GREEN MEANS GO

A COLLECTION OF COMEDY AND DRAMA MONOLOGUES IN MOTION

by

Dennis Bush

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GREEN MEANS GO

(MIRANDA tries to move forward, after her father’s death.)

Even if people are looking at you, they’re not always seeing you. They don’t see a person, just an obstacle… an inconvenience. (Pause) My dad died two months ago. (Pause) A heart attack. (Pause) He was walking to his office, downtown, and he had a heart attack in the street. He collapsed in the crosswalk. (Pause) When the light changed, people honked their horns. Like him laying dead in the street was an inconvenience for them. (With an edge) Green means go. (Pause) He was 38. Nobody expects a 38-year-old man to have a heart attack. They just don’t. And definitely not in the street. Somebody crossing the street, reached into my dad’s pockets and stole his wallet and cellphone. When the paramedics got there, they couldn’t find any identification, so they didn’t know who to notify. (SHE begins to cry) There was a crowd of people around, but he died alone… laying there in the crosswalk. A guy from his office was walking to the Starbucks and he recognized my dad getting put on a stretcher and loaded into an ambulance. So, he ran back to the office and had somebody call my mom. Except the phone number they had for my mom was her old one. (Quick pause) She changed her number when my dad and her got divorced. She decided that she didn’t want him to have her number until she gave it to him. She wanted him to ask for it, then, she could choose to give it to him. She didn’t want him to assume that he would just get it without asking. And he didn’t want to ask. So, he didn’t. And, because he didn’t ask for it, she never gave it to him.

END OF FREE PREVIEW

FIGURING IT OUT

(WES tries to figure out how HE fits in and how HE stands out.)

I’m figuring it out. (Quick pause) I’m trying to figure it out. (Quick pause) And by “it,” I mean “things.” I’m trying to figure things out. (Quick pause) My life – not just life in general. I’m trying to figure out my life. I’m trying to figure out how I fit in. (Quick pause) And how I stand out. (Pause) I don’t need a lot of attention. (Quick pause) But I need some. (Quick pause) A little. (Quick pause) Enough that I occasionally feel special. I’d like to feel special occasionally. (Quick pause) From time to time. More than once in a while but not all the time. If you felt special all the time, you wouldn’t know it was special. Something you have every day can’t be special. It’s everyday and everyday is the opposite of special.

END OF FREE PREVIEW
I wasn’t sure who I was going to be, today. I adapt to my surroundings. So, who I am is impacted by who you are. And how you are. Calling me a chameleon doesn’t really acknowledge the skill involved. Chameleons change instinctively. I change by choice. I make a conscious choice. I blend in, but only to get what I want. And because I look the way I do, people underestimate me. They shouldn’t do that. They really shouldn’t. (Smiles) I’ve got my eye on a new girl. The acquisition is already in progress. (Chuckles) She thinks I’m a gentleman. (More laughter) She thinks I’m harmless. (Pause) We make a cute couple. She’s attractive. And so am I. (Quick pause) I know that. You have to know what you have going for you, so you can use it effectively.

END OF FREE PREVIEW

There’s an order to things. A specific order. A precise order that needs to be respected. (Quick pause) People who tell you there’s more than one way to do something are wrong. Life is a series of choices that are black and white. There is no gray area. (Adamant) There is no gray area. Gray areas are distractions and distractions are not helpful! Distractions do not move us along. A direct route from point A to point B is the only acceptable option. When I take my vitamins in the morning, if two of them fall out into my hand, I have to take the one that came out first. The second one has to be put back.

END OF FREE PREVIEW

I don’t want to get too attached. When you’re close to people, it hurts more when you grow apart... when you don’t see each other as often. A lot of times the people you’re closest to are really only friends of convenience. You see each other every day. It’s easy to be friends. It’s convenient. But when you’re not in the same place doing the same things every day, what happens? The physical distance becomes emotional distance and that’s the worst kind of distance there is. All you have to talk about is what happened in the past because you’re not involved in each other’s present. And the idea of that scares me. And makes me sad. It’s like with high school. My first day of freshmen year, I knew two people and I wasn’t close to either of them. I felt so alone and disconnected. And, then, I made all these great friends – people I’ve shared so much with... who have seen me at my best and my worst and been there through it all. But at graduation, it was like a window into what happens next.
VALIDATION

(SHELBY looks at herself clearly for the first time in her life.)

I’m taking a risk right now. I left my cellphone at home. I’ve become too dependent on it. (More insistent) I was becoming too dependent on my phone, so I left it at home! (Quick pause; quieter, almost desperate to be convincing) I did. (Pause) It’s gotten to the point where, if I don’t get a call or a text from somebody I don’t feel loved or cared about. And I can’t live like that. I have to stop looking for validation from the outside. (A nearly primal scream of truth) All right! I didn’t leave my phone at home. I lost it. I lost it when I threw it at my ex-boyfriend. My very-recently-ex-boyfriend. I threw it right at his heart. I missed. I never said I had great aim. Anyway, I hit him in the stomach and it made him go, “ow,” and that’s a pretty good reaction. Throwing the phone at him symbolized his inability to communicate with me. He was unable to tell me, every day, that I was the most important thing in his life. Love must be demonstrated constantly. It has to have an obsessive quality about it or it’s not real.

END OF FREE PREVIEW

NOTHING TO NOBODY

(SUNDAY’s life comes unraveled.)

I couldn’t remember the numbers. I couldn’t remember the codes. Too many numbers. Too many passwords. Too many codes. I had to show them my driver’s license to buy the decongestant. It’s over-the-counter allergy medicine but I had to go to the pharmacy window and ask for it and show them my driver’s license and sign my name like I was some kind of criminal just because I was buying decongestant allergy medicine. And she kept my driver’s license. The pharmacy clerk. I didn’t notice at first. I wasn’t thinking straight. I was congested. My head felt like it weighed a hundred pounds. All I could think about was how long it would take for the medicine to start working. It was a Sunday night. Late. It was almost midnight till I got home. And I couldn’t get in my building. I couldn’t remember the security code. We don’t have keys. We have security codes and I couldn’t remember mine. I rang everybody’s bell, but nobody buzzed me in. I’ve buzzed in other people without even asking who was buzzing but nobody let me in. I couldn’t remember the code. My cell phone was dead. The charger is in my apartment. I didn’t have a spare battery. I couldn’t call anybody. And without my phone, I don’t even know anybody’s phone number. They’re all in my phone. I don’t have them memorized. I don’t think anybody memorizes phone numbers any more. But your life is in your phone. You open it up and you see your list of incoming and outgoing calls and text messages. Between your phone and your email, that’s your communication. That’s your life. (Pause) I didn’t know what to do or where to go. (Pause) Where do you go when you can’t get into your building? Where do people who don’t have a home go? I should have paid more attention to the news when they did stories about shelters. It was almost 3:00 in the morning and I was walking around like I was lost. I wasn’t lost but I didn’t know where to go. Can you be lost if you know where you are but don’t know where to go? There aren’t a lot of people out on the street at that hour on a Sunday night. So much for the “city that never sleeps.” And people who are out don’t have a sense of humor. I stopped a lady and asked if I could use her phone. She wanted to know who I was going to call. And I said, “I wanna order a pizza.” I was joking. But she thought I was a crazy person. I wanted to call information and get the phone number for one of my friends. I just said I wanted to order pizza. I was making a joke. A little conversation. A little humor in an otherwise humorless situation. But no. She kept walking. And so did I. I must have walked seventy blocks. I started out at my apartment and
kept heading west. I don’t know why. I just kept thinking, “Go west” and... everything will be fine. I ended up on Ninth Avenue and my legs felt like they had big ankle weights on them. They felt so heavy. And I couldn’t walk anymore. I sat down in front of the Amish Market between 49th and 50th. Who knew we had Amish people in Manhattan? And I fell asleep. I woke up with the sun in my eyes and some guy kicking me. He told me to... move along. He had a mohawk. I’ve never liked people with mohawks. I just don’t. I look at them and think, “Your hair is dangerous. You could put somebody’s eye out with it.” And he was kicking me. He said he would call the cops. While he was kicking me, he said, “I’m gonna call the cops.” People with mohawks used to run away from the cops. They were who other people called the cops on. And, now, Mr. Mohawk Man is gonna call the cops on me? The world is upside down.

END OF FREE PREVIEW

LOST AND FOUND

(PLAYBILL reflects on missed opportunities.)

I find things on the ground. I don’t dig in the trash. I have standards. There is poetry in the things I find on the ground. Stuff that people drop accidentally. I don’t want it if you threw it away on purpose. I want what still means something to you. Something you wish you didn’t lose. You drop a phone number and the world changes. The person who gave you that number will think you’re not interested, because they didn’t get a call. Missed opportunities. (Pause) The first thing I found was a message written on the back of an understudy notice in a Playbill. “You have long legs.” Had to be a man.

END OF FREE PREVIEW

REVOLUTIONARY

(MONKEY protests.)

When some tourist had a heart attack and died coming out of the Olive Garden over there around the corner on Broadway between 47 and 48, I protested the restaurant. It’s not really authentic Italian food. It’s Americanized, let’s-pretend-it’s-real Italian food even though it’s not. And it’s filled with artery-clogging cholesterol that gives people heart attacks. So, I took a big piece of cardboard I found in front of Westway Diner and I made a giant N. A huge letter N and I stood next to the beginning of the Olive Garden sign, so it spelled NO LIVE GARDEN.

END OF FREE PREVIEW
STAYING ABOVE WATER

(RIO keeps moving and keeps trying not to sink.)

We had to keep moving. From one apartment to the next. Two months in one place, two weeks in another. Two days. Two hours. A few nights at a shelter. A couple more someplace else. A rainy weekend in the basement of an apartment building on West 96th Street. Some shelters won’t take you if you’re over 18. Not in a family shelter. It’s gotta be a parent and young kids. And the family shelters are the nicest. Usually. So, if my mom and little brother and sister got in a family shelter, I’d go someplace else. Anywhere I could. I’d meet up again with them the next day and I’d tell my mom I went to a shelter. It made her feel better. She has a lot of guilt about our situation. She’s had some bad luck and she’s made some bad choices. That’s pretty much what life is – luck and choices. (Pause)

END OF FREE PREVIEW

KITTEN HEELS

(CONNOR won’t stay anyplace where people “meow” at her.)

I met this girl in front of the Winter Garden Theater. I like the name. Winter... Garden. Kind of an oxymoron. Plus, it’s always best to ask for spare change outside a theater where a happy musical is playing. People are more likely to give you money if they’re happy than if they’ve just seen some depressing play about murder or the end of the world. (Pause) And there was this girl standing there. She looked about my age. And she was asking for change, too. So, I said, “Hey,” kinda like, “Hello,” and kinda like, “Back off, this is my spot.” But she didn’t move. Instead, she started talking to me. And telling jokes. Stupid jokes. But I laughed. Neither of us made much, ’cause we were too busy talking to ask for change. And, after everybody was done coming out of the show, I was gonna go over to the Majestic. (Explaining) The show that plays there is longer and, even though it’s not, technically, a happy show, the people are usually good about coughing up some cash. But the girl was like, “You wanna come over to my apartment and hang out?” (Pause) She has an apartment. Her and her mother. (Quick pause) On 51st Street between Broadway and 8th. Like a half a block from the Winter Garden. She thinks asking people for change is fun. (A mix of awe and resentful) She does it to supplement her allowance! And, as she was telling me this, I felt like knocking her down and stomping on her face. (Pause) But I didn’t. (Pause) I couldn’t remember the last time I was in somebody’s apartment, so I went. She said I could use the bathroom, too, which was a bonus. (Explaining) Bathrooms are important. (Pause) It was a nice apartment. Two bedrooms! Her and her mother each have their own room! (Pause) Her mom came home and I figured the girl was gonna get in trouble and I was gonna get thrown out, but her mom was like, “Hello. How nice to meet you.” And she gave me a protein bar that tasted like something you’d scrape off the bottom of your shoe. And her mom asked if I like shoes which made me wonder if she could read minds and knew what I was thinking about the protein bar. So, I said, “Sure, shoes are good.” And they are. I don’t have anything against shoes. I wear ’em. So, then, her mom takes my hand and leads me down the hall to her bedroom and opens her closet and there are dozens and dozens of pairs of shoes. All kinds. She has more shoes than a shoe store. And she takes a pair and says, “These are my favorites. I love the kitten heel.” And she put ’em on and starts walking around the room saying, “I love my kitten heels. Meow. Meow.”

END OF FREE PREVIEW
TEMPORARY

(CARSON hopes less.)

My parents died when I was seven. (Quick pause) Not at the same time. (Quick pause) Not in a car accident or anything. (Quick pause) But they died within a month of each other. My mom had an aneurism. My dad got shot. Well, technically, he shot himself, but he still got shot. (Quick pause) So, I went to live with my grandmother in Pennsylvania. (Quick pause) Lots of trees. (Quick pause) It was nice. (Quick pause) If you like trees. (Pause) My grandmother died when I was eleven. (Quick pause) She just died. (Quick pause) No reason. (Quick pause) You don’t always need a reason to die. (Pause) And there weren’t any other relatives who would take me, so I got put in a foster home. (Pause) They got rid of me when they had a baby of their own. (Pause) The next place they put me there were already four foster kids and... (SHE struggles) And I don’t have any good memories of my time there. (Quick pause) None. (Quick pause) Not a single one. (Quick pause) I wish I did. (Quick pause) It would be easier that way. (Pause) One of the boys was seventeen and he said, “Foster kids are like rental cars. People treat ‘em like crap because they know they’re gonna give ‘em back. Nobody cares about you when you’re temporary.” (Pause)

END OF FREE PREVIEW

LETTING GO

(BUSBOY loses his grip.)

We were just messing around... Being silly... Having a good time. (Pause) We were walking up 6th Avenue. Vanessa had just gotten her hair cut at a place on the corner of 6th Avenue and 46th Street. They cut it really short. Shorter than I wanted. I liked it better long. I told her that but she didn’t care. She said the guy who cut it told her she looked sexy. So, some hair stylist guy’s opinion is more important than mine. Whatever. (Pause) I said, “What do you expect him to tell you? He’s the one who cut it. You think he’s gonna tell you it looked better before he cut it so short you look like a guy?” (Pause) That made her mad. And she started walking away. Really fast. At first, I was like, “Go ahead, walk away. (Shouting) That’s real mature. (Louder) That’s really good communication skills.” (Pause) If I’d walked away from her like that, she’d have thrown a fit. Right there on the street, she’d have screamed at me and told me I was behaving like a little kid. But there’s a double standard with her. She gets to walk away and I’m just supposed to take it. Just deal with it. Just let her go and not say anything. But I was like, “No, not today. You don’t get to walk away from me, today.” So, I ran after her and I grabbed her arm and I got right up in her face and yelled, “Don’t you ever walk away from me!” And people were looking at us. People stopped and stared at us but I didn’t care. I wasn’t gonna let Vanessa get away with acting like that. I wasn’t. But she tried to pull away from me. She was all, “Let me go. You’re hurting me.” Whatever. I wasn’t letting go. All I did was tell her her hair was too short. It was. (Quick pause) Her hair was too short. It made her look like a guy. That’s all I said. And it was true. (Quick pause)

END OF FREE PREVIEW
LEFT BEHIND

(JILL gets left behind by her boyfriend.)

I could have killed you. (Pause) Who leaves their girlfriend at a party? I went to the bathroom, and when I came out, you were gone. So I asked Nico and Ellen where you were and Nico shrugged his shoulders and mumbled. He knew where you went. But he wouldn’t tell me. Guys are like that. You protect each other. You lie for each other. If you wanted to leave, you should have said something. It’s just good manners.

END OF FREE PREVIEW

BETTER THAN A RING

(LYNN makes a commitment.)

I thought everything was fine. You said you were happy. You said you loved me. You wrote my name on your sneakers. (Quick pause) That’s like giving somebody a ring. (Quick pause) It’s better than a ring. It’s like I’m always walking with you. Like we’re walking around and holding hands. That’s what writing somebody’s name on your sneakers means. It’s serious. It’s a commitment. That’s what it means. So, when you scribbled all over my name with red marker, it broke my heart. There wasn’t any warning. I didn’t have time to prepare myself for the... emotional toll... because you never let me know how you felt. You just scribbled over my name like it never existed. Like we didn’t exist.

END OF FREE PREVIEW

A WORLD AWAY

(MERRICK knows where SHE belongs.)

I used to take the train into the city. The Long Island Railroad. I’d come in and hang out. Sometimes in the East Village. Sometimes up here in the theatre district. I lived in Merrick. (Quick pause) On Long Island. It’s 25.9 miles from Penn Station on the Long Island Railroad. The stop closest to my house was at Sunrise Highway and Merrick Avenue. My family lives on Merokee Drive, right on the Newbridge Pond. It’s more like a small lake, but it’s called a pond. My family has a nice house. Five bedrooms, three bathrooms, a three-car garage. But I never felt like I lived there. When I’d come into the city to hang out, it felt like I was a world away from home. And a world away is a lot farther than 25.9 miles. Sometimes, I’d go down to the Village. Mostly the East Village. And, sometimes, I’d hang out up here in the theatre district. My dad said, “You sure are spending a lot of time in the city,” And I told him, “It’s where I belong.” And he got all ticked off and yelled at me. “This is where you belong! With your family! In this house! Not in the city!” I wasn’t going to spend my life on Merokee Drive on Newbridge Pond. I wasn’t going to spend my life in a house with five bedrooms and three bathrooms where nobody talks to anybody else. A “good morning” text message from your mom when she’s already at work before you wake up isn’t communication. It’s technology.

END OF FREE PREVIEW