

Stuck at Home

An online play in 4 scenes

By Bryan Starchman

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By Bryan Starchman

- 2 -

Author's Note:

Thank you for producing my play. During these times of social distancing and sheltering in place it has become necessary to think outside the box and so this play is intended to be presented using an online meeting platform like "Zoom." With the way technology is always changing, I use "Zoom" in this script the way we call facial tissue Kleenex or hook and loop fasteners Velcro. Feel free to use whatever technology is available to you. Feel free to put this play on even when we are no longer sheltering in place since this is a shared experience that we will not soon forget. I also wrote this play so that it could easily be performed on stage once we are finally able to return to the theater! (Personally, I can't wait to return to Broadway to enjoy a live show or two...or three...or four.)

Each scene has four stock characters: Dad, Mom, Son, and Daughter. Feel free to have four actors play all of the roles or expand the cast to eight, twelve, or sixteen by choosing four actors for Dad, four for Mom, and so on. Costumes are simple "street clothes" and so I would recommend just labeling the actors' shirts with DAD, MOM, SON, and DAUGHTER using those "Hello My Name Is..." stickers but only if you use more than four actors.

The last scene is very important to me, so please don't skip it. While there is humor in tragedy, I also struggled with writing this piece because, like most people out there, this pandemic has personally affected me, my community, and the ones I love and care about. I had to find the humor in it for my own peace of mind, and I hope the spirit of my intentions come through and that we will all continue to support one another, not only during Covid-19, but in years to come.

Break a Leg!

~Bryan Starchman

May 1, 2020

San Francisco, CA

SYNOPSIS:

Join this hilarious family in four scenes as they struggle to endure being stuck at home – together! Why is the WiFi out, and will their old-school solutions work when all the needed cords are missing from the junk drawer? Will the family secure two-ply rolls of toilet paper in trade negotiations with Grandma? Wait... what has each of them been using? What foods (or beverages!) are critical enough to make a special run to the grocery store? And really, who is strong enough to endure more than one Dad joke?

Each scene has four stock characters: Dad, Mom, Son, and Daughter. Feel free to have four actors play all of the roles or expand the cast to eight, twelve, or sixteen. This show is perfect in uncertain times providing both laugh-out-loud humor as well as flexibility in staging, either performed and viewed online or traditionally staged and then viewed online.

CAST:

(Minimum 2 m, 2 w, 2 flexible offscreen voices

Maximum 8 m, 8 w, 2 flexible offscreen voices)

DAD: (Sometimes called Frank) Enjoys bowling.

MOM: (Sometimes called Karen) Enjoys a clean house and reading.

SON: (Sometimes called Spencer) Son is a bit of a computer geek.

DAUGHTER: (Sometimes called Jenny) Fancies herself a fashion influencer.

OFFSCREEN VOICES:

NEWS REPORTER: (Scene 1)

GRANDMA: (Scene 3)

Props:

TV remote - Dad

Cell phones – Dad, Daughter, Son

Disinfectant spray - Daughter

Stopwatch - Son

Notebook and pen – Son

Primary Spanish book – Son

Toothbrush – Mom

Mop - Mom

Plastic tub of spackle – Mom

2 full trash bags – Mom

Inhaler – Son

Tennis racket – Son

Headphones – Mom

VCR or cardboard box labeled “VCR” – Mom

Sock – Daughter

Super soaker squirt gun – Son

Romance novel - Mom

Wine glass - Mom

SCENE 1

(AT RISE: DAD, MOM, SON, and DAUGHTER sitting on a couch in their family room. The “fourth wall” is the TV and we see the family staring forward as they watch the news. This can be achieved by sharing a photo of a common living room and using it as the background as the family pretends they are all in the same room.)

NEWS REPORTER: *(Offscreen voice.)* And so the governor has mandated that we all shelter in place until further notice. How long could this last? Some are saying well into the summer months. So do your part, America, stay at home unless absolutely necessary, practice social distancing of at least six feet, be sure to frequently wash your hands or use hand sanitizer and wipe down all surfaces with antibacterial spray. Together, we can flatten the curve.

DAD: *(Mimics turning off the TV.)* Well. I’m going out. It’s bowling night.

MOM, SON, and DAUGHTER: No!

DAD: What? I’ll be careful. I’ve got my own ball.

MOM: What about your shoes?

DAD: They spray down the shoes. I’ve seen them. Nothing could survive after Lou disinfects the shoes. I’m surprised Lou is still kicking considering the amount of disinfectant he must inhale every night.

SON: And Gary? What about your league partner Gary?

DAD: What about him?

DAUGHTER: Dad. Seriously. He picks his nose.

DAD: Not always.

SON: Yes. Always. It’s like he’s searching for his car keys up there.

DAD: Well...I won’t touch Gary.

MOM: I would hope that you would *never* touch Gary. Regardless of the governor's warnings.

DAD: I promise to be extra careful. I’ll even bring my own hand sanitizer.

DAUGHTER: *(Looking at her phone.)* Don’t bother.

DAD: Why not?

DAUGHTER: *(Holding her phone so Dad can see the screen.)* Bowling alley is closed. *(Hold the phone out of the frame so it looks like Dad can grab it.)*

DAD: *(Grabbing the phone - actually another phone but if done smoothly it will look like they've passed the phone off in Zoom.)* What? How is this possible? The Bowling alley is never closed! Lou didn't even close the lanes when his mother died!

MOM: *(Rolling her eyes.)* Class act, that Lou.

DAD: *(Sitting on the couch, letting the phone fall beside him out of sight.)* This is more serious that I thought.

(Daughter picks up phone and sprays it down with an obscene amount of disinfectant spray.)

DAD: *(Cont'd.)* Um...excuse me. Is that really necessary? I still wash *my* hands.

DAUGHTER: Yeah. I heard you wash them.

SON: *(Holding up a stopwatch.)* And I timed you! 3.2 seconds! A new record!

DAD: What are you doing? Listening at the bathroom door?

SON: ...Maybe. *(He pulls out a notebook and pen and writes something down.)*

DAD: Why?

SON: *(Shifty eyes.)* Research. *(He goes back to his notebook.)*

(Dad just stares at his unusual son.)

MOM: The CDC says that you have to wash your hands for at least twenty seconds.

DAD: How do you time yourself washing your hands? Unlike some people in this house, I didn't spend my allowance on a stopwatch.

SON: Best forty bucks I ever spent.

DAD: Forty bucks!?

SON: It's silver plated!

DAUGHTER: You are such a nerd.

SON: Awwww! *(Looking up from his notebook.)* Thank you! *(He spreads out his arms towards her and tries to hug his sister.)*

DAUGHTER: Stop! *(He stops, awkwardly, mid-hug.)* Six feet, buster!

SON: Right. New rule.

DAUGHTER: No. Old rule. I never want you closer than six feet. Ever.

SON: Understood, Mi Hermana.

MOM: What did you call her?

SON: My sister. In Spanish. (*Holding up a primary Spanish book hidden within the cushions of the couch.*) I figure if we have all this time on our hands, I might as well be productive.

DAUGHTER: We just found out about sheltering in place like three minutes ago.

SON: I know. I feel like such a slacker! (*Cracks open the book and starts to quietly practice phrases.*) Padre. Mi Padre. Mi padre no se lava sus manos.

MOM:Anyway. Wash your hands for twenty seconds. You don't need a stopwatch, honey. Just sing the ABC song twice.

DAD: I don't know the lyrics.

MOM: Wow.

(*The family stares at Dad, dumbfounded.*)

DAD: What!?!

SON: Not to be insensitive, but are you my father? I mean (*Gesturing to Daughter.*) Jenny makes sense. She thought the world used to be in black and white until 1939.

DAUGHTER: Shut up! I saw it in a documentary.

SON: The *Wizard of Oz* is not a documentary.

DAUGHTER: (*Reaching for his throat.*) I'll kill you!

SON: (*Holding up his hands.*) Stop! Remember, minimum six feet.

MOM: That was rude. Apologize to your father.

SON: Fine. (*Beat.*) Do you happen to have his number by any chance? I'd love to meet him.

DAD: That's it! You're grounded!

SON: Um...OK. Are you going to make me stay home and force me to miss out on my weekly Dungeons and Dragons game night the Lair of the Orcs?

DAD: Why...is that something you were looking forward to?

SON: Absolutely!

DAD: Then yes! You are forbidden from going to your weekly... (*Struggling to remember.*) ...Dangerous and Dragoons game...thing...tonight at the Lair of the...Orchids.

SON: Oh...okay. (*Holding up his phone.*) Too bad it was already cancelled.

DAD: Go to your room!

SON: Woo hoo! That's where my computer lives! *(Closes his screen or simply exits the frame.)*

MOM: *(Sarcastic.)* You sure are a strict disciplinarian.

DAD: *(Missing her sarcasm and hiking up his pants.)* Sometimes you gotta show them who's boss.
(They all stare at each other awkwardly.)

MOM: So...twelve weeks. Together.

DAD: This will be...nice. We'll get to know each other. I mean, even more than we already do.
(Silence.)

DAUGHTER: Can I go to my room?

DAD: Why? Don't you like hanging out with your parents? *(Awkward silence.)* Kicking it. Just kicking it...old school! With your 'rents. Yo.

MOM: Poppin' collars and looking fresh on the couch.

DAUGHTER: What are you doing?

DAD: We're talking your language. Spitting mad beats...or whatever.

MOM: *(Way too enthusiastic.)* In the hizzle!

DAUGHTER: Why did Spencer get to go to his room?

MOM: Because he insulted your father.

DAD: That's right...and you would never do that.

DAUGHTER: *(Desperate to be sent to her room.)* Your breath is so bad that when you yell at the dog, he tries to chew on it.

MOM: Go to your room!

DAUGHTER: Thank God. *(Closes her screen or simply exits the frame.)*

DAD: *(Shocked.)* Was she talking to you or to me?

MOM: I don't think it mattered. She just wanted to escape.

(Dad blows into his hand and tries to smell his own breath.)

MOM: *(Cont'd.)* This is going to be a loooooong quarantine.

DAD: Hey. Hey, honey. What do you call breath that sneaks up on you?

(She ignores him, more interested in her cuticles than the bad "dad joke" he is trying to tell.)

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