

Isaac, I am

A play in two acts

by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

ANGELA : Early 40's. She is very concerned about being "safe." Her job in safety management at an airport gives her a sense of importance and up to now, has pretty much been her life. She has few friends on the outside and is not in contact with her family. Angela dresses down and doesn't connect with her body. She would not be the kind of woman you would notice walking down your sidewalk every day. This is an opportunity to cast someone who isn't vying for the title of Miss America. She can have a different size body, be of any race, wear glasses -- someone who is hiding out inside her shell.

JOSH: 16 Years old. Despite being ill and frail, he manages to charm others online and gets their respect. He reaches out to those on the fringe and displays a humorous empathy to them. Josh delights in knowing Angela and truly appreciates her gift of being able to take him "places." Josh is desperate to have some control over what's happening to him and enjoys the idea of being a sort of teen age hero. He fights the inevitable with loving humor.

ISAAC: From the first moment he blunders into an instant message with Angela, there is something off-putting about Isaac. He doesn't speak the online language others do, tending to communicate in full, sometime stilted sentences. He may be good looking in a very uptight way. He is controlling and intimidates people in conversations. The fact that he reaches out to others in chatrooms is a shock to Angela, because he gives her the impression she's the only one keeping him sane and maybe even alive. The therapeutic relationship he has with Angela borders on romantic and extreme neediness. Still, throughout, he is a bit like an old testament God, that kind that one loves and fears.

KATIE: 13 Years Old. She suffers so and blossoms under Angela's care. She would be the perfect daughter to have, worthy of a trip across country for the chance to save her. Angela recognizes a fellow abused child in this motherless girl. Angela would meet her in the real world in a heartbeat.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS (CONTD.)

BEN: Funny, horny, off-center humor. He seems to enjoy hunting Angela and grasps at any hope of her affections. He can also be of a different body type, not necessarily the most handsome guy on the block. But it's his attitude and charming goofiness that make him so attractive. There is something of the wild risk taker in him, that attracts and frightens Angela. Our first inkling of doubt of his intentions is the night he comes up behind Angela and puts his hands around her throat. It's a moment of danger that slips into eroticism. He has to appear sweet and goofy up to that point.

ACTOR #1, ACTOR #2, ACTOR #3 - Can be of either gender, any ethnicity, to play multiple roles.

NOTE: The production at Jacksonville University split the line-load of the Actors 1,2, and 3, enabling 6 more students to get a chance to perform on the stage. This also enhanced the size of the chatroom and IM'ing scenes.

SYNOPSIS

Set in the world of seductive cyber chat rooms and instant messaging, Angela finds herself torn between a budding "real life" romance and a darker online relationship with a family seemingly bent on its own destruction. As she struggles to come to terms with her own feelings of insecurity and loneliness, she is simultaneously pulled deeper into a bizarre cyberspace by the perplexing and emotionally elusive family of Josh, his younger sister Katie and their obsessive father, Isaac. Eventually, Angela's dual worlds of reality and "virtu-ality" begin to blur together, until her computer life threatens to devour her whole.

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SETTING: Empty stage - Large, sturdy, easy-to-move blocks line the edges of the stage. They will be used to create computers, chairs, benches, desks and other set pieces.

Up Stage center is hung a cyclorama curtain or wall, where images can be projected. Before the play, during the intermission and in between scenes, projections of social websites resembling FACEBOOK pages, short YouTube viral videos, TWITTER Tweets... all sorts of the ever-evolving creative expressions of socializing on the internet.

NOTE: Whenever Angela or another character enters a 'chat room,' the actor is physically there, enabling interaction with another character. They can touch, hug... etc..

AT RISE:

We hear a phone speed-dialing, the familiar, old fashioned snarling hiss and jarring screech of a modem hooking up with an online server. An homage to the good old days.

A single empty office chair rolls across the stage, seemingly under its own power. It exits. Another chair rolls on its own from the opposite side of the stage, exiting.

ACTOR #1, ACTOR #2, ACTOR #3, ANGELA and BEN roll in and sit in a semi-circle around the stage on swivel office chairs with rollers. The actors are backlit to a point that we cannot see their faces.

ACTOR #1

True Story. My daughter and I had just finished a salad at the department store you know, well, their cafe, any way, and decided to have a small dessert. What the heck, blow the diet. After all we've cause to celebrate, right? Everything we got was marked down sixty percent. SIXTY! Because both of us are such cookie lovers, we decided to try the department store cookie. It was so excellent that I asked if they would give me the recipe and the waitress said with a small frown, "I'm afraid not but, you can buy the recipe." Well, I asked how much, and she responded, "Only two fifty, it's a great deal!" I agreed with approval, just add it to my tab I told her...

ACTOR #2

True Story. This is not a scam or out of a science fiction novel, it is real. This guy went out last Saturday night to a party. He was having a good time, a couple of beers and some girl, you know, gave him the eye and invited him to go to another party. He decided to go along with her.

She took him to a party in some apartment and they continued to drink, and even got involved with some drugs I dunno, Crystal or Meth or Pot. That's not important. Anyway..

ACTOR#2 (CONT'D)

Next thing he knew, he woke up completely naked in a bathtub filled with ice...

ACTOR #3

True Story. al Qaeda has recruited terrorist spiders Four women in Florida turned up at hospitals over a seven-day period, with the same symptoms. Fever, chills, and vomiting, followed by muscular collapse, paralysis, and finally, death. The only signs of trauma were bite-marks on their buttocks and poison in their blood. The same kind of poison every single time. These women did not know each other, and seemed to have nothing in common besides the butt-bites, oh and they had all visited the same Restaurant within days of their deaths.

ACTOR #1

So, thirty days later, I received my VISA statement and it was \$285.00. I had only spent \$9.95 for two salads and about \$20.00 for a scarf. Silk. Gorgeous. As I glanced at the bottom of the statement, it said, "Cookie Recipe -\$250.00" That was outrageous! I called the accounting department and told them the waitress said it was "two-fifty," which clearly does not mean "two hundred and fifty dollars" by any POSSIBLE interpretation of the phrase.

ACTOR #2

He looked down at his chest, which had "CALL 911 OR YOU WILL DIE" written on it in lipstick.

ACTOR #3

Yeah, lipstick! They all went to the same rest room to powder their noses and put on new lipstick. Which actually doesn't mean anything to this story, but..

ACTOR #1

And they said, sorry, you've seen the recipe, so you'll have to pay for it!

ACTOR#2

He paid, all right. Oh yes he paid.

ACTOR #3

So this government doctor went to the ladies room and lifted up the lid of the toilet seat. There it was, in a small, damp corner of the toilet lid, a mutated version of the deadly West Asian Eensy-Weensy spider, so named because of its distinctive water spout markings and ability to climb back up after being flushed out, so to speak.

ACTOR #2

I mean, it's sick world.

ACTOR #3

...A very sick world, if you think about it.

ACTOR #1

"Okay, you sick people got my \$250.00, and now I'm going to have \$250.00 worth of fun." I told her I was going to see to it that every Cookie lover in the United States with an e-mail account has a \$250.00 cookie recipe from her store FOR FREE.

ACTOR #3

The terrorists are flying over us in little airplanes, releasing the Eensy-Weensy killer spiders all the country. They drift to earth on parachutes made from their own webs.

ACTOR #2

And the 911 operator asked him to stand up and check himself in the mirror.

ACTOR #1

Check your bill.

ACTOR #3

Check your toilet seat.

ACTOR #2

"Check your kidneys," she said, and he found two 9 inch slits on his lower back and....

ACTOR #1

2 cups butter... 4 cups flour 2 teaspoons of soda...mix it until you feel..

ACTOR #3

This prick on your butt...

ACTOR #2

And the 911 lady said "That's bad."

ACTOR #1

That's too bad if you're counting calories, because the real secret is the Hershey's bar ground up..

ACTOR #2

...Exactly where the kidneys are, plus..

ACTOR #1

...3 cups chopped nuts --your choice of nuts, of course.

ACTOR #3

Talk about nuts! The Civilian Aeronautics Board has issued a Black Flag alert. Carry a can of Raid with you at all times when you go out to eat. Or pee. Or poop.

ACTOR #2

... Because you never know when someone's gonna snatch your kidneys.

ACTOR #3

...Or send terrorist eensy-weensy spiders to attack our..

ACTOR #1
... trust in department stores.

ACTOR #2
...harvested organs for sale on the black market just to spite...

ACTOR #3
...Your ass.

ACTOR #2
True story.

ACTOR #3
Because it happened to these ladies in Florida.

ACTOR #1
True story. Because it happened...

ACTOR #2
..to the daughter of a friend of a fellow firefighter.

Lights down on ACTOR #1, ACTOR #2 and ACTOR #3, up on Angela and Ben.

ANGELA
Because it happened to me. And that's why I can't meet you.

BEN
What happened to you? Ripped off for a cookie recipe?

ANGELA
No.

BEN
Attacked by terrorist spiders? Can I come by and check your behind for bites?

ANGELA
No, Ben.

BEN
Wait a minute! You don't believe this stuff. Not the kidney thing. That story has been haunting the internet for years. The version I heard had the lipstick on the bathroom mirror, all red and like dripping with blood.

ANGELA
All the more reason.

BEN
You know it isn't true.

ANGELA
Well, I tried the cookie recipe and it was pretty good.

BEN
Neiman Marcus good?

ANGELA

I don't know.

BEN

You gotta get out of the house, Angela. You know these stories aren't true.

ANGELA

No? Then they are truisms, cautionary tales of what could happen out there.

BEN

Truism. Sounds like a religion of the scared and lonely. You're not serious. You're serious. This is the nuttiest thing. Look, all I want to do is meet you in the real world.

ANGELA

I just don't want to meet people outside. I like it here.

BEN

You don't like me.

ANGELA

I'm not saying that.

BEN

And maybe I should go away... stop bugging you with the...

ANGELA

Don't do that, Ben. Let's just keep it like this. Please.

BEN

Sometimes I think you're a tease, that all of this shy stuff is a put-on. Not even a profile "pic" on your FACEBOOK page.

ANGELA

I can't explain it any better. Please be okay with it.

BEN

Do I have any choice? Well, yeah. Okay. But Angela, I have to say something to you .. and don't take this the wrong way.

ANGELA

What?

BEN

I don't like you just for your kidneys.

BLACKOUT

LIGHTS: Variety show -- brightness and movement.

SOUND: Garish tunes that sound like they come from some demented pipe organ - the kind you hear on a rudimentary website.

They move around the stage -- a strange and patternless choreography, gathering into little groups, then flinging away, changing into new patterns.

Angela crosses the stage and finds herself in a chat room. The actors move around her, sometimes sidestepping or shoving her aside to get into their little groups. This chat room is a hive of activity -- There's a constant rumble ---deep and guttural at times. Occasionally, a provocative word such as "Nude Pics" will pop out from an actor and the others will swarm around him/her.

Out of this mess of sound and color emerges JOSH. He's a handsome young man, sweet and sickly, with a bandana covering his head. As Josh and Angela begin to converse, a spot goes up on them and the lights go down on the other actors, who freeze.

JOSH

Hey beautiful. Yes, I'm talking to you, angel.

ANGELA

Who, me? Hi. Just passing through.

JOSH

You must like angels.

ANGELA

What makes you think that?

JOSH

Your screen name. SqueetAngel What does that stand for?

ANGELA

I don't know. I was trying to spell "Sweet angel", but it must belong to someone else. Or I typed it wrong the first time. Anyway, I'm stuck with it now.

JOSH

LOL. You're probably right, there.

ANGELA

What's that?

JOSH

What's what?

ANGELA

LOL.

JOSH

LOL. You know... it's online shorthand for Laughing Out Loud. L.O.L. Get it?

ANGELA

Oh. Well. I didn't think it was that funny.

JOSH
Oh, come on, it's a little funny.

ANGELA
I don't do chat rooms much.

JOSH
Really? I never would have guessed.

ANGELA
I usually do instant messaging with a friend of mine, this one guy I met online through work. He goes around the country installing security imaging systems and I troubleshoot... Anyway. We e-mail a lot, sometimes instant message. I guess he's out on a job. I haven't heard from him. Anyway, I thought I'd check this chatroom stuff out.

JOSH
Well, this is it.

ANGELA
Spacious.

JOSH
Roomy.

ANGELA
A few throw pillows here and there... a splash of color... it could be cozy.

JOSH
Such a wit you have.

ANGELA
I try.

Actor # 3, "Poppy" enters their area.

ACTOR #3
Hey!

JOSH
Heya Poppy!

ACTOR #3
What's a poppin?

JOSH
Not much. Say hi to Angel.

ACTOR #3
Yo Angel.

ANGELA
Yo Poppy.

ACTOR #3
Age/sex/location.

ANGELA
What?

JOSH
You don't have to answer that, Angel-face. Poppy, cool it.
She's a newbie.

ACTOR #3
So?

JOSH
So you were a newbie once. Be nice.

ANGELA
Woman. Los Angeles.

ACTOR #3
You didn't say your age.

ANGELA
You're right. I didn't.

ACTOR #2 - "Roadkill", enters

ACTOR #2
Whoa. That's telling 'em, Angel. You know he's all of nine
years old..

JOSH
Say hi to Roadkill

ANGELA
Such a happy name.

ACTOR #2
Yeah, Yeah, Yeah.

ACTOR#3
Aw, leave her alone, Roadkill

ACTOR#2
I know why you call yourself Poppy.

JOSH
You're really in L.A.?

ACTOR#3
No you don't.

ACTOR#2
Do so.

ACTOR#3
Na unh!

ACTOR#2
Because you eat raw dough for supper, Poppy.

ACTOR #3 and ACTOR #2 get into a physical shoving match. Lights fade on them.

JOSH (cont'd)

Kids.

ACTOR #3
(From the darkness)

You suck!

ANGELA
They're like this all the time?

JOSH
All the time. You get used to it.

ANGELA
Oh. Well, I better go...

JOSH
Wait. Tell me something.

ANGELA
Yes?

JOSH
L.A. You live there.

ANGELA
Last I looked. Yes.

JOSH
I'm going there next summer.

ANGELA
That's great.

JOSH
And you know what I want to see? I want to see most?

ANGELA
Disneyland.

JOSH
No.

ANGELA
Universal Studios?

JOSH
No. Malibu Beach.

ANGELA
Malibu Beach. Why there?

ACTOR #3
Because he's a beach nut, that's why..

Hello.

ANGELA

They continue their buzzing

HELLO.

ANGELA (cont'd)

ACTOR #1

Don't type in all Caps. Like you're shouting.

ANGELA

Sorry. Hello.

They buzz on, ignoring her.

Anybody?

ANGELA (cont'd)

ACTOR #3

What up room? What's good?

ANGELA

Hello all. Anybody see a guy named Josh?

ACTOR #2

Newbie alert.

ACTOR #1

You know it, dude.

ACTOR #3 makes a car alarm sound.

ACTOR #1 (cont'd)

So what would you do with one if you had one?

ACTOR #2

No brainer. I'd blow away the school.

ACTOR #3

Remember the newbie.

ACTOR #2

Yeah, that's what I mean.

ACTOR #1

What, exactly?

ACTOR#3

It took you six years to learn how to point and click. Now you're blowing away the school?

ANGELA

What is this?

ACTOR #1

Careful.

ACTOR #2

First, I go to my parent's room. They're fast asleep. I put my hand in the old man's pocket and take it out. Then it's off to school and show all those shitheads. I go up to that bad ass Hemmings, look him in the eye, take it out of my pocket and...

ANGELA

Oh god.

ACTOR #3

Don't do it, man. There's no turning back.

ACTOR #1

It's not worth it.

ACTOR #2

I take it out and point it at him. And I say charge it.

ACTOR #3

You say charge it? That is so whack.

ACTOR#1

Classic, you're like a burglar. Oh! Oh! You could end up doing the commercial. American Express. Don't leave anybody's home without it.

ACTOR #2

He don't need to know it's my old man's AMEX. As far as he knows it's mine. All he has to do is bring the brewskis to the school and we'll party like hardy.

ACTOR #1

Awesome.

ANGELA

But that's fraud.

ACTOR #2

Fraud? It's fun. What's it to ya? Betcha' thought we were gonna blow up the school.

ACTOR #1

LOL! Got her good.

ACTOR #3

Score!

They roll on the floor, laughing their asses off.

Angela "leaves the room," crosses to the opposite end of the stage and takes an exasperated breath. She crosses to Actors #1, #2 and #3 and enters a grown up chatroom dripping with testosterone.

ACTORS #1, #2 AND #3

(Together)

You are in "Mature Interests - CUTE F ALONE N BORED".

ACTOR #3

Cock-a-dile Dundee, here.

ACTOR #1

If you're a cute female alone and bored raise your hand.

ACTOR #2

Any women want to piss on me in the shower?

Angela beats a hasty retreat. She passes the actors, as each holds up a sign, i.e. UTAH M4M, CHUBBIE CHASERS, etc... silently beckons her to enter their chat room. Angela is about to exit, then does a double take. She looks up and reads from an imaginary sign and enters the room.

ACTORS #1, #2 AND #3

(Together)

You are in THE NOSFERATU NIGHTCLUB.

Actors #1, #2 and #3 turn their backs to Angela and put on hooded robes.

SOUND: Strange, eerie music.

The lights dim around Angela as she shivers. Actors #1, #2 and #3 surround Angela. The hoods of their robes cover their faces, revealing them from the mouth down.

ACTOR #1

She stands uncertainly at the door, her virginal gown flowing, fine hair lifting ever so slightly in the breeze. Something draws her in. It's useless to resist. She finds herself moving toward the table with its one lit candle and the creature sitting behind it.

ACTOR #2

Who do we have here? A wayward angel, perhaps?

ACTOR #1

Perhaps.

ACTOR #3

Succulent.

ACTOR #1

He lifts the candlestick, its flame obscuring his face as it dances before her.

ANGELA

Well, it's a different kind of nightclub, I'll give you that. Though I thought it would be peppier in here.

ACTOR #3

She speaks as one lost in herself. I like that.

They move a bit closer to her.

ANGELA

Maybe you can help me. I'm looking for a friend.

ACTOR #2

A friend of a friend. Just in time for dinner. Delicious.

ANGELA

Josh. Do you know him?

ACTOR #3

Josh! Josh! Can anybody really know Josh?

ANGELA

Then I'm in the right nightclub.

ACTOR #3

Oh yes. And just in time for the dinner show.

ACTOR #2

Uncertain, is she?

ACTOR #3

She's amongst friends.

ACTOR #2

Good friends. Invited to take off her cloak and rest by the fire. The warm relaxing fire. Warmth is a good thing.

They begin to circle her as the stage lights go down. Each actor carries a flashlight with a red gel on it. Their movements become a ritualistic dance as they wave the flashlights around from Angela's face to their own. They move faster, confusing Angela with their red lights and the bombardment of unending questions.

ACTOR #1

Sensing her fear.

ACTOR #2

Of what?

ACTOR #3

What, indeed?

ANGELA

Are you asking me?

ACTOR #2

Tell us, dear angel. What frightens one?

ANGELA

Terrorists.

ACTOR #2
Oh please. Not real life.

ACTOR #3
Don't ruin it.

ACTOR #1
She is brought closer to the table, fascinated by the light. Offered a goblet filled with the wine of truth, she only allows it to touch her lips. The angel won't drink.

ANGELA
When does Josh come in?

ACTOR #3
Just play along and we'll reveal all.

ANGELA
Oh, so this is a game.

Another hooded figure enters with a red gelled flashlight. The person silently joins the others in the dance.

ACTOR #1
She fears it.

ANGELA
Why do you want to know?

ACTOR #2
To help us help one help one's self.

ANGELA
I just want my friend.

ACTOR #2
To help one find him, then.

ACTOR #3
Scared?

ANGELA
No.

ACTOR #1
Liar!

ANGELA
No.

ACTOR #1
Smells a lie a mile away. Tastes salty, a lie does.

ACTOR #2
Fear is succulent.

ANGELA
Why do you talk that way? Why don't you talk to me?

ACTOR #3

She hates that, being talked at, not talked to. That's what they did, didn't they? No. Not them, him. He did that to the Angel.

ACTOR #2

In the dark.

ACTOR #3

Where no one can see.

ACTOR #1

The darkness frightened the child. Not just darkness. In a closed up place. A hall closet with the door locked. Not enough air in it. Not near enough.

ANGELA

I don't know what you're talking about.

ACTOR #1

All it takes is a look into her eyes to see the truth.

The actors point their red flashlights into Angela's face. She panics.

ANGELA

Don't. Hurts!

ACTOR #1

A small, dark place.

ACTOR #3

Locked in as a little girl? For being bad?

ACTOR #2

Yes, Bad girl. Bad girl! Yes?

ANGELA

No.

ACTOR #1

A clear memory from back then. He called her bad, said she was spoiled, but that wasn't all. No, he took her arm..

Actor #2 takes Angela by the arm.

ACTOR #2

Get in there!

Actor #2 shoves Angela down as if locking her in a small, scary space.

ANGELA

No.

ACTOR #1

No. He didn't just lock her in. Not alone.

ANGELA
Alone would have been better. But this wasn't as you say.

ACTOR #1
No, not a closet.

ANGELA
No.

ACTOR #1
Not a bathroom, not a bedroom.

ANGELA
No. No.

ACTOR #3
But a dark place all the same. Not the attic, the dusty attic.

ANGELA
No it was...

ACTOR #2
It was..

ANGELA
Down.

ACTOR #3
The basement.

ANGELA
The cellar.

ACTOR #1
Dank and cold. Rats live there.

ANGELA
No. It's hot.

ACTOR #3
In a cellar?

ANGELA
There's the furnace... and coal in the bin.

ACTOR #1
Hard, black and flinty stones. The smell of coal dust. It turned the little girl's hands black.

ACTOR #2
Bad girl.

ACTOR #3
Dirty girl.

ACTOR #1
Black tears streak the angel's face as she remembers.

ANGELA

There's a chute above me and I see a bit of the sky. I crawl on my knees up the loose stones. The backs of my legs are black with the coal dust. Black and scratched. Then..

ACTOR#2

Then?

ANGELA

Hands holding me down, pulling me away from that little bit of light in the darkness below. And the pain. And the blood.

A beat. They have found a vein at last.

ACTOR #3

Ah, blood.

ACTOR #2

Her blood.

ACTOR #1

Angel's blood. The sweetest kind. Blood from the first time.

ACTOR #3

Can't get fresher than that.

ACTOR #2

Makes you thirsty.

ACTOR #3

Very thirsty.

ACTOR #1

Parched. To drink and to be drunk from is the greatest gift of all. Hypnotic, the flame is, bringing light into dark dusty places that smell like coal. The figure at the table rises and extends a hand to the battered Angel, offering her succor, asking for a little in return.

Actor #1 extends an arm around Angela's shoulder, pulling her close. Actors #2 and #3 caress her hair, her face and finally, her throat. In classic vampire victim fashion, Angela exposes her throat to them as they close in for the kill.

The hooded figure, who entered late suddenly moves forward, peeling the red gel from his flashlight. He pulls back the hood. It's Josh.

JOSH

Get away from her, you bloodsuckers!

The vampires hiss at him. He makes a cross out of the flashlight and his hand. They back away.

JOSH (cont'd)

Come on.

Angela resists.

Angela. It's me.

JOSH (cont'd)

Who are you?

ANGELA

Josh points the flashlight's beam on his face.

It's me, Josh.

JOSH

No you're not. You're one of them.

ANGELA

You've got to believe me, Angelface. Remember Malibu beach?

JOSH

Josh?

ANGELA

I gotta get you out of here.

JOSH

Aw shit.

ACTOR #1

What's wrong with you, dude?

ACTOR #2

Just when it was getting good.

ACTOR #3

No supper for you guys tonight.

JOSH

As the stage lights come on full, Actors #1, #2 and #3 cover their eyes in pain and exit the stage running. Josh grabs Angela's hand. She is slow to respond.

But this isn't your name on the screen.

ANGELA

Come on, before they start IM'ing you.

JOSH

She finally runs with him to a safer part of the stage. They stop. Josh falls on a block, shaky and out of breath.

What was that?

ANGELA

One hell of a close call. What were you doing in that chatroom?

JOSH

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