

RETURN TO SENDER

TEN-MINUTE PLAY

By Matt Thompson

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A Ten Minute Comedy Duet

By Matt Thompson

SYNOPSIS: Wilbur is the post office's latest employee-of-the-month, but the strain of the holidays begins to take its toll when a customer hits Wilbur's last nerve and he takes out his frustration in a very unique way.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 male)

WILBUR (m) *(65 lines)*

DEWEY (m) *(61 lines)*

SETTING: *A post office. Christmas time.*

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AT RISE: WILBUR stands behind the counter. He is literally wrapped up in a red, white, and blue postal uniform. There is a counter with some ledges underneath that WILBUR can pull items from. He hums a little tune to himself as he writes on a piece of paper standing behind the counter. He looks off stage to some imaginary customers and smiles. Beat. He speaks crisp and curt.

WILBUR: I'm not open.

He looks down again, writes something on a piece of paper for a while. Beat. He looks up, smiles, and puts out his hand as if to stop an imaginary customer.

WILBUR: I'm not open.

Another smile as he puts away what he was writing and pulls out something new to write. He scribbles a few notes and then puts it away. Without looking up, he yells:

WILBUR: Next!

DEWEY, an average type of fellow, enters with an envelope and waits at the counter. WILBUR continues writing on the same piece of paper.

DEWEY: Hi, I'd like to -

WILBUR puts up his hand in the "stop" motion as he continues to write.

DEWEY: Sure.

WILBUR continues writing. After a while he finishes his writing and puts it under the counter.

WILBUR: *(With incredible chipperness.)* Happy Holidays, and welcome to the U.S. Postal service branch number 5578641. Espresso?

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WILBUR places a small espresso cup on the counter.

DEWEY: Uh . . . no thanks.

WILBUR: *(Pulling up a baguette from behind the counter.)*
Baguette?

DEWEY: Okay. *(He takes the bread.)* Look, I seem to have a problem. This letter was sent back to me.

WILBUR: You have the sender's address?

DEWEY: Yes.

WILBUR: You have a return address?

DEWEY: Yes.

WILBUR: *(Putting out his hand.)* May I?

DEWEY: Uh . . . Sure.

WILBUR snatches the letter from DEWEY's hand. He examines it closely and for quite some time. He sniffs it, scrutinizes it.

WILBUR: You need a stamp.

DEWEY: No, I don't.

WILBUR: Yes, you do.

DEWEY: No, I don't.

WILBUR: Of course you do. This letter has not a stamp. So, in order to mail it, it needs a stamp. Would you like to buy a single stamp or a book? This month is *McDonald's Month*. Our Grimace stamps are neat!

DEWEY: Look, I don't want to buy a stamp.

WILBUR: Then this conversation is over.

WILBUR grabs the baguette from DEWEY and puts the espresso cup behind the counter.

WILBUR: Next!

DEWEY: Now, wait a minute. Look, buddy I put a Christmas card in my neighbor's mailbox, who's out of town, and someone keeps putting it back in my mailbox.

WILBUR: *(With reproach.)* You put the letter in *his* mailbox?

DEWEY: Yes.

WILBUR: (*Aghast.*) You can't do that.

DEWEY: Why not?

WILBUR: Because that's our job.

DEWEY: He lives right next door. I was helping you out.

WILBUR: Were you? Were you "helping us out"? Do you know where we would be without the United States Postal Service?

DEWEY: I don't know.

WILBUR: We would all be at U.P.S! And do you know what that would mean? We would have to wear brown! Imitating a postal worker is a federal offense Section 39-X, Paragraph H.

DEWEY: I wasn't imitating a postal worker I was mailing a letter.

WILBUR: Well, why didn't you put a stamp on it like everyone else!

DEWEY: Because he lives right next door.

WILBUR: Are you too cheap to buy a stamp?

DEWEY: No, look, I told you before, I just want to drop off the letter and -

WILBUR: You cannot put anything in someone else's mailbox!

DEWEY: Why not?

WILBUR: Because we own your mail!

DEWEY: You don't own my Christmas cards!

WILBUR: No, but we have exclusive rights to mail your Christmas cards!

DEWEY: What are you saying? That you own my mailbox as well?

WILBUR: No, that would be silly. We just own the space inside it.

DEWEY: You can't own the air!

WILBUR: We can and we do. We're the United States Postal Service!

DEWEY: Well, what if you deliver the mail through a slot in the door?

WILBUR: We own the drop zone.

DEWEY: Drop zone?

WILBUR: We own the space from where the letters enter the slot to where they fall on the ground. Now, give me that letter. I'm going to put a stamp on it once and for all.

WILBUR grabs one end of the letter as the two start a tug of war.

WILBUR: Come on now, nice and slow. We don't want any trouble.

DEWEY: Let go!

WILBUR: Ahhh!

DEWEY: Let go! Let go!

DEWEY finally wins. He is out of breath.

DEWEY: This is ridiculous! I'm outta here!

WILBUR: Good, and remember we know where you live!

DEWEY takes his letter and exits.

WILBUR: NEXT!

The lights fade as music plays. The next day. Lights up. WILBUR is now a little frazzled-looking, not so together. He is looking down at the counter, writing something whistling a holiday tune. Without his knowledge, DEWEY has entered, with a beat-up mailbox.

WILBUR: Happy Holiday and welcome to the – (*Recognizing DEWEY.*) Oh, it's you.

DEWEY: Aren't you going to offer me a holiday treat?

WILBUR: Sure. (*Pulling out a hamburger bun.*) Hamburger bun?

DEWEY: No thanks.

WILBUR: What can I do for you, sir?

DEWEY: I want you to buy me a new mailbox.

WILBUR: And why's that?

DEWEY: Well, last night some wiseacre smashed my mailbox with a baseball bat -

WILBUR: Softball.

DEWEY: *Softball* bat. And you said yesterday that the post office owned the space inside the mailbox. So, you can't own the space inside the mailbox without owning the mailbox itself so I figure you owe me a mailbox and a very special one. I'd like the one that looks like a humpback whale where you raise the fins to signal it's time for collection.

WILBUR: I'll bet you'd like that, wouldn't you?

DEWEY: I'd like to bust your face open!

WILBUR: Customer service is to your left!

DEWEY: (*Very agitated.*) I'm gonna give you *my* left in just a minute! What's your name? (*Reading his name tag.*) Wilbur? Wilbur. Okay, Wilbur -

WILBUR: I'll tell you what sir, why don't you just wait here and I'll get my office manager. How does that sound?

DEWEY: That's the first reasonable thing you've said.

WILBUR: Wonderful. Just a minute. (*Gesturing to the hamburger bun.*) Please, help yourself.

WILBUR smiles, curtly and exits. DEWEY waits. He looks at the hamburger bun, picks it up and takes a bite. WILBUR returns as "The Manager." He is dressed exactly the same. He simply has taken off his name tag and put on a hat and possibly a fake mustache.

WILBUR: Happy Holidays sir, and welcome to the U.S. Postal service branch number 5578641. I'm the manager, how can I help you?

DEWEY just stares at WILBUR for a second.

DEWEY: What's your name?

WILBUR: (*Beat.*) Ed - wardo.

DEWEY: Edwardo?

WILBUR: Yes, sir. Now as you can see we have quite a line, so how can I help you?

DEWEY: You're the same guy.

WILBUR: Excuse me?

DEWEY: You're the same guy I was just talking to. Wilbur. You're Wilbur.

WILBUR: Wilbur? Wilbur? Hmm? I'm sorry I don't know any Wilbur. Having trouble with your mailbox?

DEWEY: No, you're the same guy. You're Wilbur.

WILBUR: No, I'm not.

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