

# RAW PROVOCATIVE HUMANE PLAYS

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# IN THE MEANTIME

## CHARACTERS

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Stephanie, 31 F.      | Daycare worker, quirky, likes to think out loud, enjoys a good magazine |
| Paul Alexander, 37 M. | Accountant, always irons his button-down shirts, well-read              |

## SETTING

A studio apartment, New York City.

## TIME

Winter--the part of winter that never seems to end. The present.

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Notes:

“In the MeanTime” was originally workshopped and produced by the Milk Can Theatre Company as part of the “Receipt Plays” in May of 2004, at the Sande Shurin Theatre. All playwrights randomly chose a receipt and wrote a short play inspired by that receipt. The play has since been produced workshopped in CRY HAVOC and has had productions across America and in England.

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*STEPHANIE, 31, has done her best to make their small studio apartment feel like “home.” She sits with receipts all around her. PAUL, 37, has been listening for a long time . . . .*

**PAUL.** Put the receipts down!

**STEPHANIE.** Why is it that we always order Chinese food?

**PAUL.** There’s really no point in all of this, is there?

**STEPHANIE.** *(overlapping and switching receipts)* Do you remember when we drove to Framingham, Massachusetts? And we went to A.C. Moore on One Wuster Road.

**PAUL.** *(overlapping)* I think I should go.

**STEPHANIE.** Look. Receipt #25. I wonder if they restart the receipt numbers every hour. Or day. Or--

**PAUL.** Maybe you should go. I live here.

**STEPHANIE.** And I bought ten purple pens to brighten up this apartment.

**PAUL.** Pens do not brighten up an apartment!

**STEPHANIE.** They can—if you write sweet notes with them!

**PAUL .** You can keep all the pens, all the receipts. You can keep anything—

**STEPHANIE.** You know, the sales tax in Framingham is only 5%.

**PAUL.** There’s a reason for that.

**STEPHANIE.** And it’s over 8% here.

**PAUL.** There’s a reason for that, too.

**STEPHANIE.** *(Looking at the receipt)* Forty ounces of cleaner spray, \$4.75. No wonder we bought that there. Maybe if we lived there, it would have worked out. More space. And less sales tax.

**PAUL.** We're not breaking up because of the sales tax. Or because we live in a studio apartment.

**STEPHANIE.** *(overlapping)* Then why are we?

**PAUL.** This was impulsive.

**STEPHANIE.** That's not why people break up.

**PAUL.** In our case, it is. We moved in together; we cut our rent in half. And our bills.

**STEPHANIE.** We moved in together because you wanted less on your receipts?

**PAUL.** And that hasn't worked out at all. You buy all of these ridiculous things that no one needs.

**STEPHANIE.** That's not true.

**PAUL.** *(taking her receipt out of her hand)* Kaleidoscope Birthstone Stationary. A denim pencil case. Tweety bird.

**STEPHANIE.** All of those things have made this place more homey. Besides, I bought them on our anniversary trip to Framingham.

**PAUL.** Yes, our one-month anniversary trip to Framingham.

**STEPHANIE.** Things happen quickly in this city! People walk fast, talk fast, eat fast, and it's been so goddamned cold this winter. Last week, I went to the gynecologist—

**PAUL.** I really don't need to know—

**STEPHANIE.** Look, we are having the break up conversation. You are breaking up with me. That means I can talk about whatever I want. Those

are the rules. So shut the fuck up and listen to whatever I have to say.

**PAUL.** I'll give you seven minutes. That seems about right for a three-month relationship.

**STEPHANIE.** Fine. So I'm in the gynecologist office—

**PAUL.** *(walking away and returns)* Wait a minute—

**STEPHANIE.** What are you doing?

**PAUL.** I'm setting a timer.

**STEPHANIE.** You're such an asshole. No wonder I'm breaking up with you.

**PAUL.** *(overlapping)* I'm breaking up with--

**STEPHANIE.** Well, first of all, the room where they --check you out—

**PAUL.** Check you out?

**STEPHANIE.** I was trying not to say “give you a pap smear.” They weigh me with all my clothes on, including my boots. I weigh myself again when all I'm wearing is this hideous hospital gown. Four pounds. All day long, I'm wearing four pounds of clothes. I feel so weighed down. I feel--

**PAUL.** *(overlapping)* I'm not fond of winter either. But you're used to it. I'm the one from California. I'm the one--

**STEPHANIE.** *(overlapping)* Hey—this isn't about you. I only have seven minutes.

**PAUL.** *(looking down at the timer)* Six.

**STEPHANIE.** So there's no space, nowhere to put your clothes—I hide my bra and underwear between my long johns and my long sleeved shirt, because you don't want this woman, the ob-gyn, to have to see

your underwear even though she's going to put this silver prong up your--

**PAUL.** *(overlapping)* Aaahh---

**STEPHANIE.** I was worried because I had to have a cyst removed from my ovary when I was eighteen; it was the size of a softball--

**PAUL.** You never told me that.

**STEPHANIE.** She didn't feel a cyst, which was a relief. I asked her if I should stop taking my birth control pills.

**PAUL.** Why would you do that when--

**STEPHANIE.** Because I want to get pregnant.

**PAUL.** Woah, Woah, What? Are you--Have you not been—

**STEPHANIE.** *(overlapping)* Don't panic, commitment phobe—I didn't mean I wanted to get pregnant with *you*. It has nothing to do with *you*.

**PAUL.** *(overlapping)* Of course it has nothing to do with me. I'm just the person you're having sex with.

**STEPHANIE.** *(overlapping)* I want to get pregnant. Me. ME! I was asking if it was a problem that I've been on the pill since I was 15 and I'm now 31. That's half my life.

**PAUL.** It's actually more than—

**STEPHANIE.** Shut up, you fucking accountant. So *(composing herself)* I asked, does that affect my chances of--

**PAUL.** Does it?

**STEPHANIE.** No. She said that people worry about the pill suppressing ovulation. She said it used to be that women spent most of their lives pregnant or nursing, and therefore—not ovulating. And get this. I spent \$314 for six minutes of her time, so she could tell me

what's not normal is to be 31 and *not already have children*. In New York City. Where no one has children--

**PAUL.** She just meant historically. Or because of your clock.

**STEPHANIE.** I started doing the math. I mean, I'm not old like you—

**PAUL.** I'm 37!

**STEPHANIE.** Exactly. And I want to have one child by the time I'm 35.

**PAUL.** You're only 31! And 37 is not old.

**STEPHANIE.** 35. With one child. I want to be married two years before I have a child. 33. You're engaged a year. 32. You date for a year before that. 31. 31! This is the year I have to find the father of my child, and I can't believe I've wasted my time on you.

**PAUL.** *I'm breaking up with you.* You're supposed to take these (*looking down*) four minutes to convince *me* to stay with *you*. And you're doing a lousy job. And you forgot about the nine months of pregnancy. You should already be with your future husband. Oh well.

**STEPHANIE.** The opposite of love is not hate but indifference. I am currently indifferent towards you. And by the way, I'm not from New York. I'm from Framingham.

**PAUL.** No. That was a road trip. You said, "We'll pick a direction and see where we end up."

**STEPHANIE.** I wanted to see what it was like to have you in my hometown.

**PAUL.** And how was it?

**STEPHANIE.** Cold. Just like here.

**PAUL.** You're just saying that to be mean. When people break up, they have to say stuff they regret later. Those are part of the rules, too. How could you lie about where you're from?

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**STEPHANIE.** How could you call my hometown “Hickville”?

**PAUL.** I didn’t even know you were from there.

**STEPHANIE.** Exactly.

**PAUL.** Can I have the last three minutes?

**STEPHANIE.** No.

**PAUL.** I wasn’t with you just so we could cut our receipts in half.

**STEPHANIE.** Neither was I . . . I also wanted someone to have sex with—

**PAUL.** Thanks.

**STEPHANIE.** Isn’t that what we’re all doing? I mean—in the meantime--until we find the right one. Making a decision that it’s better to share a bed than save space for someone who’s not there. I want to be with someone who asks questions and really wants to know the answers, you know? It’s like, all day long, we have these mundane conversations with each other that mean nothing: “How are you? Fine. How are you? Good. Cold weather, huh? Long winter? Yeah. How’s work? Good.” But does anyone really care? Is anyone really listening?

**PAUL.** *(a moment)* Why do you keep all of these receipts?

**STEPHANIE.** We are breaking up—what do you care?

**PAUL.** I do.

**STEPHANIE.** My mother left my father when I was four. After she left, my Dad didn’t have the energy to pick me up, so he started using our photo albums as step stools—they were everywhere—in the bathroom, by the sink, next to the refrigerator, by the doors. I keep receipts instead of photos. When things don’t work out, you just recycle.



**PAUL.** We've lived together for two months, and I didn't know any of that about you. And you don't know my father died when I was seventeen, and I had to put off going to college because my mother didn't want to be alone. And you don't know that I hate almond butter. I really fucking hate it.

**STEPHANIE.** I was trying to save us money by packing your lunch.

**PAUL.** I didn't move in with you for your lunch making skills.

**STEPHANIE.** Then why did you?

**PAUL.** You're pretty.

**STEPHANIE.** Gee, thanks.

**PAUL.** And you make me laugh. And when we walk into a room, people wish they were me.

**STEPHANIE.** Because I'm pretty.

**PAUL.** Because we're laughing.

**STEPHANIE.** But you don't love me.

**PAUL.** Stephanie, I don't really know you. Well, now I know where you're from. I know you went to the gynecologist. I know about the receipts, your mother. I know you feel weighed down in winter.

**STEPHANIE.** It's not just winter.

**PAUL.** Is there anything else I need to know?

**STEPHANIE.** What, before we break up?

**PAUL.** Yeah.

**STEPHANIE.** You need to know where you're moving. The lease is in my name.

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**PAUL.** Stop trying to win me back.

**STEPHANIE.** You make me laugh, too. And you did my taxes this year—so it wasn't a total loss.

**PAUL.** It was easy. You saved the receipts. . . You think 37 is old?

**STEPHANIE.** Your sperm isn't getting any younger.

**PAUL.** Maybe I should be doing the math, too.

**STEPHANIE.** You want to have children?

**PAUL.** What if I told you I already do?

**STEPHANIE.** You're kidding.

**PAUL.** God, wouldn't it be crazy if I were like "behind this door, door number three are my kids" and they strolled out here and--

**STEPHANIE.** There aren't three doors—it's a small apartment. So, do you—I mean, want them?

**PAUL.** I don't want to be fifty when they want to run around Central Park with a baseball. And sixty-five when they leave the house. I'd be retiring and celebrating their graduation at the same time.

**STEPHANIE.** No one retires at sixty-five anymore.

*The timer goes off.*

**PAUL.** Thanks for being so understanding. I guess we're out of time.

**STEPHANIE.** That was my time. My seven minutes.

**PAUL.** I could set the timer again.

**STEPHANIE.** Isn't it funny how—when you know it's ending—what was it like, when your dad died?

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**PAUL.** I couldn't believe he wasn't coming back; I know that's what happens when people die—they don't come back.

**STEPHANIE.** He didn't have a choice.

**PAUL.** Your mother never came back, did she?

**STEPHANIE.** I'm really sorry. About the almond butter. I didn't know.

**PAUL.** Wait a second.

**STEPHANIE.** You don't really want to talk about all of this, do you?

**PAUL** No, I mean, yes, it's just--I'm starving. Can we order Indian food?

*She looks through the receipts.*

**STEPHANIE** We've never done that before.

*He picks up his phone. He points it at her; he's clearly not making a phone call.*

**STEPHANIE** What are you doing?

**PAUL** I'm taking a picture.

*She ducks under Tweety bird. He snaps her picture.*

*Blackout.*

*End of Play.*