

OUR 45

By Alan Haehnel

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OUR 45*A One Act Play***By Alan Hachnel**

SYNOPSIS: Daisy cannot believe Meg's insensitivity. Meg claims to be her friend, claims to care about her deeply. So how could she possibly think that blindfolding Daisy and bringing her out onstage, taking off the blindfold to reveal that they are in front of a live audience, then blackmailing her into staying out there with her for an impromptu, 45-minute show about the two of them...how could Meg think any of this was a good idea? As the event proceeds, though, this comic situation turns dark as we learn that the "play" is actually rooted in Meg's unconscious need to relive her own past with her drug-addicted mother. Meg's cruelty has a history, one of false hopes, abandonment, and death. Once she understands what Meg is really doing, Daisy vows that their friendship will defy this cycle and forge a new one.

DURATION: 45 minutes**TIME:** Present day**SETTING:** Live onstage**CAST OF CHARACTERS***(2 females)*MEG (f)..... A troubled teen. *(202 lines)*DAISY (f) Meg's friend. *(197 lines)***SETTING:** Bare stage.**PROPS:** None.**COSTUMES:** Contemporary teen garb.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES: If you're taking on "Our 45," I admire both your and your cast's bravery, for there's nowhere to hide with this show. Fancy set, elaborate costumes, makeup, tech elements—none of that to distract from the central acting challenge of two people facing an extreme psychological problem. This is one of those shows that will have to be taken apart beat by beat to discover both the overt and the covert goals and obstacles. It is also a play that requires absolute honesty between the characters, which will require a lot of background work. Both Daisy and Meg should end up likeable, but they may well not be so during the entire course of the play. We must trust that the audience will appreciate their struggles, their fallibility... ultimately, their humanity.

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AT START: *Empty stage. MEG enters.*

MEG: *(Whispering.)* Hi. I'm Meg. I have my friend Daisy backstage. She's blindfolded.

DAISY: *(Off.)* Meg?

MEG: She doesn't know where she is. I'm going to bring her out here, but I don't want her to know you're here. So shhhh, okay?

DAISY: *(Off.)* Meg, where are you?

MEG: Try not to make any noise until she takes off the blindfold, right? It'll be great. Thanks. *(Exits, then comes back on a few seconds later, leading the blindfolded DAISY.)* Right this way, we're almost there.

DAISY: Where is "almost there"?

MEG: It's a secret.

DAISY: I don't like secrets.

MEG: I know. But I love them. And you love me, and so, by extension, I believe that somewhere, deep down, you love secrets, too.

DAISY: I don't like secrets.

MEG: It's only logical.

DAISY: Your logic sucks.

MEG: Watch your language.

DAISY: What? Why?

MEG: Ta-da!

DAISY: What do you mean, "ta-da"? What are you "ta-da"-ing?

MEG: We're here.

DAISY: *(Reaching for her blindfold.)* Good.

MEG: No, no. Not yet.

DAISY: You said we're here.

MEG: Let's deepen the suspense. Where do you think you are?

DAISY: I have no idea.

MEG: What does it feel like?

DAISY: It feels like you put a blindfold on me and said "trust me" for the last twenty minutes and now you said "ta-da, we're here," and I don't have any idea what that means so it feels like... confusion and I'm wondering why I ever let you talk me into these stupid ideas.

MEG: Yeah, yeah, but physically, what does it feel like? What are the sensations of being here?

DAISY: I feel a strange tingling in my right hand.

MEG: Really? What do you think it means?

DAISY: I think it means I want to slap you. Let me take the blindfold off!

MEG: Come on, come on, play along. Have I ever led you astray?

DAISY: Uh, daily.

MEG: But you've survived, right? And your life has been a lot less boring. So, humor me. What does being here feel like?

DAISY: Hot. It's very bright in here.

MEG: True, true. Any guesses why?

DAISY: It's a big tanning bed, and you're trying to kill me with UV rays.

MEG: Not bad. Way off, but cute. What do you hear?

DAISY: Besides your annoying voice?

MEG: I'll shut up for a second. Well?

DAISY: I hope I'm not hearing what I think I'm hearing. I better not be.

MEG: What is it?

DAISY: I think other people are in this room.

MEG: Why do you think that?

DAISY: I thought I heard someone clear their throat. And I just feel like people are.... This better not be a surprise party. My birthday isn't for two weeks and you know how much I detest the surprise part...

MEG: It's not a surprise party.

DAISY: Good. So nobody else is in here?

MEG: Well, nobody else is *up* here.

DAISY: What is that supposed to mean?

MEG: I think it's time for the great unveiling. (*Pulls off DAISY'S blindfold.*) Ta-da!

DAISY squints at the stage lights.

DAISY: Wha... where are... (*Looking around.*) Oh, no. No, no, no, no. You did not...

MEG: We're on stage in front of a live audience! Yay!

DAISY: Yay. Right. See ya.

DAISY goes to exit. MEG runs to stop her.

MEG: You can't leave!

DAISY: Watch me. Oh, and by the way, later, I'm going to kill you.

MEG: Stop, Daisy. It'll be fun.

DAISY: Fun? I'm not even going to... let me go.

MEG: Nope.

DAISY: Okay. I will begin to kill you now. I will bludgeon you until you are unconscious so I can get out of here, and then I will finish the job later. Let me...

MEG: No. Because if you leave, I will tell all of these people—and I approximate there are ____ (*Insert number of people in the audience.*)—I will tell them all about how far you have gone with your obsession over a certain individual, and I will provide evidence via several social media outlets.

DAISY: That is blackmail.

MEG: I prefer the term "negotiation tactic." (*DAISY looks out at the audience briefly, then grabs MEG and whispers in her ear. MEG turns to the audience.*) She said, "How could you do this to me?" She said, "You know how much I hate being in front of people."

DAISY: What are you doing?

MEG: We're on stage, honey! We have to project! An audience gets very frustrated when they can't hear the dialogue.

DAISY: I was whispering just to you.

MEG: Which is frustrating for them.

DAISY: I don't care about them!

MEG: Well, that's nice. I think your mother's out there. Hi, Mrs. Tate! Yeah, see? She waved. Right over there. Say hi to your mom. (*DAISY crosses away from MEG and sits down, looking extremely upset. MEG sits beside her.*) Wanna take a selfie? Get out your phone.

DAISY: Stop it. Meg, what is this? What have you done?

MEG: Oh, yeah, yeah, here—I'll show you.

MEG pulls a program from her pocket.

DAISY: What is this?

MEG: It's our program. See? For our play. It's called "Our 45." Mysterious, huh? 45 is minutes. That's how long we'll be out here. It's not a gun or anything. Cool, huh?

DAISY: You invited people to come here and watch us for forty-five minutes.

MEG: Yeah. See, we're the stars. (*Reading from the program.*) "Meg Dwinell as Herself. Daisy Tate as Herself." I even got some sponsors to cover the costs for the space and everything. That's an ad for Uncle Dwayne's septic pumping service. Well, he's not actually my uncle, but when you don't have any relatives, you take what you can get, right? Yup. Dwayne's Drains. He's a nice guy. We swam in his pool last summer, remember? It's very clean. I mean, he pumps septic tanks for a living, but he keeps a very clean pool.

DAISY: Why?

MEG: Why does he pump septic tanks or why does he keep a clean pool?

DAISY: Why did you do this, Meg? Why did you invite people here and blindfold me and bring me here when you know I hate, hate, hate being in front of people? Why?

MEG: Fun. Adventure. Life! I mean, come on! That's why we hang out, right? You never know what I'm going to do next. I love your steadiness, you love my craziness. We're a pair! So why not appear as a pair on stage for forty-five minutes? We'll get through it; (*Referring to the audience.*) they'll get through it; maybe we'll have some laughs. And then it'll just be one more thing we can talk about: "Remember that time I rented a theatre and brought you out on stage for forty-five minutes"? It's memory-making. So. Here we are. We really should do a selfie.

DAISY: You've gone too far. They warned me.

MEG: Who warned you? Warned you of what?

DAISY: Never mind.

MEG: Come on. You don't just say, "They warned me" and then shut up. That's not fair.

DAISY: I don't think you have much to say about fair right now.

MEG: All right, fine. We've gotta do something. We've got, like, forty minutes left.

DAISY: Go for it. Do something. Your adoring audience is waiting.

MEG: You're a star, too—we're co-stars! That's why I named it "Our 45." It's not "My 45." It's "Our 45."

DAISY: Well, good luck with that. I played a tree in second grade. I'll play a rock now.

MEG: See, that's what I'm talking about! You're funny! People should know that about you! *(To audience.)* I mean, I'm known for being the whacky screw-up, but Daisy, here, she's smart. And funny. Funny-smart. Witty! Remember that line about the tanning bed? She comes up with that stuff all the time, out of thin air. She cracks me up. I mean, when the two of us get going, it's entertainment! We can do a show, just off the cuff. A good show! I don't laugh at just anything. But I laugh when I think about the two of us just going off. *(MEG looks over at the studiously uninvolved DAISY.)* I guess you'll have to take my word for it so far. She'll warm up.

DAISY: It's going to be a long forty-five minutes.

MEG: You have to participate.

DAISY: What else are you going to blackmail me with?

MEG: Forget the blackmail. Forget the negotiations. We're here. *(Referring to the audience.)* They're here. To watch us. Let's give them something to watch, and let's give us something to remember.

DAISY: Oh, I'm pretty sure you've given me something to remember already. You've nailed that down.

MEG: Really?

DAISY: Oh, yeah.

MEG: Okay, okay, if you were making a scrapbook of our friendship and you had a photograph of us in this moment, what would be the caption?

DAISY: The End.

MEG: What do you mean?

DAISY: This would be on the last entry on the last page of our friendship scrapbook, captioned The End. Or, if you want to be more specific, "When Meg, through blackmail and sheer insensitivity, killed us."

MEG: Daisy.

DAISY: Meg.

MEG: Be serious. *(To audience.)* Didn't I tell you? So funny.

DAISY: Believe what you want, but when this is over, we're over.

MEG: Right. Sure. Enough of this. Get up. Let's do something. Get up!

DAISY: Why?

MEG: Because we're getting boring! I invited all these people. I got this space for us. The lights are on and we're all home... come on. We are the entertainment.

DAISY: So entertain.

MEG: You're not going to help me.

DAISY: To quote Simon and Garfunkel, "I am a rock, I am an island." You're on your own.

MEG faces front, hand on hips, takes a deep breath, looks back at DAISY, faces front again.

MEG: The person is out there, you know, in the audience. I made sure of it.

DAISY: Who?

MEG: You know. The great Who of your life. The who doesn't know you exist, but on whom your very existence depends.

DAISY: I thought you said no more blackmail.

MEG: Desperate times...

DAISY: Don't.

MEG: I mean, to keep you out here, I said I would tell everyone the full story of your obsession. But if you don't get up and play with me, I might just mention a name.

DAISY: Do not do this.

MEG: The first letter of the name is...

DAISY: I'm up. I am up.

MEG: B.

DAISY: I am up! What do you want?

MEG: I just gave away the first letter! We know a lot of B's. Two Bobby's, a boy and a girl—heck, they don't even know the gender yet. Bill, uh, there's Brook, Ben, Blake, Brad...

DAISY: Stop. What do you want me to do?

MEG: You know, let's just do our thing. Like when we're hanging out and just sort of be-bopping around... we're funny. We're really quite adorable.

DAISY: I thought this was supposed to be a play.

MEG: It is. Called "Our 45."

DAISY: A play is not just a bunch of be-bopping around. It has a story. A conflict.

MEG: It's forty-five minutes of us! That's all. Delightful, adorable us being us, as buddies. BFFs, right? Oh, I know! Let's re-enact that time we jumped off the Lehman Bridge. Remember that?

DAISY: I remember.

MEG: That same certain B guy was there that time, too. He was.

DAISY: So much for not revealing the gender.

MEG: Oh, crap, I did, didn't I? Okay, I promise I won't say anything more. No more hints.

DAISY: You promise.

MEG: As long as you play along, I promise. All right, everybody, get ready. This is the awesome story of Meg and Daisy's Great Lehman Bridge Jump Adventure...ure, ure, ure. You start.

DAISY stands looking out for a long while.

DAISY: We jumped off the Lehman Bridge.

MEG: That's it?

DAISY: Oh, yeah. We jumped off the Lehman Bridge. The End.

MEG: See, that "The End" thing was funny once, but now it's old.

DAISY: Sue me.

MEG: You said you'd play.

DAISY: I am up. I am playing.

MEG: You have no enthusiasm!

DAISY: You never specified I had to have enthusiasm.

MEG: I specified this was supposed to be about us, the best part of us, together. We're fun. We're enthusiastic. We laugh, we get in trouble.

DAISY: We jumped off the Lehman Bridge. We had a fun, enthusiastic, laugh-filled, trouble-making time. The End.

MEG: You know, if I follow up with a second letter after the B, that's going to significantly narrow the field for people.

DAISY: All right, fine! What do you need for an enthusiasm level? 50%/? 70%? 88.5%?

MEG: I'll know it when I hear it.

DAISY hurriedly and angrily begins to provide details of the bridge incident.

MEG: The Lehman Bridge incident was yet another example of Meg, here, putting me in a highly uncomfortable position.

MEG: No, you said you really wanted to...

DAISY: The Lehman Bridge is thirty feet high and illegal to jump off of, but somehow there we both were, standing in the middle of the bridge, and every time the wind blew, I thought I was going to fall off, and every time I screamed at the wind blowing, Meg laughed at me screaming...

MEG: It was sooo funny!

DAISY: And I must have stood up there for five minutes...

MEG: Try twenty!

DAISY: And all around me people were shouting jump, jump, jump!

MEG: And you were shouting, "Stop yelling at me! I'll go when I go! Shut up! Just shut up! I'll go when I go!" You kept saying that. "I'll go when I go!" Somehow, I got this image of you being potty-trained. "I'll go when I go!" I couldn't stop laughing.

DAISY: I was terrified and crazy mad at her for laughing at me every time I screamed.

MEG: "I'll go when I go! Stop rushing me!"

DAISY: And finally, my fingers were hurting so bad from holding onto the railing, and I didn't dare to climb back down, and I remember thinking, seriously thinking, "I suppose there are worse ways to die."

MEG: Get outta here.

DAISY: I seriously thought, "There are worse ways to die." And I let go. And I jumped into the water.

MEG: And then...

DAISY: And the force of the water blew the top right off my swimsuit. I couldn't find it. I'm flailing all around, half naked, probably a dozen people on the shore, and I can't find the top to my bathing suit.

MEG: I'm up there, "What are you doing? What are you doing down there?"

DAISY: And I don't want to say because I'm so embarrassed, but she's up there telling me to get out of the water so other people can jump and asking me over and over what's taking me so long.

MEG: Finally she screams, "I lost my frigging bathing suit top! Shut up!"

DAISY: Of course, she laughs.

MEG: I laughed so hard! I have never laughed so hard in my entire life.

DAISY: She laughed so hard she fell off the bridge.

MEG: I did! I did. I was never going to jump. I hate heights.

DAISY: You were never going to jump?

MEG: No way.

DAISY: You promised...

MEG: But I was laughing so hard that I wasn't even paying attention and the next thing I knew, I was falling through the air, and I landed flat on my back! Hurt? Oh, it was so painful! People said it sounded like a gunshot.

DAISY: And she came about that far (*Holds her hands six inches apart.*) from hitting her head on the rocks.

MEG: I did? (*DAISY nods.*) You never told me that.

DAISY: I didn't want to scare you. Can you imagine that? I didn't want to scare you.

MEG: Wow. I almost died at the Lehman Bridge. I never knew that until now. Anyway, we found her bathing suit top, practically drowned from laughing as we treaded water trying to get it back on, and finally dragged ourselves out. Now you can say it.

DAISY: Say what?

MEG: The End.

DAISY: You've got it covered.

MEG: See, wasn't that fun?

DAISY: Barrel of laughs.

MEG: The audience seemed to like it. I heard them.

DAISY: I'm so glad. How much time is left?

MEG: Thirty minutes. We're just getting started. This is great!

DAISY: Yeah, so great. What's scene two?

MEG: Miss Daisy-Meg.

DAISY: No.

MEG: It's an awesome bit. We're good!

DAISY: Does it even matter to you that I am incredibly uncomfortable up here?

MEG: But you still love me, right? Right? You can't help yourself.

DAISY: I want to know why you're doing this.

MEG: I told you already, Numby.

DAISY: I don't believe you.

MEG squares off with DAISY, full profile to the audience. She raises her hands to get ready for a hand-clapping game.

MEG: Miss Daisy-Meg. *(To the audience.)* You're going to love this. Not at first, because it's going to seem really simple, but it gets better. Daisy, get ready.

DAISY: Why are you torturing me?

MEG: This isn't torture.

DAISY: Yes. Yes, it is.

MEG: No. Torture is when I rip out your fingernails and pull out your teeth and force you to stand barefoot on hot coals. I'm saving that for the finale.

DAISY: I believe it.

MEG: I'm joking, obviously!

DAISY: If you've ever valued our friendship, at all, let me out of this. Please.

MEG: Miss Daisy-Meg.

DAISY, near tears, squares off with MEG. They begin the typical hand-clap game to the tune of "Miss Mary Mack," but with different lyrics. MEG claps and sings vigorously. DAISY is half-hearted.

DAISY and MEG: Miss Daisy-Meg, Meg, Meg,
Stood on one leg, leg, leg *(They stand on one leg.)*
And drank root beer, beer, beer
From a giant keg, keg, keg.

On the final "keg," DAISY slaps MEG across the face.

MEG: Ow! What did you do that for?

DAISY: Sorry. I must have slipped.

MEG: Slipped? What do you mean slipped?

DAISY: Made a mistake. I went to slap your hand and I.. .missed. It won't happen again. I promise.

MEG: That was just weird.

DAISY: It won't happen again. Miss Daisy-Meg.

They square off to start again. This time, DAISY participates much more fully, but her motivation is anger, not fun.

DAISY and MEG: Miss Daisy-Meg, Meg, Meg,
Stood on one leg, leg, leg (*They stand on one leg.*)
And drank root beer, beer, beer
From a giant keg, keg, keg.

And when they finished, finished, finished
drinking the vat, vat, vat,
They vomited, -ted, -ted,
With a great big splat, splat, splat.

On the final word, DAISY slaps MEG again, harder than before.

MEG: Hey! That's not funny!

DAISY: Oh, it's not? Breaking promises isn't funny? Hurting people isn't funny?

MEG: What is the matter with you?

DAISY: The matter with me is I'm done, Meg. Done! Oh, and if you think I can't be, if you think you're holding too much over me, guess what? (*Turning to the audience.*) Yeah, it's a guy, and yeah, his name starts with a B. You want to know what it is?

MEG: Daisy, you don't...

DAISY: Byron! Byron Samuel Cross. I have probably written that name out, in full, over a thousand times, sometimes alone, sometimes combining it with mine. Byron, wherever you are, you are my hobby! My obsession! Every time I see you, I simultaneously want to both disappear twelve feet under the floor and run into your gorgeous arms to have you hold me until we turn to dust. Sometimes, I think the whole of evolution was designed to create one creature: you. You appear in my dreams, both sleeping and waking. In my imagination, we have traveled the world, kissed in a thousand spectacular locations, parented enough children to keep Social Security solvent for the next century. You have awakened my heart, enlarged my heart, shattered my heart more times than I can count, and we've never once had a conversation beyond the one time you asked me what page the biology

homework was on, and that encounter alone almost gave me a stroke.

MEG: Well. That's going to leave a mark.

DAISY: Shut up. I'm not done. Byron, I stole your sock. Yes. One day I found your soccer bag outside the gym. I knew it was yours because I've memorized the look of virtually every possession you've ever brought to school. Plus you have the initials BSC monogrammed on the outside. No one was around. I unzipped the bag. I wasn't even sure what I was going to do. I almost fainted when I saw your shirt, your shorts, your mouthguard. They were clean, but I wouldn't have cared if they were covered in sweat. They were yours! And then I saw you had, for some reason, three pairs of socks. I knew one must be a spare pair, so I reached in your bag and I took out one of your socks—not the new one! No, I had to know it was something you'd worn before. I thought you wouldn't be too suspicious. People lose socks all the time, right?

I took your sock. It's under my pillow at my house. I sleep with your sock. I know. It's sick. It's ridiculous. I'll bring it back. And if all this I've just said sounds like I've practiced it, I have. I just never intended to say any of it out loud, but now I've been forced to.

MEG: I never...

DAISY: And now you think I'm some sock-stealing freak, and I've lost any chance I ever had of you actually being in my life in some small way. Not that that was ever going to happen. So maybe this is good. After the ridicule dies down, I'll be able to move on. I'm sorry it all came out like this, but I had to do it. I had to take her power away.

MEG: Daisy, look...

DAISY: I had to take your power away because you went way too far and made me so frigging mad and you are so completely clueless about... about... boundaries! Limits! There are limits, Meg! Don't you get that?

MEG: I get it.

DAISY: Why am I still talking? I'm done. You've got nothing on me. This is over. We are over.

MEG: You can't leave.

DAISY: Watch me.

DAISY exits. MEG stares off into the wings for a few seconds, then turns out to the audience.

MEG: Hm. What month is this? February. *(The correct month should be used.)* February, January, December, November, October, September, August, July, June. Nine months. Nine months ago, me and Daisy started being friends. That seems to be the shelf life of my friendships. Haven't gotten past nine months in.... Well, that's okay. Like my mother always told me, "Nothing lasts forever." Nothing lasts... *(Pauses, tears coming, then quickly shakes off her sadness.)*

But that's okay! No worries! Fifteen minutes left. I can fill fifteen minutes. Or not. Better to finish too early than too late, right? I wish we could have shown you the rest of the Miss Daisy-Meg thing. We didn't get to the good part. I mean, clearly, the vomit lyrics were incredibly clever and inspiring, but there's more! It gets really complex. We spent a lot of time putting it together, me and Daisy. I don't know why. It was just something we worked on. It was just fun, you know? We thought we'd put it on Youtube. We never got around to it.

It's weird. When I first thought of this idea, I thought forty-five minutes wouldn't be near enough. I pictured us getting on a roll like we do when we have sleepovers, you know? Like I said, just be-bopping along, dancing, remembering, laughing, acting things out. I mean, hours would just fly by. Time would just jump, you know. What time is it? 10:30. Then a few laughs later, what time is it? 4:00 a.m. I mean, it'd be just us in a room, for hours, never a dull moment. I figured forty-five minutes would be... would be nothing for us to fill. We had a lot of good times. I know we did. Now that she's left, apparently for good, it's like someone dropped a curtain over the memories. I just can't bring myself to tell you about them. I'm sorry. I didn't expect it to go this way. I guess we should... I guess I should just be done. Thanks for coming.

MEG starts to exit.

DAISY: *(From the audience.)* Wow.

MEG: Daisy?

DAISY: No, it's the reincarnation of Michael Jackson.

MEG: What are you doing?

DAISY: I'm saying wow. I just realized what you're doing.

MEG: What are you talking about?

DAISY: Where's your mother?

MEG: What? I thought you left.

DAISY: You thought wrong. Answer the question, please. Where's your mother? Mine is out here, like you said, and so is my dad. I've scanned the whole place, though, and Byron? Not so much. I think you fibbed on that one. Anyway, where is she?

MEG: She's... she's not here.

DAISY: Where is she?

MEG: Daisy, stop.

DAISY: Why? I'm still here. I'm filling the time. You should be happy.

MEG: Asking me about my mother is not part of the program. It's not about us.

DAISY: Actually, I think it is. How about your father? My parents are represented. Why aren't yours?

MEG: I don't want to do this.

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