

Parallelogram

An Excerpt

A Comedy in Two Acts

by

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Setting

A beachfront hotel near Savannah, Georgia.

Time

Present day.

ACT I

SCENE 1

Stage is divided into two rooms, separated by a wall with a closed door. The amount of space is not equal, the ratio of the greater to the lesser room being that of the Golden Mean. In the smaller room, there is a table upon which sits a laptop, a printer, a pad of paper, a cup with pens, a pitcher of water and a glass. A hat rack with coats and hats is behind the table. The larger room is furnished normally with a sofa and chairs, coffee table, pictures on the wall, a side table with a lamp, telephone and radio, and a small bar. A bed is against the upstage wall. A door (to the outside) is upstage, and a door to the bathroom is opposite the mid-stage wall. A man (GUY MANLEY) paces intently about the room. A woman (GAY MANLEY) sits listlessly on the sofa. She wears reading glasses, and she listlessly works a crossword puzzle that is in her lap. Her expression is dull.

GUY

Do you have any idea...?

GAY

Not really.

GUY

How long it might be?

GAY

No, none.

GUY crosses to bathroom door, looks inside. GAY hums "Three Blind Mice".

GUY

Is there some reason...?

GAY

None that I can see. What would be a word for "elongated rhombus"?

GUY

And you don't have any idea what it-

GAY
I told you, Guy. Not really.

GUY
No real idea? Or no idea at all?

GAY rolls her eyes. GUY looks at his watch, paces.

GAY
What about ten letters- "Moliere or Marlowe"?

GUY
I just don't get it. Why are we here? What's supposed to happen?

GAY
No idea. I'm sure it's all for the best, though.

GUY tries mid-stage door, which is locked from other side.

GUY
You always say that, Gay.

During next few lines, ARTHUR WRIGHT enters the other room. He is primly, even nattily dressed, wearing a bowtie and glasses. He hangs up coat, sits, pours some water and drinks, and cracks his knuckles.

GAY
It's my motto. Of course I always say it. Hmmm. Six letters. "Three rings".

GUY
Well, I don't. And I don't believe it, either. Don't you feel, I don't know, trapped or something?

GAY
Pacing to and fro, like a lion in a cage at the circus.

GUY
What?

GAY
You feel trapped.

GUY
Or something.

GAY
Circus! "Three rings", okay.

GAY (CONT'D)

I don't feel trapped. Actually, right now, I don't feel much of anything at all. I just don't know...

ARTHUR takes a sip of water, gargles, and begins to write. Immediately, GUY turns in mid-stride and crosses to the radio. GAY becomes focused and alert. GUY turns on the radio, and GAY joins him there intently listening. SOUND: a loud, howling wind begins to roar.

ANNOUNCER

"No further word from the other Low Country districts. Communications are still very spotty. Where Mona will make landfall is hard to predict at this point, but it's looking like it may be south of Savannah. We'll be trying to get in touch with Rob Henderson down that way and let you know what we know, as soon as we know it. All in all, this is shaping up to be one of the worst storms this reporter has ever reported. It looks like we have--"

GUY turns off the radio.

GUY

We may have to think about leaving. It might not be safe anymore.

GAY

Guy, they always say it's the worst storm they've ever seen. It's weatherman one-upmanship.

GUY

You're probably right. But if we are forced to leave, I don't want to have to just run out. We need a plan.

GAY

Okay, here's my plan. Relax, unwind, have a drink and watch the storm. I love a good storm, even on vacation. Especially on vacation.

There is rapid knocking on the upstage door and a voice (SID KICKER) calls.

SID

Guy! Guy, are you and Gay in there? Let us in!

GUY opens door and SID and SANDRA KICKER rush in. They look worried. SID wears dark sunglasses, SANDRA wears thick glasses. She is clutching a small suitcase. SOUND: While door is open, howling wind is much louder.

SANDRA

Are you guys all right? We're all packed, at least everything I could carry in this little bag.

SID

I wouldn't let her take the big bag. Too much to deal with. Need to travel light, just in case.

GUY

In case of what, Sid?

SID

In case of what? In case of what?! Where have you been, man? You do realize that the biggest hurricane in history is barreling down on us even as we speak.

GAY

Oh, ya'll are getting too worked up. It's only a storm.

SANDRA

Gay, it's a hurricane, for Chrissakes. You know, two hundred mile an hour winds? Roofs blowing off of houses? Weather Channel guys standing around while SUV's go sailing by?

SID

It's definitely time to get the hell out of Dodge. But, man, I wish I had the plywood concession. Folks are gonna be nailing that stuff up like crazy.

SANDRA

For once, Sid, I wish you'd forget about always trying to make a buck on something. For once, I wish you'd just panic. Like a reasonable person.

GUY

Look, Sandra, I'll grant you a storm is coming. But we don't know it's coming right here, do we? The radio just said it's most likely gonna hit further south. Why don't we do like Gay says, and sit tight?

ARTHUR stops writing for a moment, looking off into space. EVERYONE in the other room sort of stop for moment, too, looking at each other. ARTHUR snaps his finger, begins writing again, and they start up.

GAY

This could be a beautiful thing, you know. A tropical storm comes raging in off the ocean, the incredible power of nature, the ecstasy of facing nature's majestic dangers.

SANDRA

The agony of dying horribly. Gay, I love you to death, but you need some reality lessons. This is definitely Panic 101.

SID

Sandra's the one to teach the course.

GUY

Look, you guys, we only got here this afternoon. It's stupid to run off and leave without even giving it chance. I for one am definitely not going to forfeit the two hundred dollar deposit on this room without a lot more proof.

Upstage door suddenly blows open, wind and rain blow in. SOUND: louder howling wind. GUY pushes door closed. SANDRA grabs SID and starts to leave.

SANDRA

You want proof, you got proof. We're leaving!

GAY stops them.

GAY

Wait, wait, wait. It's only a little wind.

SANDRA

Yeah, and the Titanic only hit a little iceberg. Come on, Sid.

GUY

Why don't ya'll turn on the radio and see what the reports say? It's silly to get completely nutso if it's not even going to hit here.

KICKERS look at each.

SID

Guy's got a point, Sandra. We'd feel pretty doggone stupid if we gave up our weekend—

GUY

And your deposit.

SID

And our deposit, for no reason at all.

SANDRA

But, Sid—

SID

It won't hurt to find out.

SID turns on radio. GAY joins them and GUY walks over next to mid-stage wall, shaking his head bemusedly.

During ANNOUNCER'S speech, GUY leans against the wall, shaking his head. The wall begins to fall towards ARTHUR, who, when he looks up and notices it, writes furiously. The wall stops, and then returns to an upright position. GUY looks wide-eyed at the wall, then back at OTHERS, then back at the wall.

GAY
I'm sure the whole
storm will blow
over before you
know it.

ANNOUNCER
"-and so it
appears Mona has
blown over much of
the whole region,
and you know, it
couldn't be much
worse for folks in
the mid-south
area. Trees and
power lines are
down everywhere.
FEMA has urged
everyone to move
to higher ground-

SANDRA
Higher ground?!

ANNOUNCER
"...where your
chances are
definitely going
to be much better
in dealing with
this storm..."

GAY
Sandra, we're on
the fifth floor.

ANNOUNCER
"...unless of
course you're
already on higher
ground. FEMA
defines 'higher
ground' as the
sixth story or
higher. Other
reports-

SANDRA clicks off radio.

SANDRA
See? What good is your fifth floor?

GAY

Sandra, ya'll are staying on the tenth floor. If things get really bad, we'll come stay with you.

SANDRA

Hah! Just try to get it in. It's gonna be every man for himself, sister.

GUY

(amazed)

Did ya'll see that?

SID

See what, Guy?

GUY

(looks at wall)

You didn't see the wall?

GAY

We see the wall fine. How could we miss it, it's right there in front of us.

GUY

It wasn't a second ago.

SID

What are you talking about?

GUY

The wall! The damn wall fell over, then it just... rose back up again.

SANDRA

It's the hurricane! We're all going to die! Come on, Sid!

ARTHUR stops writing again, tapping his pen. SANDRA stares at SID while he taps. ARTHUR begins writing again.

SID

For God's sake, Sandra, we're not going to die. Unless maybe you have a heart attack.

SANDRA clutches her chest.

SANDRA

Jesus, maybe I am having a heart attack. And no way to get to the emergency room. I don't feel right.

SANDRA collapses to the sofa, fanning herself.

GAY
You are definitely not right.

GUY
Doesn't anybody care that this damn wall almost fell over?

GAY
Guy, the wall is solid as a rock.

**GAY bangs wall, GUY tries to stop her.
ARTHUR types something, paper comes out
the printer.**

GUY
Wait, don't do that!

GAY bangs wall again.

GAY
Heck, it's the solidest thing in here. Especially when you
count...

**GAY cocks her thumb towards SANDRA. GUY
examines wall closely, feeling it
gingerly. GAY goes to comfort SANDRA,
SID sits in chair looking at GUY. JOE
enters ARTHUR's room, gets bellhop hat
and coat from hatrack, walks behind him
and takes paper from ARTHUR's hand,
crosses to the door and knocks. SOUND:
wind fades out.**

SID
Who could that be? We're the only ones we know here.

GAY
Where does that door go, Guy? Is it connected to another
room?

GUY
I don't think so. It was locked a while ago.

JOE knocks again.

GUY (CONT'D)
Who is it?

JOE
Parallelogram!

GAY
A telegram? Who'd be sending us a telegram?

GUY

No idea.

(shouts through door)

It's locked! Can you come around?

JOE

I think if you give it a good jerk, it'll open.

GUY

I did try it and—

**GUY turns knob and door opens easily.
He stares at knob.**

GUY (CONT'D)

Do you have a key?

JOE

(steps briskly in)

Not to this door. I do have a parallelogram for Mr. Guy Manley.

GUY

(still looking at door knob)

That's me. I could have sworn—

JOE

Here you are, sir.

GUY

Oh, thanks. Wait, here you go.

**GUY hands him some change, looks at
paper.**

JOE

No tips from the patrons, sir. All tips go in the other direction. Have a nice day, sir.

**GUY closes door. JOE puts up hat and
exits, ARTHUR chuckles and writes.**

SANDRA

Have a nice day! Where has that idiot been?

GAY

What's it say, Guy?

GUY

(reads)

"Going great. Stop. Keep up the good work. Stop. Don't stop. Stop. Remember that you have a bathroom, too. Stop. Arthur." Who's Arthur? And why does he care if we use the bathroom?

SID

I don't know, but all of a sudden I sure need to.

SID, SANDRA and GAY rush to bathroom.

SANDRA

Me, too!

GAY

Me, too.

ALL collide trying to get in.

SID

I was first.

GAY

So be a gentleman and let a lady through.

SANDRA

Yeah, let me through.

GAY

I meant me. It's my bathroom.

SID

I have really got to go, ya'll. Please! I'm dying here!

GUY

Hey, what happened to the wind? It just quit.

OTHERS all look at him. ARTHUR looks up in surprise, then quickly scribbles. SOUND: wind abruptly starts, very loud. Thunder is mixed with wind.

GUY (CONT'D)

What the hell?

GUY tries to open mid-stage door. It is locked again. Opens upstage door. JOE is standing there, surprised. He holds a big piece of tin, which he rattles to make thunder noise. Wind and rain blow GUY back across sofa. JOE quickly closes the door.

SANDRA

Oh my God! Mona is among us! We're all going to die!

SID

She may be right this time! Let's get out of here, Sandra!

GUY

Wait a doggone minute! Just hold on. Something strange is going on around here.

SID

And we're going gone.

SID grabs suitcase and SANDRA's arm and goes to door. At just that moment, ARTHUR begins furiously erasing. SOUND: wind stops suddenly.

SANDRA

Why is it so quiet? Are we in the eye? Is it a tornado?

GAY

GAY walks backwards to where she was before telegram arrived.

GAY (CONT'D)

Eye of what? I'm thinking eye of round. Or maybe some scallops.

SID & SANDRA also back up to their previous positions. GUY starts to go to mid-stage door, then stares at OTHERS. ARTHUR starts writing again.

SID

I could go for some seafood. Or a steak. Man, I am suddenly so hungry!

SANDRA

Me, too. It must be getting close to supertime.

SANDRA hums "Three Blind Mice".

GUY

What the hell is going on? One second, you're fleeing for your lives from a hurricane, the next, you're ready to put on the feedbag like nothing's happened.

ARTHUR frowns at door, then writes very deliberately.

GAY

Hurricane? You mean that little thunderstorm this afternoon?

GUY

What do you mean, thunderstorm? A minute ago, Sandra was so scared she was ready to call in the Marines.

SANDRA

I was not scared. I don't like lightning, sure, but who does?

GAY

Oh, I love it. Nothing like a summer thunderstorm to whet the appetite. You know, I'm famished, too. What'll we do for supper? I feel like Italian.

GUY

I don't believe this. One minute, we're in the middle of the worst hurricane of the century, the next ya'll are discussing menus.

SID

Well, it might have been a bad storm, but I don't think "worst hurricane of the century--"

GUY opens upstage door.

GUY

Look out there, will ya?

JOE stands in door holding a large painted sun in front of his face.

SANDRA

Looks great to me. Sunshine daydream. Now let's get ready to go, what do you say? Gay, can I use your bathroom?

GUY looks out door, then closes it.

GUY

This is too weird.

GAY

Right. Guy, you and Sid decide where we're going to eat, okay?

SANDRA exits to bathroom with suitcase, GAY pulls suitcase from under bed and opens it. ARTHUR types on his typewriter, JOE enters, puts on bellhop hat, and brings a message to the door.

SID

Like I said, steak is what I want.

GUY

I just want some sanity. You don't remember a hurricane just a second ago?

SID

Hell, I can't remember what we came here for. Vacation, wasn't it? A vacation is no time for a hurricane, man.

GUY

Like we have a choice about what weather we get.

JOE knocks on door.

GUY (CONT'D)

Again? What's with this door? Who is it?

JOE

Parallelogram delivery.

GUY

You already delivered it.

JOE

It's another one, sir. Could you open the door, sir?

GAY

Open the door, Guy. It's impolite to keep people waiting.

GUY tries the door.

GUY

It was locked again a minute ago, I don't think—

Door opens, JOE steps in. GUY examines both sides of the door.

JOE

Parallelogram for Mr. Sid Kicker.

SID

(brushes past GUY)

That's me. But how did you know I was in their room?

JOE

It says so on the message. Messages always go where the person is.

SID

Oh. Hey, this could be the deal I've got working back at the office. I'll take it.

JOE

Yes, sir!

GUY

What did you call that?

JOE

Call what, sir?

GUY

This message. You didn't say telegram.

JOE

I didn't? Well, I guess it's not, then. Have a nice evening,
Mr. Manley.