

revised March 25, 2015

some sample sketches from

## **JEST DESSERTS**

a tribute to the art of quick comedy

by Rich Orloff

*Note: These sketches are for reading only and may not be performed in any manner without permission from the playwright.*

Here's the full list of scenes from **JEST DESSERTS** (subject to change):

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POETRY CORNER #2: SPEED, SPEED, SPEED  
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THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE  
NEW TECHNOLOGY IN THE WAR BETWEEN THE SEXES  
FIT TO BE PIE'D

\*\*\*

## PROLOGUE

*Characters:* THE ANNOUNCER and an AUDIENCE PLANT

Before the actual play begins, when the house lights are still up, the ANNOUNCER bursts into the audience.

### ANNOUNCER

Welcome to JEST DESSERTS! Before we begin, I want to get us in the mood for the show with a little audience participation. It's very simple. I'll say something, and I want you to shout it back to me, okay? Here we go.

(If someone shouts, "Here we go", the Announcer should reply "Excellent". If people then yell "Excellent", the Announcer should start to reply but then decide to give a "thumb's up" with both hands.)

### ANNOUNCER (cont'd)

You can't make me talk!  
(after the audience repeats it:)  
Nothing you can say will make me talk...  
(after the audience repeats it:)  
Even though I love the sound of my own voice.  
(after the audience repeats it:)  
I've turned off my cell phone!  
(after the audience repeats it:)  
If I have any doubts I'll check it now!  
(after the audience repeats it:)  
If my cell phone goes off during the show...  
(after the audience repeats it:)  
I give permission for everyone around me  
to slap me silly!  
(after the audience repeats it:)  
Which is why I've *definitely* turned off  
my cell phone!\*

(\*Note: If other announcements need to be made, they can go here.)

After the audience repeats the last line, the Announcer gives a "thumbs up" with both hands. Then the Announcer says in a less Announcer-like tone:

ANNOUNCER (cont'd)

Good work.

A PLANT IN THE AUDIENCE\*

Good work.

(\*Sometimes other audience members will speak up, too.)

ANNOUNCER

No, no, you don't have to repeat anything else.

A PLANT IN THE AUDIENCE

No, no, you don't have to repeat anything else.

ANNOUNCER

The bit's over.

A PLANT IN THE AUDIENCE

The bit's over.

ANNOUNCER

I give permission to the audience to hit,  
flail, pound and trounce anyone who  
repeats this sentence.

Silence (or brutal mayhem).

The Announcer gives another "thumbs up!" with both hands.

This scene goes directly into...

## OPENING BIT

*Characters:* The ANNOUNCER, the STRAIGHT MAN\* and the SIDEKICK, with interruptions from THE JOGGER, THE POLLSTER and the DIRECTOR OF THE C.I.A.

(\**Note:* In respect for comedic tradition, this character is called the Straight Man, but he doesn't have to be male. Indeed, very few characters in JEST DESSERTS are gender specific, and even when they are, they don't need to be played by performers of that gender.)

ANNOUNCER

Don't blink; it's JEST DESSERTS,  
a tribute to the art of quick comedy.  
And here are the hosts of JEST DESSERTS,  
Norm DePlume and Sue DeNym.\*

(\*or Norma DePlume and Stu DeNym, if that's more fitting.)

The STRAIGHT MAN and SIDEKICK enter and acknowledge the audience's applause with "Thank you" and variations. Even when the applause ends, the Sidekick continues with:

SIDEKICK

Thank you, thank you very much, thank you,  
oh you're too kind, thank you, oh I don't deserve  
this, thank you, oh thank you. (etc.)

STRAIGHT MAN

(interrupting)

They've stopped applauding.

SIDEKICK

You live in your reality; I'll live in mine.

STRAIGHT MAN

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to JEST DESSERTS.

THE JOGGER, with a gag around his mouth, runs across the stage.

STRAIGHT MAN (cont'd)

JEST DESSERTS is a tribute to the art  
of quick comedy, the kind made popular  
in vaudeville and early TV.

SIDEKICK

You know, last night I had the worst date.  
I moved real close, and she\* kept talking  
and talking.

(\*Or "he" if, well, you get the idea. No need to keep pointing this out.)

STRAIGHT MAN

Hey, I'm trying to accomplish something here.

SIDEKICK

That's why I said. So after the date –

A POLLSTER, carrying a clipboard, enters and addresses the audience.

POLLSTER

A quick poll: How many people...  
like to raise their hands?

The Pollster carefully quickly counts all the hands (or at least fakes it well) and writes down the number.

POLLSTER (cont'd)

How many people... *don't* like  
to raise their hands?

The Pollster looks to see if anyone raised a hand.

POLLSTER

(if people raise their hands:)

Hypocrites.

(or if nobody raises their hands:)

I told my boss this was a silly idea.

The Pollster exits.

STRAIGHT MAN

So what happened after the date?

SIDEKICK

Well –

ANNOUNCER

We interrupt JEST DESSERTS to bring you this special bulletin. And now, from the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency in Langley, Virginia, an important announcement from the director of the C.I.A.

C.I.A. DIRECTOR

As you know, given the extraordinary advances in technology, satellites which circle the globe are able to view every square inch of this planet.

(lifts a piece of paper, clears throat:)

Will the owners of a white Chevy Camaro Ugandan license plate WS 3124, please return to your vehicle. You left your lights on.

Thank you.

ANNOUNCER

This has been an announcement from the C.I.A., where our new motto is, "Let's Play Nice".

And the play resumes.

SIDEKICK

– and then she eloped with a real ape.

STRAIGHT MAN

(skeptical)

A real ape?

SIDEKICK

Oh yeah. They were married by a professor of animal husbandry.

THE JOGGER, with a gag around his mouth, runs across the stage again.

STRAIGHT MAN

As I've been *trying* to say, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to JEST DESSERTS. Join us as we take you on a tour through the different forms of quick comedy, including short sketches, blackouts, one-liners, slapstick, non sequiturs -

THE JOGGER, with a gag around his mouth, runs across the stage yet again.

SIDEKICK

- and some running gags.

STRAIGHT MAN

Don't blink. It's JEST DESSERTS.

The lights fade, or at least shift to the next scene. Let's keep this moving!

**GREAT MOMENTS IN HISTORY:  
KING SOLOMON #1**

*Characters:* The ANNOUNCER, KING SOLOMON and two WOMEN

ANNOUNCER

Great Moments in History! In ancient Israel,  
the wisdom of King Solomon is put to the test.

KING SOLOMON faces two WOMEN. KING SOLOMON holds a baby.

WOMAN #1

That baby is mine!

WOMAN #2

No, that baby is *mine*!

The baby starts to cry.

WOMAN #1

That baby is hers!

WOMAN #2

No, that baby is *hers*!

The lights begin to fade.

ANNOUNCER

This has been Great Moments in History!

The lights fade.



## IMPOLITE CREATURES FROM OUTER SPACE

*Characters:* ALIEN, EARTHLING, SUPERMARKET CUSTOMERS, TEEN ALIEN, HALL MONITOR and 2 (or more) ANNOUNCERS. Actors can play more than one role. This sketch includes several locations, none of which need literal sets.

ANNOUNCER #1

Prepare yourself for the most horrifying film you've ever seen.

ANNOUNCER #2

The most horrifying film ever made.

ANNOUNCER #1

The most horrifying film ever imagined.

ANNOUNCER #2

The terrifying tale of advanced beings from another planet who have very, very, very bad manners. They're:

ANNOUNCERS #1 & 2

IMPOLITE CREATURES FROM OUTER SPACE!

The SPACE ALIEN and an EARTHLING:

ALIEN

Take me to your leader.

EARTHLING

Take me to your leader, *please*.

ALIEN

Take me to your leader.

EARTHLING

Take me to your leader, *please*.

ALIEN

Can I see your leader, or would you rather die?

EARTHLING

*May* I see your leader, or would you rather die.

ANNOUNCER #1

It's a film so disturbingly real that we had to release it in 2-D just so you'd know it was a movie.

A supermarket: ALIEN #2 and several SUPERMARKET CUSTOMERS

SUPERMARKET CUSTOMER #1

Hey, look. That alien just shoved his way into the 12-items-or-less line, and he has 13 items in his cart.

SUPERMARKET CUSTOMER #2

He's a threat to our civilization. Kill him.

The supermarket customers kill the alien.

ANNOUNCER #1

And don't miss the most chilling scene in movie history – when the alien teenager tries to go to high school.

A high school hallway: TEEN ALIEN and HALL MONITOR

TEEN ALIEN

Take me to your principal.

HALL MONITOR

Take me to your principal, *please*.

TEEN ALIEN

Take me to your principal.

HALL MONITOR

Take me to your principal, *please*.

TEEN ALIEN

You and me are going to your principal, or I'll shoot you with my ray gun!

HALL MONITOR

(correcting)

You and *I* are going to your principal...

The Teen Alien sighs in exasperation.

ANNOUNCER #2

They're horrible.

ANNOUNCER #1

They're deadly.

ANNOUNCER #2

And worst of all, they talk with their mouth full.

The ALIEN and an EARTHLING: The alien holds a large sandwich.

ALIEN

(mouth full and barely intelligible:)

Take me to your leader.

EARTHLING

What?!

ALIEN

(eats another bite, still barely intelligible:)

Take me to your leader.

EARTHLING

What?!

ALIEN

(eats another bite, still barely intelligible:)

Okay. Take me to your leader, please.

EARTHLING

What?!

The Alien exits, fed up and disgusted.

ANNOUNCER #1

Coming to a theater near you. They're:

ANNOUNCERS #1 & 2

IMPOLITE CREATURES FROM OUTER SPACE!

ANNOUNCER #1

They came to Earth, and they didn't wipe their boots when they landed.

*Sound cue:* A musical climax

The lights fade.

## WISE-OFF

*Characters:* Two FRIENDLY PITCHMEN and Four CUSTOMERS

### FRIENDLY PITCHMAN #1

Do you think more than you smile? Are you constantly frustrated by a civilization created and run by people less smart than you are? Do you find yourself secretly envying stupid people? You're not alone.

Millions of people spend their lives suffering from the inherent stress that comes with intelligence. For them, for you, there's finally an answer: a simple dietary supplement called Wise-Off.

### FRIENDLY PITCHMAN #2

Wise-Off was developed by a group of Swedish airheads who realized that there was absolutely no correlation between contentment and intelligence. Completely safe and non-habit-forming, Wise-Off works gently while you sleep to shed those excess I.Q. points that stand between you and the happiness you deserve.

### FRIENDLY PITCHMAN #1

But don't take our word for it.  
Listen to these happy customers:

### CUSTOMER #1

As a mid-level management executive for one of our nation's leading manufacturers, I used to stay up nights worried about the inefficiency, short-sightedness and hypocrisy that was rampant in our company. Now, after only three weeks on Wise-Off, I just want to cover my ass.

CUSTOMER #2 (FEMALE)

I used to spend a lot of time doubting if men and women could ever develop a way of dealing with each other based in mutual trust and respect. Now, after a month of Wise-Off, I just want to date rich guys. And I have no trouble getting them!

CUSTOMER #3 (MALE)\*

I used to walk around consumed by existential angst. I was getting nowhere in my career and nowhere in finding true intimacy. Now, due to Wise-Off, I just want to goof off and have sex. And I no longer need other people for that!

(\*School productions can cut this speech.)

CUSTOMER #4

It was hard for me to get through the day knowing what the future looked like because of our increasing Foreign Trade Deficit and skyrocketing Federal Deficit. I've been on Wise-Off three months now, and I don't even know what those two terms mean anymore. Life's a snap.

FRIENDLY PITCHMAN #1

And Wise-Off is completely guaranteed. Yes, we guarantee that if after thirty days, you're not feeling considerably dumber, then you won't want to buy more. So join the millions of sales clerks, bureaucrats, first dates and relatives who've made Wise-Off part of their daily diet. Wise-Off:

EVERYONE

Because you're too smart for your own good.

The lights fade.

**BAR HOPPING**  
**(A Tribute to the One-Liner)**

*Characters:* The STRAIGHT MAN, the SIDEKICK and the entire ENSEMBLE

STRAIGHT MAN

William Shakespeare once wrote,  
"Brevity is the soul of wit."

SIDEKICK

I could go on and on about that.

STRAIGHT MAN

In this segment, JEST DESSERTS pays tribute  
to one of the most underappreciated and  
difficult forms of comedy, the one-liner.

SIDEKICK

I dated a one-liner once.

STRAIGHT MAN

You dated a *one-liner*?

SIDEKICK

I think so. On a dare, we each ate  
one of those small green citrus fruits.

STRAIGHT MAN

Small green citrus fruits?

SIDEKICK

That's it. I dated a one-liner.

STRAIGHT MAN

I don't want to hear it.

SIDEKICK

Horrible personality; great pucker.

STRAIGHT MAN

The one-liner is –

SIDEKICK

We had fun till she soured on me.

STRAIGHT MAN

The best one-liners create a vivid comedic image in just one or two sentences without a wasted word.

SIDEKICK

Like: "You can lead a horse to water, but you shouldn't take a jackass to a bar."

STRAIGHT MAN

Speaking of bars, do you know what happens when an actress, an actor, a cheapskate, a politician, a philosopher, a sad sack, a drunk, a very proper lady, an Australian playboy and a misanthropic banana enter a bar?

SIDEKICK

I don't know. What happens when an actress, an actor, a cheapskate, a politician, a philosopher, a sad sack, a drunk, a very proper lady, an Australian playboy and a misanthropic banana enter a bar?

STRAIGHT MAN

I don't know either. Let's go to a bar and find out.

SIDEKICK

Shall we bar hop?

STRAIGHT MAN

Definitely.

As peppy music plays, the Straight Man and Sidekick hop into the next scene, while an ACTRESS, an ACTOR, a CHEAPSKATE, a POLITICIAN, a PHILOSOPHER, a SAD SACK, a VERY PROPER LADY, a DRUNK, an AUSTRALIAN PLAYBOY, and a misanthropic BANANA hop on stage and create a bar. In this segment, after each line, the performers hop a few steps to music so that the next line is said at a place of prime focus.

(*Note:* Depending on the size of the ensemble, this scene can be edited to fit. Also, if this is performed at a school, this scene creates a great opportunity for teachers to perform cameos.)

Hop hop hop, and we meet the ACTRESS:

ACTRESS

I'm so frustrated. I thought I did a great audition for the role of the ingénue... but the director said I didn't have enough ingénue-ity.

Hop hop hop, and the ACTOR:

ACTOR

My director just fired me over creative differences.  
She said she was creative and I was different.

Hop hop hop, and the CHEAPSKATE:

CHEAPSKATE

Live every day as if it were your last,  
unless you owe me money.

Hop hop hop, and the POLITICIAN:

POLITICIAN

The voters in my district refuse to look at  
my record... which is why I'll get reelected.

Hop hop hop, and the PHILOSOPHER, who holds an ice pack to his head:

PHILOSOPHER

Never say "Count your blessings instead of sheep"  
to a sheep farmer.

Hop hop hop, and the SAD SACK:

SAD SACK

My life's an open book... that nobody wants to read.

Hop hop hop, and the VERY PROPER LADY:

VERY PROPER LADY

People who live in glass houses... should  
keep their bathrooms in the basement.

Hop hop hop, and the DRUNK:

DRUNK

(a bit tipsy:)

I believe that – oh I seem to be a bit tipsitip-  
tipsitoptoptap – tipsitoptoptaffy – tipsidipdopdaffy –  
tipsidipdopdipdipdipsydoodlerotomy –  
but enough about me. As I was saying,  
I believe that you should never put off  
till tomorrow... what you can do the day  
after tomorrow.



Hop hop hop, and the AUSTRALIAN PLAYBOY:

AUSTRALIAN PLAYBOY

Last night I tried picking up this Australian stripper, Boom-Boomerang. I skillfully tossed her a line. It came back and hit me on the back of my head.

Hop hop hop, and the misanthropic BANANA, who's talking to the Sidekick:

BANANA

I don't think I fit in here. I feel as out of it as a vegetarian at the Donner party.

SIDEKICK

You know, for a banana, I think you're one hot tomato.

BANANA

Ooo, where'd you get that line – at the riposte office?

SIDEKICK

What I meant –

BANANA

You're so stupid –

STRAIGHT MAN

If I may interrupt –

(to us:)

One of the most classic forms of one-liner is the "so" joke. Here are some examples:

VERY PROPER LADY

I'm so proper...

The Announcer and ensemble encourage the audience to join in with:

ANNOUNCER, ENSEMBLE & AUDIENCE

How proper are you?

VERY PROPER LADY

I never do things willy-nilly.  
I do them William-Nilliam.

SAD SACK

My ex-girlfriend is so tough...

ANNOUNCER, ENSEMBLE & AUDIENCE

How tough is she?

SAD SACK

Last winter Jack Frost nipped at her nose,  
and she maced him.

ACTOR

My brother is so dumb...

ANNOUNCER, ENSEMBLE & AUDIENCE

How dumb is he?

ACTOR

The day he was born they cut the imbecilical cord.

POLITICIAN

My opponent is so nerdy...

ANNOUNCER, ENSEMBLE & AUDIENCE

How nerdy is he?

POLITICIAN

I have evidence that he once caught twerpies.

CHEAPSKATE

My doctor is so versatile...

ANNOUNCER, ENSEMBLE & AUDIENCE

How versatile is he?

CHEAPSKATE

Just last month he took out my appendix  
and skinned me alive at the same time.

BANANA

My best friend is so fruity...

ANNOUNCER, ENSEMBLE & AUDIENCE

How fruity is he?

BANANA

He's so fruity he thinks ROD AND REEL  
is a gay movie magazine.

AUSTRALIAN PLAYBOY

My friend is so tiny...

ANNOUNCER, ENSEMBLE & AUDIENCE

How tiny is he?

AUSTRALIAN PLAYBOY

He once mounted a sex doll,  
and it looked like shrimp on the Barbie.

PHILOSOPHER

My ex-girl friend\* is so easy...

(\*or "best friend" is the Philosopher is female)

ANNOUNCER, ENSEMBLE & AUDIENCE

How easy is she?

PHILOSOPHER

She once slept with the Pillsbury Dough Boy  
and gave *him* a yeast infection.

ACTRESS

My boyfriend is so erudite...

ANNOUNCER, ENSEMBLE & AUDIENCE

How erudite is he?

ACTRESS

He's so erudite he knows what the word  
"erudite" means.

DRUNK

My ex-wife is so inarticulate, longwinded,  
meandering, confusing, oblique, supercilious,  
ostentatious, narcissistic, inconsequential,  
indistinguishable and exasperatingly unintelligible...

The Announcer and Ensemble gesture to the audience, as if to say "Take it!"  
The Drunk should have a challenging time listening to the audience.

DRUNK (cont'd)

You all sound just like my ex-wife!  
I'm outta here!

As music plays, the Ensemble hops away, except for one HOPPER  
who growls with disdain and contempt with each hop:

HOPPER

I'm hopping mad!

And as the group continues to hop away...

The lights fade.

## WHY DINOSAURS ARE EXTINCT

*Characters:* Two DINOSAURS and the ANNOUNCER

ANNOUNCER

Why dinosaurs are extinct!

Two dinosaurs hanging around. One reads a newspaper with the headline, "SCIENTISTS PREDICT ICE AGE".

DINOSAUR 1

Do you believe in global chilling?

DINOSAUR 2

Nah.

DINOSAUR 1

(thinks a moment, then:)

You're probably right.

(reads more, then:)

Do you think we should evolve?

DINOSAUR 2

Nah.

DINOSAUR 1

(thinks a moment, then:)

You're probably right.

A beat, then:

ANNOUNCER

Why dinosaurs are extinct!

The lights fade.

## FAIRY TALE MARRIAGES

*Characters:* Several MARRIAGE EXPERTS, the ANNOUNCER, and JACK and JILL.

ANNOUNCER

Fairy Tale Marriages.

MARRIAGE EXPERT #1

If Little Bo Peep married Bo Diddley  
while bending her knees,  
she'd be Little Bo Diddley squat.

MARRIAGE EXPERT #2

If Little Miss Muffet married Kermit the Frog,  
she'd be Little Miss Muffet Muppet.

MARRIAGE EXPERT #3

If Goldilocks married the local worker in fine metals...  
she'd be Goldilocksmith.

MARRIAGE EXPERT #4

If the witch from Hansel and Gretel married  
Humpty Dumpty, she'd be a frumpty Dumpty.

MARRIAGE EXPERT #5

If Old Mother Hubbard married Jack Be Nimble,  
on the wedding night, he'd be quick.

MARRIAGE EXPERT #6

If Rapunzel married Bugs Bunny...  
who would do her *hare*?

MARRIAGE EXPERT #7

And finally, if Jack and Jill got married,  
what would things be like twenty years later?

JACK and JILL are stewing in the middle of a fight.

JACK

Did I *ask* you to come tumbling after?!

They look away from each other, both incensed.

The lights fade.

**GREAT MOMENTS IN HISTORY:  
KING SOLOMON #2**

*Characters:* The ANNOUNCER, KING SOLOMON and two WOMEN

ANNOUNCER

Great Moments in History! In ancient Israel,  
the wisdom of King Solomon is put to the test.

KING SOLOMON faces two WOMEN. KING SOLOMON holds a baby.

WOMAN #1

That baby is mine!

WOMAN #2

No, that baby is *mine*!

KING SOLOMON

As I do not know who the real mother is,  
the only fair solution is to cut the baby  
in half and give half to each of you.

King Solomon looks at both women, who say nothing.

KING SOLOMON (cont'd)

I said I will cut the baby in half.

King Solomon looks at the women, who don't respond.  
He grabs a sword.

KING SOLOMON (cont'd)

(annoyed)

I'm going to cut this *living* baby in half.

WOMAN #1

Half a baby's better than none.

WOMAN #2

Can I have the half that doesn't poop?

King Solomon sighs. The lights begin to fade.

ANNOUNCER

This has been Great Moments in History!

The lights fade.