

# FICTIONAL MAN

By Anne Hughes

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ISBN 1-931000-65-4

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**CAST: AUTHOR and FICTIONAL MAN**

***NOTE: Costumes are not necessary but bits of costume may be used by the FICTIONAL MAN, who may keep them in a trunk on the stage and use when appropriate.***

***(A spotlight comes up on the stage revealing a disheveled young man sitting at a rickety desk with a telephone and a pad of yellow legal paper before him on which HE is writing furiously. HE looks up.)***

AUTHOR: Oh, for muse of fire that would ascend/ The brightest heaven of invention,/ A kingdom for a stage, princes to act/ And monarchs to behold the swelling scene! Why won't my pen catch fire? Here I am with 24 hours to go and the chance of a lifetime before me if I can only pull it off. ***(Telephone rings.)*** Yeah, yeah, Dad. I'll have it by tomorrow and give it to Mr. Munson, I promise. I won't let you down. I *know* it's my big chance. Do you think Mr. Munson will read it personally? 'Cause if he does all the flunkies in his publishing company will treat my proposal for a novel as if it were the tablets of law handed down to Moses. It's his company, after all... Of course I can swing it. I've been writing all my life. I got all those prizes in college, didn't I? But you'll miss me when I leave your office and become a free-lance writer... No, really, it's great of you, Dad. I'm just lucky that your golfing buddy owns a publishing company. It will be my break-out. ***(Hypocritically)*** I'll sure miss working in your office though. Thanks, Dad. ***(Puts down the phone.)*** Yippee! No more stocks! No more bonds! No more money markets! Whoopee! My brother Sam laps this stuff up. He'll probably get filthy rich — then his real business will be to lend me money. Now to work. It's too bad that I really frittered away the last two weeks with all those holiday parties. And there's another one going on now, right across the hall. Never mind. You always do your best work with your back to the wall.

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And I've got to produce my proposal for the novel to give to Dad's friend, Mr. Munson, tomorrow. If he likes it, he'll accept it. They'll give me an advance and I'll have a year or two more to write it out. I'll be launched! No more 9 to 5. I'll go on talk shows. I could win prizes. I could go to Hollywood to work on the screen play – and meet and lounge beside the pool with all those babes. I just have to find a hero and figure out what's going to happen to him. A really good hero – someone the reader will care about. Someone who will live and suffer and grow. Now who?

***(HE bends over his desk and starts to write furiously. The spotlight on him dims and comes up on the opposite side of the stage, where another man, also a young, rather rumpled young man, in fact the mirror image of the author, steps forward a little hesitatingly.)***

FICTIONAL MAN: Oh, I have to get a life! Something that this overgrown boy here takes so much for granted. The truth is, I'm a Fictional Man, and if we work it right, this kid and me, we'll have a novel. And if it's good, I'll have a life. A lot of us fictional men got great lives and live even more vividly than you human beings, thanks to their authors. Think of Heathcliffe, Hamlet – "Seems, madam! Nay, it is; I know not 'seems'./ 'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother..." – even Rhett Butler, "My dear, I don't give a damn." Then there were Sydney Carton, Fitzwilliam Darcy, Jay Gatsby, Captain Ahab. They lived intensely and deeply and they are more real to anyone who reads their books than their own neighbors. That's literature! Oh, that's what I want! I want to *live*, to really *live* in the imagination of people years from now in different parts of the world. Oh, to *think* of it! To take on a life of my own and become a hero – without being real. But here I am – totally dependent on the brain of this kid, who has great ambition, some talent and no technique or discipline, a head whirling with movies and TV. Can we make it?

***(Spotlight comes up on the AUTHOR at his desk writing furiously and talking to himself.)***

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AUTHOR: Mark Spencer is a young man, tall, royally handsome, rich, debonair, irresistible to women. ***(The FICTIONAL MAN slips into this character.)*** He is highly intelligent and one of the three or four people in the world who know that there is a plot on foot to blow up one of our biggest aircraft carriers. ***(The FICTIONAL MAN blows on an imaginary pistol in the best James Bond manner.)*** I his years with the CIA... ***(The AUTHOR rips the sheet of yellow legal paper out of the pad, crumples it up and hurls it to the floor. Meanwhile, the FICTIONAL MAN crumples up too.)*** No, James Bond has been done! What I need is someone who will really carry the story. ***(Writes furiously.)*** Mark Spencer was a wizened, evil, hunchbacked dwarf. In his youth he had been so abused and so kicked around by society that he hated everyone and everything ***(The FICTIONAL MAN snarls)*** and was just scheming to get back at the world that had been so harsh to him. ***(The FICTIONAL MAN sinks down into himself to make himself a dwarf.)*** He said to himself over and over...

FICTIONAL MAN: ***(Snarling and shaking his fist melodramatically.)*** I'll get even with you yet! I'll foil all your little plans. And then I'll have the Fair Alicia to myself. I know she can't stand me now but I'll marry her anyway and I'll show the world!

AUTHOR: ***(Ripping another sheet off the pad, crumpling it up and throwing it on the stage. Meanwhile, the FICTIONAL MAN straightens up, relieved.)*** No. That won't do for a novel. My hero has to be sympathetic. I'll make him a missionary bringing health care and education to remote villages in Africa.

FICTIONAL MAN: ***(Pantomimes extreme benevolence, patting imaginary children on the head with pure goodness written on his face.)*** Now, children, repeat after me: 2 times 2 equals 4; 2 times 3 equals 6. What a joy it is to teach such apt and willing pupils as I am doing God's work in this God-forsaken jungle.

AUTHOR: ***(Rips sheet out of pad, crumples it and throws it to the floor. FICTIONAL MAN looks a little put out.)*** No- won't do. What do I know about Africa? Write about what you know. OK let's start again. Mark Spencer was a hugely successful rock star, had the best voice, the best rhythm, the most pounding beat, played the fastest electric guitar and swiveled

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his hips better than Elvis. His sold-out concerts were always mobbed, especially by screaming young girls who idolized him. He made tons of money and lived high.

FICTIONAL MAN: ***(Swivels his hips and pantomimes playing the electric guitar.)*** Do-wop, Daddy, oh, yeah, yeah. C'mon, let's rock all night. Yeah. Gimme the beat Daddy! ***(Can be done ad lib.)***

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