

**One Man Show**

by  
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**SYNOPSIS:**

ONE MAN SHOW explores the possibilities of one man's life and the influences on him. His "nature" is connected by the shoes he wears, but everything else changes over time. The unspoken circumstances of each scene drastically alter who and how he is at any given moment. The social circumstances, particularly those that determine what it is to "be a man," are never enough to completely eliminate his basic nature.

**CAST:**

One man- 20s to 40s

## ONE MAN SHOW

*Pitch black.*

*A top light slowly rises. An unearthly drone joins it, softly at first. The drone begins in a low pitch and ends in a high pitch. From left, a pale blue light rises, revealing a MAN up-left, nude except for black shoes. He has shoulder length "finger combed" hair.*

*The lights and drone continue to rise, constantly changing until the lights reach their peak intensity, at which point both the lights and the sound cut out, abruptly.*

*The stage is dark for a moment.*

*Slowly from off-right, white light floods the stage from all heights. With the lights rises the sound of high-pitched insects singing in drones.*

*The man, still up-left, turns up-center, and begins to cross. His shoes click loudly every time he steps (perhaps tap dancing shoes). [Note: he always wears the shoes.] He stares at the stage just before him as he crosses. When he hits center stage the lights off-right black out and the sound of insects cut out, as a spot light clicks on. The man freezes.*

*Slowly, he turns his head to look at the audience, as laughter begins from the house speakers. [Note: The laughter begins as one person laughing, then spreads as if it were contagious, i.e. one then two then ten, and it must be prerecorded and played through speakers.] He stares at the audience for a moment then feels insecure, turns his head back just as slowly, as if he thinks no one can see him if he moves slowly. He walks very carefully backwards. The spotlight follows him. Once he is completely off stage, left, the laughter cuts out.*

*He is gone for a moment.*

*When he returns he is dressed in all black, and wears a baseball cap (most likely the Yankees, but it could be any team with a winning history). He has his hair neatly tucked up into the hat.*

*He crosses down-left. The spotlight continues to follow him. As he crosses "natural" lights rise, hindering the spot light until it is nearly invisible. He hits his spot. Stops. Spot light blacks out.*

*He stares out at the audience. Smiles. Looks around quickly and noticing that he is inside he begins to remove his hat, but realizing his hair will drop, he stops and holds his hands together behind his back. He is absolutely polite as he speaks, as if he were speaking to an elderly man that he respects greatly.*

**MAN**

Hello. It's good to be here. I hope everyone is well.

*Pause. Smiles.*

I must say that I am very glad, very... appreciative... of this opportunity. I will do well. That I can guarantee.

*Stands a bit straighter, more rigid.*

You'll be proud to say you know me. I'm proud to say I know you.

*Smiles awkwardly. Begins to lose his rigidity.*

Was there anything you wanted me to do or to say? I'm a bit... nervous, actually... bit more than would be expected.

*Drops his hands to his side. Slowly slouches as he speaks.*

Truth is, I'm scared. Couldn't you help me? Couldn't I stay here? There's a ball game on tonight. We could watch that. I love watching ball games. I love it when we win. I'd love to be on that team. Why don't we watch the game? There's no sense in my going now. We might as well settle in. I'm sure he wouldn't mind.

(Beat)

Besides, it's late. Well... not late... but... I guess it is pretty early. It's relative, ya know? Everything's relative. I'm only relatively nervous, I suppose...

(Laughs uneasily)

...but more nervous than I thought I'd be.

*Realizing how much he has slouched, he suddenly shoots up straight and rigid once again, and speaks with more confidence.*

Well, I'm sure I'll be fine. Sorry to bother you with my whining. I'll knock 'em dead. We'll be mutually proud.

*Turns intently with great rigidity, almost robotic, and begins to slowly walk upstage-right, but once he hits center stage he quickly darts stage-left and off. He is gone.*

*For a moment there is silence.*

*The man reenters. [Note: every time he enters he is a completely different character, unmistakably so.] He has ridded himself of the hat, but now his hair is well combed and he wears a white robe that comes down to about his knees. The robe doesn't quite fit him and he is always trying to adjust it without drawing attention to the fact that he is doing so. He has a rosary wrapped in his right hand, he holds it as the statue of a monk, or a corpse at a wake, would. All the attempts to adjust his robe are done with his left hand, which makes it all the more awkward and obvious, as he is right handed. He holds his right hand at navel level and does not move it except to move onto another bead, he is saying the rosary in his head as he speaks. He does not smile.*

*He stands facing the audience. He is barely on-stage. He gives the impression that he is only stepping in momentarily to mention something, and that he will be leaving shortly. By taking one step he could be out of view. He is emotionless as he speaks.*

I saw him the other day. It was late at night. I was down in the cellar of the church... I had to get some wine... and he was there. At least I think it was he.

*Stops. Turns to center. Hesitates. Crosses slowly to center stage, then turns and crosses down. This he does as he speaks. He stares straight ahead of himself as he goes.*

Father Jackson and I had just finished our first game of Rummy 500. I was winning 357 to 309. We had just finished our first bottle of Holy Wine... rather... I had finished it, though he drank most of it; I had only one glass... the last. He asked me to get another bottle. I was a bit scared, I admit. The last time he asked me to get a bottle of his holy wine I returned to find him naked and-- *blessing* the cards... but he had given me his word that that would not happen again and so I went.

*Suddenly looks off at a far corner of the theatre out past the audience. He has the look of a man in awe. The look disappears from his face, and he looks back in front of him.*

It is cool and damp down there. There is only one light, and that was half blocked by Father's wine shelves. I moved slowly around the shelving unit. I was looking for a specific year, not *vintage*, but *blessing*. We had been drinking a 1995 and Father wanted something older, something a bit more... special... more Sacred, if you will. He seemed to think that 1995 was a poor year in his blessings and that so were most years that followed, but he was confident in his '93s and prior, which were slowly dwindling.

As I remember it, there were only four bottles of '93 left, one bottle of '92, an '88, and an '83.

(MORE)

**MAN (CONT'D)**

Knowing that the '83 he was holding out for his retirement party, that he only had one '92, and that '88 would bring him too much... *luck-- it did last time-- I chose a '93.*

*Looks off at the far corner of the theatre out past the audience. He has the look of a man in awe. The look disappears from his face, and he looks back in front of him.*

I was in the midst of deciding between the Merlot and the Pinot Noir-- I had already decided against any whites-- when he came to me. Shocked me, quite honestly. I nearly tipped Father's Celestial Reserve and left a smell quite my own. Luckily, it was only nearly. He came from nowhere or so it seemed... perhaps he was there the whole time. An immense glow... from the corner farthest the stairs...

*He is awe struck as he speaks, which he gradually directs toward the back corner that had struck him awe prior.*

I was unable to move. Frozen-- frozen in a frighten bliss-- when he came to me and spoke. His voice dried the cellar and aroused the wine to a blood-like warmth. He spoke only two words. He whispered them in my ear. He said..

*Looks back before him toward the audience.*

Well, I don't know that I should reveal the word of the Lord. After all, he came to me. If he wanted you to know, he should have told you.

(Pause)

You most likely wouldn't even understand.

*Looks back off to the corner.*

It was bliss. Pure bliss. I felt it so greatly I had to share it with Father as soon as I ascended the stairs.

*Looks a bit perplexed.*

But Father thought I had lied and that the wine was too long in coming. I must have drunk a bottle while gone, he said. He knew he had to punish me. He knew he had to... subject his authority.

*Looks forward.*

It mattered not. I thought *only* of our Lord. I thought of how he would *enjoy* such a punishment. How he had to deal with nails and all I had was a few slaps on the-- rump. And all the time the Lord spoke to me. All the time his words echoed.

"No point," he whispered, "no point." And I was soothed.

*He turns and slowly crosses upstage. When he hits the center he turns stage-left without a thought of going right, and exits. He exits as slowly as he entered.*

*Again the stage is bare.*

*Silence.*

*Crazed, the MAN leaps on stage in a fury! He swings his arms wildly and growls and howls at the audience. He has no props. He is dressed exactly as he had been when he first arrived on stage, nude except for his shoes. After fifteen seconds or so of crazed growls and such wild behavior, he ducks back offstage. [Note: His howls and growls are performed mockingly.]*

*Silence.*

*A moment passes and the man re-enters. He is again dressed in all black. His hair is pulled back in a ponytail. He has a BB gun in his hand. He walks to the edge of the stage, sits with his legs dangling over the edge, looks at audience from right to left and back again. And finally...*

*(Indifferent)*

Fuck you.

*(Smiles)*

Fuck you.

*(Laughs cynically)*

Fuck you.

*(Very serious)*

Fuck you. Fuck you. Fuck you!

*He drops straight back, his feet dangling over the edge.*

*He stares at the sky. He takes several random shots with his BB gun. The last is aimed at a star, the first of the evening. He tries to shoot it down.*

*He sits up in a slouched "beaten" posture. His arms dangle over the edge. He looks up at the sky again. As he speaks the lights slowly shift from daylight to a moonlit glow. By the end of the scene it is full moonlight.*

"Star light. Star bright. First star I see tonight."

*He aims the gun at it again and fires. He keeps the gun aimed at it.*

If this gun were loaded I'd be able to take down that star.  
I could shoot it down with one squeeze.

*Fires the gun. Drops his arm to his side. Addresses the audience in an obvious show-off fashion.*

I once killed an Eagle. 'ow many people you know can say 'at, 'uh? Not too many. But I can say it fer myself, 'cause I shot dat bastard right outa da sky. 'e thought 'e was so clever swooping down and scooping up 'at rabbit, but I shot 'im clear outa the sky. One shot.

*Smiles. Sits up straighter. Addresses the audience more intently.*

'at fucker never saw it comin'. Just like dat rabbit had no idea 'e was gonna be an eagle's main course, the eagle 'ad no idea what a great shot I was-- am.

*Climbs up to a crouching position.*

I was crouchin' 'ere like dis, see? And I was watchin' 'is squirrel 'at I planned on popping with dis 'ere pistol. I was kinda under a tree, see. It was like one o' 'ose Christmas trees, 'cept it wasn't yet cut down. The squirrel was over 'ere.

*He indicates a different corner than the one he had watched in awe before.*

An' 'is rabbit was hoppin' along over 'ere.

*Points straight ahead, back-center of house.*

The squirrel 'ad gotten a chance to get behind a tree, see... 'cause I woulda already shot it, but I was givin' 'im a few more moments ta live, see. Next time round 'e was dead. But 'ere comes 'is eagle swoopin' outa nowhere. Now I couldn't see 'im when 'e was up here, see--

(Points above his head)

--but when 'e came down here...

*With his outstretched arm he traces the flight of the bird with his finger. It comes from directly over his head down to the rabbit.*

I 'ad a full view of 'im, and 'is outstretched wings. Man, 'e glided right down and snatched 'at poor bunny like it was nothin'. And 'e would o' gotten away with it 'ad I not acted so quickly.

*Immediately jerks the BB gun up and aims it at the eagle. He follows the flight of the bird.*

I 'ad 'im in my sights right off. 'e 'ad a rabbit in 'is claws, see, high above da land. And I traced 'im with my gun. And...

*Squeezes trigger. BB gun dry fires.*

Dead!

(Beat)

Course it was loaded 'en.

*Drops his arm to the side.*

'at's da kinda shot I am. Knocked dat fucker clear outta da sky!

*Slouches again.*

Course 'e was too far 'way fer me ta go fetch 'im, but I got 'im, see, 'cause 'e fell, and 'e fell fast and hard.



*Shrugs his shoulders. Stands. Turns. Stops. Turns back.*

'at's one more rabbit 'at's alive 'cause a me... not ta mention the squirrel.

*Turns. Exits left.*

*The songs of crickets slowly rise.*

*The moonlight remains but it occasionally wavers as though clouds were passing in front of the moon on a mostly clear evening. As one of the clouds passes, the moonlight disappears mostly and the man enters and crosses to upstage center. Once there he crouches. The cloud passes and the man's figure is barely seen.*

*He pulls out a cigarette and lights it. As he smokes it he holds it cupped in his hand so that the "cherry" cannot be seen. He smokes about half the cigarette before moving or saying anything.*

*Begins to cross silently (still has on clicking shoes, of course) right. As he speaks he slowly moves along the stage-right perimeter until he is fully downstage. He speaks softly. His hair is still in a ponytail.*

I've seen her every other night for the last two weeks. She jogs usually, but sometimes walks, and I wonder if on those nights she has ran earlier or jogged longer or just feels like walking.

*He finishes smoking his cigarette and squats in the down-right corner of the stage.*

She has shorter than shoulder length, but longer than buzzed, dark brown-- almost black-- hair, which is always pulled back in a ponytail when she's jogging and hanging when she's not-- then she holds the scrunchy in her sweat glazed hand. She's gotta be about 21, 22. Five foot five, six, seven. Her eyes, though difficult to see from here, seem to be hazel or green, but not crystal green, which, I admit, I find disappointing.

She's never listening to music that I can see, so I wonder what she is listening to. Her beating heart perhaps. Or maybe she's just listening to the thoughts in her head. She wears a gray jogging outfit that consists of sweat shorts and a short sleeve sweatshirt, both drenched. Her sneakers are of course Nike, but I forgive her. She has strong legs, twice the size of mine, I imagine, and a sleek athletic form that--

(Beat)

Her breasts seem to be a nice size, slightly more than handfuls perhaps, though it's difficult to tell... And her ass is firm... as are her breasts.

*He stands and slowly crosses center, but still downstage.*  
She enters stealthily, almost silently. Her feet tapping a rhythm that usually matches my heart. I prefer the days that she walks, because it means she lasts longer. But I can't complain of the bouncing when she jogs. I dream of her running. She could be an Olympic athlete. I would cheer on *that* team.

*Pulls out another cigarette and lights it.*  
I've thought about stepping out of the shadows to greet her one-day, but I fear she'd change her course and I'd lose even the brief glimpses she unknowingly allows. Or perhaps I could run in the opposite direction and get a close view of her, but that would mean I'd see her for a briefer moment. I even considered trying to catch up with her, but that might be a bit much. She might run to be alone.

*He crosses to the stage-left perimeter.*  
I had a flat tire on the way back from work. I wasn't really too far from home, but this is still considered the country. I was changing it, the tire, when I first saw her. She crossed to the opposite side of the street when she saw me, and didn't even glance at me as she passed, but that's to be expected when any jogger passes a stranded motorist. Right?

I started riding my bicycle to work after that. My Beetle may be small, but it isn't that small. My bike, however, is easily hidden. The only problem was the longer ride.

I took a gamble the first day. I assumed that she routinely jogged past this place at ten and therefore I told my boss that I was sick and needed to go home. I work at a bookstore in the mall. It closes at nine, but we have to re-shelf the books and vacuum and stuff. It was slow, so she said to go, but if she had known that I had ridden my bike...

(Pause)

She wasn't there. I wasn't sure if I had missed her or if it was an off night, or if she was on her way, so I waited for an hour, then went home. The next day was my day off, so I rode out here early. An hour early. And at around 10 she came. She was over there.

*Points into the audience.*  
I was here-- well, over there.

*Points further upstage.*  
I rearranged my work schedule so that I now get off at nine-thirty... from work. I've seen her for weeks, two and a half, almost three.

*Silence.*  
Maybe tomorrow I'll talk to her... I know where she works. I saw her there. In the shoe store in the mall. Days. She's always busy. I turn my head as I pass.

*Silence.*

It's much more private out here.

*He stubs out his smoke.*

I think I'll ask her to--

*Thinks for a moment. Without a word, exits left.*

*Continued silence.*

*Lights go completely black, then rise as yellowish, indoor, light.*

*The man, now with short hair, enters pulling a recliner on-stage. It is a brand new leather recliner, beautiful and comfortable. He pulls it to center-stage (where it will remain for the rest of the play), and sits in it. He reclines.*

*He's harsh when he speaks.*

I've placed a bet in favor of the Buffalo Bills winning the Super Bowl this season. The season doesn't start for another two weeks and I realize that anything could happen, but I have placed a fifty-dollar bet that, if they win, will pay out one hundred thousand dollars. They have a strong team with young, but discipline players that work as a unit and, when healthy, they are clearly the best team in the league.

Now I know the chances are not in my favor, they wouldn't accept the bet if they were, but I know what I'm going to do with the money when I get it. If I get it.

First, a new swimming pool. The one out there is shitty-- I'm surprised it can even hold water. Second, a big screen TV with surround sound and a Hi-Def DVD player. Third, a new car-- no, no, an SUV, preferably a Jeep or Cadillac. Maybe a Hummer. I like Hummers.

*(Laughs grotesquely)*

Fourthly, a-- well I haven't quite decided what I would get fourthly, but I do have it narrowed down. Either I would get a new roof on this shack or a new hot water tank, but if I get a new hot water tank that means that I will also get a new bath tub, perhaps a *whirlpool* bath. I'm leaning that way honestly, but I still haven't decided. I think if I went that way I would even have enough money left over to get a pool table, but now I'm not real good at pool, so I may just put the rest in the bank. Though that seems like quite a waste. But I'm getting way ahead of myself. I haven't even won yet.

*Lights fade to black for about fifteen seconds. There is complete silence while the stage is dark, and when the lights rise again we find that the man is still seated in his recliner, but he now has a wedding ring on which he spins with the thumb of the same hand. The other hand rests on the arm of the recliner. He is not as far reclined as he had been, though he is far from seated upright. His hair is unchanged. He seems a bit tired.*

Ray came up to me at work the other day and asked if he could borrow my hedge trimmers. I told him to go buy his own. That fucker never returns anything he borrows. Then he says that he just needs them for one day and that if I let him borrow those things he'll allow me to borrow his welder. To this I said, "Okay."

I've been askin' that bastard ta come weld some stools for me, but he keeps puttin' me off. Well, I don't need his expertise if I can get my hands on the thing myself. There's just two stools, but man those things'll be the best Goddamned stools around. You can't ever find good stools at the store. Where ya gonna go? *Walmart? Kmart? Sears?* They can't even build a stool that's safe to sit on at dinner let alone one for a workshop.

In a workshop you gotta have a utility stool, know what I mean? You need a stool you can sit on, stand on, place car parts on, use to hold 2 x 4s and steel rods. You need a stool that's made ta last. I got one. I got all the part cut for it; I just need someone to weld it. Hell, I'll do it if he's gonna let me borrow his machine. Only reason I even asked him to do it was 'cause he told me that no one borrows his welder.

He says that he's not just a welder, but that he's a "welding artist." A welding artist! Shit, he's good, yeah, but anyone would be if that's what they did for a livin'! But artist? He's a craftsman, plain and simple.

*Silence.*

*Stares off as if he is watching something that doesn't move. A big screen TV, perhaps.*

He does have nice welds, though. Of course anyone can weld well if they do so all day and all night. If he had ever gotten married, had kids, it'd be an entirely different story. It'd probably be best if he did the welding on them stools. Maybe I'll cut his hedges, and he'll weld my stool!

*Black out.*

*A silent, dark moment.*

*Lights slowly rise. The man has not moved. He now wears a mustache. All else is the same. He seems extremely tired, though he never yawns or anything of that nature.*

*As the lights rise, we see the man adjust the seat so that he is sitting straight up on the edge of the seat. He pauses with his hands clutching the arms of the chair, as though he were about to rise. He stops, drops his hands in his lap, and stares at the floor, feet away.*

I wonder if...

*He looks offstage-left.*

Did I leave the...

*Stops suddenly and stares offstage-right. Then stares back at the floor.*

The children'll...

*Places his hands on the arms of the chair again. Then out of nowhere--*

Hancock! John Hancock!

*He pushes himself up and crosses off-left.*

*He returns after only a short moment with a blanket that is the same color, or a similar color, as the recliner.*

*He crosses to the recliner, unfolds the blanket, and neatly tucks it in so that the arms of the chair are not covered, but the seat and back are.*

*He then stops himself shy of sitting, contemplates the idea, then stops altogether and stands beside it with his hand on the top of the recliner's back.*

*He is still tired when he speaks, but he has a bit more energy, as though the idea of John Hancock has given him strength. As he makes his small speech here, he slowly walks down stage addressing the audience as a professor would his students.*

John Hancock, born in the town of Quincy in 1737, the son of a clergyman, and the grandson of one, too, was the man who boldly and forcefully penned his signature on the United States' Declaration of Independence.

(Aside)

It was a question yesterday on Jeopardy, just before a circuit breaker flipped.

I had nearly confused him with Stephen Hopkins, another signer of the Declaration, good thing I didn't, but I wish I would have known the answer sooner, I wrote a paper on John in high school!

Let's see, what do I remember about good old John Hancock--

(MORE)

**MAN (CONT'D)**

(Aside)

who of course is not to be confused with the porn star John Hand Cock.

(Laughs grotesquely)

Well, Hancock graduate from Harvard in 1754 with no realizable brilliance toward academics. He worked as a clerk for his uncle, Thomas Hancock. He went to England in 17... 60... 3? Or 4. He inherited a fortune when his uncle died, and was considered almost unchanged by the inheritance. He "maintained a high reputation for honor and integrity."

(Aside)

I sometimes like to think that I inherited some of his traits, though we aren't related.

He was friends with many of the founding father-- considering that he was one this should be no surprise-- including Samuel Adams--

(Aside)

The name of one great beer, I might add.

Anyhow, John Hancock was the guy that had-- to quote jeopardy last night-- "he is most notably known for his unmistakable signature on the Declaration of Independence." Buzz! Who is John Hancock? I would of had it.

A little known fact is that he also gave a riveting speech at the burial of the slain after the Boston massacre-- much of which was far too dependent upon religious piousness to make the proper argument, but I'll forgive him as it was his time not his person that made it such.

*He stops speaking suddenly and has a look of shock on his face, as though he couldn't believe that he actually remembered all of this from a high school paper, or as if he was in shock that he actually cared enough to repeat it.*

*He looks at the floor in something akin to shame, turns and crosses back upstage to the recliner. Looks at it. Pats it gently. Crosses off left.*

*The lights slowly shift from interior to moonlight to "natural" lighting.*

*The man is not seen or heard for a few moments.*

*Complete silence.*

*The off-right white lights at all levels rise, as well as the sound of insects.*

*The man enters. He has long hair that is not combed well, but not at all wild, over which he wears his old baseball cap.*

*He wears his robe that fits him no better than before. The rosary is strung around his neck. In his right hand is the BB gun, in his left is a cigarette, which he casually smokes as he goes. He wears a mustache and a wedding ring.*

*He enters slowly, hesitantly, looking straight ahead until he gets to the recliner.*

*At the recliner, he stares straight into the light, which cause him to squint, and his eyes to water. He turns his head to the audience, crosses down-center. Speaks confidently, but quietly.*

I've wanted to quit smoking for years. Always had the plan to, just never made it happen.

I've wanted to travel to India for a while, too. I've never seen how they live out there in the East.

I thought perhaps I'd have a chance to go sky diving as well.

And deep-sea fishing...

But you know how it is.

*He contemplates each sentence.*

I haven't yet read "War and Peace," though I've never known either.

Haven't seen the sun rise from a Pacific Island.

Nor spent a week as a hermit in the Rockies.

Never had to care for a dog with worms.

Never eaten an earthworm.

Nor beaten an old man.

Nor a small child.

Nor a large child.

Never murdered.

Only once stole.

Never swam.

Never flew.

Never.

*The spotlight snaps on.*

*He shifts his eyes to the ground in front of him. We cannot see his eyes for a moment.*

*When he finally looks up to the audience, we see that his eyes have filled with tears.*

*He finishes his cigarette, drops it to the ground, steps on it and twists his foot.*

*Stares at the back corner where he had once looked with awe. He now looks with disgust.*

*Turns. Crosses to the recliner. Stops. Takes the blanket from the recliner, tosses it over his shoulder and wraps it tightly around himself. Stares at the recliner. Looks stage-right. Looks over his shoulder stage-left. Turns back stage-right and, without wavering, stares straight into the lights and crosses stage-right and off.*

*As soon as he is offstage, all lights black out. It is dark for a moment, as the sound of insects increases in number and volume.*

*A pale blue light rises center-stage on the recliner. The man runs back on-stage, grabs the recliner with both hands on one of its arms and drags it offstage with him.*

*The sound of insects reaches a painful level, and at once both the lights and the sound cut out.*

END.