

AMONG THE OATS

Episode 01: "Dream"

By Jason Half

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**AMONG THE OATS** - Episode 01 of 06 - "Dream"

By Jason Half

CAST: (3M)

ART, id  
BRUCE, superego  
CAL, ego

SETTING:

An oatmeal canister. As always.

TIME:

Now.

Originally written for a video series, stage productions of Among the Oats have also met with success. Stage design can be realistic -- one set of actors performed in 250 pounds of rolled oats -- or abstract, detailed or simple. One-act scripts can also be mixed and matched, to an extent. Traditionally, stage productions have presented three of the six one-act episodes in sequence.

Whatever the choice, the set design should highlight one aspect of the characters' world: the space is finite and inescapable, a Sartrean No Exit of comical frustration occurring inside a Quaker Oats canister. Set and lighting should remind the audience of the close confines of the space.

**AMONG THE OATS, episode 1: - "Dream" by Jason Half**

CAL is lying among the oats. ART is holding Cal's head and BRUCE is on the opposite side.

CAL

(Pointing to Bruce)

And you were there...

(Pointing to Art)

And you were there...

(Pointing to Bruce)

And you were there...

BRUCE

You already said that.

CAL

Oh. Well you were. There may've been two of you. Either that or you got around real fast. You were dressed real nice in a business suit. And it glittered. You looked very handsome.

BRUCE

Really?

ART

Obviously a delusion. What about me then?

CAL

Yes, you were there.

ART

Yes, I know that! What was I doing?

CAL

You were putting up big signs.

ART

What was I wearing?

BRUCE

What did the signs say?

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ART

(To Bruce)

Do you mind? We had to listen to endless descriptions of your fantastic glittering dance suit, I think it's only fair he tell me what I was wearing.

BRUCE

That's not as important as the signs.

ART

It's every bit as important as the signs! Go on then, what was it? A dazzling black tux? A baseball jersey? One of those flashy little vests with the beads you can buy in Mexico?

CAL

No, I think you were just wearing a white shirt. And white pants.

ART

White shirt and white pants?! I had no accessories?

CAL

I don't think so.

ART

Are you sure that was me?

CAL

Yeah, it was you.

ART

You didn't get me confused with someone else in your dream? Someone less interesting?

CAL

I don't think so.

BRUCE

Now what about the signs he was posting?

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ART

How come he gets an amazing besequined dance suit and I'm stuck in a white shirt and pants?

BRUCE

Art, shut up about that for a minute!

CAL

It wasn't a dance suit, it was a business suit.

BRUCE

Look, what's the difference??

CAL

(Together)

The lapels.

ART

(Together)

The lapels.

BRUCE

I mean WHO CARES?

Art open his mouth wide to reply.  
Before he can respond:

BRUCE (CONT'D)

I mean, the costume isn't the most important part of the dream to examine here. What's important is what the signs are saying. Now, Cal, I ask you: what did the signs say?

CAL

Well.

Cal reflects. A long pause.

CAL (CONT'D)

I don't remember.

Disappointed GROANS from Art and Bruce. Art lets Cal's head drop to the oats.

CAL (CONT'D)

Wait a minute! Okay.

BRUCE

You remember?

CAL

Well, I've got good news and bad news.

BRUCE

Bad news first.

ART

No, good news first! He might forget halfway through.

BRUCE

Oh yeah.

CAL

Okay. The good news is: I remembered why I can't remember what the signs are saying. It's because the signs only have one letter each on them.

BRUCE

And the bad news?

CAL

I can't remember what the letters are.

Another frustrated reaction.

CAL (CONT'D)

Wait! I remember two of them! "R" and "E."

BRUCE

How many signs with letters do you think there were?

CAL

Oh, I don't know. A couple dozen.

BRUCE

And you can only remember "R" and E."

CAL

Well... That "R" could have been a "P."

ART

Oh, this is hopeless! We're wasting our time trying to analyze vacuum-head's dreams. It'd be more constructive knocking our heads against the harder oats.

BRUCE

I could help you out there.

ART

Is that some kind of threat?!

CAL

(To Bruce)

What do you want to learn from my dreams anyway?

BRUCE

That's classified.

CAL

Classified? Are we in some sort of army or something?

ART

(Loud whisper to Bruce)

He knows too much! I think he needs to be demilitarized right now!

BRUCE

Shut up, Art.

ART

DISSENSION IN THE RANKS!

Bruce punches Art in the head.

Art drops to the ground.

CAL

Why do you want to know about my dreams?

BRUCE

I'm just intensely curious.

CAL

You've never been curious about anything I've done before.

BRUCE

That's true.

CAL

So why are you interested in my dreams?

BRUCE

(Awkwardly joking)

Because they're there?

Bruce gives a forced laugh,  
trying to make light. Cal looks  
at him.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Look, you're the only one in here whose dreams we can use.  
Me, I don't dream. At all. No output.

CAL

What about Arthur?

BRUCE

Oh he's useless, isn't he?

CAL

Doesn't he dream?

BRUCE

He does, but it's always the same thing. Of no use at all.

CAL

What do you dream about, Arthur?

Art holds his head and glares at  
Bruce.

ART

Fascist.

CAL

You dream about fascists?

ART

No of course not. I was referring to Hitler over there!

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Bruce takes a step toward Art,  
who jumps and retreats to the  
other side.

BRUCE

I think you're mixing your military metaphors.

ART

Quiet you.

CAL

(To Art)

So what is it you dream about?

ART

I dream about the day the world will drop the shackles of  
dictatorship known as Bruce and freely embrace the communist  
spirit that lives in, nay radiates from the being called  
Arthur.

BRUCE

So you've had an interesting dream for once. Too bad it has  
no basis in reality.

ART

Oh no?

BRUCE

Oh no.

ART

Right! General elections! I call!

BRUCE

No!

CAL

I thought we had general elections yesterday.

BRUCE

We did.

ART

Right, and we're having them again. Now, platforms: Bruce has  
his little I'm-a-fascist-dictator-and-everybody's-got-to-do-  
exactly-what-I-say ticket.

BRUCE

I'm a socialist. Dictators don't get elected.

ART

Whatever. And I'm running on the communist-slash-peace ticket. Now--

BRUCE

I'm changing mine to socialist-slash-peace.

ART

Fine. You won't fool anyone. Now: pre-election poll. All those who want to see Bruce and his fascist-slash-alleged-peace party elected...

BRUCE

Re-elected, in this case.

ART

Show off. HANDS!

Bruce raises his hand.

ART (CONT'D)

Okay. One vote. Perhaps more campaigning is in order for the Bruce camp. Now: All those who want to see Art, i.e. me, and his communist-and-only-true-peace party elected... HANDS!

Art shoots his hand up. A beat.

ART (CONT'D)

Yes, well, bear in mind this is a pre-election poll, so there is a margin of error of plus or minus one hundred percent. Now. Undecided. HANDS!

Cal raises his hand.

BRUCE

That looks like me one and you one, with one undecided.

ART

Not necessarily. You forgot the absentee ballots.

BRUCE

Absentee--? From who? The squirrels?

ART

Shut up about that! Now:

Campaign speeches. BRUCE

Quiet. I'm running this. ART

Well hurry it up. BRUCE

Then stop interrupting me! ART

Campaign speeches! BRUCE

I'm doing it. Just stay over there and be quiet. Now: ART  
campaign speeches.

I'll go first. BRUCE

Oh you'd like that, wouldn't you? ART

But Bruce has already taken an orator's stance between the two of them. Art digs into his pocket and starts fiddling with a stop watch. He will watch the time, fully involved in the watch, through Bruce's entire speech.

BRUCE  
Gentlemen. Cal. Gentleman Cal. I think my political history speaks for itself. Day in and day out I have been your leader, and quite frankly, without me we would not be where we are today. I'm not saying life is perfect, but you know something? It's not that bad. If certain others are elected in my place, the future seems much more uncertain. Who knows what future they could lead us into. Granted, it could be something great, but it could also be something very, very bad. And I'd like to give my barely respected opponent the benefit of the doubt, but if you only know what he dreamed about--

A little BEEP sounds. Art pounces.

ART

TIME!!

Art pushes Bruce out of the space so he can begin his speech. Cal claps politely as Bruce steps down. Art pulls out index cards.

ART (CONT'D)

(In Great Orator mode)

A child with a broken leg. A family without a home. A nuclear holocaust. All of these--

BRUCE

Stop watch.

Art tosses the stop watch to Bruce, who begins to time him.

ART

(Quickly catching up)

A child with a broken leg, family without a home, nuclear holocaust, all of these SCENARIOS are possible and possibly inevitable if you elect the man they call Bruce. An investigation into Bruce's personal life shows an unusually high number of physical assaults.

(Flipping note card)

Witnesses have been quoted as saying he's also frequently irritable or "ornery" as one person has described him. I ask you, voting public, do we really want someone like that in office?

(Flipping note card)

While Bruce has been, and I use the phrase loosely, "in charge," there has been an alarming increase in the number of personal property thefts. A recent survey shows--

The stop watch BEEPS.

BRUCE

Time!

ART

(Sneaking it in)

Vote communist peace for change!

BRUCE

TIME!

ART

I made it through three note cards that time.

BRUCE

P-R!

ART

P-R!

Bruce turns and talks to Cal, shaking his hand, patting his shoulder, and leading him around the space. Art tries to get to Cal but Bruce blocks him at every move. This irritates Art greatly.

Finally, Bruce moves back to the speech area. Art jumps in and begins talking to Cal.

BRUCE

Open forum!

ART

No. I just started P-R!

BRUCE

Are you declining open forum?

ART

I hate you.

Art trudges back to the speech area. He and Bruce are now "on stage," with Cal as the audience.

BRUCE

We officially open the forum. Any questions from the audience?

CAL

Art, what do you dream about?

ART

A glorious win for the communist peace party and maybe a small parade after the win.

CAL

No, I mean what do you dream about at night?

Art looks nervously at Bruce, who waits for his reply.

ART

Pass.

CAL

What?

ART

I have no comment at this time. Next question.

CAL

Oh. I would like to know where each of the candidates stands on the trade embargo issue.

BRUCE

Well, about five foot ten. Little political humor there for you...

ART

Very good question and one that demands a detailed examination from every side of the issue. Now:

BRUCE

I'm for it.

ART

Well, I'm against it then.

BRUCE

That's settled. Any other questions?

CAL

If elected, what would be your first task in office?

ART

This is after the parade?

CAL

Yes.

ART

Well, I'm going to propose legislation that would toughen the laws for theft around here. And maybe look into reinstating the death penalty.

BRUCE

I gave you that pen back.

ART

It had no ink left!

BRUCE

I know. I ran out seven pages in.

ART

And that was my stationery! Now I have nothing to write official government memos on!

BRUCE

You're not elected yet.

ART

And I have nothing to write official government memos with!!

BRUCE

You don't sound too prepared for office.

ART

You don't either with stationery that says "From the mind of Art."

BRUCE

Maybe I crossed out "Art" and wrote in "Bruce."

ART

Oh! Absolute power corrupts absolutely!

CAL

What about you, Bruce?

BRUCE

What about me what?

CAL

If you were elected--

BRUCE

Re-elected.

CAL

Re-elected, what would you do first in office?

BRUCE

Hmmm. Take a nap, probably. Then maybe clean up the place a little bit. Get you guys to help. Then get something to eat maybe, then we could play some ball.

CAL

So basically you'd do the same thing you do every day.

BRUCE

Basically.

ART

See? You can elect someone who has no ambitions outside of the teensy-tiny world in which we currently exist, or you can elect someone who's not afraid to dream big, to push the envelope, to make something of our dreary existence. Because I want to live, dammit! I want to fly like an eagle, to the sea!

BRUCE

Public forum is closing, apparently grandstanding has taken over.

ART

I happen to be telling the truth here. If you can't handle it...

BRUCE

I can handle the truth fine. It's these flights of fancy that annoy me.

ART

This can be a reality! That's what I'm telling you.

(Addressing Cal now)

That's what I'm telling you! I can change all this!

BRUCE

Any other questions?

CAL

Yeah, one. Art, what do you dream about?

ART

Oh for-- now you already asked me that!

CAL

You said, "No comment at this time." I was wondering if you would comment at this time.

ART

Is this the issue that's gonna decide the election? The content of my dreams?!

CAL

I just want to know.

BRUCE

The public has a right to know.

ART

The content of dreams is a private matter. There's no reason why it should be part of an electoral campaign.

BRUCE

Oh I disagree.

CAL

Wholeheartedly?

BRUCE

Yes, I would say I disagree wholeheartedly. Strongly, too.

CAL

How so?

BRUCE

A dream is a representation of one's hopes and fears, condensed and presented symbolically. A look at a candidate's dream will show you his true agenda. It'll tell you what really occupies his time.

ART

Ha! And you admitted you didn't dream! Therefore, by your own definition, your true agenda is a big fat blank screen.

BRUCE

That may be true.

ART

(Snorting)

There's a leadership that really inspires confidence.

CAL

What do you dream about, Art?

BRUCE

Yes, what do you dream about, Art?

A pause.

ART

Well first of all, I don't believe Bruce's pat little theory about dreams representing a person's agenda, and second, I want it to be known that this isn't a dream that I would classify as 'recurring'...

BRUCE

Hurry up.

ART

This isn't easy! Okay, I'm sure it's no big deal. Lately, and it hasn't been every night, but once in a while I dream about... [inaudible.]

CAL

'Bout what?

BRUCE

About what, Art?

ART

(Ashamed)

About squirrels! I dream about squirrels. There, are you happy, Sigmund Freud?

BRUCE

Yeah, I guess so.

CAL

You dream about squirrels?

ART

Yes!

CAL

What are they doing?

ART

What are they-- I don't know! Nothing. They're doing squirrel things, scampering and capering and such.

BRUCE

They're not even gathering nuts or doing something productive, are they? They're certainly not passing legislation of theft laws.

ART

No...

BRUCE

So there, voting public, you have it. One man who has no dream and one man who has a dream-- a scampering, capering one-- a dream of squirrels. Time to vote. Everyone for Art and his commie squirrel party, hands.

Art raises his hand  
halfheartedly.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

And everyone for the Bruce-for-socialism party, hands.

Bruce raises his hand. After a  
second, Cal raises his hand.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Any undecided? I guess not. So Bruce-for-socialism is victorious, and the president-elect will promptly celebrate by taking a nap.

ART

Typical!

Art sits at the back wall, looking through his note cards, moping and dejected. Bruce starts toward his sleeping space, then turns and walks over to Cal.

BRUCE

Cal...

CAL

Yeah?

BRUCE

If you should happen to dream about anything else, would you write it down for me?

CAL

I can do that.

BRUCE

Good.

Bruce hands Cal a piece of paper and pen from his pocket. Cal looks at the paper.

CAL

(Reading)

"From the Mind of Art?"

Bruce points to the paper. Cal looks again.

CAL (CONT'D)

Oh. "From the Mind of Bruce."

Bruce nods and moves away to his sleeping space.

BRUCE

That's a good boy.

CAL

But if I'm writing out my dreams, I suppose the correct heading would be "From the Mind of Cal." Right Bruce? Bruce?

But Bruce has started his nap. Cal shrugs and begins to cross out "Bruce" to write in "Cal." The pen doesn't work. He pockets pen and paper.

Cal crosses to Art, still sitting.

CAL

Are you gonna take a nap too?

ART

These political elections are getting dirtier every day.

CAL

What do you mean?

ART

He didn't have to use that information about my dreams. That's a low blow, even by his standards.

CAL

You mean about your squirrel dreams?

ART

Yes of course that's what I mean!

CAL

That was your best campaign point, by the way.

ART

What do you mean?

CAL

Well, you know, the squirrels. They'd make a good mascot for you. You could put them on a flag or something.

ART

But they represent frivolity andandand lack of seriousness!

CAL

I thought it was kind of cute.

ART

The squirrels stand for everything I should be working to avoid in my life! I need clearer focus.

CAL

They're just squirrels. I don't know if they really stand for anything.

ART

The squirrel dream didn't make you vote for Bruce?

CAL

No.

ART

Then why did you vote for him?

CAL

You kept going on and on about changing everything.

ART

Yeah...

CAL

I don't know. I guess I kind of like things the way they are. Bruce has always been in charge.

ART

Fine. I guess I should've learned by now.

CAL

Better luck next time.

ART

I'm going for five note cards next time.

CAL

Good for you.

Cal stretches on the floor.

ART

'Night.

CAL

You goin' to sleep soon?

ART

I don't know. No. Yes. Maybe.

CAL

Sweet dreams.

(A beat)

Of squirrels.

ART

Shut up now.

Art, seated among the oats, looks again at the note cards and then drops them to the ground. He leans his head on his hand, sighs, and closes his eyes.

As lights fade, video of squirrels appear. They scamper and caper in the grass. Eventually the camera tilts to the sky and the image brightens, then fades out.

THE END