

Mime in a Box

A One-Act
By
Stephen Bittrich

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"MIME IN A BOX"

BY STEPHEN BITTRICH

SETTING:

The Village, New York City.

AT RISE:

A MIME is standing center stage, arms folded, angry. There is a hat for donations slightly downstage and to the right of him. Slightly downstage and to the left of him is LENNY sitting on a crate reading a newspaper. HARV enters stage right.

HARV

Hey Lenny, what's going on?

LENNY

Not much, Harv. How's it with you?

HARV
Same old. You got the scores?

LENNY
Yeah, the team sucks.

HARV
Don't I know it.

LENNY
Yeah.

HARV
You on a lunch? Jou eat yet?

LENNY
Nope. But I'm--I'm skippin' lunch today.

HARV
What are you on a diet or somethin'? Lemme buy you a sub.

LENNY
I got somethin' going on. I'll take a raincheck.

HARV
Oh yeah?

LENNY
Yeah.

(HARV notices the MIME for the
first time. The MIME is
eavesdropping)

HARV
Hey, who's your nosy friend?

LENNY
Hmmm?
(matter of factly)
Oh, that's a mime.

HARV
No shit?

LENNY
Yeah.

HARV
(beat)

What the hell is a mime?

LENNY

Umm...like him. You know about mimes, right?

HARV

Well, I mean, I've seen these guys around before. They're like clowns, right? What's he lookin' for--a hand out?

LENNY

That's probably what he depends on.

HARV

You want I should sock him?

LENNY

No, Harv. Have a little more respect for the street performer.

HARV

I find these clown guys annoying.

LENNY

He's not a clown, Harv. He's a mime. Mime has it's roots in commedia dell'arte, not clowning. Have you never heard of Marcel Marceau? Famous French mime? Performed completely without words--just by using gestures.

HARV

Never heard of him.

LENNY

Yeah, he's like the Marlon Brando of mimes. French guy. Born in the 1920's.

HARV

Len, this mime is really startin' ta piss me off. He's pushin' alla my buttons.

(to the MIME)

Buddy, Buddy, you wanna find some place else ta stand? You wanna get lost?

LENNY

Harv, Harv, he can't leave. I locked him in his box.

HARV

Oh. Huh?

LENNY

Yeah, he's stuck in there.

HARV

Okay.

(beat)

I'm not following.

LENNY

In his box. His imaginary box.

HARV

Oh, like a pretend box.

(beat)

What?

LENNY

(to the MIME)

Can you do it for him?

(MIME shakes his head "no")

LENNY (cont'd)

Come on. Do it for him.

(MIME shakes his head "no")

HARV

What do you want him to do, Len? You want I should clock him one?

(the MIME does "stuck in a box")

LENNY

See that Harv?

HARV

Oh. Yeah. So he's like pretending that he's stuck in a box.

LENNY

Oh no, he's genuinely stuck in a box. I mean this guy's a professional. And I locked it.

HARV

I don't see a box.

LENNY

(profoundly)

Well, it's in his mind, Harv, and it's in our minds now too, but that doesn't make it any less real, does it?

HARV

And you locked it?

LENNY

Yeah, I came along and...

(LENNY mimes taking a
gigantic, weighty lock out of
his pocket and puts it on the
box. HE's actually a pretty
good mime.)

HARV

And that's all it took? And you got this guy locked in?

LENNY

Yep.

HARV

Freaky.

(beat)

So he's like double locked now...

LENNY

Hmmm?

HARV

Well, you locked him in earlier, and you just now put
another lock on there.

LENNY

Yees. Yes, Harv. I spose he is. Yes, he's double locked
in there.

HARV

Hmmm.

(beat)

Now what? Are you gonna mess with him or what?

LENNY

I'm definitely going to test the boundries of reality and
illusion, Harv. Is that what you mean?

HARV

Yeah, I guess that's what I mean.

(beat)

That all he does? The box thing?

LENNY

I imagine not. Most mimes also do the classic "mime walk."

HARV
(to the MIME)
Do it, mime! Let's see the walk. Mime, come on!

(the MIME shakes his head
"no")

HARV (cont'd)
This mime's got an attitude problem, Lenny.

LENNY
(motioning HARV further
downstage)
Come here a second.

HARV
Huh?

LENNY
Come over here.

(THEY move slightly downstage)

HARV
What?

LENNY
(sotto voce)
You're never going to get him to do the walk by pissing him off. Harv, mimes aren't stupid. No, no, you've gotta use psychology on him. These mimes are a very proud and sensitive lot.

HARV
Psychology?

LENNY
Yeah. Look, just follow my lead, okay?

HARV
I'm with ya, Len.

LENNY
(louder)
And you see, Harv, that is why he can't do the mime walk. He's just not skilled enough to do the walk inside a small space--inside the box. He needs more room.

HARV

Makes perfect sense to me. Of course. Not skilled enough.

(the MIME mimes a big temper tantrum, then begins to expertly walk in place inside the box. HE runs into the walls of the box as he walks one way, turns around and walks in the opposite way, never walking too far before HE runs into the box wall. LENNY and HARV pretend not to notice at first, but HARV can't help himself--)

HARV (cont'd)

Hey, that's pretty fucked up.

LENNY

See, this guy's a professional...even incorporated the box into the whole walk thing.

HARV

Yeah, a real pro.

(beat, meaningfully)

Hey Len, is the lock...a combination lock? Or...?

LENNY

--a key lock. Here's the key for the second lock.

(LENNY takes a cumbersome imaginary key necklace off from around his neck)

HARV

Can I see?

LENNY

Sure.

(handing HARV the imaginary key necklace)

And the other one's in my pocket...somewhere.

(LENNY searches his pockets. HARV eats the key.)

LENNY (cont'd)

Hey, what the hell did you do that for?

HARV

I don't know.

LENNY

You ate the key.

HARV

Yeah.

LENNY

Well, well, Harv...I can't keep this guy in here all day...while you digest the thing...fish it out of the toilet.

HARV

(suddenly disturbed)

But...I mean...can't you cut it off with a--a lock cutter?

(the MIME and LENNY do a take to each other like HARV is the biggest idiot in the world)

LENNY

Are you kidding me? Where am I going to get a lock cutter of that--that size? I don't even think this lock can be cut. It's huge!

HARV

I dunno. I--I--I wasn't thinking.

LENNY

No, you weren't thinking at all. This is serious. I mean, there's only so much oxygen in there.

(the MIME starts doing a "running out of air" mime.)

HARV

I'm sorry I ate it, Lenny.

LENNY

Well, you should be.

HARV

I don't know what came over me.

LENNY

I'm very upset.

HARV

I wanted in on the game.

LENNY

You wanted--?

(beat, understanding)

Of course you did, Harv. Of course you did.

HARV

Sorry.

LENNY

Don't worry about it. Don't worry at all. We'll figure it out.

HARV

I still don't see why we can't use a big ass "mime" lock cutter.

LENNY

(taking him firmly by the shoulders)

Harv.

HARV

Yes?

LENNY

It's because of what I believe about the lock. It's because of the obstacles in my mind.

HARV

(agreeing, but bewildered)

Uh huh.

LENNY

I believe this lock, this second lock to be the most massive, indestructable lock known to man. THAT'S WHAT I BELIEVE, HARV!

HARV

Wow.

LENNY

It's my ideal of lock...of what is "lockness," "locknessity," "lockttitude."

HARV

Had a few bikes stolen? You've got issues right?

LENNY

It's perfection, Harv. It's per-fec-tion.

HARV

So, so because that's what you believe, then...that's what it is.

LENNY

Well, I spose...I mean the only way it really works is...if I share in a common belief with--

HARV

--the mime!

LENNY

Exactly--

HARV

But not me?

LENNY

Well--

HARV

I mean because maybe I had a different picture of the lock.

LENNY

Maybe? Did you see me put the lock on?

HARV

Yes.

LENNY

What picture did you get of the lock?

HARV

Massive lock.

LENNY

You see...

HARV

Okay, I see what yer sayin'...but, I'm just sayin', your idea could be different than mine.

(suddenly to the mime--in a
panic)

Hang on there, fella! We'll get you out!

LENNY

(philosophically, to the air)

We're all chained up in a cave, Harv, just looking at flickering shadows on a wall.

HARV

Lenny, how do you see the box?

LENNY

The box?

HARV

Yes, the box! How do you see it?

LENNY

Lenny, this box is made of multi-layered bulletproof glass bonded together with titanium steel bolts, hinges, and corner pieces.

HARV

I see it as kind of a flimsy cardboard box, Len...with a little cut out window.

LENNY

You think I'd lock a cardboard box? I mean--

HARV

Well...

LENNY

It's bulletproof glass, Harv! Multi-layered bulletproof glass!

HARV

I just don't see it.

LENNY

A cardboard box. How ridiculous! He could just gnaw his way out.

HARV

That's what I see.

LENNY

I mean, for this to work, I believe we must have a shared experience, Harv, and you're mucking it all up. Mucking up the works!

(to the MIME)

Am I right?

HARV

(blurting out, as if struck by lightning)
If there's nobody around to hear a mime scream, does he really make a sound?

LENNY
What?

HARV
(trying to remember what HE said)
If there's nobody around...to hear a mime scream...does he really make a sound?

LENNY
Hmmm.

HARV
Know what I mean?

LENNY
I think I do. Wow. That's a mouthful.

HARV
(proud, then after a beat)
I say we set fire to the box!

LENNY
Yeah...say what?

HARV
And then leave!

LENNY
And this accomplishes what?

HARV
Um, um, to see if it...you know...it's a test.

LENNY
Nobody around to hear a mime scream, does he make a sound?

HARV
Right. But we can't be around. We've gotta leave.

LENNY
But..if we leave, how will we know?

HARV
Didn't think of that...

LENNY

No, you didn't.

HARV

But it doesn't work unless we leave.

LENNY

No, I spose not.

HARV

I think we should do it.

LENNY

I would be curious to test this theory. But as far as I can determine, it's untestable.

HARV

Well, the mime will know the result.

LENNY

True that.

HARV

Also, we'll know pretty quickly if the box burns...

LENNY

...if it's make of cardboard or glass!

HARV

Exactly.

LENNY

Seems a little unfair to...

(indicating the MIME)

...you know. I mean, we were starting to bond.

HARV

Hey, you know, you roll the dice, you take your chances. He's out here pretending to be stuck in a box...

(HARV does a quick "stuck in a box" mime)

...ya know?

LENNY

I spose.

HARV

That's the way the ball bounces.

LENNY

(after a beat)
Okay, light it up.

(With great attention to detail, HARV takes an imaginary can of lighter fluid out of his pocket and squirts an imaginary flammable liquid on the box. The MIME is horrified)

LENNY (cont'd)
Okay, not too much. If it's cardboard, it shouldn't need much help.

(HARV takes an imaginary box of kitchen matches out of his pocket)

LENNY (cont'd)
Kitchen matches. Nice.

HARV
You want to do the honors, Lenny?

THE PLAY CONTINUES FOR ONE MORE PAGE.

FOR THE LAST PAGE OF THE PLAY, WHICH YOU CAN READ FOR FREE, EMAIL STEPHEN BITTRICH AT SBITTRICH@AOL.COM