

Developed at Stage Left Theatre, presented in *LeapFest X* (Chicago, 2013)
Developed at Chicago Dramatists (2012)
Reading at American Theatre Company (Chicago, 2011)

YOUR TEACHER IS OUT TODAY

BY S. THOMASIN BARSOTTI

S. Thomasin Barsotti

barsots@gmail.com

<http://scottiebarsotti.wordpress.com>

© 2013

All rights reserved

YOUR TEACHER IS OUT TODAY (AND WILL BE OUT TOMORROW)

Lights up on a schoolteacher's desk. It has been recently disturbed. Pencil cup knocked over. Papers scattered. Chalk broken. The chair is on its end.

The classroom should include at least two doors, one that goes out to the hallway, and a second door, visible onstage, that remains locked, presumably an art supply or A/V closet. There might be some classroom-type Halloween decorations around the room. 'Tis the season.

HENRY, a man in his late 40s/50s, rumpled, tired, world-weary, enters from the hallway. He's in a suit, looks out at the audience as though they were grade-schoolers, because that's exactly what they are. He's awkward before them, and less than thrilled to be in here. Not sure how to start...

HENRY:

Hello children. Kids. Little guys.

(laughs strangely, obviously self-conscious, sighs)

Ooooooh boy. Alright.

(claps his hands)

Heeeeeey kids! No no no. Wrong tone. No. Um....Mmm. Children. Students. Ok. I have some...I have some news. It's not...ok. Your, your teacher...Mr. Klochak...has been.....arrested. Do you know what that is? What that means? Anybody?

(points at student who answers)

Yes. Yes. The cops got him. Very good. He did something wrong and the cops took him away.

(question)

What did he do? Hmm...good question. Very good question. What did he do? Well, I can't...I can't say just yet what he did, what we're pretty sure he did. Can't tell you that. It's all still...it's sensitive, this kind of situation, but yeah, the cops got him. That's the important thing.

(question)

Me? No I'm not a cop. Do I look like a cop? Well, I'm kind of a cop. I'm a federal agent. Have you kids heard of the FBI? Raise your hand if you've...yes! You've heard of us. Aren't you smart?

(question)

What? No. No, that's not...no, we have nothing to do with that, come on.

(question)

No, not that either. You watch too much tv.

(question)

I'm not Secret Service, no. Look, no sunglasses. They're Homeland Security, we're Department of Justice, huge difference. Huge.

(question)

What's the difference? Eh. I'd try to explain it but it'd be an exercise in futility, you wouldn't understand, and it'd be really frustrating for both of us. Who has an easier question? Yeah.

(question)

Oh, I'm sorry, jeez, didn't I tell you that already? Didn't I...jeez you're probably thinking 'who the hell is this guy?' My name is Henry, and I'm an FBI agent, you knew that second part already. And yeah, I'm here because...well you kinda know that too.

(comment)

I know, that's why I said "kinda," you kinda know.

(a bell rings, an inoffensive, repetitive tone. Henry gestures for the kids to stay seated)

What was that? Was that the bell? Jeez, in my day it was like a fire station. GO NOW. You know? Someone should probably turn that off.

(comment)

Hmm? Yeah, no, you're not goin' anywhere, kids. No class right now, least of all for Mr. Klochak's homeroom, that's for sure. We're probably gonna have to talk to a few of you. I apologize in advance. Actually, hey, no, I don't apologize, it'll be exciting, right? Like an adventure. Who wants to be questioned by the FBI? Raise your hand.

(question)

No no no. Dear god, no. None of you are in trouble. What a sweetheart. I'll say it again, none of you are in trouble and none of you have done anything wrong. So, you know. No crying.

(question)

I can't tell you what Mr. Klochak did, son, I'm sorry. I know the suspense must be killing you. I'm sorry you guys had to see that, by the way. That'll probably stick with you for a while. That...kerfuffle there.

(question)

Oh, it means commotion. Like a ruckus. It's British, I like it though. Fun to say. Kerfuffle. Try saying it. Yeah, see? Makes you giggle, doesn't it? Use it in a sentence sometime today. Kerfuffle. Yes?

(question)

Well, yes, I suppose I do catch bad guys, that's part of it. And I'm not a police officer but sometimes I work with the police. You know, when necessary.

(question)

No, not quite like Batman, that's really not very...you know...I'm gonna say something controversial. I never liked Batman. You guys like Batman? I don't really like him. I'm old-fashioned, I like Superman, he's from outer space, he had real powers. I mean, Batman...he's just some rich guy. Nothing interesting about rich people. Batman can just throw as much money as he wants at a

problem, build whatever car, invent whatever weapon or gadget. I mean, he has a butler, for god's sake. Who needs a butler? Any of you have butlers? No, me neither, and I wouldn't want one. Things aren't as easy as Batman has it. Batman is lying to you. In the real world, criminals are hard to catch and hard to identify. They look just like regular people most of the time, like Mr. Klochak. Did he look like a criminal? Raise your hand if you thought your teacher looked like a criminal.

(question)

Like a bad guy. Did you think he looked like a bad guy? Did he look like a person who would do bad things, who would abuse a trust, who would live his life devoid of any recognizable code of morals and make people like me necessary? Did he look like that to you? Did he? Am I overwhelming you? I'm sorry. Really. I didn't mean to...you don't have to answer any of those questions.

(question)

I know you're curious about what he did, I know you are, why wouldn't you be? But I can't...I'm sorry, I can't. It's better this way. Trust me. You really don't want to know.

(comment)

You say you do. You may even think you do, but trust me on this one. Agh. Listen to that, "Trust me." I always hated when adults said "trust me." I'll bet you guys hate that. Still, trust me. You don't wanna...well, I'm not gonna tell you in any case, so...

(comment)

You come on.

(comment)

What are you talking about, whose parents died? Oh, Batman. We're still on Batman? Yeah, his parents died, so what? That happens to everyone.

(follow-up comment)

Meh. Yeah, sure. It's sad for him, but you're wrong though, his parents' death doesn't make him *heroic*, it makes him *tragic*. You should, you know. Use words correctly.

(pause)

God, I'm tired, are you guys tired? It's so early. That's not it though, I'm tired all the time, man, it's awful. I've tried everything. Coffee, Red Bull, more sleep, less sleep, more water, less food, exercise. Nothin'. I'm just always...exhausted, like it's in my bones, not pain, just like weakness, like my bones are rusting through...you kids hear about the crumbling infrastructure? Hear your parents talk about that ever? "The Crumbling Infrastructure?" They're talking about me.

(question)

How old do you think I am?

(listens to answer, laughs heartily)

If only. If only. Wow. No no, it's just funny...how far off that is. Let's just say I'm older than most of your parents, probably. I've got kids who are grown now. Grown ups, both of them. Yep, just me and the missus at home. And our dogs.

(question)

Yep. Do you have a dog?

(answer)

Oh yeah? We've got two of them. Chocolate labs. No other breed in the world as far as I'm concerned. Beautiful beautiful animals. Smart, fun. Loyal. Their names are Merriam and Webster.

(comment)

Yes, like the dictionary, very good. You like dogs? Raise your hand if you like dogs. Yeah, that's what I figured. Oh wait...one little girl without her hand up, you don't like dogs? Really? What's the matter with you? Oh, I mean...why don't you?

(answer)

They knock you over. You're right, that isn't very nice. You've been hanging out with the wrong dogs. You need to find some smaller dogs to hang out with.

(comment)

They don't smell bad, I disagree. I vehemently disagree. Um, meaning I disagree a lot.

(pause, he takes stock and his attention goes to the door for a moment, looking for back up. When none comes, he pulls out his phone, checks for messages)

Man...I'm getting no service out here.

(types a message on his phone.)

"In his room. With kids. Brief? Question mark?"

(waits. Shakes the phone, growls a little)

Send. Send. Send. Come on.

(holds his phone up, toward a corner of the room)

Do you guys get service here? Really? I'd like to believe you're all too young to have cell phones, but I know better. Is this going through?

(looks at phone, shakes his head, puts it down on the desk. Looks around the room.)

It's uh...some room you got here. Yep. Some room. You guys like it in here? It's just so...so...misleading. False. Makes me queasy to think that he put all this stuff up himself, this...disarming...yeah... Hmm?

(question)

Mr. Klochak...won't be coming back. He is out the rest of the day, and will be out tomorrow. You'll probably...how to say this delicately but honestly...you'll...

(pause)

...never...

(pause)

...see him again.

(question)

No, we didn't kill him! God, what a weirdo. Get a load of this kid. Hey, is he always this weird? Did we kill him. No, we didn't kill your teacher. Your parents might, but we haven't. Man, put all your parents in a room alone with that guy and see what happens. Hoo!

(question)