

NOBODY'S DUMMIES

What if a DUMMY isn't really?

— by Rick Butts —



When a friend and a surveillance reindeer stage an intervention, can Freddie turn his life around?

NOBODY'S DUMMIES

A play in ten minutes

by

Rick Butts

What if a dummy isn't really?

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

FREDDIE, a warehouse worker who loves coffee talk.

SHERRY, a warehouse worker who loves coffee with less talk.

BLITZEN, a toy reindeer the size of a teddy bear voiced by the actor playing SHERRY.

Roles may be cast with actors of any race and any vocal characteristics.

SCENE

On the right, a table with two coffee mugs and two chairs where workers take their breaks. There are no walls separating this space from the boss's "office" on the left. In this office area, there is a "boss chair" on wheels and a duffle bag on the floor containing coffee pods. A small toy reindeer is positioned close by to keep an eye on the bag.

TIME

Now.

SYNOPSIS

Freddie tells his co-worker Sherry they should search the boss's office in their hunt for the coffee he thinks the boss is hoarding. Sherry knows they will be in trouble if they get caught. Freddie argues that the boss is out for the day, so they go in and are immediately challenged by Blitzen the surveillance reindeer inside the office. An amateur ventriloquist, Sherry teams up with Blitzen to teach Freddie a life lesson, that reckless actions have consequences. Trapped and at the mercy of Blitzen, Freddie realizes that his workplace shenanigans are about to be exposed. He runs from the office crying like a baby as Sherry and Blitzen wonder whether Freddie has learned anything from the experience. Probably not, they agree.

BLITZEN voiced by the actor playing SHERRY

The actor performing Sherry is also the voice of Blitzen, the surveillance reindeer that watches over the boss's stash of coffee. Sherry is a truly terrible ventriloquist who performs at community events and never misses an opportunity to voice inanimate objects. Obviously awkward ventriloquism is the desired effect here. When she speaks as Blitzen, it comes off as artificial even mechanical as she pretends—and fails—to speak without moving her lips.

Blitzen is a surveillance reindeer who engages with Freddie and Sherry when they activate her with the wake word "Blitzen". Blitzen is later revealed to be a sophisticated communications technology concealing a camera and a microphone programmed to record audio and video and transfer files to the company's network Cloud storage. Yet the audience has seen that Blitzen's voice comes from Sherry not the toy reindeer. In practice, both situations can't be true. Unless of course Blitzen truly is nobody's dummy.

SETTING: The break table in the warehouse outside the boss's "office."

AT RISE: Two warehouse workers in overalls SHERRY and FREDDIE sit at the table drinking bad coffee. SHERRY wears an orange helmet. FREDDIE has a hockey team toque pulled down low over his ears.

(In the distance, the sounds of trucks backing up, a loud crash of something hitting the floor.)

SHERRY

Freddie! No! Don't say it!

FREDDIE

(Shouts at someone off-stage.)

Yeah, we'll get that.

SHERRY

Now? We just sat down.

FREDDIE

Later.

SHERRY

We got a thousand pallets to load and wrap.

FREDDIE

Later.

SHERRY

And a hundred trucks coming in.

FREDDIE

Don't worry.

SHERRY

I worry.

FREDDIE

The forklift's down.

SHERRY

Again? We can't do anything without the forklift.

FREDDIE

My point exactly. Wait for it.

(Sound of door slamming off-stage.)

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Boss is gone. Forklift's down. Now you got all day to sit and finish your coffee.

SHERRY

Is he really gone for the day?

FREDDIE

He's at the dentist. That's his story. Says it might be all day.

SHERRY

All day at the dentist?

FREDDIE

Yup. Getting a wisdom tooth pulled. Good luck finding one.

SHERRY

(Sipping coffee, choking.)

I'd kill for a good cup of coffee.

FREDDIE

You smell *his* coffee? I'd kill *him* for that stuff.

SHERRY

I don't know if I can take another sip.

FREDDIE

If you pinch your nose closed, you get it down without smelling it. Take a big gulp.

SHERRY

What's wrong with your forklift?

FREDDIE

Oopsie! Looks like someone forgot to plug it in overnight.

SHERRY

It'll take hours to charge.

FREDDIE

Exactly. We can't do much without the forklift. So sit back and enjoy your coffee.

SHERRY

I wish we had his coffee.

FREDDIE

You can smell him coming at a hundred feet.

SHERRY

I know it's him when he's five racks over in bidets and sanitary drains.

FREDDIE

He's hoarding the good stuff, you know.

SHERRY

We searched every rack in the warehouse for his coffee stash!

FREDDIE

(Gesturing at the boss's "office.")

We haven't searched *everywhere*.

SHERRY

No! We can't go in there.

FREDDIE

It's not fair. It shouldn't be allowed. He's got the good stuff in there.

SHERRY

We can't search his office. We'll get fired if he finds out.

FREDDIE

You went into the dumpster for his used pods. You said yourself, it's not fair.

SHERRY

You said that. But you're right, it isn't fair.

FREDDIE

What do you think of his coffee?

SHERRY

I dream about it. Complex. Smoky. Nutty. A hint of floral. A fruity finish.

FREDDIE

And our coffee?

SHERRY

Fermented cat thingy.

FREDDIE

There's only one coffee station. When *we* brew, we get crap-in-a-cup. *He* brews and it's coffee to die for. Where are his used pods? Gone. Like they never existed.

SHERRY

It's a good thing I get up at night to pee. It wakes me out of the nightmares. Last night there's a decapitated head of a giant coffee pod on my pillow.

FREDDIE

It's probably too much coffee before bed.

SHERRY

It's too much *crap* coffee all day at the warehouse!

FREDDIE

(Gesturing at the boss's "office.")

So what are we going to do about it? It's got to be in his office. You've got a chance to be the little man who stands up for the rest of us. Be that little man, Sherry.

SHERRY

You know I'm a woman right? You're much better suited to be the little man.

FREDDIE

His office is calling to you—the door's open. He's gone for the day. It's time to stop being a baby and put on your big boy pants. Sorry, *big woman* pants. I'll stay here to be the look-out.

SHERRY

Like you were the look-out last time?

FREDDIE

You should let that go. You're obsessing. I didn't see the raccoon going in after you. Maybe you shouldn't have been wearing headphones while dumpster diving.

SHERRY

I was on break. Listening to a podcast. My time.

FREDDIE

I warned you. Banged "dum da-da-da-dum dum" on the lid so you'd know it was a raccoon attack. They can be territorial.

SHERRY

Territorial? He bit me!

FREDDIE

Okay, no one's fault. Just saying that if you go into a dumpster for the cause, you can walk into the boss's office for a little look-see.

SHERRY

He bit me *twice*. Not once. Twice. That demonstrates malice! NO WAY I'M GOING IN!

FREDDIE

His office is calling you. You owe it to yourself to confront your fears. It'll help you overcome your self loathing. I'll keep watch from over here.

SHERRY

NOPE. NOT GOING IN. NO WAY!

FREDDIE

Searching the boss's office will let you feel good about yourself again. Get over the screw-up with the raccoon thing.

(Takes a big swig of his coffee. Grimaces.)

Fine. I'll go in.

(FREDDIE goes to the “office.” SHERRY follows.)

SHERRY

Don’t call me a baby. And I’m not staying out here by myself.

(FREDDIE sits in the boss’s chair. SHERRY spots BLITZEN on the floor, picks it up.)

FREDDIE

Bosses get nice offices. Big window. Big chair. With wheels and everything—

SHERRY

(To BLITZEN.)

Are you a Christmas ornament?

(Turns BLITZEN towards FREDDIE.)

Say hello to Freddie. Hey, why would he keep a Christmas thing around all year?

FREDDIE

Really? You’re asking me? I don’t know. It’s weird. I came in one morning early and found him talking to it like it’s a pet bird. Calls it Blitzen.

(SHERRY does a ventriloquism routine with BLITZEN. Her act is awful but it fools FREDDIE.)

SHERRY *speaking as* BLITZEN

Uh huh.

FREDDIE

You hear that?

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

Uh huh? Uh huh.

FREDDIE

You heard *un huh* twice?

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

No. Once. I heard *uh huh* once. I was saying *uh huh* to you that I heard *uh huh*.

FREDDIE

Who said *uh huh* first?

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

(Gestures at BLITZEN.)

She did!

FREDDIE

Give it.

(SHERRY tosses BLITZEN to FREDDIE.)

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

(Handling BLITZEN roughly.)

Ok reindeer, talk.

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

Freddie, her eyes are flashing!

FREDDIE

Sherry, you're seeing things. I'm poking her eyes. There's nothing going on.

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

Give her back. Stop hurting her.

FREDDIE

It's probably one of those talking toys. You press a button somewhere and it says stuff.

(To BLITZEN. Louder.)

Ya filthy cari-BOO! I'll give you back to Auntie Sherry so she can pull your antlers off—

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

No! Auntie Sherry would never hurt her—

FREDDIE

(Banging BLITZEN's head on the floor.)

Maybe if you die, you'll talk.

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

Stop it! Don't kill her!

FREDDIE

(Holds BLITZEN to his face.)

We can't have this thing telling the boss I left the forklift unplugged on purpose.

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

She's a reindeer, not a rat!

(SHERRY takes BLITZEN, puts her on the floor near the duffle bag.)

You sit there quiet. No one's going to hurt you, Blitzen.

SHERRY *speaking as BLITZEN*

Uh huh.

FREDDIE

Did you touch the button again?

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

No.

FREDDIE

Leave it alone. We got to find his coffee. Search everywhere. I'll check out the chair.

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

(Goes to the “window” downstage.)

Look at the size of this window. You can see the whole parking lot.

(Stares at something. Suddenly alarmed.)

Freddie! His parking spot! He’s still there in his car!

FREDDIE

Get out of the window! Down!

(SHERRY dives to the floor.)

What’s he doing?

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

(On the floor, crawls frantically to the “door” right.)

I can’t see. I’m on the floor.

FREDDIE

Get up. Wait. Stay down. Now look out. But not when he’s looking back.

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

(On her knees, peeking out.)

He’s stopped at receiving.

FREDDIE

Oh my God. He forgot something. He’s coming back. We better get out of here—

(Starts to run out right.)

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

Freddie, stop!

(FREDDIE freezes, stands in front of the window.)

I mean stop because he’s out of his car and looking at his window.

(FREDDIE drops down with a thud, crawls around in circles, gets tangled up on top of BLITZEN.)

FREDDIE

Ow! She’s biting me! Stop Blitzen—

SHERRY *speaking as BLITZEN*

(Turns her face away from FREDDIE. Shouts.)

Ow back at you. Get off me—

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

Freddie, get off her! Don’t hurt Blitzen!

SHERRY *speaking as BLITZEN*

Have either of you fallen? Do you need me to call 911? Or just sound a very shrill annoying siren that will bring everyone in the building to your assistance?

FREDDIE

(Makes the shssh sign to SHERRY. Whispers.)

Don't tell her anyone's here.

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

Blitzen, thank you for asking. No one's here.

SHERRY *speaking as BLITZEN*

Okay Sherry. Is Freddie really okay? He sounds a little stressed.

(A car horn goes *beep-beep* in the parking lot.)

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

He's fine, Blitzen. He's just on the floor to avoid detection by the boss.

FREDDIE

What's happening outside?

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

It's MARIE! He's picking up MARIE from receiving. She's getting into his car.

FREDDIE

(Crawls to the other side of the window.)

MARIE! The hottie! You know what this means?

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

She has the same dentist?

FREDDIE

No! She's the missing link!

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

Fine. Missing link. Who woulda thought? Can I get up now? My knees are killing me.

FREDDIE

Get up. But stay down. What's happening now?

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

(Stands with her back downstage on one side of the window.)

They're gone. You can get up.

FREDDIE

Marie? She's hired last month. By the boss. She's hot. She's into coffee. It's obvious.

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

She's into hot coffee?

FREDDIE

Sherry, work with me here. They're doing flirty-flirty from day one. He's drinking the crap coffee we drink. Suddenly he's drinking the good stuff. She's got the *same* coffee!?

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

The other day, I thought it was the boss in flex drains. I could smell his coffee over the rubber. I swing in and it's Marie! At the four-inch corrugated. Drinking the boss's coffee!

FREDDIE

This changes everything. We need a new plan. But now we need to know what coffee they're bringing in.

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

Why don't you ask Blitzen?

SHERRY *speaking as BLITZEN*

Check in the duffle bag, ya doofus.

(FREDDIE opens the bag, It's the coffee pods.)

FREDDIE

His coffee! Lat-a-luv Beans Cream Royal Chocolate Espresso Yourself. From the gods!

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

No. From that undercover surveillance reindeer. Blitzen!

FREDDIE

Surveillance reindeer? Blitzen?

SHERRY *speaking as BLITZEN*

(Turns her face away from FREDDIE. Laughs wildly.)

You guys should see your faces.

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

I need a coffee.

SHERRY *speaking as BLITZEN*

No problem Sherry. The boss has plenty of pods right here in his duffle bag.

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

Thank you. Would you like a coffee, Blitzen?

SHERRY *speaking as BLITZEN*

Me? No. Too much coffee will kill you.

FREDDIE

We'll be dead when the boss finds out we've been in his office talking to his surveillance reindeer. Are you one of those deer-cams?

SHERRY *speaking as* BLITZEN

Not just a deer-cam, Freddie. A deer-cam *with 4K video*. And full audio capabilities. Time and date stamp on everything I record.

FREDDIE

CRAP-puccino!

(FREDDIE runs out right screaming. SHERRY holds BLITZEN and watches him go. They sit together in the boss's chair.)

SHERRY *speaking as* BLITZEN

Do you think he's learned a lesson?

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

No.

SHERRY *speaking as* BLITZEN

He certainly enjoys conspiracy theories.

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

He does.

SHERRY *speaking as* BLITZEN

Will he eventually figure it out?

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

If I don't tell him? Probably not. Plus it would ruin his fun.

SHERRY *speaking as* BLITZEN

And you're never going to tell him?

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

No.

SHERRY *speaking as* BLITZEN

That's probably for the best. And I won't tell the boss about today. You want a coffee?

SHERRY *speaking as herself*

Yeah. Coffee would be good.

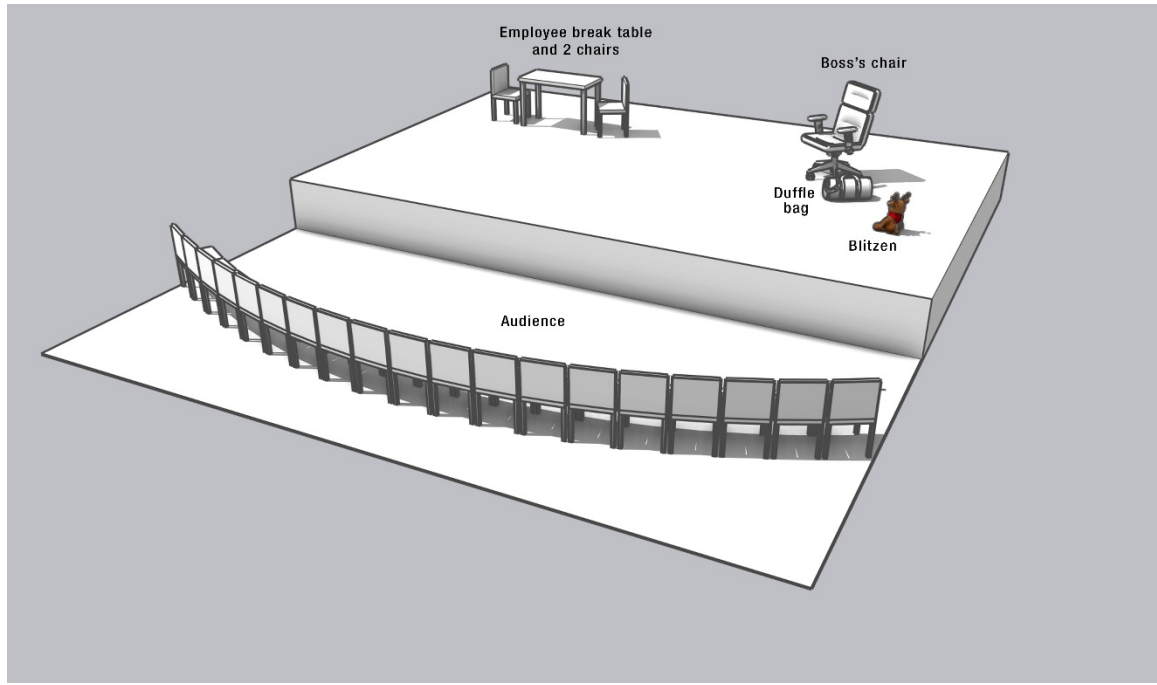
(SHERRY takes a couple of coffee pods from the bag and exits right carrying BLITZEN with her.)

(END OF PLAY)

PRODUCTION NOTES

This play is meant to be accessible to venues in which simple staging is critical, for example, in festival formats where numerous plays are being accommodated on stage in quick succession and time does not allow for elaborate set dressing.

This play works on a simple set as actors imagine the office door and window



DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Nobodies Dummies is a classic flip of the script. It's the story of Freddie the entitled layabout who manipulates everything to his advantage and Sherry the gentle soul who turns the tables on him for his own good.

Controlling and obsessive, Freddie is a schemer who works in a warehouse. His sense of entitlement is what motivates him. He's driven by his desire for recognition by his superiors. When he loudly volunteers to clean up an accidental spill by someone else he does so only to be overheard by the boss saving the day. In fact, he has no intention of ever doing it. He secretly unplugs the forklift the night before the boss is going to be out so he can sit around the next day and drink coffee while he waits for it to recharge.

Freddie's co-worker Sherry sees only the goodness in people. She's happy with her lot in life: she has a decent job, a good work friend like Freddie and time to do her ventriloquism routine on the weekends at community shows. As a follower, she lets Freddie rant that they are owed some rewards that are being withheld by a cabal of . . . everyone. But she doesn't believe him. She accompanies him on his adventures as much to keep him out of trouble as find whatever he's searching for.

When she agrees, against her better judgement, to go into the boss's office in their hunt for the holy grail of great coffee, she's already decided to let her friend experience the "life could be worse" lesson. For his own good. She enlists Blitzen the surveillance reindeer to help her turn the tables on Freddie. Freddie finds himself trapped and at the mercy of Blitzen. He'll be exposed when the boss learns of his warehouse shenanigans. He runs crying like a baby from the office under the watchful eyes of Sherry and Blitzen as they consider whether Freddie has learned anything from the experience. Probably not, they agree.