

Name Space Collision

An Excerpt

A Comedy in Two Acts

by

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Setting

Popsicle Beach, in the Florida Panhandle.

Time

Summer. Present Day.

ACT I

SCENE 1

The living room of a beach condo. Upstage is a kitchenette (on a slightly higher platform, i.e., with a step down into the main area), which has a door that opens upstage to the outside. We see the refrigerator and there is a pot of coffee on the stove. Opposite is another door, usually locked which leads out the hall to an adjoining condo. The whole room opens downstage onto a veranda that actually looks out on the Gulf of Mexico. Above the window, a stair goes to a landing which has a door leading to the bedrooms. On the landing is a bureau with a mirror. Typical wall hangings abound: fish and oil paintings of sea oats and gulls. A sofa is center, facing downstage, flanked by an easy chair. There is a radio (shortwave and weather stations) on a table. On one wall is a small liquor bar with two stools. On the bar are two pairs of binoculars and a large glass ashtray. FAITH HOPE, wearing a bathing suit, stands in the kitchen, making a sandwich. She has the bread and meat out. She looks in the fridge, doesn't find what she seeks, opens and closes cabinets, calling out.

FAITH

Mama! Mama, did we bring any mayonnaise?

The upstairs bedroom door opens, and CHARITY HOPE sticks her head out. She is wearing a broad-brimmed straw beach hat, and a brightly flowered summer dress.

CHARITY

It's in the picnic basket, Faith.

She disappears behind the door, then sticks her head out again.

CHARITY (CONT'D)

Unless it's still in the— no, it's definitely in picnic basket

CHARITY disappears again, talking from off-stage. FAITH opens basket, discovers mayonnaise and finishes sandwich.

CHARITY (OFFSTAGE)(CONT'D)
because I put it in there when your father complained that we might get it confused with the suntan lotion if I left it in the beach basket-

CHARITY enters and fixes her hair under hat, using the mirror.

which I suppose is just possible, but only for your father, who might even enjoy suntan lotion on a sandwich, unless it was that kind with coconut oil in it, because you know how he feels about coconut.

She exits to bedroom again.

FAITH
He hates it.

CHARITY enters again with a different hat, comes down stairs.

CHARITY
He hates it. Can't stand the way it feels in his mouth, which is odd, when you think about it, because he loves rice, and especially rice pudding... Dear, have we had a rice pudding recently?

FAITH
No, ma'am.

CHARITY
Then it's about time we did, don't you think? Although I don't think ya'll would like one as much at the beach. Too hot, and what with all the sunburns everybody gets, on account of the ozone hole. Those damn Republicans!

FAITH
Yes, ma'am.

CHARITY takes binoculars and looks out over verandah.

CHARITY
If it weren't for the Republicans and their "anything for a buck" cronyism, we wouldn't have this problem, all my babies getting sunburned, and me not even able to get a nice tan... Oh! The sailboats are already out this morning! I am so glad we decided to come to Popsicle Beach this year!

FAITH

Mama, we come to Popsicle Beach every August. Ever since I was a baby.

CHARITY

Yes, Faith, dear. But we always talk about going some other place.

FAITH plops down in chair.

FAITH

Yeah. Two years ago we talked about New England. Last year we talked about Yosemite. This year we talked about Hawaii. Every year we get further away.

CHARITY

Maybe next year we'll talk about Australia. Wouldn't that be a fun vacation!

FAITH

Mama, all we'll do is talk about it. Then we'll come to Popsicle Beach.

CHARITY puts binoculars back on table.

CHARITY

Dear, you're father likes familiar things. He gets nervous when he goes someplace he's never been. He gets nervous when he goes someplace he has been. Sometimes he gets nervous just going to the bathroom. And you know how he gets when he gets nervous.

FAITH

I rather be around a bear! In Yosemite.

(sighing)

Oh well. Maybe next year we really will go someplace else. I hope so.

CHARITY

Faith! As your father always says, Hope is your last name.

FAITH

So what? It's Last's last name, too.

CHARITY

And your brother's middle name is Best. What a delightful arrangement.

BING HOPE enters from outside door. A thin, bespectacled man, he dresses in Bermuda shorts, black nylon socks, and loafers. He peers back out door before he closes it.

He backs into living area, looking at door, and trips on the step, falling behind the sofa. After a moment he sheepishly looks over sofa.

FAITH

Hi, Dad!

CHARITY

Bing, honey, did you get the car parked?

BING

Parked? Car?

CHARITY

Yes. Our van. The one we drove to Florida in?

BING

Yes. I got it parked. Right downstairs. Just backed it right in. No problem.

CHARITY

Is there something wrong, Bing? You look a little nervous.

FAITH

Oh, no.

BING

Me? Nervous? Not me. Got the car parked, no problem, and here we are, ready for a week of fun at Popsicle Beach. No incidents of any kind, nothing to worry about. Where's Last?

FAITH

He went down to the sound.

CHARITY

You know how Last loves paddling around in the sound, except I worry about the pollution, it's so much worse these days. All because of those damn Republicans!

BING goes to window and peeks out.

CHARITY (CONT'D)

If we don't get some new Congresspeople, we'll lose all the whales at Popsicle Beach.

FAITH

Mama, there aren't any whales at Popsicle Beach.

CHARITY

See? Too late already!

FAITH

I'm going down to the beach and see if anybody interesting is here this year. Although I doubt it. There never is.

FAITH starts to exit thru kitchen door.

BING

Faith?

FAITH

Yes, Daddy?

BING

Uh, stay away from the car, okay honey?

FAITH

The car? I wasn't going anywhere near the car.

FAITH exits.

CHARITY

Is there something wrong with the car, Bing?

BING goes to fridge and gets a beer.

BING

Wrong? No. It's still just a little hot. I've got to get the rest of the stuff unpacked.

CHARITY goes upstairs.

BING (CONT'D)

Where are you going, Charity?

CHARITY

Just to get another hat. This one's not wide enough. I'm afraid I'll get melanoma.

Exits into bedroom. They continue conversation with Bing downstairs, and FAITH upstairs. BING looks out over verandah.

BING

Charity, honey, have you met any of our neighbors yet?

CHARITY

Not yet, dear.

BING

You don't know who's staying next door?

CHARITY steps out holding several hats.

CHARITY

I haven't seen them, dear. Have you met them?

She tries on more hats, using mirror.

BING

Me? No, of course not. You know I don't just walk up and introduce myself to perfect strangers.

(to himself)

For instance, I would never just ring someone's doorbell, and then when they answered it, say, "Oh, excuse me, I just put a ding in the door of your van."

CHARITY

Bing, are you talking to yourself?

BING

No, I'm talking to you.

CHARITY

I thought you said Bing.

CHARITY puts her finger to her lips as she remembers where some other hats are, then exits into bedroom. During BING's speech, "ROB PETRIE", a swarthy man dressed in black, enters upstage door, crosses to bar, examines ashtray, then exits side door. BING does not see him.

BING

I said, "ding". Well, actually, I said "ring", too, like when you ring a doorbell, but I was really trying to tell you about a little ding. You might think I was talking about the sound a doorbell makes, on account of the ringing business, but, I'm talking about a ding, like you find in the door of your car if someone accidentally scrapes it while they're backing up their car.

CHARITY enters with more hats.

BING (CONT'D)

I wasn't talking to myself at any rate, you see, Charity?

CHARITY looks in mirror.

CHARITY

Perfectly, Bing. It looks fine.

BING

Well, that's what I hoped. It's such a small one.

CHARITY takes off her hat at this, looks at it, tries another one.

CHARITY

If you say so, dear. I didn't think you noticed such things.

BING

Well, it is so small, and so, so, casual, even, that no one would think twice about it, probably wouldn't notice it at all.

CHARITY purses her lips at this, then snaps her fingers, exits to bedroom.

BING (CONT'D)

I know I wouldn't have noticed it. Except of course I did it, and I certainly noticed it when it happened, but I'd really hate to make our neighbors think I was careless, especially since we'll be next door all week.

CHARITY comes out with another hat.

BING (CONT'D)

I suppose the best thing you could do is just to put it behind you.

BING takes a long swallow of beer, CHARITY shrugs her shoulders, puts on hat, letting it hang behind her head, then comes downstairs.

BING (CONT'D)

I think it will be perfectly fine that way, don't you Charity?

CHARITY

Absolutely, Bing. I'm glad you agree with it.

BING

Well of course I agree with it, I said it. Charity?

CHARITY

Yes, dear?

BING

Don't you have another hat?

CHARITY

Another hat? But—

BING

Maybe if you just wear it flat. You want to keep the sun off, don't you?

Door flings open and LAST HOPE comes running in, dragging SYDNEY COPELAND, who sports a pair of binoculars. They leave the door open.

LAST

Hey, everybody, look what I found!

CHARITY

Last, darling, don't refer to people as "what". You say "who".

LAST

Well, look who I found. This is... who is you, anywho?

SYDNEY

Sydney. My name is Sydney Copeland.

LAST

He's got a pair of binoclurs just like yours, mama! Mama!

CHARITY

Hush, dear.

SYDNEY

Uh, I think we're you're neighbors.

BING

(eyebrows raised)

Neighbors. Over there?

BING points to closed door.

SYDNEY

Yessir.

He offers his hand, but BING cringes and turns away. CHARITY steps in and shakes his hand, looking at BING.

CHARITY

Bing! Glad to meet you, Sydney. I'm Charity Hope, and this is Bing Hope, and you already know Last.

SYDNEY

Wow! So he wasn't making it up!

LAST beams.

CHARITY

Making what up?

SYDNEY

Your son and I were talking down at the sound.

LAST

Sydney was looking through his binoclurs, mama. Mama!

CHARITY

Yes, Last.

SYDNEY

He told me his name, and I said I thought he was joking, so he sort of insisted that I get you to tell me it was really so.

SYDNEY turns to LAST.

SYDNEY (CONT'D)

Last Hope.

LAST

Last Best Hope. That's what she named me.

SYDNEY

And your name is Charity Hope?

CHARITY

Yes.

SYDNEY

Please to meet you, ma'am. Wow. You just need a Faith, then you'd be "Faith, Hope and Charity."

LAST

We've got one! That's my sister. Isn't it mama? She was the one you were look-

SYDNEY shoves binoculars at LAST.

SYDNEY

Have you ever looked through binoculars, Last? They're cool.

LAST

These are just like mama's, aren't they Mama? Mama!

CHARITY

Last, honey, why don't you go and look at the ocean.

LAST

It's just a bunch of water, Mama.

CHARITY

Look for the whales.

LAST

Whales! Wow!

LAST goes downstage and looks out over verandah.

SYDNEY

What a bunch of weird- interesting names.

BING

It was the Road movies.

SYDNEY

Road movies?

BING

My mother loved all the Road movies, so that's why she named me what she did.

SYDNEY

Road movies? You mean, like Mad Max?

BING

No, I mean like Bing Crosby. And Bob Hope. "Bing" Hope, get it?

Blank look on SYDNEY'S face.

BING (CONT'D)

Road to Mandalay? Road to Cairo? Don't you watch old movies?

SYDNEY shakes his head "No".

BING (CONT'D)

Oh. Well, I guess it was before your time. Anyway, my mother loved 'em, and then she married my father, and when I came along, she just naturally named me Bing.

CHARITY

And I loved my married name so much, I named our children these other "hope" names.

BING

I'm reasonably certain Mother loved Dad almost as much as she loved those movies.

CHARITY

Charity and Faith went with Hope, and then we had little Last.

LAST

(still looking thru binoculars)

Daddy says they knew I was gonna be the Last Best Hope.

SYDNEY

They knew? How did they--? Oh.

LAST crosses up to BING.

LAST

How did ya'll know, Daddy?

BING

Genetic engineering, Last. Primitive genetic engineering.

Rolls his eyes, and CHARITY squeezes his hand. LAST goes back to other binoculars.

CHARITY

It's for the best, dear. ZPG you know.

SYDNEY

ZPG?

BING

Zero Population Growth.

CHARITY

Are you a bird watcher, Sydney?

SYDNEY

Ma'am?

CHARITY

The binoculars. Most people don't just carry around a pair of binoculars. Are you interested in birds? Or whales, maybe?

LAST

He was looking at-

SYDNEY

(quickly)

UFOs, Miss Hope. I keep a lookout for them, practically all the time.

BING

UFOs? That's cra- That's very interesting, Sydney. A UFO buff, eh?

SYDNEY

Yessir! There's tons of UFOs at Popsicle Beach. It's been in all the news. Heck, it was only a week ago today that some teenagers saw a whole fleet of them, right out over the sound.

BING

A week ago today. That would make it, uh, Saturday night, right? It's hard to believe a bunch of teenagers might see anything strange on a Saturday night.

CHARITY

UFOs! At Popsicle Beach! That is so exciting, I can't believe it. In all the years we've been coming here, no one's seen any UFOs.

BING

Amazing how that is. We must not have looked hard enough.

SYDNEY

Well, you've got to be pretty sharp to see them. And prepared. And diligent. That's why I keep the binoculars with me.

BING

A regular UFO Boy Scout, huh? "Look to the skies", you can work on your merit badge.

LAST

I can see Faith, Mama. She's down at the beach.

CHARITY gets her binoculars and joins LAST.

CHARITY

Where is she? Oh, there she is. Right by that lifeguard tower. No, wait... That's actually the lifeguard, I believe. My, my. What an extraordinarily large... boy. Bing, get your binoculars and come see how pretty our daughter looks!

BING gets them and joins her.

LAST

You wanna look, Sydney?

Sydney takes binoculars and looks.

CHARITY

Faith is the one in the red and white bathing suit, standing next to that extraordinarily large... boy.

All four are gazing out over verandah.

SYDNEY

Which one? Oh. Ohhhh. Wow.

(waits a beat, then to himself)

Cool! She looks better on the beach than she did in her bedroom.

CHARITY and BING lower binoculars, and look at SYDNEY, who slowly lowers his binoculars, looks at them, wipes lenses of the binoculars, looks thru them again.

SYDNEY (CONT'D)

You know, I must be thinking about someone else.

BING

How many girls have you looked at in their bedrooms?

SYDNEY keeps binoculars to his eyes, using them as a shield

SYDNEY

I don't look at girls in their bedrooms. I was just looking around, for UFOs you know, and I sort of accidentally-

He tries to move to door, still holding binoculars to his eyes.

CHARITY

Accidentally what?

SYDNEY

Kinda passed by this bedroom window in one of the condos, and-

BING

And what?

SYDNEY

And-

A voice is heard off, shouting.

FLOSSIE (OFFSTAGE)

Sydney! Sydney!

FLOSSIE COPELAND sticks her head in the door.

FLOSSIE (CONT'D)

Sydney, are you in here?

SYDNEY

(to himself, dropping binoculars)

Yeah, but I really wish I wasn't.

(out loud)

Yes, ma'am.

FLOSSIE enters the room.

FLOSSIE

I am so sorry to bother you folks, I'm just looking for my boy.

BING

(to CHARITY)

Who's been doing some looking of his own.

CHARITY

Hush, Bing.

She crosses to FLOSSIE, extending her hand.

CHARITY (CONT'D)

How d'ya do? I'm Charity Hope, and this is my husband, Bing.

LAST

Mama!

CHARITY

And Last, my son.

FLOSSIE

Your last son?

CHARITY

So far.

BING

Forever.

LAST

Last, but not least.

FLOSSIE

Nice to meet you. Flossie Copeland. I'm sorry to bust in like this, but I need Sydney. His father's been looking all over for him— Did you say, "Bing"? Bing Hope?

CHARITY

It was the Road movies. Nice to meet you, Mrs. Copeland. We're looking forward to being your neighbors this week.

BING

We most certainly are. We've been having the most informative chat with young Sydney, here.

SYDNEY

Mom, did you say Dad was looking for me?

FLOSSIE

He wants you to help unload the car, Sydney.

BING

Unload the car?

FLOSSIE

Unload the car.

BING

Yes, of course. Mrs. Copeland, if there's any ding— anything— we can help you with, anyding at all, you just let us know.

**He starts escorting them to door.
FLOSSIE stops at bar, gazes lovingly at
ashtray, puts her fingers in, runs
around the brim, picks it up, peers
thru the bottom.**

FLOSSIE

No, no, we're fine. Just got to get the car unpacked. That's a particularly nice ashtray you have here.

She reluctantly puts it back down.

FLOSSIE (CONT'D)

I collect ashtrays.

CHARITY

Oh. Do you... smoke, Mrs. Copeland?

FLOSSIE

Please call me Flossie. No, I quit recently.

CHARITY

They say the first few days are the worst. I wouldn't know, of course.

BING

When did you quit?

FLOSSIE

Fifteen years ago. It's been hell.

She picks ashtray back up.

FLOSSIE (CONT'D)

After I quit, I just got attached to ashtrays. I look at them wherever I go. They fascinate me.

BING

There's no doubt that they are a fascinating subject, Mrs. Copeland-

FLOSSIE

Flossie.

BING

Flossie.

BING starts escorting her to door.

FLOSSIE hands him the ashtray.

BING (CONT'D)

A dying breed, ashtrays. No telling what they might be worth.

FLOSSIE

Oh, I just like to look at them. Touch them. Hold them.

BING

Well, don't let us keep you. You'll probably want to get right on to touching and holding the ones in your place.