

Writing Sample

THE LAMP

A Play in Two Acts

by

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"THE LAMP" had professional staged readings at the 42nd Street Workshop and The Harold Clurman Theater on Theater Row in New York City.

THE CAST:

Don Leslie
Barbara Sinclair
Mark Thomas
Lynne Workinger

Directed by the Author

CHARACTERS

DUDLEY

Forty to Fifty. An Ex-Hippie who sold out, then burnt out, and now wants to return to innocence - he's lost his business, broke, living above his means, and now is losing his home.

FIONA

Forty to Fifty. An Ex-Hippie who sold out with Dudley, her husband, and now wants to kill him and collect the insurance money so she can keep her Jaguar ("Jaggy") who she has fallen in love with.

BONNIE BOO

Twenties. A lost college student who wears a mixture of every rebellious teenager's clothing that has ever existed, including a Head Ring that seems to go through her brain, is hooked on drugs, and returns home to find sanctuary.

Mr. Carnaro

Thirty to Fifty. A one-time Archeological Doctoral student who gave it up to confiscate people's lives for the Bank, hates himself but won't admit it, and enjoys pillaging for profit - he seeks a protege to save from a life of depth and truth and join the salvation of the Bank.

The Time

The present.

The Setting

A living room in a wealthy home in The Hamptons, NY.

EXCERPT 1

Dudley just told Fiona that she has to sell her Jaguar in order to pay some debt.

DUDLEY

...WE HAVE NO MONEY LEFT. I HAD TO PAY OFF THE MORTGAGE AND BUSINESS DEBTS AND OUR BELOVED DAUGHTER'S...

Fiona looks out over the audience.

FIONA

(ruined, deep voice)

...I feel as though I've just been told I have cellulite. I need another nose job. my face lift is deteriorating again. The tummy tuck didn't hold and I've reached my liposuction limit! I don't deserve this. I simply won't accept it. I won't. I won't.

DUDLEY

(softly)

Yes you will. We both will.

FIONA

(deepening delusion)

Jaggy and I will run away. Go to Europe perhaps or the Virgin Islands. We'll sail together on ferries from one exotic Island to another. We'll stop at Pizza Huts and Burger Kings and eat Whoppers along the coastline, and I'll go for a nice swim and Jaggy will wait for me, unconditionally, drenched in the Caribbean sunset.

Pause.

FIONA

This is what the Bible meant by the Apocalypse - I finally feel religious.

LATER

Dudley needing to sell the Jaguar resorts to swallowing the car keys, in a frenzy of confusion.

DUDLEY

Oh shit wha'd I do?

FIONA

You swallowed a huge debt and it's going to rip out your heart.

DUDLEY

I swallowed them for you.

FIONA

You swallowed them for yourself.

He doubles over. Fiona looks at the scene and becomes terrified and disgusted. Bonny Boo looks on terrified and confused.

FIONA

This isn't happening. We live in the Hamptons for Chrissakes. We were friends with anyone who was anyone. We had parties with sushi and caviar and Patte' Patte' on light an' crunchy Organic Sodium, Gluten, and Fat-Free Whole Wheat Crusty-Thin Crispy Crackers with no artificial additives of any kind. We attended all the Theater, Music, Fund-Raising, Community, Social and Political events. Even though we hated every single Goddamned one of them.

DUDLEY

Call nine one one!

FIONA

We worked for the company. We were legally unethical and dishonest. We went along without complaint. We made them a lot of money.

Dudley falls to the ground in a heap and begins crawling from the far end of the stage, on his belly, toward the phone at the other end of the stage.

FIONA

We created a nation as great as any founded by landlords and lawyers.

BONNIE BOO

(terrified of what she's witnessing)

Everybody wants equality so long as they're rich.

Dudley crawls onto the couch.

DUDLEY

CALL AN AM - BU...

Dudley falls onto the floor and begins crawling on his belly again.

DUDLEY

...Bleeding on the inside... where no one can see...

FIONA

...It hurts me so to watch you crawling on the floor like that. But it's how we live isn't it. Crawling toward salvation until we drop dead.

He crawls. Fiona drinks.

FIONA

(to Dudley)

...You should have been a poet we would have been a lot better off. Poetry and Pot in the woods. Remember? ANSWER ME YOU FUCKING IDIOT WHO SWALLOWS CAR KEYS TO SAVE HIS MONEY? It just slipped out I'm...

DUDLEY

...Phone...

FIONA

...I should have been a feminist instead of a Hippie...

BONNIE BOO

...MUMMY... DUDDY'S DYING!

FIONA

...I might have gotten divorced and found myself, instead of being abducted...

DUDLEY

...Hospit...

BONNIE BOO

...MUMMY CALL...

FIONA

...It's all this stuff. We've become each others madness... But what's the alternative? Love didn't work - who can trust it...

BONNIE BOO

...I wish I could call but I can't...

FIONA

...War never solved anything except increasing the national debt and making the one percent huge profits on the blood of an endless number of human beings, so what's left?

BONNIE BOO

I need you to show me you care...

FIONA

...I can't go back to beating a drum - the sixties are over, and besides, I wouldn't have a thing to wear, my Minky is ruined, Jaggy's keys are going reside in Dudley's Shit in the morning - and my credit cards are inactive...

DUDLEY

...I'm dying...

Pause. She looks at him terrified.

FIONA

...Did you pay the life insurance?

Dudley is almost to the phone. Fiona sees this and grabs the phone up and holds it over his head. He reaches up for it. Bonnie Boo watches from a distance and grows more terrified of what she's watching.

FIONA

DID YOU PAY THE LIFE INSURANCE...?!

DUDLEY

...Call the...

FIONA

...DID YOU PAY THE LIFE INSURANCE?!

Dudley gets a sudden burst of energy and begins pulling at the telephone wire from the floor like a wild animal who's got its feet in a trap. Fiona and Dudley have a tug of war, Dudley from the floor.

DUDLEY

...NO! I'M NO LONGER WORTH MORE DEAD THAN ALIVE ARE YOU HAPPY?!

Fiona violently puts the telephone cord around Dudley's neck and pulls him up onto his knees, his back to her as he struggles for breath.

FIONA

DO I LOOK HAPPY?!

BONNIE BOO

Why aren't you the image of the parents you pretended to be but never really were? I need those people, those perfect parents, you pretended to be with your smiles and your gifts, but held no real truth underneath the masks! I need you to be authentic, and real.

Bonnie Boo stands swaying like a five-year old child, her arms wrapped

*around herself in a desperate hug
in a pool of baby blue light.*

Jungle Music begins.

END OF ACT I

EXCERPT 5

Mr. Carnaro has been packing items one by one, while Fiona has tried to seduce him into stopping, but nothing works. Bonnie Boo has been on the couch healing from her wounds, drug addiction and result of Fiona and Dudley's bad parenting catching up. Fiona watches growing increasingly nervous, Dudley is smoking a joint and trying to be a hippie again. Mr. Carnaro gives her a red book promising her a way out of her misery and find prosperity. She is reading it.

MR. CARNARO

And sometimes we're just victims caught in the middle of a biblical misinterpretation - something like that. Take me for instance. I feel like I'm all caught up in all these superficial and potentially destructive actions. As if my choice is controlled by outside forces invisible to the actions taking place right here, right now. I'll show you what I mean. As I place these valuables into their appropriate boxes, it's as if, I, weren't really doing it, but rather a force bigger than I were in control. It somehow has control of my body, and my mind, even though a part of my mind rebels, even finds it gratuitous, as I fulfill the action the outside force wants me to fulfill.

(to Bonnie Boo)

It's a good read isn't it?

BONNIE BOO

Yes.

(Reads quickly)

The process of becoming is the process of absorption. The process of absorption is the process of repetition. Regurgitating mundane information to burnt out academics is the key to graduating in four years or less with a higher grade point average. Shoving down throats and spitting up is essentially how we educate our young. Conformity and indifference, is the essential ingredient to insidious levels of success. Remember, in the end, the grade, and the piece of paper, is all that matters. Just like in the real world, it's not how you earn the money that matters, just that you do earn lots and lots of money - it's not not what you do to others that matters, or even yourself

(MORE)

BONNIE BOO (CONT'D)

that matters, but just that you have abundant sums of money.
That is all that matters.

MR. CARNARO

(clapping)

BRAVO, BONNIE-BOO, BRAVO - You're getting it. A fast learner just what we like. Just one comment - SMILE, when you recite our instructions in the future. Even if you feel like vomiting - master, the convincing smile. Teeth - show your teeth.

(demonstrates "THE" smile)

Bonnie-Boo copies him.

MR. CARNARO

Yessssssssssssssssssss, that's just perfect.

Bonnie-Boo abruptly drops the smile and returns to the book.

Mr. Carnaro picks up two beautiful gold candle holders.

MR. CARNARO

Gold plated?

FIONA

Yes.

MR. CARNARO

Oooooo Dellisssssh!
(packs them)

FIONA

You can't just put my life in a box like that.

MR. CARNARO

Is it upsetting you?

FIONA

YES, IT'S DEVASTATING.

MR. CARNARO

Would you like some Prosaic?

FIONA

No.

MR. CARNARO

Then what is your problem?

FIONA

WHAT IS MY PROBLEM? WHAT IS YOUR PROBLEM?

MR. CARNARO

I wrapped it first. In the Times. Not the Inquirer or second - rate news wrap. Besides, these material objects are really useless. Ignore them. Don't be upset. It's only your whole life!

(sardonic giggle)

FIONA

You are going to leave us bereft.

MR. CARNARO

Ber...

FIONA

...BEREFT!

MR. CARNARO

Ber...

FIONA

...FUCKING BEREFT! BER...

MR. CARNARO

...eft? Word sounds familiar.

Mr. Carnaro packs. Fiona looks out at the lawn - out over the audience.

FIONA

It wasn't me. I want you all to know that. I shared my wealth with the nail salon, and the landscapers, the waiters, and the little over priced proprietorships in town. I was and am a miserably unfulfilled human being. But I didn't complain. I wasn't unhappy about it. In fact, I felt satisfied to just have myself redone weekly, go to detention or jail or the hospital to visit Bonnie Boo, take drives in Jaggy and wait for you to come home from the office to bore me to death! It was enough for me. But not for you!

DUDLEY

(taking tokes)

To each his own, baby.

(to Mr. carnaro)

Uh... Toke?

Mr. Carnaro packs.

FIONA

...We could have been happy in our misery together. We had all this. It was an adequate diversion from the truth. It kept our minds off of ourselves.

DUDLEY

(sings)

Up up and away in my beautiful, my beautiful
ballooooooooooooooooooooooooooon...

*Mr. Carnaro finds a beautiful small
lamp. Dudley sees him and snaps
out of his high immediately.*

DUDLEY

No. Please, Mr. Carnaro, not that. That was the lamp I
bought while I was on business in Germany. My first major
deal that catapulted my company into the Fortune Five.
It's made of pure lamb's skin. Well, some type of skin.
I bought it in a lovely little German antique shop. The
shop keeper said it was manufactured as a limited edition
during World War Two - you remember World War Two, don't
you? Some sort of experiment of some kind. You mustn't
take it.

MR. CARNARO

(stroking the shade)

It has a texture I've never felt before. So unique. So
soft. Like... baby's skin.

DUDLEY

Yes, I know. Soft as a baby's skin, isn't it? It's very
rare. A collectors' item. Please don't take it.

MR. CARNARO

It's an unbelievable feeling. Oh, how lovely. I'll leave
it right here. Until last.

*Mr. Carnaro strokes the lamp shade
again, smiling. He then places the
lamp on a tall table, up stage
center, where it will remain clearly
visible for the rest of the play.
A glowing, gentle light remains on
the lamp even during blackouts.*

EXCERPT 6

Near the end of the play Bonnie Boo is under the influence of THE BOOK, which Mr. Carnaro gave her telling her it will rid her of all her confusion and pain, and put her on a path to prosperity, just like it did for him. She slowly has lost control of her body, and de-evolves into a primitive human, in full warrior/hunter dress. Fiona has left to get some air as her attempts at stopping the eviction has proven useless. Now, to take full control of Bonnie Boo as a servant to the Bank, Mr. Carnaro sees Dudley as a threat, as has increasingly sought freedom, independence and get back to the truth. As he tries to protect his daughter, and his wife, from the evil intentions of Carnaro, the invisible powers of the Bank take control. Bonnie Boo has brought in a large pail full of mud and large tree branches.

BONNIE BOO

(trying to pull the mask
off of her)

It won't come off. This isn't right. I wanted to dance.
I wanted to know something profound.

*Bonnie Boo continues struggling with her mask.
Fiona Screams off stage. It's terrifying.
Dudley rises and runs to the window
looking out over the audience for Fiona.*

DUDLEY

FIONA?

*Mr. Carnaro hits Dudley again across
his back with a large branch, Dudley
screams in pain and arches his back,
but holds onto an imaginary window
frame looking for Fiona.*

*Bonnie Boo's body is thrust wildly
about as though she had no control
over it convulsing into a more
aggressive dance of primitive
violence all over the stage as she
continues trying to free herself
from the mask.*

*Mr. Carnaro thrusts a large tree
branch into Bonnie Boo's hands she
grabs it unconsciously.*

BONNIE BOO

Daddy, save me.

Fiona screams off stage.

MR. CARNARO

HIT HIM WITH THAT BRANCH AND SHUT HIM UP.

Bonnie-Boo hits Dudley across the back hard, and he falls to the ground.

BONNIE BOO

I'm sorry Daddy, I didn't mean to.

Dudley tries to get off the floor but is in too much pain and collapses and tries again. Bonnie Boo continues to dance out of control. She moves to Dudley who tries to help her free herself from the dance, but she uncontrollably and violently hits him with her tree branch several times again.

Mr. Carnaro joins in beating Dudley with another branch while he's on the floor. Dudley screams in pain and tries to crawl away.

Fiona screams again outside. It's louder and more pained.

Dudley hears her and rises.

DUDLEY

FIONA! I'M COMING TO SAVE YOU.

Bonnie-Boo hits Dudley with her branch sending him flying onto the couch. When they part, Dudley's hair, face and neck are completely filled with blood. He sits unconscious with his arms and legs in an asymmetrical and pained position. Mr. Carnaro looks on laughingly and calmly. He takes Bonnie Boo's branch, and his own and puts them back in the bucket.

Bonnie Boo remains downstage panting in a violent huff, almost as if steam were coming out of her nose looking out over the audience - he mud-covered face makes the whites of her eyes and teeth appear primitive and bestial while trying

*to free herself but growing more
and more unable to.*

MR. CARNARO

Everything's working out just as we planned. It's nice to be on schedule.

(giggles)

Fiona screams and is thrown in through the open window, landing on her back down stage center. She is wearing only beige panties and bra covered with mud, and her body is badly bruised, scratched and bleeding. Her hair is a wild mess and falls over her face making her appear primitive. She tries to rise, but cannot. She watches Bonnie Boo struggling to free herself. Mr. Carnaro moves behind Bonnie Boo and cuddles her in his arms, swaying her from side to side seductively.

MR. CARNARO

(smiling, to Bonnie Boo)

Soon, you'll feel completely normal again. You'll feel as though you fit into something. That's what you wanted, isn't it? Stability? Part of a community? Comfort? You have to evolve into it. Trust me, and you'll eventually feel no pain, even when you inflict it on others, or yourself. It's just great.

(chuckles)

*Bonnie Boo's movements and appearance
grow more and more real as the
costume becomes her.*

BONNIE BOO

Stop it, you can't do this to him. He's my father.

MR. CARNARO

(to Bonnie boo, violently)

I didn't. WE did. Do you understand Bonnie-boo boo? Soon, I will retire, verrrrrry comfortably, and you my dear, will become... guess who?

(whispers)

Me.

Bonnie Boo grunts. Mr. Carnaro bears a big fake smile, his teeth glowing white out facing the audience behind Bonnie Boo who stands bestial, struggling to break free.

END OF EXCERPTS