

SHORT FORM

By

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Cast of Characters

MAX: Any gender, any age  
STEVIE: Any gender, any age  
WIGGINS: Any gender, any age

Scene

Bare stage.

Time

Now.

SHORT FORM

Bare stage. Now. Max paces. Stevie enters, stage right.

MAX

Stevie, I need a script.

STEVIE

I have given you scripts.

MAX

All of them much too long. I asked you to come because we will be presenting a set of new short plays, and I need one more to fill the bill.

STEVIE

I don't write short plays.

MAX

But you do write plays.

STEVIE

Great plays.

MAX

Great in length.

STEVIE

Have you read them?

MAX

A few lines, here and there. The rules for what I want from you are these: no more than ten minutes' duration...

STEVIE

Read those scripts I gave you.

MAX

...with a small cast.

STEVIE

Read them, Max. Then produce them.

MAX

I produce the work of writers who cooperate.

STEVIE

Ten minutes?! With a small cast?! It can not be done!

MAX

It has been done a million times.

STEVIE

I need room. Literature of merit can not exist within parameters as cramped as those you have specified.

MAX

See to it, Stevie, that whatever you come up with does not have lines in it as clunky as the one you just spoke. And you know what? What you just said isn't even true.

(Calling.)

Wiggins!

Wiggins enters stage left.

MAX (cont'd)

(To Wiggins.)

You have been claiming you have a way with words.

WIGGINS

Yes. And it is time you recognized I am a fantastic actor, too.

MAX

Fantastic actors do not chew up the scenery.

WIGGINS

You dress me in an over-the-top costume, stick a spear in my hand, give me nothing to say, and tell me to go get out on stage and stand stock still. **Me!** With **my** talent! I singlehandedly **salvaged** that rotten production for you, Max.

MAX

Well, I am happy to keep employing you...behind the scenes. Have you swept the lobby?

WIGGINS

Yes.

MAX

And cleaned the toilet?

WIGGINS

You called. I came. Now, what do you want?

MAX

I want you to convince Stevie to provide us with the additional one-act our upcoming program requires. Given the verbal ability you boast about, I thought you might show him/her how short form can amply accommodate this whadda-you-call-it...this "literature of merit" thing.

STEVIE

Which is the only kind I write. Compositions of infinite scope.

MAX

Yeah, yeah.

STEVIE

And unfathomable profundity. As well as---

MAX

Let's have some poems, Wiggins. Little ones, chock-full of the kind of merit Stevie insists short form can not possibly contain.

WIGGINS

Are you telling me to play a poet?

MAX

I am not telling you to **play** anybody. Give us a sonnet, if you please.

WIGGINS

All the best poets have been blind. Hang on.

Wiggins exits stage left; then returns with a chair, and places it center stage. S/he exits and, in sunglasses, returns again, carrying a white cane. Tapping the cane along, Wiggins trips over the chair and falls. Then, feeling his/her way, s/he scrambles up and sits in it.

MAX

A sonnet...?

Wiggins stands.

WIGGINS

(Ranging blindly all over the stage.)

There's wonder in small vessels, when they're full.

Do not condemn them as devoid of worth.

To say they promise nothing is pure bull.

Embrace the space that lies within their girth.

.....

Though words and glances, ploys and thrusts and feints,

Betrayals and, so too, the sweetest love

Pervade the vastness of our lives, it ain't

As if you can't into such vessel shove

.....

The lot of them, and more, so that there be...

An efflorescence. Note my verse, that delves

As deep and wide as one could wish. Do see

I've done superbly: this line's only twelve.

.....

So there! Why can't you show, in one brief scene,

The sum of all that is, and might have been?

Stevie rips Wiggins' sunglasses off  
and stomps on them; then takes the  
cane and flings it off stage left.  
Wiggins gives Stevie a look, and  
exits stage left.

MAX

Stevie, are you going to throw tantrums, or help me out?

Wiggins enters stage left, again  
with sunglasses and cane, does the  
blind-wo/man routine as before,  
then sits.

MAX (cont'd)

If it is going to be tantrums, then I may as well assign the  
job to my two-year-old. Did that poem not demonstrate you  
can accomplish all you would like, in short form?

STEVIE

It failed to embody the ineffable.

MAX

Wiggins, give us ineffable.

Wiggins gets up, bows stiffly, then  
stands straight in place.

WIGGINS

A haiku:

Stevie slams Wiggins back into the  
chair.

STEVIE

(To Max.)

How can you be so cold?! **I** have a heart. Do you?

MAX

Wiggins, throw in some heart.

Wiggins gets up, bows stiffly, then stands straight in place.

WIGGINS

A haiku:

Love, yearn---.

Stevie slams Wiggins back into the chair.

STEVIE

I also have a spleen.

MAX

Wiggins, kindly toss in a bit of spleen.

Wiggins gets up, bows stiffly, then stands straight in place.

WIGGINS

A haiku:

Love, yearn, rage, decry.

Passion, burn! Burn to ash! Black.

The soul of wit gleams.

Wiggins bows stiffly, then stands straight, then feels blindly for the chair, and sits.

STEVIE

What the hell is that supposed to mean?

MAX

Perhaps, Wiggins, you can create something more straightforward and, once and for all, bring the message home.

WIGGINS

How 'bout a villanelle?

Wiggins stands.

WIGGINS

(Ranging blindly all over the stage.)

Singing the adventures of men and mice,

The breadth and the depth and the feel of life,

Is super, Stevie, but be concise.

.....

I ought not, you might tell me, provide advice,

Or question a genius who's dead set on

Singing the adventures of men and mice.

.....

Still, if you listened, it would be nice.

We could argue, contend. A hot back-and-forth

Is super, Stevie, but be concise.

.....

Here is the point, in this exemplary trice:

There are more ways than yours of

Singing the adventures of men and mice.

.....

So quit being adamant, roll the dice.

No? Well, you could claim, I guess, that to bitch

Is super, Stevie, but be concise.

.....

You do go on, you're a bore. You do not entice

With your manner, or writing. Even so, give it a go!

Singing the adventures of men and mice

Is super, Stevie, but be concise.

Stevie pulls out a gun and shoots  
Wiggins dead.



MAX

Are you, or are you not, going to come through with the script I need?

STEVIE

A stage play, when up on its feet,

Can be a sensational treat.

But with minutes too few,

And few cast members, too,

This writer would much rather tweet.

MAX

Get off my boards!

Stevie shoots Max, point-blank.

MAX (cont'd)

(Shoving Stevie.)

Off!

Stevie shoots Max, point-blank.

MAX (cont'd)

(Shoving.)

Out of my theater!

Stevie shoots Max, point-blank.

MAX (cont'd)

(Pushing.)

Go!

Stevie shoots Max, point-blank.

MAX (cont'd)

(With a big thrust.)

Go!

Stevie, now off-stage right, shoots again.

MAX (cont'd)

Go!

With a final thrust, Max follows Stevie off stage right. The slam of a door. Max enters back.

MAX

Get up, Wiggins!

(Poking the motionless Wiggins with  
his/her foot.)

Time to clean the toilet.

Max pulls Wiggins' arm straight up. No response. S/he lets go, and the arm drops, limp. Max throws his/her arms in the air, and exits stage left. Wiggins cautiously looks around, determining that the coast is clear; then gets up, and takes an extravagant bow. Stevie enters stage right, shoots Wiggins back dead, and bows grandly. Max enters stage left and, as Stevie shoots at him/her, chases Stevie back off stage left. Door slam. Max enters back, places one foot on the motionless Wiggins and, with a flourish, bows. Lights out, then back up. All three bow together.

**###THE END###**