

# JACK-IN-THE-BOX

A Play in One-Act

By Sara L. Reily

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***Dedicated to Jennifer***

***The Playwright, Sara L. Reily***

### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

*JACK-IN-THE-BOX* is a unique drama that explores the depths of the human spirit. Jarod, a young med student, takes a journey into his own mind after an accident causes him to become comatose. As Jarod struggles to make sense of his surroundings he comes across a man who will change his life forever...his subconscious. The limited set allows the stage to become a universal playing ground where Jarod's subconscious introduces him to various places and people that enlighten and encourage him to take on life's obstacles and survival. Jarod becomes a recognizable character who discovers more about himself than he ever knew existed.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(3 M, 2 W)*

**MAN:** Jarod's subconscious.

**JAROD:** Medical student in a coma.

**LIZ:** Jarod's wife.

**AARON:** Jarod's dead brother.

**WOMAN:** Jarod's mother.

**PROPS**

MAN: Stack of notebooks, pen, paper, newspaper, orange.

JAROD: Letter opener.

AARON: Baseball and mitt.

WOMAN: Baby doll wrapped in a blanket.

**SETTING**

The stage is cluttered with junk. There is a filing cabinet, a chair, pens and paper strewn over the floor. The stage is dimly lit.

**SOUND EFFECTS**

The beep of a pulse monitor. Pace of monitor varies at times.

**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: THE MAN walks on stage carrying a stack of notebooks. He drops them, exasperated, sits down, picks up a pen and some paper and begins to write. JAROD, a young man in his 20s, enters looking frazzled.)*

MAN: Yeees?

JAROD: What're you trying to do, give me a heart attack?

MAN: Hardly.

JAROD: *(Walks farther onto the stage)* I need help.

MAN: *(Grunts)* What a surprise.

JAROD: Directions or something...I don't know. Where am I?

MAN: Hmm?

JAROD: Can you tell me where I am?

MAN: Should I?

JAROD: What? Yes...I...I...

MAN: I don't think I will.

JAROD: Are you crazy?

MAN: That's personal, don't you think?

JAROD: Forget it. Just...I don't need this.

MAN: Good-bye.

JAROD: I'll ask someone else.

MAN: Good luck. *(JAROD exits SR. MAN begins to write. Jarod enters again.)* Yeees?

JAROD: Jesus!

MAN: You really should be more aware of your surroundings.

JAROD: What?

MAN: You know, take in the scenery...watch where you're going.

JAROD: I don't understand.

MAN: No, of course you wouldn't know.

JAROD: *(Crossing towards MAN)* Do I...know you?

MAN: I don't think so.

JAROD: You seem familiar.

MAN: Yes, well...I'm not...bye.

JAROD: No...really...Who are you?

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MAN: (*Drops notepad*) Look, you need to go now.  
JAROD: I tried.  
MAN: Try harder.  
JAROD: Am I dead?  
MAN: Do you feel dead?  
JAROD: (*Thinks for a moment*) I guess not.  
MAN: OK, bye.  
JAROD: Will you at least show me the way out?  
MAN: OK...(*Begins to exit SR. Stops*) Hmm. No, I don't think so.  
JAROD: You want to get rid of me so bad.  
MAN: Yes! Yes I do. God, I wish you would leave.  
JAROD: Have you ever heard of hospitality?  
MAN: Yes.  
JAROD: Well...?  
MAN: I don't believe in it.  
JAROD: You're insane.  
MAN: I've often thought so.  
JAROD: Just show me the way out.  
MAN: (*Begins to write*) Go the way you came.  
JAROD: I...I don't remember how I got here.  
MAN: I can't show you the way back.  
JAROD: Do you mind telling me why?  
MAN: I can't...leave.  
JAROD: What? How am I supposed to get out of here?  
MAN: Look...I'm stuck here.  
JAROD: (*Exits and returns*) What do you mean stuck here?  
MAN: Just go. I have a lot of work to do.  
JAROD: Tell me what you mean.  
MAN: Go.  
JAROD: I can't. (*MAN ignores JAROD and continues to write. JAROD plops down to think.*) I'm dead.  
MAN: You're not dead.  
JAROD: I'm dead and I'm in hell.  
MAN: You're not dead.  
JAROD: I knew I should have gone to confession. I took the Lord's name in vain eight times last week —  
MAN: Twelve.

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JAROD: I drank someone else's wine at a par...What did you say?

MAN: *(Looking up)* I said dwell. Don't dwell on it.

JAROD: So, I am dead.

MAN: Please sir, if you'd kindly shut your trap...I have to think.

JAROD: Rude.

MAN: Shhh.

JAROD: *(Searching the room)* There's gotta be a way out.

MAN: There is.

JAROD: How?

MAN: I don't know, but you got here, right?

JAROD: You know something.

MAN: Really?

JAROD: Why won't you tell me?

MAN: Tell you...?

JAROD: *(Crosses to MAN and grabs him)* You're holding out on me. I want you to tell me how to get out of here.

MAN: And by assaulting me you think I'll tell you.

JAROD: *(Lets go of MAN)* Oh, God. What am I doing?

MAN: You're losing your mind.

JAROD: I'm losing my...I'm crazy.

MAN: More like claustrophobic.

JAROD: Yes. Yes. That's it. Claustrophobic. How did you know that?

MAN: You're displaying classic symptoms.

JAROD: Oh.

MAN: It helps to loosen your tie.

JAROD: *(Takes HIS tie off)* Thanks.

MAN: Now, if you'll excuse me.

JAROD: Who are you?

MAN: You're not going to let this go are you?

JAROD: No.

MAN: Figures.

JAROD: You're not going to say?

MAN: No.

*(JAROD stares at MAN while Man writes ignoring him.)*

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JAROD: Humph! *(HE crosses USL and picks up a piece of paper.)*

MAN: *(Leaps up, crosses to JAROD and grabs the paper)*  
What do you think you're doing?

JAROD: Well, you're not going to give me information—

MAN: That's right—

JAROD: Something around here might.

MAN: This is all personal. You can't go sticking your nose  
into whatever you feel like.

JAROD: If you'd tell me something I wouldn't have to.

MAN: If you'd mind your own business maybe I would.

JAROD: Fine.

MAN: Fine.

*(MAN crosses to chair and sits. He begins to write again.  
JAROD crosses DSR and sits, sulking.)*

JAROD: I have to get out of here. I have to cash my check  
before the bank closes. I have to start dinner before Liz  
comes home. I have a date, you know. A very important  
one...my marriage is hanging by a thread. Do you know  
what time it is? *(MAN continues to ignore HIM.)* She  
probably thinks I blew her off. She'll never forgive me. I  
promised her tonight. "You're always too busy for me," she  
says. And now I'm not going to be there. She's going to  
kill me if I don't show. Are you going to ignore me forever?

MAN: That's it. Leave.

JAROD: What?

MAN: Go. Now.

JAROD: Why?

MAN: Because you're driving me up the bloody wall.

JAROD: And how am I supposed to leave?

MAN: See where it says exit?

JAROD: Yeah?

MAN: My guess would be that way.

JAROD: I went that way. Remember?

MAN: Try again!

JAROD: Why are you so angry?

MAN: I'm not...I need you to leave before I...

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