

A Prayer for Rain

By

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Tofer Carlson (C) 2010

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Cast of Characters

<u>Carol:</u>	A young woman, age indeterminate, makes lemonade.
<u>Businessman:</u>	A three-piece suit type, carries an attaché, obsessed with being on time.
<u>Woman:</u>	Motherly, perhaps middle-aged.
<u>Boy:</u>	Young, energetic, hopeful.
<u>Well-Dressed Woman:</u>	Young woman of indeterminate age, formal in dress and speech, ominous.

Scene

Set in an indeterminate location. The passing of time should be surreal, as characters often come on to repeat scenes soon after leaving stage. Set is very sparse, perhaps limited to two chairs and the small table where Carol sells lemonade. Lighting should be bright, but ominous.

CAROL sits on stage alone as lights come up. She is sitting at a table with a pitcher of fresh lemonade, and half a dozen lemons in a basket. Bright lighting. It's daytime, and it hasn't rained for a long time. Pauses when CAROL is alone on stage can be elongated, perhaps 15 or more seconds. There's no hurry in her life, there shouldn't be in the staging of her play.

CAROL sits and smiles. She leans back.

BUSINESSMAN enters, walking quickly across stage. He has no intention of stopping. CAROL doesn't seem to mind.

Thunder in the background.

BUSINESSMAN pauses, looks down at the umbrella he's carrying.

CAROL
Don't worry.

BUSINESSMAN
Excuse me?

CAROL
It's just heat lightning.

BUSINESSMAN
Really?

CAROL
Yep. It hasn't rained in a long time. No reason for it to start now.

BUSINESSMAN
It has been dry lately.

CAROL
It's been dry for a long time.

BUSINESSMAN
It's too bad, we could use the rain.

CAROL
We really could.
(Thunder rumbles again)

BUSINESSMAN
Just heat lightning?

CAROL
Just heat lightning.

BUSINESSMAN
Hmm.

CAROL
Lemonade?

BUSINESSMAN
What? (*looks down*) Oh. Sure.

CAROL
Great! (*Pours a glass, and hands it to him*)

BUSINESSMAN
Thanks.

CAROL
My pleasure! How's work these days?

BUSINESSMAN
Oh, you know. (*Beat, BUSINESSMAN sighs*)

CAROL
I do know.

BUSINESSMAN
It goes, and it keeps going. It's work.

CAROL
Sometimes I feel like it never ends.

BUSINESSMAN
(*Looking around*) Have you been out here long?

CAROL
I'm always here.

BUSINESSMAN
I know the feeling. (*looks at his watch*)

CAROL
You're going to have to hurry if you're going to catch
the 12:10.

BUSINESSMAN
True enough. Thanks. (*exits, offering a salute with his
lemonade as he heads off stage.*)

Thunder sounds again. CAROL sits back and smiles.

WOMAN enters.

WOMAN

Out again today, sweetheart?

CAROL

So long as the sun is shining.

WOMAN

Well, it certainly is nice to see you there smiling. I think that would be sun enough for me.

CAROL

Why, thank you. Anything exciting happening today?

Woman sits, unfolds her newspaper.

WOMAN

There's always something exciting, dear. You know that. Just yesterday my nephew had his first child.

CAROL

He had a child! That is news!

WOMAN

Oh, you know what I mean!

CAROL

That's wonderful news! The best news! (*Pours a cup of lemonade for WOMAN, and one for herself.*) You must be so excited!

WOMAN

My sister is ecstatic. She acts the curmudgeon and grumbles about being a grandmother at her age. At her age! I should want the excitement. (*Drinks, beat*) I'm happy for them though.

CAROL

Of course you are! (*Beat*) How long has it been?

WOMAN

Three years ago next month.

CAROL

Three years.

WOMAN

You'd think it would go by slowly. (*Beat*) It feels like yesterday.

CAROL

I remember. (*WOMAN looks at her expectantly*) You'd walk here together then, and you were the ones smiling in the sun. He took you by the arm and he walk up and say: Carol, my dear! So good to see you!

WOMAN
Yes!

CAROL
So good to see you indeed! Two cups of your finest!

WOMAN
And you said-

CAROL
Nothing but the best for my best customers.

WOMAN
Nothing but the best...

Well-Dressed Woman enters out of sight of the characters. She stands silently observing.

CAROL
And on Sundays he had his top hat.

WOMAN
Oh, that hat. I told him it was foolish.

CAROL
It was wonderful! It brought a smile to my face whenever he walked by. I loved that hat. And seeing you together. It still warms me to think about it, now he's gone.

WOMAN
It warms my heart too, dear. It warms my heart too. We did so love coming together. On Sundays and on every day. (beat, thunder rolls.)

WOMAN
Think we'll have rain this week?

CAROL
I doubt it. Hasn't rained for (looks at watch), oh, too long now to start over some measly heat lightning.

WOMAN
You're probably right. We could use the rain though.

CAROL
We could always use the rain.

They drink lemonade in silence.

WOMAN
(*Standing*) Well, love--I should be on my merry way.

CAROL
I know, I know.

WOMAN
I'll see you later this week.

CAROL
Wouldn't miss it.

WOMAN
And Carol? (*Carol looks up*) Thanks.

CAROL
Any time! I'm always here. (*sighs*) Always here.

WOMAN walks off stage. CAROL sits back and smiles. Thunder in the distance sounds closer now.

Boy enters, running across stage.

BOY
Hi Carol!

CAROL
Hey you! How's it hanging?

BOY exits before responding. CAROL laughs. She sits for a moment and organizes her table of goods.

BOY runs back on stage and sits down.

BOY
Sorry. It's good Carol.

CAROL
Don't worry about it!

BOY
You didn't see him run by, did you?

CAROL
Run by?

BOY
My dog.

CAROL
Oh! No, sorry.

BOY
It's OK. He just saw a squirrel and ran off.

CAROL
I'm sure he'll come back when he gets bored.

BOY
He always does.

CAROL
Want a cup?

BOY
Do you need to ask?

CAROL
I guess not.

BOY
The first time, he was gone for two days. Mom wanted me to stay inside, but the second night, I snuck out the back door with a flashlight.

CAROL
What did she do?

BOY
She came out a few minutes later to look for me.

CAROL
Oh no!

BOY
She found both of us pretty quickly. We were sitting by the tree out back looking at the stars.

CAROL
She must have been thrilled.

BOY
For a while she'd ask my dad if he thought the shelter would take dogs and boys. I was just glad to get him back.

CAROL
I bet.

BOY
That's why I'm not worried now.

CAROL
Good.

BOY
He'll come back.

CAROL
He always does.

BOY
He-- (*hears something*) --that's him!

CAROL
Go get him!

BOY
Bye, Carol!

CAROL
See you later!

BOY runs off stage, following the sound of his dog. CAROL is alone with the WELL-DRESSED WOMAN. There are several moments of silence in which CAROL looks at her uncomfortably before the WELL-DRESSED WOMAN walks off stage. CAROL sits back and smiles.

Scene 2

Thunder rumbles in the distance, perhaps louder than before. BUSINESSMAN enters hurriedly, glancing nervously at his umbrella.

CAROL
Don't worry.

BUSINESSMAN
Excuse me?

CAROL
It's just heat lightning.

BUSINESSMAN
Really?

CAROL
Been going for a while now. And when was the last time we had rain?

BUSINESSMAN
It has been dry lately.

CAROL
You said it.

BUSINESSMAN
It's too bad, we could use the rain.

(CONTINUED)

CAROL

We really could.
(*Thunder rumbles again*)

BUSINESSMAN

Heat lightning?

CAROL

Just heat lightning.

BUSINESSMAN

Hmm.

CAROL

Lemonade?

BUSINESSMAN

What? (*looks down*) Oh. Sure.

CAROL

Great! (*Pours a glass, and hands it to him*)

BUSINESSMAN

Thanks. (*Beat, BUSINESSMAN sighs*) How long have you been out here?

CAROL

I'm always here.

BUSINESSMAN

I know the feeling. These days it seems I'm always on the road.

CAROL

Where are you off to this time?

BUSINESSMAN

Tell you the truth, I don't even know. (*laughs*) Think it's raining there?

CAROL

Well, you never know.

BUSINESSMAN

Maybe this thing will come in handy.

CAROL

I think you'll probably manage to keep dry.

BUSINESSMAN

I wouldn't mind having to use it. It was a gift you know. From my son. (*beat*) God, it seems so long ago.

(CONTINUED)

CAROL

How old was he?

BUSINESSMAN

When he gave me this old thing? Maybe five? Six?

CAROL

You must miss him.

BUSINESSMAN

I-- *(He looks at his watch)* I've got to get to the station.

CAROL

You've got to hurry if you're going to make the 12:10.

BUSINESSMAN

I suppose I do at that. *(offering a salute with his lemonade)* *(he stops, thunder sounds)* You know--

CAROL

What?

BUSINESSMAN

You know, there was something on the edge of my mind. Something I wanted to say--it's gone now.

CAROL

Sorry to hear. *(beat)* The train?

BUSINESSMAN

Right! The train. So long! And thanks!

CAROL watches him walk away, an uncertain expression on her face. Thunder sounds again. CAROL sits back, more slowly this time, and smiles.

WOMAN enters.

WOMAN

Out again today, sweetheart?

CAROL

So long as the sun is shining.

WOMAN

Well, it certainly is nice to see you there smiling. I think that would be sun enough for me.

CAROL

Why, thank you. I'm certainly glad I can bring some light to your day.

(CONTINUED)

WOMAN

Not that I really need it with ol' faithful up there.

Woman sits, unfolds her newspaper.

CAROL

Anything going on today?

WOMAN

Oh, there's always something, dear. You know that.
(Beat, while reading; puts paper down again) You know,
it just hit me--my nephew had a son yesterday. I
guess that makes me a great aunt, doesn't it.

CAROL

I suppose it does at that! Congratulations!

WOMAN

Oh, it's nothing, I guess. Just means I'm getting
older.

CAROL

But it *is* wonderful news!

WOMAN

Happens all the time!

CAROL

But it's new for you! You're a great aunt now, with a
new nephew to spoil.

*(Pours a cup of lemonade for WOMAN, and one for
herself.)*

WOMAN

You're right, I know. I guess I wish it were me. She's
so happy--my sister. Her first grandchild.

CAROL

And your first great-nephew!

WOMAN

Ricky.

CAROL

What?

WOMAN

His name--my nephew's son. They named him Ricky.

CAROL

Like your husband.

(CONTINUED)

WOMAN

Like my Ricky.

CAROL

How long has it been?

WOMAN

Almost three years now. Next month.

CAROL

Three years.

WOMAN

I thought it would go by slowly. It doesn't though. I never thought I'd make it. They've all been a godsend.

CAROL

I know. I remember when he came with you. He wore that wonderful top hat.

WOMAN

It was such a silly hat.

CAROL

It was wonderful! And he'd say: Two cups of your finest!

WOMAN

I remember--

CAROL

I gave nothing but the best to my best customers.

WOMAN

He so loved coming to see you.

CAROL

I'm glad to hear it.

Woman stares off into space for a moment, smiling. Takes a drink of lemonade.
And your children?

WOMAN

What? Oh, they're divine. Our youngest just graduated. He's going to be working at one of those big computer places out west.

CAROL

That's wonderful!

(CONTINUED)

WOMAN

And Maria is engaged--there's just so much to do before the wedding. I don't know how she manages. I try to help, but she smiles and tells me I've helped her whole life...but she'll always need her mother.

CAROL

They know you'll always be there.

WOMAN

I know--I just don't think I'm ready for them to be grown up and on their own. What if they have money trouble? Or, God forbid, get in an accident? I'm all they've got.

CAROL

They have each other.

WOMAN

I know. I know. (*She stands, suddenly anxious*) But I think I must be on my way, dear heart.

CAROL

Already?

WOMAN

I've got my errands to run. And I should call them. Just to check in.

CAROL

Of course--

WOMAN

Do you think we'll get rain soon Carol?

CAROL

We could certainly use it. (*beat*) But it's been a long time.

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN comes back in from offstage as the Woman walks away.

WOMAN

A long time--

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN

It never changes.

CAROL

Why are you here?

(CONTINUED)

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN

To watch. (*She takes a cup, pours herself a glass of lemonade*) It's comforting to watch.

CAROL

What is?

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN

The pattern. It never changes, and that's comforting.

CAROL

I can help them.

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN

You can't.

CAROL

I do help them.

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN

If that were true, they wouldn't be here. For that matter, neither would you.

CAROL

And why are you here?

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN

I watch.

CAROL

You watch.

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN

You understand.

CAROL

I don't think I do.

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN

Well enough, anyway. He's coming, I will leave you now.

CAROL

You say that you watch--you've seen then. You've seen they change.

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN

Oh, they change a few words now and again. But do *they* change?

CAROL

They do. They are.

(CONTINUED)

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN

That's a noble hope.

CAROL

It's more than hope. It's why I'm here. I help them move on.

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN

You can't even help yourself (*turns to walk away*).

Thunder in the distance sounds closer now. BOY comes running in from offstage, almost careening into the WELL-DRESSED WOMAN.

BOY

Hi Carol!

CAROL stares off into space while the boy exits. When she doesn't respond after a few moments, he comes back on, concerned.

BOY

Carol?

CAROL

Oh. Hey you!

His energy returning, the BOY runs over to CAROL and sits down.

BOY

Hi Carol! Sorry for just running by you like that.

CAROL

No worries, my friend!

BOY

You were just sitting here, and staring. It was like you weren't there. (*beat*) You didn't see him run by did you?

CAROL

(*Getting pulled back into the flow of her life*) Run by?

BOY

My dog.

CAROL

Oh! Nope, not even the blur of the furball zipping on by. Sorry.

(CONTINUED)

BOY

It's OK. He sees a squirrel, and suddenly he's gone. He's always running off.

CAROL

I'm sure he'll come back when he gets bored.

BOY

He always does.

CAROL

Want a cup?

BOY

I don't know. Anything funny in it today?

CAROL

Funny?

BOY

Like vegetables?

CAROL

Nope. Just lemonade this week--I saved the radish-ade for next time.

BOY

Just making sure. (*He takes the offered cup, and tries it*)

CAROL

Satisfied?

BOY

Yup. Where do you think he goes?

CAROL

Your dog? I'm not sure. I guess I know squirrels live in the woods, but I'm not really sure where they stay there.

BOY

I remember how scared I was the first time he ran. He was gone for two days! I snuck past my mom to try to find him.

CAROL

I bet she was thrilled.

BOY

Oh, she found us quickly enough. She saw that what looked like me in bed, was really a pillow and a soccer ball, and came running into the backyard in her nightgown.

(CONTINUED)

CAROL

Oh no!

BOY

We were under the big tree looking at the stars.

CAROL

He was already there?

BOY

Like he knew I was coming to find him and didn't want me to get scared. I don't like the dark so much.

Thunder rolls again in the distance.

CAROL

Me neither. But I'm glad you found him so quickly.

BOY

Me too.

CAROL

I bet your mom was happy too.

BOY

Not so much. I think she used the word infuriated a few too many times to be happy. She calmed down. But, that's why I'm not worried now. Because he comes back. He always comes back. (*He is not convinced*)

CAROL

Sounds like he's a good friend to have.

BOY

The best.

CAROL

I guess it's something you've got to learn.

BOY

What?

CAROL

That you can trust. That everything will be OK.

BOY

He just went off after a squirrel. It's nothing new. He'll come back.

CAROL

He always does.

(CONTINUED)

BOY

(beat) He didn't look.

CAROL

Look?

BOY

When you cross the street. You're supposed to look both ways. And... he didn't.

CAROL

I'm not sure it works that way for dogs.

BOY

So I need to look out for him. Because he doesn't. And he didn't look. He didn't see it Carol.

CAROL

What happened?

BOY

He didn't see the car. I wasn't looking out for him, so he didn't see it. I yelled, but he didn't hear me. So I had to go after him.

CAROL

Go after him?

BOY

You understand, don't you? He doesn't look, so I have to! He's my best friend. I can't let him down.

CAROL

I know.

BOY

I can't let him down. What if he gets hurt? I mean, he made it past before the car. But he's all alone now. Who's going to look out for him Carol?

CAROL

He'll find his way. He always does.

BOY

But who's going to look out for--I hear him! (*snap change in his demeanor, from desperation to excitement, accompanied by a sharp crack of thunder*) I hear him Carol! He's coming back! See you later!

CAROL

Wait...

There is a long beat before Carol sighs and begins speaking.

(CONTINUED)

CAROL
Damn it. I wish--

Scene 3

A sharp crack of thunder breaks through, interrupting CAROL, as the BUSINESSMAN returns to stage, once more looking nervously at his umbrella. CAROL visibly centers herself before speaking.

CAROL
Don't worry. You're not going to need it today.

BUSINESSMAN
Excuse me?

CAROL
Your umbrella.

BUSINESSMAN
How do you know?

CAROL
It's just heat lightning.

BUSINESSMAN
Heat lightning?

CAROL
Doesn't seem to let up around here. And when was the last time we had rain?

BUSINESSMAN
It has been a bit of a dry spell.

CAROL
You said it.

BUSINESSMAN
It's too bad, we could use the rain.

CAROL
We really could.
(Thunder rumbles again)

BUSINESSMAN
Heat lightning?

CAROL
Heat lightning.

(CONTINUED)

BUSINESSMAN

Hmm. (*Looking off into the distance*)

CAROL

Lemonade?

BUSINESSMAN

What? (*looks down*) Oh. Sure. To tell you the truth, it's nice to have a break. It seems all I do is travel these days.

CAROL

I know the feeling.

BUSINESSMAN

I just try to remember why I'm doing it. It keeps me from missing him too much.

CAROL

Your son?

BUSINESSMAN

My son. (*Beat*) He gave me this. (*Holds up the umbrella*) Think it's raining in... you know, I don't even know where I'm going this time. Being on the road's addled my brain a bit I think.

CAROL

You must miss him.

BUSINESSMAN

Every minute. When I was local, I got to see him on weekends at least. We'd go to the park and I used to watch him spin on the--what do they call those spinny-things? I think its too small to be a merry-go-round. (*He sits*)

CAROL

I haven't the foggiest.

BUSINESSMAN

(*laughs*) Me neither. I can still see his face though, laughing in the sunlight. (*Pause, he takes a drink*). My wife took him last year. A job in London. Across town is a lot different than across the pond.

CAROL

Only a few miles, right?

BUSINESSMAN

Only a few miles. I wish he knew how much I miss him.

(CONTINUED)

CAROL

He does.

BUSINESSMAN

You think?

CAROL

Of course he does! Whose picture do you think he says good night to every night?

BUSINESSMAN

That's what Claire--my wife, well, ex-wife--told me.

CAROL

He misses you too.

BUSINESSMAN

I wish he were here now.

CAROL

No, you don't.

BUSINESSMAN

I don't? No. You're right. I wish I was there with him.

CAROL

Yes.

BUSINESSMAN

Wait. That's where I was going!

CAROL

To see him?

BUSINESSMAN

To see him! That's what the 12:10 is for; catch the 12:10 to South Station, take the Silver Line to Logan for my 5:00 flight to Heathrow.

CAROL

To see your son!

BUSINESSMAN

To see him! That's where I...where I was going.

CAROL

I know.

BUSINESSMAN

I'm not going to make it there, am I?

(CONTINUED)

CAROL

They were waiting for you.

BUSINESSMAN

I remember getting on the train.

CAROL

He still kisses your picture goodnight each night. Every night.

BUSINESSMAN

I remember the sounds.

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN enters, watching again.

CAROL

And he still thinks of you when he's in the park.

BUSINESSMAN

The crashing, tearing metal. Oh, god.

CAROL

He knows you love him.

BUSINESSMAN

I was going to see my son... *(he stands)*

CAROL

He knows you love him.

BUSINESSMAN

How long has it been?

CAROL

I don't know. Time is different here.

BUSINESSMAN

But you've see him?

CAROL

Yes.

BUSINESSMAN

And he's alright?

CAROL

He's alright.

BUSINESSMAN

And he...he knows?

(CONTINUED)

CAROL

He knows.

BUSINESSMAN

God, I miss him. I just wish... (*looks at his watch, there's a sharp crack of thunder*)

CAROL

You wish?

BUSINESSMAN

I wish? I'm not sure. Was I talking about something important?

CAROL

Please, no. Not now.

BUSINESSMAN

Excuse me? (*Hears thunder rumbling again*) Do you think it will rain soon?

CAROL

Not again. I can't do it again.

BUSINESSMAN

Can't do what again? All I asked is if you thought it was going to rain.

CAROL

No. I don't think it will rain. It's just heat lightning.

BUSINESSMAN

Heat lightning?

CAROL

Heat lightning. It hasn't rained for a long time.

BUSINESSMAN

You've got that right. Well, I should probably be on my way to make the train.

CAROL

You've got to hurry if you're going to make the 12:10.

BUSINESSMAN

Very true! Thanks for the lemonade!

CAROL

Any time. I'm always here.

(CONTINUED)

BUSINESSMAN

I know the feeling. So long! *(He exits)*

CAROL

(to WELL-DRESSED WOMAN, aggressively confronting her) I had him. I had him, and you know it.

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN

You didn't seem to accomplish much of anything.

CAROL

Why are you here?

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN

To watch.

CAROL

To watch what?

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN

To watch you, Carol. That's my role. I watch.

CAROL

Why won't you go away. I was helping. I was helping him. He understood.

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN

And yet, he got on that train again. Nothing changes.

CAROL

He was.

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN

For your sake, I wish it were true. It simply isn't.

CAROL

Leave me alone.

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN

If you wish.

CAROL

I do. *(the WELL-DRESSED WOMAN exits)* I can't give up on them. I have to believe that they can change. What hope is there for any of us if they can't? What hope is there for anyone...

CAROL is still standing when the BOY comes running across stage.

BOY

Hi Carol!

(CONTINUED)

CAROL

Hey you!

BOY exits, CAROL returns to her lemonade stand and takes a seat. She sighs before he runs back in.

BOY

Sorry, Carol. You didn't see him run by did you?

CAROL

Run by?

BOY

My dog.

CAROL

Sorry. Not even the tip of his tail.

BOY

It's OK. He's always running off. I think he saw a squirrel and took off. Maybe a chipmunk this time.

CAROL

I'm sure he'll find his way home.

BOY

He always does. *(he sits)*

CAROL

Want a cup?

BOY

Just lemonade?

CAROL

What else would it be?

BOY

No vegetables?

CAROL

No vegetables. I promise. Your mom trying to sneak you foods again?

BOY

Yea. *(He makes a face, then takes a sip)* Just had to make sure.

CAROL

Besides, I save the broccoli juice for the grown-ups. Satisfied?

(CONTINUED)

BOY

Yup. It's real. Where do you think he runs off to?

CAROL

Your dog? I'm not sure.

BOY

I remember the first time he ran off. He was gone for two days! I was so scared.

CAROL

I bet you were.

BOY

I ran off to find him one night after my mom went to bed. I took a flashlight, a loaf of bread and a bottle of ketchup. Just in case.

CAROL

It's important to be prepared.

BOY

I was only out for a few minutes before I found him under the tree in the yard.

CAROL

He must have known you were worried.

BOY

I guess so. My mom came down a few minutes later in her nightgown and her scary eyes.

CAROL

I bet she was just happy you were safe.

BOY

After a while. She yelled, and woke my dad up. She laughed about it later though. A lot later. But, that's why I'm not worried now. Because he comes back. He always comes back. (*He is not convinced*) I just need to keep listening for him.

CAROL

A good plan.

BOY

I just worry sometimes, because he's not careful enough. I need to look out for him. You know?

CAROL

I think he probably does OK.

(CONTINUED)