

SERENDIPITY

by

Jody McColman

SERENDIPITY

CHARACTERS:

PHIL: Male, 18+

ED: Female, 18+

CLAIRE/JIM/NICK: Neutral, 18+

CHARACTER NOTE: CLAIRE, JIM, and (for his one line) NICK are played by one actor as split-personalities. The stage directions refer to the characters collectively as "CLIM."

STAGING NOTE: The play can be staged very simply with just two chairs on an otherwise bare stage.

SETTING: An abandoned warehouse.

AT RISE: PHIL and ED are in chairs, blindfolded, with their hands tied behind them. PHIL has several cheap, clicky, ballpoint pens in his front shirt pocket.

PHIL

Do you really think things just happen? Out of nowhere? Just poof! Done! Voila!

ED

Well, yeah. I--

PHIL

No, Ed, of course not! I mean there's, there's, there's no shortcuts in life baby!

ED

But, what about serendipity.

PHIL

What?

ED

Serendipity. (beat) A fortunate happenstance. (beat) A happenstance. (beat) A thing that happens by chance. (beat) Ok, how about "pleasant surprise" then?

PHIL

Nope. No. Nothing happens by "chance." And when did surprises get this rep for being pleasant, anyway. Surprises suck. You can't plan for them, you can't prepare yourself, they come out of nowhere, man.

ED

Well, yeah. They're *surprises*, Phil.

PHIL

Exactly, dude. EXACTLY. Give me one example of "serendipity." One.

ED

Penicillin.

PHIL

What?

ED

Penicillin.

PHIL

I don't follow.

ED

Penicillin was discovered in the 1920s when an English doctor returned to work from vacation. He had accidentally left some bacteria samples he was working on out in the open, and when he got back he saw the samples were all moldy. He looked at the sample under a microscope, and found that the mold was preventing the growth of the bacteria. Boom. Penicillin.

PHIL

So, some sloppy doctor leaves his crap out when he goes on vacation, and we end up with--

ED

Modern antibiotics. Yeah.

PHIL

Dude, that's--

ED

Serendipity, I know!

PHIL

--crazy. That should not be how things are invented.

ED

That's what serendip-- Did you hear something?

CLIM enters

CLAIRE

Ok, you understand what you're supposed to do, right?

JIM

Yeah, yeah. I've got it. You've explained it enough times. I think sometimes you don't give me the, the, um...

CLAIRE

Respect? Credit? Benefit?

JIM

See! See! Right there! That! Not believing I have the right word.

CLAIRE

I'm sorry. (beat) So?

JIM

What?

CLAIRE

So sometimes I don't give you enough...?

JIM

Oh! Sometimes you don't give me... appropriate accolades for my... aptitude.

CLAIRE

I apologize. I'm sorry for not providing you with sufficient--

JIM

Appropriate.

CLAIRE

Appropriate... accolades?

CLIM as JIM nods

CLAIRE

For your...?

JIM

Aptitude.

CLAIRE

Aptitude. Right. Nice alliteration there, by the way.

JIM

Thanks. I thought that flowed nicely.

CLAIRE

It did. I'm sorry. Now, do you know the plan?

JIM

Yes.

CLIM as CLAIRE gestures toward PHIL and ED

JIM

Right. Ahem. Ok. You two. Don't bother screaming or yelling for help, nobody can hear you. Oh, introductions, how rude of me. We're your kidnapers. I'm Jim and this--

CLAIRE

NO NAMES! We talked about this!

JIM

Right! Sorry Claire-- Uh. Sorry, uh, "Kidnapper B." We've contacted your company--

CLAIRE

Wait, why am I Kidnapper B?

JIM

Because I'm Kidnapper A

CLAIRE

Why do you get to be A? How come I can't be A? Or, for that matter, why can't I be Kidnapper Z?

JIM

We never discussed who was Kidnapper what, so I'm just winging it here. Did you want to be Kidnapper A.

CLAIRE

Well, not necessarily. You're right we never discussed it. We should have discussed it.

JIM

I'm sorry. We should have. You can be Kidnapper A if you want.

CLAIRE

Nah, that's ok. You keep it. It was your idea, after all.

JIM

Thank you.

CLAIRE

You're welcome. I think I'd rather be Kidnapper Q though. I like the sound of that. If you don't mind.

JIM

No, of course not, I--

ED

Hello?

JIM

Right! So sorry. Where were we?

PHIL

You've contacted our company...

CLAIRE

I've got this. We've contacted your company, and we're waiting for a response to our ransom demands.

ED

What was their reaction? How long did they say they needed?

JIM

Well, to be clear, by "contacted," Kidnapper... Q was it? You're right, that is better. By contacted, Kidnapper Q means we left a message.

CLAIRE

A voicemail.

JIM

It is the middle of the night.

PHIL

So, we, what? Wait?

ED

Why us?

JIM

What do you mean?

ED

I mean, we're pen salesmen. Pens. And not fancy pens, either. Simple, cheap, clicky pens. Look in his pocket.

CLIM reaches into PHIL'S shirt pocket and pulls out a cheap, clicky pen, and clicks it a few times

ED

It's not like we're diamond dealers or bond brokers or, or, movie moguls, or some job with real money. With employers who can afford a huge ransom.

CLAIRE

Now *that* was some nice alliteration.

JIM

Indeed. Nicely done there.

ED

Thank you.

JIM

Wait. You're what?

PHIL

Pen salesmen.

CLAIRE

You're not the Pointe Brothers?

ED

The who?

JIM

The Pointe Brothers, the owners of Ball Pointe Hedge Funds?

PHIL

No, we're Lower Mainland sales reps for the Hedge Ball Point Pen Company. And we're not brothers.

CLAIRE

Oh dear.

JIM

Well, this is embarrassing. We, uh. I mean, we...

CLAIRE

We owe you two an apology. A sincere apology.

ED

So, we can go?

JIM

Well I, um, I'm not sure--

CLAIRE

We didn't discuss what we'd-- I mean we don't have a mistaken identity contingency plan.

CLIM becomes a third personality, NICK, for just a moment

NICK

Get it together you two! Amateurs.

CLIM gets it together

JIM

We did blindfold them.

CLAIRE

True.

JIM

So they can't identify us.

CLAIRE

Also true.

CLIM as CLAIRE turns to ED and PHIL

CLAIRE

Is there anyone we can call for you? I mean, to come and pick you up? We can give them directions, we're not far off the highway, actually. Easy enough to find.

PHIL

Well, sure, my husband's number is 203-783-2000.

CLIM takes a pen from PHIL'S shirt pocket and writes the number on their hand

JIM

Great. So, um, we're going to go now. We'll call your husband when we're safely away.

PHIL

Ok. Thanks, I guess?

CLAIRE

No hard feelings, I hope. Really just a terrible misunderstanding.

CLIM unties ED and PHIL and exits.

ED

Well, that was a pleasant surprise.

PHIL

Don't.

ED

Yep, serendipitous. Like the naval engineer who was working with tension springs and happened to drop one.

PHIL

Can't help yourself, can you?

ED

He saw that it kept moving after it hit the ground. Thus inventing?

PHIL

They should have just shot us.

ED

The Slinky!

END OF PLAY