

HELLMATES

A 25+ Minute Play

By

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Contact:
NO!

Characters:

Bernie Marks, mid-40's to 50's. A meek, petulant man.

Alice Young, mid-40's to 50's; a fast talking former Network Executive's Assistant with anger issues.

Desk Attendant, a deadpan demon. Can also occupy the role of the intercom voice.

Setting:

Hell's Waiting Room

(LIGHTS UP in HELL'S WAITING ROOM. We are greeted by some chill music, akin to "Left Bank Two" by the Noveltones. Hell's a surprisingly bright and underwhelming place, with a row of chairs along backstage, STAGE LEFT, and a desk on STAGE RIGHT. THE DESK ATTENDENT is sitting at her post idly filing her nails. On the back wall above this scene is a bright, cartoonish sign overhead that reads: "Welcome to Hell! Enjoy your stay.")

(BERNIE walks in from STAGE LEFT. A door could be heard slamming behind him. The music dies down. He stops just in front of the sign and raises his head to look at it, then to THE DESK ATTENDENT.)

BERNIE

This is it?

ATTENDENT

Mhmm.

BERNIE

(Beat.) You're sure?

ATTENDENT

Pretty sure.

BERNIE

(Beat.) It's not what I pictured.

ATTENDENT

Never is.

(BERNIE breathes out a long sigh, trying to process what's happening.)

BERNIE

I'm dreaming. That's what's happening right now.

ATTENDENT

You must have some shitty dreams.

BERNIE

All I have to do is wake up, and it'll all go away. That's all, that's it, I'll just shut my eyes...

(He does so.)

...And when I open them, I will be back in my bed.

(He eases down, as if feeling the mattress of the bed behind him.)

Okay.

(He opens his eyes and looks around him.)

ATTENDENT

Take a number.

BERNIE

Okay, trying that again. I'll shut my eyes.

(He does so.)

And when I *open* them, I will be back on the lumpy piece of concrete that I call a bed.

(There's a pause as he again tries to feel out the bed.)

There it is. It feels - just as crappy as I remember it./

(THE ATTENDENT tosses a pencil at Bernie with the intention of hitting him. This causes Bernie to open his eyes.)

ATTENDENT

/Take a number!

BERNIE

This is a stubborn dream.

ATTENDENT

Satan's *balls*, just *take onnne!*

BERNIE

Alright!

(BERNIE walks over to the desk and takes a piece of paper. He looks at it.)

Number two hundred million, six-hundred thousand and sixty two. (beat.)
What am I waiting for?

ATTENDENT

You'll be seen by a demonlord who will assign you the circle you'll be staying at for the rest of eternity.

BERNIE

Oh. (Beat.) Figured that would just kind of be instantaneous?

ATTENDENT

(Shrugs.) I don't make the rules.

BERNIE

Right. I'll just—sit down then.

(BERNIE walks over to a nearby chair, but before he can sit down, a door can be heard opening. ALICE then steps in, dazed. BERNIE stares at her in confusion, then disbelief.)

ALICE

(Beat.) *Bernie?*

BERNIE

Alice?

ALICE

You're dead.

BERNIE

You're in California.

ALICE

I was. I was and now I'm—what is this, where am I?

BERNIE

Uh. Well, uh...

(ALICE turn and looks at the sign. She then looks to Bernie.)

ALICE

This is--?

BERNIE

(Voice cracking.) Apparently!

(ALICE looks at the sign again, then Bernie. She then *busts* out laughing. It's a hard laugh, probably the hardest she's ever laughed in a long time. BERNIE in the meantime looks *horrified*. THE ATTENDENT looks pleased.)

ALICE

Well - *I'll be damned!*

(She busts out laughing again.)

BERNIE

(To self.) I'm going to close my eyes. And when I open them everything will be fine again.

ALICE

Okay, okay.

(She breathes out.)

Okay. Bernie, sweetie, I'll have to be honest – this is probably the most desperate stunt you've pulled yet.

BERNIE

What?

ALICE

It's funny! Don't get me wrong, the set up is surprisingly well done coming from you. I mean I don't know how were you able to pull off taking me out from the hospital/

BERNIE

/I didn't./

ALICE

/And when I heard the news about you in the paper, I'll admit, I was convinced/

BERNIE

/What news?/

ALICE

/But Bern. Faking your death? Trying to fake mine? That's a ballsy move but it's not going to put me at your mercy. I have more than enough resources to fake my own death, thank you very much.

BERNIE

Alice, that's not what this is/

ALICE

I'm *sure* it isn't. Just like that trip to the Bahamas you promised me, or the agreement that you would get out of my life if I just wrote you a check, or the time that you needed just a *little* something to help your starving boy go to Scout camp like he always wanted.

BERNIE

I, uh...

ALICE

What was your "little boy's" name again?

BERNIE

(Beat.) Dennis.

ALICE

I thought it was Thomas.

BERNIE

(Beat.) No. You just—forgot.

ALICE

Mhm...

BERNIE

You never saw him.

ALICE

Bernie, we both know if you ever had a child you would've dropped them like a hot brick. You're not fooling anyone.

(ALICE looks to the attendant.)

Well! This has been *fun* you two! But I'm a very busy woman, I've got places to be, and a hospital lawsuit to file. So I bid you good day and politely ask you to *stay the fuck out of my life*. Okay? Okay. Goodbye.

(ALICE begins to walk to the door she entered from. She attempts to open – only for it not to budge. She tries again. No dice. She looks behind her.)

Bernie, unlock the door.

(BERNIE looks to the ATTENDANT, who is busy filing her nails.)

Can you unlock it, please?

BERNIE

No.

ATTENDANT

Come on—please?

BERNIE

Can't do, champ.

ATTENDANT

Bernie!

ALICE

(BERNIE looks back and forth between them, before running over to ALICE'S door. He starts to push at it hard, then violently.)

Oh please don't do this to me.

BERNIE

I swear to God/

ALICE

/Hey, don't mention that guy's name down here/

ATTENDANT

/Shut up!

ALICE

(She looks to BERNIE.)

If you don't open this door right now, I'm going to use your face as a battering ram!

I'm trying!

BERNIE

(He now is putting everything he's got into trying to open the door, even ramming his shoulder against it. That's when suddenly, his hand retracts from the handle!)

OW!

ALICE
What *now!*?

BERNIE
It—burned me!

ALICE
Oh for Christ's sake/

ATTENDANT
/Don't mention him either.

(ALICE reaches down for the door knob, and immediately retracts it.)

ALICE
Gah!?

(ALICE looks to her hand. Then she and BERNIE look to each other. A moment. The two then look to the ATTENDANT.)

ATTENDANT
You done?

(ALICE storms over to the desk, BERNIE reluctantly following behind her.)

ALICE
Open the door.

ATTENDANT
Can't.

ALICE
(Beat.) What do you want?

ATTENDANT
You taking a number would be nice.

ALICE
What for!?

(THE ATTENDANT gestures over to BERNIE expecting him to finish for her.)

BERNIE

We're, uh. We're going to be assigned our circle in Hell.

ALICE

(Beat.) Jesus, would you *stop* with that!

ATTENDANT

You know he can't hear you down here, right?

ALICE

Shut up! Open that door, *now!*

ATTENDANT

I told you, I can't.

ALICE

Why not!?

ATTENDANT

Company rules.

ALICE

Company-!?!/

ATTENDANT

I can open that door though.

(THE ATTENDANT points behind her towards
STAGE RIGHT.)

ALICE

Then do it!

ATTENDANT

Alright, if you really want me to.

(THE ATTENDANT stands up and walks over to that door. She nonchalantly opens it, allowing a red light to enter the room. The hellish sounds of the damned fill the space. All ALICE and BERNIE can do is stare.)

Well?

ALICE

(Meekly.) Close it please!

(THE ATTENDANT does so, immediately restoring the
peace.)

ALICE

(Beat.) We're actually here.

BERNIE

Oh fuck.

ALICE

Oh my *God*, we're actually *here*!

ATTENDANT

Hey, lady, if you keep using that kind of language in here I'm gonna have to ask you to step outside.

ALICE

This doesn't make sense. I don't deserve this!

BERNIE

You don't!?

ALICE

Not *that* much!

(ALICE walks back over to the desk.)

Listen. There's been a mistake.

ATTENDANT

Not my problem.

ALICE

Don't I get a fair trial? Don't I get to see an angel or something and explain myself?

ATTENDANT

Guess not.

ALICE

(Beat.) I want to speak to your manager!

BERNIE

What?

ATTENDANT

I'm afraid the boss is busy right now. But I can file a formal complaint.

ALICE

Then let's do that!

BERNIE

Alice!?

ATTENDANT

Okay. Then let me just print off a form.

(An obnoxious buzzer sounds off.)

Lunch break!

(The ATTENDANT stands up and proceeds
to walk to the door STAGE RIGHT.)

ALICE

Wait! What about my complaint?

ATTENDANT

I'll file it when I get back.

ALICE

When will that be?

ATTENDANT

I dunno.

(The ATTENDANT walks out and shuts the
door behind her.)

ALICE

GAH-

(She holds up a finger, preventing herself from finishing
the name.)

-Damnit...

(ALICE inhales. She takes a number and takes a look at it.
She squints as she unravels the length of it.)

Number two hundred million, six-hundred thousand and sixty three.

INTERCOMM

Calling number two hundred million, five hundred thousand and sixty.

(A beat. The two look around the room. Then she gives a damning look to BERNIE.)

Well. Happy!?

BERNIE

(An uncomprehending grunt.)

ALICE

Oh don't act dumb, I know you were always just *hoping* something like this would happen to me!

BERNIE

(Beat.) Well—yeah...!

(ALICE *slaps* him.)

Ow!

ALICE

This is your fault!

BERNIE

How? I haven't even seen you in – ten years!

ALICE

And it still wasn't enough to undo what you did! Do you know how long it took me to get back into a decent job position?

BERNIE

(Beat.) Please don't tell me we're talking about Florida/

ALICE

/Oh, we are *absolutely* talking about Florida!

BERNIE

For the love of Satan, Alice, you were on board with it!

ALICE

Well, apparently, I thought my boyfriend would be smart enough to remove the 19 dollar price tag off the lamp before trying to con a *high-profile* art collector!

BERNIE

(Beat.) I'm still in disbelief he noticed. The man was nearly blind/

ALICE

/Ugh! Idiot! You know

BERNIE

Hey, let me remind *you* that it was *your* plan, alright? *You* convinced *me* this was a good idea!

ALICE

It was! I just happened to choose a dumbass for the job!

BERNIE

You were supposed to manage everything, you *insisted* that you oversaw *everything*!

ALICE

And do you know how many details I had to take care of!?! The least you could have done was take the price tag off as soon as you bought it!

BERNIE

You know what, this is pointless. This is pointless and I'm done arguing with you.

ALICE

Fine! Then why don't you stand in that corner over there/

(She gestures over to the STAGE LEFT side.)

/and leave me alone!

(THE ATTENDANT pokes her head in from the door on STAGE RIGHT.)

BERNIE

Why do *I* have to stand in the corner!

ALICE

Because you're a baby!

BERNIE

I'm not a baby!

ALICE

Yes you are, you're a whiny, overgrown, stupid little baby!

BERNIE

I am *not* a baby!

(He stamps his foot like a whiny child. THE ATTENDANT
snerks loudly, catching ALICE and BERNIE's attention.)

ALICE

Hey!

THE ATTENDANT

Oop.

(THE ATTENDANT leaves, shutting the door tightly.)

BERNIE

Okay. Okay, I'll go over into the corner. Just stop talking to me.

ALICE

Fine!

(BERNIE walks over to his corner, crossing his
arms. Meanwhile, ALICE moves to the other side of
the desk and leans back against it, staring at the
door ahead of her.)

BERNIE

(Mutters.) I am not a baby.

(ALICE rolls her eyes. The two sit in a moment of
prolonged silence.)

BERNIE (cont.)

"Everything would run smoothly.", she said.

(ALICE glares at him.)

BERNIE

"Like butter on a biscuit.", she said.

ALICE

I'm sorry, did you want to talk?

BERNIE

No.

ALICE

Because it sounds like to me that you really want to talk.

BERNIE

I don't.

ALICE

Okay.

(Another moment of prolonged silence.)

BERNIE

The least you could have done was bail me out.

(ALICE lets out an aggravated sigh.)

BERNIE

I took the fall for you.

ALICE

Bernie, the first two words you dropped when they arrested you were my name.

BERNIE

(Beat.) It was a -- reflex.

ALICE

Yeah. Sure. Well, it was enough to get me investigated.

BERNIE

And yet I'm the only one who went to prison. *You* wound up an executive.

ALICE

An executive assistant Bernie, they're two very different things.

BERNIE

Point is. While I was dropped under the bus, *your* life turned out just fine.

ALICE

Fine!?

(ALICE points at the "Welcome To Hell" sign.)

Does this look like everything went *fine* to you!?

(BERNIE looks at the sign.)

BERNIE

Well, I mean...you at least got to drive a Lexus.

(ALICE, furious, proceeds to slip off her shoe.)

BERNIE (cont.)

What are you doing?

(ALICE proceeds to *throw* it at him!)

BERNIE (cont.)

Shit!

ALICE

Everyday I went into that old man's office!

BERNIE

What!?

(She proceeds to hop over the desk and struggle to remove her other shoe.)

ALICE

Everyday I put up with his bullshit! "Ms. Young schedule my 9 o' clock massage, Ms. Young please tell a nice little lie to my wife for me, thanks, Ms. Young go wait in line on Black Friday so my grandson can get his JoyStation, Ms. Young *could you clip my nails for me!?*"

BERNIE

Ew.

(ALICE tosses another shoe at Bernie.)

BERNIE

Stop!

ALICE

I did that man's *job* for him! And he *knew* I would do anything he asked because he knew I had worked so damn hard to get where I am and I was *never* gonna get back there I got fired!

BERNIE

You know, I could just stand quietly in the corner if that's what you want/

ALICE

/You think I was doing *fine!?* Well let me tell you something, Bernie, I was *NOT. FINE!*

(She retrieves her shoe, Bernie braces himself.)

BERNIE

Okay! Okay, you were not fine. You were not fine—could you please put down the footwear?

(ALICE stops, finally coming out of her blind fury. She then beans him with the shoe anyway.)

BERNIE (Cont.)

Fuck!

(She walks away, panting.)

BERNIE (Cont.)

So what did you do, kill him!?

ALICE

(Beat.) No.

BERNIE

(Beat.) No?

ALICE

No.

BERNIE

Then what did you do to get down here?

ALICE

(Beat.) I killed the janitor.

BERNIE

(Beat.) Well what the hell did he do?

ALICE

Nothing. He just walked in...I was at the desk. I was working on a speech for one of the boss's charity dinner. He was too cheap to hire a writer so there I was. So the janitor walked in, came by and asked how I was doing. I said "fine". He said "you don't look fine." And then we began to talk about my job. And we talked and...the more I talked the more things got fuzzy. (Beat.) Next thing I know, I killed him with a head massager.

BERNIE

(Beat.) Poor guy.

ALICE

I'm not even sure how I did it. The guy I got to clean up the body said it was the damnedest thing he's ever seen.

BERNIE

Uh-huh. (Beat.) Well. Why don't you, uh. Why don't you just take a seat here and I'll...give you some space...

(BERNIE starts to back away.)

ALICE

What did you do?

BERNIE

Hm?

ALICE

To get into Hell. What did you do?

BERNIE

Well I—I don't know. You know I never read my bible, could have been a number of things I didn't think of.

ALICE

(Beat.) Cut the crap Bernie.

BERNIE

(Beat.) If I had to guess...it might have had something to do with my job.

ALICE

You mean you went back into full-time conning?

BERNIE

Not exactly. I was a salesman.

ALICE

Salesman? That *sounds* modest. (Beat.) Too modest. What did you sell?

BERNIE

Veterinary equipment.

ALICE

(Beat.) *No*.

BERNIE

Now I know what you're thinking/

ALICE

/Please tell me you didn't!

BERNIE

/And as far as I know, none of it was faulty.

ALICE

(Beat.) You never went back and checked, did you?

BERNIE

When you're on the run from probation officers, you kind of have to keep moving!

(ALICE begins to remove her shoe again,
BERNIE rushes over to the desk and dives
over it for cover.)

ALICE

You monster!

BERNIE

Hey, hey! At least I didn't kill a man!

ALICE

No! You killed puppies and kittens and sick parrots!

BERNIE

No! (Beat.) If anything, it was the manufacturers that did that!

(ALICE tosses her shoe towards his
direction. As soon as it lands she ALICE
begins to search for another while BERNIE
makes a break for the nearest door. He
wrestles it but it's not budging. ALICE
retrieves her shoe and begins to hurry over
to him. BERNIE promptly arms himself
with the shoe she threw prior.)

BERNIE (cont.)

You know I would have never had to sell any of that stuff if you didn't put me in a bad position!

ALICE

Don't you start that Bernie!

BERNIE

Do you know how hard it is to make a decent living when you're an ex-con?

ALICE

There are other career opportunities outside of *dog murder*, Bernie!

BERNIE

Would you believe that I got out during a recession?

(A brief shoe-slapping fight ensues, with ALICE on the offense and BERNIE defending himself with a shoe-shield. Before this fight can get ugly, the ATTENDANT steps in through the door, drink in hand.)

ATTENDANT

Oh hey.

BERNIE

Oh thank *God*—Satan! Thank the devil, dark lord, you're here!

(He rushes to her.)

Hey, listen. Is there another waiting room I could stay in?

ALICE

Hey!

ATTENDANT

You want a transfer?

BERNIE

Yes, yes.

ATTENDANT

I can't do that.

BERNIE

You can pair me up with anyone. I'll—you can torture me with whoever you like!

ATTENDANT

I can't. Company rules.

BERNIE

Oh—oh okay, uh. Maybe, uh—maybe I just didn't articulate the problem as well as I should have. See Alice, here, is an *adamant* follower of the almighty!

ALICE

Hey!

BERNIE

I mean she's been belting out hymns for the past ten minutes here, and it's starting to make me yearn for the light of the lord above.

ATTENDANT

And you don't want that?

BERNIE

No, I mean—it seems counterproductive to the whole everlasting despair thing and you know? And I figure I'm not getting out of here, so I might as well not prolong the inevitable you know?

ALICE

(Beat.) He's right, he's been getting too comfortable in here. He should be moved to somewhere where he can suffer at his most optimum potential like the piece of human garbage he is.

BERNIE

Thanks honey.

ALICE

Just looking out for you.

ATTENDANT

Sorry. There's really nothing I can do.

BERNIE

Then can't you just let me outside?

ATTENDANT

Oh, yeah. About that. Turns out boss said I'm not allowed to do that. So...

(She gives a half-hearted shrug.)

BERNIE

(Beat.) Then may I file a complaint?

ATTENDANT

Sure. Let me just head to the printer.

(THE ATTENDANT promptly heads to the door.)

BERNIE

Wait.

(But it's too late. She leaves. BERNIE sets his head down against the desk and breathes out a long sigh.)

I'll go stand in the corner.

ALICE

Go do that.

(He goes on his way to do just that as ALICE sits herself on a nearby chair. A moment of blissful silence passes.)

INTERCOMM

Calling number two hundred million, six-hundred thousand and sixty one.

BERNIE

Oh, hey. I'm next.

(The words sink in. There's a horrible realization.)

Oh fuck, I'm next.

ALICE

(Beat.) If it's any consolation, I'll be right behind you.

BERNIE

I'd prefer a few hundred meters away minimum, but I appreciate the thought.

(ALICE leans back into her chair, staring up at the ceiling.)

BERNIE (CONT.)

You know, I imagined a lot of places where my life could end up. Never believed I would wind up here. Or that "here" would smell faintly of cheap body spray.

ALICE

I don't understand it either, smells more like a gym than a waiting room. (Beat.) You had to have thought that you might wind up in Hell one day.

BERNIE

It was a thought I guess. But you never really *believe* you're going to be sent down here. You just focus on what you have to get in the moment and...hope you can make it up later.

ALICE

I guess we were both bound for disappointment.

BERNIE

I guess.

ALICE

(Beat.) It seems unfair to be judged for one moment out of your whole life.

BERNIE

I think this is for more than just one moment, Alice.

ALICE

(Beat.) Shut up, Bernie...

BERNIE

As long as you do.

(The silence resumes.)

But you know, you would have really benefited from an anger management class.

ALICE

And you could have afforded some moral boundaries, but that never stopped you from trying to make a quick buck now did it?

BERNIE

Says the lady who brought us the Florida job.

(ALICE lets off an aggravated grunt.)

ALICE

Bernie. For the sake of making this experience a *little* less migraine inducing...can we both just agree that we brought *ourselves* down here?

BERNIE

(Beat.) I guess.

ALICE

You *guess*?

BERNIE

Alright! Fine...but the Florida job.

ALICE

Bernie.

BERNIE

Hey, you wanted to talk about it...

INTERCOMM

Calling number two hundred million, six-hundred thousand and sixty two.

BERNIE

(Beat.) There it is.

(BERNIE stands up.)

Well. I'd say "I'll see you in Hell", but/

ALICE

/Just go.

BERNIE

Yeah.

(The door STAGE RIGHT opens itself.)

Okay.

(He walks on towards the door.)

ALICE

You should have checked the price tag!

BERNIE

Sorry, can't hear you, leaving, bye!

(He exits, shutting the door behind him.)

ALICE

I hope he gets tortured by dogs. (Beat.) A pack of rottweilers. Or chihuahuas. Something that/

(Her hand mimics a snapping dog.)

/nips. (Prolonged beat.) Well. At least I got some quiet around here.

INTERCOM

Calling number two hundred million, six-hundred thousand and sixty three.

ALICE

Of course.

(She stands up and the STAGE RIGHT door opens.)

Took you long enough!

(She marches through the door and it shuts behind her. There's a moment of silence. Then, the STAGE LEFT door opens and BERNIE steps on in. The door shuts behind him.)

BERNIE

Hold on.

(ALICE enters in just behind him, the door shutting again. BERNIE notices her. There's a mutual shock.)

ALICE

(Beat.) No.

(She takes notice of the room around them.)

No, no, no...

(THE ATTENDANT walks in through the STAGE RIGHT door.)

ATTENDANT

Take a number.

BERNIE

(Beat.) Where is the demonlord?

ATTENDANT

Oh him? He's in one the next rooms.

ALICE

How many rooms. Are there?

(THE ATTENDANT lazily shrugs.)

ATTENDANT

I dunno.

BERNIE

(Beat.) Could you give us a rough estimate?

(ALICE starts to laugh.)

ALICE

I think—I think I'll take that complaint now.

ATTENDANT

Sure. I just need to print off a form.

(A buzzer goes off.)

Oh. Shift's over.

ALICE

And there it is!

BERNIE

You just got here. You came here for paper.

(THE ATTENDANT begins to walk out.
ALICE is still laughing.)

BERNIE

Wait, *wait!* Someone will come in right behind you, right?

ATTENDANT

Sure. They'll probably be in around...

(Checks their wrist. A watch may or may not be there.)

A few centuries.

(BERNIE just stands there, frozen. The laughter cuts out.)

Oh, don't look so down Bern. At least you've got company.

(THE ATTENDANT exits with a smirk. BERNIE
slowly looks over to ALICE, ALICE to BERNIE.
They share a silence.)

BERNIE

(Beat.) So.

ALICE

So.

BERNIE

For what it's worth, I'm...sorry for the way your life turned out.

(ALICE smiles knowingly.)

ALICE

No you're not.

BERNIE

(Beat.) It's the thought that counts, right? (Beat.) Corner?

ALICE

Please.

(BERNIE walks to his favorite spot
by the wall and settles himself
down.)

BERNIE

You know, maybe Hell doesn't have to be such a bad thing.

ALICE

How's that?

BERNIE

Well, I mean. It's gotten you to admit your mistakes, hasn't it?

(There is a long silence between them. ALICE's eyes
widen and then bore into the back of BERNIE's head.
BERNIE slowly straightens.)

BERNIE

Ah, fuck.

(LIGHTS OUT. END OF PLAY.)