

“Never Say Yes”

A Ten-Minute Comedy

By Cheryl Ann Costa

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Special Note on Music and Recordings

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2M, 1W plus extras

Synopsis: Steve is having serious trouble with his girlfriend. He meets a former work associate, a mature woman who gives him advice on the do's and don'ts of relationships. An eavesdropping pub patron interjects his two cents worth along with most of her points, adding his own opinions.

Stage setting: The stage is set with a single cocktail table with three cocktail chairs. Behind the table, a bar representative of a small pub with a couple of bar stools. Obviously, the set can be expanded to fill out the stage area to the director's best judgement.

Cast of Characters

Kevin 21-30 A professional-looking guy, clean cut in a sport jacket, company badge still clipped to his pocket. He's a decent guy, he's just not too worldly when it comes to relationships.

Julie 45-55 A professional woman dressed in conservative business suit, she might be a stock broker or a bank officer. She's a very good friend, sort of a cross between an older sister and a divorced aunt. She's been around the block.

Gabriel (Gabe) 45-55 A businessman of some sort but obviously he's a bit crusty around the edges. He's boxy with a salty, irreverent manner with a sense of sarcastic humor. Deep down he's a righteous man but shows it only when he's making a serious point.

Bartender (Bit Part) More mime and facial expression to convey meaning.

Scene One

Place: A quiet pub

Time: present day

[A lone bartender serves several persons at the bar, Gabe is among them. Kevin walks in the bar looking around for someone and addresses the bartender.]

Kevin: Excuse me, have you seen a middle-aged lady dressed like she works for a bank? I'm supposed to meet her here.

[The bartender, drying a glass with a towel, smiles and just shakes his head no. Kevin pointing at an empty down stage table again addresses the bartender]

Kevin: Is this table taken?

[The bartender gives a simple motion of his hand and arm to wave Kevin to the table, Kevin puts down his briefcase and waits to be served. The bartender comes over table and simply looks at Kevin]

Kevin: I guess I should order something, shouldn't I? *[The bartender just smiles sarcastically]* I'll have a vodka tonic.

[Julie makes her entrance. She comes in very rushed, like she's late.]

Julie: Kevin darling !!!! Am I late?

Kevin: Julie !!! Nah, I just got here myself, it's nice to see you.

Julie: Oh, it's great to see you too hon!

Kevin: What can I get you?

Julie: A whiskey sour *[beat - on 2nd thought]* a double!

Kevin: Psssst!

[He gets the bartender's attention]

Kevin: A double whiskey sour for the lady.

[The silent bartender nods and Gabe turns around and sneaks a glance at the lady who ordered the double whiskey sour, and returns to his drink]

Julie: So, what's up? You sounded so upset on the phone.

Kevin: It's my girlfriend *[beat]* we're having some problems *[beat]* bad ones.

Julie: I don't understand why you called me.

Kevin: Julie, you and I have worked together a few years now, you're the best lady friend I've got. *[beat]* You're experienced and knowledgeable about *[beat - struggles]* well, things!

[Julie is amused, but rubs Kevin a bit for fun]

Julie: You mean I've been divorced three times and I've been around the block a few times.

Kevin: Ah, yeah, Something like that. I though you might be able to give me some advice about women.

[Playfully]

Julie: Oh, so you want me to sell out my gender so you can get an unfair advantage over your girlfriend.

Kevin: Fiancée! She's my fiancée.

Julie: A fiancée! Oh Kevin, congratulations! Have you set a date?

Kevin: No date as yet and if I don't get my act together pretty darn quick we won't be engaged much longer.

Julie: So you want me tell you the secrets of the opposite gender so you can get an unfair advantage over your fiancée.

Kevin: Yeah! Something like that!

Julie: Hmmmm Sounds like a worthy cause to me.

[The bartender delivers the drinks]

Julie: Thank you.

[to the bartender]

So what did you say to her that got her upset? You didn't tell her she was fat did you?

[Kevin starts to raise his voice, then backs off trying to keep his voice down]

Kevin: WHY DO YOU THINK that I started it by saying something stupid like that?

Gabe: Excuse me kid, but the lady is right, you must have said something to tick your girl off.

Kevin: Are you eavesdropping on my conversation, sir?

[Sarcastically]

Gabe: Me!! Eavesdrop? Perish the thought, I just couldn't help overhearing your conversation with the nice lady.

Julie: The point I was making before we were so rudely interrupted, *[toward Gabe on the side]* was that very often men just say the wrong thing and they manage to tromp on a girl's feelings like a bull in a china shop.

Kevin: Do you really think that's what I did?

Julie: Absolutely!

[From Gabe on the side]

Gabe: I'd lay money on it.

[Julie gets indignant toward Gabe]

Julie: Please!

Kevin: Excuse me Sir, this is a private conversation.

Gabe: Look kid, no harm intended, I was just overhearing a piece here and a piece there. From where I sit I think the nice lady will give you some good advice, but.....

Julie: But what?

Gabe: I think that if you really want some balanced advice you should have a man's input.

[Julie seems intrigued]

Julie: Kevin, this might be a good idea, perhaps we can persuade Mr.? Mr.?

Gabe: Gabe!! Just plain Gabe.

Julie: Mr. just plain Gabe to join us for this counseling session.

Kevin: Julie are you sure about this? I mean this guy's a complete stranger.

Julie: Sometimes the best advice comes from a disinterested stranger.

Kevin: All right, if you say so. OK, Gabe, please join us.

[Gabe pulls out the third chair, turns it around and sits on it with its back facing out.]
[Directors note: from this point except for brief interjections from Kevin, this is a sparing match between Julie and Gabe. Kevin makes a few gestures to interject but only rarely gets a word in edgewise.]

Gabe: Ladies first.

Julie: How did you propose to her?

Kevin: "Will you marry me?"

Julie: "Will you marry me?" is good. "Let's shack up together" is bad.

Gabe: "I'm rich" is better.

Kevin: I'm not rich!

Julie: Kevin, you have a good job and a trust fund, don't lie.

Gabe: Yeah real men never lie, [beat] they merely misspeak.

Julie: Good point Gabe, creditable communications is very important, so you should call her often, or make time for quiet conversations in private.

Gabe: You know I've always thought that shouting across a crowded bar should count.

Kevin: Shouting?

[Julie frustrated with that reply]

Julie: Talking is good. Shouting is bad.

Gabe: Remember - Slapping is a felony.

Julie: Your conversations should be respectful, you should be willing to give in to her position .

Gabe: Crying, whining, and begging, however, will get you dumped.

Kevin: I would never cry, whine, or beg!

[Julie and Gabe look at each other with the eyes of wisdom and experience and together say]

Gabe & Julie: You will.

Gabe: One word of advice from someone who knows is that a grunt is seldom an acceptable answer to any question.

Julie: Which makes communication difficult since most male behavior and

conversation is easily summed up in grunts, beer, and peeing while upright.

Kevin: That is disgusting.

Julie: Hon, it's the truth. Like I was saying, you should keep a good line of communication with her. Call her.

Gabe: Especially if you don't have bail after a rowdy night out.

Kevin: Did you say BAIL?

Julie: That's a good point. If guys' night out is going to be fun, invite the girls. The girls have a tendency to temper the evening so that nobody gets arrested. Always invite the girls.

Gabe: Oh but madam remember that FUN is a heavily gender-based term. For instance, shooting rats at the dump is fun but girls don't usually like it.

Julie: I suppose you're right, nix the dump and the rats, but if guys' night out is going to involve strippers, remember the zoo rules: **No Petting.**

Gabe: Don't feed the dogs also comes to mind too, bow wow.

Kevin: That does it! This is ridiculous. *[standing]* Aunt Julie, I'm not getting anything from this talk. Mr. Gabe, all this bantering is going nowhere. *[beat]* I think I'll just go over to her house and ask for her forgiveness. *[thinks a moment]* Better yet I'm going to ask her to elope with me tonight *[pleased - starts to walk out]* That's the ticket, elope...just the two us...I'll take her to the mountains...*[out the door]*

[Gabe and Julie just look at each other for a moment - Gabe breaks the silence]

Gabe: So, would you call that a successful mentoring session?

Julie: Yes I think that was.

[Fade to black]

Curtain

Never Say Yes

I'm always being asked for ten-minute one-acts for fillers and for competition acting pieces. This was an attempt at such a ten-minute one-act concept. It's been done in a few readings and recently done on stage. It's a funny piece if not taken too seriously, by actors or audience.

Concept? I used to have this aunt who was wise in the ways of the world and a bit of "Heller" if you know what I mean. I asked myself the question one day, what kind of answers would I have gotten from her when I was a young guy and I had wanted advice on love and dating? I ended up visiting a gal friend who is a "mother earth mamma" to a bunch of us and asked her to role-play the conversation out and recorded it. This play, except for a few tweaks, is what played out. She role-played the Auntie and I role-played Gabriel.