



# OUTSTANDING SHORT PLAYS VOLUME 4

Edited by **CRAIG POSPISIL**



DRAMATISTS  
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INC.



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## INTRODUCTION

One of the things I like best about putting together these collections is finding a broad range of new voices and new works. The plays in *OUTSTANDING SHORT PLAYS, VOLUME 4* are an eclectic group that range from thoughtful dramas to witty comedies, to absurdist comedies, and to really, really absurd comedies.

For this collection, I first turned to a number of playwrights whose work we've published before. Kara Lee Corthron, whose riotous *MERCURY IS PERPETUALLY IN RETROGRADE SO STOP WORRYING ABOUT IT* appeared in the last collection, provided another wildly comic play in *DOG?* Cherie Vogelstein, who we previously published in a collection for one-acts from Ensemble Studio Theatre, returns with *BROWN*, about a job interview gone very wrong. *THE SCULPTURE GALLERY* is a new drama by Aoise Stratford, who was featured in volume 2 of this series.

I also like to reach out to some of our more established playwrights, who are primarily known for full-length works, to see if they have some one-acts I can consider. From that I chose *JACK* by Melissa Ross and *LINUS AND MURRAY* by Leah Nanako Winkler, two very different love stories, but which both involve pets, and the Beckett-esque *WAITING FOR THE MATINEE* by Eric Coble.

New play festivals and conferences are a great place to find new plays and playwrights. This volume features *SHOCK AND AWWW* by Dan Castellaneta and Deb Lacusta, which I saw at one of City Theatre's annual Summer Shorts productions in Miami, *FOR UNTO US* by Stephen Kaplan, which came from Barrington Stage's 10X10 in the Berkshires, and I was introduced to Lia Romeo and *THE PRESENTATION* at the National Winter Playwrights Retreat in Creede, Colorado. My own play *HAPPENSTANCE* premiered at the Purple Rose Theatre Company in Chelsea, Michigan, in their "Spring Comedy Festival: Lovers, Liars & Lunatics."

I frequently hear from people who love reading these volumes for the new work or to find something to produce in an evening of short

plays or to work on in acting classes. If you've liked the previous collections, I know you're going to enjoy these. And if you haven't read any of the earlier volumes...well, I still know you're going to find something in this collection that speaks to you. (Now, go get volumes 1 through 3!)

—Craig Pospisil  
2019

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**BROWN**

**BY CHERIE VOGELSTEIN**

## **CHARACTERS**

IRA

PETER

MAURIE

MARY

## **NOTE**

*There should be NO pauses in dialogue except where noted.*

# BROWN

*Interviewer Ira Burke, a most congenial, father-figure type, sits at wide, wooden desk, in a sumptuous executive-office suite. Younger applicant Peter Telke, an earnest, sincere Ivy Leaguer, sits across from him. Peter wants this job, very much.*

PETER. About eighteen months?

IRA. *(Looking at papers.)* Eighteen months.

PETER. Oh, well, I got—I got sick for a little while in there—

IRA. Oh, I'm sorry.

*Beat.*

What, uh...what was wrong? If I may...?

PETER. Well, it's kind of...complicated.

*Ira waits.*

Okay: First I had a...burst appendix—

IRA. Oh no—

PETER. And then, in the hospital, I contracted pneumonia.

IRA. *(Sympathetic.)* Geez!

PETER. Yeah, so it kind of set me back for a while, laid me up for close to three months.

IRA. Three months! Wow, a young kid like you.

PETER. Yeah, it was, it was kind of a hard time—

IRA. I'll bet, I'll bet, with your kind of drive. *(Looks at papers.)* And your parents?

PETER. My parents?

IRA. Ya know, were they, uh...were they supportive during that period?

PETER. Oh, well, it's just my mother now. My father passed away last year.



IRA. I'm so sorry.

PETER. Thank you. Thanks. Well, but...life has to go on, right?

*Beat.*

I'm ready to work hard!

IRA. *(Smiles genuinely.)* Good, good.

*Beat.*

So! It says here Artie Winslow was your D.M.—

PETER. Yes. Yes, he was.

IRA. I know Artie well.

PETER. Oh!

IRA. How'd you, how'd ya get along with him?

PETER. With Artie?

IRA. Right.

PETER. Well, um...ya know, pretty good. We—we didn't exactly... see eye to eye on every, single...project, but, for the most part, I'd say pretty good. Good.

IRA. Like what?

PETER. Um...?

IRA. What didn't you see eye to eye on? What projects?

PETER. Oh. Well...let's see: ya know, the applications systems for KM3s? Are you familiar with—

IRA. Sure.

PETER. Well, we really—

IRA. He says here you had some “control issues.”

PETER. He did? Well, I think...maybe he had some...resented my age.

IRA. *(Smiles broadly.)* Really? He's not such an old guy, is he?

PETER. No, no, but...he just, he was rooted to HIS...way of doing things, ya know? and I—I wanted to...deviate a little sometimes, from the standard—

IRA. *(Looking through papers.)* Interesting.

PETER. I mean, that's one of the reasons I left Dunlap actually, because I just, I wasn't finding it very stimulating. At all.

IRA. No?

PETER. I mean, the way I spent my time was...well, I wanted to be doing...MUCH more with my time.

IRA. And what *were* you doing? With your time.

PETER. Truthfully? I was browsing the internet. A lot.

IRA. Love to browse the internet.

PETER. I know, but I'd finish my work like around 11 A.M.?

IRA. 11 A.M.?

PETER. And have the rest of the day to kill, so to speak. That's not—that's not—

IRA. (*Chuckles.*) 11 o'clock! That's early!

PETER. I know! And I... I really thrive on a challenge, ya know?

*Beat.*

I need to be challenged.

IRA. Do you.

PETER. That's why I was so... I'm so, I'd...

IRA. Hey! You want something to drink? (*Stands.*) Some tea or...

PETER. (*Also stands.*) Oh no, no, thank you, I was just— (*Starts to sit.*) —I was gonna say—

*Peter sees Ira is still standing, pops back up immediately. Ira then turns, begins attending to tea service near desk.*

—the kind of really innovative...complex undertakings going on HERE—

IRA. (*Back to him, at tea service.*) Right, right—

PETER. Just so exciting and...I was, at Dunlap and Fritz, I was basically just...killing time. (*Smiles sheepishly.*) I already said that.

IRA. (*Leans over intercom.*) Maurie? Can you come in here for a second?

*Maurie enters instantaneously. Walks with a major swagger— or is it a limp?*

Maurie, this is Pete Telke—

PETER. (*Half-rises, shakes.*) Peter, Peter Telke, nice to meet you.

MAURIE. How ya doing?

IRA. *(To Maurie.)* Can you sit? You have a few minutes?

MAURIE. Sure.

*Maurie sits; beat.*

IRA. Pete was with Winslow at Dunlap and Fritz.

MAURIE. Oh yeah?

IRA. About eighteen months.

MAURIE. *(To Peter.)* Why'd you leave?

PETER. Dunlap and Fritz?

MAURIE. Yeah.

IRA. He was bored.

MAURIE. Nice.

IRA. *(Nods approvingly, to Maurie about Peter.)* This kid...

MAURIE. *(Impressed.)* Oh yeah?

*Beat.*

So how'd ya like Winslow? Is he retarded or what?

PETER. *(Smiles shyly.)* Well...

MAURIE. *(Grabs Peter's knee, playfully.)* Come on, you know what I'm sayin', YOU know what I'm sayin'!

IRA. *(Laughs.)* Artie's alright, he's... *(To Maurie.)* Tea, Maurie?

MAURIE. Great. With honey, please.

*Beat.*

So, Pete. Where'd you go to school?

PETER. Oh, Brown.

MAURIE. Brown! *(To Ira, who is still fixing tea.)* Marshall went to Brown.

IRA. He did? I didn't know that.

MAURIE. Yep.

*Longer beat.*

Hey! you want me to call Mary in? *(To Peter.)* Mary's great!

IRA. Yeah, call Mary, would you?

MAURIE. *(Calls loudly.)* Mary!

IRA. *(To Peter.)* Mary's the—

*Mary also enters instantaneously.*

MAURIE. *(Loudly.)* Here she is! Mary, Mary—

MARY. Here she is, here she is. *(Looking around confidently.)* Hello, boys.

PETER. *(Stands.)* Peter Telke.

MAURIE. *(To Ira, jokingly.)* He didn't stand up for ME.

MARY. *(To Maurie, looking at Peter.)* You're not Mary.

IRA. NO ONE is Mary.

MARY. *(Shaking Peter's hand; a supportive mother figure.)* I'M not even Mary.

MAURIE. Mary was with the Rockettes.

MARY. *(Still holding Peter's hand, smiling warmly.)* No, I wasn't.

MAURIE. Pete here went to Brown.

PETER. *(A whisper.)* Pe-Peter.

MARY. Oh, you went to Brown? *(To Ira.)* Marshall went to Brown. *(Softly, shakes her head sadly.)* Marshall.

IRA. Yeah, was he smart? I didn't think he was that smart.

MARY. Well, he went to Brown.

IRA. Go figure.

MAURIE. So, what'd you do at Brown? Any sports?

PETER. Um...

MAURIE. Lacrosse?

PETER. No...no.

MAURIE. *(Surprised.)* Really?

PETER. *(Beat, offering hopefully.)* I played badminton for a while.

MAURIE. Badminton?!

IRA. *(To Mary.)* Is that a sport?

MARY. It's a great sport! *(To Peter.)* I love badminton!

MAURIE. *(Laughing.)* You love badminton. *(To Peter.)* She never played badminton in her life.

MARY. *(Smiling.)* How do you know?

# OUTSTANDING SHORT PLAYS

## VOLUME 4

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**BROWN** by **Cherie Vogelstein**. Peter is in the middle of a job interview. It's a little shaky at first, but Ira, Maurie, and Mary seem to like him and to be impressed that he went to Brown. But then they ask him—hypothetically—if he'd rather sleep with a dog or his mother. And that's when things get really strange. (3 men, 1 woman.) **DOG?** by **Kara Lee Corthron**. A man being interviewed as a prospective dog-sitter is stunned when the dog turns out to be a young woman pretending to be a dog. He doesn't want to get involved, but then it seems this may be some role-playing game. Or is it something else? Just what's going on here? (2 men, 1 woman.) **FOR UNTO US** by **Stephen Kaplan**. Mary and Joseph are a pair of 5-year-olds playing with a doll. But before they can start, they'll need to debate gender stereotypes, the relative merits of Christmas versus Hanukkah, the nature of God, and what it means to have two dads. (1 man, 1 woman.) **HAPPENSTANCE** by **Craig Pospisil**. First off, Cassidy is definitely not crazy. Secondly, she is totally over her ex-boyfriend. So when she runs into Abe at a coffee shop, she totally doesn't think about what happened between them. Or what could happen. And she totally didn't forget that her husband Martin is sitting right next to her. Totally. (2 men, 2 women.) **JACK** by **Melissa Ross**. Maggie and George are divorced. It's been six months, and they're dating other people. But they're in the middle of a huge argument outside the dog run in the park about why George didn't call Maggie about an emergency involving Jack, the dog they adopted together at the start of their relationship. (1 man, 1 woman.) **LINUS AND MURRAY** by **Leah Nanako Winkler**. Linus is a cat who's seen it all. Murray is a young dog, who's newly adopted and neurotic. They share a yard, but can they get past the antiquated idea that they are mortal enemies and become friends? Can they be more than friends? (2 men.) **THE PRESENTATION** by **Lia Romeo**. Samantha, polished and professional, finishes a presentation on sexual harassment in the workplace and she opens the floor up for questions. Unfortunately, the three Vikings she's been addressing haven't gotten the point of her talk, especially where it concerns not raping. (3 men, 1 woman.) **THE SCULPTURE GALLERY** by **Aoise Stratford**. As Kennedy, a young woman in an art gallery, sketches lifelike sculptures of women, a man several years her senior strikes up a conversation. Jack, trading on their shared love and understanding of art, breaks down Kennedy's barriers until she—and we—are no longer able to tell where the objectified artist's subject begins and the person ends. (1 man, 2 women.) **SHOCK AND AWWW** by **Dan Castellaneta** and **Deb Lacusta**. Stewart and Patrick are roommates who agreed: No pets. So when Stewart comes home to find Patrick cuddling a kitten named Mr. Squiggy, he says the cat has to go. But Mr. Squiggy isn't going anywhere. In fact, he's already taken over Patrick's mind. (2 men.) **WAITING FOR THE MATINEE** by **Eric Coble**. "Nothing to be done." Estelle and Vivian are waiting for a show to begin, but nothing happens. They've read the whole program while waiting. But nothing happens. Should they go? Should they stay? Should they unwrap their candy? (2 women.)

Also edited by Craig Pospisil  
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DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.

ISBN: 978-0-8222-3926-0

