

DON'T JUMP

A Play in One Act
for Young Performers

by

Nathan Hartswick

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Cast of Characters

<u>Dan:</u>	A young man trying to find work as a daredevil.
<u>Marsha:</u>	A self-involved young woman aspiring to become a Broadway star.
<u>Inga:</u>	A foreign woman who works as a shadow puppeteer.
<u>Vic:</u>	Fast-talking owner of the talent agency for which the performers are auditioning.
<u>Sam:</u>	Owner of the clothing store downstairs.

Scene

A talent agency in New York City.

Time

The present.

SETTING: An office in a talent agency. Sign reads: "SIMONE TALENT AGENCY -- AUDITIONS TODAY." Three chairs sit down stage right. A desk and chair are down stage left. A flat with a large window is up stage center.

AT RISE: One chair is occupied by MARSHA, a prima donna Broadway star, one by INGA, a soft-spoken European shadow puppeteer. The last chair is empty. DAN strides in, a daredevil with a leather flight cap and goggles.

DAN

Thank you, thank you, no autographs, please.

(loudly, to others)

Hi. I'm Dan, Dan, the Daredevil Man.

(He hands them both
business cards.)

MARSHA

(looking at the card)

Is your name really "Dan Dan?"

DAN

No, it's just the one Dan, but "Dan, Dan the Daredevil Man" *sounds* so much better. How 'bout a stunt? Go ahead --

(picking up a chair,
handing it to INGA)

-- smash this chair over my head; I won't even blink, I betchya.

(INGA looks perplexed.
Dan takes the chair
back.)

Aw, forget it. I'm really more into aerial stunts anyway. This morning I did three somersaults out on the wing of a bi-plane.

(He turns the chair
around backwards and
straddles it, takes a

donut from his pocket
and munches on it.
Speaks to MARSHA)

So, what do you do?

MARSHA

I am Marsha Grenarde.

(DAN stares, blankly.
She continues,
annoyed.)

Currently the first understudy for Miss Portia Brady in the
off-off Broadway production of *Calvin Coolidge: The
Musical*. I also --

DAN

Swell. How 'bout you, lady?

INGA

Me?

DAN

Yeah, you.

INGA

(smiling)

I am Inga. I make-a dee puppets. Dee puppets with dee
light. And dee dark. And dee hands.

(demonstrating)

Dee dark an' dee light an' dee hands --

DAN

Oh, *shadow* puppets.

INGA

Yes! Dee shay-do puppets. Ees entertainful.

(Enter VIC, a talent
agent. He is
distraught. He rushes
to the window, looks
outside quickly, then

paces back and forth
talking to himself.)

VIC

Oh, no, no, no, no, no... OK, let me think. Guy goes out on ledge... not my fault. Guy could jump *off* ledge... *also* not my fault. Story in newspaper says guy jumped off ledge outside *my* window. Everyone might *think* it's my fault. Ahh! Forced to close down. Live in a cardboard box. Sleep on a street corner. Eat donuts from the trash can --

(He grabs the donut
from DAN'S hand
absentmindedly, takes
a bite.)

DAN

'Scuse me, sir, is there a problem?

MARSHA

(put out)

When do we audition, anyway?

INGA

(announcing to VIC)

I am a shadow poopateer.

VIC

(just noticing them)

Oh! Lissen, I know you're here to audition, but I've got a situation here. There's a guy standing out on the ledge in front of my office, and if he jumps it's gonna look really bad. You gotta help me talk him back inside.

DAN

Not a problem, buddy. C'mon, gang.

MARSHA

You must be joking. Is this part of the audition?

INGA

(showing VIC her
hands)

Look. Ees an elephant, galumphing across dee plains of Afreeka.

DAN

I'm Dan, Dan, the Daredevil Man. This is Marsha and this is Inga.

VIC

Good to meethya. My name is Vic Simone. I'm one of the most powerful men in show business, and if you can get this guy inside for me, I'll see to it that you never have to audition in this town again. You got that? Whatever job you want.

MARSHA

Hmm... any role on Broadway?

VIC

It's yours.

DAN

Stuntman for the next big Hollywood movie?

VIC

You got it.

INGA

(shouting, excited)

Superbowl halftime shadow puppet show?

VIC

Let's be realistic, doll.

DAN

All right, where's this jumper of yours?

VIC

On the ledge outside that window.

DAN

... I see.

(A pause.)

VIC

... Aren't you gonna go look?

DAN

I'll... I'll take your word for it.

MARSHA

(sticking her head out
the window; yelling)

Hey! You out there! What are you doing?

(silence)

What do you want?

(silence)

Will you come inside?

(silence)

OK... just... don't jump, all right? You have everything to
live for!

VIC

How do you know?

MARSHA

(thinks a moment; yells)

You... probably have everything to live for! We're here to
help you!

(She pulls her head back
inside.)

He's not talking. And he's holding a sign of some kind, but
I can't see what it says.

VIC

Hm. Well, it looks like someone will have to climb out
there and try to talk to him, then.

MARSHA

Yes, it certainly does. I suppose Dan should do it. He is
the most qualified, after all.

(A pause.)

DAN

Yes. Yes, of course.

(He sidles over, almost
reaching the window,
steps back nervously.)

Wow! Sure is a... sure is a long way down, idn't it! Ha ha...

MARSHA

Well, it should be nothing for you, "Dan, Dan, the Daredevil Man."

DAN

Oh, of course! Of course! I just mean, it's so easy, really. I me -- I mean, it would be a lot better, you know, for me, if you had, for instance, a motorcycle, so I could drive out there on the ledge. Or even a unicycle. It's just so -- so -- so standard, so boring, to just, uh, walk out there, y'know?

INGA

(to DAN; showing her hands)

I will make you a puppet, Dan-Dan, yes? You will like my puppet.

MARSHA

(to DAN, forcefully)

Listen. I'm not about to give up the biggest role I ever had because this isn't *showy* enough for you.

DAN

Well, plus I don't really have the right *equipment*, and --

MARSHA

(grabbing him by the collar)

Get out there, you pathetic little wuss! *Now!*

DAN

Okay, okay, I'm going, I'm going.

(He is on his way to the window.)

But it'd be a LOT better with some explosives!

(He perches carefully on the sill, summoning his courage.)

INGA comes up behind
him. She taps his
shoulder and shouts in
his ear suddenly:)

INGA

LOOK, DAN-DAN! I MAKE YOU A PUPPET!

(DAN, scared out of his
mind, falls off the sill
backwards into the room,
clutching his heart.)

VIC

(to DAN)

Quit foolin' around, man, he could jump any second!

MARSHA

Go on, get out there!

(DAN peers out the
window again. INGA
approaches VIC.)

INGA

You like my puppets, Vic? Look: ees dee leaning tower of
pete-zah. See?

(She holds up her
fists.)

VIC

Yeah, that's swell, doll.

(DAN walks away from the window.)

MARSHA

(to DAN)

What? What's the matter now?

DAN

I... I have a confession to make.

MARSHA

Well, what is it?

(DAN whispers in her ear.)

You're WHAT?!

DAN

Shh! Shh...

VIC

You're AFRAID OF HEIGHTS? How can you call yourself a daredevil?

MARSHA

I thought you did three somersaults on the wing of a bi-plane this morning!

DAN

I did, it was sitting in a hangar out at the airport --

MARSHA

I don't believe this. Well I'm certainly not going out there. For one, I've got high heels on, and two, I'm a very important understudy for Miss Portia Brady in the off-off Broadway production of...

(She continues, but no one is listening. DAN interrupts.)

DAN

What about you, Vic, why don't you go out there and --

VIC

Oh, no, I get a nosebleed standing on tiptoes. You wouldn't get me out on that ledge for all the tea in Chinatown --

MARSHA

Where's Inga?

DAN

Huh?

MARSHA

Has anyone seen Inga?

(Throughout their last argument, INGA has

climbed through the window and moved sideways on the ledge, out of view. They haven't seen her do this, and search the office for her.)

Inga!

DAN

Inga!

MARSHA

Inga!

VIC

Inga!

DAN

MARSHA
(looking out the window)
She's out here!

Oh, good --

VIC

-- good God!

DAN
(overlapping)

(DAN sits down in a chair and puts his head between his knees. VIC rushes to the window to help MARSHA with INGA and the jumper.)

MARSHA
She's bringing him in!

(VIC and MARSHA help INGA in with the jumper, encouraging her.)

VIC
(ad. lib.)

Come on, honey, that's it, bring him in nice and easy...

MARSHA

(overlapping; ad. lib.)

You've got it, we've got you, come on in, that's it...

(INGA, MARSHA and VIC
back into the room. We
don't see the jumper,
but we see they are
dragging him. As VIC and
MARSHA part, INGA holds
up the jumper and he
falls apart -- it is a
mannequin. They are
stunned. VIC pries the
sign, hitherto unread,
from the mannequin's
hand and holds it up. It
reads:)

MARSHA

"Horton's Clothing Superstore. Our Prices are Falling Every
Day."

DAN

I don't believe it.

INGA

(demonstrating her
talent yet again)

Look! I make you one, Miss Portia Brady Grenarde. Ees
Calvin Coolidge! See? Ha ha ha... And now... (she readjusts
her hands) ...ees a crocodile wearing a top hat. See? (a
beat) And now --

DAN

(interrupting)

Oh, will you give it a rest, already?

(SAM bursts in.)

SAM

What do you think you're doing?

DAN

What?

VIC

Who the heck are you, chief?

SAM

I'm Sam Allen, from Horton's Department Store, downstairs. You people just wrecked our big promotion! That mannequin was supposed to attract people's attention for our big clothing sale this weekend!

(He gathers up the dummy
and sign.)

DAN

Hey, we're sorry, man, we didn't know --

MARSHA

Jeez, that's a dirty trick --

VIC

Yeah, I wish I'd thought of it.

MARSHA

We were just trying to hel --

SAM

Yeah, well, the next time you get the urge to help a dummy, why don't you call up my sales manager. Thanks for nothing.

(He is on his way out,
and stops when he passes
INGA, who is practicing
another puppet.)

Excuse me, is that -- is that a shadow puppet?

INGA

Ees a hippopotomoose. See?

SAM

Why, that's remarkable! Hey, how'd you like to come sit in the Horton's lobby and do those? I bet it would really attract the customers.

INGA

(smiles, holds out hand)

I am Inga. I am a poopateer.

MAN

A pleasure. I'd shake, but my hands are kinda full at the moment. Come on.

(They exit together.)

DAN

Well, that was embarrassing.

VIC

How were we supposed to know it was a dummy?

MARSHA

He's right, it's ridiculous. Absolutely ridiculous.

(A long, awkward pause
between them. Then, a
quick exchange:)

DAN

I won't tell anyone if you won't.

VIC

Sounds good to me.

MARSHA

Me too.

(They shake on it, then exit
together, talking, as the
LIGHTS FADE.)