

WRITER'S BLOCK

A Novel One Act

By

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## WRITER'S BLOCK

## CAST (4M, 3F)

JAY	M	novelist specializing in historical fiction
MAC	M	novelist specializing in action adventure
EDNA	F	their agent, fast-talking and headstrong
SHIRLEY	F	waitress
DIEGO	M	a hero from Jay's novel
Also plays KIDNAPPER		Crazed gunman
Also plays LANCE		A Spy
The CAPTAIN	M	Diego's nemesis
Also plays COP		a policeman
Also plays TAYLOR		special agent to the President
MARIA	F	Diego's love interest
Also plays LADY		a kidnap victim
Also plays DORIS		an undercover reporter

THE TIME: The present.

THE PLACE: A local tavern, and inside the minds of the two novelists

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SETTING: The set is divided into two parts - a table at the local tavern where Jay and Mac often do their writing, and an open space which will serve as the setting for the fictional vignettes of the play.

SOUND: snare drums and marching boots. Lights up stage right. DIEGO is standing with his hands tied behind his back as if facing a firing squad. MARIA MARIANNA MARGARITA is on her knees hugging his legs and crying.

MARIA MARIANNA MARGARITA

No, Diego! Do not let them do this!

CAPTAIN enters.

CAPTAIN

Get away you stupid wench. Today is a day for celebration. Today Diego shall die.

MARIA MARIANNA MARGARITA

No!

CAPTAIN kicks MARIA MARIANNA MARGARITA away and she lies sobbing on the ground.

CAPTAIN

So, Diego, you have finally come to the end of your journey. Would you like a blindfold?

DIEGO shakes his head.

CAPTAIN (cont'd)

Very well. You were always braver than you were wise. I have been waiting for this moment my entire career. Finally, you will humiliate me no longer. Cigarette?

DIEGO spits in the CAPTAIN'S face.

CAPTAIN (cont'd)

Perhaps not. You have such spirit, Diego, but that spirit will soon dry up when the life flows out of your body like a babbling brook that is swallowed by the parched earth under the furious sun. It is almost sunrise. Do you have any final words?

DIEGO pauses and attempts to speak.  
Nothing comes out. He tries to speak, but says nothing.

CAPTAIN (cont'd)

Okay, what would Diego say? Let's see, he's a legend, a folk hero, a living symbol of the Revolution.

CAPTAIN begins to pace, talking to himself while DIEGO watches him intently.

CAPTAIN (cont'd)

He's laughing in the face of death, defying the authorities, showing that his purpose is greater than any bodily harm that this corrupt government could possibly administer. How about ...

DIEGO

Give me Liberty or give me Death.

CAPTAIN

Nah, been done – that's another revolution.

DIEGO

My only regret is that I have but one life to give for my country.

CAPTAIN

No, no, that's too Nathan Hale.

DIEGO

I want my mommy.

CAPTAIN

No, that's what I would say. Not Diego. Diego is a hero. He's like Zorro and Robin Hood and Underdog – all rolled up into one. Ah, how about ...

DIEGO

Hey, Sweetheart, bring me a light beer.

DIEGO, MARIA MARIANNA  
MARGARITA, and the CAPTAIN are surprised by the remark. Blackout.

SHIRLEY (in darkness)

One light Beer – comin’ up.

Lights up on the tavern, JAY is sitting at a table, writing in a notebook. MAC crosses towards him.

MAC

Make that two. One for my good friend J. Noble Preston, the great novelist.

JAY

Cut it out, will ya?

MAC

Sorry, man, did I break your concentration?

JAY

My train of thought just left on an express run to Chicago.

MAC

Hey, that’s pretty good. Mind if I used it?

JAY

You already did. I was quoting your second novel.

MAC

Clones in Petticoats? Where was.... Oh yeah, when Brady discovers the truth about the pharmacy.

JAY

That’s it.

MAC

I didn’t know you even read it.

JAY

Sometimes I like to compare our styles.

MAC

What’s to compare? I’m all “frantic-suspense-edge of your seat” and you’re that historical embellishment stuff.

JAY

I’m not talking about content. I’m referring to your literary style, turn of phrase .....

MAC

Hey, I just write the stuff - don't ask me to understand it.

SHIRLEY enters, delivers two beers.

SHIRLEY

Two light beers.

MAC

Thanks, Shirley.

JAY

Make sure the check goes to Dexter McQuayle.

SHIRLEY

Who's that?

JAY

Mac.

SHIRLEY

Your name is Dexter?

MAC

Don't rub it in, Sweetheart. I was named after my great grandfather.

SHIRLEY

I guess "Block Head" was already taken as a family name.

SHIRLEY exits.

MAC

I swear she loves me. So how's it going?

JAY

I'm stuck.

MAC

I hate that.

JAY

I've got Diego in front of a firing squad and I can't think of anything good for him to say as his last words.

MAC

You're doing another Diego book?

JAY

Yeah, you have a problem with that?

MAC

No, it's just that you've written about seven of them.

JAY

Two. Only two. This will be the third and last.

MAC

This is the last Diego book?

JAY

Yes.

MAC

Well, then that's easy.

JAY

What's easy?

MAC

His last words. Just have him yell "Fire away."

JAY

Thanks a lot.

MAC

"And don't miss!"

JAY

You're a jerk, Mac.

MAC

It's his last book. His last words could really be his last words.

JAY

Not in Chapter Two.

MAC

You're only on Chapter Two?

JAY

Yeah.

MAC  
Not good. Isn't Edna going to be here soon?

JAY  
Next week.

MAC  
Oh, crap.

JAY  
You said it. She's gonna want to see a manuscript.

MAC  
A finished manuscript.

JAY  
How about you? You got anything good?

MAC  
No, I'm stuck.

JAY  
Too bad. My story keeps going in circles. I just feel blocked.

MAC  
Don't say that!

JAY  
Sorry, I didn't mean "blocked."

MAC  
We are not "blocked."

JAY  
Not at all.

MAC  
We're just between inspirations...

JAY  
There's no such thing as writer's block.

MAC  
A complete myth.



Only a fable. JAY

An old wives' tale. MAC

Writer's block does not exist. BOTH

JAY and MAC – high five.

So whatta ya say? You need a warm up? MAC

Yeah, might as well. JAY

Okay. (surveys the room) MAC  
How about him? The one in the corner.

Mister Bushy Moustache and Receding Hairline? JAY

Yeah. Whatta ya think? MAC

I don't know, .....international spy? JAY

Former KGB? MAC

Yeah, Vladimir Stakoyachev, the Soviet Union's most talented cryptographer. JAY

What's that? MAC

Code breaker. JAY

Oh, yeah. Came to the States in '92 and spilled his guts to the CIA. MAC

JAY

Because the Soviet government had framed him for atrocities he did not commit.

MAC

Those bad Soviets!

JAY

Witness Protection?

MAC

Yeah, now living in the suburbs under the name of Harvey Wallace.

JAY

Profession?

MAC

Other than ex-spy?

JAY

Yeah, what's his day job?

MAC

Ummm.....Librarian at Central Community College.

JAY

Librarian?

MAC

His experience in cracking codes gave him the upper hand at deciphering the Dewey Decimal System.

JAY

Nice touch.

MAC

Wife and kids?

JAY

None. His career took precedence.

MAC

That's too easy.

JAY

Sorry. I just can't imagine our super spy pushing Vladimir Junior on the swing set.

MAC  
Good point.

JAY  
What's his secret?

MAC  
The one thing that he didn't tell the CIA.

JAY  
Oooo nice. Which is?

MAC  
He's still looking for someone.

JAY  
The man with the artificial arm?

MAC  
Artificial leg.

JAY  
Better yet. And why is Vladimir chasing this Comrade Limp-o-wit-ski?

MAC  
He wants the artificial leg.

JAY  
Why?

MAC  
Something valuable is hidden inside the leg.

JAY  
Microfilm.

MAC  
Of course.

JAY  
The microfilm that contains the evidence which will exonerate him for the trumped up charges against him.

MAC  
And clear his name, allowing him to return to his homeland as a hero.

JAY

And the plot twist?

MAC

The man with the artificial leg was killed in an automobile accident.

JAY

But the prosthetic leg was donated to a local hospital.

MAC

And was, in turn, given to an underprivileged teenage boy who had his leg amputated after a freak pole vaulting accident.

JAY

Kind of an artificial organ donation.

MAC

Naturally.

JAY

Which is significant because.....

MAC

This teenage boy now attends Central Community College...

JAY

And works as part time help in the library...

MAC

Under Vladimir's supervision.

High five. SHIRLEY enters and removes beer bottles.

SHIRLEY

Are you guys playing your silly game again?

MAC

Of course.

SHIRLEY

Who is it this time?

JAY

Two O'clock. Moustache, receding hairline.

SHIRLEY

Oh, Randy? He runs the body shop over on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue. What were you guys thinking?

JAY

Russian spy.

SHIRLEY

Well that's better than the last one. I remember when you used Lonnie from Simmons Accounting....What was he again?

MAC

Alien Warlord.

SHIRLEY

Well, at least now you're staying on the same planet.

SHIRLEY exits.

JAY

She has no imagination.

MAC

She's not a writer.

JAY

Doesn't look beyond the surface.

MAC

Misses the colorful possibilities.

JAY

Too deeply imbedded in reality.

MAC

And worst of all...

BOTH

SHE'S NEVER BEEN PUBLISHED!

High five.

MAC

I'd better get to work. I'm short by about twelve chapters.

JAY

Good luck.

MAC

Are we bowling tomorrow night?

JAY

No, I need to work on this before Edna shows up.

MAC

Right. I should probably do the same. 'Night, Jay.

JAY

Wait up. I'll walk home with you. I could use some fresh air.

MAC and JAY exit as the lights fade out.  
SOUND: Sirens.

COP

(in darkness)

Drop the gun! If you surrender peacefully, you will not be harmed.

The lights come up on a KIDNAPPER,  
holding LADY while pointing a gun to her  
head.

KIDNAPPER

Get away from me, I tell you. I'll shoot her! I swear I will.

COP (off stage)

Put down the gun. No one will get hurt.

KIDNAPPER

No way! Now get back - I swear I'll blow her brains out. Don't do that!

SOUND: shots ring out. KIDNAPPER falls  
to the ground. LADY cringes and backs  
away from the body. COP runs in.

COP

Stand back!

COP examines the body and returns to  
LADY who is kneeling and fearful.

COP (cont'd)

Are you okay?

LADY nods.

COP (cont'd)

It's all right. He won't bother you any more. Are you sure you're all right ?

LADY nods.

COP (cont'd)

Can you speak?

LADY nods, pauses, and then speaks.

LADY

Oh my lord, would you look at the butt on that waiter . . .

Blackout.

EDNA (in the dark)

He could be one of those Chippendale dancers or something.

Lights up on Tavern where MAC is sitting at the table writing. EDNA is standing beside the table. She speaks with the speed and subtlety of a machine gun.

EDNA (cont'd)

I could just butter him up and serve him as an appetizer. It's no wonder I love this place. The food isn't good, but the view is just lovely.

EDNA sits.

MAC

Hi, Edna. I'm still working on the book.

EDNA

Well, work away, Sugar, don't let me stop you. Does it help to write in this place?

MAC

Yeah, this way I never run out of beer in the fridge like at my place.

EDNA

Well, Love, I've always said that alcohol marinates your talent -we've got to have something big this time, Mac - you'd better make it good. I've got room for only one more novel this year - Leonard is just waiting for the first thing I bring in - He'll try and push this one through to the top, Sweetheart, so if you can wrap this up soon, I'll rush it through.

MAC

Only one novel? What about Jay?

EDNA

Can't you count, Babydoll? One novel – Uno – Ichi – Odin - Roman numeral lowercase i. If Jay beats you to the finish line, your book goes on hold.

MAC

Great. Nothing like a little pressure.

EDNA

You'll do fine, Cupcake, you always come through and everybody wants to see what Dexter McQuayle is going to do next so don't keep your public waiting, Handsome – don't drag your feet on this one.

MAC

It's the life of a novelist – sometimes the words just don't flow.

EDNA

Don't worry, Creampuff, you'll get over it. Oh, there he is again.

(yelling across the room at the waiter)

Hey, Twinkie-Tush! Bring your buns over here - I'd like a martini.

(to MAC)

So what is it, anyhow?

MAC

Right now it's something kind of like "Dog Day Afternoon," but with sci-fi twist. I'm having a hard time with it. I get so far and just draw a blank.

EDNA

Don't tell me you've got writer's –

MAC

Don't say it!

EDNA

Well, get on it, Lambchop, we don't have much time. I'm only in town for two days and I plan to go back with a novel in my hands.

MAC

Only two days?

EDNA

That's it, Loverboy.

To read the rest of the play, contact [dave@dritchardtucker.com](mailto:dave@dritchardtucker.com)