

# Ice Cream and Disbelief

## Contents

Forward	P 1
---------	-----

### First Act

#### **Starting to Play**

1 Pop Goes the Question – 1993	P 4
2 Growing Things – 1993	P 14
3 Legacy – 1991	P 20

#### **Playing Around**

4 Happy Hour – 2006	P 27
5 The Cause of This – 2012	P 39
6 Of Hawks and Hounds – 2013	P 50
7 Re-Maid – 2015	P 62
8 A Strike of the Match – 2012 (rewrite 2019)	P 72

### Second Act

#### **Not Playing Around**

9 thE noT sO greaT societY – 2014 (rewrite 2016)	P 83
10 Picture Me – 2019	P 91
11 But Not Before – 2015	P 96
12 Not Yet Death – 2019	P 108
13 A Farce or a Tragedy – 2020	P 112
14 Sound-Bite Idiots – 2021	P 125

## Forward

This play offers a selection of my rejected and/or neglected short plays. This project began when I stumbled upon three fairly recent, but forgotten about short pieces. At one point I also looked for and found a hard copy of my earliest play and realized I'd been writing plays for thirty years! I too realized these plays collectively offer a look at my journey as a playwright. I have broken them into three groups based upon who I was as a writer when the play revealed itself to me.

The first group, Starting to Play, are the first three of what I'd consider successful attempts at a full scene or a short play. The first two were probably written in my first playwriting workshop. They were ideas I was aware of, but I waited until I was in a playwriting workshop before I put them on paper. *Pop Goes the Question*, not surprisingly, came to me when I was eating at a restaurant. I was an undergraduate and the story simply wouldn't go away; every time I ate at that restaurant the story would pop back into my head. *Growing Things* emerged from an idea I had for a short story in my first narrative writing class, also when I was an undergraduate. I recently found the first couple of pages of my rather haphazard attempt to write this story as a short story, which quickly stalled out. It was obvious from this small sample, which was written mostly in dialogue, the story wanted to be a play. However, it would have to wait about two years, until I returned to Chicago, before I'd find a playwriting workshop. Both of these plays have been tinkered with in various classes and workshops with friends and colleagues. The biggest surprise for me in this group is *Legacy*, which was written as a paper for a literature class. The professor was one of my favorite teachers and in my second class with him there was some overlap of materials with the first class. The professor had said he had a theatre background so he was open to papers with theatre topics, such as set design or costumes for students in Theatre (though I was an English major). When he gave out the assignment for the first paper in my second class it was the exact same topic I'd written on in the first class—so for some reason (I have no knowledge as to why) I asked him if I could write a play! At this point I'd only had two creative writing classes (one in poetry and one in narrative) and I had no idea I might wind up in theatre one day. However my professor said I could write a play, as he'd done so in the past.

The second group, Playing Around, offers more variety than the first group, including some experimental pieces. These plays were written after I'd written a couple of longer plays, so I was more comfortable trying different things. However (unbeknownst to me) I was still looking for my voice as a playwright (and I still am to some degree). *Happy Hour* is the only play in this collection to have had a staged reading (LiveWire Chicago Theatre, VisionFest 2008, directed by Joshua Aaron Weinstein). It was written with many stops and starts over a number of years. The biggest challenge with this play was I didn't know exactly what it was or was about when I first sat down to write it which is never a good place to begin (I understand this because I did it twice back then). (*A Strike of the Match* and *thE noT sO greaT societY* also had later rewrites, but these were due to my changing the focus of the play for different audiences than they'd originally been written for.) *Happy Hour* is also a transition piece as it was developed over time, so as a writer I was closer to one group when I began the play but I was clearly in another group when I finished

it. As for the other four plays in this group—*The Cause of This, Of Hawks and Hounds, Re-Maid* and *A Strike of the Match*—they all feel connected as they were drawn from and expressed through my interests in classical literature. I read many plays, including the Greeks and Shakespeare and his contemporaries, and these plays are reactions to plays I've read. The Greek plays are fun to play with and expand upon as Greek playwrights often left holes you can fill in and explore in interesting ways. By bringing the characters in the two Greek plays, *The Cause of This* and *A Strike of the Match*, to life in a new context I'm able to bring to life a new dramatic situation, but also comment upon our society, especially politically as our politicians are remarkably as ignorant, as stupid, as arrogant, as bought off, as power hungry and/or as shortsighted as many of these dysfunctional Greeks were. (Unfortunately overtly dysfunctional and problematic characters make for interesting drama as they are often involved in—and usually drive—conflict and therefore create problems for others and themselves.) I don't remember the impetus behind the two Greek plays but I think the plays speak for themselves and to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The two remaining plays, *Of Hawks and Hounds* and *Re-Maid*, are reactions to plays by Shakespeare's contemporaries. In *Of Hawks and Hounds* I'm playing with phrases and lines I was drawn to from Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (first published in 1607). I heard these lines at a reading and went home and began to play around with them. This play is an adaptation of some sort, as I let Heywood's language lead the audience through a highly condensed version of the play but with a different presentational form. With *Re-Maid* I was aghast when I read Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy* (first published in 1619) and thought Beaumont and Fletcher missed the dramatic line they should have taken.

By the time I was writing well enough to begin the final group, *Not Playing Around*, many things in my life had changed and more than a few things had passed me and my writing career by including my still being an unproduced playwright as I write this. However, as these plays show I was (and am) still growing and evolving as a writer. *thE noT sO greaT societY* is a reaction to the student debt crisis, where our government allowed (and still allows as this has not been adequately resolved in my opinion) the financial industry to take advantage of and exploit 18 year old high school graduates for financial gain. Our government and politicians can be absolutely shameless at times and this is one of those times. *Picture Me* and *Not Yet Death* emerged together one weekend. I have no recollection as to what triggered their emergence, but I felt the need to express them and once I wrote them I was able to move on. *But Not Before* is another transition play I worked on over a number of years and it is also the other play I began not knowing what it was about—obviously not a coincidence! *But Not Before* is also unique within this collection as it is the only play that didn't begin as a short play. I was in graduate school when I wrote the first full-length draft of this play, but for many reasons it never fully came together though I worked on it on and off throughout many years. What is left is a reduced and simplified take on just a couple of the oh-so-many things I was trying to figure out, balance, understand, grasp and communicate in graduate school. With the troubled state of our government and political system in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century it is difficult not to react to some of these machinations and hoodwinkings and *A Farce or a Tragedy* is one of these reactions. *Sound-Bite Idiots* is the only new play in this collection, as it 'just sort of popped out' as I was pulling things together.

Hopefully this collection will offer a look at the type of journey a playwright (or any writer or creative person) might go through during his or her creative life. All fourteen of these plays have helped me to discover some element of my evolving playwriting voice. Looking back I'm glad to see I was struggling with characters trying to find better connections to and with themselves and with the types of things that can prevent those important personal types of connections we all need. "Know thyself" as the Greeks use to say. As individuals I think we spend much time and energy looking for, but not always finding who we are. We do this as human beings (at least some of us do) but those of us in the arts also need to do this with our creative voices.

As I was selecting which pieces to include in this collection, I realized I wasn't doing the selecting as much as the plays seemed to be working together and essentially putting forth one another. I am also in my sixties now so it is time to begin to reflect upon my life and my career as a playwright and this may be what is driving this collection more than anything. The process of gathering and sorting through my many short pieces for this collection revived generous memories from my earlier, more speculative and more uncertain writing days. Even though these plays were not written to be performed together, throughout this gathering process they have become a unified whole. It too feels as if I may have reached a certain point in my career as a playwright; however what this point is exactly and what it may or may not mean for the future is not clear as I write this, though I understand it reflects an organic change in who I am as a writer.

S.G.

#### Script and Production Notes:

Sets should be minimal to allow for flexibility and quick, smooth changes.

You can perform this script with a minimum of 6 actors, 3W and 3M, of various ages.

There are a total of 47 roles, so mix and match as you will.

S.G.