



PUDDING

By Michael Tooher

A SMITH SCRIPT

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pudding

Michael Toohar

Cast for "Pudding" (with doubling chart)

7 actors in total are required.

The crew is seen onstage in Act II

John - a man in late middle age.

Mary - a young woman in her mid twenties.

Workman 1

Workman 2

Ninja 1

Ninja 2

Ninja 3

Ninja 4

Stylist

Make-up

Hairstylist

Costumer

Photographer

Warm-up

Host

Hostess

Control (VO)

Voice 2 (VO)

Doubling Chart

Workman 1/ Ninja 1 / Stylist / Control (Voice only)

Workman 2/ Ninja 2 / Make-up / Warmup

Ninja 3 / Hairstylist / Host

Ninja 4 / Costumer / Voice 2 (Voice only)

Photographer / Hostess

ACT I, Scene 1 - Morning - Now

A living room. Or, really, just the suggestion of one. Downstage of the cyclorama, two window sills hang, one center, one stage left. A free-standing door and frame upstage right complete the playing area.

The door is open.

Downstage center is a desk. On the desk, and clustered around it are a variety of materials: telephone books, markers, packing materials and small cardboard shipping boxes.

Haphazardly deposited around, atop and between these items are many, many boxes of pudding.

Jell-O chocolate pudding.

Asleep at the desk, snoring loudly, is JOHN, a man in late middle age. He is somewhat paunchy, somewhat balding and is wearing thick glasses.

Gradually he wakes up. He collects himself slowly, blinking and peering around the room. He takes a swig of water from a water bottle. After stretching and groaning a bit, he starts his day.

Placing one hand over his eyes, he makes a grab for one of the telephone books and places it in front of himself. He looks down at it.

JOHN

Louisville, Kentucky.

Placing his hand over his eyes again, he rifles through the book, allowing it to open at a random page. With one hand, he covers

his eyes. He takes his free hand and moves it in circles over the page, finally jabbing the page with his index finger.

JOHN

Mrs. Deliah Stout Wilbanks, 20 Man O' War Boulevard , Louisville Kentucky

Placing a small card to mark the address, he picks up a shipping box and begins to laboriously copy the address on it. That done, he places a box of pudding into it. Then he seals the box.

JOHN (Continued)

One...

As he covers his eyes and reaches for a new phone book, MARY enters upstage left. In her mid-twenties, she is poised, pretty and immaculately dressed in a coordinated outfit.

She is walking outside the room, looking through the windows while consulting the piece of paper in her hand. She stops by the door, looking to the side of the door frame as if reading the address. Finally satisfied that she is in the right place, she looks through the open door.

She knocks.

There is no reaction from JOHN, who is deeply engrossed in his work.

She knocks again, louder.

Still no reaction from JOHN.

Frowning and peering at him with displeasure, she shuts the door and beats on it vigorously.

JOHN does not notice.

MARY opens the door, standing in the doorway for a moment with a cross expression on her face. Then after taking a moment to collect herself, she smiles and marches over to the table where JOHN is working.

MARY
May I come in?

JOHN
What? Oh...!
(He looks to the door, then at MARY, then back at the door.)
Who are you?

MARY
All positive social interactions start with a hello.

JOHN
What?

MARY
Try it. Hello.

JOHN
Ummm...

MARY
Go ahead, you can do it.

JOHN
Hello?

MARY
Hello.

(Pause)
There. That wasn't so hard, was it?
(JOHN stares at her.)

May I come in?

JOHN
(Pause)
You are in.

MARY

So I am. That seems a bit confusing, doesn't it? Asking to come in when one is already in.

JOHN

Who are you?

MARY

But the door was already open.

JOHN

Oh.

MARY

And that's really an invitation isn't it? An open door just seems to say "Here I am world, please come visit."

JOHN

It does?

MARY

Of course, the entire "May I come in" ritual is really just a formality. Like when you meet an acquaintance on the street and say "How are you?" You really don't care, it's just something you say.

JOHN

Huh?

MARY

And, as I'm sure you realize, having the door open negates all privacy rights. I really didn't have to ask you if I could come in. But I did. I like to observe the social niceties. Courtesy is the grease that allows society to function.

JOHN

Who are you?

MARY

Oh. Excuse me for prattling on....

(Extends hand)

I'm Mary.

JOHN

(Shaking her hand warily)

Hello.

MARY

And you must be...

(Looks at paper in her hand)

Fernando.

JOHN

Who?

MARY

Fernando.

JOHN

Fernando?

MARY

Yes. Hello Fernando, I'm very pleased to meet you.

JOHN

No.

MARY

No?

JOHN

No.

MARY

No what?

JOHN

I'm not Fernando.

MARY

Is that an alias?

JOHN

No.

MARY

A nickname perhaps? Doing business as...

JOHN

My name is John.

MARY

John?

Yes. <u>John</u> .	JOHN
John?	MARY
Yes.	JOHN
John...	MARY
What?	JOHN
Your name is ...John?	MARY
It is.	JOHN
But...	MARY
But what?	JOHN
This says Fernando.	MARY
See? <i>(She shows him the paper)</i>	
So it does.	JOHN
Well, there you go.	MARY
But that's not me. I'm John.	JOHN
But the paper says Fernando.	MARY

JOHN

That's not me. Sorry.

JOHN returns to his work. MARY stands there perplexed, looking first at the paper, then at her surroundings, then back at the paper.

MARY

But this is Hillcrest Drive, correct?

JOHN

(startled)

You're still here?

MARY

Yes. And this is Hillcrest Drive, correct?

JOHN

Yes, but...

MARY

114 South Hillcrest Drive.

JOHN

No.

MARY

No?

JOHN

Not South. This is North Hillcrest Drive. South Hillcrest Drive is closer to the beach.

MARY

And there's a 114 there? On South Hillcrest Drive?

JOHN

Yes.

MARY

That's...that's.... amazing ...

JOHN

We get each other's mail all the time.

MARY

You do?

(Shakes head)

Amazing...

JOHN

That's amazing? How is that amazing?

MARY

How? Amazingly stupid, that's how. Who in their right mind would use the same numbering system for different parts of the same street? What do we have city planners for? What are we paying them for? Shouldn't they be planning things? Logically? Sensibly? This idiotic system, if you can call it that, is created to foster chaos. It breeds disorder. Doesn't it? Doesn't it?

JOHN

I never thought about it.

MARY

No?

JOHN

But you're right.

MARY

I know I'm right.

(Pause)

Do you know what the single largest threat to human civilization is?

JOHN

That's quite a conversational leap...

MARY

Work with me.

JOHN

Oh...sure...

MARY

Well, do you know?

JOHN

Ummm...no.

MARY

(Intensely)

Chaos. And what does that lead to? Disorder, pandemonium and anarchy.

JOHN

Oh.

MARY

For example, in 1957 the U.S. government gave the city of Rio de Janeiro, which at the time had the highest rate of pedestrian traffic deaths in the world, a complete new set of traffic lights. The Brazilians had never seen traffic lights before. It cost us a million dollars to install the system in their fair city at a time when a million dollars was a great deal of money. So...care to guess what happened to pedestrian traffic deaths in Rio in 1957?

(JOHN shakes his head)

They went up. They went up! And do you know why they went up?

JOHN

No.

MARY

Because no one bothered to tell the good citizens of Rio what they were for. The Brazilians thought they were decorations for carnival. So not only did the lights fail to bring order to their traffic system, the drivers were distracted by the “decorations.”

JOHN

Wow.

MARY

And that’s only one story in a billion. And it all comes back to chaos. It’s a cancer that seeps into our existence and threatens all we hold dear. I hate it. I hate it. It’s so...so...so...

JOHN

So...what?

MARY

Untidy.

JOHN

(Pause)

I guess it is.

MARY

(Sighs)

And now I’ve lost Fernando.