GIVE THE PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT

(seven plays for five actors)

by

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A NOTE ON CHARACTER NAMES: The names of the actual five actors playing these roles should determine the character names. For example, if you happen to cast Dustin Hoffmann and Meryl Streep for the Chris Chrisson and Keisha Keishason roles, you should rename the characters Dustin Dustinson and Meryl Merylson.
A WALK IN THE PUBLIC AREA (intro.)

(Keisha enters and stands center stage. She addresses the audience directly.)

KEISHA

Number One:  Love.

(She exits. Lights fade.)
A WALK IN THE PUBLIC AREA

(Just after lunch. Micah and Julie stroll casually across the public atrium of a big, big office building.)

JULIE
Oh, Micah, you’re such a -- browny man.

MICAH
Thank you, Julie. That’s -- very kind of you to say.

(She takes his hand.)

JULIE
A browny, browny, browny man.

MICAH
Thank you.

(She sighs. The two take in the scene around them.)

JULIE
I love the public area this time of day, just after lunch with everyone burpy and sleepy and the table tops still dusted with crumbs.

MICAH
It’s a wonderful place to eat one’s lunch.

JULIE
Or even one’s own.

MICAH
Wha--? I -- ah ha ha ha ha ha...

(They laugh.)

MICAH
Oh, Julie. I feel so lucky to have you here with me in the public atrium of this big, big office building.

JULIE
I’m the one who’s lucky, Micah.

(They come close to kissing then shyly pull away.)

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I...um...

Don’t be sorry, Micah.

I didn’t mean to be so forward.

I don’t mind you being forward.

But-

(She puts her hand to his mouth.)

I don’t mind you being forward at all. I just want us to enjoy our lunchtime together. After all, we only get a half hour.

Of course you’re right, Julie. Thank you.

(They take in the scene again, resettling a bit after their uncomfortable incident.)

A bird was trapped in here the other day.

No.

True story.

A pigeon?

Not a pigeon, smaller than a pigeon.
JULIE
Drawn in by the fountain, no doubt.

MICAH
Perhaps.

(Feeling bold, he takes her hand in his, drawing her close to him.)

MICAH
Seeing you here, Julie, by the fountain as you are, I feel -- I feel that you are that bird in some small way.

JULIE
Oh, Micah.

MICAH
Drawn in by the fountain, smaller than a pigeon, beautiful and -- flying around.

JULIE
But Micah, I was drawn in by you.

MICAH
Then, perhaps, I am that fountain.

(They kiss at last, then embrace.)

JULIE
I bet you eat your lunch down here alot, Micah.

MICAH
Oh yes, I do. Some days I buy from the salad bar -- you know the one -- and bring it here, to one of these tables to eat it quietly with perhaps only a magazine or a sports section for company. Some days I pack my own lunch and stare silently into the fountain while I savor my thriftiness: peanut butter and jelly, tuna fish salad, ham and swiss on whole wheat. And some days -- some days I buy from the kiosk itself, the one over there, the one that maintains these very tables.

JULIE
So expensive.

MICAH
Yes. But on a rainy day...
JULIE

I understand entirely.

(They hold each other tight.)

MICAH

Julie?

JULIE

Yes, Micah?

MICAH

Can I ask you a question?

JULIE

Of course, Micah, what is it?

MICAH

Earlier - earlier you referred to me as a “browny” man. I’m afraid I don’t know what that means.

(She pulls herself away from him a little bit.)

JULIE

Do we have to talk about this now, Micah?

MICAH

No, of course not, it was only that-

(She pulls away from him entirely, trying desperately to change the subject.)

JULIE

My, it certainly is beautiful here this time of day, don’t you think?

MICAH

Yes. I do.

JULIE

I could stay here all day, I really could. Too bad we only get a half hour.

MICAH

I asked you a question, Julie.

JULIE

I know you did, Micah.
MICAH
Then why don’t you—?

JULIE
Can’t we just walk and smell the fountain without asking and answering silly questions about words and what they mean? Can’t we do that, Micah? Just for today?

MICAH
Of course we can, Julie. It was just that—

JULIE
Micah, please! Don’t ask me about it again.

(Beat.)

MICAH
Of course you’re right, Julie. I didn’t mean to press it, I’m sorry.

JULIE
Don’t be sorry, Micah, just—just be with me.

MICAH
I’m here for you.

(They embrace. Then)

JULIE
Oh, look!

MICAH
Yes, Julie?

JULIE
The pigeon! The one you saw, there it is, flying near the fountain.

MICAH
So it is, Julie. So it is.

JULIE
So beautiful.

MICAH
Yes.
JULIE
So free.

MICAH
That too.

JULIE
Do you really think of me as being like that pigeon you saw, just flying around and searching for bits of food left by departing luncheoners and what not.

MICAH
I do, Julie.

JULIE
So beautiful.

MICAH
Like you.

JULIE
Oh Micah.

MICAH
Julie.

JULIE
Kiss me.

(They kiss for a good long time, then embrace, her more warmly than he.)

MICAH
Although I must say that what I saw was smaller than a pigeon.

JULIE
What’s that?

MICAH
The bird that I saw, it was smaller than a pigeon.

JULIE
Smaller than a pigeon?

MICAH
That’s right, Julie. Smaller than a pigeon, and therefore not a pigeon.
JULIE

Oh?

MICAH

You said pigeon. I didn’t see a pigeon.

JULIE

Well, you saw something.

MICAH

I did see something. It’s just that it wasn’t a pigeon, it was smaller than a pigeon.

JULIE

What are you after, Micah?

MICAH

I said it wasn’t a pigeon the first time. Why do I have to keep saying it over and over and over and over and over and over again?

JULIE

Now you’re angry with me.

MICAH

I’m not angry, I’m just – well, yes, I suppose I am a little bit irritated.

JULIE

Don’t be angry, Micah. Be happy. We’re together now, don’t you see? Nothing else matters but that.

(They embrace again, if uncertainly. Realizing now what’s wrong, Julie backs away.)

JULIE

You’re still thinking about it, aren’t you?

MICAH

Thinking about what, Julie?

JULIE

You know what I’m talking about.

MICAH

But what on earth can it mean? “Browny”?
JULIE
And now we’re talking about it! How is this supposed to continue, Micah?

MICAH
Julie, please, relax.

JULIE
You made a promise to me, Micah.

MICAH
How can I not wonder, Julie? How can I not – How can you ask me not to question? “Browny”?

JULIE
Oh, Micah, people say things all the time, silly things, meaningless things, what else can people do? You say I said “browny,” so I said “browny.” What difference does it make?

MICAH
You tell me, Julie, what is the difference that it makes? “Browny”? What on Earth can an expression like that mean?!

JULIE
Oh, Micah, it means many things to many people.

MICAH
It does?! Other than the cakey treat or the old-timey camera or the little girls’ organization, I’ve never heard the word “Browny” used before in my life! Ever! So you tell me, Julie, what does it mean?!

(Grabbing her now by the shoulders.)
What does it mean to YOU?!

(He holds her hard, waiting her response. Then, realizing what he’s done, he steps away from her, horrified.)

JULIE
Actually, I think I’d better go now.

MICAH
No.

JULIE
Yes.
MICAH
Julie, please, don’t leave now, not because of this.

JULIE
I’m afraid I’m going to have to.

MICAH
I didn’t mean to offend you.

JULIE
Well, you did, Micah. You offended me a lot, an awful lot.

MICAH
Julie.

JULIE
Micah, I think we’ve seen enough of each other for today.

MICAH
Julie, please, you’re being unkind.

JULIE
Unkind?

MICAH
Or at least unfair, or perhaps even a little bit — browny?

(She slaps him hard across the face.)

JULIE
(Hissing)
How dare you.

MICAH
Julie?

JULIE
“Browny”? Me?! Browny?!

(She winds up to smack him again then, at the last moment, stops herself. He stares at her, shocked and wounded. Soon she is as shocked with herself as he is.)

JULIE
Oh, Micah—
MICAH
Stop. Stay away from me, please.

JULIE
I didn’t mean to-

MICAH
I don’t care what you meant to do. I don’t care about- I think you’re right, Julie. Our time together is over.

JULIE
It’s just a word, Micah. It doesn’t mean any thing, it just came out. That’s all.

MICAH
Oh, it means something, Julie. It means something very much. And it’s something I hope I never hear again as long as I live.

JULIE
Micah.

MICAH
Julie.

JULIE
I hurt you, let me help you.

MICAH
I’d rather that you didn’t, actually.

JULIE
Micah.

(She reaches up to touch his face, he turns his face away.)

JULIE
Well, I suppose this truly is goodbye after all.

MICAH
You’re free again, Julie. You should be happy about that.

JULIE
Like that pigeon you saw.
MICAH

Or some other bird.

JULIE

Yes. Some other bird.

(She starts to leave.)

MICAH

And Julie?

JULIE

Yes, Micah.

MICAH

Don’t go back to the salad bar across the street, you know the one. I wouldn’t want to bump into you there.

JULIE

No, of course not.

MICAH

Thank you, Julie.

JULIE

Goodbye, Micah.

MICAH

Goodbye, Julie.

(She exits in tears.)

MICAH


(Lights fade.)

FIN
WEATHER (intro.)

(Chris enters and addresses us directly.)

Chris

Number two: Sex.

(He exits. Lights fade.)
WEATHER

(Dan and Keisha sit with their backs to the audience, addressing unseen cameras upstage.)

KEISHA
We’ll be back with more headlines-

DAN
And weather!

KEISHA
After this.

(Lights bump down, Dan and Keisha relax. From offshore we hear)

MICAH(O.S.)
We’re out! Sixty seconds!

(Dan turns to Keisha.)

DAN
(softly)
You were amazing last night.

KEISHA
(also softly)
Thanks, so were you.

(Dan reaches into his jacket pocket.)

DAN
I got you something.

(Dan hands Keisha a little box. She opens it.)

MICAH(O.S.)
Fifteen seconds!

KEISHA
My God. It’s beautiful. Thank you.

DAN
Thank you for finally letting me see what you wear under all those business suits.
KEISHA

Anytime.

DAN

How about tonight?

MICAH (O.S.)

Three! Two!

(Lights bump up. Dan and Keisha turn their attention upstage.)

DAN

In Afghanistan today there was more violence. Chris Chrisson reports from Kabul.

(Chris enters and stands somewhere upstage, facing Dan and Keisha.)

CHRIS

Two members of Afghanistan’s government were gunned down today in simultaneous drive-by shootings. And in Khandahar, a suicide bomber drove an explosive laden Humvee into a police station, killing twenty seven and wounding many more.

KEISHA

Chris, on the Khandahar story, did the police think the humvee was friendly?

CHRIS

That’s exactly right, Keisha. We’ve gotten reports that the suicide bomber was wearing an American style uniform, but we haven’t gotten confirmation of that just yet.

DAN

Chris Chrisson reporting from Kabul.

KEISHA

Stay safe.

(Chris exits.)

DAN

A fire sweeps through a Brooklyn housing project. That, and weather, after this.

(Lights bump down.)
MICAH (O.S.)
We’re out!  Sixty seconds!

(Dan turns to Keisha.)

DAN
You like bubble bath?

KEISHA
I love bubble bath.

DAN
I’ve got a jacuzzi.

KEISHA
I noticed.

(Dan takes out his cell phone.)

DAN
I’m gonna call my help, give her the night off.

KEISHA
I’ll have to go home first.

DAN
No you won’t.

KEISHA
I don’t have a change of clothes.

DAN
All the better.

(Micah enters with Julie.  Julie notices the hand holding.)

MICAH
You’ll do the weather spot from here, Julie.  So just stand quietly and wait for Dan’s cue.

JULIE
I know the drill, Micah.  I haven’t been gone that long.
(Micah leads Julie to a spot upstage. Seeing Julie, Dan hangs up the phone and let’s go of Keisha’s hand.)

MICAH
Thanks for filling in at the last minute. Fifteen seconds!

(Micah exits.)

DAN
Julie.

JULIE
Dan. Hi, Keisha.

DAN
What are you doing here?

JULIE
Covering. You’ve gone through quite a few weather women in the last few months I understand. But I see you’ve graduated from meteorologists.

DAN
You shouldn’t have come.

JULIE
You should have answered my messages.

MICAH (O.S)
Okay, here we go! Three! Two!

KEISHA
A Brooklyn apartment complex devastated by fire. Chris Chrisson was there.

(Chris enters and stands in his spot.)

CHRIS
Tonight the building is dark, but earlier today it was the site of a deadly fire that claimed three lives and left hundreds homeless. Arson is suspected, and gas cans found near the fire seem to confirm that suspicion.

DAN
Anyone being held?
CHRIS
Oh, I don’t really know.

KEISHA
Chris Chrisson in Brooklyn.

(Chris exits.)

DAN
And now weather. Hi, Julie. Welcome back.

JULIE
I got the blood tests back, Dan. You’re the father of my child. I told you that in voicemail messages, email messages, texts, and certified letters. Now I’m telling you in person.

(Beat. Lights bump down.)

MICAH(O.S.)
Thirty seconds!!

KEISHA
Oh my God.

(Micah storms on.)

MICAH
Are you out of your mind?!

JULIE
I’m sorry, Micah.

MICAH
What the fuck are you doing bringing your personal shit in here?! Our viewers don’t care about your children, they care about the weather!

JULIE
I didn’t know we were on.

MICAH
(Calling off)
Did the delay get that?!

CHRIS(O.S.)
Caught most of it.
MICAH
I thought you said you were up for this.

JULIE
I did. I am.

MICAH
What a major fuck up this turned out to be.

JULIE
I made a mistake. That’s all.

KEISHA
I could deliver the weather report.

JULIE
That would be fun to see.

MICAH
We’ll take it again. No more mistakes.

(Micah exits. Julie turns to Keisha.)

JULIE
You have no idea what you’ve gotten yourself mixed up with, do you, Keisha?

MICAH(O.S.)
We’ll go to Chris at the kennel, then you, Julie! Got it?!

KEISHA
Try any shit and I will fuck you up. I swear to God I will.

JULIE
Try your best.

MICAH(O.S.)
Three! Two!

(Lights bump up.)

DAN
We’ve got weather for you coming up, but first Chris Chrisson would like to share a very special birth story. Chris?
(Chris enters.)

CHRIS
I’m at the Happy Day animal shelter where Daisy, a Golden Lab, gave birth to a litter of seven golden pups. So this year, Happy Day will be offering this golden dog tag to the lucky owner who will claim both Daisy and her golden pups.

DAN
Thanks Chris.

(Chris exits.)

KEISHA
And now weather.

JULIE
The DNA matches, Dan. It’s yours. So maybe you should leave your bimbo co-anchor and be a father to at least one of your children, not that you don’t have others.

KEISHA
Hey! You’re the bimbo, bimbo! You got knocked up?! You take care of it!

JULIE
You’re probably knocked up, too, bimbo! You’re just too much of a bimbo to know it yet!

MICAH(O.S.)
THIRTY SECONDS!!

(Lights bump down.)

KEISHA
You couldn’t hold onto him?! Too bad, go home and cry into your fucking pillow!

JULIE
He puts holes in his condoms!

KEISHA
What?!!

DAN
That is not true! That’s your lawyer talking, Julie, and you know it!
(Micah storms on again.)

MICAH

(To Julie)
You, out! Security, get this woman out of the station!

(Chris rushes on as a security guard. He struggles to drag Julie off as the shouting match continues.)

JULIE
He’s a psychopath! He tried to do it without a condom, right?! He tried to, didn’t he Keisha?! You know he did!

DAN
I’m sterile! I’m sterile AND I had a vasectomy! What do I need with a condom?!

JULIE
Compromising protection is how he gets off! Ask any woman who’s worked here for the past ten years! He’s fathered ten children at this station alone!

DAN
That’s a lie!

JULIE
My lawyer has his condom collection! I took it when he broke up with me and then got me fired!

DAN
You put the holes in my condoms!

KEISHA
You have holes in your condoms?!

DAN
She’s trying to entrap me! We had a fling, so what?! She’s the psychopath, not me!

MICAH
Get her out of here!

JULIE
Think about it, Keisha! Think about what happened to you last night! Did you see the needle on his night stand?! How it was in a kind of shrine?!
(Chris drags Julie out, Micah exits.)

DAN
Women. Crazy. They’re all crazy.

(Beat.)

KEISHA
I think I’ll take a pass on tonight.

MICAH (O.S.)
Three! Two!

(Lights bump up.)

DAN
I’m not saying you’re crazy. Her. Julie. And the others. And if I put holes in my condoms with my special needle, so what? There shouldn’t be more little Dans in the world? More beautiful little Me's? Men gotta sow their oats, baby. Wild oats. Wild. So, yeah, I put holes in my condoms with my needle, my God-needle. And I’ll do it again. And again. Until I die, or until they put me behind bars. Again.

(Beat. Keisha turns to the "camera".)

KEISHA
Have a great weekend, everybody. We’ll be back tomorrow morning with news, sports –

DAN
(Realizing he's still on.)
And – weather!

KEISHA
Goodnight.

(Lights bump down. Keisha runs out. Dan is left utterly alone. Lights fade.)

IT IS THE END