

SUNSHINE AND MADAM ZORBA

By David LaBounty

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CHARACTERS

JENNIFER HOWELL - 16. Suffering from bone cancer.

SARA COLE - 15. Suffering from a brain tumor.

MR. COLE - 40s. Sara's father.

MS. HANSON - 40s. Sara's mother.

MRS. HOWELL - 50s. Jennifer's mother.

MR. HOWELL - 50s. Jennifer's father.

TONY - 18. Jennifer's brother.

DR. GREEN - 40s. Neurosurgeon, Sara's doctor.

DR. WILDE - 50s. Chief Neurosurgeon.

NURSE JENKINS - 30s.

GEORGE - 20s. Orderly.

SETTING

Acts 1, 2 and scene two of Act 3 take place in Room 212 of the children's ward at St. Luke's hospital. Scene 1 of Act 3 takes place in the Operating room at St. Luke's hospital.

SYNOPSIS

SARA COLE awakes to find herself in a hospital room. Her roommate, JENNIFER HOWELL informs her that SHE is a mental patient who recently tried to escape. In truth, SARA is suffering from a glioblastoma multiform - a brain tumor. JENNIFER, who is dying from bone cancer, lies to SARA, in part, because SHE is bored. After a rough start, JENNIFER and SARA learn that illness has a way of bonding two completely opposite people.

ACT 1
SCENE 1

Room 212 of the children's ward at St. Luke's Hospital. Two hospital beds face the audience. Next to each bed are an adjustable hospital tray and a chair. A TV remote sits on the tray next to JENNIFER's bed. A large curtain, which can be used to separate the two beds, has been pulled back. SARA is asleep in the bed on the left. Next to her is a door that leads to the bathroom. The other bed is empty. The stage is dark. We can just make out the silhouette of JENNIFER as SHE sits in her wheel chair, pointed to the right off stage. Slowly, the sun rises. A soft orange light starts to creep up JENNIFER's chest until it illuminates her face. SHE is wearing a blue terrycloth robe. SHE has on goofy slippers and is wearing a brightly colored bandana on her hairless head. SHE smiles at the sun as it continues to rise and fill the stage with light. SARA begins to stir in the bed on the other side of the room. SHE is dressed in a standard hospital issued gown.

JENNIFER: *(to SARA, but still looking out the window)* Good morning, Sunshine.

SARA: W-where am I?

JENNIFER: Lakeview Mental Hospital.

SARA: Mental hospital?

JENNIFER: *(turning around to face SARA)* You don't remember? Don't worry; it will all come back to you. It usually does in a couple of hours.

SARA: What am I doing here?

JENNIFER: It's where you live.

SARA: What are you talking about?

JENNIFER: *(as if this wasn't the first time SHE's been through this routine)* Your name is Jennifer Howell. You're fourteen years old and a diagnosed paranoid schizophrenic. Last night you had another one of your delusional episodes. This time they found you wandering downtown in your robe, spouting off about how the government had found a cure for cancer but wasn't releasing it because they wanted to keep the population down.

SARA: What?

JENNIFER: I know, it sounds crazy. But you can be a little weird when you go schizo.

SARA: First of all, my name isn't Jennifer, it's Sara.

JENNIFER: Delusional. That's one of your symptoms.

SARA: I am fifteen, not fourteen. I live at 406 Roosevelt street. I'm a ninth grader at Pioneer High School.

JENNIFER: That's just crazy talk.

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SARA: You're the one who's crazy.

JENNIFER: That's what I keep trying to tell the doctors. By the way, we try not to use the word crazy around here. Most of us prefer to be called 'sanity challenged.'

SARA: You said it first.

JENNIFER: I'm allowed to. I'm certifiable.

SARA: What does that mean?

JENNIFER: It means I'm certified to say the word crazy around crazy people. Duh.

SARA: I want to talk to a nurse, or a doctor.

JENNIFER: Go right ahead. Although, I don't know how willing they are going to be to talk to you. I mean you did accuse them of taking out small pieces of your brain with tweezers and selling the them to Third World countries as fertilizer.

SARA: What are you talking about? Who are you?

JENNIFER: Madam Zorba, but you can call me Jennifer.

SARA: I thought my name was Jennifer.

JENNIFER: Only on Tuesdays and Fridays, and every other Sunday of the months that have full moons.

SARA: What are you in for?

JENNIFER: Oh, I'm just here on vacation. You see, I read minds for a living. Maybe you've heard about me? I'm very famous in Wyoming. Anyway, it's very hard work reading minds. I never get a moment to myself. That's why, for three weeks out of the year, I spend some time here. This is where I go to get away from it all.

SARA: Sure you do. You're crazier than I am, and I'm not crazy.

JENNIFER: Whatever helps you get to sleep at night.

SARA: So, what's the wheelchair for?

JENNIFER: Because my legs don't work. Why else would I be in a wheelchair? I forgot how insensitive you can be after one of your episodes.

SARA: Sorry.

JENNIFER: That's quite all right.

SARA: Wait a minute. What about that thing next to you?

JENNIFER: You mean Harvey? I'm sorry, I thought I had already introduced you two. **(looking up at the IV bag hanging from the pole)** Harvey, this is Jennifer. Jennifer, Harvey.

SARA: That's an IV.

JENNIFER: Actually, he's a rabbit. **(looking back up at the bag)** What was that? No, she's not slow, she's just crazy.

SARA: Oh right. You're the one talking to a bag, who you think is a rabbit, and I'm crazy.

JENNIFER: That's what I've been trying to tell you.

SARA: Just shut up and leave me alone.

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JENNIFER: Okay, I'm sorry. You're not crazy, just a little confused. We all get that way sometimes. We'll just tell the nurse to cut back on your medication, that's all.

SARA: So how long have I been here?

JENNIFER: As far as I can figure, ten years.

SARA: Ten years!? That's impossible.

JENNIFER: It's possible. What's the last thing you remember?

SARA: I was getting ready for bed – brushing my teeth, then, I woke up here.

JENNIFER: That's part of your condition. You have these blackouts and then you wake up. The last thing you remember is actually something that never happened.

SARA: Then how come I can remember living a completely different life?

JENNIFER: The doctors call it – **(pausing as if to think of a really technical sounding term)** disassociative remembering. It's a coping mechanism.

SARA: **(reaching up and touching the bump on her forehead)** Then where did I get this?

JENNIFER: The police. If I were you, I'd file a report.

SARA: I don't believe you.

JENNIFER: You don't have to believe me if you don't want to.

(MR. COLE enters the room sipping coffee from a cup. When HE notices SARA is awake HE almost chokes on his drink in excitement.)

MR. COLE: Hey, Kiddo! You're awake!

JENNIFER: So's everyone else now.

SARA: Daddy?

MR. COLE: How do you feel?

SARA: What's my name?

MR. COLE: Sara.

SARA: How old am I?

MR. COLE: **(not understanding this line of questioning)** Fifteen.

SARA: What's my cat's name?

MR. COLE: You don't have a cat. You have a dog named Trigger. What's with the twenty questions? Are you all right?

SARA: **(looking at JENNIFER who is looking away, pretending not to be paying attention)** I'm fine now. Where am I?

MR. COLE: St. Luke's Hospital.

SARA: What happened?

MR. COLE: I don't know. Last night, I heard this loud thump and when I found you, you were lying on the bathroom floor. Out like a light. You must have blacked out.

SARA: But why did I blackout?

MR. COLE: Listen, let me go get the doctor. She wanted me to get her when you got up. **(exits)**

SARA: Why did you lie to me?

JENNIFER: To make you feel better.

SARA: How's that supposed to make me feel better?

JENNIFER: Don't you feel better now that you know you aren't in a mental hospital? No matter what the doctor comes in here and tells you, at least you know you are who you think you are.

SARA: You're weird.

JENNIFER: Yes I am.

MR. COLE: **(returns with the doctor)** Hey, Kiddo. This is Doctor Green.

DR. GREEN: **(extending her hand)** It's nice to meet you, Sara.

JENNIFER: **(mutters under her breath)** Uh oh. They're never that nice to you unless it's really bad news.

SARA: What happened to me?

DR. GREEN: You had a blackout.

SARA: Why?

DR. GREEN: Well, we don't really know yet.

JENNIFER: Translation: You have a disease we've never seen before in the entire history of medicine.

SARA: What does that mean?

DR. GREEN: It means we have to run some more tests on you.

JENNIFER: Translation: Get ready for some pain.

SARA: What kind of tests?

DR. GREEN: Oh, the usual - blood, urine. Maybe a CT scan and MRI.

SARA: When can I go home?

DR. GREEN: We want to keep you here for a few more days.

JENNIFER: Translation: You are never going home again.

DR. GREEN: Just until we know what we are dealing with here. I'll have Nurse Jenkins come get you after breakfast. She'll bring you down to the lab and we'll get started on those tests. Okay? Great. Can I talk to you out in the hallway, Mr. Cole?

MR. COLE: Sure I'll be right there. Everything's going to be all right, Kiddo.

SARA: I want to go home, Dad.

MR. COLE: I know, Kiddo. We'll get you home real soon. I'll be back in just a sec, okay?

SARA: Okay.

MR. COLE: Okay. Don't break out into a smile until I get back. **(SARA smiles.) (sternly)** Ah, what did I say?

(SARA smiles even bigger. MR. COLE smiles back and exits.)

JENNIFER: He seems like a nice guy. **(No answer from SARA.)** So, where's your mother?

SARA: (*sarcastically*) You're the mind reader, why don't you tell me?

JENNIFER: (*lowering her head and putting her hand over her eyes. SHE looks up.*) She's dead, isn't she?

SARA: No. My parents are divorced and she lives in California. God, you are morbid.

JENNIFER: Relax, it was just a guess. Besides, if she's living in California, she might as well be dead.

SARA: What's that supposed to mean?

GEORGE: (*enters carrying two breakfast trays*) Good morning, ladies. Breakfast? We have poached eggs, blueberry scones, thinly sliced steaks, and orange juice.

SARA: Really?

GEORGE: (*placing the tray on the cart and wheeling it in front of SARA*) No, not really. The eggs are powdered, the muffin is bran, and the meat is something that looks like bacon, but could just be a tongue depressor. But you know what, it's surprisingly good. You must be Sara. I'm George. I'll be your orderly for today. Well, I'll be your orderly every day. That is until you go home, then you'll have to find your own orderly.

SARA: Nice to meet you.

GEORGE: If you need anything, just buzz.

JENNIFER: Buzz! Buzz!

GEORGE: Ah, Good morning, gorgeous! Hungry?

JENNIFER: Only for you.

GEORGE: I'll take that as a yes. So what's in my fortune for today?

JENNIFER: (*lowering her head and putting her hand over her eyes. SHE looks up and smiles*) You'll meet a beautiful young lady in a wheel chair, whose name is Jennifer. You'll fall in love with this fair maiden and sweep her off her feet and away from this awful place.

GEORGE: Wow. It's amazing how a guy can have the same fortune day in and day out.

JENNIFER: Hey, I don't question Fate. I'm just a messenger - (*winces in pain and doubles over in her wheelchair*)

GEORGE: Are you okay? Do you want me to get Nurse Jenkins?

JENNIFER: (*shaking her head, SHE waits until the pain passes and rights herself*) Nah, I'm okay. Actually, I'm really not hungry.

GEORGE: Do you want me to get you something else?

JENNIFER: No. Just take it away.

GEORGE: I hate to see a good breakfast like this go to waste. Maybe I'll see if the mice in the basement are hungry. Nah, we have a hard enough time treating the sick people in this hospital. See you later.

JENNIFER: (*follows GEORGE out with her eyes and shakes her head slowly*) Now he is delicious.

SARA: What?

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