional/amateur stage rights, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all other forms of mechanical, electronic and digital reproduction, transmission and distribution, such as CD, DVD, the Internet, private and file-sharing networks, information storage and retrieval systems, photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is placed upon the matter of readings, permission for which must be secured from the Author's agent in writing.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for PLEASE EXCUSE MY DEAR AUNT SALLY are controlled exclusively by Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 440 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016. No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance the written permission of Dramatists Play Service, Inc., and paying the requisite fee.

Inquiries concerning all other rights should be addressed to ICM Partners, 65 East 55th Street, 16th Floor, New York, NY 10022. Attn: Di Glazer.

SPECIAL NOTE

Anyone receiving permission to produce PLEASE EXCUSE MY DEAR AUNT SALLY is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears, including printed or digital materials for advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. Please see your production license for font size and typeface requirements.

Be advised that there may be additional credits required in all programs and promotional material. Such language will be listed under the "Additional Billing" section of production licenses. It is the licensee's responsibility to ensure any and all required billing is included in the requisite places, per the terms of the license.

SPECIAL NOTE ON SONGS AND RECORDINGS

Dramatists Play Service, Inc. neither holds the rights to nor grants permission to use any songs or recordings mentioned in the Play. Permission for performances of copyrighted songs, arrangements or recordings mentioned in this Play is not included in our license agreement. The permission of the copyright owner(s) must be obtained for any such use. For any songs and/or recordings mentioned in the Play, other songs, arrangements, or recordings may be substituted provided permission from the copyright owner(s) of such songs, arrangements or recordings is obtained; or songs, arrangements or recordings in the public domain may be substituted.

*For iPhone,
my dearest*

PLEASE EXCUSE MY DEAR AUNT SALLY was commissioned and performed by One Year Lease Theater Company, originally presented Off-Broadway at 59E59 Theaters, opening on October 6, 2015. It was directed by Ianthe Demos; the movement direction was by Natalie Lomonte; the original music was by Estelle Bajou; the set design was by James Hunting; the costume design was by Kenisha Kelly; the lighting design was by Mike Riggs; the dramaturg was Jessica Kaplow Applebaum; and the production stage manager was Sofia Montgomery. The cast was as follows:

Danny Bernardy
Sarah-Jane Casey
Nick Flint
Christina Bennett Lind
Ethan Slater

The European premiere of PLEASE EXCUSE MY DEAR AUNT SALLY was produced and performed by One Year Lease Theater Company at Pleasance Beyond as part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, opening on August 3, 2016. The cast was as follows:

Sarah-Jane Casey
Leah Donovan
Nick Flint
Devin McDuffee
Richard Saudek

AUTHOR'S NOTES

On Casting

Any number of actors can be used, of any age, gender, and ethnicity.

The original production used five actors, individually playing Red, Mom, Dad, the Teacher, and Donald, and alternating/sharing the rest as a sort of cell phone chorus. This worked great—but maybe you want to do it with three people; or thirty; or as a one-person show. Go forth and multiply.

On Setting

The story takes place in coastal Southern California—at a high school, a suburban house, a beach, etc.—but the play is really a manifestation of the phone's view of those settings.

That's kind of like saying *Our Town* takes place in Grover's Corners, but the play is a manifestation of the Stage Manager's perspective on the town. Wilder, in that case, calls for minimal scenic representation “in the spirit of ‘play,’” which makes sense since a member of the play's crew is guiding us through the thing.

I don't have a similar request here, except that you consider this distinction in conceptual conversations. What do these locations look like...through the eyes of Red's phone?

On the Formatting

A few sections contain unusual formatting. P—Please—Parentheses, for instance, employs little parenthetical nesting dolls after certain words. This is mainly to visualize the language device at work. While they might affect how you divvy up the text or interpret its meaning, just don't let them disrupt the rhythm too much.

On Performing

Let it play quickly. A relentless adventure. It should feel like a whirlwind, the most exciting and important and terrifying journey of this phone's short life. (The entire text is, after all, just one long sentence.)

Remember that phones are inanimate and therefore impartial. While they can observe and analyze what is happening now and what might happen in the future, they do not have opinions about it. They cannot be judgmental or moralizing about any of our character's actions.

That said...I've cheated a little. This phone has a voice and personality. It complains sometimes. It makes jokes. Its waning battery life is expressed as physical tiredness. And while the above paragraph is generally true, and the phone does not—for instance—have an opinion at to the rightness or wrongness of Red and his teacher's relationship...it does have a loyalty to Red, and can therefore be concerned for his wellbeing. It can develop a certain attachment to the teacher as an extension of that loyalty. And I say all this mainly to say: Don't take it too far in either direction. The phone shouldn't be played as a robot, nor as a fully fleshed human. I think it's somewhere in between, and possibly fluid as the play progresses—and that's more fun anyway.

PLEASE EXCUSE MY DEAR AUNT SALLY

please excuse my dear aunt sally,

she's written it on the board, today's lesson, order of operations,

the way to remember how to solve large equations, cause you can't
just go about them any old way,

no,

you've got to know the right order, the prescribed method,

she's written it on the board and the class is comatose
post-lunch, little pubescent systems gurgling, digesting sandwiches
and sodas and cookies and shit,

please excuse my dear aunt sally, again she tells them, tries to stir
them, you have to respect the order or you'll never solve it, ok?,

i begin singing, and this is how things start,

she whips her head towards the noise, hound in a forest, searching
for the offender,

scouring the rows of wooden desks, but no one fesses up, so passing
each aisle until i'm louder and louder, as she nears the desk of red
mccray,

i'm belting my song and she zeroes in, catching the scent, glaring
down at the boy, hand out expectantly, as he stares back blankly,

please excuse my dull android sounds,

and she wants to smack his face, the smart-ass, looks down and sees
“duffy calling...” projecting from my cheek, and her fingers curl
around my face before marching back up to her desk and tossing me
into a drawer,

the student begging to have me back, but not a chance,

i can't have disruptions in class,

then back to the board, to the words written, which she taps with
her finger,

p—please—parentheses

we're in a coastal town
(coastal so-cal),

red mccray a typical student
(typical freshman idiot),
she a typical teacher
(typical beige math lady),

but it starts with me
(((it starts with his negligence
(((it starts with her boredom
((it starts with his parents' split
(it starts with zone redistricting))))),

red had transferred there recently and landed in her algebra class,
and so far all that could be said is that she teaches and he goofs off,

she in her baggy shirts and he in his angst,

he's trying to make friends

((to fit in
(to not go insane)),

newcomer class clown of a sort,

then everyone leaves, fifth period over, and i'm sitting in her drawer
at the front of the classroom, sitting and she could just leave me
there, give me back tomorrow, lesson learned,

but the last student walks out and soon the drawer's sliding open,
and she looks down at me,

we stare at each other,

and without comment or fanfare i'm suddenly freefalling into the
dark abyss of her handbag,

she's decided to get the smart-ass's attention
((she's decided to rebel against her beigeness
(she's decided to grab her phone and makes
an honest mistake)),

into her purse and she takes me home, home to her partner, who's
just moved in,

he's made dinner for the two of them, he does this to mask his un-
employment, donald, donald the man at home, one of thousands of
men here who are "developing" something, developing an app, the
next big idea—he watches lots of ted talks—it's another way of saying
he's home making dinner with her money,

but they're newly cohabitated and so greet each other passionately
(((greet each other warmly
(greet each other ritualistically
(greet each other emptily))),

hey baby!
how was your day lover?

mmm i love coming home to you!
i got the bookshelves up, did you see?
 ((i'm so responsible, did you see?
 (i'm making you forget i don't have a job, did you
 see?)),

i'm hearing all this from her purse, foreign place, we're in a one-
bedroom apartment in a complex, and he excitedly tells her the
day's progress
 (not progress)
on the app he's developing,

my friend jerry from college—you remember jerry?—he has this
investor friend...

she takes a bite of the fish he's cooked, mahi mahi,

this is good—expensive?,

it was on sale
 (it was overpriced but it made me feel adult),

he's serving her more zucchini with truffle oil when i start singing
again, muffled notes from her purse,

what's that?,

she pretends she doesn't know what he's talking about,

what's what,

but he says,

the music, that music,

oh oh oh it's just a new ringer for my phone baby
 ((for a student's phone baby
 (for this contraband i've smuggled in baby)),

duffy, she sees the name again on my cheek, once she's excused herself to the bathroom, she's taken us here so she can look at me, see the mysterious caller,

and she's tempted to answer, i see the curiosity on her face, but instead she silences me, converting my song into a buzz-buzz,

there's a candle atop the toilet, little pier one incense candle donald put there, she licks her fingers and strangles the wick, hissing as it dies, and stands in the dark bathroom lit only by my eyes, pondering,

and in bed later they're watching netflix, their thirteenth night since donald moved in, all the boxes finally gone and the bookshelves put up,

she's watching with him but she's too curious

(((too restless

(((too hungry

((too depraved

(too bored))))),

so she holds me under the covers while they watch, donald facing the screen

(facing away),

and her fingers glide over me, her beige eyes peering down as she investigates,

starting with messages, between red and his mom, red and his dad, group text about a party—is he more popular than she thought? no, sees the names, must be from his old school,

i see her judging him as she reads these, judging the mask he's put in front of his face, class clown mask thin as paper,

and now she's looking at my gallery, immaculately curated, selfies of red in a car—he can drive? no passenger seat—another of him and some girl at a homecoming dance—duffy—one of him and an older man, and they both look annoyed

PLEASE EXCUSE MY DEAR AUNT SALLY

by Kevin Armento

Any number M or W (flexible casting)

A turbulent affair between a teenage boy and his math teacher is brought to life from the surprising perspective of the boy's best friend: his cell phone. Red McCray is a troubled fifteen-year-old, furious that his parents' split has forced him to transfer schools. His new algebra teacher has just moved in with her boyfriend, a wannabe tech entrepreneur happily living off her steady paychecks. As Red's phone gets sucked into a breakneck journey from pockets to purses, and through text messages and photo galleries, it takes us inside an utterly unique view on human interaction, struggling to unpack some of life's most complex equations.

"[A] clever, funny-sad play... An elegantly constructed examination of contemporary isolation and the illusory nature of electronic connection..."

—**The New York Times**

"Screams of novelty. Armento pushes boundaries, challenging his spectator to engage with the modern environment instead of ignorantly accepting it."

—**The Huffington Post**

"...exhilarating... [The play] brims with linguistic spirals. ...Armento's language has a kind of poetry to it. In fact, the script reads like a lyric epic, filled with short stanzas that propel the story to exquisite effect. ...a gleaming portrait of our collective contemporary existence."

—**AmericanTheaterWeb.com**

ISBN 978-0-8222-3696-2



DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.

9 780822 236962