

Writing Sample

FARMLAND

A Play in Two Acts

by

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ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

Farmland was originally produced by the Actors Workshop of Long Island in 1985 at the Dowling College Performing Arts Center where it was housed. The Workshop was a professional acting school, founded, operated and taught by John Monteleone from 1985 - 2001. A series of students who studied for many years evolved into a talented group of professional actors and this play was a major production working with them on it. Three of the cast members in this play went on to have very successful professional careers - notably Kevin James, the famous comedian of TV and Screen (King of Queens), his brother Gary Valentine another talented comic of Stage and TV, and Greg Vacariello, a well-known Las Vegas and working Comic. It was a pleasure working with them, as they were budding artists at that time, tackling a very complex script and demanding director. The play was well received, and had a full article about the production in The New York Times and Newsday.

The cast was as follows:

Maw - Kathy Zampogna
Paw - Charlie
Sam - Gary Valentine
Freddy - Dan Sturgess
Sueanne - Dianne Harrington
Howard - Greg Vacariello
IRS AGENT - Unknown
Maya - Linda Holleran
Sherriff - Kevin James

CHARACTERS

MAW

Elderly woman, earthy, from a long line of farmers.

PAW

Elderly man, earthy, from long line of farmers.

SAM

Maw and Paw's son, a strong physical presence and a farmer.

FREDDY

Maw and Paw's son, Sam's brother, a very large man, muscular and ex boxer.

SUEANNE

Freddy's wife and wannabe actress.

IRS AGENT

An I.R.S. Agent and Robot.

HOWARD

A nerd, insecure, unscrupulous banker.

MAYA

An illusion

SHERIFF

A rigid, by the book, cop.

PLACE

A farm. Many acres.

TIME

The present.

EXCERPT 1

The farming family has been under so much pressure, although they are trying to carry on normal activities, their behavior is clearly off. Sam, has just brought home a deer he shot, and dumps it in the middle of the stage, and speaks to himself. He tears off a kitchen cabinet, takes a dish out and smashes it, later in the play he tears down the barn with his bulldozer.

Sam, a burly man, wearing a cowboy hat and overalls, stands center stage with the dead carcass of a small deer strung over his shoulders.

SAM

(bitter, to himself)

Ya look around at all the silence and there's nothin'. Like a meadow. Sittin' there all alone. Like it's waitin' fer somethin' to come along and take it home with it. Nothin' nowhere. Peace. Then all of a sudden it hits yer. BANG! WHAM!

(sound of a truck engine)

ERRRRRRRRR! Some kind of obnoxious noise like that. Everythin' movin' in on yer territory.

Angrily dumps the deer down center in full view.

SAM

So yer pull inside. Yer search fer shelter. Quick an' easy. That's wut happens almost always. Like a big fat ol' turtle. The noise shrivels yer up inside like ya wanna curl up into a ball and go right back to the beginnin' 'fore it all came ta bein'. Like that.

(rips a cupboard door off the hinges)

Like a flower bein' stepped all over. Like that. Yeah. Like a ... a... pack of geese floatin' on the water mid-fall and two hairy fisherman come rollin' in on a skif with a loud gasoline engine and propel themselves right through the pack 'stead o' goin' 'round 'em and the geese take off down the lake like a sculpture of wings runnin' away from the disturbance.

(does something destructive)

Like a peaceful lake sittin' there, not doin' nothin' to nobody and along comes some developer who wants to develop some oh so necessary product and plops a gigantic factory at the neck of the river leading into the lake

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

and pours some toxic chemical into it like he has the right...

(smiling and mocking)

...Then some newscaster smiles at yer face with his bran' new caps and tells ya about some nice all American family that's moved in on the lake maybe a mile, mile 'n a half down the curve so they could live in peace with each other in the calm serenity of nature and they all die of some kind of horrible cancer but nobody can prove it come from that factory whose smoke stacks pour out thick black gook into the mountain air...

(to deer)

Everyone here's sufferin'. At least you didn't suffer. I hope you didn't suffer. If you did, I'm sorry, but I had to shoot yer. You was there. You made me hungry and I needed you. I couldn't have yer any other way. So yer dead. But I didn't want it to hurt. I wanted to kill you but not hurt you. Not like them bankers they don't care how they kill ya. Let ya suffer, writhe in agony... no matter them but to me it does. You know wut I mean? I hope it didn't hurt. I know it killed yer that's fer sure. But it didn't hurt you, did it? HEY I'M TALKIN' TO YOU BITCH? YOU DEAF?

(kicks the dead deer)

Gee, I'm sorry. I can't seem to help myself these days. I'm all... uh...

EXCERPT 2

LATER IN THE PLAY

In the dark we hear the sounds of a man grunting and groaning followed by the sound of someone punching something. As the lights come up it is mid-day. Freddy is down stage right, wearing white silk boxer shorts, professional type, and clean white boxing sneakers. His hands are wrapped in bloodied gauze and he moves around the deer carcass which is now hung from the ceiling. He hits it violently and dances like Mohammed Ali.

Down stage right in front of the wheat field, is a large pile of dark brown dirt. Sam is kneeling behind it and digging carefully through it, savoring the feel of the dirt on his hands and finding miscellaneous items from the past.

FREDDY

UGH. AK! UGHK...

SAM

I think I see somethin' here. I think I see a body. No, no it's a bone. It was a body and now it's a bone. Somebody's bone. No, it's not human, it's... it's... Butch! IT'S BUTCH'S BONE! Holll...lly Shit... M' Dog. How do yer like that after all these years... An' his ball. Oh, now ain't that cute.

FREDDY

UG! AH! UK! MAKE 'EM BLEED! CRUSH THE RIBS! Soon it'll be tender as a baby pig with an apple in its mouth. Mmmmmmmmmmm. Mmm. I'll get that Maserati yet and build us all a big brand-new house. One o' them fancy new architectural designs. You know with the skylights and all... Freddy blocks imaginary punches.

SAM

How the hell are ya Butch?

(barks)

Ruff to you too. Yer lookin' well this evenin'. So, have yer dreams been shattered or wut?

(loud, nervous, Doofy laugh)

I see yer plans all worked out fer the best and all yer hopes and promises and goals, all those kinds of things jus' went right along as planned. Well, nice seein' ya again.

Sam buries the bone with one quick movement.

SAM

He was a good hound wasn't he Freddy?

FREDDY

(punching the deer carcass)

Buy paw a new truck. A Ford. A new Ford eight cylinder pick up with four wheel drive an' a raised chassis. Air conditioning in 'er. A red one. A bright red Ford pick up brand new hot of the block.

SAM

Too bad fer him. Lived to a ripe ol' age of eighteen though. Was the Alpo. He had the best nose in these parts.

FREDDY

He's dead. We gotta live Sammy. Help me here. I'm practicin' for the match.

Sammy wipes Freddy down, rubs his back, Freddy goes back to boxing. Sam resumes digging.

FREDDY

Put Maw in a mink with her hair all prettied up and paw in a tuxedo with tails walkin' down a black tarred driveway in the night with fancy lights and shrubs all around the edges. Walkin' toward the new red ford with air conditioning.

SAM

Look at this. A coin. Seventeen ... seventy... uh... six. Seventeen Seventy-Six? Now that makes me feel better knowin' the year of our birth is right here in the earth. An' look at that a... a bullet! A genuine Seventeen Seventy-Six revolutionary silver war bullet. An'... an Indian arrowhead... an' a feather an' a piece of buffalo hide with an inscription on it.

(reads)

"NO BUFFALO, NO INDIAN". Wut's that supposed ta mean? Freddy that make you feel better? This here Seventeen Seventy-Six coin an' bullet an' arrowhead an' feather an' hide, sorta takes me back to somethin' solid. An idea or somethin'. An old idea. Is that a different idea than the idea in this here room right now? FREDDY?

FREDDY

(to himself)

LOOK OUT!

Freddy blocks imaginary punches.

FREDDY

NOW! GIVE IT TO HIM HARD!

Freddy goes wild.

FREDDY

TWO MILLION DOLLARS HERE I COME. WE'LL BUY THE ELECTRIC COMPANY AND THE TELEPHONE COMPANY AND THE SUPERMARKET ALL IN ONE WIPE OF MY PEN. WITH ENDORSEMENTS - EVERY COMPANY'LL WANT ME TO ENDORSE THEIR CRAPPY-ASS PRODUCT. MAKE BILLIONS. I'LL BE ON THE COVER OF PEOPLE MAGAZINE. WE'LL GET 'EM BACK HUH BROTHER?

Freddy goes wild.

HOWARD, the banker, who has come to get final signatures to take possession of the home for the bank, is a mid-sized man in a grey pin striped suit. He walks cautiously up to the stage right area, nervously

coughing. He wears glasses and carries a suede briefcase. He stands there for a long moment watching Freddy's violence, nervously. Sam and Freddy don't notice him. Freddy rests for a minute hanging onto the carcass.

SAM

Long purty legs, skin as soft as a lake mid fall, an' breasts like mother mountain herself, like hills rollin' through the prairie, the breeze liftin' each hair off her neck, like a flag wavin' itself in the air, goin' in a direction, her sparklin' eyes, glisten like the stars in the skies lookin' out and forever to a destiny, and her cheeks, like a smiling rainbow of rivers, ribboned through the land, on a journey of generations, her lips, tender an' soft an' kissin' smooth open up to blow a whisper of hope in yer ear, her neck, ready and waitin' to be touched by my hands, kissed by me, holdin' each other like the forests and the flowers and the mountains and the oceans and the sky gleamin' over the earth grabbin' each body of land everywhere, an we could kiss, we could kiss so gentle, hear the touch of our skin, the lick of our lips and our breath as one, breathin' each other in an' out, in an' out, like a spring breeze an' singin', like a lovin' heart back to the first dream. Oh, I want you back, I want you back my darlin'... He snaps out of this passion.

Freddy resumes boxing.

FREDDY

BUY BACK GRANDADDY'S AN' GREAT GRANDADDY'S AN' GREAT GREAT GRANDADDY'S AN' GREAT GREAT GREAT GRAN...

Freddy hits the carcass so hard he falls back a few feet.

Howard knocks again, fearfully. Then enters and sees what's going on. He's terrified but determined.

Freddy dances around the deer carcass and punches it up and down and all over making horrible grunting sounds, almost foaming at the mouth.

Howard just stands there. He clears his throat to get their attention.

HOWARD

UM... EXCUSE ME...

*Freddy's back is to them punching
wildly.*

FREDDY

(to deer)

I'LL TEAR 'IM APART LIMB BY LIMB. BUTCHER THE FUCKER.
MAKE 'IM BLEED INSIDE OUT BEGGIN' FER MERCY...

SAM

Wut else we got in here...

(digs)

Freddy sees Howard and stops.

FREDDY

YOU!

(punches deer not looking
at it)

Sam looks up. There is a long silence, filled with threat
and fear.

EXCERPT 3

MAYA, appears at the end of the play, while the banker, Howard, the Sherrif, the IRS Agent (a robot) and the family are in the room. Each character, now, has lost their foundation as the corrupted bankers, who set up the family to become desperate to force a sale for a high-end Condominium Developer, are taking possession of their farm.

Maya means Illusion in Sanskrit and she is a vacuous, gorgeous woman, sensual and sexy, dressed in red, long blonde hair, etc., which she removes throughout the scene to reveal a bald, vacant mannequin. She holds the power of illusion over them.

Each has lost various parts of themselves which they're searching for. Sammy loses parts of his body - his feet, and legs he can't feel, then his heart, his eyes etc. Freddy has lost the boxing match and is now beat up, in shorts, seeking to start a computer business. Maw and Paw die in the scene on their front porch as this silent, legaliaed massacre plays out.

FREDDY

(to himself out toward the
audience)

The last thing I remember was the match. In a place. A
fightin' match. I was wearin' white and he was wearin'
red, white and blue. An' he punched me in the heart.

(MORE)

FREDDY (CONT'D)

That's wut did it. That's when I fell over. It didn't even hurt like the ones to my jaw, or gut or the one below the belt. It was the one to my heart that killed me. An' wut hurt the most was that he didn't cry when he did it. He jus' had this great big smile of enjoyment and success smack across his face 'cause he knew he'd won. An' when I fell over, flat on my back, disheartened... he let out a laugh, an' started jumpin' up and down with his hands up in the air, bells went off blasting away an' the crowd, the crowd roared, full of violent pleasure at my death.

(pause)

That's when everything went black.

Freddy looks at Maya.

FREDDY

Do you believe that Maya?

MAYA

Doesn't matter what I believe. Only what you need to believe.

(smiles, swoons)

FREDDY

If I believe in you, that's what happens - now ain't that right? I'm askin' you if that's true?

MAYA

What do you think is true?

FREDDY

I know what I'm sayin' is right - and I need you to stop suckin' me in like that - stop it, stop it, stop that...

(screams in pain)

...STOP PULLIN' ME IN LIKE THAT YER KILLING ME...

MAYA

I'm not pulling you in. You're doing that to yourself. But I can leave if you want me to.

(she turns to leave)

FREDDY

DON'T GO I NEED YOU...

Maya turns back smiling.

PAW

(looking at the road)

I remember when that was a forest, with a dirt trail runnin' through 'er. Stoppin' at the stream an' lookin'

(MORE)

PAW (CONT'D)

down at the fine stone bottom pure an' clean an' cold...
you could drink it an' it cleansed you inside... felt
like youth...

EXCERPT 4

At the end of the play the parents are dead, sitting
onstage arms crossed on the porch, the house is vacant,
and Sam, Freddy and Sueanne (Freddy's actress wife)
have all transformed from the farming life they had, to
new people - who have been given a new identity, one of
the machine.

*They all look out at the audience
in their own worlds, completely
separated from one another in their
final pose.*

Tableau.

*Lights shift, separating them a
little more in pools of individual
light.*

SAM

(looking out into the
audience)

An' as yer walk into the house my hearts right by the
checkbook.

(pause)

But most of all May, most of all, I found my eyes again.
They're right over there.

(looking nowhere)

I can't tell you what a relief that was. Findin' my
eyes again. I thought I'd never see 'em. That was
frightenin'. Real frightenin'. But now it's alright.
'Cause of you May. All 'Cause of you!

*Sam puts on a pair of dark sun
glasses. Crosses his arms
defensively. Stares out.*

SAM

(Smiling and looking out into the distance at nothing).

We're home, May. We're... home!

*A pool of light comes up on the
small wheat field, still standing,
as the lights on them shift into a
horrid contrast to who they were in
the beginning of the play, each in
their own delusional world,*

represented by individual pools of light.

All of the characters, melt from their last pose, and become numb, face the audience with their hands at their sides, no expression, in their various pools of colored light. This is not for a bow - they are dead inside, walking corpses, the inside of what they have become, expressed on the outside. They are, exactly like Maya who is still up stage center smiling like a mannequin in a store window.

It is a hideous portrait of a vacuous and lonely division, fragmented and fractured, mechanistic, robotic cultural norm, as they stare out at the audience from their isolation.

Fade out very slowly.

End Of Writing Sample