

DRAKE DISAPPEARS

by

Matthew S. Hinton

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DRAKE DISAPPEARS**Copyright© 2022 Matthew S. Hinton****CAST OF CHARACTERS**

DRAKE, a young boy on the cusp of 13 – can be played by an adult (13, going on 30)

MARLA, his older sister

JUSTIN THYME, a private eye, somewhat out of shape

SETTING

A kitchen. There is a counter, cabinets, refrigerator, stove, and working sink. One door opens to the outside – a window also reveals the world beyond the kitchen. To one side of the stage, another door leads to the rest of the house. A small breakfast table and chairs rest to one side. All of the appliances and furniture pieces look as though they have come from various eras (the fridge especially, which is a blocky piece from the 1960's or earlier – with a heavy latching door that has likely doomed some poor wretch of a child during a game of 'hide and seek'; the table is one of those formica and chrome jobs from the mid-20th century; and so on).

At rise, MARLA is counting down loudly offstage starting at “thirty-one thousand” as DRAKE enters, gleefully looking for a hiding place. He tries all possibilities, but nothing satisfies him. Time is running out. Then, it hits him. He goes to fridge, opens it, flooding the stage with pure, blinding, cold fridge light. He begins to remove its contents (milk, etc.) and put them on the counter. As “zero” approaches, DRAKE enters the fridge cabinet, pulling the door behind him as the lights dim, flicker, and flash, perhaps also giving off a puff of smoke and ozone. The door snaps shut, and the microwave beeps back to life as the lights return to normal.

MARLA: ... Zero! READY OR NOT, HERE I COME!

(Enter MARLA, in search mode.)

MARLA: Drake! Draaaaaaaaaaake ... I know you're in here Drake ... you're too predictable. You don't hide very well. It's not hiding when you keep picking the same room. I heard you come in here. Are you in the garbage can again? No? Getting too big, eh? How about the table? Can't fit

balled up under there anymore. How about the cabinets?! HA! No ... Just soda and bleach. Should we be storing those next to each other, mom? *Don't sass me, Marla!* Sorr-ee! Yeesh. Okay, Drake. You're not allowed to move, y'know! You're SUPPOSED to stay put! That's how I do it! I play fair! And how many times have I told you about moving the ...

(Finally, her eyes fall on the fridge)

... 2 percent ... (now with a Cheshire grin) Okay, boy – only ONE place you can be. Same old spot. I gotcha now, boy. Got - !

(She opens the door to find ... nothing. MARLA looks a bit confused.)

... you.

(She paces, stares at the fridge thoughtfully, retraces her steps, opens it again – nothing. She studies the unit from several angles. She hides behind the table, chairs, etc., and rushes the fridge, finding nothing each time. The last time, she jerks the door open wildly, casually closes it most of the way, and flings it wide with a sudden:)

A-HA!

(She closes the door. She is less confused.)

Drake? Drake?!

(She checks the microwave for the time. MARLA is worried. She picks up the phone, dials.)

Hullo? Police. I ... I wanna report a missing person ... it's my little brother, Drake, he's just – gone ... I dunno he was here a minute ago, but he vanished ... 24 hours?! It can't wait that long! He never just vanishes! Who just vanishes like that?! ... This IS serious, why wouldn't I be serious? Okay. Okay. I'm calm. I'm calming down. I'm calm. It was like this: We were playing hide-and-seek and I came into the kitchen where he always hides and – Hullo? HULLO?! What the crap?! They hung up on me! DO YOU HEAR THAT DRAKE?! THEY HUNG UP! I HOPE YOU'RE HAPPY! MOM'S GONNA KILL YOU WHEN SHE GETS BACK AND CAN'T FIND YOU! ... I'LL TELL HER YOU LEFT THE TWO PERCENT OUT!

(Silence is her only answer.)

DRAKE! C'MON! NO MORE FOOLIN AROUND! I'M CALLING THE POLICE AGAIN!

(She dials again.)

Hullo?! Yes, I was just hung up on while trying to report a missing person! It's my brother, Drake – we were playing hide-and-seek and ... YES! YES, I CHECKED THE REST OF THE HOUSE! ... FINE!

(She exits, offstage, to the rest of the house, leaving the phone on the counter and returns immediately, picks up the phone)

NOPE! NOWHERE! Now listen, he usually hides in the fridge, he took everything out this time and ... HULLO?! HULLO?! Are you SERIOUS?!

(She hangs up the phone, checks the fridge again on a whim, finds it empty, slams it shut)

DAMMIT DRAKE!

(She checks the microwave again, gets out the phone book, flips through the pages, stops, scans)

Private ... private ... private ... Perfect!

(*Mumbling as she dials*) Disappears ... Drake just disappears ... little shii- Hello, yes, I need some help and I don't know who else to turn to. Yes. Yes, it's urgent. My little brother's missing – I'm at –

(She has been hung up on again; she is fuming)

DRRRRAKE! You are dead, mister!

(Enter JUSTIN THYME from the outside. MARLA frantically grabs at items from a drawer, comes up with a baster and some wacky kitchen gadget, ready to defend herself and home.)

MARLA: Okay, buddy! I don't know who you are, but we are NOT buying any today, okay?! So take your girl scout cookies or your boy scout popcorn and beat cheeks! I've got a serious situation here!

JUSTIN TIME: Looks like I'm just in time. I came as soon as I heard.

MARLA: Hunh?

JT: I'm here to shake the tree.

MARLA: Yeah? Well, my dad's an atheist! So you and whatever god you're pawning today can pound sand! You got that?! I'll know how to use this! And ... and this thing too!

JT: Easy kid, easy. You called me. You don't remember?

MARLA: You don't look like police.

JT: You don't look like an atheist.

MARLA: Lemme see a badge or something.

JT: Or what? You going baste me? Thing's not even loaded, and the safety's on on your gizmo, Gizmo.

MARLA: You don't talk like a cop.

JT: Thank god for that.

MARLA: You talk like an idiot.

JT: Don't let the talk fool you. In real life, I'm very very dumb.

MARLA: Who ... who are –

JT: Name's Justin Thyme, kid. You called me – remember?

MARLA: *(looks down at the phonebook, slowly relaxes)* Oh. But you hung up. How did you - ?

JT: I'm a shamus. A private eye.

MARLA: But you got here so fast.

JT: Time is relative, kid – just another way to measure space. That's my motto; my copyright. It's on all the adspace, printed on all the business cards. Even my menu.

MARLA: Menu?

JT: Let your fingers do the walking. Flip to the restaurants.

(She does, then reads from it aloud.)

MARLA: “Death by chocolate? Murder after dinner? Expiration date fraud?” What is this?

JT: A menu; my list of services. I’m a kitchen sleuth – a skim tracer, if you will. A countertop operative. By the way, ignore the coupons kid, they printed those without my say-so. And their expired anyway.

MARLA: You shouldn’t hang up on people and then just appear in their house unannounced.

JT: You shouldn’t go around threatening people with used turkey plastic and a salad shooter. I never did like to eat my greens, but there are better ways to convince me than a cucumber roscoe.

MARLA: Ew. So, your name is Justin *Time*?

JT: Yes.

MARLA: That’s dumb.

JT: Okay. You’re such a smart kid, why don’t you turn a better moniker?

MARLA: How about Justin Theshortterm?

JT: Too long.

MARLA: Justin *CASE*! That’s a good one and you know it.

JT: It does fit the outfit, doesn’t it?

MARLA: Yeah – now if only the outfit fit *you*.

JT: Cute, but mean. Business has been slow. No. Justin Thyme is the name -

MARLA: Justin Bieber!

JT: Ew. Too topical.

MARLA: But it’d get you business.

JT: The wrong kinda business kid. No, Justin *Thyme* is the name – kitchen crimes are my game.

MARLA: That explains the clothes. And how you got here so quickly.

JT: And here I went assuming you were smart. It's a homonym. With an "H" and a "Y". As in parsley, sage, rosemary, and *thyme*?

MARLA: (beat) ... Am I supposed to get that, or ... something?

JT: Do you want my help or not?

MARLA: Yes, yes. Sorry. Jeez.

JT: Have a seat, miss ...

(MARLA sits as JT examines the kitchen)

JT: What's your name?

MARLA: Marla.

JT: Marla – (Takes out a pack of cigarettes) *Boro*?

MARLA: Just Marla. Some detective.

(JUSTIN THYME draws a loosey from the pack with his mouth, lights it, enjoys it; notices MARLA watching him)

JT: (Offering) Cigarette?

MARLA: (Giving them a quick look and crossing her arms) Yes, I know.

JT: (Putting cigarettes away) Why don't you tell me what happened, Marla? Your little brother went missing.

MARLA: Yes. Drake's disappeared. The police don't believe me. They laughed, told me to wait 24 hours, laughed some more, and then hung up on me. Twice.

JT: Standard operating procedure.

MARLA: For all I know he's in San Francisco... or, or, or, I don't know where. The West Indies, for all I know. Brazil! Exploring the Pacific Ocean! Or he's lost somewhere. My mother'll kill me if he's not here when she gets home from work.

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