

BUSINESS IS BUSINESS

A One-Act Play

by

Patrice Hamilton

Cast of Characters

Charlie: Male. Looks to be in his late 20s.

Jason: Male. Looks to be in his mid 20s.

Gianna: Female. Looks to be in her mid 20s.

Scene

The living room in a small apartment.

Time

April, 2020. Night.

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ACT I

Scene 1

SETTING: Small apartment. There is a worn couch, a stuffed side chair, a coffee table. A large wooden box sits on the coffee table. Some toys are pushed to the corners of the room.

AT RISE: GIANNA is standing by the chair with a basket of clothing next to her. She is folding baby clothes and placing them on the chair. CHARLIE is sitting on the couch playing a game on his cell.

CHARLIE

(glancing at GIANNA)

You know you looking pretty sexy folding those clothes. Making it hard to concentrate.

GIANNA

(smiling)

Shut-up. I gotta get up early tomorrow.

(They hear a KNOCK on the door.)

GIANNA

You expecting someone?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

GIANNA

We said nobody after eleven.

CHARLIE

It's Jason. He just got outta work.

GIANNA

We gotta have boundaries. I'm tired of people coming around 24/7, waking up the kids.

CHARLIE

He's bringing some milk.

GIANNA

(heavy sigh)

You tell him whole milk? Kids need some fat in their diet.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

(GIANNA puts down the clothing she's folding. She grabs a facemask and gloves that are sitting on the coffee table. She goes to the door and puts on the gloves while she looks through the peak hole.)

GIANNA

(muttering)

Every time. The man's got the brain cells of a gnat.

(yelling to JASON through the door)

I don't know how many times I've got to tell you! You're not coming in without a mask!

(She keeps watching until she's satisfied.)

Was that so hard!?

(GIANNA puts on the face mask, releases the chain, and opens the door. JASON is standing there holding a brown bag.)

JASON

Hey, Gianna.

GIANNA

Am I gonna find whole milk in there?

JASON

I got skim. They're out of whole milk.

GIANNA

Skim's mostly water. Makes the cereal taste like crap.

JASON

Water's good for 'em. Kid's got to stay hydrated.

(He starts to walk further into the room, but she stops him.)

GIANNA

Whoa. Wait a minute.

(GIANNA takes a thermometer out of her jeans' pocket and reaches up towards JASON'S head.)

JASON
Hold up. What's that?

GIANNA
I gotta scan you.

JASON
You gotta what?

GIANNA
You want to talk to Charlie, I gotta scan you first.

JASON
(looking past her towards CHARLIE)
You good with this?

CHARLIE
We've got kids, man. Can't take any chances.

JASON
Jesus! Alright, go ahead.

(GIANNA puts the thermometer on JASON'S head and scans it. She looks at the reading and nods.)

GIANNA
(taking off her mask)
Okay, you can take off your mask now.

(JASON takes off his mask and starts to walk towards CHARLIE, but she stops him.)

GIANNA
Not yet.

(GIANNA goes to the coffee table and grabs some hand sanitizer. She walks back over to JASON and hands it to him. He looks at it and laughs.)

JASON
You guys getting a little paranoid, don't ya think?

GIANNA
We're following CDC guidelines in this house. Don't like it, go somewhere else.

(JASON shakes his head and puts the sanitizer on.)

JASON

(clapping his hands)

All cool?

GIANNA

I find out you came here covered in that nasty virus and you will not survive the day.

(GIANNA takes the brown bag from him and exits to put the milk away. JASON walks over to the stuffed chair, moves some baby clothes aside and sits down. CHARLIE puts his cell away and opens the wooden box on the coffee table.)

JASON

She's wasting her time as a hair dresser. She should be a bouncer.

CHARLIE

You want the usual?

JASON

Nah, man. Gimme four bags.

CHARLIE

Stocking up?

JASON

Just in case.

CHARLIE

It's \$65 a bag now.

JASON

Sixty-five! You're fucking with me, right?

CHARLIE

(shaking his head)

Supply and demand. Lots of distributors getting busted. Can't get their money outta the country.

JASON

I brought you guys some milk!

CHARLIE

Skim milk. (brief pause) I'll take \$5 off the bill. You still want four bags?

JASON

What happened to my discount for buying in bulk?

CHARLIE

Can't do it. That's capitalism, man.

JASON

Yeah, well, maybe I should do like Gianna said and take my business to somebody else.

CHARLIE

You want to take it to one of those dudes on the street handing off to any scumbag with a twenty, go ahead. You know what you get with me security. Every time I handle the product, I use gloves. I don't cut it with any shit that will fuck you up and everything's sterile. You know anybody else can offer you that kind of insurance for a cheaper rate, then go for it.

JASON

That's price gouging. Not ethical, man. I don't have that kind of money on me.

CHARLIE

(shaking his head)

If I make an exception for you and the word gets around, I gotta make an exception for everybody.

JASON

The word won't get out, I swear.

CHARLIE

Plus, I gotta think about my family. Gianna started a college fund. Youngest ain't even potty-trained yet, and we're socking money away for the future.

JASON

That's messed up.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

JASON

(looking down at his sneakers)

What about my sneakers? How much for these?

CHARLIE

(looking at JASON'S sneakers)

They knock offs?

JASON

Knock-offs? Look at em! These look like knock-offs to you? They're worth \$300 easy!

CHARLIE

(shaking his head)

I don't need anymore sneakers.

JASON

Everybody needs more sneakers, man.

CHARLIE

(looking at the sneakers more closely)

What size?

JASON

Twelve. Brand-new. Just got 'em last week.

CHARLIE

Stole 'em?

JASON

Yeah I stole 'em. So what? You're a drug dealer. Not exactly occupying the moral high ground.

CHARLIE

I'm an eleven.

JASON

So you wear some socks. Try 'em on. You're not gonna want to take 'em off!

(JASON takes off his sneakers and holds them out to CHARLIE.
CHARLIE hesitates but then tries one of them on.)

JASON (CONT'D)

Feels good, right?

CHARLIE

Not bad. You sure about this? It feels a little harsh.

JASON

Absolutely. No big deal. I got another pair at home. All broken in. Real comfortable.

(CHARLIE tries on the other sneaker.)

JASON (CONT'D)

Walk around. Test it out. It's like you're walking on pillows.

(CHARLIE stands up and walks around. He likes how they feel.)

CHARLIE

Yeah, sweet.

(CHARLIE sits back on the couch.)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Alright, I tell you what. I'll give you three bags for the sneakers. That includes the milk. And don't say nothing to Gianna. I can't be buying up all your secondhand shit.

JASON

No sweat. I got you.

(CHARLIE reaches into the box and pulls out some gloves. He puts them on and then retrieves three small packages of powder and gives them to JASON.)

JASON

So, uh, you think Gianna would give Alicia a haircut?

CHARLIE

(closing the box)

A haircut?

JASON

Yeah. She wants a haircut real bad

CHARLIE

Gianna's place ain't reopened yet.

JASON

I hear she's been giving some haircuts on the side.

CHARLIE

Where'd you hear that?

JASON

What do you care where I heard it? I heard it. Tell Gianna we'll pay her \$30 bucks.

CHARLIE

If they found out she was cutting hair at home, she'd get fired. We don't need some loud mouth telling everybody where his baby mama got a haircut.

JASON

She'd do it if you told her to.

CHARLIE

You ever see anybody tell Gianna what to do? That woman's got a lot of skills, but listening ain't one of them.

JASON

I thought we were friends, man.

CHARLIE

Because you bring us some milk? You ever ask about my life? Ever ask about my kids? Come to my brother's funeral?

JASON

I just don't like funerals. Everybody all sad and shit. Gets me down.

CHARLIE

Tell you what. You tell me one of my kids' names and I'll get Gianna to give Alicia a haircut.

JASON

What?

CHARLIE

She'll even through in a blow-dry. If we're friends, you gotta know at least one of my kids' names.

JASON

Uhh...well...

(looking at the baby clothes beside him.)

I know you got a son. And a girl. And there...uh...little...

CHARLIE

(noticing JASON'S glance at the clothing)

Stop stalling man. You know it or not?

(A beat as JASON wracks his brain for a name.)

JASON

I think one of 'em begins with a K. (pause) Or maybe a T.

CHARLIE

I'm your vending machine, man. That's it. We ain't friends.

JASON

(stands up.)

Okay. Just thought I'd ask. What are you gonna tell her about where you got the sneakers?

(CHARLIE takes off the sneakers and stashes them under the couch.)

CHARLIE

I'll figure something out. You better go before she comes back in.

JASON

Mind if I hit the bathroom real quick?

(GIANNA enters the room.)

GIANNA

That bathroom's not for public use.

JASON

What? Since when?

GIANNA

Since the last person that used it stole a roll of toilet paper, that's when.

JASON

You know what Gianna? You're cold. You used to be nice. We're in plague times, man. We all gotta support each other. Like in the old days when people would be building a barn and shit. I can't even get a roll from McDonalds because the only thing they got open is drive-thru.

(GIANNA leaves the room. Awkward silence between CHARLIE and JASON.)

JASON (CONT'D)

Well, I guess I'd better get going.

(CHARLIE stands up as GIANNA returns. She's carrying a package of 4 toilet paper rolls.)

GIANNA

(handing the package to JASON)

Here you go.

JASON

Aw, thanks, Gianna. I appreciate it.

CHARLIE

Good to see ya, man. Take care of yourself now.

(The guys look like they're ready to exchange a "man hug" when GIANNA intercepts.)

GIANNA

Oh no you don't. No Bro Hugs. And no fist bumps. We're bowing now. (looking at them expectantly.) You heard me. Namaste. It means "I bow to the divine in you."

(The two men bow awkwardly. Then she bows.)

JASON

Namaste, man.

CHARLIE

Namaste, dude.

GIANNA

See? Not bad, right? (pause) Tell Alicia she can come by tomorrow at 2. That's when the kids take a nap.

JASON

Okay, great. I'll tell her.

GIANNA

Tell her I charge \$40 bucks! And she better be wearing a mask!

JASON

Absolutely! Got it! Two o'clock.

(JASON exits.)

CHARLIE

That was nice of you. You're a good woman.

GIANNA

(looking pointedly under the couch)

Yeah, well, somebody had to bring in some cash, with you giving the product away for a second-hand pair of sneakers!

CHARLIE

You shouldn't be listening in to my conversations, woman!

GIANNA

(laughs)

I shouldn't have to be listening into your conversations!

(GIANNA picks up the folded clothing on the chair and exits. CHARLIE shakes his head, picks up his phone, and goes back to his online game.)

CURTAIN