

ONE MAN SHOW

Written by

BEN KADIE

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INT. THEATER AUDITORIUM - DAY

This small auditorium hasn't been renovated since the 1970s.

The stage doubles as a tiny studio apartment, complete with a working toilet, a mini-fridge, a twin bed, a rack of identical black long sleeve shirts. The perimeter of the stage is marked with a thick RED LINE.

Standing center stage, THE PERFORMER (60s, wiry, intense) taps his foot impatiently.

A small beam of sunlight filters through a high window, giving us an approximate sense that it's midday. In the window a BLUE JAY whistles a short call. The Performer looks at the bird. It flies off.

INT. NEW YORK CITY SUBWAY CAR (TRAVELING) - DAY

MAURIELLE (late 30s, a dedicated optimist) plays with the brand new ENGAGEMENT RING on her finger and smiles to herself. She looks up. She's almost missed her stop.

She hurriedly bundles several grocery bags and squeezes her way out of the train car.

INT. THEATER AUDITORIUM - DAY

The Performer looks at a CLOCK on the back wall. It's 1:24 PM

He looks at a SANDWICH BOARD on the corner of the stage with changeable marquee lettering. It lists a daily performance schedule: "1 PM MATINEE - HAMLET..."

But nobody is in the audience, except for a sleeping homeless gentleman (JOE, 50s) in the back row.

EXT. THEATER - DAY

The sign on the door reads 'CLOSED'

Through the glass we can see the LOBBY inside. It's also a small museum, displaying mementoes to the Performer's enduring greatness. A talk-show interview of the Performer circa 1989 plays on a loop. Newspaper clippings and magazine covers are framed on the walls.

Our view pulls back to reveal a small line of half a dozen people waiting at the door.

Maurielle towards us from across the street. She mumbles "excuse me" as she gets to the front door, and fumbles to produce a RING OF KEYS.

INT. THEATER AUDITORIUM - DAY

The Performer sits in a folding chair, facing away from the audience. Our half-dozen theatergoers file in and take their seats. They wait for a beat in silent expectation.

In the back of the auditorium, Maurielle presses a button on a sound board. MUSIC STARTS—a big orchestral hit from Tchaikovsky's Hamlet Symphony. And with it the Performer bolts up from the chair to face his audience.

He is dressed as the ghost of King Hamlet, in a blood-splattered white sheet, a heavy bronze crown upon his head.

He mouths the ghost's words at the audience, making no sound but with huge emotional ferocity. "MARK ME, MARK ME..." The audience gasps. Except for Joe. He's seen this a hundred times before.

The music shifts and the Performer with it. In a flourish of stage magic, his costume quick-changes into another character: the young Prince Hamlet. He trembles with awe at the sight of his father.

EXT. THEATER - DAY

On weathered sign: "WORLD'S LONGEST RUNNING ONE MAN SHOW"

INT. THEATER LOBBY - DAY

In several close-ups of the museum items we see:

A) A faded magazine cover circa 1989 screams "*This One Man Act is Better Than Cats!*" The younger Performer in the photo looks happier, less serious. He's dressed in a colorful color block sweater, smiling, holding a microphone.

B) Another, smaller newspaper article: "*Ten Years and New York's Oldest Solo Act Keeps Setting Records.*" The Performer in the photo looks a little more severe. The smile is gone.

C) Another - "*Bizarre Hidden Gem in Brooklyn.*" No picture this time.

D) Another - a very short article. "*Relic of N.Y. Underground Theater Vows Silence 'For The Art'*"

INT. THEATER AUDITORIUM - DAY

The Performer has come to the end of Hamlet. He lies "dead" on the stage, half way between two costumes.

The audience—all six of them—burst into applause. The Performer stands, bows, soaks it in.

INT. THEATER AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

On stage, the Performer eats his dinner at a small folding table center stage. Maurielle tidies the space for him and removes a trash bag. She grabs a bowl of microwaved soup and sits across from him.

The audience watches them eat; it's all part of the show. The marquee sign reads "DINNER PRODUCTION MEETING"

Maurielle speaks in a hushed voice, trying to maintain some privacy despite the audience watching her.

MAURIELLE

Listen, I have big news. Susie asked me to marry her. And I said yes! Which is why it's news.

The Performer smiles warmly and squeezes her hand. The audience claps. Maurielle tries to ignore them.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)

Thank you! Big changes, you know. But it does affect my job here because she has a teaching gig lined up in Syracuse. Actually we both do. So we're moving upstate.

The Performer cocks his head: confusion.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)

Not super soon! Not too soon. Well, a month.

The Performer is alarmed.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)

(speaking even quieter)

No, don't worry. It's plenty of time to find my replacement. And you've done this before. Right? I'm what, your twenty fifth? And we'll come visit you.

Performer raises an eyebrow.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)
 (almost whispering)
 Of course we'll come visit!

The Performer looks out to the audience, back to Maurielle. Like a conductor, he raises a hand to indicate "louder."

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)
 Sorry, yeah.

(projecting)

I said we'll come and visit you
 after I'm married. And it will all
 be okay.

The Performer nods: Acceptable. He stands. So does she. He takes her hand and leads her in a bow. The audience claps.

INT. NEW YORK CITY SUBWAY CAR (TRAVELING)

Maurielle sits by a window, fidgeting with engagement ring, troubled.

INT. THEATER AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The Performer lies wide-eyed in his cot, staring at a small patch of ceiling above him that's painted like the night sky.

He springs out of bed and over to the marquee. From a drawer, he dumps out dozens of plaques with names of his various acts: "Hamlet, Glengarry Glen Ross, The Chair Piece, Miss Saigon, The Interactive Hour," etc.

Manically, he begins arranging the plaques on the marquee, filling tomorrow's day full to bursting.

Joe is the only person in the audience.

JOE
 That won't do you no good. You
 always do this when things don't go
 your way. Over do it.

The Performer glares at him.

JOE (CONT'D)
 Tell me I'm wrong! I've seen this
 before with you.

The Performer angrily points at the door, a command to leave.

JOE (CONT'D (CONT'D))

Oh come on.

Again, he points to the door.

JOE (CONT'D)

Christ. Okay, I'll shut up already.

Still pointing to the door. The Performer is dead serious.

JOE (CONT'D)

I paid my ticket like everybody,
asshole.

The Performer doesn't move, still pointing.

JOE (CONT'D)

It's cold out there, man. It's
December.

Struck, the Performer falls into his chair. He rubs his face,
exhausted.

JOE (CONT'D)

Hey, hey, I'm sorry. It's not
December. It's September. It's
still cold out there at night
though. Shit.

The Performer doesn't move.

JOE (CONT'D)

Did you know that man? What month
it is? Hey, are you okay?

The Performer shakes off his sadness and returns a huge and
slightly creepy smile to Joe. He goes back to arranging the
marquee.

INT. THEATER AUDITORIUM - DAY

In a fast montage we see several acts:

- A) The Performer lip-synching to Opera in high glam makeup,
like an avant-garde drag queen.
- B) The Performer with an audience member on stage, doing an
exaggerated impersonation of the other man's physicality.
- C) The Performer in the middle of a quiet, subtle piece of
mime. He's holding something tenderly, sadly. It could be a
baby, we're not certain without context. A few people are
WEEPING.

INT. THEATER LOBBY - NIGHT

Maurielle sits behind the counter, taking tickets. There is a buzz in the lobby- an air of new life, excitement.

An UPPER EAST SIDE TYPE lackadaisically looks at the museum displays.

MAURIELLE

Ma'am- Ma'am- I don't want to interrupt you but you're gonna want to get in there. He's on fire tonight!

UPPER EAST SIDE

Ah, thanks!

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The marquee indicates that it's another 'DINNER PRODUCTION MEETING.'

On stage, the Performer lounges in his chair and sips glass of wine. He does a few little comic bits, playing with his food like Charlie Chaplin. The audience loves it.

Maurielle enters with an awkward young man (KEVIN, 22) behind her. She hesitates in the back of the theater, not sure if she's interrupting. The Performer motions for her to join him.

Maurielle and Kevin approach the stage. Maurielle sits across from the Performer and hands him a RESUME. Kevin hovers, nervous.

MAURIELLE

This is Kevin. He'd like to be your new assistant. After a long search, he's the absolute best applicant. Go ahead Kevin.

KEVIN

I love your show. So, so much. I've been coming since I was five years old, my dad took me for the first time. Well my dad's not around anymore. So now I come whenever I want to remember him. Or just whenever I need a place to feel like myself. I love what you do and this place is so- like- significant to me. I promise I'll give everything to this job.

The Performer shrugs and shakes his head 'no' to Maurielle.

MAURIELLE

Hey.

The Performer rolls his eyes and motions "talk, talk, talk" with his hand.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)

Hey! That's not fair.

Kevin, red-faced, runs off. Maurielle tries to stop him but he's gone. She returns to the stage, irate.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)

What was that?

The Performer shrugs nonchalantly as if to say "I just didn't like his vibe." Maurielle searches his eyes for remorse. He maintains his unaffected ere.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)

I can't believe you did that.

She looks deep into his eyes. She's feeling the horror of seeing her idol disappoint her.

He's feeling guilty, trying to mask it. He looks back at her with pure contempt as if to say, "You're leaving anyway."

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)

I'm glad I'm leaving.

She walks off. The Performer sees the audience looking at him. They *hate* him. Joe claps sarcastically in the back row.

JOE

Bravo. Good show, man.

Joe gathers his things and leaves. The Performer protectively turns his back to the audience and fights back sadness.

INT. THEATER AUDITORIUM - DAY

It's early morning. The Performer sits in his chair, center stage, still as a rock. The marquee is empty.

The audience is mostly empty. Joe is gone. Maurielle enters with some groceries and sets them on stage without looking at him.

INT. THEATER AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The Performer is in the same position, apparently having not moved all day.

Maurielle enters and sets down his dinner, removes his trash without looking at him. She leaves and says over her shoulder:

MAURIELLE

Goodnight.

This affects him, shakes him from his depressed stillness. But he can't do anything to respond. He stands up and sits back down again.

INT. THEATER AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Maurielle sets down dinner. The performer waves 'goodnight' to her.

MAURIELLE

Yeah, see you tomorrow.

INT. THEATER AUDITORIUM - DAY

Maurielle enters with groceries. There's only one person in the audience. The Performer waves to get her attention.

MAURIELLE

Yes?

He hands her a hand written note. She reads over it.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)

Oh, no. This won't work. It's today. We're leaving today.

The Performer is utterly baffled.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)

I reminded you yesterday.

He shakes his head no.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)

I did, I swear to God! Hey, I really think you need to see someone.

He shrugs this idea off.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)
No, I really do because—

He interrupts by pushing his note at her.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)
No, I can't. We bought train
tickets. So—
What were you planning anyway?

He smiles mischievously.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)
What was it? A big sappy lip-sync
thing where you serenade me with a
nostalgic goodbye song?

He nods, embarrassed.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)
Well thank you for the— uh—
sentiment. But you know I hate
being put on the spot like that. I
would've hated that. God, it really
is all about you, isn't it?

The sound of a theater seat clattering upright after someone
leaves. They both turn to see the stranger's back as he tries
to exit discreetly. For the first time, the audience is
totally empty.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)
Look, I've been thinking about this
a lot and I want you to know I'm
not angry. This is just how you
are, right? Theatrical, I guess.
Kevin is going to take over for me.
He was actually the only applicant.
I lied a bit when I said there were
more. He'll be by this afternoon.

The Performer nods, "OK"

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)
So everything is sorted out.
Everything is set.

He nods, agreeing.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)
I don't know what else to say. I
guess this is goodbye.

She moves to leave. He grabs her arm.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)

What?

He looks into her eyes, trying to communicate something complicated.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)

What? If you have something to say you can just say it.

He keeps trying to communicate non-verbally.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)

You're sad I'm leaving.

He nods yes.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)

Well, so am I. What? What? You're sorry?

He nods yes. But he wants to say something else.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)

Okay, I forgive you. What? Are you angry with me for leaving?

He shakes his head "no" vigorously, clutches her arm tighter. She pulls away.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)

Ow—that's too tight. Hey, I really have go. Nobody is here. You can just say it out-loud. Your secret is safe with me.

He stands up, rummages in a drawer for pencil and paper.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)

No, no. I'm not getting into all that. Look, what else is there to say? I'll miss you. You'll miss me. That's called goodbye. So...

Maurielle chokes up. But she doesn't want him to see her emotional. She steps off the stage abruptly and starts walking away.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)

I have to go. I have to go.

He stomps his feet. She keeps walking. He knocks over his table, making a loud clatter. She keeps walking.

MAURIELLE (CONT'D)
Take care of yourself for me,
please. Goodbye.

She's gone.

For the first time, he is really alone in the space. A moment of silence then-

PERFORMER
Goodbye. Goodbye?
(shouting)
MAURIELLE?

With slow, deliberate steps, he steps OFF THE STAGE. Like he's remembering how to run, he increases his speed gradually, loping towards the back door on uncertain feet.

INT. THEATER LOBBY - DAY

The Performer runs through the lobby and out the door, passing his own image in the museum displays.

PERFORMER
Maurielle?

EXT. STREET - DAY

The Performer exits the building. The sunlight is blinding. He squints as he looks around for Maurielle.

He is totally overwhelmed. Seeing the world for the first time in 35 years. He stops in his tracks and takes it in.

A BLUE JAY sings in a nearby tree.

THE END