

RANDOM ACTS

a play in two acts

by

Michael Perlmutter

Michael Perlmutter
1719 N. 6th St
Port Hueneme, CA 93041
805-469-2897
lmjdj@msn.com

CHARACTERS

- THEODORE 'Teddy' STAVOS -
Forty-two years old, blue collar in appearance; non-de-script: could pass for thirty to sixty on any given day.
- JUNE CESSARIO -
Early to mid thirties. A young psychologist. Married, no children.
- STAFF -
NANCY PARKINS - Staff secretary.
Dr. 1 / EDWARD HAMMERSTONE
Dr. 2 / SAMUEL BRIGHTON
Dr. 3 / MAVIS BEAUCHAMP
working in the same medical group with June.
- JASON CESSARIO -
June's husband, a career social worker, in his mid thirties.
- THERESA STAVOS-MILLER -
Teddy's sister, 38

SETTING

The stage is basically an empty box. The actors sit in eight chairs lining the edges of the scene. Upstage, far left and far right. The cast sit in shadows. The center of the stage (we will call the playing area or arena) is defined by a 8" rise and is generally well lit. At the back of the arena is a contemporary desk (flat / slab in definition.)
Down left of the arena is a small round table which may be moved onto the playing area to create a restaurant or bistro as needed.)

TIME

The present; reflecting on moments from July 2009 thru August 2011

"The only reason for time is so that everything doesn't happen at once."
-- Albert Einstein

June Cessario, a young professional woman addresses us with an all too familiar tone, distancing herself, as best she can, from the subject of her story. A tactic she has learned in order to survive her chosen line of work, psychology.

June relates to us the events of her patient Theodore (Teddy) Stavos, a forty-two year old man who claims he is unable to linearly integrate his soul with his body. While his body ages regularly day to day, like the rest of us, Teddy's conscience (or soul if you will) is not tethered to the same timetable. He may live a day at the age of twelve and then another at 42, "jumping" between the moments of his own life until the last moment at the end of July 2011. However that date (July 31, 2011) is looming closer and in order to save his life Teddy must learn to correct course before it's too late.

However, June's desire to help Teddy is clouded by her own ambition and inexperience. The uniqueness of Teddy's condition presents opportunities in both publishing and establishing herself early in her vocation. June's recent marriage to Jason, a social worker specializing in children with behavioral problems, inevitably begins to take a backseat to her career.

The medical staff, whom June is still under probationary review with, cautiously give her enough room to work with Teddy, constantly supervising and questioning her methods.

Progress is slow and uneventful until Teddy's sister, Theresa, is interviewed, providing insight into Teddy's behavior. June learns their parents passed away violently in an auto accident, establishing a single traumatic moment that may be the cause for Teddy's state of mind. Theresa, however insists Teddy's 'condition' is an act he's been working on and perfecting for as many years as she can remember and that she is all but done with him.

Teddy's penchant to keep his appointments is spotty at best and soon the staff begin to question whether Teddy's charming charismatic personality is authentic or a rouse; and if he is a lying: why? Why would he go to such elaborate lengths to pull a con of this nature? Or is he truly disturbed? Or is he actually who he says he is? The medical staff steer June away from Teddy's apparent 'game' which only forces June to dig her heels in further. The staff, in turn, take action and let Teddy go. June's unplanned pregnancy, predicted by Teddy, ends in miscarriage, partly due to June's inability to prioritize.

June returns to work and although he has been summarily released from the medical staff's care, Teddy continues to keep his appointments. June agrees to continue seeing Teddy, on her lunch hours--growing more attached to Teddy than to her own now failing marriage. Jason agrees to take a job offer half way across the country. June's treatment of Teddy is soon discovered and again, she is given a small amount of latitude to continue.

June again takes advantage of the situation and finds herself having to choose between her patient or her practice. Choosing the patient she tenders her resignation of both her marriage and her job as the end of July 2011 looms only weeks away.

Told through vignettes of recorded appointments, deposition statements and overlapping memories: time lines indeed begin to jumble. Story arcs and discoveries begin to emerge out of linearity and in the end Teddy is cured of his disposition only to find himself unable to deal with his new found life of never touching base with the ghosts of his past again.

In a last phone contact with his doctor Teddy admits to his despair and following the end of the call hurls himself in front of a passing 'L' train.

We end the play as we began: with June defending herself and her actions, 'for the record,' to us and the medical staff--as she is asked quietly to begin "at the beginning."

ACT I

(At rise:

The stage is basically an empty box. The actors sit in chairs lining the edges of the scene. Upstage, far left and far right. The cast sit in shadows. The center of the stage (we will call the playing area or arena) is defined by a 8" rise and focused light. On it are a contemporary styled desk, with a chair that sit somewhere upstage and two chairs positioned elsewhere in the arena.

As the lights come up we find THEODORE 'Teddy' STAVOS, a man of indeterminable age but presumably in his late thirties/early forties, dressed in jeans, sneakers, shirt and members only style jacket, sits carefully on the playing area, center stage. TEDDY holds a colored rabbit's foot keychain which he rubs between his fingers therapeutically. Another set of chairs also sit to the side, presenting an office area.

Downstage JUNE CESSARIO, a career woman, dressed in casual business attire, addresses the audience.)

JUNE

Most good stories have a beginning, middle, and an end. Usually in that order. Usually. I'm going to try to keep this in perspective but I can't offer exact results. I *will* do my best to follow my own timeline wherever I can but occasionally I may have to rely on his. Instead of trying to explain . . . let me just . . . start with our first--

(Corrects herself:)

my first encounter with Theodore.

(JUNE steps back into the scene onstage, crossing to the edge of the playing area and entering into the room.)

JUNE

(Continues to cross over to her desk.)

Excuse me? Do we have an appointment?

TEDDY

Eleven thirty. Every Tuesday and Thursday.

JUNE

(Not sitting.)

Since . . . ?

TEDDY

Ever.

JUNE

Alright then. I think you'll need to check with my secretary, Mrs. Parkins. She's just outs--

TEDDY

Oh shit. What's today's date?

(No reply.)

You don't have your calendar out yet. Today? Is this July 21st?

(No reply.)

2009?

JUNE

(Standing at her desk--waiting for Teddy to leave her office.)

Wrong by a day.

TEDDY

Damn. I always thought it was the 21st. So . . . this isn't Tuesday?

JUNE

I'm afraid you're going to have to go.

TEDDY

To when?

JUNE

Make an appointment with Mrs. Parkins on your way out and give her your insurance information.

TEDDY

I don't have insurance.

JUNE

And I don't do charity.

TEDDY

I can pay you. In cash.

(He pulls a large roll of bills out of his pocket prepared to count off what she needs.)

JUNE

I'm not impressed.

(JUNE crosses to the door [stage right center on the playing arena] and waves her arm towards offstage: "inviting him" to exit through it. TEDDY stays glued to his chair.)

TEDDY

(Reciting . . growing nervous:)

June Cessario. Graduated from a hole in the wall university in Lincoln, Nebraska that must not be named. You got your credentials through an online course from the Phoenix Institute. Married. One child . . .

(Corrects himself:)

TEDDY (Continued:)

On the way. A girl. But you were hoping for a boy--that's why you chose the name Sam--you'll *choose* the name Sam.

JUNE

I think you should leave now.

TEDDY

(Starting to panic:)

You're afraid your husband, Jason, is seeing somebody else but he's not. You wore blue at your own wedding because you thought it brings out your eyes. And--and--and--and your dog's name is Heathcliff because you wanted a cat. And you limp when it rains.

(Slight pause.)

JUNE

I'm going to call security.

(No reply.)

Either you leave and make an appointment or we're done here.

(No reply. TEDDY stays firmly attached to his seat. JUNE crosses out the door:)

JUNE

(As she goes:)

Ms. Parkins?

TEDDY

(As she goes:)

Don't leave-- . . .

(But she is gone. There is a beat. TEDDY resigns himself to her absence.)

TEDDY

(Drops his head into his hands.)

. . . dammit . . .

(There is a slight pause. TEDDY lifts his head back up, opening his eyes as if for the first time, he looks around quietly, clearly unaware of his surroundings. He lets go his grip on the chair and studies his own hands a moment. He takes in his situation then sheepishly rises and exits the arena. JUNE watches him leave then turns to the audience:)

JUNE

From what I can gather from this last part that was Theodore's first encounter with me as well.

(As JUNE continues and places a scarf over her attire TEDDY re-enters the playing arena and reclaims his chair.)

JUNE (Continued:)

(Placing on a scarf, she moves around the arena, crossing by NANCY PARKINS, her secretary, who hands her a coffee as she passes:)

The next day I remember I got in late. Nothing miraculous happened that morning worth recalling but I do remember we had a summer rain that carried over through lunch I think.

NANCY

Black, half a Sweet'n'Low.

JUNE

(To Nancy as she heads back to her office:)

None of that raspberry this time?

NANCY

That man's in your office again--he says he has an appointment--

JUNE

Call Security.

(Thinks a moment better on it--turns back:)

Just put them on alert.

(JUNE continues stride to the playing area--she stops at the sight of TEDDY.)

JUNE

Good morning.

TEDDY

Morning?

JUNE

You're back.

TEDDY

You left me.

JUNE

You didn't have an appointment.

TEDDY

You don't have a calendar up.

JUNE

You don't know what today is?

TEDDY

Do you?

JUNE

What was yesterday?

(No reply. Changes course of action:)

What is your name?

TEDDY

Teddy. Stavos. S-T-A-V-O-S. Theodore.

JUNE

I don't seem to have a file.

TEDDY

I don't think I have a lot of time.

JUNE

Nancy, when is my next appointment?

NANCY

Ten fifteen. Barbara Matthers cancelled.

JUNE

You could have mentioned that when you gave me my coffee--

NANCY

I tried to--

JUNE

Next time lead with a cancellation.

NANCY

I lead with there's a man in your office.

JUNE

(Debates here options a few moments:)

You have my attention.

TEDDY

Actually she lead with your coffee.

JUNE

True enough. So tell me about yourself, Theodore.

TEDDY

You can call me Teddy.

JUNE

Teddy is a boy's name, isn't it?

TEDDY

It's safer.

JUNE

"Safer"?

TEDDY

(Taking out a paper from his back pocket to read it to her--as not to get anything wrong:)

I have a condition of acute time displacement.

JUNE

I never heard of this.

TEDDY

ATD; You coined the phrase.

(Looks for her reaction but continues on before she shuts him out:)

I am living in a body that continues linearly while my conscious self jumps from date to date.

JUNE

I don't follow.

TEDDY

You wrote this.

JUNE

Explain it to me.

TEDDY

(Thinks a moment then . . .)

Ok . . . um . . . you know that when you go to sleep tonight that you will wake up sometime tomorrow; you're sure of that, right? Because that's the normal order of things: time flows consistently--consecutively--linearly. Well, I don't experience that. I could wake up three years from now or two days ago.

(No reply.)

It's like--When you drive in your car and you're alone, just listening to the music, and: no one else is there? And a song comes on from ten years ago and for all you know when you get out of the car it will be ten years ago. Or ten years forward. Or two hours. Or . . . another day? Another time?

JUNE

So, you're a time traveler?

TEDDY

No. Yes. But . . . just in here:

(Points to his head then the rest of his body:)

Just in me. I was born and someday I'll die but everything in between just bounces around.

JUNE

Is it like the movie Ground Hog's Day? You find yourself reliving the same day over and over again?

TEDDY

No. No, I never relive the same day--or the same time of the same day. I live every moment once . . . but not consecutively.

JUNE

You have gaps.

TEDDY

No. . . . Yes . . . from your point of view but . . . only in days, or hours, because I haven't lived in them yet. My body, at this point, has been through them, but my . . . soul hasn't.

JUNE

You have a soul?

(Lights come up on JASON, seated, watching on. JUNE's attention is directed to him as TEDDY continues:)

TEDDY

Everybody has a soul.

JUNE

But your soul is not tied to your body? You ever wake up as somebody else?

TEDDY

No. I'm always me. I'm me. I'm not Sybil or three faces of Eve. It's always me. I can't believe I still have to go over this every time.

JUNE

(Her attention diverts totally back to Teddy:)

Every time? How many times do you think you've been here?

(While JUNE's attention has returned to the patient on hand, JASON's light fades out again.)

TEDDY

Forty. Fifty maybe.

JUNE

(Turning back to see not Jason but only the darkness of where he was-- then as smoothly--in the same move--returning her full focus to Teddy:)

And we have the same conversation?

TEDDY

A bit. This is the worst though. This is obviously the first. What is today?

JUNE

July 21st, 2009.

TEDDY

I knew it.

JUNE

The date means something to you?

(No reply.)

How old are you?

TEDDY

I don't know. Maybe we can slice me open and count the rings.

JUNE

You were born . . . when?

TEDDY

My body is forty-two years old.

JUNE

And out of those forty-two years, how many years have you experienced so far?

TEDDY

Well put. I don't know. If you didn't have a way to track that; how old do you think you would be? I don't know how old my soul is.

JUNE

And again you refer to yourself as your "soul".

TEDDY

And? God gave us souls. We have souls. We are our souls.

JUNE

God gave you a soul . . . So, you believe in God?

TEDDY

Yes.

JUNE

A Christian God? A Jewish God . . . ?

TEDDY

There's one God.

JUNE

Which book did he write?

TEDDY

All of them.

JUNE

So, tell me, why would God have your soul live differently than everybody else?

TEDDY

I don't know, ask Him. I think it's kind of like, "what if you put a puppy in with a litter of kittens?" just to see what would happen.

JUNE

You're an experiment?

TEDDY

Maybe.

JUNE

And how does that make you feel? Being God's experiment?

(No reply.)

Why are you here?

TEDDY

You invited me.

JUNE

No. That I'm pretty sure I didn't.

TEDDY

You will. But that is months between us here. I just need to set the ground work so we can move forward.

JUNE

You said you don't think you have a lot of time, what did you mean by that?

TEDDY

I don't remember 2012.

JUNE

None of us do. It hasn't happened yet.

TEDDY

I don't remember August 2011. I don't remember anything after July.

JUNE

2011?

TEDDY

Yes.

JUNE

Why is that?

TEDDY

Because I think I die.

(yeah, I know just a smidge past 10 pages -- but the vignette ends on this last line so . . . there you have it. For more just let me know
Michael Perlmutter lmjdj@msn.com)