

**TECHNICAL  
DIFFICULTIES 2.0**  
PLAYS FROM PANDEMIC THEATRE

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A DPS ACTING EDITION PUBLISHED BY

**BROADWAY**  
LICENSING GLOBAL

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**END OF DAYS:  
THE MINOR  
CONSIDERATIONS LIST**

**BY TRACY THORNE**

# CHARACTER

MABEL

# END OF DAYS: THE MINOR CONSIDERATIONS LIST

*Mabel drinks an enormous glass of rosé.*

**MABEL.** Okay, this is a thing. What with all the “quarantining” and the “entire planet on pause-ing” I am worried about my butt... so here’s *another* list for the end of days...it’s a private list, a minor considerations list, just World War II sandbags to hush what’s out there. And since all the rules have unconditionally dissolved, who’s to judge that worrying about my butt is tone-deaf? People are still all over their stupid shit, even when other people are sick, at least let’s not lie about it, right? Now you may say, if it’s about her butt that’s definitely private, why is she posting it on YouTube? Easy one: She’s spent too much time alone in her room and her judgment is compromised. Now you may say, there are way bigger problems out there beyond a) her butt and b) her lonesomeness. Definitely, yes. Dying people, yes. However—saving the butt for later—about lonesomeness, what with the universal collapse of everything we’ve got a lot of lonesomeness going on, what happens when there’s a global tsunami of lonesomeness? Nobody knows. Nobody knows anything. So I went with thinking about my butt and made my private list because it details a lot of stuff I used to feel perfectly fine thinking about every single day and, under the circumstances, I’m kind of not minding the familiarity. The lack of existential threat. The meaninglessness of my butt, a case could be made that I’m in hot pursuit of meaninglessness. I mean every food shopping excursion is just *way too meaningful*...so what the heck, let’s go to the list:

1—Workout clothes. All that cute yoga stuff from the Lululemon sale, never even wore it, catastrophe upon catastrophe—and where

is that stuff? Still in the bag? And where is the bag? Ohhh right, in the city, but I'm not in the city, I'm in the country, is it really safer here? What a saga.

2—Hair. Okay, should I even put hair on the list? I mean, what is the expectation? For everyone. Forget that, what is my actual hair color, am I about to find out? Decades into the highlighting process, never went longer than eight weeks between appointments, how much more pain can I endure? And I guess I'm growing my hair out, right? Would have loved a discussion with Rick my hairdresser about that, would have appreciated developing a strategy, an aesthetic finesse, or even just an interim cut, but the universe said, "No!"

3—My face. Well, we didn't know this was going to go on for months, did we? They said spring so why would I have bought backup face products, especially since my dermatologist said I had to come into the office if I wanted to buy something? No online purchasing? My body in his office? I don't think so, I mean, technically, what is going to happen to my face? With no products. I won't be able to FaceTime, that's for sure. FaceTime is already unforgiving to anybody over thirty, I am so much older than thirty, I know people know it, I can live with that, I'm big enough for that, but they don't know I'm like a hundred, they figure I'm maybe forty, but what do you want to bet they really figure I'm well over fifty but say forty to be nice, I can't think about this anymore.

4—Zoom. It isn't any better than FaceTime.

5—Money. What the fuck? You know, I guess I don't really want to talk about money because there simply isn't enough of it when no one in my house has a job. No World War II sandbag for money. Moving on.

6—Ah! My butt. Finally we have arrived. So. I don't have to worry about stress eating because, in my case, it's stress "not" eating. Which I know a lot of people would say, "Ohhhh, good for you, I have a loaf of bread, two bags of Cheetos, and a jumbo box of Milk Duds every long day of this social distancing," but they say it as if those are bad things, how are those are bad things, isn't it always a compromise between the long game and the short game, isn't that the key strategy, isn't that the secret sauce? Lord, I wish people

would be kinder to themselves...where was I? Oh yes, my butt! Now, here's the working theory I've been going with forever and—oh, well—it's courtesy of Catherine Deneuve. Catherine says, over forty, a woman has to choose her face or her butt. Bigger butt, fuller face. Smaller butt...this. (*Points to her face.*) Now, I always had a baby face so, when things started to slide, choosing the butt was a slam dunk, right? But then this shit happened and my butt got, like, no butt, and my face began to look like someone's old laundry that's been rolled down a hill and stomped on by the Russian army, and sure I've tarted up special for you all today and gamed my Tom Ford lighting to the best of my homespun abilities—you can't see it but, on this sofa, there's a white sheet, Tom Ford says the light bounce might hide my chins *which I didn't used to have so many of* until all the stress “not” eating made me shrivel up into something very un-elastic and also made my neck look like the scarecrow's in *The Wizard of Oz*. To remind you, the scarecrow's neck, and all the rest of him, was made out of someone's old laundry—okay I'm going to be honest now, the time has come. (*Waits.*) I'm not worried about my butt, actually. My butt's okay, through thick and thin—it's the working out for like fifty years, highly recommend, totally pays off—I just *said* my butt so you'd say, “What do you mean, your butt looks great, it always looks great,” and I do thank you for that, so appreciate it, very, very much...but I guess I thought if you were thinking about my butt you maybe wouldn't notice my neck...but now that, so particularly, I've drawn your attention to it... (*Seriously showing the worst of her neck.*) Well, it is what it is, isn't it? You hang around long enough and the life wears on you. Especially in days like these, even though we have never before seen days like these. I suppose the argument could be made that the wear and tear is something we earn, whatever, I still liked my neck way better when I was thirty, I think that will always be true. Ouch. Sad. Frailty. Old lady stuff. Me. But as I said, it is what it is...and these days... these brutal days...are what they are...unimaginable a few weeks ago and yet...each and every one all true now. By the way, about true stuff, I like when the guys in charge say true things, even if they're a punch in the head, I find I can adapt to what's true, incorporate it, pile it on my back and still move forward, when I'm lied to I don't know what to incorporate and the confusion stops me in my tracks,

just saying. So maybe we should all give ourselves some credit... because so many are adapting to what's true...so many are doing the job...a job we didn't know we had or could do...turns out we have the job and we can do the job. So if wear and tear on my neck—coming a foot closer to old lady stuff—is a consequence of adapting to the truth of these nerve-wracking days, well...then... what the fuck?!

## **End of Play**

# **THE HUG**

**BY MARSHALL FOLTZ**

## **CHARACTERS**

THE PARENT

THE CHILD

## **SETTING**

Near. Far. Wherever you are.

## **TIME**

A blip in the decade of the year that was 2020.

## **NOTES**

This play can be performed by actors of any age, any ethnicity, and especially any gender. Please adjust the dialogue [in brackets] accordingly to suit your production.

This play was written to be performed via livestreaming, but can absolutely be performed onstage too.

# THE HUG

*Lights up.*

*The parent and the child stand opposite and far from each other.*

*The parent takes a step toward (or reaches for) the child.*

**THE CHILD.** Don't.

**THE PARENT.** But—

**THE CHILD.** *Don't.*

**THE PARENT.** But—

**THE CHILD.** No.

**THE PARENT.** *But—*

**THE CHILD.** Six feet.

**THE PARENT.** What?

**THE CHILD.** Six. Feet.

**THE PARENT.** Please, [son]...

**THE CHILD.** We can't.

**THE PARENT.** Why?

**THE CHILD.** You *know* why.

**THE PARENT.** I know, I *know*, but // just...

**THE CHILD.** We. Can't.

**THE PARENT.** Then I'm going to leave.

**THE CHILD.** What? No!

**THE PARENT.** Then let me hug // you.

**THE CHILD.** You know we can't.

**THE PARENT.** Just a little one?

**THE CHILD.** [Mom]. No.

**THE PARENT.** But I'm your [mother].

**THE CHILD.** Yeah, and I'm your [son].

**THE PARENT.** Don't mock // me!

**THE CHILD.** I'm not mocking you, I'm just // stating a fact.

**THE PARENT.** You know, I really don't appreciate this tone // you're taking with me.

**THE CHILD.** Tone? What tone?

**THE PARENT.** This...flippant tone.

**THE CHILD.** I'm not being flippant.

**THE PARENT.** Well, you're being very dismissive of my feelings.

**THE CHILD.** I'm not dismissing your feelings.

**THE PARENT.** Yes, you are.

**THE CHILD.** No, I'm not.

**THE PARENT.** Yes, you are!

**THE CHILD.** No, I'm not.

**THE PARENT.** Yes. You. Are.

**THE CHILD.** Now you're acting like a three-year-old.

**THE PARENT.** (*In a very three-year-old tone.*) No, I'm not.

**THE CHILD.** Okay. Who's the parent and who's the child here?

*A moment.*

**THE PARENT.** [Sweetie]... I just... My heart is breaking. I just want to reach out, to hold you // to...to...to...

**THE CHILD.** [Mom], please...

**THE PARENT.** I want to hold you and hug you and squeeze you and love you and let you know that everything is going to be alright.

**THE CHILD.** Do you think I *don't* want that?! [Mom], I want one of your hugs more than anything in this whole fucked-up world right now.

**THE PARENT.** Did you just use the f-word?

**THE CHILD.** I...  
maybe...

**THE PARENT.** You're lucky you're so far away or else I'd bop you.

*A much-needed giggle.*

**THE CHILD.** [Mom]. The reason I'm being flippant, so you say, is because I love you so fuc—*freaking* much. I don't want anything bad to happen to you, ever. If, for whatever reason, you got sick because of me, after all this time being apart, and after *all* you've been through, I would never forgive myself. So that's why I'm keeping my distance. And that's why I'm being "flippant."

...Because otherwise you'd be able to see just how much my heart, too, is breaking.

...And how much I need a hug from my [mommy].

**THE PARENT.** Oh, [sweetie, sweetie]...

**THE CHILD.** I miss you so much.

**THE PARENT.** I miss you too.

**THE CHILD.** You're so far.

**THE PARENT.** I'm right here.

**THE CHILD.** I can't tell if you're six feet or six thousand miles away...

**THE PARENT.** I'm here. I'm right here.

**THE CHILD.** No, you're not. I want you *here*. Right here. In my arms.

**THE PARENT.** Oh, [sweetie], you know I'd give anything if I could.

*A moment. A breather.*

What can I do?

**THE CHILD.** I don't know.

**THE PARENT.** What can *we* do?

**THE CHILD.** I don't know...

*Another moment.*

**THE PARENT.** I know. We can hug!

**THE CHILD.** [Mom], you know we can't fucking // hug!

**THE PARENT.** Stop fucking cursing! I raised you better than that! Now, look. We're going to create a *new* hug. A socially distanced hug. A hug for the times!

**THE CHILD.** And how are we gonna hug without touching?

**THE PARENT.** We'll never find out with that attitude, will we?

**THE CHILD.** (*Can't come up with a response.*) ...

**THE PARENT.** That's what I thought...

Okay! I have an idea. Let's stand and face each other...

**THE CHILD.** Okay...

**THE PARENT.** Look me in my eyes...

**THE CHILD.** I'm lookin'...

**THE PARENT.** Hold your arms straight out...

**THE CHILD.** They're out...

**THE PARENT.** And on the count of three, let's wrap our arms tightly around ourselves. So tightly, that it feels just like the real thing—No! Better! And know that I will always, *always* be with you, even when the day comes that I'll be gone, when we can finally, actually hug again, it'll just be that much sweeter...

Ready?

**THE CHILD.** Ready.

**BOTH.** One...

Two...

Three!

*They throw their arms around themselves; "hugging" each other.*

**THE CHILD.** I...I feel it! I can feel your hug.

**THE PARENT.** I can too!

**THE CHILD.** I love you, [Mom].

**THE PARENT.** I love you too, [sweetie].

*A moment. They savor the "hug."*

Can we stay like this? Can we keep hugging just a little bit longer?

**THE CHILD.** I'm not letting go.

**THE PARENT.** Good...

Don't...

*Lights slowly fade as they continue to "hug" each other.*

**End of Play**

# **FORGET-ME-NOT**

**BY CRAIG POSPISIL**

## **CHARACTERS**

JULIA

RICHARD

LIZBETH

# FORGET-ME-NOT

*A welcome card reads, "You are joining Henley Prep's 40th High School Reunion."*

*A video chat window opens, and Richard appears. He's in his fifties with a full beard. There's a picture of snowcapped mountains rising directly from a verdant shoreline behind him. He looks. No one else is there. He walks out of view.*

*A second window opens, and Julia, also fifties, arrives. She peers at her computer screen.*

**JULIA.** Hello?

*Richard returns with a glass of wine.*

**RICHARD.** Well, hello, Julia.

**JULIA.** *(Strains to recognize him.)* Who...? Oh my god. Richard?

*Richard smiles and nods.*

Holy shit. Holy fucking shit.

*Richard laughs.*

What. Is on your face?!

**RICHARD.** *(Touches his beard.)* This?

**JULIA.** Yeah, that. When did that happen?

**RICHARD.** Oh, fifteen years ago or more.

**JULIA.** Fifteen?! That beard is as old as you were when I met you?

**RICHARD.** Yeah, I guess so.

**JULIA.** You've got a teenager on your face.

**RICHARD.** A prematurely gray teenager, I guess.

**JULIA.** Holy shit. Richard Haller. Fuck. How are you?

**RICHARD.** I'm good. Pretty good.

**JULIA.** Really? Is that possible in the middle of this?

**RICHARD.** Well, it's spring. That's nice, don't you think?

**JULIA.** Hell if I know. Last time I was outside it was still winter.

**RICHARD.** (*Laughs.*) How do you get food to eat?

**JULIA.** It's New York. I get everything delivered.

**RICHARD.** So, you're still in New York?

**JULIA.** Of course. Where are you?

**RICHARD.** (*Gestures to his background.*) Valdez, Alaska.

**JULIA.** Holy fucking shit.

**RICHARD.** I teach English lit and theater at the Prince William Sound Community College.

**JULIA.** Alaska. Wow.

**RICHARD.** It's not Times Square. It's good to see you, Julia.

**JULIA.** You too. Are we early? I thought there'd be more people.

**RICHARD.** Gives us more time to talk.

**JULIA.** It was always like this. Any time we were all going to a party or a bar, you and I were always the first ones there.

**RICHARD.** And Bill and Amy and Lisa were always late.

*They laugh, and a new window opens up and a decidedly younger woman, Lizbeth, appears in that window, smiling broadly.*

**LIZBETH.** Hey, everyone! How—

*She peers in at them. They look back.*

Who are you?

**JULIA.** Us? Who are you?

**LIZBETH.** Lizbeth Miller. You guys didn't go to Henley.

**JULIA.** Yeah, we did.

**RICHARD.** Class of 1980.

**LIZBETH.** 1980? Whoop! You had me scared. I was like, what alternate reality did I just wake up in?! As if things aren't weird enough, am I right? New Year's Eve I thought "Wow, it's the start of the twenties. Maybe these twenties will be, like, a cool repeat of the Jazz Age twenties" but less than three months later it's "Nah, let's skip the Jazz Age and go straight to a really not cool repeat of the

**The play doesn't end here...**

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