

HIDE TOWN

By Lisa D'Amour

Inspired by Texas Ghost Towns

and the Infernal Bridegroom Productions company

Contact:

Val Day

William Morris Associates

1325 Avenue of the Americas

New York, NY 10019

212-903-1192

vday@wma.com

© 2006, Lisa D'Amour

August, 2006 Draft

CHARACTERS

Swimming Otter (At one time, he was the town sweetheart, All-American style)

Texie Betters (A hostess with the mostest, married to Coonrad)

Coonrod Betters (A community leader, married to Texie)

Miss Ivah Smith (An aged college girl)

Oswald (A handyman and immigrant)

Mads (The Bartender, also a ghost, possibly an alien)

(Note: If needed, Mads could be played by the actor playing Oswald)

Bud (Married to Olive.)

Olive (Married to Bud. A hairdresser in the “old world”)

Casting Note: All characters should be played by actors in their mid-thirties and older, even though some of the residents of Hide Town seem to be younger.

PLACE

The place is the State of Texas, near the one-time coast, just outside the “big city” once called Wharton, in a town called Hide Town.

TIME

The time is In the Future.

AUTHOR’S NOTE

Many of the references in this play hail from trips taken to ghost towns and tiny towns in between Houston and Austin Texas with the IBP company, as well as from research conducted on alien abductions primarily in the Houston area. Many of the facts and details gathered during this research have been twisted into new shapes. When this play is produced in Houston, audience members will receive a pamphlet detailing the “real” origins of the references that make up this world.

In addition, certain phrases and exchanges in this script have been lifted from Chekhov’s Uncle Vanya and placed into this script. Uncle Vanya was in rehearsal at Infernal Bridegroom Productions when I was writing this script. In the Infernal Bridegroom production of this play in November, the same actor who delivered the lines in Uncle Vanya will play the character who speaks the near-identical lines in HIDE TOWN. It is hoped that the effect for actor and audience will be a faint sense of déjà vu that reminds one that he or she is in a theater, watching a play.

HIDE TOWN

Here we are in the saloon that is also a country store. With the dusty shelves of old oatmeal and bags of charcoal and such. A few random deerheads mounted on the wall. A few round tables covered with the plastic checkered tablecloths (see the cigarette burns?) also folding chairs, napkin holders and hot sauce set out and ready. A sign over the door, with block letters that say "*Some Day, These Days Will Be Worth Remembering.*" This is the bar motto.

Olive and Swimming Otter sit at the bar.

OLIVE

I don't know Swimming Otter, it's like, who the hell knows?

It's like I mean: there you go.

I mean like: No, Yeah, NO.

I mean so you're standing there, right?

You're standing there with your hand on your hip

Hand on your hip and your like, sure, well, alright fine

If you say so.

That's gonna be fine unless, unless, unless, unless, unless

It's against the law. If it's against the law then I am firmly against it

So when I try to figure out what really happened

I just wind up being like, well, so

Whatever, so I couldn't hear her cries for help

I mean I think I was vacuuming that day, see, I get migranes and

Everything was like totally crazy that month,

The month when it all began.

Olive shifts in her seat.

Anyway she hated me from the beginning that much I know.

Don't listen to Bud, Bud just speaks out loud

Whatever tumbles onto his tongue he doesn't know how to

Mean Things. The truth is fragile, and Bud's all thumbs.

A Texas pause, meaning they sit at the bar, and maybe twirl the glass in front of them, meaning they turn their eyes inward to think about what the farm used to look like, meaning there is no real hurry to start talking again, meaning someone could walk in and start something new. But they don't.

Now you know I'm not stuck out in la la land.

I know my left hand from my right.

And even after everything, all the fury and helloverhighwater,

and the TV people dancing in with their cranes full of rain,

I really care about this place, I really do.

We're all good people here. "A simple people with simple needs."
Let the city people have their cities,
I say, we all say, we all go church except Oswald, but
Oswald's different, he's got his own religion, that olde tyme religion
From the golden times when brides wore black dresses and men
Tied garlic around their ankles for good luck. The rest of us
are progressive folk, progressive without getting all
Tom Cruise about it. Remember Tom Cruise? Whoo-ee now
THERE was a President. I mean for those two months, those
Two months before he.....
..... but a body can be progressive without
being an idiot. Look at me: I'm like totally starting
A fat flush and helping my sister open her Norwegian furniture atelier.
Oh wait, oh wait, oh wait that's not me, that's somebody else,
Someone I read about in an old newspaper.....No, no, no, no, no, NO.
My name is Olive, and I am sitting in this saloon
with my hand on my hip and I live in oh Jesus fuck
I live in Texas. I live in Texas and I enjoy
Barbecue and going to matinee movies and my family owns a
Ranch over in Waller. Owned that is.
Up the road a piece or maybe is it down?

It's supposed to be really muggy out today.

Pause but not quite a Texas pause. Olive touches her hair.

And to think, I used to be a hairdresser.

Swimming Otter is suddenly loud and panicked and speaks into the air.

SWIMMING OTTER

DONNA! DONNA! WAIT! DONNA DON'T GO PLEASE.

Olive is calm.

OLIVE

Otter?

SWIMMING OTTER

Oh, sorry, that was a flashback.

OLIVE

Right.

SWIMMING OTTER

It's supposed to be really muggy out today.

OLIVE
Right.

The door to the bar opens and wind and snow pour in: a blizzard outside.
An old wrinkled woman enters on roller skates, wearing a wedding dress.

SWIMMING OTTER AND OLIVE
Hey Miss Ivah.

Miss Ivah sounds drunk and tired.

MISS IVAH
Hey.

And there's Miss Ivah, standing there, breathing heavy. She goes to the bar and gets a few peanuts out of the peanut bowl. Her hands are shaking. She really wants a chocolate milk. She barely gets the peanuts in her mouth, and chews. She kind of glances over at Swimming Otter and Olive for a moment. Then she rollerskates back out the door. Snow, again. Swimming Otter and Olive share a look like "poor Miss Ivah." Swimming Otter takes a swig of beer, slams his hand down on the bar, and gives a lively motivational speech.

SWIMMING OTTER

It's a fleeting time but we can fleet with it, I say.
If we just stay tuned to the vibration and DON'T FREAK OUT.
Stay calm, eat healthy and like Chekov says WORK.
Plant near the village and organize yer workforce
So then ya got more time to THINK. THINK up new ideas that are
Better than everybody else's ideas.
And not dumbfuck ideas like sailing a ship fulla stinkin', beady-eyed camels
across the ocean to carry guns, water and whiskey cross the desert.

OLIVE
Now, Otter –

SWIMMING OTTER

THINK. WORK. LEARN TO STORE YOUR GRAIN.
Muffdive if you want to muffdive but muffdive on your own time, and don't
Spend time worryin about whose muffdiving and whose not muffdiving.
You are you.
And everybody else is everybody else.
Now there's a rule of thumb!
And while we now know the Camel is thoroughly evil,
The Human Being is basically good so

Count yerself lucky and go to sleep sound.
And the good people of...the good people of...the good people of...
Where are we again, Olive?

OLIVE

We are in Hide Town.

SWIMMING OTTER

The good people of Hide Town should feel proud to be in
Hide Town. THAT'S why they put us on TV that time.
We have our rights and we have our wits
And we have this saloon and we have our teeth and
we have our one historical marker and we wake up each day
and say Howdy Neighbor
we believe deeply In Howdy Neighbor
we say it real natural like, round like, like
It was a beautiful marble rolling out of our mouths
like the phrase belongs to us, because it does belong to us,
it does, and you should just FEEL GOOD.

OLIVE

Thank you, Otter.
That made me feel a mite bit better I think.

SWIMMING OTTER

Sure thing.

Olive moves her hand, slowly at first, till it gently covers Swimming
Otter's hand.

SWIMMING OTTER

Olive.

OLIVE

I know, I know.

She pulls her hand away just as Texie and Coonrod enter. The blizzard is
still raging. Look at Texie and Coonrad, all dressed to go out, with their
cowboy boots and hats, and their shirts with fancy stitching.

TEXIE

Howdy, Neighbor!

SWIMMING OTTER

Howdy Neighbor!

COONRAD
Howdy Neighbor!

OLIVE
Howdy Neighbor!

TEXIE
Howdy Neighbor!

OLIVE
Howdy Neighbor!

COONRAD
Howdy Neighbor!

SWIMMING OTTER
Howdy Neighbor!

They all burst into laughter for a few seconds.

COONRAD
Where's the party! Where's the mechanical bull!
The 7 layer dip and the pull tabs! Baby carrots with Ranch Dressing!
Corn Dogs with dippin' sauce!

A tired laugh from the group.

SWIMMING OTTER
(Calling to someone off stage)
Mads! Get this man some whiskey!

TEXIE
Oh, Otter.

SWIMMING OTTER
No really! Mads! Mads where is that booger.
Hold on I'll just have to get it myself.

Swimming otter goes around the bar and dusts off an old, empty bottle of whiskey. He takes out a dusty glass, spits in it, and cleans it out. He mimes pouring whiskey in the glass and makes glug glug sounds.

Rocks?

Coonrad holds up two fingers. Texie shakes her head. Swimming otter mimes putting two ice cubes in the whiskey and slides the glass down to Coonrad. He mimes drinking.

SWIMMING OTTER

Texie?

TEXIE

No thank you, Swimming Otter.

COONRAD

It's a fleeting time but I know we can fleet with it.

Ya gotta remember your cattle and your wife and your rope and

Your rifle and your saddle soap and spit cup but you also

must remember to DANCE. DANCE whether it is in the

Morning or the nighttime or the afternoon or the midday

It does not matter the time it is the DANCE that is important.

It is the dance that wriggles the hard work out of our bones

And makes us feel ALIVE. Because we all must work

Yes we all must work just like that guy...Otter's buddy....

That uh....

You know that old guy Otter's always talking about that there -

SWIMMING OTTER

Chekov.

COONRAD

Like Chekov said all those many days ago, yes the work is

Positively important but equally important is the DANCE.

The DANCE reminds us of the golden times, when the old

Timers wore dresses made of garlic to boost fertility.

KAPOW!

The DANCE cuts straight to the heart of the good in us.

Because the evil of the camel's hoof can only be countered

By the good of the human heart, a heart that has been known to grow

Four sizes when that heart is allowed to DANCE.

Coonrad ends in a dance-ish pose. Everyone is half-smiling. They don't want him to feel bad but they are also a little embarrassed for him.

OLIVE

Swimming Otter said the same thing just a few minutes ago.

COONRAD

He did?

OLIVE

More or less yes.

SWIMMING OTTER

Ever since you and Texie got back from that couples retreat in Taos -

OLIVE

Thank you, Coonrad.

TEXIE

Yes, thanks, Coonrad.

COONRAD

Anytime, Olive, of course anytime, Texie.

A pause that could almost turn into a Texas pause.

COONRAD

Any sign of Choices?

ALL

(Groaning)

No.

COONRAD

Ha Ha!

Remember that time when we all went on his show? On TV? And then the cameras...

TEXIE, OLIVE, SWIMMING OTTER

Yes.

Then Coonrad remembers what a disaster that was.

COONRAD

Oh right, right.

Coonrad turns in a circle. Then, he lies down flat on the floor.

SWIMMING OTTER

What are you doing?

COONRAD

I'm taking a little rest.

SWIMMING OTTER
(Shaking his head.)
In the middle of the floor.

TEXIE
They call that a “Mexican Nap.”

The door opens and Miss Ivah skates in. She speaks to Olive.

MISS IVAH
Hey Sheila?

Olive’s face turns ghost white. The wind is knocked out of her.

TEXIE
(Harsh whisper.)
Ivah!

MISS IVAH
Oh. Oh. Sorry. I mean.
Hey Olive?

OLIVE
I’m going to freshen up.

Olive leaves.

MISS IVAH
(Small voice.)
Olive wait. I have to ask you....

But Olive is gone. Miss Ivah kind of looks around. She sees Coonrad.

What’s he doing?

TEXIE
Coonrad is taking a Mexican Nap.

SWIMMING OTTER
You’re surrounded by the strangest people.
Fakes, all of them, you live among them
Two or three years , and
Before you know it,
you become a fake yourself.

END OF EXCERPT