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4 in a Loo
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Jack's Dilemma was first produced at the Lebanon Community Theatre, August 17-20, 2006: Sue Desendi, director.

JACK: Eric Friedman

MAN/FRIEND: Bruce Kissinger

Shannon is Gone was produced at the Camino Real Playhouse, San Juan Capistrano, CA, Oct. 14-30, 2005: Danny Perezvertti, director.

MINISTER: Tom Scott

MICHAEL: Rick Kerrigan

SHANNON: Michelle Kerrigan

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4 in a Loo

"Jack's Dilemma," winner, Lebanon Community Theatre Playwriting Contest, 2006
"Shannon is Gone," finalist, Camino Real Playhouse ShowOff! Festival, 2005
"4 in a Loo," semi-finalist, Theatre Oxford, 2006

COLLECTION. Twists and turns abound in this collection of four short plays, which features a hodgepodge of delightfully mixed-up characters. In "Jack's Dilemma," Jack arrives at a local diner and tries to make amends with a long-lost friend by offering him a cup of coffee, some money, and a heart-felt apology. The only problem is that the man at the diner is a total stranger. In "Shannon is Gone," a groom sings a "magical" wedding song, which makes his overbearing, abusive bride disappear. In "Death by Dyslexia," a dyslexic hit man arrives at the wrong house because he keeps getting the house numbers mixed up. And in "4 in a Loo," four desperate college students fight for the use of a small, cramped bathroom.

Performance Time: Approximately 40-60 minutes.

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Jack's Dilemma

(2 flexible)

JACK: 20-30, trying to repair estranged relationship with friend.

MAN/FRIEND: Same age as Jack; customer at a diner.

Shannon is Gone

(1 M, 1 F, 1 flexible)

MINISTER: Officiator of the wedding; flexible.

SHANNON: Small, beautiful, abusive bride; professional singer.

MICHAEL: Handsome, calm groom; magician.

Death by Dyslexia

(2 flexible)

RESIDENT: Homeowner.

INTRUDER: Intruder; suffers from dyslexia.

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(4 M or 4 F)

MICK: College student.

BIRD: Freshman pre-med student.

LENNIE: College student, geek.

TAD: Flamboyant theatre major.

NOTE: For flexible roles, change names, pronouns, etc. accordingly in the script.

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Setting

Jack's Dilemma: A diner with a table and two chairs.

Shannon is Gone: The altar of a small church.

Death by Dyslexia: A bedroom, late at night. The side of a bed faces the stage.

4 in a Loo: Cramped dorm or apartment bathroom. There is a toilet.

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Props

Jack's Dilemma: Table, 2 chairs, book, 2 cups of coffee, envelope.

Shannon is Gone: Microphone, wristwatch for Michael, wedding decorations.

Death by Dyslexia: Bed, gun, flashlight, piece of paper, jacket for Intruder, bullets.

4 in a Loo: Toilet, medical textbook.

Sound Effects

Death by Dyslexia: Gunshots.

4 in a Loo: Loud retching sound.

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“Wha—?”

—Man

Jack's Dilemma

(AT RISE: A Man is sitting at the table completely engaged in reading a book. Jack approaches, carrying a cup of coffee in each hand. Jack looks over at the Man, trying to recognize him. Feeling he has positively identified the Man, Jack approaches the table and sits down across from the Man. NOTE: If characters are female, make changes to script accordingly.)

JACK: Okay...before you say anything, let me say what I need to say. I know I've caught you by surprise here, and a bit off guard, but just let me do the talking, and you do the listening. I am so glad I have finally caught up with you.

MAN: Pardon...me?

JACK: I just need a few minutes of your time. These last five years have been brutal on me, and I can't take it anymore. I just need to get this whole thing out and off my shoulders. It's been killing me...so just listen, okay?

MAN: Wha—?

JACK: No...don't...let me talk first. Just listen...please. I called your place and your wife told me you would be over here tonight.

MAN: You...what did you say?

JACK: I called your place and talked to your wife, and she told me—

MAN: You what? You called my house? What are you doing calling my house?

JACK: Look...I needed to do whatever I could to repair our friendship. It has taken me forever to track you down with all the moving around you've done. Took me some work...but I found you. With enough determination, you can find anything. *(Hands Man a cup of coffee.)* Here. I got you a coffee...I even remembered how you like it. Half cream, half milk, double sugar with a tad of salt. Right?

MAN: Ahhh...I...ahhh, no...no...

JACK: No, please, I insist. I've already paid for it...and you know I don't drink anything with all that junk in it.

MAN: I...I don't want your coffee...I don't even like coffee...

JACK: Wow...off of coffee...good for you...making some changes. I guess lots can happen in five years. I almost didn't recognize you when I came in. But when I saw you over here, I knew it was you. Do you think I've changed much?

MAN: I'm...not...really sure. Hold it. Hold it. Stop. Look. I'm not really sure what this is all about...but, you know, I really just want to be alone and read my book, so...

JACK: What? Wait, wait, wait, wait a minute. No, no, no, no. Don't go pulling this on me again, man. I didn't go through all this research and planning...and this whole internal thought and emotional process so that I could come all the way down here for you to pull this "I don't know you stuff" on me again. All I want is a few minutes of your time, to patch up where we left off and then I can get on with my life. I have literally dragged myself through the last five years already, and it ends right here, right now. I was just hoping that you would be a bit more mature about it.

MAN: Look, pal. I just want to be alone, all right? There's lots of tables in this place. Just go find one and leave me alone, okay? Thanks.

(Man goes back to reading his book. Jack stares at him a moment, and then grabs the book from him.)

JACK: Don't go pulling that crap on me. Look, this is exactly where we left off last time.

[END OF FREEVIEW]

*" You' re singing a song...
to my mother...
about her daughter,
who you are implying is a mutt.*

*Do you not see
a problem with that?"*

– Shannon

Shannon is Gone

(AT RISE: A wedding ceremony in progress. The Minister stands before Michael, the groom, and Shannon, the bride. The Minister is facing the audience and Michael and Shannon have their backs to the audience. Note: If the Minister is female, change pronouns accordingly.)

MINISTER: In all my time officiating weddings, this is the first time that I have had the privilege of bringing together two people as unique and talented as Michael and Shannon. Michael, a classic magician, and Shannon, a professional singer and actress, have been traveling all over the world as individuals, presenting their shows to thousands of people. I am excited to be a part of their final performance as singles, as they enter into this next journey of their lives. This performance will far outdo anything they have ever done before. Before we begin the vows, Michael has asked if he can take a few minutes to share something special.

(Shannon and Michael turn to face each other. Shannon is a bit surprised but content.)

MICHAEL: *(A little emotional, but recovers.)* This is the most awesome day of my life...Shannon, I love you more than anything. But before we continue, I want to say something to your mom. *(Looks toward the front row of the audience.)* This will be the first day I can really call you..."Mom." Thank you for allowing me to live the rest of my life with your beautiful daughter. You have single-handedly raised Shannon. I know this will be an incredibly emotional day for you, and instead of trying to put together words, I have found the most perfect song. *(Shannon's eyes are getting larger with concern as she tries to maintain a smile.)* I know we will never know fully, all that you feel, but I hope this song will help express even a little bit of that emotion, as you

release your best friend and daughter to me. (*"Shannon" by Henry Gross, 1976. Michael takes a microphone. Sings.*) "Another day is at end, (*Shannon has lost her smile and is frantically looking around, wondering what to do next.*) Mama says she's tired again."

SHANNON: (*Quietly, to Michael.*) Michael...please, don't.

MICHAEL: (*Very pleased with his presentation.*) "No one can even begin to tell her. I hardly know what to say."

SHANNON: (*A little louder.*) Michael...stop.

MICHAEL: "But maybe it's better that way. If Papa were here I'm sure he'd tell her. Shannon is gone..."

(*Shannon grabs the microphone away from him.*)

SHANNON: I said stop!

(*Michael is stunned. Shannon realizes what she has done. A moment of awkward silence.*)

MICHAEL: (*Quietly.*) Shannon...what...what are you doing?

SHANNON: (*Quietly.*) What are you doing? What are you doing?

MICHAEL: (*Quietly.*) Singing?

SHANNON: (*Quietly.*) Do I look like a dog to you?

MICHAEL: (*Trying to remain inconspicuous.*) Pardon?

SHANNON: Do I look like a dog to you? Do I?

MICHAEL: (*Completely confused.*) Shannon...I don't know what you are talking about, but I—

(*Shannon turns to the audience.*)

SHANNON: (*To audience.*) I'm sorry. This is kind of embarrassing, but we seem to have mixed up the order of our service...and...and, we just need to take a minute to sort it out... (*Nervously attempts to smile and chuckle.*) ...get a few

things back in order so that we're all on the same page and...and then we can begin again.

MINISTER: Should we go into my office and—?

SHANNON: *(Abruptly, to Minister.)* No...we're fine. *(To Michael.)* Why are you singing a song about a dog?

MICHAEL: What are you talking about? The title of this song is "Shannon." You know, like your name?

SHANNON: It's about a dog named Shannon, you idiot. Don't you know anything? This is so embarrassing. I can't believe this is happening.

MICHAEL: What are you talking about?

SHANNON: This song "Shannon"...is about a dog...whose name is Shannon. Is that plain enough for you? Why is this happening to me?

MICHAEL: It is not. I've read the lyrics.

SHANNON: And so have I, and I know the history of the song.

MICHAEL: No one names their dog "Shannon."

SHANNON: What, you think every dog's name is "Rover"?

MICHAEL: C'mon, you're creating a scene.

SHANNON: *(Escalating quickly, she grabs him by the collar, her voice starting to rise.)* I'm creating a scene? You sing a dog song at a wedding, and you've got the nerve to say I'm creating a scene? I haven't even begun to create a scene, Michael. You want a scene, I can give you a real scene. This was supposed to be my big day. This is the day I give up everything I've done, everything I've owned, every part of my being, to spend the rest of my life with...with what? A complete moron.

(She pushes him back and lets go of his collar.)

[END OF FREEVIEW]

**“Stupid dixlesia.
It’s gonna kill me one day.”**

— Intruder

Death By Dyslexia

(AT RISE: A bedroom, late at night. The bedroom is lit by moonlight and/or street lights. The side of the bed is facing the stage. The Resident is in bed sleeping. The Intruder enters quietly and approaches the downstage side of the bed. He is carrying a gun. The Intruder accidentally bumps into the bedrail and the Resident awakens. NOTE: If characters are female, make changes to script accordingly.)

RESIDENT: Huh? What the—?! Whoa, whoa... no, no...

(Resident rolls away and Intruder fires his gun at the Resident. He misses.)

INTRUDER: Dang!

RESIDENT: No...no...no...please don't hurt me...please, please... (Resident rolls to the upstage side of the bed, protecting himself. Resident scrambles for the flashlight, clicks it on, and points it at the Intruder.) Look, whatever you want, you can have it all. I'll tell you where anything is. If you want money, you can have it...I'll get it for you. I've got jewelry. You need jewelry? It's right in the drawers. Have my watch...it's yours...anything...it's yours...just say...just say, and it's yours. Is it money you want? If it's money you want, you can have it. Anything, just say...I'll tell you where it—

INTRUDER: Will you just, *shut up*. Yer givin' me a headache. (Indicates flashlight.) And get that thing outta my face.

(Resident lowers the flashlight beam out of the Intruder's face.)

RESIDENT: Okay...okay, I'm sorry. Please don't shoot. Just don't shoot...okay...just stay calm. I'll do whatever you want. Please don't hurt me...I'll do whatever...you... (Resident whacks Intruder in the head with the flashlight.)

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Intruder grabs his head, dropping the gun on the bed. Resident dives on the gun, picks it up, and starts shooting while kneeling on the bed, but the rest of the chambers are empty.)
C'mon...shoot...shoot...

INTRUDER: *(Wrenching from the pain.)* What'd ya hafta go and do that fer? That hurt me bad. I better not be bleeding.

(Resident points the gun at the Intruder.)

RESIDENT: Who...what...what are you doing? You just about killed me.

INTRUDER: Dang, that hurts. Ya caught me right in the side of the eye.

RESIDENT: How'd you get in here? Who...who are you?

INTRUDER: Ya nearly gave me a heart attack, ya know...jumpin' up like that. Ya made me miss. Now gimme the gun... *(Riffles through all of his possible pockets looking for bullets. Still rubbing his head.)* ...gimme the gun so I can reload. *(Resident screams and grabs the Intruder around the neck and tackles him onto the bed. They wrestle for about half of a minute, grunting and yelling until the Resident pins the Intruder.)* What's the matter with you? Get off me.

RESIDENT: Tell me what you're doing here before I shred your face from your skull.

INTRUDER: Whadya talkin' about? I'm trying ta do the job I'm paid ta do, but ya went and scared the crap outta me and I missed. Ya gotta sleepin' disorder or something? Let me up, so I can finish the job.

RESIDENT: Job? What job? You realize that you were a microsecond away from punching a hole into my skull? Now what's this job you're talking about?

INTRUDER: Well...if ya would let me up, I could show ya.

(Resident lets Intruder up while pointing the gun at him.)

RESIDENT: Get up. You try anything, and I'll ram the nozzle of this gun into the closest orifice of your pathetic skanky body.

(Intruder gets up, massaging his wrist. He then goes to get a piece of paper from his back pocket, but Resident whacks him across the head with the gun butt and he goes down in pain.)

INTRUDER: Ahhh...now I'm really messed...what ya gone and done that fer? That hurts, ya know. Geeez. Am I bleedin'? Is there blood now? That stings.

RESIDENT: I said, don't try anything. What's the matter with you...English not your first language?

INTRUDER: I'm just gettin' a piece a paper outta my back pocket. Gimme a break.

RESIDENT: I'll get it.

(Resident grabs the bottom of the Intruder's jacket, yanks it up, and then takes the paper from his back pocket.)

INTRUDER: Hey, hey...try bein' a bit more gentle...

RESIDENT: What? Like the bullet hole you put through my pillow and mattress? *(Throws the paper at him.)* Here, you open it. I don't want any more psychotic moves.

(Intruder sits on the floor and opens up the paper.)

INTRUDER: *(Reads.)* "268." That's your address, right?

RESIDENT: My house number? 268? Is that what that says? My address is 286.

INTRUDER: Yer kiddin' me. That's impossible.

RESIDENT: What, you think I don't know my own address?

INTRUDER: I can't believe it. Stupid dixlesia. It's gonna kill me one day.

RESIDENT: The word is "dyslexia." And don't worry, because I'm gonna kill you first. You have the address right in your pocket, and you can't even get the number right?

INTRUDER: I always screw up numbers. No wonder this ain't goin' right. I'm supposed ta be knockin' off somebody else. *(Stuffs the paper back into his pocket.)*

RESIDENT: *(Sarcastic.)* Well, thanks for the clarification. That makes me feel so much better.

INTRUDER: Not a problem. *(He gets up, still feeling his head for blood or cuts.)* Nice little lump ya put there on my head. That supposed to make up fer the hole in yer bed?

RESIDENT: That hole in my bed was almost a hole in my head... *(Hoofs him in the groin. Intruder drops to the floor.)* You're taking this a bit too lightly, my friend. If you think you can just walk outta here and down a few houses to commit a murder somewhere else, you're hallucinating.

INTRUDER: *(On his knees, grimacing from the pain.)* It's...not...a...murder. It's a suicide.

RESIDENT: Suicide? Where'd you go to school? Suicide is when you kill yourself...don't you even know that much?

[END OF FREEVIEW]

**“This sounds more exciting
than streptococcal infectious
flesh-eating disease.”**

— Bird

4 in a Loo

(Cramped college dorm room bathroom. Stage is dark. There is a loud retching and heaving sound like someone is throwing up. Lights up. Mick has his head hanging over the side of a toilet. He spits into the toilet and then leans back, exhausted and sweating profusely. Bird is sitting and leaning against the wall reading a medical book. NOTE: If characters are female, make changes to script accordingly.)

MICK: Ughhh. I think I tossed my left lung that time.

BIRD: Yeah, well, you can blow grits with the best of them.

Wait till you start to dry heave. That's when it really hurts.

MICK: Thanks. That's really helpful.

BIRD: No prob. Ya know, you wouldn't be here if you hadn't drank so much.

MICK: What do I have to do to convince you I had nothing to drink.

BIRD: Denial only makes the pain more intense.

MICK: Shut up with the medical advice.

BIRD: Well, as your loyal roommate, and a future physician, I'm just trying to help.

MICK: You're just grasping at any opportunity to pretend you're the medicine man you really aren't.

BIRD: It sure appears to be a case of veisalgia. That's the medical term for hangover.

(Mick spits into the toilet.)

MICK: Hey, could you grab me a towel or something?

BIRD: Yeah, sure, just hang on. If it's not veisalgia, then I need to figure out what's really wrong with you.

MICK: Take a peek in the toilet. It will save you the research. Towel, please.

BIRD: Here's a virus worth looking at...you think it's the Epstein-Barr virus? Let me just check the symptoms of that.

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MICK: Forget it, I'll get it myself. *(Gets up, becomes dizzy, and falls back next to the toilet.)* Ohhhh, wow. *(Sarcastic.)* Hey, don't worry, I'm okay here. Don't get up or nothing.

BIRD: Oh, this is a good one...it's so you... the Epstein-Barr is part of the herpes virus family. Ha-ha...the herpes virus. Beaut.

MICK: Don't you have somewhere to go? Maybe an exam to write...a bus to catch... an autopsy to do...on yourself?

(Lennie enters. He has to urinate badly. He is holding himself and prancing around.)

LENNIE: Hey...hey. Like, this isn't study hall...like, get out, I gotta use the can.

MICK: Too bad, Lennie, this isn't a good time. Get lost.

LENNIE: You sick? Figures. That's what you get for drinking too much.

MICK: It's not a hangover! So shut up...both of ya.

BIRD: Yeah, it might actually be some kind of disease. I'm thinking it might be EBV. Just checking out the medical stats here.

LENNIE: I don't care...I gotta go, or I'm gonna wet myself bad.

MICK: It won't be the first time. Go ahead, hose yourself. Just don't get it on me.

LENNIE: You are disgusting, Mick. This is my bathroom just as much as it is yours...and I gotta use it. So everybody out.

BIRD: Oh, here... *(Reads.)* "...symptoms are fever, sore throat, and swollen lymph glands."

MICK: Burned throat is more like it. Lennie's got the bursting glands...maybe he has that freakin' disease. Look, Lennie, why don't you run along and make up a bathroom schedule so we know who can use it when...and schedule me in for the rest of the day.

BIRD: *(Reads.)* "Sometimes, a swollen spleen or liver involvement may develop."

MICK: Ya know what? Why doesn't everybody get outta here 'cause it's... *(Spits into the toilet.)* ...it's getting way too humid in here, and all your stinking bodies are making me sick.

LENNIE: I'm the one who's gonna be sick. I'm about to explode. I can taste it on the back of my tongue.

MICK: Swallow it and you'll be fine. *(Tad enters, singing "I've Got Rhythm" or another suitable song.)* Ahh, gee. Just what I needed. I'm really feeling ill here. Get lost, Tad, and take Larry and Moe with you.

TAD: Heyyyy...who planned the party without inviting— Geeez, man, who died? What is that smell?

MICK: Leftovers. In the bowl. Grab a spoon.

TAD: Uh, oh. Look who's been consuming too much—?

MICK: Will you shut your face? I haven't been drinking. You guys are a complete bunch of morons. Try expanding your minds a bit. I know it's a challenge when you've got a bag of hammers for brains.

BIRD: *(Reads.)* "Heart problems or involvement of the central nervous system occurs only rarely..." Well, let's hope this isn't one of those rare moments.

MICK: It better be...I couldn't relive this again.

TAD: *(To Bird.)* What the heck are you yakking on about?

BIRD: Mick's got some kind of virus...I'm thinking EBV.

TAD: Like you know something about medicine...you're a freshman...you don't know jack...go read your [Archie] comics. *[Or insert the name of another comic book.]* *(Looks at Lennie, who is still dancing around and holding himself.)* That's a poor imitation of [Riverdance]...but coming from you... *[Or insert another kind of popular dance style.]*

LENNIE: Like, get lost...all of you...get lost.

MICK: I wish all of you would.

BIRD: Don't stand too close to Lennie unless you brought yourself a bar of soap and shower cap.

[END OF FREEVIEW]