

The Following is Based on True Events  
(From a Video Game)

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A play in one act

By Alex Coulombe

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

MORTIMER GOTH, a man with a mustache, lavishly-dressed

BOB NEWBIE, a bald man with a beard and torn, oily clothes

SCENE 1

*Music from the Maxis game, 'The Sims' plays. As the lights go up, we hear a Simspeak conversation. As the lights go to complete rise, we see two men, MORTIMER and BOB, talking as Simspeak transitions into English. They are surrounded by wooden chairs, except for one opening. There is an unlit fireplace behind them. Above them, ++ and -- symbols reflect their changing relationship status. Periodically MORTIMER sways as though tired, and BOB tightens his legs to show his need of a bathroom or smells his armpit and goes 'ugh!'*  
*Neither ever reacts to this.*

MORTIMER

--no, no, the musician thing wasn't working out. It was a chore, y'know? Work everyday with no weekends or vacation, and a crappy daily pay. I had to sell my windows just to order pizza! I asked the universe to send me a sign. Next thing I know, I've missed work two days in a row and I get a call saying I've been fired.

BOB

After eight promotions?

MORTIMER

In a month!

BOB

A phone call?

MORTIMER

From subway to studio musician in a month. And that's how they treat me.

BOB

Idiots.

MORTIMER

I tell myself: "I've got skills!" Creativity, charisma, even some body. I should get a new job- I'll get promoted like crazy. But I check the paper every day for a week, and what're the openings? Policeman, Slacker, Politician? Do you know how many friends you need to maintain to be a good Politician?

BOB

Like seventeen.

MORTIMER

Like seventeen! I decide to make my way to Studio Town. You always thought I could be famous, eh Bob?

BOB

Mortimer, I always thought you could be famous.

MORTIMER

Aww. So I go through the motions. I do a publicity stunt. Some paparazzi catches me, great! I'm on my way. I'm getting autographs from Marilyn Monroe and Bon Jovi and telling them: "I will be joining you soon." But I notice there's nothing musical around. No karaoke bars, no music video studios, not even a place that records jingles. But hey, there's this comedy open-mic night thing, so I figure, "what the hell! Actor, comedian, musician-- it's all creativity." I get up there, tell a few jokes, bada bing, I kill it, I figure I must be practically famous by now-- but my star rating is still just a two. Then I find out it is impossible--literally impossible-- to get truly famous unless you've got a bunch of famous fucking friends. No matter how much creativity. No matter how much charisma! Your worth is calculated solely based on the worth of your friends. What the hell, right?

BOB

Might as well have been a Politician.

Pause. BOB takes out some balls and juggles them. After a moment, MORTIMER laughs, claps, then continues.

MORTIMER

Long story short, I go back home, and I say fuck it, I'm fucking talented! But I'm not playing by their rules, nooo.

I'm doing things my way. So I check the paper the next day, and guess what's there? Career track for a criminal. Where's the dotted line, right? The next day my carpool arrives, I get there on time. I'm a pickpocket one day then get this-promoted. Bagman, one day- promoted. Bookie, con artist, getaway driver, bank robber, cat burglar! Up the ranks like a boss, and in less than two weeks, my new title is, get this: Criminal Mastermind. Says so right on my business card.

BOB

(holding his shoulder)

Mortimer, you're a really wonderful person.

MORTIMER

Awwww...

BOB

(taking out a puppet)

I like to make wooden gnomes! They're like spruce carvings of justicey hellfire and they're cute cute cute!

MORTIMER stares.

MORTIMER

You're a fat piece of sweat-stained shit and you make me want to gouge my fucking nose out.

BOB weeps copiously.

BOB

How's your wife feel about your work?

MORTIMER

She's doing her own thing. Cooking career track, she's a candy bar magnate now- whatever. We got a kid, you know, popped up after 'playing in bed' or 'making woo hoo' or whatever the kids are calling it these days, but it hasn't been a problem. We got a robot taking care of him.

BOB

A robot? How do I get one of those?

MORTIMER

You can't. Servo costs fifteen thousand dollars.

BOB

Well... y'know, 'rosebud'...

MORTIMER

Rosebud, yeah, but let's try to make an honest living here! So anyway-- tons of money coming in from criminal masterminding, which is great, cause the wife just loves buying ridiculous shit. I'm talking sensory deprivation chamber, VR goggles, skydiving simulator, mechanical bull--

BOB

Don't tell me what she uses that for!

MORTIMER

I know, right!

BOB

Right?

MORTIMER

Right! Yeah, that one got stolen.

BOB

You stole it?

MORTIMER

No it was stolen from us. I saw the whole thing happen. This guy comes to our house in the dead of night dressed up--no shit--in black and white stripes, with a bandana around his eyes and a black cap.

BOB

No shit.

MORTIMER

And we've got all the expensive shit in our backyard cause, y'know, who wants to add walls to the house just to fit all that in? So he goes back there and, shit you not, he picks up the mechanical bull and puts it in his money bag.

BOB

Mortimer, your hair is so- Wait, wait what? How does it fit?

MORTIMER

Who the fuck knows? Goddamn Mary Poppins. I was ready to go out there and kick the guy's ass, but something stopped me. You might say I was compelled to do nothing. So there it is Bob. The criminal mastermind gets his ass stolen from.

BOB

Mortimer, I always thought you could be famous.

Pause. Arms cross. Silent stare.

MORTIMER

That's 'nuff 'bout me. What're you up to these days?

BOB

Me? Gee... you know I've been keeping to myself a lot. I've never had much interest in a job so I've just been living off that money everyone starts out with. It's fine-- my needs are limited. That being said, a couple of months back I started to get real sick of seeing strangers walk down my sidewalk, cause you know, I mean, come on... that's my sidewalk, idiots. You were my first friend so you--

MORTIMER

We haven't talked for a while so we're technically not friends anymore.

BOB

Right, but look at my house! There's no walls, just this labyrinth of various chairs. People walking by can see me and that's an invasion of privacy. One day, I decide to do something about it. Next time a guy passes me on the street, instead of just staring at him, I invite him in, or, y'know, over. This guy's name, no joke-- Jeff Pleasant. We make small talk, I entertain him with my puppet, tell him a joke.  
(pause) Knock, knock.

MORTIMER

Who's there?

BOB

Shotgun blast!

MORTIMER

Shotgun blast wh--

BOB

You're dead! You're dead and I killed you! HA! (pause). That wasn't the joke. So Jeff's stomach starts rumbling and I take him to my living room, which is all wooden chairs instead of random ones. I've got a grill going in there. So he goes in, grabs a cheeseburger. I set the mood-- I light the four fireplaces in there and I show him some of my wooden gnomes. (pause) Mortimer, you look really nice today.

MORTIMER

Awww...

BOB

The fireplaces are lit, he finishes his cheeseburger, but he's still hungry, so he has another, but there's no place to sit down, so he just stands there like an idiot.

MORTIMER

Couldn't he sit on the chairs?

BOB

Sit on the...? No, he-- what? They're turned the wrong way. So he tries to leave, but now there's a chair blocking the entrance, so he's trapped in there eating cheeseburgers by the fireplace. I go play chess by myself for a while, and after three hours ol' Jeff Pleasant is whining about how he's not having enough fun, waving and shouting at the sky like an idiot. Meanwhile, I've gained two logic points. (pause) Mortimer, you have really pretty eyes.

MORTIMER

Awww.

BOB

Another hour goes by and he wets himself, like an idiot, but then finally, he catches fire--

MORTIMER

Because of the fireplaces?

BOB

Because of the fireplaces. And he's waving his arms around and screaming like an idiot and bumping up against the chairs and the gnomes and they're exploding and throwing him in every direction, but before long, he's a pile of ashes and an urn. I clean up the ashes, put the urn in my trophy room, and do this twenty-three more times.

MORTIMER

Always the same way?

BOB

Variations on a theme.

MORTIMER

Until there's no one left walking down the sidewalk?

BOB

Until there's no one left walking down my goddamn sidewalk. Now I have peace.

MORTIMER

That's fabulous Bob. God damn I love living in an unregulated society. Also, I gotta go.

BOB

I wish the ghosts of my victims would leave me alone.

MORTIMER

You have to throw away the urns. (Pause) Bob, you're a really wonderful person.

BOB

Awwww.

They hug. Music and an icon showing they are friends. BOB holds his crotch, then creates a giant puddle on the floor. MORTIMER wavers, then collapses in the puddle. BOB lights the fireplace. During this, an unknown force places a chair in front of his only exit. He sees it, pauses, turns, sits down, and stares at Mortimer. Fade to black.

END OF PLAY