BYTE ME

A TEN MINUTE COMEDY

By Scott Haan

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SYNOPSIS: Chris bites off more than he can chew when he offers to help a technophobe with a computer project. It's a battle between the techie wizard and the computer illiterate...and only one will emerge victorious!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 either; gender flexible)

CHRIS (m/f)....................................A computer expert, friendly and patient...at least at first. Written here as male, but could be played by either gender. *(62 lines)*

RUDY (m/f) ....A techno-phobe, grumpy and frustrated...at least at first. Written here as female, but could be played by either gender. *(63 lines)*

SETTING

This show could be performed on an entirely blank stage. (An apartment set could also be used, if already standing.)

TIME & PLACE: Rudy's apartment, 9:00 a.m. on a Saturday in early April.

PROPS

- □ A chair
- □ A table
- □ A laptop computer
- □ A few sheets of paper
- □ A few pieces of mail
- □ A watch worn by Chris

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PREMIERE

Byte Me *was first presented on August 1, 2011 by the Red Barn Summer Theatre in Frankfort, IN. It was directed by the author, Scott Haan. The roles were originally performed by the following cast:*

CHRIS..Andy Best
RUDY ....Janeen Burrows

AT RISE: Lights up. RUDY is sitting at a table CS, concentrating. The only objects on the table are a laptop computer and a few sheets of paper. The laptop is facing away from the audience, so they cannot see the screen. From SR, there is an offstage knock. SOUND FX: Knock knock knock.

RUDY: *(Calling off.)* It's open.

CHRIS enters from SR, carrying some mail.

CHRIS: Morning, neighbor. Got your mail again. I think our new postman might be Stevie Wonder. *(He sets the mail on the table.)*

RUDY: Oh, thanks!

CHRIS: I already went through and pulled out all the cash.

RUDY: *(Distracted by the screen, not looking up at him.)* Sure. That's fine. Thanks. *(CHRIS starts to walk back out, but is stopped by RUDY's angry outburst at the computer.)* AHH! Oh, you stupid –

CHRIS: Having a little trouble over there?

RUDY: Oh, it's just this dumb computer. I don't know what I'm doing here.

CHRIS: *(Taking a few steps towards her again.)* Well, maybe I can help. What are you trying to do?

RUDY: Well, I'm applying for a job at the Singer Grill over on Nolan Street, but they only accept electronic applications. I don't even know where to start.

CHRIS: *(Joining her.)* Okay, well, where are you now?

RUDY: Résumé. My brother typed one up for me and put it on the laptop. I FINALLY figured out how to open it, but I still need to fix a few things.

CHRIS: All right, and what application are you using?

RUDY: *(Holding up one of the papers as if to say "Duh!")* Um, the application they gave me at the restaurant.

CHRIS: *(Chuckling slightly.)* No, I mean what PROGRAM. An application is a program.

RUDY: Well, THAT'S stupid. Why don't they just call it a program?

CHRIS smiles. His calm, jovial nature is a sharp contrast to RUDY's grumpiness.

CHRIS: Beats me. Looks like you're using Word.

RUDY: *(Puzzled again.)* Actually, I'm using LOTS of them.

CHRIS: No, I mean Microsoft Word. That's the name of the app – uh, PROGRAM you're in.

RUDY: Are they TRYING to confuse people?

CHRIS: It's Microsoft. The answer to that is, "Yes." *(Beat.)* You don't use computers much, do you?

RUDY: No. Not if I can help it.

CHRIS: I'm surprised you even knew how to boot it up.

RUDY: *(Glaring at the computer with hatred.)* Oh, I would LOVE to "boot it up." That's very tempting! *(Beat.)* This stupid thing can beat me at solitaire, but I'll bet I can beat it at kickboxing!

CHRIS: *(Smiling.)* Okay, settle down. Violence is RARELY the answer when it comes to technology. Let's take it one step–

RUDY: *(Interrupting with a frustrated outburst at the screen.)* AAAH! It did it again! It just went black! It always does this! Stupid–

RUDY's finger reaches dramatically for a button on the keyboard. Surprised, CHRIS grabs her arm to stop her.

CHRIS: Wait, wait! Don't turn it off! It's just a screensaver!

RUDY: *(As if the word is completely foreign.)* A "screensaver"?

CHRIS: Right. Shutting down with that button is REALLY hard on the system. All you have to do is wake it up. *(Pointing at the screen.)* See what that floating text says? "Press Any Key to Continue."

RUDY: *(Aggravated.)* I know! It always says that! But I can't find it!

CHRIS: You can't find what?

RUDY: The "ANY" key! My keyboard doesn't HAVE one. I have looked EVERYWHERE!

CHRIS: *(Taking this in.)* Wwwooww. Okay. Um, just press "A" for "Any." That works, too.

RUDY: *(Skeptical.)* Okay... *(She presses a key, then her face lights up with relief.)* Hey, there it is!

CHRIS: Yeah! How about that! You know, I'm starting to suspect that most of your problems are "peb-kac" errors.

RUDY: What's "peb-kac"?

CHRIS: P.E.B.C.A.C. Problem Exists Between Computer and Chair.

RUDY: *(Looking down at her chair in confusion.)* I don't get it.

CHRIS: Never mind. So what are you trying to change on your résumé?

RUDY: *(Pointing.)* Well, it's not in chronological order. I need to move THAT job down to THERE.

CHRIS: Simple enough. Just cut and paste it.

RUDY: How do you do that?

CHRIS: It's easy. First, just highlight all the text you want to move.

RUDY: Okay. *(Beat.)* Do you have a highlighter?

CHRIS: *(Taken aback.)* Do I– *(Beat.)* NOT with an actual highlighter! Are you yanking my chain? It's a miracle you don't have white-out all over your screen!

RUDY: *(Sarcastic.)* Ha ha.

CHRIS: You just have to click and drag over the text you want to move. Where's your cursor?

RUDY: Oh, she's on the way, believe me. I'm about to start cursing up a storm any second now.

CHRIS: You and me both. Here, let me show you. *(He performs a few quick keyboard functions.)* There. Highlighted. Now, cut it...

RUDY: Where's that?

CHRIS: The easiest way is with keyboard shortcuts... You hold down Control and press certain letters. Control-X is cut, and Control-V is paste.

RUDY: X and V? Why? They should have used C for cut and P for paste.

CHRIS: Well, those are already used for copy and print. Think of X like X-ing something out, and when you need to paste, think of V for "vaste."

RUDY: "Vaste"? Really? *(In a German accent.)* Yeah! That's vhat this is, a huge "vaste"! *(Normal voice resumes.)* How can you keep all this straight?

CHRIS: Just try it. Hold down Control and type X... *(She does.)* Then move up there and click... *(She does.)* Then hold down Control and type V. *(She does.)* See? Easy.

RUDY: *(Insincere, rolling her eyes.)* Yeah...

CHRIS: Is there anything else you wanted to fix?

RUDY: Nope.

CHRIS: Okay, well, there's one more thing we SHOULD do to make it all consistent. *(Pointing at the screen.)* You need to justify all this.

RUDY: Justify it? Um, well, I need a job so I can afford food and clothes, so I need to send them my résumé.

CHRIS: Yeah, no, I got that. By "justify," I mean line up the margins evenly. Here. *(He works the computer for a moment.)* Done. That looks better. Now all you have to do is save it.

RUDY: Which is...?

CHRIS: *(Pointing at the top of the screen.)* See that little icon up there? That's the "Save" button.

RUDY: Okay. *(She touches the screen with her index finger, waits for a reaction, then jabs it a few more times.)* Nothing's happening.

CHRIS: Of course not! You can't just touch the screen!

RUDY: Well, you can SOMEtimes. The self-checkout machine at the supermarket lets you.

CHRIS: Yes. True. But this one doesn't.

RUDY: Well, how do you know which ones do and which ones don't?

CHRIS: Just trust me. Most laptops don't. Not yet, anyway. So just move your pointer up to the "Save" icon and click. *(She does.)* It's a good idea to save often as you work, just in case your computer crashes.

RUDY: How is it gonna crash? It's sitting right here on this sturdy table.

CHRIS: *(Beginning to lose patience.)* Crash, as in "shut down unexpectedly."

As the story progresses, their temperaments gradually switch. CHRIS is becoming grumpier, while RUDY is getting calmer. Soon they will meet in the middle, passing on the road to their moods reversing.

RUDY: Ah. Gotcha. So it's saved. Now what?

CHRIS: Now we figure out where to send it. Did the restaurant give you instructions about where to e-mail the résumé?

RUDY: *(Looking through the papers.)* I don't think so...

CHRIS: Maybe it's on their website. Let's go online and try to find it. First, go ahead and close all of your windows.

She looks at him for a moment, perplexed, then starts to scoot her chair back while speaking.

RUDY: Okay, if you think that will help.

RUDY stands, intending to walk away to close an actual window. CHRIS' words stop her movement.

CHRIS: STOP. *(Sigh. A few beats.)* I meant close the windows ON YOUR SCREEN.

RUDY: *(Sitting back down.)* Oh! I was WONDERING why it mattered. Thought maybe the draft was bothering you.

CHRIS: *(A stage whisper aside, not meant for her to hear.)* Just the one between your ears.

RUDY: *(Didn't hear this.)* I'm sorry?

CHRIS: Oh, um, I said, "I just would love to ease your fears." *(Ahem.)* Look at all of those files. How can you even find anything? You REALLY need to clean up your desktop.

RUDY: *(Indicating the tabletop.)* What are you talking about? The only thing on it is a computer and a few papers.

CHRIS: *(About to explode.)* NOT YOUR– *(Pause. With great effort, he calms himself down. When he speaks again, he is trying too hard to sound patient.)* Hey. New rule. From now on, when I use a noun, like "desktop," let's just...ASSUME I'm talking about a computer term and not a real-world object, all right?

RUDY: Makes sense.

CHRIS: *(Skeptical.)* You're sure? So if I mention "cookies" or say "I wish this was an Apple," you won't go to the kitchen to get me a snack, right?

RUDY: Right. Although now you're making me hungry.

CHRIS: And you won't serve me nasty mystery meat if I mention "Spam"?

RUDY: Eww, no. Gross. At least I'm not hungry anymore.

CHRIS: Good. I think we're on the same page. Now, let's find that website. *(Pointing at the computer.)* Um, can I take over?

RUDY: *(Standing, trading places with him.)* Sure. All yours.

CHRIS sits and works the computer, with RUDY watching over his shoulder. Brief pause as he works.

RUDY: Why is it so slow? Is it supposed to take this long?

CHRIS: It's a little sluggish. You might not have much free space.

RUDY: *(Defensive, looking around the room.)* Well, this is the biggest place I could afford! *(CHRIS glares at her and she realizes she broke the rule.)* Which is not what you meant.

CHRIS: No, it's not. The speed might also have to do with your bandwidth. *(RUDY opens her mouth to speak, but CHRIS cuts her off.)* Which has NOTHING to do with fat musicians.

RUDY: *(Clearly lying.)* That's not what I was gonna say.

CHRIS: All right, here we go. There's the website, aaaaaaand there's the link for job opportunities. Let's get this bad boy e-mailed. Um, where's your Outlook?

RUDY: Right now, it's improving, thanks to your help!

CHRIS tries to blink away his stress to no avail. His head and right arm twitch involuntarily in unison. His very sanity is in danger.

CHRIS: *(With all the civility he can muster.)* Your e-mail program. What e-mail program do you use?

RUDY: Oh, I don't really do e-mail. My brother set me up with something called Heat-Mail, but I've never used it.