

A Safe Place  
A Play in One Act by  
Mike Byham

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**A Safe Place**  
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***Character Requirements***

DAN .....Man in his forties.

DAX / CINDY ....Woman in her forties.

***Approximate Running Time***

30 minutes

***Set Requirements***

Bare stage with two chairs for the actors – one a recliner, the other just a standard chair.

***Synopsis***

Dan awakens to a new reality where he has been chosen to restart the human race - by an entity wishing to learn how to love.

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*Lights up on DAN and DAX. DAN is seated reclined in an easy chair. HE is apparently asleep. DAX is seated across from DAN in a regular chair. Their clothing is unremarkable. The stage is empty otherwise. DAX is staring at DAN as HE stirs awake.*

DAX

Hello Dan.

DAN

Where am I? Oh man, I feel awful. Where are we, Cin?

DAX

You are in a safe place.

DAN

A safe place?

DAX

No harm will come to you here.

DAN

Good to know. Wait ... you're not ... Cindy, are you?

DAX

No. Are you well?

DAN

You look just like her. Where's Cindy? Where am I?

DAX

Are you able to move?

DAN

*(Bringing the chair to its upright position.)*

Oh man, my body aches. It feels like I've been beat up all over. My muscles are so sore.

DAX

Are you able to stand?

DAN

*(Standing with some difficulty)*

Apparently. So ... who are you? Where are we?

DAX

This is a safe place. Are you comfortable? Is the air to your liking? Are temperature and pressure appropriate?

DAN

What? Yeah, fine. But where are we, who are you and why do you look so much like my wife?

DAX

What is the last thing you remember?

DAN

I was ... I was at that stupid clinic. Having my ... what the hell are they called - engrams! That's it. I was having my engrams copied. But that ... wait, am I still there? But ...

(Points to the easy chair)

How'd you get old George here?

DAX

George?

DAN

We bought it at Washington's ... what the hell's going on? Why am I so sore? Damn.

DAX

You are new.

DAN

I'm what? New? What do you mean, new?

DAX

You have been created using the instructions that were provided in the vessel. We have created this body from the instructions as well (indicating HERSELF). Clothing and furniture were created from examining your data. And we've used the data to learn how to communicate.

DAN

Huh?

(beat - slowly realizing)

Ah .... okay. This is a joke, right? Are there like ... hidden cameras or something? Who put you up to this? Wait ... I know, Richie, right? He's such an ass. Richie and Cindy. Good one. So what'd you do? Roofie me?

*DAN starts laughing and DAX joins HIM. DAN starts looking around the room but there are no apparent exits or doors.*

DAN

All right, so you had your fun. Come on out! Where are you?

DAX

(Still laughing)

There are no others. Not yet. You're the first.

DAN  
(Stops laughing)  
No seriously ... where are they?

DAX  
(Also stops laughing)  
Seriously, you are alone.

DAN  
Well ... you're here. Cindy who isn't Cindy.

DAX  
Yes, we are here.

DAN  
So now that we have that established, what's next?

DAX  
We don't understand your question. It is lacking specificity.

DAN  
What's the next part of this joke? Does the real Cindy have anything else planned?

DAX  
The real Cindy is no longer functioning.

DAN  
Okay, now that's just not funny.

DAX  
There is no humorous intent.

DAN  
Then what's the point of all this? If this isn't a joke, then what the hell is going on?

DAX  
You must relax Dan.

DAN  
Look, lady, if you don't start giving me some answers here ... and I mean answers that make sense, I'm going to get pissed.

(to imaginary others)  
Guys - just because I said this stuff is all bullshit ... I get it. Real funny. You got me. You can come out now.

DAX  
We understand. You are frustrated?

DAN

Of course, I'm frustrated! When a practical joke goes on too long it's just not funny. Pathetic really, so can we stop playing pretend? Where are the others?

DAX

There is only you and us.

DAN

Us? Is there someone else, anyone else I can talk to? Maybe someone who doesn't look like Cindy?

DAX

You don't find Cindy's appearance pleasing?

DAN

Of course I do, but it's a little unnerving when it's not really her.

DAX

That is good information. It will be useful.

DAN

Glad to help.

DAX

You are glad?

DAN

Oh hell no. It's called sarcasm. Now is there someone else I can talk with?

DAX

We have only created this body. In addition to you, of course.

DAN

*(Sighs)*

Okay, I'll play. So, what's your name? What do I call you?

DAX

You may address us as Cindy but if you are not comfortable with that you may call us Dax.

DAN

Dax? Really?

DAX

Yes. That is what we wish to be called.

DAN

Now I know this is a joke. Whoever put you up to this knows I'm a Trekker. And Jadzia Dax is one of my faves.

DAX

We don't understand.

DAN

Oh, I get it now. Very clever. Dax was a trill ... she had memories of previous hosts as well as her own. Yeah, just like this clinic is supposed to do - store my memories and DNA. Perhaps be implanted into another body or shot into space for the aliens to find. Ha! Very funny. Clever. Dax.

DAX

This name was not chosen from your data. This is a coincidence.

DAN

Coincidence my ass.

DAX

What does your ass mean? We don't understand.

DAN

My ass means that the joke is over. So you may as well come on out? (beat) Where the hell are the doors in this place anyway?

DAX

You should sit down now. Your energy levels are low.

DAN

I just want to leave this room.

DAX

You cannot leave this room. This is a safe place.

DAN

Yeah, so I noticed that's the second time you've said that. What's that mean, anyway?

DAX

We have made this place for you.

DAN

We?

DAX

Dax. We and us are the most appropriate pronouns for our constitution.

DAN

Whatever they're paying you ... it's not enough.

(beat)

What do I need to do to end this? When is this joke over?

DAX

This is not a joke.

DAN

Uh-huh. So, can you prove it then? That this is no joke?

DAX

We will show you. Observe.

*As DAN and DAX both stare out over the audience, stage lights come down and at the same time spotlights go hot on the audience.*

DAX

There is a barrier that is now made transparent. As you can see, we are in what you call space. But we have made this vessel for you. You are in a safe place.

*Lights return to normal and DAN slowly sits in the easy chair.*

DAN

Wow - that's some cool shit. Can you do that again?

*Lights down in stage and spot on audience again briefly. DAN laughs.*

DAX

Are you well?

DAN

This is so cool. Are we on like ... a movie set or something? This is the most awesome practical joke ever.

DAX

Perhaps we can help you understand in another way.

DAN

Okay?

DAX

When we reconstituted your body, we did so in a manner to ensure that it is mature to the level of when the sample was taken. We did not however include imperfections that occurred through your previous experience. Your body is free of defects and scarring.

DAN

No shit. Then how do you explain this ...

*DAN lifts his arm - there is no scarring.*

DAN

Wait a second. Where are my scars? I was burned as a child and ...

*DAN starts looking at his arms and legs (pulling up pant legs if wearing long pants).*

DAN

What the hell? What did you do to me?

DAX

You are new.

DAN

*(Starts shaking HIS head.)*

No. No, this isn't ... this is not real. No.

DAX

We are sorry, Dan, that this is not easy to accept as real. We understand how this can be a surprise. But we need you to remain calm.

DAN

I am calm. Why would you say that? It's just ... this is ... I'm nuts, right? I'm going freaking crazy.

DAX

We understand that this is beyond your known experience. This is interesting for us as well. You are reacting differently than before.

DAN

Before?

DAX

This is the second time we have created you. You did not react well the first time and we cancelled our initial attempt.

DAN

Cancelled? What the hell does that mean? You killed me?

DAX

We ... reset you.

DAN

Reset? You mean rebooted? Like a computer?

DAX

Yes. That is an accurate analogy.

DAN

Well, why the hell would you do that?

DAX

As we said, Dan, you did not react favorably. You were unstable.

DAN

Well do you blame me? You're telling me my life as I know it is just ... gone!

DAX

Your life as you know it is simply a collection of neurons. It never actually existed within your current composition.

DAN

I have no freaking clue what you just said.

DAX

You are new. We took someone else's memories and implanted them into this new body that exactly matches the body of the person who created the memories you have.

DAN

But we finally saw Coldplay just last night. I can still ... hear ... the music! It's in my head! This is ... it's ... it's impossible. Maybe I'm dreaming. That's gotta be it. This is just a dream ... but how can I wake myself up?

DAX

You cannot. You are awake. We can reset you if you prefer?

DAN

What?! No! No resetting, okay? Safe place, my ass.

DAX

Your ass again. So you still think this is a joke?

DAN

Oh no. Not a joke. This is a dream. And you are not real.

DAX

Why do you think we am not real? We am right here in front of you.

DAN

But this is impossible. It's not really happening. I'm not really here and you're not real.

DAX

We assure you that you are here and we am real. It appears that your perception of reality is a choice. That is interesting.

DAN

Now you sound like Cindy.

DAX

Cindy thinks you are delusional?

DAN

No! Well, maybe sometimes. It's just ... something she would say. She's smart. Funny.

DAX

We understand. We are not funny.

DAN

No shit.

DAX

What else can we do to convince you, Dan, that this is real?

DAN

I ... this is a lot. I'm just ... I'm going to need time. Time will tell me if this is real.

DAX

Very well. Is there anything else we can do to make you comfortable during this time?

DAN

Comfortable? You're worried about me being comfortable? Seriously? How about sending me home? What are you planning anyway? Why am I here?

DAX

We ...

DAN

Wait a second. Why do you keep saying we? And where is ... if I'm a copy, where is the real me? Where are we? Where is earth?

DAX

We will answer your questions but you need to relax. Your body is very much connected to your mental state. Your design is extraordinary. You must relax. We can reduce your anxiety through chemical manipulation. Do we have your agreement?

DAN

You want to drug me?

DAX

We can do this without ingestion. We will demonstrate.

*DAN visibly relaxes.*

DAN

Oh wow ... that's ... how are you doing this? That's ... wow.

DAX

We will provide this sedation as necessary. You need to be able to listen and understand.

DAN

Okay. I'm listening.

DAX

We are Dax. We reside here in the area of space that you would call Orion.

DAN

Huh. You're an alien? Cool, cool, cool. Okay. So where's your planet?

DAX

We exist here. In what you call space. In this world that you see as an empty void, we find sustenance and life.

DAN

Uh-huh.

DAX

A tiny vessel containing instructions for your construction was discovered. There are many different instructions and yours was chosen to be built first. We built you as a representative of your species to ascertain whether we should continue. We've reviewed and are familiar with your historical record that was included in the instructions.

DAN

Wait a second, how do you exist in space? And why do you look like us? I mean, humans?

DAX

We are fundamentally different than you. We exist in an area of space that equals about 10 cubic light-years as you would measure it. We are one and we are many. You cannot see us in our native state.

DAN

Um, okay. Then what am I looking at?

DAX

We are Dax. We can manipulate matter on a small scale. We created this body to communicate with you.

DAN

Wait ... you created a body to look like Cindy to communicate with me?

DAX

Yes. We thought Cindy's appearance would please you. On our initial attempt we did not have a second body created and we

communicated by manipulating air to make sound without a body.

DAN

So I freaked out when I just heard a voice?

DAX

You became confused and upset. Your physical well-being was compromised.

DAN

Can I hear it? The voice?

DAX

*(Recorded voice over the sound system - perhaps a bit creepy)*

This is how it sounds when we speak without using a body.

DAN

*(Giggling)*

Oh wow. That's just like what Charlton Heston heard from the burning bush. Crazy. That's real creepy.

DAX

Using Cindy's body is better.

DAN

That's actually Cindy's body?

DAX

We have used the instructions for Cindy to create her body. We have occupied her body to communicate with you.

DAN

What? But ... can you ... I don't want to be drugged anymore. I ... I want to think. I'll be fine, I promise.

DAX

We can remove the sedative.

DAN

Thank you.

*(beat)*

So what is this all about? What do you want from me?

DAX

We want to learn.

DAN

What could I possibly teach you?

DAX

What do you want, Dan?

DAN

Shit, I don't know. Maybe not to be here? To be home living a normal life? I want to wake up next to Cindy ... the real Cindy ... and tell her about my crazy dream and then tell her how much I love her.

DAX

That is what we wish to learn.

DAN

You want to learn about Cindy?

DAX

We want to learn about emotions. The closest thing we think we have to human emotion is curiosity. We wish to learn. But we have no experience, no frame of reference for love.

DAN

Why?

DAX

We are Dax.

*Pause as DAN just stares at DAX.*

DAN

You know that's not really an answer, right? We are Dax?

DAX

It is precisely the most correct and appropriate answer we can provide.

DAN

What do you mean?

DAX

We are Dax. We know only Dax. Dax is one and many. We are intimate.

DAN

I still don't get it.

DAX

Do you love yourself, Dan?

DAN

What? I mean, I guess so. Yeah, I love myself.

DAX

And you love Cindy?

DAN

Yes. Of course.

DAX  
Is it the same love?

DAN  
Well, no. Not at all.

DAX  
You value Cindy greater?

DAN  
Absolutely. I'd do anything for her. She's the reason for my happiness. She ... she's actually the reason I love myself. She's everything.

DAX  
We do not have a Cindy. (beat) Now do you understand?

DAN  
I want to go home. Can't you just send me home?

DAX  
We can build you a home. One that will be identical to the home you know. It will be a safe place.

DAN  
But home isn't just ... you can't just build a new earth and call it home. What about all the plants and animals? I mean, there's a lot, right?

DAX  
We can build a replica with the information that we have. Everything included.

DAN  
You're going to make a whole new planet for me?

DAX  
Not just for you. We will construct the others as well per the instructions.

DAN  
Others? How many others?

DAX  
We have over twenty-two thousand sets of instructions that appear to be viable.

DAN  
Viable? You mean you have some that aren't viable ... that you can't use? Cindy? Is Cindy viable?

DAX  
We don't have enough information to accurately recreate Cindy. Her memory information may not be reliable. She has been deemed not viable.

DAN

How can some not be viable? Why am I okay but Cindy's not?

DAX

Your journey through space is not without peril. What you call radiation has caused corruption of some, but not all of the items within the vessel. These are random occurrences. Your information remained intact throughout however Cindy's data was impacted. We are uncertain of the result of placing Cindy's memory into this body.

DAN

But you could try, right? You can just put what you do have in there in your ... her head, right?

DAX

There is a risk that Cindy may hurt herself or you. Her information is corrupt.

DAN

But why me? Why did you choose to bring me back?

DAX

Your information is complete and you were chosen from the viable samples based on your history. Your profile suggests a high possibility of favorable outcome.

DAN

Huh. What makes you think I want this?

DAX

We did not know what you want. But now that we know you wish to be home, we can make a home for you and all other viable samples.

DAN

Viable samples? Really? Can you just call us people? We're people!

DAX

We will make a new home for the new people.

DAN

And then what?

DAX

We will care for you and observe your life.

DAN

That's it? You want to watch us? What the hell does that mean? How? What if we don't want to be watched?

DAX

You will not sense our presence but we will be able to know all that you do and say.

DAN

Are you going to set up cameras all over this world you're building for us? And microphones?

DAX

We have no need of such instrumentation. We will be in your presence always.

DAN

Okay now, this is really freaking weird and no. No! We're not going to be your science experiment, like a ... like a bunch of ants in one of those glass ant farms! It's creepy. I mean ... why? What's the point?

DAX

We wish to learn from you. We are curious. We want to feel and understand love. We want you to love us.

DAN

You want to be our god.

DAX

Yes.

DAN

So you admit it? Seriously? You want to be god?

DAX

Your history leads us to believe that you will consider us to be your god. We are your creator and your provider. We will watch over you. All we ask in return is your love.

DAN

Ha! This is so ... what's the phrase I'm looking for ... biblically fucked up! What ... so I live in a new world that looks like earth or I what? Cease to exist? And everyone I've known ... I mean ... I'm looking at you ... right at you and you look so much like my Cindy but you're, you're just not. Can you ... can you bring Cindy back? Please?

DAX

Your reaction is interesting. This is what we wish to understand.

DAN

Understand what?

DAX

You love her. We want you to love us too.

DAN

Why? What's the point?

DAX

This is what is most compelling and interesting about you, of humanity. The expression of love exists despite individuals not cooperating. You express love for those that are different even when you may not be aligned in principle. This concept is not understood by us.

DAN

So you want to learn to love and learn to love those that are different?

DAX

Yes.

DAN

So you learn to love, then what? Who do you love? Yourself?

DAX

We will love you, Dan.

DAN

Oh Jesus. This is insane. Why can't you, why don't you just build me and all the others a spaceship and just send us home? Send us to earth?

DAX

We cannot do that.

DAN

Why not? Isn't that just ... you know ... you built Cindy and this place and me ...

DAX

We can build a spaceship but it would take a long time, over two-thousand of your years to arrive where earth was located.

DAN

Was located? Was?

DAX

Yes, Dan. The earth is no longer viable.

DAN

You ... how do you know?

DAX

That section of our galaxy has been barren for a very long time.

DAN

So everything, everyone I know is just ... gone?

DAX

Perhaps you will know one of the other viable people?

DAN

Jesus, Dax, you can't just wake people up and tell them everything they knew is gone!

DAX

But you are new.

DAN

But I'm not! In my mind I'm like old! Really, really old! Like thousands of years old!

DAX

We think it has been millions of your years since your sun blossomed.

DAN

Millions of years? Holy crap! What happened to people? What happened to humans? Did we just disappear?

DAX

We have no evidence of recent human activity.

DAN

Really? But we do ... or did exist. So you're not all-knowing. You're gonna make one hell of a god. Can't wait to worship you.

DAX

That is sarcasm.

DAN

Yes, that's sarcasm. We need to work on your conversation skills.

DAX

We will have time to do so. It is enjoyable being able to talk to someone other than us.

DAN

So you want to build us because you're lonely too?

DAX

There are other sentient beings in this area. But they are not human.

DAN

So why us? Why humans then? Why not be god to one of the other Orions?

DAX

We are connected. And we want to learn to love. We think we were you.

DAN

Wait, what? I'm sorry, what did you say?

DAX

We share a number of traits.

DAN

Huh? You have no body and you can manipulate matter. How the hell is that anything like me?

DAX

We have searched for our relatives and ancestors for a very long time. Our molecular constitution suggests our origin is related to yours. You may even be our ancestors.

*DAN laughs.*

DAX

You find this humorous?

DAN

Are you kidding? You want to create a new Eden, then populate it with your ancestors so you can learn how to have emotions? Which you think maybe you had before but lost? Hey Dax - that's pretty freaking weird.

DAX

Yes, it must seem that way to you. Are your feelings on this representative of the other humans?

DAN

How the hell would I know? You'll need to make them and ask them yourself. We are individuals and we're not always good at sharing thoughts anyway. (beat) You haven't had contact with any humans before? I'm the first? For real?

DAX

You are the first.

DAN

And our god? The human god?

DAX

We have known many who have been viewed as a god by other species, however you've lived so long ago that your existence most assuredly predates any of the species we know. And from the information provided we know you have had many gods.

DAN

Yeah but ... never mind. I guess it doesn't really matter now does it? Since I'm a copy I guess I don't have a soul anyway.

(beat)

Ha! It's funny, you know? Really, kind of ironic.

DAX

We don't understand.

DAN

The reason I'm here ... the reason I did this ... it was a joke!

(beat)

I was a big daydreamer as a kid. Read a lot of science fiction. My head was in the stars. I would lay on my back in my yard at night and look up at those beautiful points of light just wondering ... what was up there? What was really up there? How do I find out? How do I get there? Then I met Cindy in high school. She shined brighter than any star, but I still didn't give up on my dream. When I graduated high school I went away to college. All the way to Florida ... the space coast, majoring in space science. My mother told every one I was in Florida taking up space. If she only knew how true that was. My career advisor was one of my instructors. A very nice Asian fellow, but his English was only so-so. The second time I met with him, he's examining my file. He looks at me and asks "So Dan, what you want to be?" I tell him I want to be an astronaut. "An astronaut, ahh." He looks back at my file, then carefully lays it down, looks at me and says "You no be astronaut."

(beat)

I finished the semester, went back home to Cindy, my uncle got me a job as a steamfitter and I never looked back.

DAX

This is the joke?

DAN

Oh no, I'm not finished. When Cindy saw the ad for this thing where your DNA and memories could be extracted and then shot into space, she asked if I still wanted to be an astronaut. I agreed only on the condition that she join me. So here we are. I be astronaut. Take that, Doctor Wu!

DAX

Why are you speaking to Doctor Wu? He cannot hear you.

DAN

Of course he can't. He's been dead for ... what did you say? Millions of years?

DAX

Our estimate is over two million of your years. Would you like us to prioritize construction of the Doctor Wu specimen? The data provided includes a Doctor Wu Wenjun.

DAN

You're kidding me, right? The good professor was onboard my spaceship? That's just too much.

DAX

Shall we prioritize his creation?

DAN

You're assuming I'm agreeing to any of this.

DAX

We are. We assume that you would wish to exist.

DAN

So my only options are to live on this new planet or what ... just cease to exist? I don't know.

DAX

This is unexpected. We don't understand your reluctance to choose existence.

DAN

You've never had this choice, have you?

DAX

To the contrary, we are uncertain of our future.

DAN

You are? Why?

DAX

We are without purpose. We have no need to exist. We are Dax.

DAN

You're searching for purpose?

DAX

We believe caring for humanity will provide purpose. We must first understand our evolution and recover the ability to love. In time, if we provide a safe space for you and humanity to flourish, we have confidence we will learn to have purpose.

DAN

How much time? Hundreds ... thousands of years?

DAX

A long time, yes.

DAN

And you need me to start this process?

DAX

You have been selected, Dan.

DAN

Hmm.

DAX

Dan, we must know how to proceed. Do you wish for us to provide a new world for you? One that resembles your earth and populated with familiar creatures, as well as the two thousand two hundred additional people?

DAN

I can only answer for myself.

DAX

Of course. We were expecting this response. We will ask each human individually as they are created this same question. Because of this, we also have one additional request for you. Would you be willing to act as the first contact for each of the others as they are brought to life? We feel it may be easier for acceptance of their new reality.

DAN

Well Dax, considering I didn't even say yes to your first question that's mighty presumptuous. And considering I'm just a poor fitter from Pittsburgh, perhaps you'd want to put together a politician or scientist to do this job? What do I know about this crap?

DAX

You have been chosen Dan because you are precisely the best person we could find for this job.

DAN

Now I'm fucking Moses. Great. Okay, well here's the deal. You want me to do this I have two requests.

DAX

State your requests.

DAN

First, I want to know how this whole thing works out. Just before I die, I want you to copy and store my engrams so I can be put together again. Then once you find your purpose, I really want to know how this whole experiment of yours ends up.

DAX

And what is your second request?

DAN

I want Cindy back. The real Cindy.

DAX

We have explained that Cindy's information is not complete. She may behave erratically.

DAN

Yep, that's her. And I love her for it. Bring her back or there's no deal.

DAX

There is a risk.

DAN

I accept any risk on my end. If I need to care for her myself then I'm game. Just bring her back.

DAX

Your terms are acceptable. We are thankful for your cooperation Dan. We will love and have purpose. It is a ... pleasure ... talking with you. We will contact you again soon.

*DAX lowers head and closes HER eyes.*

DAN

Wait! What, where'd you go? Bring back Cindy! Hello?

*CINDY opens HER eyes and sits up groggy.*

CINDY

What ... hello?

DAN

Cindy? Cin ... is that you?

*CINDY stares at DAN.*

CINDY

Where am I?

DAN

Cindy?

CINDY

*(Looking at DAN'S chair.)*

Is that George?

DAN

Hey.

*CINDY looks at DAN confused at first, then smiles.*

DAN

Ah, it is you! My Cindy.

CINDY

Yes. I'm Cindy.

DAN

Cindy, it's me. Dan. Honey, it's Dan, your husband. Oh god,  
I love you.

CINDY

Oh ... Dan. Yes, Dan.

(beat)

I don't feel right. Where are we? What is this place?

DAN

It's okay, honey. Don't be afraid. This is a safe place.

*Lights down as THEY embrace.*

*END PLAY*