

PUTTING HER ON HOLD

Comedic Duet

by
John C. Havens



Brooklyn Publishers, LLC

Toll-Free 888-473-8521

Fax 319-368-8011

Web www.brookpub.com

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At Rise: CHARLIE walks onstage. If costumes are used, HE may wear a jacket and tie or any piece to denote HE is working in an office setting. After HE reaches center stage, HE makes the sound of a phone ringing and mimes picking up the phone. The challenge and fun of this piece is for the actor to go between the roles of CHARLIE and CALLER quickly and fluidly, building in speed and intensity until the surprise ending of the piece.

CHARLIE: **(sound of phone ringing; HE picks up)** Quality Banking, Checking Division, where our checking is free but our customer service is priceless. How may I help you?

(At this point, HE becomes CALLER on the phone. This can be denoted by dropping the phone to his side or turning his head. CALLER speaks in a high-pitched voice with a hint of a European or Indian accent and is hard to hear except at certain points where SHE is trying to make her point.)

CALLER: Yes, I'd like to speak to Mr. Sevenallangetti.....

CHARLIE: I'm sorry, who would you....

CALLER: **(clears throat loudly, then softly says)** Mr. Allenberry-rastafaria....

CHARLIE: I'm sorry, sir, I can't hear you.

CALLER: I'm not a sir.

CHARLIE: Okay, well, miss...

CALLER: No.

CHARLIE: Okay, Miss Noh.

CALLER: No, not Noh.

CHARLIE: Yes?

CALLER: Correct.

CHARLIE: Uh, right. So um... ma'am?

CALLER: Ma'am? **(laughter)**

CHARLIE: **(pause)** Right, um, anyway, how may I direct your call?

CALLER: Dee-rect...

CHARLIE: Whom would you like to speak to?

CALLER: I do not know this whom.

CHARLIE: No, whom is not a person, whom is another way of saying who...

CALLER: I told you who.

CHARLIE: You mean who you want to speak to?

CALLER: Whom I want to speak to?

CHARLIE: Yeah, whatever, I don't know the grammar here...

CALLER: I am not your grandmother. **(pause)**

CHARLIE: Right, so anyway, how can I help you?

CALLER: I told you.

CHARLIE: Right, I'm sorry. What's the name of the person you want to speak to again?

CALLER: **(sighs)** Fine, I will tell you again. **(pause)** A. Rastaallla-mmann...

CHARLIE: Rastaman....

CALLER: Rangy O'tangy... lu lu lu lu **(various and strange mouth noises)**

CHARLIE: **(pause)** You mind spelling that for me?

CALLER: **(sighs)** L M N O R S L E...

CHARLIE: **(trying to follow)** L M N O R S L E...

CALLER: D D D L T S R Q Q Q Q Q Q Q Q....

CHARLIE: Okay, you lost me after the fourth Q.

CALLER: Q what?

CHARLIE: No, the fourth Q. Fourth Q! **(pause)**

CALLER: I did not expect such language from you, sir.

CHARLIE: I'm sorry. My name is Charlie by the way.

CALLER: Charlie?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

CALLER: Can you spell that for me?

CHARLIE: Um, sure. C H A R L I E. **(pause)** Ma'am?

CALLER: Yes, Charlie?

CHARLIE: I just wondered where you went. You got kind of quiet is all.

CALLER: I just enjoy listening to the sound of your voice. **(pause)**

CHARLIE: Okay, tell you what. What's the first name of the person you're looking for?

CALLER: Akbhar.

CHARLIE: Akbhar?

CALLER: Akbhar.

CHARLIE: Okay, great. Akbhar. I'm just going to check with someone to see...

CALLER: Please don't put me on hold.

CHARLIE: It'll be just a second.

CALLER: I'm asking you to please not put me on hold.

CHARLIE: Look, I'm sorry, but it's my first day on a new temp job, so I have to check with someone...

CALLER: Oh, you will not be wanting to put me on hold, Mr. Charlie.

CHARLIE: But, look... **(comes up with a lie to put her on hold)** Now I have two other lines lighting up. I have to get the phone, okay? That's my job.

CALLER: Don't do it.

CHARLIE: Just a second.

CALLER: Don't... do... it.

CHARLIE: Just one little...

CALLER: Oh, please, I am begging...

CHARLIE: Just a second.

CALLER: DO NOT EVEN CONSIDER PUTTING ME ON...

CHARLIE: **(puts her on hold by saying "click"; sighs to himself)** What time is it? **(checks watch)** 9:15. **(pretends to look through a company directory)** Okay. Akbhar, Akbhar... there's no FREAKING Akbhar in the company, first OR last name. Right. So, here we go... **(clicks back to speak with CALLER)** Um, hello... you? **(silence)** Hello? **(silence)** Hellooooo. **(sighs)** Where'd she go? I didn't mean to hang up on her. Darn it. I hate temping. Nobody talks to me. Just set me down at a phone, talk to me like an idiot, like I'm a machine. "What should I do, Mr. Angry Looking Man in bad fitting suit?" "Just answer the phone and take messages. Pick up the phone when it rings." "Okay. Where's the lunch room? How about the bathroom?" Does Mr. Angry Looking Man respond? Noooooo. That would be too human. That would mean we were sort of equals in his estimation, right? **(pause; sighs)** Still. I can't believe that woman hung up on me.

CALLER: I did not hang up.

CHARLIE: Oh, sorry. Look, there's no Akbhar...

CALLER: I asked you not to put me on hold.

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