

Theater [11 Minutes]:  
A \$4 Fantasy Made Real

a Play by Charlie Kupets and Wyatt Bland

### Synopsis

The play occurs in a run-down theater at Theater [11 Minutes], a fantasy camp for people who did not get into the University of Chicago theater festival, Theater [24]. The Camp Director chooses a lucky five from the audience of eager yet underutilized thespians to participate in theatrical activities and their own show. Anything can happen at this second-rate theater festival.

### Characters

MAXINE (played by Maxine Frenzel): Camp Director. Vivacious, assertive, friends in low places. Cares for her thespian passions.

BJORN (played by Bjorn Olafsson): An Actor

KATIE (played by Katie Vandervalk): An Actor

ALEXANDRA (played by Alexandra Harding-Jackson): An Actor

ELISABETH (played by Elisabeth Del Toro): Stage Manager

### Stage layout

5 chairs on stage. Whatever layout you feel is appropriate for the context.

### Props

5 chairs on stage

Diet Dr. Pepper, or any other slightly uncommon and unpopular soda beverage

Meatball marinara sandwich, with text "SINGLE-PAYER HEALTHCARE" clearly seen on outside/wrapper

Two wristwatches, worn by Maxine and Katie

Costumes: Everyday attire. MAXINE may wear something festive and theatrical to reflect her role

### NOTE:

/ indicates overlapping or interrupting dialogue

*Thee-ate-er* is pronounced as it is spelled, in a pretentious, high brow manner

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KATIE and ALEXANDRA are seated in an accessible place in the audience, probably the front. This may require setting up extra chairs. MAXINE is offstage in the wings. BJORN is in the hallway outside of the theatre.

*Lights are off in the theater and stage.*

Where Everybody Knows Your Name (Cheers Theme) by Gary Portnoy plays.

MAXINE walks out onto the dark and empty stage after about 45 seconds.

MAXINE: *(yells in a strained whisper-yell while the lights are still off and music plays)*  
CAROLINE! CAROLINE! Turn on the damn lights and turn off your music. We're about to start.  
CAROLINE!

*(Cue lights, turn off music)*

MAXINE: Welcome. I am so excited to see such latent potential here tonight. You all paid the 4 dollars to be here, and we've got some exciting things planned for / all of you.

BJORN *haphazardly busts through the back doors of the theater as MAXINE's line is ending. He starts his line and falls, and is forced to begin again.*

BJORN: Is this the fantasy camp for people who didn't get into thee-ate-er 24?

MAXINE: Did you pay me 4 dollars?

BJORN: Uhhh *(looks frazzledly down at papers)*, yeah.

MAXINE: Then yes. Sit down.

BJORN *speed walks down to the third open row and shimmies with a very open stance across the row, whispering excited apologies to the audience members. Then he wraps around and does the same thing to the second row, finally wrapping around to his seat in the front next to our other actors.*

MAXINE: Ok. Everyone look to your left. Now everyone look to your right. Now look in the mirror. You're here because, frankly, you're just not that good. *(pointing to the audience members)* You can't act, you can't design, you can't direct, and you definitely, definitely, can't write. You know those writers who made it to thee-ate-er 24? They're brilliant. Incredible.

Geniuses. You know what, let's give a round of applause to the writers. *(Break for applause)*  
The writers are building their legacy with thee-ate-er 24, because that is all they have.

MAXINE: Alright. I am going to call up some thespians who will showcase the thee-ate-ric artistic process. *(walks into audience, selects BJORN, ALEXANDRA, KATIE, and two audience members. She gestures towards a third, picks one, but then on second thought tells them to sit back down. ACTORS quietly instruct audience members to sit in the seats on-stage. The two audience members will remain for the majority of the play, with one being there the whole time.)*

MAXINE: Alright you five. Let's get started. Welcome to Theater 11 minutes, a fantasy camp for artisanal thespians, such as yourselves, who lacked the chops for thee-ate-er 24. So, as you probably assumed, I will be directing / this play.

KATIE: But I want to be the director!

MAXINE: Tough shit. I'm directing.

KATIE: Isn't this supposed to be a fantasy camp? That's my fantasy.

MAXINE: I said this was a fantasy camp, I didn't say this was a fantasy camp for you. *(KATIE slumps with stern antagonism)* Alright, who wanted to be an actor?

ALEXANDRA: Ooh! Ooh! I wanna act! I wanna act!

MAXINE: Jesus christ okay fine. Let's see what you got.

ALEXANDRA: *(With accompanying silly dance)* How bout me pingo pee? *(apologetic and panicked tone)* eh hh boo boo - Sorry I don't know- I'm not-I'm not theater- I'm so sorry.

*ALEXANDRA walks back to her chair.*

MAXINE: This is getting a little off the rails. Let's start some thee-ate-er games.

*Everyone moves their chairs and provides an open space.*

BJORN: Why do I have to be next to this loud radiator?

MAXINE: Tough shit, sugar tits.

KATIE: And why is this such a shitty space?

MAXINE: Well otherwise we would have to charge more than \$4 and we could barely get anyone to come to this anyways.

ALL THREE: (overlapping dialogue with nods) Well yeah/ that's true/ that's fair/ ok.

MAXINE: We are going to warm up with some classical (*rolled r*) improvisational thee-ate-er games. (*pointing to the audience*) I need the name of a location. (*spins arms in a thee-ate-ric manner*) Does anyone have the name of a location, a spatial realm for thee-ate-er to blossom?

*Audience shouts out names.*

MAXINE: (*Points to the sky*) Bowling alley! I heard bowling alley! Let's get started. Lex, you will be my partner.

MAXINE and ALEXANDRA *step into the center.*

MAXINE *pantomimes opening a door with exaggerated vocal door and door chime sound effects. She saunters up to an imaginary counter and leans her elbow on it.*

MAXINE: Hello, miss, is this the bowling alley?

ALEXANDRA: (*shakes head*) No.

MAXINE: (*lightly recoils*) Then do tell, what is this surrounding space?

ALEXANDRA: (*sheepishly and almost inaudibly*) Um I don't... I don't really know.

MAXINE *puts her hands together as if in prayer towards her chin and audibly sighs. Lowers hands about 45 degrees from her body. While opening hands she mumbles inarticulately.*

MAXINE: (*She turns towards the audience.*) And scene. (*She bows.*) Alright, let's try it with someone else. Somebody fresh, somebody new. Um you, (*points to one of the two audience members on-stage*) fine member of the thee-ate-er! Please stand up!

MAXINE: What is your name?

AUDIENCE MEMBER *provides name.*

MAXINE: (*lightly flirts*) Wonderful, I used to know a [*butchers name*]. Maybe twas you? Ah good fun (*becomes darkly contemplative*) good fun... It was so long ago (*She lowers her head solemnly and stares wide eyed at the ground, there is a pause, and MAXINE begins again*) What were we doing?

BJORN: We're doing improv.

MAXINE: Alright, (*said with a hard J*) Buh-journ, get up here.

BJORN *walks to the center of the stage with audience member.*

MAXINE: Beeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeegiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiin! (*While MAXINE is shouting "begin!" she is thee-ate-rically dancing, moving, throwing her arms and hands around, rolling around on the floor, pointing randomly, etc. Just have fun with it. This goes on for an unreasonably long time.*)

*No actors say anything at all, we wait for the audience member to start the scene. BJORN refuses to make any sort of eye contact with the audience member, visibly turning his head away from the audience member.*

*If the audience member does not understand to begin, MAXINE motions for the audience member to begin, with increasing intensity if there is no cooperation.*

AUDIENCE MEMBER: [*whatever the first line is*]

ALL: Eh/Uh/No/Not so sure about that/hmm I don't think so./I don't really like that...

BJORN: And scene. (*Bows*)

MAXINE: (*impressed by BJORN's bow, clasps BJORN's shoulders*) Very, very good, Borna. (*Turns solemnly towards the audience member that participated*) Please leave. Please. You're not welcome here. (*forces audience member back to the seat. If the other audience member tries to go back off-stage to the audience, MAXINE insists that they stay seated*)

KATIE: Can I play in one of these games?

MAXINE: (*surprised*) Ah! You're still here? Ehhh yes, we may play another Game of the Thee-ate-er. We shall play a game that one calls, View Points.

KATIE: Oh! I know that one!

MAXINE: Good. Take the lead on this one, chief, I need to take a cigarette break. (*walks off-stage*)

KATIE: Okay everyone, so View Points is a game where you walk from one side of the stage to the other and I give you commands.

ALEXANDRA: That's not really what View Points is...

KATIE: I have been doing thee-ate-er for five years. I think I know what View Points is.

ALEXANDRA: Alright fine, go.

KATIE: I'll stand here (*moves to center stage*). Everyone lines up over there!

BJORN *and* ALEXANDRA *line up somewhere on stage. They don't even care.*

KATIE: Ok so in View Points I give you commands and you follow. Are you ready, Bjorn? Start walking!

BJORN *walks at a leisurely pace.*

KATIE *begins to yell "SLOWER" at him, repeatedly, for a total of 5-6 times. Each time, BJORN listens and responds accordingly and slows his pace. For some inexplicable reason, BJORN takes it upon himself to also continuously lower himself and make himself smaller.*

KATIE: (*at the climax of the process*) WOAH! WAY TOO SLOW! STOP! STOP!! STOOOP!!

MAXINE *enters stage.*

MAXINE: (*with a Diet Dr. Pepper in hand*) Jesus H. christ! What the hell is going on here?

ALEXANDRA: We're playing View Points...

MAXINE: Still? (*Looks at watch, and screams to the void*) Hey you fucks know you have to fucking write this fucking play, you motherfucking fuck faces.

BJORN, ALEXANDRA, and KATIE *pause in shock.*

BJORN: (*Deadpans*) Theater 11 minutes is weird.

ALEXANDRA: Yeah, this all started out pretty cool but now it's getting a little freaky.

KATIE: To be honest guys, we do have a deadline really soon. (*Looks at her watch*) And it's only been 7 minutes.

MAXINE: (*regains her cool in a thee-ate-ricial manner*) I apologize. But at this camp, you are to experience the life of someone of talent. And what better way to do that then to write a play. Lord knows acting does not take any talent. Everybody knows that the only thing that matters is the writing. (*turn to the actors on the wings*) Everybody say it with me: the only thing that matters is the writing! (*turns to audience*) The only thing that matters is the writing! *Begins chant while snapping her fingers with the rhythm. As she, and possibly others, are chanting, she backs off the stage into the wings.*

MAXINE *exits stage*

*Pause*

BJORN: (*staring at where MAXINE just left*) I want my four bucks back.

ALEXANDRA: This is more of a nightmare than a fantasy.

*Pause*

KATIE: So does anybody have any ideas on what we should write about.

BJORN: How about Hamilton?

KATIE: No. No, that's dumb.

*Pause*

ALEXANDRA: This could be the play.

KATIE: What?

ALEXANDRA: We could write about this!

BJORN: What, about writing a play?

ALEXANDRA: Sure!

KATIE: What? No. Nobody wants to see a play about people writing a play.

BJORN: Okay well fine. What do people want to see?

ALEXANDRA: (*indignantly*) What do people want to see? Who gives a shit! If they want to see something so bad, they should write it themselves.

*Pause*

BJORN: We could do a play about a guy eating a sandwich and there's a lot of marinara on it. And, um, there's a lot of meatballs. Big meatballs. And he can't eat it all. It's too big. He can't even fit the thing in his mouth. There's marinara sauce all over his shirt and all over the white table cloth. And it's everywhere. What does he do? He doesn't know what to do!

ALEXANDRA: How about this- How about this. On the tablecloth, it says Bernie Sanders.



BJORN: YES! YES! That's good! That's interesting! That's really good!

BJORN *and* ALEXANDRA *stare at* KATIE

ALEXANDRA: Come on, Katie. What do you think?

KATIE *stands in the middle of the stage, staring blankly.*

ALEXANDRA: Katie?

*Pause*

KATIE: What if... The meatball sandwich says single-payer healthcare on it.

ALEXANDRA, BJORN, *and* KATIE *gasp and look at each other in excitement.*

*In rapid, machine-gun like succession.*

BJORN: And the table is the American taxpayer!

ALEXANDRA: And the shirt buttons are Wall Street!

KATIE: And his shoes are the Endangered Species Act of 1973!

BJORN: But! His glasses are the Americans with Disabilities Act!

ALL 3 IN UNISON: BEHIND HIM IS A BIG SIGN THAT SAYS UNELECTED  
SUPERDELEGATES FROM THE 17TH DISTRICT OF FLORIDA!

*Pause*

ALL 3 IN UNISON: Nahhh.

KATIE: So then what are we going to do?

ALEXANDRA: Well, I think politics is still viable.

BJORN: Yeah. It's easy, topical, and you can get a little edgy, and the audience members constantly pat themselves on the back for understanding the references.

KATIE: But what exactly are we going to talk about?

*Pause*

ALEXANDRA: We could always make fun of the GOP.

BJORN: Oh, that's easy.

KATIE: That script can write itself!

MAXINE *enters stage while eating a meatball sandwich. Written on the sandwich is:*  
"SINGLE-PAYER HEALTHCARE"

MAXINE: Hey guys, so what did you come up with?

ALEXANDRA: We're going to make fun of the GOP.

MAXINE: (*shakes sandwich, metaphorically refers to their plan to make fun of the GOP*) Oh boy, that's one spicy meatball!

BJORN: What?

ELISABETH: (*peeking out from the wings*) Hey you guys know that your play starts in a minute, right?

ALEXANDRA: Oh no! We literally have no time. We're going to have to write this in 11 seconds. Curtain call is in less than a minute!

BJORN: Isn't the curtain call the end of a play?

KATIE: Yeah whatever. Same thing.

ALEXANDRA, BJORN, and KATIE *run off-stage*

MAXINE: (*sighs, looks at her watch, turns to remaining audience member on-stage*) That's 11 minutes I'm never getting back.

*Fade to black. Right Back Where We Started From by Maxine Nightingale at the 00:12 mark. Music plays while MAXINE and audience member leave the stage.*

THE END