

# **FIRST DRAFT**

## **By Joseph Sorrentino**

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# FIRST DRAFT

*A Ten Minute Comedy Duet*

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**SYNOPSIS:** Harry is an aspiring playwright and Frank is the main character in his play and in his head. As usual, Harry's having trouble getting his play written; in fact, he's having trouble getting it started. When Frank finally gets fed-up with Harry's procrastination, he steps out of Harry's head and into Harry's life, with unsettling results.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(2 male)*

HARRY (m) ..... Age is flexible but ideally is in his mid-50s. A blue-collar type. He's wearing sweatpants and a sweat shirt, slippers.

*(64 lines)*

FRANK (m) ..... Age is flexible but at least several years younger than Harry. He's wearing a dress shirt, light colored pants, shoes.

*(33 lines)*

**PROPERTY LIST**

- Desk
- 2 Desk chairs (with rollers)
- Laptop computer
- Small desk lamp
- Penholder with pens and pencils
- Bookcase
- Books
- Simple wooden or folding chair
- Coat rack
- Sports coat
- Tie
- Scarf
- Black pants
- Box with a variety of hats in it
- Watch for FRANK
- Bar Stool
- Captain's chair

**PRODUCTION NOTES**

The stage directions are suggestions about what can be done, especially by FRANK, to speed things along. In the section where he's trying on hats, any hats will do as long as there are a lot of them.

**AT RISE:** HARRY'S "writing studio" which is just an extra room in his house. There's a desk with a laptop computer, a lamp, a penholder and a desk chair, one with wheels on it. There's a bookcase with several books on it. Some distance away is another chair that's dimly lit. On one side of that chair is a coat rack with: sports coat, tie, scarf, black pants. There's a small table nearby. HARRY and FRANK enter at the same time from opposite sides of the stage. HARRY opens the laptop, turns on the lamp. He fidgets with the angle of the screen, the angle of the lamp head; turns lamp on and off a few times. Adjusts his chair. FRANK looks at his watch, sighs. HARRY interlaces his fingers and stretches them. FRANK looks at HARRY, points to his watch impatiently as if to say, "Let's go." Finally, after a few more adjustments, HARRY starts typing. FRANK acts out what HARRY writes.

**HARRY:** Act I, Scene 1.

*FRANK snaps to attention, sitting upright. Lights brighten on him.*

**HARRY:** Boy, this must be just what the Bard himself felt like when he sat down to pen his master works. The excitement of startin' on a new play...somethin' fresh...darin'... Of course, he'd be starin' at a piece of parchment paper or somethin' and here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we're starin' at a blank screen instead. Yessir, a blank screen just waitin' to be filled up...the blinkin' cursor...It's blinkin' a little fast there...let's just slow that baby down a bit...There, that's better.

*FRANK slumps in his chair.*

**HARRY:** And that screen's a tad bright, isn't it? Let's change that (*Does this.*)...just ...a...little... bit... There, that's it. Now it's time to fill that screen up with some snappy dialog. (*Pause.*) Hold on, Harry!

*FRANK snaps to attention*

**HARRY:** Whaddya thinkin'? You gotta decide on the font. That's important, the type of font...sends a message...now let's see...Whadda we have?

*FRANK slumps in his chair again. HARRY is highlighting and changing fonts.*

**HARRY:** Boy, just lookit all these fonts. Abadi MT Condensed Extra Bold...Abadi MT Condensed Light...American Typewriter...American Typewriter Condensed... Guy could spend hours pickin' just the right one to use...Ooh...They got Chinese...Japanese ...Korean...Hey, I use one of them, I could submit to an Asian company, increase my chances of finally gettin' somethin' published...Times...Times New Roman...Times New Roman Italics...(Pause.) Harry, Harry, Harry...you little devil you...you know what you're doin'. You're procrastinatin', that's what you're doin'.

*FRANK nods his head vigorously.*

**HARRY:** OK. Here goes. Act I, Scene 1. At rise, Frank, a young, vibrant man sits erect in his chair...Hmm...C'mon Harry, you know what they always say about writing: write what you know...OK...Let's see...At rise, Frank, a middle-aged man with a pot belly, receding hair line, slightly frumpy demeanor and diminishing career options sits slumped in a chair waiting for "Gilligan's Island" reruns to start. (Pause.) Whoa. Maybe that's what I know but no sense depressin' the audience and sendin' 'em fleein' for the exits right off the bat...Wait... how 'bout somethin' radical...Don't ya just love computers? Change anythin' ya want just like that (Snaps fingers.) At rise, Frances, an enticing young woman...

*FRANK stares at HARRY with horror.*

**HARRY:** Nope, no way that's gonna work...writin' from the perspective of the female of the species has never been my strong suit. Best thing: go with your gut here, Harry... Lord knows you got plenty of that. At rise, Frank, a good lookin' man in his late 20s to early 30s...Note to director: I'm OK with you bein' flexible about his age...always like to let the director feel like he has some sorta decision-makin' power...So Frank is sittin' erect in a chair. He stands. (*Typing.*) We see he's well dressed...A nice dress shirt but he has it untucked...no...it's tucked in the front but not in the back...No...Back but not the front? No, nix that. He's not a slob...a nice blue dress shirt, all tucked in and... and...and what? And a tie...

*FRANK takes a tie off the coat rack, starts tying it.*

**HARRY:** No, wait...deep six the tie...a scarf...Yeah, that's good. Gives him a little panache. I like that and...and a dark blue sport coat...yeah, that's the ticket. Real debonair kinda guy. His pants are...what color?

*FRANK looks at his pants, looks questioningly at HARRY*

**HARRY:** Black.

*FRANK looks at his pants and then at HARRY. He does this a couple of times, looking more and more nervous, then looks at audience, shrugs apologetically. He starts unbuckling his pants.*

**HARRY:** C'mon now, Harry...don't get hung up on the details. What difference does the pants color make?

*FRANK runs a hand across his forehead, relieved. Buckles belt.*

**HARRY:** Director's gonna ignore most of what your stage directions anyway. You're lucky if they leave your dialog alone. (*Typing.*) Ooh...he's wearin' a hat. Now what kind? Type "names of hats" into Google here...and voilà!

*FRANK walks off, comes back with a box full of hats.*

**HARRY:** Wow. Would ya look at that? Who knew there were so many?

*As he reads them off, with increasing speed, FRANK puts the hats on and as they're rejected by HARRY, places them on the table.*

**HARRY:** Ascot? Hmm...Balaclava? That's definitely not gonna work...baseball cap? Doesn't go with the sport coat, does it? Beret... bowler... chullo...cowboy hat... fedora... fez...hard hat...kufi...mortarboard... Panama...party hat...Santa...Tam o' Shanter...Umbrella hat... (Pause.) Wait. I got it! (FRANK looks expectantly at him.) No hat.

*FRANK, disgruntled, sweeps the hats back into the box, carries it offstage.*

**HARRY:** Act I, Scene 1. At rise, Frank, a good lookin' man in his late 20s to early 30s sits in a simple wooden chair onstage...parenthetically: No hat. A spotlight slowly comes up on it. That gives it an air of mystery, doesn't it? Ooh...I like that (Types.) air...of...mystery. (Stops typing.) But does it have to be a simple chair? Why not somethin' that makes a little more of a statement? How about... (He rolls back from the desk.)...how about a desk chair? A desk chair says you're important...you're in charge.

*FRANK brings on a desk chair, replaces the simple chair. He starts walking off with the chair.*

**HARRY:** No...actor's gonna be rollin' all around the stage if it's a desk chair. Can't have that.

*FRANK switches the chair. As HARRY mentions the chairs, FRANK walks off and starts bringing them on but never gets too far.*

**HARRY:** Bar stool? Nah...who's he think he is? Frank Sinatra? Captain's chair? Possibly...Wooden folding chair? Nuh-uh...Wait...I got it. I gotta hand it to ya Harry, you're a genius. A Barco Lounger.

*FRANK looks nervously at HARRY.*

**HARRY:** Yeah, that's it. One of them really big, humongous Barco Loungers...

*FRANK sighs and resignedly walks offstage. We hear the sound of a large chair being dragged across the floor and FRANK groaning but FRANK never makes it to the stage.*

**HARRY:** Nah...that's too much.

*FRANK enters, looking relieved.*

**HARRY:** Just a nice, simple little wooden chair. That's all we need.

*FRANK points at the chair that's already there, looking at HARRY for affirmation.*

**HARRY:** Yeah, that'll do. So whadda we got? We got Frank...we got a chair...an air of mystery which we'll establish with the lighting and perhaps a little music. So let's see...he's sitting there...what's he doing? Not much. I don't like that...sitting at the beginning of the play. Gotta put some energy into it. Better the play starts with him offstage...he's gonna enter from...

*FRANK waits.*

**HARRY:** ...stage left.

*FRANK exits stage left.*

**HARRY:** And now we gotta get the character onstage. Simple enough for a pro like me. (*Typing.*) Frank enters stage left.

*FRANK does this.*

**HARRY:** Wait...is it better stage right?

*FRANK hurries across stage and begins to enter from stage right.*

**HARRY:** Or is stage left better?

*FRANK hurries across but before he gets there...*

**HARRY:** Stage right? Stage left?

*FRANK is caught in the middle of the stage and starts walking to where HARRY says.*

**HARRY:** Right? Left? Right?

*FRANK stops, stares at HARRY with his hands out, palms up as if asking, "What on earth are you doing?"*

**HARRY:** Ah...it doesn't matter. Flip a coin...Heads, stage right; tails stage left. *(He takes a coin out of his pocket, flips it but isn't able to catch it. He gets on his knees to see it and FRANK stands behind him.)* Heads. Stage right it is. Glad we got that settled.

**FRANK:** Me, too.

*HARRY freezes, unsure if he's heard FRANK. FRANK stands behind HARRY. As HARRY looks exaggeratedly around, FRANK stays behind him, also looking around.*

**HARRY:** Huh. That's weird. I thought I heard...nah, can't be. Must be 'cause I'm workin' myself too hard... *(Reads.)* Act I, Scene 1. We change this to... At rise, we see a simple chair onstage with a spotlight on it. There's an air of mystery...

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