

15 Dollars and a Sub Sandwich

A Ten-Minute Play

By

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Characters:

Alex, mid-twenties. Is dressed in wrinkled business casual, with a loosened necktie. A man uncertain of himself, constantly stressed and easily flustered. Not used to being assertive. Looks exhausted.

Todd, early-to-mid 40's; a begging man in a t-shirt and jeans. Has a sparse beard. Speaks with a hoarse voice.

Officer, mid-30s to 40's. A dispassionate person who just wants to keep the neighborhood quiet and get a paycheck.

Setting:

Late day. Crosswalk/sidewalk, connected to an apartment building.

Note: The characters' names, gender, and ethnicity can all be changed as desired (although it is recommended that the characters be of the same gender and ethnicity as one another to avoid the focus of the conflict being obscured by other political/social issues). Only the ages, style of clothing, and condition of the characters must remain the same.

(LIGHTS UP on the sidewalk. It is the corner of a city block, the waiting point for a crosswalk. There should be enough space on the stage for audience to get a sense of a crosswalk leading across the stage to the block. Audience can see the entrance to the apartment next to a sandwich store: Sub-Above.)

(TODD is walking to the corner, brown bag in hand. He stops by a trash bin and tosses the bag into it. He rests his back against the edge of the block facing stage left. He pulls out a small watch out of the opposite pocket, checking the time before quickly returning it into the pocket.)

(After a moment, ALEX walks onto the stage using the crosswalk. His eyes are on the ground, his thoughts are pensive. Just as he touches the corner of the block, his eyes go up and see Todd. ALEX forcefully turns his eyes away and proceeds to increase his pace. TODD recognizes him immediately and smiles big. ALEX almost makes it to the door of his apartment, when TODD steps around the corner to face him.)

TODD

Hey, man! How ya been?

(ALEX shuts his eyes for a moment. He almost made it. He puts on a polite, but tired smile.)

ALEX

Hey...man.

(ALEX now turns to face TODD. TODD is walking at a brisk pace towards him.)

TODD

I said how ya been man?

(TODD offer his hand for a handshake. Alex reluctantly shakes it.)

ALEX

I've been alright.

TODD

Alright! Cool, cool...Hey, listen-

(TODD's expression, though cordial, takes on an urging solemnity.)

-I don't got a place to stay tonight. I got kicked outta the place I was stayin' in last night cause I couldn't pay.

(TODD extends his hand to Stage Left, presumably where the "place" is.)

But I got almost enough today to stay there for tonight. If I could just get—15 dollars from ya, that'd really help me out.

(A pause. ALEX's smile is slowly waning.)

ALEX

(Beat.) I'm sorry. I can't.

TODD

You can't?

ALEX

I can't.

TODD

Whaddyou mean you can't, man?

ALEX

Money's just been tight right now. I can't-can't be spending it. I gotta be careful.

TODD

I don't wanna stay out in the cold, man. You helped me last week, didn't ya?

ALEX

I did. 30 dollars.

TODD

An' I'm only askin' for half of that.

ALEX

I know. But I don't have the money on me.

TODD

Well, you got your credit card right?

ALEX

Yeah. I mean//

TODD

//Well, then all you gotta do is go to the ATM over there, right?

(He points towards the corner, implying somewhere backstage.)

ALEX

(Silence.)

TODD

It's just right there, man.

ALEX

I'm working two jobs right now. I'm barely making enough to keep for myself. I can't keep doing this.

(ALEX tries to walk off, but TODD stops him.)

TODD

Hey, hey, y'know, that's alright, that's alright. But can you just do me one favor? It ain't much, I *promise*.

ALEX

Look, I really can't//

TODD

//Just a sandwich. That's all I need, just a five dollar sub from that Sub-Above.

(TODD extends his hand to the store and steps back towards it, his eyes on ALEX.)

It's just five dollars, man. Just real quick.

ALEX

(Beat.) I'm sorry. No.

TODD

(Beat.) Man, I'm hungry man! I haven't eaten today!

ALEX

Please don't do this again//

TODD

//It's a five-dollar sandwich, that's it. You're telling me you can't even lend five dollars for me to eat?

ALEX

No! I'm telling you that I'm sick of being *used* like this!

TODD

(Beat.) What do you mean "used"!?

ALEX

You've been doing this for weeks! Almost every other day you come to this spot out here, saying the same thing to everybody that comes by! A-And, you know I showed you where the shelter was//

TODD

//Yeah, well//

ALEX

//But you're back *again*, and you're telling me you don't have a place to stay, that they haven't *fed* you? What's going on?

TODD

They don't got nothin' for me over there, that's what's going on!

ALEX

(Beat.) What?

TODD

Place is packed. I don't got a spot to sleep. They don't got enough food for everybody, and they ain't even open during the weekends.

ALEX

I'm sorry. I thought--I didn't know.

(Beat.)

What about the Interfaith home?

TODD

What?

ALEX

The Interfaith home, down on Eastburrow. I gave you a map to there to, didn't I?

TODD
What?

TODD
Same story.

ALEX
That's unbelievable.
(TODD opens his arms, as if to suggest that he doesn't know what to tell Alex.)

TODD
Jus' how it was, man.

ALEX
(Beat.) And you're sure there isn't another one around here?

TODD
Okay. Alright. I get it. I get it. Five dollars is too much for ya.

ALEX
I'm sorry.

TODD
Yeah. I'm sure you are. Sure you are.
(TODD shakes his head, smiling with bitter amusement.)

TODD
Man, if you don't care, you should just say it outright. It'd save us both some time.

ALEX
Don't—don't put that on me. You don't know what I'm dealing with.

TODD
Yeah? You hungry? You need a place to stay?

ALEX
I need to pay rent. I need to pay tuition. I'm working two jobs right now, and I barely have enough to keep!

TODD
And I don't have *anything* to keep!

ALEX
I'm not responsible for that!

TODD

It's my fault then? Is that it?

ALEX

I don't—that's not--//

TODD

//Come, I know you want to say it. So, say it. C'mon! C'mon, say it!

ALEX

You're putting words in my mouth!

TODD

Then tell me why it's so hard, so painful for you to give me just five dollars so I can eat!

ALEX

Because I don't trust you, alright!?

(TODD steps forward.)

TODD

And why's that? What's the issue, somethin' about me don't look right?

ALEX

That's not//

TODD

//Do I look like I drink? Maybe I look like I've been takin' something, maybe you can jus' "sense" that about me.

ALEX

No, that isn't it//

TODD

//Then what? I don't look like I'm starving enough for ya?

ALEX

That isn't what I'm trying to say!

TODD

Then just say it, man! I'm dying to know this one!

ALEX

I don't even know if you've really *tried*! I've never seen you go to work before, you've never mentioned a job, how do I know you're not using that money to buy something you shouldn't!

(AN OFFICER rounds

the corner, and
slowly approaches.)

TODD

And there it is! Just like everybody else! You think I wanna
be out here? You think I wanna do this every week?

(TODD now gets up into ALEX's personal space.)

TODD

You really think I'm like that? You think I'm just some lazy
piece of crap? You don't know *nothing!*

ALEX

(Silence.)

OFFICER

Is there a problem, sir?

(Alex seems surprised
to see the officer.
Todd turns stiff, and
backs away from
Alex.)

TODD

Man, I don't need this. I don't need this.

ALEX

It's fine, officer. Everything's fine.

OFFICER

(To Alex) Did this man ask you for money?

ALEX

(Silence.)

TODD

I don't need this!

(The Officer grabs
Todd, puts his hands
behind his back.)

ALEX

Wait, you don't—you don't need to do that.

OFFICER

Panhandling's a misdemeanor. He knows better.

TODD

This is bull, man!

ALEX

Please! He's a friend, officer.

OFFICER

Sir, you're not helping him. Let me do my job.

ALEX

I'm...I'm sorry, officer.

(The Officer cuffs Todd.)

OFFICER

Come on.

TODD

This is *bull!*

OFFICER

You've warned you, and you keep coming back here. I'm not going to keep playing this game with you. Come on.

(Todd looks ready to fight, but that spirit quickly peters out.)

TODD

Alright. Alright. I'm comin'.

(Todd and The Officer start to walk away.)

TODD (Cont.)

(To Alex). Five dollars was just too much for ya!

OFFICER

Settle down or I'll make you.

(The two walk off stage right. Alex wrings his hands.)

ALEX

It's not my problem.

(Beat.)

It's not my problem.

(Alex leans back against the stage, takes a moment to breathe. He reaches into his back pocket and opens his wallet.)

He sighs, and lets
his head fall back
against the wall.)

ALEX

It's not my problem.

(Lights fade out. END OF PLAY.)