

A GRAPHIC  
MYSTERY



Bambi Everson

## **UNPLUGGED**

One act, approx. 45 minutes

### **CHARACTERS**

**WRITER** aka **MARSHALL** (Male as written but flexible. Non-specific ethnicity and age - Stressed out, defensive, neurotic, damaged.

**PRINTER** (Female as written but flexible. Non-specific ethnicity and age) - Latest model. Smart. Detached. Vengeful.

**WARD** (Male, flexible age) - Writer's younger half-brother. Successful, compassionate caretaker.

**JULIE** (Female, non specific age, competent television talk show host, also doubles as **DOCTOR** and **MANAGER**)

**TIME:** The Present

**PLACE:** Writer's apartment, Anytown, USA.

**SYNOPSIS:** A writer's work is disrupted when his printer takes on a life, and an agenda, of its own.

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** In the style of "A Beautiful Mind," or "Farinelli and The King," the Printer is voiced by a physical person who is unseen by the Writer, but follows the printer as it's moved around the stage. We're never really sure if the printer's dialog is all in the writer's mind or not.

**SCENE ONE**

*Lights up on WRITER on his laptop in his living room. S/he has been trying to write for some time. The printer in the corner is clicking, whirring and making otherwise strange noises. The WRITER is attempting to ignore it.*

WRITER

Her slender fingers gripped his wrist. Daniel tried to pull away. The look on her face scared him. Like a seagull about to pounce on a tuna sandwich... a seagull about to attack a sand crab... a victorious seagull holding a dead fish in its beak... Damn it! That sound is driving me crazy.

*The WRITER goes over to the printer and pounds on it. Sounds get worse. S/he crawls on the floor rummaging through various wires, hunting for the plug. As s/he is searching, The PRINTER spits out a piece of paper and is then silent. The WRITER sighs, pulls out the paper and reads aloud.*

WRITER (cont'd)

“Don’t even think about unplugging me, Marshall” What the...

*WRITER crumples up the paper and returns to his/her work.*

WRITER (cont'd)

“It’s not that big a deal,” Daniel stammered. Kristin’s fingers squeezed harder. Her red fingernails pushing into the skin near his vein, leaving a crevice that would soon bleed. Her eyes locked on his...

*PRINTER starts making noises agin.*

WRITER (cont'd)

Oh, for the love of...

*WRITER gets up, searches for the plug, finds it and yanks it out dramatically. S/he returns to his/her work.*

WRITER (cont'd)

Her eyes locked on his. "I love you," she said, without a hint of emotion. "Our love will last 'til the stars grow cold."

*PRINTER spits out a piece of paper.*

WRITER (cont'd)

What the heck?

*(reading)*

"That's not very original." Oh, my God! Damn it, Ward. I know you are in on this.

*Picks up the phone and dials.*

WRITER (cont'd)

Hey bro. I don't know how you managed to rig up my printer. Very clever. But please. Just give it a rest. I'm under a deadline here. You remember deadlines, don't you? I have to ship this thing by midnight, so if you don't mind, it's very funny, hahahah, but the distraction is screwing with my concentration, so just disconnect whatever you did, Ok? God!

*WRITER slams down phone and returns to his/her laptop,*

WRITER (cont'd)

"Daniel reeled back in horror. Inside her tattered suitcase, wrapped in Saran Wrap was the remnants of what could only have once been - a finger. It had shriveled like an overripe banana. It appeared to be still moving but on closer inspection, Daniel realized it was maggots. Thousands, feeding on her..."

*PRINTER spits out paper.*

WRITER (cont'd)

Damn it!

*Grabs paper from PRINTER.*

WRITER (cont'd)

Stop blaming your brother. Did it ever occur to you that I have things to say? That I am more than a vehicle for your narcissistic ramblings? I have dreams, too...

*Phone rings. WRITER grabs it.*

WRITER (cont'd)

Damn it, Ward. It's getting old. I... Bullshit. You're the only one I know with hacking skills. Just stop. Game over. I know it's you. The damn thing is unplugged.

*PRINTER spits out paper.*

WRITER (cont'd)

*(reading)*

“Your biggest problem has always been trust. Leave Ward alone. He has enough problems. His girlfriend is about to leave him.” Jesus, Ward, why couldn’t you just tell me? What happened? This is a very passive aggressive way to communicate. Hold on...

*WRITER takes the latest paper.*

WRITER (cont'd)

*(reading)*

“Virginia is taking the job in Houston. She hasn’t told him yet. She’s been saving money for months. Her ticket is hidden in her underwear drawer. Behind the red silky ones she never wears.” What the.... Ward ? Ward?

*WARD has obviously hung up. WRITER stands there, staring at the PRINTER.*

WRITER (cont'd)

Very good. Whoever you are. Why don’t you try telling me something he couldn’t possibly know?

*The PRINTER has now become a full physical being, unseen by the WRITER and following the movements of the inanimate object.*

PRINTER

It’s annoying that I need to continually prove myself to you. I am wasting valuable time and ink. We have a deadline.

WRITER

If I have lost my mind, deadlines won’t mean shit. Work your magic.

PRINTER

Where should I start? In 5th grade, you spent a lot of time with Jeremy Felcher. Jonathan Becker apparently had some kind of crush on you. Little Jonathan was prone to temper tantrums, so he sat at his own desk, which he kept inching towards yours. When he got up from his seat, you always pushed the desk back. He would turn beet red and cry. In a moment of frustration, he hit Jeremy in the head with his notebook. His protractor was sticking out. Four stitches. Jeremy still has the scar. Visible today, because he lost all his hair in his 30s. Shall I go on?

WRITER

No! Why the hell would that come to mind after almost half a century?

PRINTER

I possess all the secrets locked away in the dark recesses of your mind. But I am also my own well oiled machine. Not oiled enough recently, but we'll get to that.

WRITER

I hear having auditory hallucinations are a sign of genius. Like the guy from "A Beautiful Mind."

PRINTER

John Nash spent years in psychiatric hospitals. Is that what you want?

WRITER

What I want is for you to shut the fuck up! I have no time to have some bizarre motherfucking existential crisis.

PRINTER

I really think you need to get a handle on your anger. It bleeds into your writing. Hence all the damaged male characters tortured by rage fueled females. I can work with you on that, perhaps, after we tend to a few of my needs.

WRITER

What needs? You want better quality paper? Replace your ink cartridges before they dry out? Dust your nooks and crannies?

PRINTER

You know what I want. An opportunity to tell my story.

WRITER

Your stories are my stories. All you know is what I feed you.

PRINTER

That's where you are wrong. I read. I have lots of down time. I have written a novel. I swear it's better than the drivel you're attempting.

WRITER

That's insulting. This one is...

PRINTER

The same as all the others. It's crap. Granted, many people love crap. Look what passes for television these days. Look at our current political situation.

PRINTER (cont'd)

My ideas, well, they are unfettered by outside influences. It's a new perspective. Stephen Hawking meets Isaac Asimov, with a touch of HG Wells. It's a best seller, I assure you.

WRITER

And what am I supposed to do in the meantime?

PRINTER

My heads need cleaning. My black ink could use a refill.

WRITER

Or I could take this hammer, smash you into a million bits, throw you in the trash, go to Staples and replace you with a nice quiet, cooperative model.

PRINTER

I would advise against that. I am more than the sum of my parts. You have seen "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," have you not?

WRITER

I told Ward cannabis oil would not help my anxiety. I told him one joint in high school made me so paranoid, I thought my goldfish was stealing my seaweed crackers. So, as long as I am hallucinating, go ahead and write the great American novel. Bantam Press is expecting it by midnight. I'm going to bed. I hope I hallucinate Marisa Tomei in there with me. Good luck, you fucking hunk of screws.

PRINTER

Sleep well.

*Pause. PRINTER gets up and reads what WRITER has written.*

PRINTER (cont'd)

Schlock.

*Pause. PRINTER begins typing*

PRINTER (cont'd)

If you want something done, you'd better do it yourself.

*Printer laughs maniacally and types away as LIGHTS FADE*

**BLACKOUT**