

HOMELESS HARRY

By Brian James Lane

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THE PLAYERS

HARRY, a homeless man with a scroungy beard and dirt smeared all over his face and hands. He wears a filthy hat and tattered clothing.

SHOP OWNER, a man with a foreign accent who owns a shop on the street. He carries a push broom and wears an apron.

CRIMINAL, a very seedy looking young individual in equally questionable attire.

POLICEMAN, an out-of-shape officer of the law.

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN, a short, over-bearing lady hardened by the years.

RETARDED MAN, a severely mentally handicapped adult man who wears suspenders a la Steinbeck.

WOMAN WITH DOG, a woman walking her dog. (dog can be mimed, if necessary)

FRIGHTENED WOMAN, an attractive, normal-looking woman who is afraid of everything - including her own shadow. She carries an umbrella and a purse.

HEAVENLY VOICE, a divine booming voice from off-stage.

PROPS

A large cardboard box

Old newspapers

A coin

Whistle

Umbrella

Sound effect of approaching vehicle

Sound effect of thunder and rain

Sound effect of crickets

Sound effect of birds chirping

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THE SCENE: It is an urban street and sidewalk. Graffiti and stains of all shapes and sizes cover the walls in the background. A cardboard box rests on the sidewalk (HARRY's home) with just enough room to walk around it. The box itself is carpeted with newspaper. The curb gives an indication of a street, but the actual street is left up to the audiences' imagination.

(As the scene opens, HARRY is lying in the cardboard box, feet protruding. His feet shake and stretch and HE crawls from the box looking towards the heavens. HARRY stands up and scratches various parts of his body. HE looks up and holds out an open palm - as if expecting it to rain. HARRY looks around at a place on the ground, center stage. HE cups his hands, as if HE were scooping up water from a puddle. HARRY then uses his cupped hands to wash his face. HE also takes each hand and rubs them under his armpits. Doing this, his demeanor changes gradually. HARRY is now more content and perhaps even a bit happy in his expression. HE looks around, stage left, stage right, and even out into the audience. His smile broadens by seeing the audience members. HARRY waves at the audience. HE then turns his attention skyward, and gives another little wave. HARRY then lies down in front of the box on the sidewalk.)

SHOP OWNER: *(from stage left, sweeping the ground as HE enters)* You still here? *(with disgust, through a thick accent)* Why you no get job? Why you no get money, find place to live, stop clutter up my street? This no good for business, people see you and think you rub off. No good, no good. *(shaking head)* You a bad influence to my wife and kids. They see you like this, no good. And my customers see you, definitely no good.

(HARRY barely acknowledges the SHOP OWNER, sitting up but just looking at him in passing. HARRY begins studying his body, ignoring the man. HE focuses on his hand intently while the SHOP OWNER talks.)

SHOP OWNER: Why you not listen to me? *(throwing his hands in the air)* Can you even smell yourself? You smell like...*(lifting one shoe and looking under it)*...well, you just smell bad. *(staring at HARRY, awaiting a response)* Very bad.

SHOP OWNER: Every day it same thing. I try and make my store presentable. I work hard - my whole family work hard - for many years just to get here. You work hard, you not live there *(indicating box)*. If it not for you, maybe more people come to my shop. Maybe I make enough to retire.

(HARRY looks at SHOP OWNER with an expression of disbelief.)

SHOP OWNER: Well, maybe not retire. But have more money, yes?

(SHOP OWNER waits for a response from HARRY. Seeing HE won't get one, HE continues)

SHOP OWNER: You need money, find place to live. Stop clutter up my street. You find job, huh? Find job and don't hang around. And don't rub off on my customers. Or at least try not to smell so bad.

(The SHOP OWNER leaves in haste, stage left. HARRY sniffs his armpits and shrugs. HE then resumes his previous reclined position.)

(After a short pause, a whistle can be heard from off-stage. It grows louder as it approaches. The CRIMINAL half jogs, half walks from stage left. HE looks back and stops in front of HARRY. HE looks at HARRY and then back behind him to stage left)

CRIMINAL: Hey ya, Harry! **(as if speaking to a long lost friend)** How's it goin', man? I love the constants, Harry. Life's little assurances. I always know you're going to be here **(waving arms around indicating the city)** or actually **(pause)** there. **(pointing to the ground where HARRY reclines)**

(HARRY shrugs and smiles at the CRIMINAL. HARRY motions with his hand to the spot next to him, inviting the man to have a seat.)

CRIMINAL: Hey, not right now, man. But thanks! **(pause)** A man in my line of work has got to keep moving. You know, I could use a man like yourself in my **(pause)** business. Yeah. A man who doesn't feel he needs to conform to society's norms. A man who doesn't feel the necessity to follow rules, regulations, **(pause)** current fashion trends. Yes, Harry, you're a natural. You and me could go far. I like a man who isn't afraid to **(pause, then sarcastically)** speak his mind. The sky is the limit, man. **(kneeling and patting HARRY on the back, pointing upwards with his other hand)** The sky is the limit.

(HARRY looks up to where CRIMINAL is pointing. HE nods his head in approval. From off in the distance, a whistle can be heard)

CRIMINAL: **(standing and looking off in the distance, stage left)** You know what your problem is, buddy? **(HARRY shrugs)** You talk too much. **(pause as HE again looks back to stage left, another whistle - this time louder - indicates someone approaching)** I'll see you later.

(CRIMINAL runs off stage right, HARRY waves at his retreat)

(POLICEMAN jogs in from stage left, gun drawn and aimed upwards. [The gun can easily be mimed, if necessary, otherwise, a plastic toy gun should be used.] HE is huffing and puffing loudly. HE stops center stage and haunches over, leaning on his knees, gasping for breath)

POLICEMAN: **(looking at HARRY)** Shut-up. **(catching his breath)**

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(HARRY puts his thumb and forefinger to his lips and turns an imaginary key. HE then tosses this imaginary key over his shoulder and smiles at the POLICEMAN)

POLICEMAN: **(sarcastically)** Smart guy, huh?

(HARRY nods at the POLICEMAN and raises his thumb and forefinger up, about an inch apart - indicating that HE is a little smart)

POLICEMAN: Okay, smart guy - you wait here. I'll be back to talk to you later.

(HE runs off after the CRIMINAL to stage-right, blowing his whistle occasionally)

(HARRY stretches his arms outward and clumsily stands. HE looks skyward and gives a concerned look. HE holds a hand out, palm up. HARRY then turns and rummages through his box. He returns with some newspaper. HE sits down again and arranges the paper on top of him in an attempt to keep himself dry)

(After a moment there is the griping, nagging voice of the MIDDLE AGED WOMAN lecturing the RETARDED MAN from off-stage. They both enter from stage right. Neither notices HARRY at first because of the newspapers covering him.)

RETARDED MAN: Going too fast. Slow down. You're always going too fast. Making me tired. Tired - tired - tired. **(sitting down)** My legs hurt and my knees are making that funny popping sound again. That means we're going too fast. Whenever that happens, we are going too fast. Fast – fast – fast – fast.

(HE begins running his hands around on the ground, playing)

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN: Get up! That street is just filthy! Stop that and get up. And whatever you do, do not put those filthy hands in your mouth! I am too old and too tired to drag you all the way home! You've had ice cream, already. You promised me if you had ice cream today you would behave. Now, get up and be responsible. Honestly! If I have to mend those overalls again-

RETARDED MAN: **(interrupting MIDDLE AGED WOMAN)** HII! **(shouting very loudly, RETARDED MAN has noticed HARRY. RETARDED MAN begins to wave and crawls over to HARRY)** How're you, mister?

(HARRY sits up and waves back at RETARDED MAN)

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MIDDLE AGED WOMAN: STOP! (**screaming in fear**) You never know what you'll catch from those (**pause**) people! I've told you hundreds of times to be careful about strangers. It just isn't safe to walk the streets anymore. Strangers mean danger. Remember? Strangers mean danger!

(Both HARRY and the RETARDED MAN wince at the shrill screeching of the MIDDLE AGED WOMAN. SHE grabs the RETARDED MAN by the arm and jerks him up to her side.)

RETARDED MAN: But this one's nice. See, he is smiling.

(walking slowly back towards HARRY)

(HARRY smiles sheepishly at the woman. HE offers her a feeble wave, but SHE does not respond. HE looks back at the RETARDED MAN, and his smile broadens)

RETARDED MAN: Hey, mister. Hey mister, mister ...do you want to hear my knee pop? Listen to this.

(grinning with delight and moving knee back and forth)

(HARRY nods his approval at the RETARDED MAN. MIDDLE AGED WOMAN grabs RETARDED MAN and pulls him away from HARRY.)

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN: Now, it's time to go. Strangers mean danger, don't ever forget that. And this one, (**nodding her head, indicating HARRY**) well...(**pause**) he means not only danger - but dirty, disgusting diseases! You get close enough and you could get lice - or worse!

(RETARDED MAN looks concerned, even a bit worried. As a result, HE puts his fingers in his mouth)

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN: STOP THAT AT ONCE! What did I tell you about putting your hands in your mouth? (**yanking RETARDED MAN's fingers out of his mouth**) Goodness! We can only hope that he didn't go the bathroom where you put your hands!

(HARRY reacts with an expression of surprise and disgust. HE shakes his head and points to himself and then to a place behind the box, denoting that HE goes over there)

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN: Come, now and stop your dawdling! We've got to get going if we are going to beat it home before the storm hits!

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