

# JUST THE MESSENGER

## By Dennis Bush

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# JUST THE MESSENGER

## A COLLECTION OF MONOLOGUES WITH A MISSION

by  
Dennis Bush

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*Just the Messenger* may be performed with 13 actors (8 female, 5 male) each performing one character/one monologue or directors may opt for fewer actors playing multiple roles. There is also gender flexibility with some of the roles. Directors are free to arrange the order of the monologues, as they choose.

## SET

*Just the Messenger* is a collection of monologues, each set in a different time and place. It can be performed on a bare stage or with very limited set pieces. Only minimal costuming is needed to suggest the characters.

## PRODUCTION HISTORY

The monologues in this collection are taken from Dennis Bush's plays, *Turn the Page*, *Play the Game*, *Scratching the Surface* and *Stop Time*. The plays from which the monologues were taken have all had readings, workshops and full productions, including performances in New York. Original performers included Alex Knerr, Jared Sikes, Ben Whitmire, Alex Rivera, Kelsey Torstveit, Emily White, Macy Cobb, Samantha Ortiz and Ariana O'Rafter.

**JUST THE MESSENGER**  
**A Collection of Monologues with a Mission**

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**Just the Messenger**

**WYATT: Delivers messages.**

I get the messages through my bluetooth earpiece. Loud and clear. Clearer than a cellphone conversation. I get the messages and I deliver them. The delivery can be complicated. “Kick his head like it was a soccer ball.” I got that one last week. I don’t question the messages. That’s not my job. I just deliver them. I’m only the messenger. *(pause)* So, I kicked some guy’s head like it was a soccer ball. Not just any guy. I didn’t go up to a random guy and start kicking his head. The message is always for a specific person. I always know when I find the correct recipient because I hear the beep in my ear like when your bluetooth earpiece connects to your cellphone. I hear the beep and whoever I’m next to gets the message. “Spray paint her bathroom black.” That one came yesterday. The message was clear, but the delivery was a challenge. “Spray paint her bathroom black.” *(quick pause)* I had to follow her home, insinuate my way into her apartment and find the bathroom. She had seven pairs of shoes on her bathroom floor. I think that’s excessive. I don’t think anyone needs seven pairs of shoes. And, if they have seven pairs of shoes, they shouldn’t keep them on their bathroom floor. *(back to his story)* She didn’t even know I was in her apartment. She was oblivious. It only took a few minutes to spray paint her bathroom. I painted the towels, too. And all seven pairs of shoes on the floor. When I was bending over to spray the shoes, the paint fumes gave me a little buzz. That was a bonus. *(quick pause)* I love it when there’s a bonus with a message delivery. *(pause)* I got a date out of a delivery, last Saturday. That was a bonus. The message was: “Kiss her. And use a lot of tongue.” So, I did. She was incredibly hot. She opened her mouth and let me deliver the message. She was clearly a woman who liked a lot of tongue. *(quick pause)* Not everyone does. *(pause)* We went out on Monday night. I got two messages during dinner. I can’t ignore messages. You can’t do that. *(ominously)* You really can’t do that. So, I spit in her food. And I cut a loud fart. Those were the messages. They came so quickly that I wasn’t sure whether I was supposed to spit in her food while I was cutting a loud fart or do them separately. Accurate delivery of the messages is crucial. *(pause)*

The date was over pretty quickly after that. I can't blame her. Lois Lane and Superman didn't have it easy. And Batman never had any women who stuck around very long. It's difficult being romantically involved with a super hero. It just is. (*quick pause*) But that's a sacrifice I have to make. (*pause; a simple fact*) I don't have a choice.

**END OF PLAY**

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## Conspiracy Theory

**SHEILA: Refuses to be silent anymore.**

*(SHE has had just enough to drink to consider herself quite wise, but is not drunk.)*

My daughter loves cookie dough ice cream. You don't know my daughter. *(pause)* I don't really know her, either. I mean, does *anybody* really know anybody else. I do know that eating raw cookie dough can give you worms if you eat enough of it. It's true. *(quick pause)* Eating raw cookie dough can give you worms if you eat enough of it. *(quick pause)* I do know that eating raw cookie dough can give you worms if you eat enough of it. So, I'm sure my daughter has worms. Worms aren't something you can play around with. If you get worms, you have a serious problem. I have warned my daughter repeatedly about the connection between cookie dough and worms but she ignores me. She never listens to anything I say. I might as well be talking to the wall. If she was smart, she'd pay attention to me. I have knowledge to share . . . wisdom to impart. I have learned a lot of things in my life and hearing about them from me would save her from having to learn the lessons herself the hard way. *(a major announcement)* Sitting on cold concrete makes you constipated. *(pause)* It's true. It's the God's honest truth. But that information is being kept from the public because of a conspiracy between the media, the medical community and the makers of laxatives. If people knew about the effects of sitting on cold concrete and could do something about it, how much Ex-Lax or Metamusil do you think they'd sell? Somebody is slipping somebody some cash . . . some payola . . . to keep it quiet. The cookie dough people have got to be doing the same thing. They've created a marketing juggernaut. A complete and total juggernaut. Look how pervasive cookie dough has become. It used to be the only time there was cookie dough was before it was baked into cookies. But, now? Now, it's in ice cream and . . . it's in *several* brands of ice cream. And why? To give people worms. The pharmaceutical companies are involved. I'd bet money on it. They must not be selling enough worm medicine for dogs, so they want to branch out into humans, too. They're playing with our lives. They're playing with *worms*. And they're smart. They are *diabolical*. No one would think that cookie dough could be so harmful. They're counting on our ignorance. They *always* count on our ignorance. But I know about the cookie dough and the worms. And I'm not going to be silent.

**END OF PLAY**

## An Eyeful

**BRADLEY:** Tries to clear up the confusion.

I'm not paranoid. (*quick pause*) I'm not, so let's get that cleared up right away. (*quick pause*) So there's no confusion. (*quick pause*) So you don't have any incorrect information. (*quick pause*) So we all understand that what's going on is *not* paranoia. OK? Because it's not. (*quick pause*) I am not paranoid. (*pause*) I am *thoughtful*. I *think* about things. I ruminate. I am full of thoughts and, sometimes, thoughtful people are perceived to be paranoid. Their thoughtfulness is misconstrued. And I don't want that to happen. (*pause*) Just because I believe that tapioca pudding is a bowlful of mucus-covered eyes that look back at you when you eat it, does not mean that I'm paranoid. It means that I don't like to be watched by my dessert. (*pause*) I don't think it was a coincidence that, when my neighbors had come over for dinner, last night, they served tapioca pudding. (*pause*) They've been watching me. I know that. They have a secret camera hidden in the clock on my microwave. It's a micro-camera that uses microfilm. (*pause*) They're using time as a weapon. (*quick pause*) Just like my father did when he gave me time limits to eat. (*quick pause*) Ten minutes for dinner. (*quick pause*) No time to play with my food. (*getting increasingly agitated*) Food is not a toy. (*filled with rage*) Your dinner plate is not an amusement park! (*pause*) So, when my neighbors put the bowl of tapioca pudding in front of me, I walked out. I wasn't about to sit in their kitchen being watched. I can sit in my own kitchen and have them watch me through the camera in my microwave clock. I'm not going to be watched by the tapioca pudding in their kitchen just to make it more convenient for them. That's not how I roll. So I left. (*quick pause*) They pretended to be surprised. They're devious. But I'm on to them. So, I walked out. (*quick pause*) I've walked out of restaurants for the same reason. If I see tapioca pudding on the menu, I know what kind of set up they have. I wasn't born yesterday. And if somebody at the table next to where I'm sitting orders tapioca pudding, I get up and leave—even if I'm not finished eating. (*his body begins to shake*) I'm not going to have them all look at me from the corner of their eyes. No way. Because that's worse than having the little eyes make eye contact with you. (*HE is visibly shaking, but trying to regain control of himself*) Think about that. Think about *that!*

**END OF PLAY**

## Honoring the Cow

### **CAMDEN: A protest.**

“Civilized societies don’t eat animals.” (*quick pause*) I have a shirt with that on it. I’m not wearing it today, because I’m not on duty. I’m not affiliated with any formal organization or group. I’m a voluntary militant. I’m a one-woman army. And my t-shirt is my uniform. It’s a uniform and a warning. (*pause*) People sitting in the food court at the mall shoving a cheeseburger into their faces should heed the warning. (*strongly*) They need to be punished. *Anyone* eating meat in public deserves to be dragged down the street behind a car. (*pause*) I know what you’re thinking. How can she be such a veggie-vigilante when she’s wearing a fabulous pair of leather boots? (*pause; indignant*) I didn’t go shopping for a cow. I went shopping for *shoes*. I didn’t kill the cow. The cow was already dead. Using its hide for shoes is a way to give a second life to the animal. It’s reincarnation. It honors the past life of the cow. I believe that. It’s a fact.

**END OF PLAY**



## A Different Name

**JOHN: Finds a way to be anybody but himself.**

I give them a different name. Whenever I go to a restaurant where they ask me for my name—you know, so they can call you when your food's ready or when they have a table for you—whenever I go to a place like that . . . I never use my own name. I've been Chris, Jim, Bill, Mike, Tim and Tom (*explaining*) I was on a one-syllable-name streak for a while . . . Lately, I've been getting more creative. Yesterday, at the Big-Man Burger down on 2nd Avenue, when they asked for my name, I told 'em I was Afsheen. You have to say it with confidence, like there's no doubt. Like there's no way I could be anybody but Afsheen. When it's a name like that, it helps if you spell it for 'em. It adds that extra level of certainty. So, I was like, A-F-S-H-E-E-N. Like, I dare you to think my name's not Afsheen. I dare you. I *am* Afsheen. I'm Afsheen and you're not. (*cocky*) He believed me. (*quick pause*) The guy at Big-Man Burger totally believed that I was Afsheen. He totally believed it. (*pause*) I'm digging the A's. I feel a run of A names coming on. I may go way out there, next time. I may go all Egyptian. I may be Ahmenhotep. You have to seriously own that name. You can't just mumble it. You have to be like, "Heck, yeah, I am Ahmenhotep."

**END OF PLAY**

## Choose or Lose

### **CASSIE: Plays the game.**

Playing the game is a choice. You can choose to play or not. Most people don't see it that way and they end up falling somewhere in between play and not play. (*quick pause*) In a kind of passive, too-afraid-to-make-a-choice place. I like to put people in a position where they have to make a choice. Choose or lose. I am constantly on the lookout for situations like that. Sometimes, they find me. I was at a party and an older woman—not too much older; maybe like 15 years older than me—asked me the question everybody always asks everybody else at parties: “What do you do?” And I decided that this was the moment where this woman and I were both gonna find out what she was made of. So, I said, “Wrestle alligators.” I said it without blinking or looking away. “I wrestle alligators,” I repeated, just to make sure there was no way she could shake off the first time I said it like she didn't hear me right with all the party noise. (*pause*) When somebody asks you what you do and you say something like “I wrestle alligators,” you've put them in a position where they have to make a choice. Are they gonna play the game or not? It's taking the Hey, how ya doin' today a big step further. The lady blinked slowly and deliberately, like this. (*SHE demonstrates*) And she smiled. And I could see a little sparkle in her eye. I knew she was gonna play. People who have a sparkle in their eye are people who play the game. The don't just sit on the sidelines and dream about what it would be like to be somebody who is in the game. “That must be very exciting work.” (*quick pause*) That's what the lady said. Not, “Oh, how dreadfully dangerous” or anything that you might expect from a woman her age. No way. This woman was ready for life. “That must be very exciting work.” I loved her. So, now that she was playing, I had to take it up a notch. “It is,” I told her. “It's a nice change from being a birthing coach to pygmy elephants.” I don't know where I got the idea for pygmy elephants. I was giddy. I liked the oxymoron of pygmy and elephants. “I rode an elephant in India,” she said. “I was part of an expedition tracking poachers who kill elephants for their ivory tusks.” (*pause*) I nearly squealed. This woman was playing the game! She was a freakin' all-star. I loved her. I wanted to take her home to meet my boyfriend. And, then, she opened her purse and pulled out pictures of herself—pictures of herself *on an elephant . . . in India . . . on an actual expedition* to track poachers who kill elephants for their ivory tusks!” (*pause*) I was a little embarrassed that I'd lied about being a birthing coach for pygmy elephants but, if I hadn't said that, I'd never have heard about her adventure and seen the pictures of it. And, besides, I don't really

consider it lying, when you're playing the game. *(pause)* I'm pretty sure she knew I'd never been a pygmy elephant birthing coach or an alligator wrestler. I'm almost positive that she knew. But she didn't say anything. She didn't need to. We talked for about two hours. We're going to dinner and a movie, next week. Her husband travels a lot, so she likes to do things with friends when he's away. If we hadn't played the game, we wouldn't have gotten any farther than a quick hello over the spinach dip. *(pause)* Choose or lose. Play the game.

**END OF PLAY**

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## Controlling the Chaos

### **NINA: Wants to bring order to a chaotic world.**

I'm like a bounty hunter . . . I'm the long arm of the law. I bring order to chaos. Somebody has to. There's a lot of chaos out there. And not just *out there*. There's chaos (*SHE gestures to the room*) *in here* and (*SHE indicates her own head.*) *in here* and (*SHE holds up a Word Search book*) *in here*. (*pause*) Word Search puzzles are a metaphor for life. There are all sorts of ideas . . . and thoughts . . . floating around without structure or organization—like words hidden in a chaotic jumble of letters that aren't part of those words. (*pause; giving an example*) It's like when you're in an elevator and you have an idea but you can't really focus on it because of all the ideas the other people have in their heads and the music in the elevator and the dinging of the bell that tells you when the door is going to open. It's chaos. (*pause*) So, I do Word Searches. I study the list of words—I establish the necessary goals and objectives and, then, I start to *corral* the words like they're calves that need roping. It's no accident that it's a circle—an oval—that goes around the words when you find them. It's like a *lasso*. (*pause*) I do a Word Search every morning while I eat breakfast. It gets my day started on the right foot. It sets the tone. If I can control the chaos of the Word Search, then, I can control the chaos I encounter out in the world. It also keeps my hands busy. That's a necessary goal and objective. Otherwise, I'd reach right through the TV screen and slap the people on the morning shows. *All* of the morning TV shows. They're all the same. Very perky people talking about the news like it was entertainment. People being gunned down in a parking lot is not entertainment. It is *not* entertainment. It is *not* something to be shoehorned between the results of a wedding-planning contest and a segment on cooking with curry! (*pause*) I keep a list. A list of people who should be slapped. And the people on the morning shows are at the top of the list. Perkiness is running rampant. Happy talk is like a plague on our world. The list isn't limited to morning shows, though. It includes people on all kinds of shows. Afternoon talk shows, infomercials, soap operas. Sportscasters, too. Almost all of 'em. (*pause; then, with enthusiasm*) The technology is out there. Slap-O-Vision is a reality. I'm sure of it. It's the next step beyond touch screens. Of course, we have to establish rules and parameters for using it. People can't just reach through their TV screens and slap anyone they want to, all willy-nilly. That would be anarchy. And the only thing worse than chaos is anarchy. (*pause*) As I see it, people would have to be approved and certified to receive slapping privileges. And no one could use more than five slaps per month—for a total of sixty slaps each year.

Unused slaps would carry over from month to month but not from year to year. You couldn't buy any more slaps after you'd used up your allotment and you couldn't give your slaps away to somebody else if you weren't using your own, though I can't imagine a scenario where anyone wouldn't use their own slaps. Unless they were paralyzed from the neck down and lost the ability to slap. But that would fall under extenuating circumstances. In that case, I suppose you could have a designated slapper. I would volunteer to be the designated slapper for anyone in my area who is approved and certified. I would view it as a civic duty—a way of doing my part to corral the chaos in my community. *(pause; reflecting)* People who were getting slapped would have to have some rights, too. There would have to be a maximum number of slaps a person could receive within a 24-hour period or else people would have bruises and hand prints on their faces—though a few faces with hand prints on them would serve as a deterrent to slap-worthy behavior. It would go a long way in reining in the chaos. I'm ready to lend a hand, so to speak. I'm the long arm of the law. *(pause)* We have to control the chaos before we can move on to the next set of goals and objectives. It's exactly like having to find all the words in a Word Search puzzle before you can turn the page and start on a new one . . . It's just the way it is.

**END OF PLAY**

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