

GOOD LUCK

by
Tom B. Reed
tomreedv.1.0@gmail.com
he/him/his
Minneapolis, MN

Written for the first Quarantine Playwriting Bake-Off (quarantinebakeoff.com)
March 17th, 2020

Required elements: An empty store/stadium/theatre, a bottle of hand sanitizer, a virtual dance or duet, a moment of mass panic, a light in the dark. Extra credit: A flower or flour

Tom B. Reed
TomReedv.1.0@gmail.com
tombreed.com

This play begins and ends in the lobby.

Ushers are instructed to say the following to every audience member while making intense eye contact.

USHER

Theater is a lie. Thank you for coming.

Ushers should hand out programs that simply read “GOOD LUCK.” The audience will be given information about the production team afterward, and at the Tonys, obviously.

In the theater, when the audience is settled, the show officially “begins” with an announcement in darkness.

VOICE

You may leave your cell phones on. Enjoy the show. Good luck.

Still in darkness, the Pharrell Williams song “Happy” blares from what sounds like a crappy bluetooth speaker.

A pin spot illuminates MARGOT’s face.

MARGOT

(muttering to herself)

Shit, forgot to take my Claritin.

Lights expand, revealing a line of shivering people snaking across stage - Margot’s near the end of the line. They stand at least six feet apart holding empty reusable grocery bags.

Each time the chorus of “Happy” starts, the line advances in unison with one person leaving off stage left and someone new added to the end of the line.

Margot’s nearest linemate is a DAD and his four-year-old DAUGHTER.

DAUGHTER

(whimpering)

Daddy, I want a snack... please...

Soon, Bella, soon.

DAD

Margot feels around in her jacket pocket, produces a granola bar, holds it up and makes eye contact with Dad.

...Ok?

MARGOT

Dad hesitates, but Margot is already using a small **bottle of hand sanitizer*** to douse the bar. He nods.

Margot tosses the granola bar - too hard - it bounces awkwardly off of Dad's face.

Oh my god! SO sorry!

MARGOT

It's Ok! I'm Ok.

DAD

The adults laugh. Bella picks up the bar.

The line morbidly advances on cue from the "Happy" chorus.

Bella unwraps the bar, then deftly produces her own little bottle of hand sanitizer and cleans the bare snack.

Honey, not *on* the...

DAD

Too late, Bella chomps on the sanitized granola bar.

Thank you.

BELLA
(to Margot, while chewing)

Thank Sherman - that's my son.

MARGOT

Thank you, Sherman.

BELLA

MARGOT

I'm sure he'd say you're very welcome.

Bella munches and Margot shares warm "we're all in this together" half-smiles with others in the line.

A howl of wind causes an extra shiver across the line.
Margot, now close to center, sneezes.

Everyone screams and scatters - **panicked!!***

MARGOT

No! It's allergies! I have allergi.....

Margot is cut off by three HAZMAT SUIT WEARERS that appear from nowhere. They wrestle her roughly to the ground and wrap her in a huge sheet of black plastic.

Margot (a giant writhing plastic burrito) is carried off, screaming and struggling desperately.

One of the Suits sprays the area Margot stood with some kind of fine mist. The sprayer's nozzle is in the shape of a cheery cartoonish yellow **flower***. The Suit leaves.

A beat.

The line silently re-forms.

"BECAUSE I'M HAPPY!" blares again (the song is on a continuous loop) and the line mechanically advances, filling the gap Margot left.

Dad holds up his phone - he's Facetiming.

DAD

(to the phone)

Hey babe, the line was extra long today... yeah... we're doing good.

He holds the phone out toward Bella who starts dancing with the music.

BELLA

(still chewing, singing adorably)

...cause I'm happy! Clap along if happiness is the troof...

On the phone screen, the blurry image of Bella's mom wriggles back and forth, **dancing*** out of sync with Bella. Bella giggles and dances with the image of her mom as she munches.

Suddenly Dad looks terrified. He lunges and knocks the remaining bit of granola bar out of Bella's hand. Stunned, Bella starts crying.

DAD

(to Bella)

Sorry honey! It's for safety.

(to the phone)

There was an Infected, but they wrapped them, thank god. *(re: Bella)* Sorry, she's melting down, call you back in a minute.

He hangs up and stoops to attend to Bella.

BELLA

(through tears)

Everything's for safety! I hate safety.

DAD

I know. I know. I'm sorry, honey.

BELLA

(crying so hard she stammers)

I h h h h HATE it!

DAD

Ok, Bella, that's enough of that word. Deep breaths, buddy. Deep breaths. You're making a mess of yourself.

She's bawling harder than ever, her nose is a runny mess.

Dad doesn't notice as one of the people in line clocks Bella's messy face, looks concerned, and heads off stage.

DAD

Hey! Bella! We'll get you a new snack soon! It's gonna be OK.

Bella continues wailing and Dad's starting to get desperate.

Others in line look on furtively as the "Happy" chorus triggers another shift that they all obey.

DAD

Bella! Bella! We'll get you a TREAT! A snack AND a treat! And macaroni for dinner!
Bella - *macaroni!!* And unlimited iPad time!

Bella's checked out, a snotty crying mess. Dad secretively pulls a Kleenex from a pocket and tries to wipe her face quickly.

She twists away and lets fly a loud single COUGH.

Everyone in line screams and runs away as the Hazmat Suit Wearers rush in again - toward Bella.

Dad scoops Bella up and backs away from the Suits.

DAD

(shouting frantically)

KID! She's a kid! KID! KID! ... CHILD! CHILD! CHILDCHILDCHILD!

On the word "Child" the Suits slow their approach.

They slowly stalk around Dad and Bella at a safe distance, inspecting her.

DAD

I swear to god, she's FOUR! She's a CHILD! Please. PLEASE. She's not an Infected!

The Hazmat Suits seem satisfied. They fold up the black plastic and go back off stage. Others re-form the line. Bella's now quietly weeping, Dad clutches her tighter than ever.

The person who left line slinks back on stage looking guilty. Dad looks in their direction, then snarls...

DAD

Hey, FUCK YOU, you can see she's a kid. You saw the whole fucking thing!

OTHERS IN LINE

Whoa. Hey. Calm down. No need to... etc.

BELLA

(half crying, imitating Dad)

Hey-a-fuck you!

DAD

(gently to Bella)

No, Bella.

OTHERS IN LINE

Just calm down, man. Cool it. It's OK now. Calm down!

DAD

(Bristling angrily)

Don't tell me to fucking cool it - you all just saw that bullshit! *(pointing)* That motherfucker just tried to get my *four year old* daughter wrapped for crying. For crying. FUCK YOU.

“Because I'm Happy!” triggers another near-automatic line shift and the person who reported Bella turns to avoid eye contact.

Dad tries to catch his breath as he sets Bella down. She clings to his leg.

NEARBY LINE STANDER

Better safe than sorry.

DAD

Oh come ON!

NEARBY LINE STANDER

She did eat the granola bar.

DAD

What?

NEARBY LINE STANDER

You know what I mean. The Infected - gave her the granola bar.

DAD

It was sealed. And sanitized... twice. *(he laughs)* I mean, she even sanitized the actual bar.

NEARBY LINE STANDER

(sarcastic, aside)

Yeah, funny.

FAR LINE STANDER

(to Dad)

Then why did you take it away?

DAD

What? Because...the chances of transmission are... there's just no... there's no chance.

NEARBY LINE STANDER

Then why did you take it away?

DAD

Besides - she sneezed. It was allergies. She probably wasn't even an Infected.

BELLA

(imitating, but also asking)

Then why did you take it away?

The others all look on like "Told you so." Bella waits for an answer.

DAD

(to the Line Standers, fed up)

Fuck off.

Bella starts crying again.

DAD

No! No, not you Bella. I'm sorry. I'm sorry, honey. That was not at you.

Bella keeps crying. Dad glares at the strangers. They shake their heads in disapproval.

Another "Happy" chorus, another shift.

Dad and Bella are next in line - they'll get to leave stage/line at the next chorus. Everyone seems to calm a bit. Dad takes a deep breath, steels himself, then...

DAD

(to everyone, sincere)

Look, *I'm sorry*. Rough day, you know?

The crowd side eyes his apology - it is not accepted.

FAR LINE STANDER

(bitterly)

Ha, you think you're the only one?

The others all laugh, cruel agreement, sneers harden. Dad looks hurt.

BELLA

What's funny, daddy?

DAD

Nothing, buddy. Nothing. Look - we're next in line. We're gonna make it.

BELLA

Snack time?

DAD

Almost!

BELLA

And a treat AND macaroni, right?

DAD

Yeah, that's right, as much macaroni as a hippopotamus could eat!

Bella's eyes widen - she takes this as a challenge.

BELLA

I'm a hippopotamus! Ommm nommm nommm.

Dad laughs as Bella imitates a Hippopotamus.

As he and Bella laugh, "Happy" plays almost to the chorus. Dad starts to ready himself to move on.

Suddenly several loud coughs are heard scattered in the audience. The music stops (for the first time).

Dad, Bella and all Line Standers freeze and look out at the coughing noises, scared.

House lights come up very slowly and a few “audience members” are now coughing and lurching down various aisles, being sure to get reasonably close to every section.

Dad, Bella and all Line Standers panic like earlier and rush off stage frantically. The Three Hazmat Suit Wearers re-emerge as the coughing “audience members” stumble on stage.

House lights now at full, the same voice from earlier bellows...

VOICE

Thank you. Please leave the theater calmly and quickly. You will receive FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS in the lobby.

Ushers assist the audience in exiting to the lobby.

Meanwhile, on stage, the Suits slowly gather the coughing “audience members” (now scattered on stage, overcome by their coughs) one at a time. Wrapping them, then carrying them away. Then returning for the next one.

In the lobby, lights are low and the audience is encouraged to stand and watch the theatre live feed on the video monitors as the remaining Coughers are wrapped and taken away on stage.

The final thing seen on screen is an **empty theatre*** followed by the text “You are now Infected.”

Lobby lights blackout just as “HAPPY” plays loudly one last time.

After a few seconds in the dark an usher uses their phone to shine **light***. The audience follows suit or not. After 60 seconds, lights are brought up just enough to allow safe exit. The play is over, but no one explicitly tells the audience.

Ushers are encouraged to answer questions with “Theater is a lie, thank you for coming.”

There are no “further instructions.”

END OF PLAY.