

BROKEN CITY

by Kelly Meadows

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BROKEN CITY*A Comedic Duet***by Kelly Meadows**

SYNOPSIS: How hard is it to buy a cake? Really hard if the bakery blew up. That's why they renamed the street Fallen Loaf Lane. A visitor to this lost and lonely town quickly realizes that everything in it is falling apart. Stay for the laughs but leave before dark!

TIME: Present.

SETTING: Outdoors, a run-down small town.

CAST OF CHARACTERS*(2 either)*

TOWNIE (m/f).....citizen, and also plays the mayor. *(49 lines)*

VISITOR (m/f).....New to town, looking for a cake. *(48 lines)*

SET: A bare stage. Optional: old bicycles, tires, trash cans, etc.

COSTUMES

VISITOR – more dressed up, from a happier set of circumstances.

TOWNIE – regular clothes, run down. As Mayor, perhaps add a jacket or coat, but torn or out of date.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

This play is often silly and unrealistic, and the audience will see it mainly from the point of view of the visitor, who discovers line by line that things in this strange town are worse than they seem every step of the way. Also, Townie is not terribly worldly and probably rarely leaves the city limits, whereas Visitor has more experiences to share and consider, so this would shape their views and understanding of the events. When Townie returns as Mayor, there should be more confidence in movement and speech.

AT START: *TOWNIE is on stage; VISITOR enters and observes briefly.*

VISITOR: Hey you. (*TOWNIE stops and sizes up VISITOR, a bit unsure.*) Yeah you.

TOWNIE: (*Suspicious and hesitant at first.*) Yeah, me? Why you wanna talk to me?

VISITOR: It's not like there's anyone else out here. (*More to self.*) I don't have a choice.

TOWNIE: Too many potholes.

VISITOR: Is there a bakery around here?

TOWNIE: Yep, it's down that way three blocks, then turn the corner at Fallen Loaf Lane.

VISITOR: Oh, thanks. (*They start to go opposite ways and then VISITOR stops, thinks, turns back.*) That's an odd name for a street, especially with a bakery.

TOWNIE: You could say. (*Approaching VISITOR, ready to share a bit more information.*) Our fire department's on Burned Village Terrace. But Fallen Loaf is the main drag here; you can't miss it. There's the bakery... and a few high school dropouts begging for dough.

VISITOR: Well... I hate to be nosy, but...

TOWNIE: Apparently you don't but go 'head.

VISITOR: Did something happen to the bakery?

TOWNIE: We used to have a bakery row until the boom. Cakes, pastries, pies... then, boom.

VISITOR: A boom sounds like they'd be successful.

TOWNIE: No, a loud boom. A boom like no other. A boom we've never recovered from. It was pie in the sky—literally. (*Gets aggravated for no good reason.*) You know what? Just go get your cake and call it a day. (*Starts to leave.*)

VISITOR: (*Calling back.*) You started it. You can't just say boom and run away like you lit the fuse.

TOWNIE: (*Acquiesces, taking a bit of time.*) It was the mayor's birthday and there was a bread-baking contest...

VISITOR: Quaint.

TOWNIE: Rising Yeast Parkway it was called back then. Bakery row was ablaze with rye bread, wheat bread, bread of the living, bread of the dead.

VISITOR: What's that like?

TOWNIE: I don't know, I can't eat it... yet.

VISITOR: Who does? If the living can't, and the dead don't...

TOWNIE: Are you going to let me tell the story?

VISITOR: Not when you've got zombies in the neighborhood.

TOWNIE: (*Annoyed.*) Zombies know better than to come here.

VISITOR: Then who eats the bread, if not the walking dead? The sitting-around-doing-nothing dead? It just doesn't sound very lucrative from a baker's point of view.

TOWNIE: Nobody eats it! We just make it and leave it at the cemetery. I don't know, now stop.

VISITOR: (*Starting to realize that things are really messed up.*) I think your mom ate it. Then she had you, and that explains this conversation.

TOWNIE: (*Continues the story.*) Everyone had their bread rising in the oven, waiting for the mayor's family to judge who made the best bread on Rising Yeast Parkway.

VISITOR: Do you just name streets after—

TOWNIE: Yeast and calamity.

VISITOR: That explains Out of Business Boulevard. A tin cup in every doorway.

TOWNIE: It's skid row, yep. Well... a fire started in one of the bakeries and it blew up. The baker went sky high and landed in the trampoline factory across the street.

VISITOR: I find that hard to believe.

TOWNIE: So did the tramp fac. They were holding an outdoor demo and there was the baker doing a seat drop, followed by the winning loaf. The only loaf that survived, actually, since...

VISITOR: Since the blast from the factory caused all the bread to fall in.

TOWNIE: The losers accused the winner of causing the blowup in order to win the contest and drop a loaf on a tramp. They ran him out of town, and unfortunately now there's a ghost involved.

VISITOR: The bread of the dead?

TOWNIE: I don't know but however you slice it, it's a ghost. (*Dramatic, wistful.*) Perhaps it was a customer who never got served, holding a number in perpetuity, next in line, forever. Perhaps it's the maintenance man, waiting for someone to get out of the bathroom so he can disinfect. But every day at some unannounced time this ghost lets out a loud wail and we hear the boom. And you never know when, but if you're baking at the time... kerplop. Your loaf collapses along with your dreams. No rolls, no biscuits, barely even a pancake survives...

VISITOR: Why don't you just go to Wal-Mart?

TOWNIE: That's what we do. It's not fresh, but it's not flat.

VISITOR: So foul.

TOWNIE: Why are you here? Like your town doesn't have a bakery.

VISITOR: I came all the way down Hard Luck Lane, took a left at Horrible Happenstance Thruway, and then the exit at Shouldacouldawoulda Street. Do you really wanna know?

TOWNIE: I have my own problems if you haven't noticed.

VISITOR: Because my bakery's all about gossip.

TOWNIE: But you're going to tell me anyway.

VISITOR: I wanted a surprise for my wife [husband]. But our bakery likes to squeeze out gossip on its cakes. So when they find out something from one family, they'll tell the next. Happy birthday, Susan, your sister says you're not 35. Happy graduation Amber, Skyler cheated his way into valedictorian.

TOWNIE: Why don't you just go to the Piggly Wiggly?

VISITOR: And not support local business? Are you crazy?

TOWNIE: I've been called worse by better.

VISITOR: Besides, the surprise is I'm moving out. I want the cake to say, "Happy Birthday and Bye Bye Baby." I don't really want that message out before I'm packed.

TOWNIE: That's not a very nice cake.

VISITOR: Depending on how you slice it, she [he] might not notice.

TOWNIE: Well, it's been nice chatting, but I've got to go file for bankruptcy. Not that anyone will notice. (*Exit.*)

VISITOR: (*Shakes head, then notices someone else and calls off stage.*) Hey! You look dignified.

TOWNIE enters, now as the town MAYOR.

VISITOR: Can I ask you something?

TOWNIE: I'm the mayor. Ask me anything. History, job search, things to do. Short list but go 'head.

VISITOR: I am very worried about anything you'd call a tourist attraction. You look pretty bedraggled for a mayor.

TOWNIE: Only three people voted. I got one vote—that was mine—and the other two were cheats.

VISITOR: I just have no idea why anyone wants to live here. Every road is a downer.

TOWNIE: That's why it's called Downer's Groves.

VISITOR: Why don't you all just smile?

TOWNIE: For what? We live with what we create. The toy factory burned down, the gas station blew up, the diner ran out of roaches... well actually the roaches ran out of the diner. We had to take 'em off the menu.

VISITOR: Why don't you do something about all this?

TOWNIE: On my salary? First thing I tried to do was vote myself a raise.

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