

Cast of Characters

THOMAS, a nice, friendly, ordinary guy

ESTHER, a missionary trainer for the Church of the Eternal Spirit

ALMA, a missionary trainee for the Church of the Eternal Spirit

DREW, another nice, friendly, ordinary guy

Time

Afternoon, the present.

Place

A pretty ordinary living room.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express their appreciation to the company of actors and friends who participated in workshop readings of this play, and whose questions and comments proved invaluable to the development of the script: Staci Cobb, Christopher Gabaldon, Kirstie Gabaldon, Karen Koprowski, David Sacks, Nick Sacks, and Shirley Sacks.

Knockers was first produced at Players by the Sea in Jacksonville Beach, Florida on August 15, 2008, as part of a triple bill titled *Home on Deranged*. It featured the following cast and production team:

THOMAS Jeff Duffy
ESTHER Amber Murphy
ALMA Jessica Palombo
DREW Matt Shuman

Directors Chris Sheppard and Jeff Grove
Assistant Director Zach Kanner
Stage Manager Leewood Oakley
Scenery Chris Sheppard
Lighting David Paul
Costumes Holly Gutshall and Karen Koprowski
Properties Regina Barry

KNOCKERS by Chris Sheppard and Jeff Grove

(Daytime. A moment that establishes THOMAS—sitting and reading a magazine, moving about straightening the room, whatever. There is a knock at the front door. THOMAS crosses to the door and opens it, revealing ESTHER and ALMA. The women are very sensibly and conservatively dressed. ESTHER carries a Bible; ALMA, a stack of religious newspapers and pamphlets.)

THOMAS. *(As he opens the door.)* Who's there?

ESTHER. Good afternoon, sir. My name is Esther, and this is Alma. We're members of the Church of the Eternal Spirit. Have you ever considered where *you* would spend eternity if you were to die tonight?

THOMAS. Why? What have you heard?

(ESTHER nudges ALMA to encourage her.)

ALMA. Well, the Church of the Eternal Spirit teaches that we must be prepared to meet the Lord at any moment. You could have a heart attack just sitting here in your home.

ESTHER. Or you could step off of a sidewalk and be hit by a bus.

THOMAS. *(Picking up on the ladies' enthusiasm—perhaps a little too quickly.)* Or I could fall into the alligator pit at the zoo! You know, ladies, I've never really thought of it that way before. Why don't you come in and let's have a chat?

(THOMAS closes the door and ushers ESTHER and ALMA to seats.)

ESTHER. Thank you, Mr.—um, I don't believe I caught your name.

THOMAS. Thomas.

ESTHER. Mr. Thomas. Well, Mr. Thomas—

THOMAS. No, Thomas is my *first* name.

ALMA. How unusual. Most men named Thomas want to be called "Tom" or "Tommy."

THOMAS. Well, I'm just an old-fashioned kind of guy.

ESTHER. Isn't that nice, Alma? The world could use a few more traditional attitudes today.

THOMAS. That's exactly what my mother used to say. Her name was Alma, too. Of course, we called her Al.

ALMA. Beg pardon?

THOMAS. At least, we did until I started school. You can imagine how my teachers reacted when I told them that my parents' names were Al and George.

ALMA. My, that must have been confusing!

THOMAS. Only to my brother Marion. (*ESTHER and ALMA begin to react, but THOMAS quickly changes the subject.*) So. Tell me about your church, ladies.

ESTHER. First of all, let us give you a copy of *The Archway*. I'm sure that you've heard of it. It's our church's international newsletter.

ALMA. (*Digging through her literature, then handing THOMAS a thin, small newspaper.*) Yes, it's full of articles to help you consider your place in eternity. And there's a coupon on the back page good for ten percent off anything at our church bookstore.

THOMAS. I'll be sure to have my whole family read it.

ALMA. Family, you said? (*She scans the room.*) My, your wife certainly has good taste.

THOMAS. Actually, we did it together. We're big fans of those home makeover shows on TV.

ESTHER. Do you watch...a lot of TV, Thomas?

THOMAS. Oh, no, there's way too much sex and violence and profanity on TV for us.

ESTHER. That's refreshing to hear.

ALMA. And so true! What a wonderful way to bring up children—that is, if you have any.

THOMAS. We're more likely to take the little ones down to the park to play than we are to sit around here watching TV with them.

ALMA. (*Gushing:*) You really should bring them to our church. We have a full nursery for every service, and an indoor playground for the older children. And activities—well, there's just no end to it!

ESTHER. (*Intervening with a gesture that quiets ALMA:*) But we're getting ahead of ourselves with all of that. What church do you currently belong to, Thomas?

THOMAS. I guess you could say that I'm sort of...*between* religions right now. That's why I asked you in.

ESTHER. Well, let us start with a Bible verse—

(*THOMAS has unconsciously taken out a pack of cigarettes. ESTHER and ALMA, seeing the pack, stare at THOMAS judgmentally. THOMAS notices the women staring at him, and extends the pack toward them.*)

THOMAS. (*Nervously:*) Would you...like a smoke?

ESTHER. What?

THOMAS. A cigarette. Would you like a cigarette?

ESTHER. (*A little indignant:*) I don't smoke.

ALMA. I used to, but I quit when I joined our church.

ESTHER. Do *you* smoke, Thomas?

THOMAS. Um... Actually, that was just a test. I wanted to see how you ladies felt about smoking.

ESTHER. Then why do you have a pack of cigarettes there?

THOMAS. To remind me of just how much I hate smoking.

ESTHER. Oh.

THOMAS. (*Putting away the cigarettes:*) So you ladies don't smoke. How about sex?

ESTHER. Excuse me?

THOMAS. How do you ladies feel about sex?

ESTHER. I'm not sure that—

THOMAS. So you dislike sex.

ALMA. No, I like sex.

ESTHER. Alma!

ALMA. I mean, sex is O.K.—within the confines of marriage.

THOMAS. You find marriage confining, do you?

ALMA. Oh, yes.

ESTHER. Alma!

ALMA. No, I mean—no.

ESTHER. What she means is that sex is all right within the bonds of marriage.

THOMAS. Don't tell me that you're into bondage?!

ESTHER. Bondage?

THOMAS. I'm surprised that such nice ladies would do something so kinky!

ALMA. No, no... We're getting a little confused here. Esther and I are not into bondage.

THOMAS. For all I know, you could even belong to one of those wife-swapping clubs.

ALMA. No, no, no! The very idea of even thinking such a thing, Thomas! Esther and I feel strongly that marriage should be monotonous.

ESTHER. You mean "monogamous," dear.

ALMA. Can we get off the subject of sex? I'm getting a headache.

THOMAS. How about a drink? Coffee? Tea? Beer?

ESTHER. Beer?! I don't drink alcohol of any kind! Neither does Alma.

ALMA. Well...that's not...*quite*...true, Esther. I do have the occasional glass of wine. (*Pause. Then, quickly:*) Just to settle my nerves, of course.

THOMAS. So you use alcohol as a drug.

ALMA. As a drug? No, no—I just use it to calm myself. Sometimes a missionary's position can be very tiring.

THOMAS. I thought you wanted to get off the subject of sex.

ALMA. All I meant is that even though we're working for the Lord, it can be very tiring, so sometimes at the end of a long day I take a little nip of wine to help me relax. (*Under her breath:*) I could use some now.

THOMAS. But isn't that a drug? How does your church feel about drugs?

ESTHER. Well, drugs can be helpful if you are sick.

ALMA. Yes, they can relieve pain, for example.

THOMAS. But isn't some pain good for the soul? Aren't we *meant* to suffer?

ALMA. I suppose we can learn from suffering, but I try to avoid outright pain whenever possible.

ESTHER. Now I'm getting a headache.

THOMAS. Would you like something for the pain?

ESTHER. I think I can endure it. Now, really, Thomas, we did come here to tell you about our church, so if you're not—

THOMAS. I'm sorry, ladies. You're right. And I do want to hear about your church. Tell me, what does your church teach about capital punishment?

ALMA. Well, the Old Testament does specify the death penalty for a number of crimes and sins, so—

THOMAS. Glad to hear it. We could use some of those laws in America today, don't you think? Doesn't Leviticus say that kids who curse their parents should be stoned to death? Hey, if Junior mouths off to Dad, let's drag him into the back yard and let 'im have it!

ESTHER. Now, of course, you have to put that kind of thing into its historical context, Thomas, so I don't know that—

THOMAS. And what about women? What does your church have to say about them?

ALMA. We believe that the husband should be the head of the household, and that the wife should defer to his authority.

THOMAS. Absolutely. Why, if a husband wants to hear his wife's opinion about something, he'll give it to her! Who needs all of these women working outside the home today? All they do is take jobs away from men! It all started with those Women's Libbers back in the sixties. We should have executed them while we had the chance—strung 'em up for treason!

ESTHER. Treason?! Don't you think that's a bit harsh, Thomas? I mean, it would be nice if everyone lived a truly godly lifestyle, but—

THOMAS. Lifestyle! Yes, exactly! What about these—these *homosexuals* today? Going around talking about "alternate lifestyles" and everything, as if turning gay were just another choice you make!

ALMA. Well, we certainly don't agree with the homosexual agenda, but—

THOMAS. Good! Finally, a church that'll stand up for what's right! I say we oughta take all those nancy boys and ship 'em off to some godforsaken island and dump 'em there!

ESTHER. That's not quite what we—

THOMAS. Hold that thought, ladies. (*Calling offstage:*) Honey, can you come in here a minute? I think you'll want to hear this.

(*From the back of the house comes DREW, dressed in full gay leather gear—cap, chest harness, chaps, Levis, boots, etc. ESTHER and ALMA gape in horror.*)

DREW. Well, who do we have here?

THOMAS. Drew, these nice ladies came to tell us about their church. They want us to join.

ALMA. Actually, I'm not quite sure that—

DREW. Join their church? As if you don't already spend enough time on your knees!

ESTHER. *(Self-consciously checking her watch:)* Oh, my goodness, look at the time. We really should be going. We still have so many homes to visit on this block!

THOMAS. I'm sorry to hear that. You *must* come back again and tell us more.

(ESTHER and ALMA frantically gather up their Bible and literature, and make for the door.)

DREW. Here, let me show you out.

ALMA. Oh, no, that's all right. We know the way!

(ESTHER and ALMA make a hasty exit. THOMAS and DREW are silent for a long moment, then burst out laughing.)

THOMAS. That was great!

DREW. Think it'll work?

THOMAS. *(Picking up a small notebook and pencil from nearby:)* Oh, I doubt *they'll* ever be back—or anyone else from that church! Let's see... *(THOMAS flips through a list in the notebook.)* Apex Consumer Surveys... Bubba's Lawn Care Service... Here we are, the Church of the Eternal Spirit. *(THOMAS crosses the church off of the list.)* Say, the nipple clamps were a great touch. I almost lost it when you walked in.

DREW. Good. I know it wasn't part of your plan, but I wanted to put in a few touches of my own.

THOMAS. *(Checking his watch:)* Hey, it's 5:15. You know what that means.

DREW. Well, if it's Thursday, then it's almost time for the Lorelei Cosmetics lady to drop by. Do we have time to walk the "little ones" first?

THOMAS. No. *(THOMAS grabs two dog leashes from somewhere handy, and drapes them around DREW's neck.)* We can do that afterwards if we have their leashes ready. Meanwhile, you go take off that leather stuff and get into drag. I'll stall Miss Lorelei when she gets here.

DREW. Check. How many more of these things do we have left to do?

THOMAS. Two or three. Then we'll never have to deal with door-to-door solicitors again.

DREW. Peace and quiet at last! Cool. See ya in a few.

(DREW exits to the rear of the house. THOMAS resumes his action from the beginning of the play—sitting and reading a magazine, moving about straightening the room, whatever. A moment of silence passes. Once more, there is a knock at the front door. THOMAS smiles.)

THOMAS. *(On his way to the door:)* Who's there?

End of Play