

THE SERVICE

By Mike Willis

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CHARACTERS

THE WOMAN

A woman twenty-five to fifty. Her hair is severely tied back and SHE is dressed in a dark business suit. THE WOMAN appears to be all-business with an aura of aloofness about her. SHE is brusque and to-the-point, in a nutshell, SHE is rude. SHE often seems pre-occupied and bored. THE WOMAN is a game-player.

THE CUSTOMER

A man twenty-five to fifty. HE is well-dressed but casual. THE CUSTOMER is your average, likeable, everyday citizen.

THE BOSS

The owner of The Service. A man or woman forty to sixty. THE BOSS is dressed in a business suit. HE or SHE is businesslike and pleasant.

SCENE

The reception area of The Service.

TIME

The present.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The Service, is easily stage on a bare-stage using three desks and props. The play offers flexible casting. The part of The Boss can be played by a man or a woman. The Woman should be played all-business, to the point of being rude. Optional props include computer stations and telephones on all of the desks. Separate lighting for each of the desks is *not* advised as it needs to be apparent that The Woman could easily have helped The Customer from the receptionist's desk.

PROPS

3 OFFICE DESKS WITH CHAIRS

TELEPHONE WITH ANSWERING MACHINE (on receptionist's desk)

3 NOTEPADS (one on each desk)

ASSORTED PENCILS AND PENS (some for each desk)

RECEPTIONIST NAMEPLATE (on receptionist's desk)

SIGN READING STATION 1

SIGN READING STATION 2

PAPERS FOR A RESUME

ASSORTED PAPERWORK ON ALL OF THE DESKS

A BELL (on receptionist's desk)

SIGN READING; RING FOR SERVICE (next to the bell)

OPTIONAL PROPS

A computer screen and keypad at each desk or a laptop along with telephones for the station 1 and station 2 desks.

COSTUMING

Current day no special needs.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The Service, is easily staged on a bare-stage using three desks and props. The play offers flexible casting. The part of THE BOSS can be played by a man or a woman and with some minor line changes the part of THE CUSTOMER may also be played by a man or woman.

HISTORY

The Service, was a winner in the 24th Annual Wauwatosa Village Playhouse's One-Act Playwriting Contest. The first staged performance was by the Village Playhouse of Wauwatosa, Wisconsin on May 8th 2009. The director was Laura Kohn LaPinske and the original cast consisted of:

The Boss - Brad Hightdudis

The Woman - Brianna Hubbard

The Customer - Michael LaPinske

DEDICATION

The Service, is dedicated to anyone who has ever experienced problems with customer services.

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ACT I

SCENE 1

SETTING: We are in the reception area of The Service. There are three desks on stage. Each desk has a bell on it with a sign that reads, Ring For Service. Three chairs are arranged around each desk, one for the person working behind the desk and the others in front of the desk for customers. The desks are placed down-stage right, up-stage center and stage left. On the down-stage right desk there also sits a telephone and a nameplate that says, Receptionist. The up-stage center desk has a sign on the front of it that reads, Station 1. The stage left desk has a similar sign that reads, Station 2. There are stacks of file folders and papers on each desk.

AT RISE: *THE BOSS* and *THE WOMAN* are standing center-stage. *THE WOMAN* has a purse slung over her shoulder watching *THE BOSS* as *HE* reviews some papers that *HE* is holding.

THE BOSS: (Looking at the papers.) You know ... this is all very interesting.

THE WOMAN: I'm glad that you think so.

THE BOSS: Yes, very interesting indeed.

THE WOMAN: I thought so.

THE BOSS: Do you have any more to add to it?

THE WOMAN: No ... no, I can't recall anything right off hand.

THE BOSS: Well, I'm really not sure how I should proceed with this.

THE WOMAN: Nor am I ... but then, you're the boss.

THE BOSS: Yes I am, aren't I?

THE WOMAN: Yes, yes you are.

THE BOSS: Well, then ... I had best go and make a few calls to see if I can gather any additional information.

THE WOMAN: Sounds like a plan.

THE BOSS: A plan, yes ... I'll be right back.

THE WOMAN: I'll be here.

(*THE BOSS* exits stage left. *THE WOMAN* crosses to the receptionist's desk stage right. *SHE* sits in the receptionist's chair behind the desk and

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takes a nail file from her purse and begins filing her nails. The phone on the desk rings. THE WOMAN starts to answer it, but then decides to ignore it and returns to filing her nails. The answering machine picks up.)

ANSWERING MACHINE: *(in a pleasant female voice)* Good day, you have reached, The Service. I am sorry, but all of our lines are either busy or we are not in the office today. Our normal office hours are Monday through Friday eight am to five pm. We are pleased that you chose to call, The Service, where we supply all of the services that you might require for your everyday living. We pride ourselves in our ability to customize our service to fit each customer's, specific needs. Remember our motto; "Service is, as Service does." We hope you have a pleasant day and if you would care to leave a message please do so after the beep and we will return your call.

(The machine beeps and a voice comes on the machine with a message.)

CALLER ON THE MACHINE: *(whiny, nasally voice)* Yes, my name is Gerald Louis Grenaldi and I would like some information regarding extermination service ... uh, especially for lice and fleas and also some flower-bed fertilization service and maybe a good septic cleaning, my toilet backed up and oh, uh ... do you have a dating service? I could sure use a date. My number is 333-1416 ... uh, uh ... I guess that's all, bye.

(The phone clicks off. THE WOMAN finishes filing her nails and begins looking through the folders on the desk. THE CUSTOMER enters from stage-right and approaches the reception desk. THE WOMAN continues looking through the folders, ignoring him.)

THE CUSTOMER: Uh, excuse me.

(THE WOMAN continues to ignore him.)

Helloooo? I said, excuse me.

THE WOMAN: *(looking up unsmiling)* What, for?

THE CUSTOMER: *What, for?*

THE WOMAN: What should I excuse you for?

THE CUSTOMER: Well, I don't know, I ...

THE WOMAN: If you don't know why you want to be excused then how do you expect me to know? Do you have to go to the bathroom?

THE CUSTOMER: *What?!*

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THE WOMAN: It's not a difficult question. Do you have to go to the bathroom?

THE CUSTOMER: *No!*

THE WOMAN: Then what do you need to be excused for?

THE CUSTOMER: Nothing!

THE WOMAN: Then why did you say, excuse me?

THE CUSTOMER: I don't know.

THE WOMAN: Well, if you don't know, I certainly don't, you're the one who said it.

THE CUSTOMER: (*more composed*) Look, forget I said excuse me, I'm here because my family just moved to town and I was told that if we had any needs for a specific service, this was the place to come. This is The Service, isn't it?

THE WOMAN: What's it say on the door?

THE CUSTOMER: It says, The Service.

THE WOMAN: This must be The Service then, why else would it be written on the door?

THE CUSTOMER: I don't know, look ...

THE WOMAN: Well, if you don't know, I ...

THE CUSTOMER: *Certainly don't!* Yeah, okay, I get it.

THE WOMAN: No need to be rude.

THE CUSTOMER: What? Rude? Me? Why ... look, I may be in need of some services, can I get those services here?

THE WOMAN: Maybe.

THE CUSTOMER: Maybe? What kind of answer is that?

THE WOMAN: A short one.

THE CUSTOMER: Let me be more specific ... do you have dog services?

THE WOMAN: Not here.

THE CUSTOMER: You mean to tell me you do not provide services for dogs?

THE WOMAN: Not at this station. This is the reception station.

THE CUSTOMER: Ohhhkay ... should I want to enquire about services for dogs, what station would I go to?

THE WOMAN: (*pointing*) That would be ... uh, station number 2.

THE CUSTOMER: Thank, you.

THE WOMAN: No, problem.

(THE CUSTOMER crosses to the desk at station 2 and rings the bell. THE WOMAN lets out a large sigh, rises and reluctantly crosses and sits behind the desk at station 2. SHE picks up a pad and pencil.)

THE CUSTOMER: What? I thought you were the receptionist.

THE WOMAN: That was at the other desk. This is the station 2 desk.

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THE CUSTOMER: But, you're the same person, why couldn't you just help me over there?

THE WOMAN: Because, that is *not* the dog services desk. That desk is the ...

THE CUSTOMER: *Reception desk!* I know, look ... I would like some services for my dog.

THE WOMAN: What kind?

THE CUSTOMER: You know ... walking, grooming ...

THE WOMAN: Of, dog?

THE CUSTOMER: What? What difference does it make what kind of dog it is? All I want is ...

THE WOMAN: Sir, we are highly specialized here. What kind of dog is it?

THE CUSTOMER: It's part Lab and part Huskie.

THE WOMAN: (*writing on a pad*) Muskie.

THE CUSTOMER: What? It's not a muskie, that's a fish. I want dog services not fish services.

THE WOMAN: Sir, your dog is a mutt.

THE CUSTOMER: He's not a mutt. He is a Lab, Huskie mix.

THE WOMAN: A part Huskie mutt. The M is for mutt and the uskie indicates that your dog is a part Huskie mix, hence our code name for your *specific* dog is Muskie.

THE CUSTOMER: That's ridiculous.

THE WOMAN: We are very customized in our services here. How old is your Muskie?

THE CUSTOMER: My *dog* is ten.

THE WOMAN: (*writing*) Senior.

THE CUSTOMER: What?

THE WOMAN: Your Muskie is a senior citizen. All dogs ten and over are considered senior citizens and require special care.

THE CUSTOMER: My Muskie ... uh, my dog, is in excellent shape, he ...

THE WOMAN: That may be sir, but senior Muskies require a less strenuous program than some of the other breeds. Now, what services are you interested in purchasing for your Muskie?

THE CUSTOMER: Walking, I'd like my *dog* walked.

THE WOMAN: When?

THE CUSTOMER: I don't know, I ...

THE WOMAN: Daily? Bi-weekly? Weekly?

THE CUSTOMER: Daily, I guess.

THE WOMAN: (*writing*) Daily.

THE CUSTOMER: And I'd like him groomed.

THE WOMAN: Daily? Bi-weekly? Weekly? Monthly?

THE CUSTOMER: Monthly, would be sufficient, I would think.

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THE WOMAN: (*writing*) Groomed, monthly.

THE CUSTOMER: And I'd like him wormed.

THE WOMAN: Daily? Bi-weekly? Weekly? Mon ...

THE CUSTOMER: *Whenever!*

THE WOMAN: What?

THE CUSTOMER: Whenever ... whenever he needs it.

THE WOMAN: (*writing*) I see ... wormed, *whenever*. (to CUSTOMER)
Is there anything else?

THE CUSTOMER: No, I think that should do it.

THE WOMAN: (*looking in a folder*) Let me see if I covered everything ...
oh will your dog require clean-up?

THE CUSTOMER: Clean-up?

THE WOMAN: Yes, in the event that your Muskie feels the urge to
relieve himself of number two while he is being walked, would you
require clean-up services.

THE CUSTOMER: Well, of course I would want it cleaned up.

THE WOMAN: There is an extra charge if you require clean-up.

THE CUSTOMER: *Why wouldn't* I want clean-up?

THE WOMAN: A customer sometimes provides what we call a dumping
ground where their dogs can be walked freely without clean-up. We
also have other customers that choose to walk behind their dog as it
is being walked and perform the clean-up services themselves.

THE CUSTOMER: That doesn't make any sense. If I was going to walk
behind my dog and clean up after it, why wouldn't I just walk the dog
myself?

THE WOMAN: I don't know sir, why wouldn't you?

THE CUSTOMER: That's what I'm asking you. Never mind, forget it ...
just add in the clean-up service.

THE WOMAN: How about disposal?

THE CUSTOMER: *What?!*

THE WOMAN: After the clean-up, the waste material will require
disposal. Would you like disposal service included with your clean-
up service or do you have a disposal site of your own?

THE CUSTOMER: *No* ... I do not have a disposal site of my own.

THE WOMAN: You'll want disposal service, then?

THE CUSTOMER: Sure, why not? Disposal service ...

THE WOMAN: (*writing*) Clean-up and disposal. Will that be all, sir?

THE CUSTOMER: I certainly hope so.

THE WOMAN: All right, it will be just a minute while I customize your
service request and get you your personalized estimate for dog
services. (*looks through some files on the desk*) Oh, I'm sorry.

THE CUSTOMER: What? What is it?

THE WOMAN: We don't seem to have a listing for senior Muskies that
require monthly grooming, daily walking with clean-up and disposal

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and worming, whenever. I'm sorry sir, but it doesn't look like we will be able to service you.

THE CUSTOMER: *You've got to be kidding?!*

THE WOMAN: I don't kid, sir.

THE CUSTOMER: You have dog walking services, don't you?

THE WOMAN: Yes sir, and all of our services are designed specifically for you, our valued customer.

THE CUSTOMER: Then just give me someone who can walk my dog.

THE WOMAN: I am sorry sir, but that is just not possible. All of our services are custom designed to fit the exacting needs of our customers. To give you services short of what you asked for would undermine the integrity of our company and we cannot allow that. I am sorry, but we will be unable to provide you with dog services for your Muskie. Now, are there any other services that we may be able to supply for you?

THE CUSTOMER: Childcare, what about childcare? My wife and I will be in need of some childcare services. Do you provide childcare service?

THE WOMAN: Not here.

THE CUSTOMER: You don't supply childcare service? That's one of the basic services.

THE WOMAN: We supply it, just not here.

THE CUSTOMER: Where, then? Oh, no ... let me guess ... back at the reception desk.

THE WOMAN: Wrong ... station number 1. Please go to station number 1 to request childcare services.

(THE CUSTOMER crosses to station number 1 and rings the bell for service. THE WOMAN rises and crosses and sits in the chair behind the desk at station number 1.)

THE CUSTOMER: You, again? Let me guess ... you couldn't help me at station number 2 because station number 2 was the ...

THE WOMAN: Dog service station.

THE CUSTOMER: And station number 1 is ...

THE CUSTOMER and THE WOMAN: The childcare station.

THE CUSTOMER: Got it. Okay then ... as I was saying, my wife and I will be in need of childcare services.

THE WOMAN: What kind?

THE CUSTOMER: Daycare, babysitting ...

THE WOMAN: *Of child?*

THE CUSTOMER: What?

THE WOMAN: What kind of child do you have?

THE CUSTOMER: Human, of course.

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THE WOMAN: Caucasian? African-American? Hispanic? Oriental?
Native American? Eskimo ...

THE CUSTOMER: *Caucasian!* And what difference does it make
anyway?

THE WOMAN: I told you sir, here at The Service, we are very
specialized and pride ourselves in customizing your service. Now
then, we've established your child is caucasian, what sex?

THE CUSTOMER: Female.

THE WOMAN: Nationality?

THE CUSTOMER: *What?!*

THE WOMAN: What is the nationality of your child?

THE CUSTOMER: What has that got to do with anything?

THE WOMAN: Sir, I am just trying to find the right level of service for
your child.

THE CUSTOMER: (*giving in*) I'm of English descent and my wife is
Hungarian.

THE WOMAN: (*writing*) Englarian.

THE CUSTOMER: *What?!*

THE WOMAN: Englarian. Our code for your female half English, half
Hungarian child is, Englarian.

THE CUSTOMER: Why didn't I see that coming? Muskie for my dog ...
naturally there has to be another stupid code for my child, right?

THE WOMAN: Sir, I am just trying to get all of the facts so we can
provide the most appropriate service for your child.

THE CUSTOMER: *Appropriate?* The kid is two years old. You think
she is going to care if the babysitter feeds her sauerkraut and weiner
schnitzel instead of fish and chips and goulash?

THE WOMAN: That's not for me to say sir. Did you say that your child
was two?

THE CUSTOMER: Yes, two.

THE WOMAN: (*writing*) Toddler. (*to CUSTOMER*) She does toddle,
doesn't she?

THE CUSTOMER: What's toddle?

THE WOMAN: Walk shakily ... gets into everything.

THE CUSTOMER: Yeah, okay she toddles.

THE WOMAN: (*writing*) Toddler, with the Terrible-Twos Rider Clause.
(*to CUSTOMER*) I'm afraid you child falls under our Terrible-Twos
Rider Clause.

THE CUSTOMER: Terrible-Twos Rider Clause ... what's that?

THE WOMAN: After extensive testing under strict laboratory conditions,
experts have concluded that two year old children get into
everything. For this reason, they need closer supervision. All of our
customers who require childcare for a child two years old fall under

our Terrible-Twos Rider Clause. There is an additional charge for that.

THE CUSTOMER: (*sarcastic*) Of course.

THE WOMAN: No need for sarcasm, sir. Now, what services did you say you need for your toddling two year old female Englarian?

THE CUSTOMER: Babysitting.

THE WOMAN: (*writing*) Babysitting ... day or night?

THE CUSTOMER: What's the difference?

THE WOMAN: One dollar an hour.

THE CUSTOMER: I might have known. It will be mostly during the day, my wife and I both work.

THE WOMAN: Weekends?

THE CUSTOMER: Occasionally. Don't tell me, let me guess, that's ... double-time?

THE WOMAN: Exactly. Does your young Englarian take a nap?

THE CUSTOMER: Yes. I suppose taking a nap is extra?

THE WOMAN: No sir, taking a nap is only extra if the sitter has to sing your child to sleep. If that were to be necessary would you like your child to be sung to sleep in English or Hungarian?

THE CUSTOMER: *What?!*

THE WOMAN: English or Hungarian ... the languages specific to the origin of your child sir.

THE CUSTOMER: *Neither!*

THE WOMAN: Very well. (*writing*) Takes naps ... do not sing child to sleep. (*to CUSTOMER*) Is there anything else?

THE CUSTOMER: Like what?

THE WOMAN: I don't know sir, the two year old Englarian is yours not mine. (*short pause*) What about diapers? Are there diapers that will need changing?

THE CUSTOMER: No, she wears training pants. We're in the process of potty-train ... oh no, oh no, don't even say it ... potty-training is extra, right?

THE WOMAN: No, sir.

THE CUSTOMER: (*astonished*) *No?* You don't charge extra for potty-training? That's amazing, finally something you don't charge extra for.

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