

ENTER LAUGHING

by Joseph Stein

adapted from Carl Reiner's novel

David Kolovitz (18) - Marvin (18)

The Play: Joseph Stein's stage adaptation of Carl Reiner's marvelously funny autobiography is as hilarious as the original. Set in New York City in the mid-1930's, it is the story of David, a stage-struck young Jewish boy from the Bronx who works as a delivery boy in a sewing machine factory. The problem is David's parents want him to become a druggist, and he'll have none of it; he's determined to become an actor. As soon as he's earned enough money, he joins a semi-professional theater company, which, as it turns out, will cast anyone for the right amount. David is as bad an actor as the others are hammy, and his debut on stage brings down the house. In the process David falls in love with the manager's overly dramatic daughter, someone else's girlfriend, and finally an office girl who seems to have been meant for him all along. Before the curtain comes down, David has learned much about life and the business of show business.

The Scene: David is at the sewing machine factory. His boss, Mr. Foreman, has just informed him that he has had a phone call from a girl. Foreman, who hopes David might take over the business one day, has advised David to stay away from girls for now, especially ones who aren't Jewish. David's hormones tell him otherwise, and in the scene that follows, he and his friend, Marvin (who admires David "just this side of hero worship"), have girls on their mind, as usual. But more than that, David discloses that he wants to become an actor.

Special Note: As David and Marvin are two Jewish boys from the Bronx, every effort should be made to capture the genuine flavor of their ethnicity, while resisting stereotypes.

ENTER LAUGHING

(MARVIN enters. MARVIN is David's age; he is not too good-looking, a little timid, unsure of himself. He admires David, just this side of hero worship. He carries his lunch, wrapped in a newspaper.)

DAVID: Hi, Marv.

MARVIN: Hi. *(Crossing to L. of table, gets chair from U.L., moves it to L. of table. Sits and eats.)*

DAVID: I'm calling Wanda. *(Into phone.)* Hello, Wanda? Did you call me?... He told me... No, he went out... Yeah, Marvin just came down. He's having his lunch... Saturday night? Gee, I'd love to, Wanda, only my mother and father are visiting some relatives in Flatbush, and I've got to mind my stupid kid sister. Who's giving the dance?... Well, listen, Wanda, maybe after the dance, you and me could get together and have a little tete-a-tete. *(Imitating Ronald Colman.)* "It will be a far, far better thing that you and I will do on Saturday night than has ever been done before."... Yes, Ronald Colman, that's right!... Goodbye. *(Hangs up and moves chair from U.R. to S. R. of table.)*

MARVIN: Boy, the way you do those imitations. You're great, you know that, Dave? *(DAVID then goes into a Louis Armstrong routine in midst of which MARVIN says: "Louis Armstrong." At end of it he takes rag from bench and dabs face.)* Great!

DAVID: I know. *(He sits R. of table.)*

MARVIN: And the way you talk to girls. Boy, I wish I had a steady girl, like you.

DAVID: You do?

MARVIN: I sure do. A steady girl, boy.

DAVID: I'll tell you, Marv, even though I got a steady girl, I think about other girls.

MARVIN: You do?

DAVID: Yeah, a lot. Do you think about girls a lot?

MARVIN: Me? I don't know what you mean by a lot. Sometimes I think about other things.

DAVID: Like what?

MARVIN: *(Considers.)* Oh, you know, other things—food.

DAVID: *(Rises. Crosses L. below table, above it, then to S.R. of it.)*

ENTER LAUGHING

I think about girls a lot. I admit it. Like if I'm walking down the street, I see a girl swinging along—you know the way they do when they're walking, the way they walk.

MARVIN: Yeah—

DAVID: (*Crossing U.S. and D.S.*) Sometimes I go two, three blocks out of my way, just to watch the way they walk. What the heck, it's better than looking at nothing. Right?

MARVIN: Me, too.

DAVID: (*U.S.C. of table.*) I think about it a lot. Like there's this bookkeeper at the LaTesh Hat Company. Her name is Miss B., she's the mosts zaftig thing you ever saw, Marve, I mean it—

MARVIN: Her name is Miss B.?

DAVID: (*At R. of S.R. chair.*) That's what they call her. Anyway, she'd drive you crazy if her name was Irving. I go up there sometimes I forget to get a receipt.

MARVIN: I thought you're crazy about Wanda.

DAVID: I am. I'm crazy about Wanda. And I'm crazy about Miss B. And I'm crazy about strange girls on the street. Sometimes I think I'm a sex maniac.

MARVIN: Yeah, me, too.

DAVID: (*Crossing R. to U.R. Then D.S.*) Only one thing, I talk a lot, but I don't do anything. Not that I don't want to, I just don't. (*Sits chair R. of table.*) I'm a big talker.

MARVIN: Me, too.

DAVID: (*Rises above table.*) Another thing. What am I doing in this crummy job? I mean, okay, just for a while, but Mr. Foreman thinks I want to learn the business—what do I want to be a machinist on ladies hats for? (*Picks up two files from table.*)

MARVIN: Then don't.

DAVID: Okay, then why don't I tell him? He keeps saying, you'll work hard, be a good machinist, and I say, sure, Mr. Foreman...

MARVIN: Do you want an apple?

DAVID: No. (*Drumming on shelves with files.*) And my parents, they want me to be a druggist. (*Drums.*) They want me to register in night school for September, to be a druggist. (*Drums.*) I don't want to be

ENTER LAUGHING

a druggist.

MARVIN: Then why don't you tell them?

DAVID: (*Drumming.*) I did tell them. I kind of told them. So they say, what do you want to be? You can't be a nothing. Everyone calls me a nothing. (*Throws files in tray on table. Sits S.R. of table.*)

MARVIN: Why don't you want to be a druggist?

DAVID: Because I don't want to. Does everybody have to want to be a druggist?

MARVIN: You know, I wouldn't mind being a druggist.

DAVID: You? You'd poison the whole neighborhood. (*Rises to U.S. C. of table.*) The thing is, I want to be something. Something, so people will say, there goes Dave Kolovitz, the something.

MARVIN: What's the matter with "there goes the druggist?"

DAVID: (*Crosses R.*) Naah.

MARVIN: (*Offering apple.*) You sure you don't want an apple?

DAVID: (*Crosses to above table.*) What's with you and the apple? What's it got, worms or something?

MARVIN: No, my mother just put in two today, that's all. (*Bites second apple.*)

DAVID: (*Crosses L. above table to L. of table.*) If I had any guts, I'd pack up and go to Panama or someplace.

MARVIN: Why don't you?

DAVID: (*At S.L.; shouts.*) Because I have to mind my stupid kid sister Saturday night, that's why.

MARVIN: (*Rises, steps L. to DAVID with apple.*) Okay, you don't have to bite my head off.

DAVID: (*Pause.*) Give me the apple.

MARVIN: I bit it already.

DAVID: What are you giving me an apple for and then eating it yourself?

MARVIN: It ain't my fault you don't know what you want to be.

DAVID: Did I say I don't know what I want to be? I know what I want to be.

MARVIN: Yeah—a something!

DAVID: (*Crosses R. below table to R. of table.*) No. I'll tell you

ENTER LAUGHING

what I want to be. I want to be an actor.

MARVIN: An actor?

DAVID: (*Crosses D.S.R. of table.*) Sure. Why not? An actor!
(*Faces audience, poses.*)

MARVIN: You know something? You'd be great!

DAVID: I know. But you can't just be an actor. You can't just go around and tell people—hello, I'm an actor!

MARVIN: (*Crossing R. to DAVID.*) Hey, I saw this ad in today's paper. I saw it yesterday, too. I saw it both days.

DAVID: An ad? For what?

MARVIN: For actors.

DAVID: For actors?

MARVIN: For actors.

DAVID: You're crazy! (*Goes U.S., takes newspaper from shelf on C. wall. MARVIN crosses L. of table to above it.*)

MARVIN: (*Taking paper from DAVID, finds ad.*) It's here, right here in the paper. I saw it yesterday, I saw it today.... Here. When I saw it I even thought about you.

DAVID: (*Reads; U.S. of S.R. chair.*) "Marlowe Theatre and School for Dramatic Arts... Scholarships for Promising Young Actors..."

MARVIN: (*At S.L. of DAVID.*) Just do your Ronald Coleman or your Humphrey Bogart.

DAVID: "Learn to act before audiences."

MARVIN: No kidding, you're a cinch.

DAVID: (*Crossing S.R. MARVIN follows.*) They'll see applicants at six o'clock.

MARVIN: What do you say, will you go?

DAVID: Sure. Why not?

MARVIN: Bet you a dime you don't.

DAVID: It's a bet.

(*They shake hands.*)

MARVIN: (*Gets apple from table.*) Here. I only took one bite.

DAVID: Thanks—I can't make it, though. I don't get out of here till six o'clock—

MARVIN: Listen, you don't want to be a machinist or a druggist all

ENTER LAUGHING

your life?

DAVID: Besides, I got to be home tonight. What will I tell my mother?

MARVIN: Okay, okay, you lose; give me the dime.

DAVID: Besides it's in the paper. There'll be a thousand guys.

MARVIN: Okay, give me the dime.