

BOX OFFICE



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BOX OFFICE

COMEDY. As the new box office manager for a small community theatre, Gayle soon discovers that there's more drama in the theatre lobby than on stage! Chaos and confusion abound when Gayle encounters a host of unusual customers including a smooth-talking "new age" minister who mistakes the theatre for a church, a housewife who thinks the theatre's rummage sale is a play, and a woman who arrives wearing a bathrobe. And to make matters worse, the theatre's computer system crashes and an overbearing season ticket-holder arrives to "help" Gayle out.

Performance Time: Approximately 30 minutes.

CHARACTERS

(3 M, 4 F)

(With doubling: 2 M, 3 F)

GAYLE: Young box office manager; nervous but determined to do a good job in her new position.

DEB: Breezy housewife.

JOE: Befuddled season ticket holder.

MUFFERS: Busybody who thinks she owns the theatre; bitter about being passed over for box office manager position.

JEFF: Slick, smooth-talking “new-age” minister.

ERNST: Elderly gentleman who is hard of hearing or may just have selective hearing.

MILDRED: Elderly woman; wears a bathrobe.

Doubling:

Deb/Mildred

Joe/Ernst

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SET

The lobby and box office of a small community theatre, late summer. There is a desk or table, a desk phone, and a computer.

PROPS

Sales ledger
Cheat sheet
Sack of groceries
Tickets
Business card
Check

SOUND EFFECTS

Phone rings

**“You are
a community theatre,
aren’t you?”**

—Muffers

BOX OFFICE

(AT RISE: Morning, the lobby and box office of a small community theatre. Gayle, the new box office manager, is at work entering ticket sales in a ledger. It is her first day on the job. She is reading from a cheat sheet and is already a bit overwhelmed. The phone rings.)

GAYLE: Okay, phone. I'm going to answer you. *(To herself.)*
Take deep breaths. *(Takes a deep breath.)* Focus. Focus! *(She focuses.)* Where's my instruction sheet? Okay... *(Grabs her cheat sheet.)* ...go! *(She picks up the telephone. In her sweetest voice, she reads from the cheat sheet.)* "Good morning, [Shoreview Players]. Our rummage sale will be held this Thursday and Friday from 9 a.m. till 7 p.m. Please come by for wonderful bargains on costumes and props. Our first show of the season will be 'Night of January 16th' on September 3rd. Tickets are \$10 and \$12. Please reserve early for this popular courtroom drama. Please consider buying season tickets. Our slate of shows— *[Or insert the name of local theatre group.]*

(Deb enters. She is carrying a sack of groceries and is in a hurry.)

DEB: Excuse me!

(Gayle motions for Deb to be quiet.)

GAYLE: I'll be right with you. *(Into phone.)* What?...No. I am not a machine. I am the box—...What?...Oh, no. We do not show movies. This is a theatre—

DEB: My ice cream is melting!

GAYLE: *(Into phone.)* No—

DEB: Yes!

GAYLE: *(Into phone.)* No! It's a place where people come to see shows...Without popcorn...Live!...Yes....No!...Well, it's for adults...but no...it's not "adult," if you know what I

mean...You're welcome. Happy to help. *(To Deb.)* How may I help you?

DEB: Yeah. I was just walking by and I saw your sign, "Rummage Sale." I'm interested.

GAYLE: It starts Thursday at 9 a.m.

DEB: Two tickets, please.

GAYLE: Well, the bad news is our computer is down for the moment, but the good news is you don't need tickets!

DEB: What do you mean I don't need tickets? How do you operate if you don't sell tickets?

GAYLE: Well, we do sell tickets, of course, but not for the rummage sale.

DEB: But how – ? I mean, did you get a grant or something? 'Cause if you got a grant from my hard-earned tax money, I'm going to be more than slightly annoyed. Just 'cause you're in the arts, it doesn't mean I have to fund you.

GAYLE: What?

DEB: Besides, if you don't sell tickets, how do you know everyone will fit inside?

GAYLE: They all just mill about and, you know, look at things. When you see what you like, then you can pay.

DEB: So I only pay if I like it?

GAYLE: Of course. "As You Like It." A play. It's...a play. Get it?

DEB: No. Now, suppose I really enjoy it, but I tell you it's terrible. Then I don't have to pay?

GAYLE: Not if you don't want it. Of course, you can't take it with you – Oh! "You Can't Take It With You"! It's a play, get it? A play?

DEB: Yeah. That's what I am here for...the play. So I just show up tomorrow morning?

GAYLE: Yes. There's something for everyone. You'll be pleased.

DEB: Well, I'd better run. Have a lot of things for the fridge. You know, I've lived here for 10 years and this is the first time you are doing anything that remotely interests me.

GAYLE: Glad to hear it.

DEB: It's about time someone wrote a play about real people.

"Rummage Sale." Now that's a play I can relate to.

GAYLE: Oh, no! That's not a—

DEB: See you Thursday morning. Strange time for a play...

GAYLE: —show.

DEB: Don't worry, I'll be there. *(Deb exits.)*

GAYLE: *(Calls after her.)* But it's a garage sale! *(The phone rings. Gayle sighs, grabs her cheat sheet, and answers the phone. Joe enters. Into phone. Reads.)* "Good morning, Shoreview Players. Our rummage sale will be held—"

JOE: What's the deal here?

GAYLE: *(To Joe.)* I'll be right with you. *(Into phone.)* Our rummage sale will be held this Thursday and Friday morning from—

JOE: I said, "What's the deal"?!

GAYLE: *(To Joe.)* Sir, please wait a moment. *(Into phone.)* Oh not you, ma'am—

JOE: Where's the help?

GAYLE: *(Into phone.)* Yes, sir...no, ma'am—

JOE: Does anybody work here?

GAYLE: *(Into the phone.)* Yes! I mean, yes. *(To Joe.)* I'll be right— *(Into phone.)* Oh, ma'am, no—...Excuse me. Of course I'm not shouting at you. I'm shouting at *him!*

JOE: What?

GAYLE: *(Into phone.)* Can I call you back?

JOE: No! You cannot call me back. I'm here. In person. I want to exchange some tickets.

GAYLE: *(Into phone.)* Yes. I have the number. I will help you in a minute—

JOE: But I'm here now.

GAYLE: *(Into phone.)* Yes. Five minutes.

JOE: Why would I wait five minutes? There's no one else here! Are you the help?

GAYLE: *(To Joe.)* Help! That's me. I'm the help. Hi. *(Into phone.)* I'm the box office manager actually...Gayle...That's

my name. How do you do? *(To Joe.)* I'm Gayle. How are you, sir?

JOE: I'm looking for service. I don't need a friend.

GAYLE: *(To Joe.)* Born to serve. *(Into phone.)* I'll call you back.
(She hangs up the phone and turns to Joe.) How may I serve you?

JOE: I have these tickets here...“Night of January 16th.”
They're no good.

GAYLE: I'm sorry. They are not refundable.

JOE: I clearly asked for tickets for October 21st.

(Gayle checks the tickets.)

GAYLE: And they are for October 21st.

JOE: Can't you read? *(Points to ticket.)* It says right here...“Night of January 16th.”

GAYLE: Which will be showing on October 21st.

JOE: What will be showing on October 21st?

GAYLE: “Night of January 16th.”

JOE: I will be in Florida on January 16th.

GAYLE: Which is when the murder was committed. Which is why it's called “Night of January 16th.” Get it?

JOE: I didn't do it! I was in Florida! I am always in Florida in January.

GAYLE: But you could be on the jury. Would you like to be on the jury?

JOE: When?

GAYLE: October 21st. During the “Night of January 16th.”
We are looking for audience members to be on the jury.

JOE: Really? They have you people do that now? The state used to send a summons asking you to be on jury duty.

GAYLE: No. This is not jury duty.

JOE: Being on the jury is not jury duty?

GAYLE: Sitting on the jury...but as part of the show.

JOE: What show?

GAYLE: “Night of January 16th”!

JOE: I can't sit on the jury on January 16th. I'll—

GAYLE/JOE: —be in Florida!

GAYLE: But you will be here on October 21st.

JOE: I will?

GAYLE: Yes. You will be attending our production of the courtroom drama by Ayn Rand entitled "Night of January 16th" on October 21, and just let me put you down for the jury...on October 21st. You will be right there on stage with the actors during "Night of January 16th" on October 21st. Do you understand?

JOE: I...don't know.

GAYLE: Just come to the theatre as planned on October 21st. We will have a seat on the jury waiting for you.

JOE: Can...Muriel join me?

GAYLE: On the jury? Of course.

JOE: She's never done jury duty before. And she'd like the money.

GAYLE: Money?

JOE: For jury duty.

GAYLE: We don't pay you to sit on the jury. You buy the ticket and pay us for the privilege.

JOE: When did that happen? I used to get paid.

GAYLE: Well, you're not on a real jury....this is a theatrical one.

JOE: Confounded politicians. Always pulling a fast one on us.

GAYLE: I have you both down for jury duty on October 21st for the "Night of January 16th." It will be a wonderful experience.

(Phone rings.)

JOE: I just wanted to go to the theatre with my wife. Hadn't planned on jury duty...

GAYLE: *(Into phone.)* Hello. [Shoreview Players]. *(To Joe.)* Bye, Joe.

JOE: (*Confused, muttering to himself.*) What will I tell Muriel? She thought she was going to the theatre? (*Joe exits still muttering to himself.*)

GAYLE: (*Into phone.*) Our rummage sale...Oh! Oh! You're back! Yes, I know I said I would call you back and—...Has it been five minutes? I don't think so. (*Getting angry.*) I really am a capable person, and if I said I would call you back in five minutes, I will call you back in five minutes! (*Gayle hangs up the phone and takes a deep breath.*) Oh! That wasn't good! I need to deep breathe. Take control.

(*Muffers enters.*)

MUFFERS: Yoo-hoo! Theatrical types! Anyone about? (*Sees Gayle.*) Well, hello. Just thought I'd drop by and see how the new box office manager was. Don't mind me. How do you do? I'm a donor.

GAYLE: What? Like, if you dropped dead, we could sell off your body parts?

MUFFERS: I do not contribute money to this theatre so that its personnel can make me shudder. You are a community theatre, aren't you? Meet the community. (*Muffers holds out her hand and Gayle shakes it.*) I like to make myself known around the theatre. This way, when I call for tickets and need some extra care—if you know what I mean—you will know who you are dealing with. I'm Muffy Walker. My friends call me "Muffers."

GAYLE: Oh, Mrs. Walker, I couldn't call *anyone* "Muffers."

MUFFERS: (*Sharply.*) Yes, you can. (*All sweetness.*) Now, tell me...how are things going at the theatre? Are you getting settled in all right?

(*The phone rings. Gayle answers it.*)

GAYLE: (*Into phone.*) I'll call you back! (*She hangs up.*)

MUFFERS: A little stressed, dear? Would you like me to help you out? I am well known here. I can handle multiple tasks and am really quite qualified to do your work. I notice there's no one here to help you.

GAYLE: Well, the office is closed right now. It opens at noon. And of course, the computers are down.

MUFFERS: Funny how young people today cannot do anything without a computer.

GAYLE: Well, the box office is wired so we can track –

MUFFERS: First day?

GAYLE: First day alone. I trained last week. And I'll be working the rummage sale.

MUFFERS: Oh. The rummage sale. Sad that a theatre has to lower itself to selling bric-a-brac, isn't it?

GAYLE: Oh no! There's a lot of nice things in there. Antique frames...an old phonograph. Why, I bet some antique dealers would pay a pretty penny to get their hands on some of that stuff. In fact, the office manager is at some antique place speaking with a dealer right now.

MUFFERS: Is that so? Shouldn't she be here getting ready for the sale?

GAYLE: Oh, the sale's all ready to go. Everything priced and laying around the stage. The manager, Cheryl, she's really worked hard on it.

MUFFERS: Ahh, Cheryl. Young, youth-oriented Cheryl. I interviewed with her. Yes, well...as long as everything is quiet out here, you don't mind if I...take a look?

GAYLE: Well...I guess not. Remember, the sale hasn't started yet. Okay, sure...

MUFFERS: Muffers.

GAYLE: ...Muffers. Have a look.

MUFFERS: Thank you. I'll be sure to put in a good word about you. Maybe increase my donation. I applied for your job, you know. The manager thought she "would go in another direction." It looks like that meant...young. Go

back to what you were doing. I'll just have a look. I don't think anyone will mind. *(Muffers exits into the theatre.)*

GAYLE: *(Calls after her.)* Well, I guess it's all right. *(To herself.)* What was I doing...? *(Remembers.)* Returning phone calls.

(Gayle searches for the telephone number, finds it, and starts to dial. Jeff enters.)

JEFF: Greetings! Greetings! I bring you good tidings! It is way cool what you are doing, you know. I like it. I like it all! The mass times, the rummage sale. What you need now is a good old-fashioned Christian "Bingo Night" and then people will know you're a legitimate church. Why are you waiting till January 16th to begin masses? Don't have a minister?

GAYLE: Oh no! We're not—

JEFF: Because if you don't, this is your lucky day. Ordained yesterday. Church of All Things Wise and Wonderful—

GAYLE: A church!

JEFF: Love old churches! There's so much history! Architecture! I bet you even have a ghost!

GAYLE: Actually, I didn't think ministers believed in ghosts!

JEFF: I believe what you want me to believe. I minister to the wise and wonderful! The superstitious! The cynic! The sage and the sinner! I am for all people and all seasons!

GAYLE: "A Man for all Seasons"?

JEFF: Pardon?

GAYLE: A play. We do plays.

JEFF: As do I play. For what is a mass but a celebration, and what is a celebration, but a heightened form of play? Play on! So, who's your minister?

GAYLE: No...we have an office manager, and I'm the box office manager, but no minister.

JEFF: This is your lucky day! I work cheap—no salary—just a percentage off the collection box.

GAYLE: We don't have a collection box. We take donations.

JEFF: There you go! You say "donation." I say "collection."
We can work it out.

[END OF FREEVIEW]