

THIS IS IT

A Play in One Act
by Edith L. Freni

Dim lights up on a THE BIG LEAP, a carnival ride situated very high off the ground. NIGHT. In the distance, the faint sound of carousel music. MAUREEN, an angry looking girl in her late teens, sits in a ticket booth. Her hair is all done up, she wears a ton of make-up and a glitzy jacket. There is a sign on her booth that reads, "No REFUNDS!" JACK, a wiry, unsettling young man with a pompadour, wearing a plaid jacket and holding a bamboo cane, stands to her right. They stare at each other. She growls. She barks like a rabid dog. He barks back. They begin a violent barking match that can go on as long as they like until--

MAUREEN

Step right up, Ladies and--

JACK

STEP RIIIIIGHT UP, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! Step right up and GO right down! STEP RIGHT UP AND EXPERRRIENCE THE LEAP!

MAUREEN

OK, you wanna shout, I'll shout about something--

JACK

Step right up and experience the death UNdefying leap that makes a monkey out of a man (poor monkey), a man out of a boy, a boy out of a baby--

MAUREEN

A baby out of a man's more like it--

JACK (cont'd)

--Never before seen, heard, smelled, touched, tasted, wasted, walked on, trod on, taken in, shuffled out, sniffled up, shot down, shat upon or shimmied under, THIS ISSSSS IT, ladies and gentlemen, the finest, fastest, funnest way back down to the grinding ground!

MAUREEN

Some nerve. Some rotten nerve you have.

JACK

God gave man nerves so he could feel things, Maureen. If

feeling's a crime, I am the worst criminal!

MAUREEN

You don't feel shit!

JACK

(approaching the booth)

Don't feel WHAT? I believe I implemented a no cussing policy on this ride a few days ago. And I'll have you know I do feel things. I feel for you, Baby!

MAUREEN

Stay put, Jack!

(He begins to back away from her. Laughs. Walks to the stage edge, gazes out.)

JACK

I don't like this new attitude of yours, Maureen. Or your new hairstyle. And I especially hate that ridiculous jacket.

MAUREEN

I don't care what you like or hate.

JACK

What you getting yourself all fancied up for anyway?

MAUREEN

Never you mind.

JACK

I sure as heck hope you don't think you're gonna start barkin'!

MAUREEN

And what if that *is* what I think?

JACK

Then *I* think you're delusional!

MAUREEN

Why shouldn't I be the one? I got a better voice than you! I attract people better than you! You scare people, Jack! You want to hurt people!

JACK

I just want everyone to get their money's worth. So did your daddy, Old Man Weatherbeaten, lord rest his soul. What a man that man was.

MAUREEN

He was a rotten apple. And a great roll model for wayward boys, apparently, 'cause you sure got worms in you now and now you put 'em in me!

JACK

There is nothing wrong with my seed! I won't find *myself* at fate's feet later in life just to be kicked in the face. Weatherbeaten needed a son; the God's gave him you. And everyone knows that a girl can't bark. That's why we're starting early, you and me. Plenty of time for mistakes. I'm gonna fill you full of babies 'till I got me a whole line of barker-boy royalty, yessiree.

(sighs, looks out)

What a sight. What a world. Bunch a rats, all of 'em. (beat) I love rats. Even they can't wallow in the dirt forever. Sooner or later they all make their way up here.

(Maureen begins reading a glossy fashion magazine.)

MAUREEN

Sooner or later they all do.

JACK

(beat)

Well, I'll be! There's that little fat freak-show kid again.

MAUREEN

(looking up from the magazine)

Oh yeah?

JACK

Kid looks like a certified idiot dragging that filthy stuffed bear behind him. Snot dribbling down his chin.

MAUREEN

Is he eating?

JACK

What do you think? Hand dipped soft serve this time.

(She sighs. Jack strains to see the kid.)

JACK

His parents should be ashamed of themselves.

MAUREEN

Probably doesn't have any.

JACK

Someone had to win him that bear 'cause he sure as heck didn't win it for himself. (beat) Oh GOD! I can't wait to have a baby boy to call my own! I'll make a barker out him, so help me God. Strong. Lean. Robust. Just like his poppa. He's gonna win his own darned bears, Maureen. No hand outs from this hand. Nobody ever won this body no bear! *I* threw

the balls that knocked down the laughing clowns, I got the frog onto that lily pad, I picked up the gun and squirted water right into that bulls eye--

MAUREEN

(exiting the booth)

--YEAH, I know all about your good aim!

JACK

(blocks her exit)

Uh, uh, uh! Where do you think you're going?

MAUREEN

(returning to her post)

Woof, woof, woof. Just like a good dog.

JACK

You don't want to come out here anyway. Out here is no place for a woman in YOUR condition.

MAUREEN

That's right, Jack. Keep on humping every leg in sight. Too bad you don't know whether it's male or female, canine or feline, up, down, in, out...You don't know shit.

JACK

I am warning you to cut out that cussin' or else!

MAUREEN

Or else what?

JACK

You...you don't want to know what else so just shut it.

MAUREEN

That's what I thought. (beat) All bark.

JACK

You want me to bite ya'?

MAUREEN

I want you to hear me. You listenin'? This is it.

JACK

What?

MAUREEN

I know exactly how our baby turns out. You wanna see--

JACK

Cut out the nonsense, Maureen.

MAUREEN

I'm serious. I can draw a pretty good picture—

JACK

I know you don't want me to come in there--

MAUREEN

He's more disappointment than any girl ever could be.

JACK

Not. Possible.

(Jack turns to walk away.)

MAUREEN

Ain't no barker that's for sure!

JACK

You know what? You should be down there. Yeah, we'll get you your own booth and everything. You can read people's fortunes. You're a regular psychic.

MAUREEN

I can see those rats scurry just as well as you can.

JACK

Doubt it. (beat) Highly.

(Suddenly, BERNARD ambles onto the stage. He wears striped Bermuda shorts, a clashing t-shirt and suspenders. He is red and sweaty and has an ENORMOUS belly. He is furiously stuffing a Hostess Snowball into his mouth. He is so absorbed in this snowball that he doesn't see either Jack or Maureen. His face and hands are covered with marshmallow as if he has been eating these things all day. His appearance is, overall, quite dirty.)

JACK

Well wouldya lookit what we got here...

MAUREEN

Jack, hold on a sec--

JACK

(approaching Bernard)

Hey there, Fat Boy!

(Bernard whips around to face Jack.)

BERNARD

Stay away from me COCKSUCKER!

JACK

Now, there's no need to be hostile.

BERNARD

I said STAY BACK! I've been known to projectile vomit on numerous occasions! It makes me special, you see.

JACK

Don't you know where you are? Don't you know what this is?

BERNARD

I was hoping it was a quiet place where no one would make fun of me but—OOPS! Wrong again! What's new?

JACK

This here is the best ride in the park!

BERNARD

No it's not. It's a stupid jump off a crummy ledge. I've heard all about it.

JACK

This. Is. It. Don't let nobody tell you otherwise. Come here. Come on, you don't have to be afraid of me. I just want to show you a good time. I just wanna give you a ride.

MAUREEN

He kinda looks like he could use a ride—

JACK

--You keep your dirty mind closed like it aughta be--

MAUREEN

--But I don't think that's what he's looking for--

BERNARD

What do you know about it, lady? As it turns out I'm always in the market for a good time. Whatcha got?

JACK

Oh, I got somethin' gonna just kill ya'!

(Jack steps back)

Step RIGHT UP and experience the death UNdefying leap that makes a monkey out of a man (poor monkey), a man out of a boy, a boy out of a baby! Never before seen, heard, smelled, touched, tasted, wasted, walked on, trod on, taken in, shuffled out, sniffled up, shot down, shat upon or shimmied under, THIS IS IT, FAT BOY, the finest, fastest, funnest way back down to the grinding ground! So.(beat) What do you say?

BERNARD

I say...point me to it!

JACK

(leading him to the ledge)

You made the right choice.

MAUREEN

Wait a second! He didn't pay Jack! Send him back to pay.

JACK

You heard the woman. Forty-five tickets.

BERNARD

Fuh--FORTY! FORTY-FIVE? THAT'S FUCKIN' HIGHWAY ROBBERY!

JACK

Yes! But it is also a ride just like the rest of them. Now, pay the woman in the booth, wash that dirty mouth of yours out with a little Borax and I'll crank 'er up for ya'. But not until then! You do want to experience the thrillsandchills, don't ye'?

BERNARD

Of course I do!

JACK

You ain't AFRAID are ya'?

BERNARD

I ain't afraid of nothing!

(Bernard runs to the booth. Digs around in his pocket, looking for tickets. He holds them to out to Maureen who pauses for a second.)

MAUREEN

Well, hello there. Up awful high, aren't you?

BERNARD

Are you gonna take these or what?!?

MAUREEN

Sure. (beat) JACK!

JACK

Yes.

MAUREEN

I believe this gentleman would like to go down.

JACK

Would he? All right, cat-lover, come to papa.

(Bernard walks to Jack.)

JACK (cont'd)

Now, I'm gonna take you to the darkside but you gotta play by my rules, ya' hear? Got gum in your mouth, spit it out!

Got brains in your head, blow 'em out your nose! Kiss it all
goodbye, fat boy, and get ready for the most mind altering,
blood curdling, rock 'em, sock 'em--

BERNARD

JUST LET ME GO!

JACK

HEY! I don't come to where you work and tell you to leave
early.

BERNARD

I can feel the corn dog churning in my stomach!

JACK

(gags, then super fast)

Ride lasts approximately thirty seconds. Keep your hands at
your sides at all times, keep your eyes open or you'll miss
the lights, don't scream or you'll suffocate and remember,
above all, to have fun. Why Maureen?

MAUREEN/JACK

(reciting super fast)

Because fun is a three letter word. And those are the kind
that it's all right to say in front of small children.

(Beat. They all take a big breath in and exhale at
the same time.)

JACK

And children are a blessing.

(looks at Maureen)

Aren't they baby.

MAUREEN

They sure are.

JACK

It's all yours, Poppin' Fresh. On the count of three.

(Bernard walks to the ledge.)

BERNARD

This is GONNA BE GREAT! Ha HA!

JACK

One...two...th--

MAUREEN

--Hey kid what happened to that bear 'a yours?

(Beat. Bernard stands motionless for a moment.
Jack stares at him. Bernard's lower lip begins to
quiver.)

BERNARD

I...my...Oh no.

JACK

Maureen? Are you pollutin' people's minds again?

BERNARD

I can't do this without my bear.

JACK

Yes, you can. You'll love it. Did you like the tilt-a-whirl?
This is ten times--

BERNARD

No you don't understand I have to go get him.

JACK

No Son, YOU don't understand. There's no turning back now.

(to Maureen with venom)

BOY! You really mucked things up this time! Why would you go
and put ideas into his head when you know he can't get out
of it?!?

(back at Bernard)

She don't know no better. She's not one of them intellectual
types like you and me—

BERNARD

What do you mean I can't get out of it?

JACK

Didn't you read the sign?

BERNARD

What sign?

JACK

I believe you can field *that* question, Maureen.

MAUREEN

No refunds.

JACK

SEE! You have to do it!

BERNARD

I don't care about the tickets I just want my bear!

JACK

Can't do it.

BERNARD

YES, I CAN!

JACK

NO YOU CAN'T!

BERNARD

Who the HELL are you? You're not the boss of me!

JACK

Don't you take that tone with me! I most certainly am the boss, young man! Up here I am the boss of everything! I rule this world, for what it's worth. I am the king of this castle and you will obey my laws! What I say goes and I say YOU GO DOWN!

MAUREEN

You can't leave.

BERNARD

Why not?

MAUREEN

Because this is it. This is as good as it gets.

JACK

This is the high point. Of you.

MAUREEN

This is where you started.

JACK

I don't know about that but it's certainly where you're gonna end. (beat) Listen, buddy, it's business. Nobody ever got out of it, ever before.

BERNARD

But I'm too fat for this ride! Isn't there a weight maximum? If there is, I've probably exceeded it.

JACK

Actually, the fatter you are, the better.

MAUREEN

He's a thin man inside.

BERNARD

I am. Inside, I'm all bones. Outside, I'm a beast. It doesn't matter. Either way, I'm some sort of freak.

JACK

Probably why they stuck you in the freak show.

BERNARD

It is. They sucked me in and they...they just kept feedin' me and feedin' me, and they made me sleep on a pile of dirt and in the mornings they'd let children in and the children

would poke at me with electric poking devices. Years. YEARS OF TORMENT! It was a horrible life! A HORRIBLE LIFE! They took everything. Except the bear. My daddy won me that. I kept him hid. If they knew, they woulda' taken him too. He was the only friend I ever had.

JACK

All the more reason to take the leap--

BERNARD

NO! (beat) I don't need your stupid ride! Keep the tickets! I just wanna go home!

JACK

To do what? Eat an ice cream sundae, a canoli, and some chicken wings?

MAUREEN

STOP IT!

JACK

Face it, buddy, even with that bear, you're looking at a pretty bleak future.

BERNARD

No refunds?

JACK

NO.

(Bernard looks to Maureen. She shrugs. He sighs. Pouts. Walks slowly to the ledge. A moment.)

BERNARD

(out)

Good night moon.

JACK

(smirking)

Here we go again. One...two...thr--

MAUREEN

Wait. Maybe--

BERNARD

(turning quickly)

Maybe what?

JACK

Maybe nothing!

MAUREEN

Yes. No refunds but maybe we can work out an exchange.

JACK

EXCHANGE?

BERNARD

For what?

JACK

There's nothing to exchange for.

MAUREEN

Oh, well! Look who knows so damned much now! Guess daddy-o didn't teach you everything before he passed the buckandtheblowjob on to you!

JACK

He taught me every trick in the book.

MAUREEN

He was my father.

JACK

In blood only.

MAUREEN

What else is there?

BERNARD

Exactly what kind of an exchange are you talking about?

MAUREEN

Fat for thin, sad for happy, death for life, and any other directly oppositional exchanges you can think...up.

JACK

(slowly)

What you got hiding in that black hat of yours, girl? Tell me.

MAUREEN

(staring at Jack)

I want to get out of the booth. I'll only tell you if you let me out.

(Long pause. Maureen and Jack stare off.)

BERNARD

WELL LET HER OUT OF THE GOD DAMNED BOOTH ALREADY!

JACK

I'm warning you both one last time about the foul language!

(Beat. Jack lets Maureen out. She exits,

cautiously. She is a bit tentative at first but eventually gets her footing and walks to Jack. Looks at Bernard. Stands in front of them and looks in the opposite direction.)

MAUREEN

The exchange...is for that side.

(The two men look to the other side. Jack laughs.)

JACK

All right, you've abused your privileges. Back you go--

BERNARD

What's so fuckin' special about that side?

JACK

That's it. I'm gonna cut your tongue out myself, you little foul mouthed--

MAUREEN

(turning to them)

--That side, gentlemen...goes up.

JACK

(beat)

BULL SHIT! I never heard about no up!

MAUREEN

That's because daddy didn't even know.

JACK

Then who the hell told you?

MAUREEN

Mamma.

JACK

Never heard of no ``mamma'' neiter.

(Bernard runs over to Maureen.)

BERNARD

What's up there?

MAUREEN

Everything.

JACK

Bullshit.

BERNARD

Happiness?

MAUREEN

Yes.

JACK

FUCKING BULLSHIT!

BERNARD

A woman?

MAUREEN

Oh, yes. The woman of your dreams.

BERNARD

How do you know about her?

MAUREEN

(beat)

I've seen her. We've talked. About you.

JACK

Oh give me a fucking break!

BERNARD

What did she say?

MAUREEN

She said she's never gotten over leaving you behind. That she's regretted it every single day of her life. But that she had good reason. That she knew someday you'd find her again and that you'd forgive her.

JACK

SHE'S CRAZY! Don't listen to her! She's fighting hormones like an English cow, right now, buddy.

MAUREEN

No. (beat) I'm not.

JACK

Yes you are. Don't deny it. (beat) YOU SEE what getting out of that booth is doing to your mind? It's completely warping your perspective on everything. Now let's get ya' back in--

MAUREEN

There are no hormones in me. There is nothing in me.

(Beat. Jack stares at Maureen.)

JACK

What about my...what about my barking baby? Where is he?

(Maureen smiles. Pause. She points up to the sky.)

MAUREEN

I sent him up. I took him out myself and sent him up there.
And that's where he is.

(looks to Bernard)
Waiting for his mother.

JACK

Oh, that's just rich...

BERNARD

You put your baby up there?

MAUREEN

I did.

JACK

You are just too damned much!

BERNARD

Is it that much better?

MAUREEN

(looking at Jack)

You have no idea. I'm amazed this man doesn't look familiar
to you, Jack?

(Jack walks up to Bernard. Stares at him. Squints
his eyes, puts his hands on his back, scratches
his head, examines Bernard up and down.)

JACK

Why?

MAUREEN

One day on the carousel. The next day on the Yo-Yo. Stuffing
his face with cotton candy, candy apples, hot dogs, fried
dough, ice cream, hot sausage and peppers and onions. Lollipops,
gum drops, licorice whips. Stuffing himself every
single day with more and more disgusting, sugar spun, food
dyed, deep fried, cancer causing, heart attack inducing
monster poisons that he couldn't even see were killing him
quicker than the second hand smoke he was inhaling from his
father's nicotine sticks.

(Jack coughs. They both look at him.)

JACK

What?

MAUREEN

(turning back to Bernard)

You were so out of control. I saw you go from thin to fat,

from happy to sad, from alive to dead in such a short period of time.

JACK

Why the hell'd you stuff yourself like that, kid?

BERNARD

They made me. Said it would sell more tickets.

JACK

And you let them? Why didn't you stand up for yourself? A real man would stand up!

BERNARD

Yeah well it's real easy to talk about bravery when you don't have a whip at your back. When you're not trapped in a body--

MAUREEN

--Or a cage--

BERNARD

--that you know you don't belong in!

JACK

A man can always leave.

BERNARD

Where was I supposed to go? Those freaks were the only family I ever knew. I believed them when they told me I was the fat man. I believed them because nobody ever told me otherwise.

(to Maureen)

You could really see me from all the way up here?

MAUREEN

The distance isn't really that great I assure you.

(whispers)

It's really just an optical illusion. Smoke and mirrors.

BERNARD

So if I go down...

JACK

Wait...wait a second. I see what you're doing! Don't think I don't see what you're doing!

MAUREEN

You'll probably twist an ankle. And everything will be the same again. Do you want that?

JACK

WE ARE HUNDREDS OF STORIES ABOVE THE GROUND. You can't out

bark me!

MAUREEN

Do you hear me barking?

BERNARD

And if I go up...

MAUREEN

The possibilities are endless.

JACK

(rushes to Maureen)

OH YEAH? Well, if it's so great up there, why haven't you gone yet?

MAUREEN

This is the first time I have EVER been out of that booth.
(to Bernard)

What do you say? I'll go with you.

JACK

No you won't!

MAUREEN

Like hell I won't. You don't control me anymore!

JACK

What did you do with my baby?!? If you hurt him, so help me God, I'll kill you dead, woman!

MAUREEN

I never laid a hand on that boy.

JACK

I wanna see him. I wanna make sure. Go get him back for me. Right now.

MAUREEN

Not on your life.

JACK

(steaming mad)

Then I'll go up and get him myself.

MAUREEN

You can try.

JACK

And I'll succeed.

MAUREEN
Doubt it. (beat) Highly.

JACK
Just watch me.

MAUREEN
Watching.

JACK
I'm going up, Maureen. But I'll be back in half an hour. If you're not in that booth upon my return, and if this fat shit hasn't taken the leap, I WILL THROW HIM OFF MYSELF!

MAUREEN
No need to hurry.

JACK
This ISSSSSS it, ladies and gentlemen!

(Jack walks to the ledge on the other side. Crosses himself, jumps and quite obviously falls DOWN. Maureen and Bernard walk to ledge to watch him fall.)

MAUREEN
Woof...woof...woof.
(a moment/she gasps)
Would you look at that?

BERNARD
What?

MAUREEN
That little brown haired boy. You see him?

BERNARD
Where is he exactly?

MAUREEN
He's by the laughing clowns. He's trying to knock them down. He wants to win that Panda Bear.

BERNARD
Oh. I do. I do see him. That's horrible.

MAUREEN
I wonder where his daddy is.

(Bernard pauses. Looks at Maureen.)

BERNARD

So...so there really is no up. Huh?

MAUREEN

(still staring out)

Don't be silly. Of course there is.

(She continues watching the boy throwing the balls. Bernard looks around. Very confused. Maureen looks at him.)

MAUREEN

(with a slight giggle)

This is it.

(She flashes a great big smile. Music rises faintly in the background. They look out. She puts her arm around him. Lights fade slowly as the music gets louder. **End of Play.**)