

AUDITION INFO

**THE GODDAMN COUPLE DOWN THE HALL
(OH...AND MERRY CHRISTMAS)
A Comedy by Mark Wilding**

Directed by
Charlie Mount

RUNS
Nov 8 thru Dec 15
(Including the weekend after Thanksgiving)

AUDITIONS
June 15 1pm - 6pm

CALLBACKS
June 16 1pm-6pm

Contact Charlie Mount for an Appointment Time:
(818) 212-4546 or charliemount@me.com

SYNOPSIS AND CHARACTERS

SYNOPSIS

A family gathers at a condo for a holiday meal but they suspect that one of the noisy neighbors down the hall has committed murder. Can Christmas be saved?

CHARACTERS

DANA WOODRUFF: Early 30s. Like her home Dana is very put together and organized. There's always a little something boiling underneath that calm structured exterior. Think a dormant volcano.

CHAD BELLOWS: Dana's fiancé, also in his 30s. A touch pompous, as fond of their lifestyle as she is. He tries very hard to stay on Dana's good side. Is he Mr. Right, though?

LUCINDA: A neighbor. Explosive one minute, sweet and traditional the next. Is she misunderstood, insane, a victim, or is she a cold blooded killer? Unconsciously (or is it consciously?) seductive. A cypher the family must figure out.

KENNY: Lucinda's boyfriend. Heard but not seen on stage. Voice only. May double as Stage Manager.

JEFFY WOODRUFF: Early 60s. Puckish and laid back. Wry, with a deadpan delivery. Likes his traditions and wishes everyone would just get along so he can have his turkey and football. Think William Powell.

MAUREEN WOODRUFF: Early 60s. She's hands on all the way. A loving Mom who wants her daughters to live their own lives but can't help trying manage them anyway.

SYDNEY WOODRUFF: Late 20s. Determined to not be like her older sister Dana. The rebel in her is one of the reasons why she's dating Lance.

LANCE DOMBROWSKI: Late 20s. Not exceedingly sharp. An endearing loser, but in an attractive way. Loves Sydney.

OFFICER HOYT: 30s, fresh faced and well meaning cop. Earnest, and very by-the-book (although it's his first week on the job, so he doesn't know the book that well.)

SIDE 1 - JERRY and MAUREEN

JERRY: (*To CHAD*) When is trash day in your neighborhood? Tomorrow? (*Nods thoughtfully*) Makes sense.

MAUREEN: (*To JERRY*) Really? You're actually going to indulge this fantasy?

JERRY: You had your say, now it's my turn. (*Then*) If you're gonna get rid of a body, you wrap it in a big rug or a tarp and then stick it in a dumpster the night before the city picks it up. That way, the body doesn't have time to start smelling. The next day, the contents of said dumpster are emptied into a garbage truck. Then the truck unloads it at the local landfill. Where you'll never find it because those things are huge. You're talking five or six hundred acres. So even if you suspect a body's in there, it's basically a poke and hope situation.

MAUREEN: How do you know the average size of a landfill?

JERRY: I'm civic-minded.

MAUREEN: Go ahead and kill me. But you'll never get away with it.

JERRY: You're right. Too many witnesses. The only question is how she killed him.

MAUREEN: He probably had his back to her for a second and she plunged a big old knife into him. He falls to his knees in shock then you finish him off by slicing his carotid. He's dead within twenty seconds.

JERRY: You seem to know the most efficient way to butcher someone.

MAUREEN: You're not the only one who's done their research, Jerry.

JERRY: We'll be fine. As soon as we hear that grocery cart going down the hallway, we'll call 911.

MAUREEN: You will do no such thing.

JERRY: It's not like she can break down our door.

MAUREEN: She wouldn't have to. She could just blast the thing to smithereens.

JERRY: So now she has a gun?

MAUREEN: Everyone in this country has a gun. What do you think they get for Christmas?

SIDE 2 - JERRY (with DANA)

DANA: Is this what I have to look forward to in our marriage? Jokes about killing each other.

JERRY: Who's joking?

DANA: (*To SYDNEY*) Did you see the way Chad looked at her?

JERRY: Oh sweetie. That's every guy.

DANA: He's supposed to be my best friend.

JERRY: It's still every guy.

DANA: You didn't look at her.

JERRY: Not on the outside. But on the inside... (*Shrugs*) He's young. Rookie mistake.

DANA: It annoys me. It's horrible.

JERRY: In someone's eyes, everyone is horrible. I'm sure your mother thinks I'm horrible occasionally.

DANA: You're still married.

JERRY: Going on forty-two years.

DANA: That's pretty impressive, Dad.

JERRY: (*Dismissive*) Enh. It's not like I won Wimbledon. Don't ever tell your mom I said this, but the secret to staying married, the one thing that keeps you together... can you tolerate each other? That's it. Everything else is BS.

DANA: That's pretty cynical.

JERRY: Don't underestimate cynicism. Saves you a lot of disappointment. Like with you and your sister. Your mom and I aren't asking for the world. We just want you to be able to stand each other. Even if it takes the cold-blooded murder of a neighbor to bring you a little closer together.

SIDE 3 - MAUREEN (with DANA)

MAUREEN: Oh please. People always ask that. How do you do it? What's the secret? Like all lasting marriages can be explained by one piece of elusive knowledge.

DANA: So there's no secret?

MAUREEN: Oh, there's a secret. But you won't like the answer.

DANA: He's your best friend, right?

MAUREEN: Have you seen us together? God no. I'm much nicer to my best friend.

SYDNEY: You're soul mates.

MAUREEN: Oh my god, you're worse than your sister. *Nobody* has a soul mate. Unless you wanna marry yourself. That's your only soul mate. The secret to staying together -- can you stand each other? That's it. Can you tolerate this person? That's the whole shooting match.

LANCE: No offense but that doesn't feel like a very high bar.

MAUREEN: Trust me, it is. It boils down to do I wanna be irritated or alone?

SIDE 4 - CHAD and DANA

The lights come up on DANA WOODRUFF who is on her hands and knees examining one of the couch's velvet pillows. DANA is in her early thirties and looking good. This is the world she always pictured for herself. Still, there's the matter of this pillow.

DANA: What is...? *(Sniffs the pillow)* Oh myyy goddd! *(Yells to the kitchen, undone)* Chad!
Chad!!

CHAD'S VOICE: Basting, angelheart!

DANA: Now!!

CHAD BELLOWS, *in an apron, dutifully emerges through the swinging doors. Dana's fiancé, he's also in his thirties. A touch pompous, he's as fond of their lifestyle as she is. His apron wryly proclaims "I have no idea what I'm doing."* He tries very hard to stay on DANA'S good side.

CHAD: At your service, madam.

DANA: *(Shoving the cushion at him)* Look at this. You see what I see?

He peers at the pillow, then looks up at her.

CHAD: Apart from the hand-sewn daisies and the exquisite stenciling?

DANA: Hair oils.

CHAD: What?

DANA: There's hair oils all over this pillow. *(A dry heave)* I'm gonna puke!

CHAD: Gotta be honest, bug. I don't see any evidence of hair oils.

DANA: They're there, Chad. Obviously from when my sister's whatever he is, that Lance person, came over.

CHAD: In his defense, Lance probably situated his head on it as a means to afford himself a little more comfort.

DANA: It's a *decorative* pillow. It's not meant to be comfortable. *No* decorative pillow is meant to be comfortable.

Beat.

CHAD: I'll get the back-up pillow.

DANA: Thank you.

CHAD *suspects this isn't just about hair oils.*

CHAD: Don't worry about the money. It's their oldest daughter's wedding. You can't put a price on that.

DANA: I told them fifty thousand. Now it's almost a hundred.

CHAD: You're their light. The daughter who's done everything right. Including, if I may, getting engaged to yours truly. *(He gives her a peck on the cheek.)* It's Christmas. Let's enjoy our blessings.

SIDE 5 - OFFICER HOYT (with JERRY)

JERRY: I'm so sorry we pulled you away from your family on Christmas Day, Officer Hoyt.

OFFICER HOYT: I have two families. My police family, those brothers and sisters in blue I'm just now getting to know – but with whom, eventually, I hope to share a wonderful degree of camaraderie, including backyard barbeques, softball games and skiing – both water and jet -- on Lake Mead. And my other family – John Q Public. Folks like yourselves. Whose lives I'm here to protect and serve. And in that vein, I have to ask...do you know what caused the alarm to go off?

JERRY: My money is on smoke coming from the oven.

OFFICER HOYT: I took the liberty of talking to one of the firemen and he said that smoke doesn't set off this kind of alarm. Heat does. It's a heat alarm. *That* is what triggered the sprinkler heads.

A beat.

JERRY: We can explain.

OFFICER HOYT: Great. I'm all ears.

JERRY: *(No one else is answering so...)* I think the heat from the turkey rose in a convecting type manner. It was then magnified by the stainless steel backsplash until it eventually reached the temperature of the sun. Thus the alarm being sounded. *(Beat)* Officer?

A preoccupied OFFICER HOYT *looks up from a manual he's pulled from his front pocket.*

OFFICER HOYT: I'm just checking my training manual for other scenarios. Gimme a sec.

A long beat as they all wait for OFFICER HOYT to peruse his manual. He finally looks up

OFFICER HOYT: Are there any troubled young people in the house?

JERRY: No.

OFFICER HOYT: *(Nods)* Anyone you think might enjoy setting a fire?

JERRY: No, officer.

OFFICER HOYT: Does anyone have a vendetta against you?

JERRY: If you count Harry and David and that old bat in Santa Monica, I'd say yes. But if not, then no.

OFFICER HOYT: Well technically, we have a disturbance of the peace situation here. But it is Christmas and I don't wanna spoil anyone's day so consider this investigation closed.

JERRY: It's too late. My day's already been spoiled.

OFFICER HOYT: Real sorry about your Christmas dinner.

JERRY: It wasn't just a dinner. It was a...feast. A once a year feast.

OFFICER HOYT: I think KFC is open. They have great biscuits these days. Anyway, you all have a Merry Christmas.

SIDE 6 - DANA and SYDNEY

DANA: Are you really gonna marry that guy?

SYDNEY: Are you really gonna marry Chad?

DANA: Chad worships me.

SYDNEY: Lance worships me. Anyway, who doesn't come with a little baggage.

DANA: He's got three exes, two kids and at least one bankruptcy. For most people that takes a lifetime. He's not even thirty.

SYDNEY: Now you sound like Mom.

DANA: Even Mom is right once in a while. How does he even support his kids?

SYDNEY: Ski instructors get paid a lot more than you think.

DANA: No they don't! They make squat!

SYDNEY: (*Defensive*) For your information, he also wants to be a whitewater rafting guide. Y'know, when he's not on the slopes.

DANA: So why hasn't he done it.

SYDNEY: He will.

DANA: When?

SYDNEY: I don't know. Sometime.

DANA: I don't understand. It's not like he's trying to be a surgeon. What's the hold-up?

SYDNEY: None of your business.

DANA: Oh, for god's sake, just tell me already.

A beat.

SYDNEY: He doesn't agree with their drug policy. He doesn't like the idea of random testing.

DANA: (*Rolls her eyes*) He's taking people down intense rapids. Whitewater. Quick drops. Fast climbs. Boulders. You need to have your wits.

SYDNEY: That's why he hasn't gone through the training. He's being responsible.

DANA: By continuing to smoke pot?

SYDNEY: He'll apply for a job when they change their drug policy.

DANA *frowns, which SYDNEY catches.*

SYDNEY: I saw that look. That's your judgy, I'm the older sister, I know everything look. I don't wanna be like you, okay?

DANA: Well, Lance is helping you achieve that goal.

SYDNEY: Nice.

DANA: *(Regrets what she just said)* I'm sorry. That was unkind. For Lance's sake, I hope the river rafting people come to their senses and hire guides who are complete stoners. But even if they do, he still has all these other obligations. You'll be dragged into that mess for the rest of your life.

SYDNEY: They're *ex-wives*. They're not sister wives. It's not like we're gonna spend every holiday together. People make mistakes.

SIDE 7 - DANA and SYDNEY

SYDNEY: Maybe you marrying Chad is a mistake and you just don't know it yet.

DANA: Chad and I are not a mistake.

SYDNEY: He wears driving gloves!

DANA: *(A painful reminder)* I know. I've talked to him about it.

SYDNEY: They look ridiculous. Why not wear a monocle while he's at it?

DANA: That's never gonna happen. Although he did ask for a pocket watch for Christmas.

SYDNEY: Oh god.

DANA: I said no. We both like the finer things in life but you have to draw the line somewhere.

And, for the moment, the two sisters have found some common ground.

SYDNEY: Lance wants to take me to a monster truck rally.

DANA: Jesus.

SYDNEY: I know but, hey, if it makes him happy.

DANA: *(Nods)* I wonder at what point you go from tolerating driving gloves and monster truck rallies to I have to stab this son of a bitch.

SYDNEY: Good question. Although gotta say...I don't mind being worshipped.

DANA: Me too. But after a while, it's like how about you grow a spine?

SYDNEY: *(Nods)* It's a delicate balance. Although mom and dad haven't turned on each other and they've been together for forty years.

DANA: They've probably just lost the energy.

SIDE 8 - LUCINDA (with JERRY, DANA and SYDNEY)

DANA: *(After a beat, calling out)* Who is it?

LUCINDA: *(From the hallway)* Lucinda. Wanted to drop off some of my sweet potato casserole. You told me your Christmas dinner was ruined. Don't be proud, Dana's family. C'mon, open the door already. You don't want it to get cold, do ya?

DANA: *(Looks at JERRY, uncertain)* Dad?

JERRY: Go ahead and answer the door. It's not like she's gonna shoot us. Half the building would be up here in no time.

DANA *crosses to the door and opens it.* LUCINDA *bares in with the cart. A tarp covers its contents. Well, mostly covers. A pair of shoe-covered feet hang off one side of the cart. A knife sticks out of the body.* LUCINDA *slams the door behind her and pulls out a gun.*

LUCINDA: I lied about the casserole.

JERRY: Okay, let's not go crazy here.

LUCINDA: Anything but, Dana's dad. *(She trains the gun on the two girls.)* I need you two to go stand next to your father.

JERRY: Don't move. Either of you.

LUCINDA: This is hard enough and now you wanna make it even harder?

JERRY: Just put the gun down, Lucinda.

She keeps it trained on them while crossing to draw the blinds on the window.

LUCINDA: Trust me, Dana's dad, I debated whether or not to do this. I'm not a cold-blooded killer or anything. But I've reached my breaking point. It's probably the stress of the holidays. That, and having a shitty boyfriend. Kenny spoiled my Christmas and now you're doing the same.

SYDNEY: *(Nods towards the grocery cart)* Is that really Kenny?

LUCINDA: *(Nods)* Finally found a way to shut him up.

DANA: You stabbed him?

LUCINDA: *(Re: the knife)* What gave it away?

JERRY: Don't make it any worse, Lucinda. You can tell the police it was self-defense.

LUCINDA: I could but you guys would say otherwise.

JERRY: We would not, would we, girls?

DANA: We definitely would not.

SYDNEY: Self-defense all the way. That whole business with the Florida oranges? It's not like he didn't deserve it.

A beat as LUCINDA weighs her options. Finally --

LUCINDA: Naah. I'm sorry. I can't risk it. *(Gestures for the two girls to stand next to JERRY)*
C'mon, you two.

DANA *obliges*. SYDNEY *doesn't*.

LUCINDA: Oh that's right. You're the rebel of the family.

DANA: Our neighbor will hear the gunshots.

LUCINDA: Our neighbor's in Phoenix.

SYDNEY: Then other people in the building.

LUCINDA: Most of whom are visiting their loved ones. It's Christmas after all. But let's test your theory.

She shoots the gun into the ceiling. Twice.

LUCINDA: There. Let's see if anyone comes by. If they do, I put this away. If they don't...

JERRY: The police will trace this back to you.

LUCINDA: Already thought about that, Dana's dad. First, this is Kenny's gun. Got it for him for Christmas. Second, I'll just say I was napping. Kenny came over here because he was sick and tired of you guys telling us to shut up. You got into a big argument with him – neighbors, right? He pulled out his gun. You managed to knife him but not before he could shoot all of you.

DANA: That still leaves half the family.

LUCINDA: I saw them leave. I'll just wait for them to come back. In the meantime, I'll enjoy my Christmas dinner. Despite what Kenny here said, my turkey is really good. *(A beat)* Too bad.

Looks like the neighbors aren't coming through for you. *(Then)* I'm real sorry. I never thought this is how my Christmas would turn out. *(To SYDNEY)* You gonna stand next to them or not?

SYDNEY: Fuck you.

LUCINDA: *(She raises her gun.)* Just for that, I'm gonna shoot you first. Merry Christmas.

SIDE 9 - LANCE (with MAUREEN)

MAUREEN: How long have you two even known each other?

LANCE: One month to the day. Long enough to say I feel real good about it this time.

MAUREEN: *This* time? You've been married before?

LANCE: Three times. Which I know ain't the greatest track record. But this'll be my first wedding in Vegas. Which somehow makes it legit, ya know? Maureen, if it makes you feel any better, I don't really count the other three marriages.

MAUREEN: But you were, nevertheless, married. You've had three wives.

LANCE: Sure. On paper. But there were extenuating circumstances. The first girl, I knocked her up in high school. That shouldn't count. I was basically cornered. Had to marry her. That was a pretty sucky senior year. Living in her parents' basement. Screaming kid. No TV. Anyway, her parents finally threw me out. So then I went back home to get my life together. My mom's a drunk but she's pretty strict. She made me get my GED and go to church every Sunday. I was on an excellent and righteous path. Until...

MAUREEN: Lemme guess. You knocked up a girl at the church?

LANCE: (*Nods*) The minister's daughter. On the down side, there was a lot of talk about God. On the plus side, they had a much nicer basement.

MAUREEN: How about lucky wife number three? You knock her up as well?

LANCE: Naah. That was just awesome sex. Talk about a wildcat. But that faded after a year. So...here I am. Free as a bird.

MAUREEN: Except for the two children that you fathered.

LANCE: Boy Andy and girl Andy. I've always loved that name.

SIDE 10 - LUCINDA (with KENNY)

LUCINDA: You're an asshole!

KENNY: Well, you're a bitch! That's a great Christmas present!

LUCINDA: It's a bag of oranges!

KENNY: From Florida! They're Florida oranges!

LUCINDA: This is it? This is the only present you're giving me?!

KENNY: Most girls would love Florida oranges!

LUCINDA: You are a fucking idiot! This is the worst fucking gift ever!

KENNY: Maybe if you tasted one of them first, you'd shut up for a change!

LUCINDA: I don't have to taste it! It's a fuckin' orange. I know what an orange tastes like!

KENNY: And I can't help you in the kitchen between the hours of one and four. It's the Lakers and the Celtics! Everything else takes a back seat.

LUCINDA: You are helping me cook this fucking meal!

KENNY: Fuck you!

LUCINDA: I mean it, Kenny. If you don't help me, you will not get a single fuckin' bite!

KENNY: I don't give a fuck! I'll eat the Florida oranges!

LUCINDA: Stop calling them that! They're just oranges! Now get off that fuckin' couch!

KENNY: When the fuckin' game is fuckin' over!

LUCINDA: Last chance Kenny! Or I swear I'm gonna eat that whole fuckin' meal by myself!

KENNY: There's no way you can eat a whole fuckin' turkey!

LUCINDA: Watch me!