

FIRST IN LINE
and Other Traumatic Life Experiences

By Rob Frankel

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DEDICATION

To Brad, a gentle giant of a fighter, and his loving wife Jill, and beautiful family, Chelsea, Colin, and Carolyn...we'll never forget you.

The Playwright, Rob Frankel

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PRODUCTION NOTES

This play is a compilation of 15 scenes written on the general theme, "Firsts," from the warm and fuzzy, to the downright embarrassing, to the poignant and touching. Scenes may be removed or shuffled as warranted by the production.

This play was written as a traveling show with simple scenery and props. Because of that, the actors will need to ensure they use some basic miming fundamentals to establish the important doors, glasses, etc.

With so many scene changes, the trick is to sacrifice formality for expedience. Characters may bring out their own furnishings as they begin their dialogue. Or you may choose to have some set-up going on in the dark part of the stage as the current scene is concluding. Also see "Sound" for other notes on this.

The curtain call can be lots of fun if each of the characters will create a small sign that they hold up as they take their individual bow. Each sign would indicate some sort of "First" for them personally. Examples would be - "First Time Taking a Bow" or "First Time Uncle Albert Has Seen Me in a Play."

SOUND

Music between scenes helps smooth the many scene changes. There are also a number of places where sound effects will be helpful ("First Time Driving"), but not absolutely necessary. And finally, this play uses some offstage voices, so an offstage standing microphone is very helpful.

FLEXIBLE CASTING

This play can run with as few as 5 females and 5 males, if double casting is used, or as many as twenty or more. Additionally, many roles (e.g. the Poet) can be cast either as male or female. The Poet is an important character. This character is the only "running gag" in the show, and gives the audience something on which to anchor. The person should be suitably snooty, and stick to the poem despite the distractions. Though a traditional 'he' pronoun has been used for stage instructions, please consider it generic and use either gender. See end of playbook for an example of how this play can be double cast.

COSTUMES

Simple costumes work best for this production with accessories such as hats, glasses, pipes added to suggest each of the characters. Because each actor will play several parts and because you never know what your offstage area will look like if you are taking this on tour, keeping the costume changes simple will prevent any gray hair to which the director might be prone.

SETTING

Like the costumes, the setting should be kept as simple as possible. Four large wooden blocks can serve as tables, beds, podiums, etc. In addition, four short stools work well in doubling as chairs, TV stands, steps, etc. If you are not touring you certainly can make your set more elaborate. A movable door on a frame, for example, is a helpful addition in several scenes as "First Blind Date."

PROPS

Act I

FIRST BASE: (Poet) Poetry book, baseball, baseball mitt.

FIRST IN LINE: Two large sets of keys.

FIRST COMPUTER: National Enquirer newspaper, hand-held video game, three telephones, computer keyboard.

CRUSHED: (Poet) Poetry book, large stuffed animal.

FIRST CRUSH: Bag of popcorn, purse, pipe.

FIRST TIME DRIVING: Clipboard, driver's education book, Walkman headphones.

FIRST BRUSH WITH PREJUDICE: Basketball, duffel bag.

ACT II

DECEMBER (Poet): Poetry book, marshmallows, box of Ivory Snowflakes

FIRST HOUSE: Mop, telephone, backgammon game, newspaper, box of Girl Scout Cookies

FIRST BLEMISH: Five pairs of sunglasses, hand-held makeup mirror, large band-aid, large paper bag, tube of acne cream, beekeeper (or other unusual) helmet.

FIRST BLIND DATE: Two message papers, flour bouquet, purse, hair brush, desk mirror, faddish magazine.

FIRST DAY OF SPRING (Poet): Several long-range ("Super Soaker") squirt guns, umbrella.

FIRST TIME YOU'VE SEEN THIS PLAY (Poet): Long rope.

No special properties required for the following scenes:

FIRST DAY OF TEACHING

FIRST PLAY FROM SCRIMMAGE

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

FIRST PLANE RIDE

FIRST DAY OF WINTER

FIRST BOUT WITH DEATH

FIRST CHILD

ACT I
Scene 1: FIRST BASE

POET - stodgy, high-brow poet
BASEBALL PLAYER
UMPIRE

(AT RISE: POET enters solemnly. After stopping, he takes out poetry book from behind back, and smiles at audience. He speaks with high-brow, affected accent.)

POET: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I am Lionel P. Henthrow, Junior, and I will be offering you a suite of eclectic but delightful poetry periodically throughout this evening, hopefully turning this otherwise mundane event into a true artistic happening. *(Eyes blazing and full of himself, POET opens book.)* Our first selection for this evening is entitled, aptly enough, "First Base," by Kenneth Keating Spamworth Diagonal Breakdown. *(Clears throat.)*

Oh, the joy, of sweetest tension,
At the sight of greenest grass,
The baseball looms before me now,
Whose swift white mass I can't let pass.

(A baseball mitt is tossed onto stage at POET's feet from offstage. He is surprised, looks offstage for a moment, but recovers and continues.)

And ninety feet from where I stand,
A cushion of white is placed,
Oh, the thrill that can be mine
If I but achieve first base!

(Now a small ball bounces out onto stage and rolls somewhere near HIS feet. Again he notices and pauses, but continues.)

And I swing at the sphere that is waist high,
A hit! Like lightning I race
Toward the benign serenity that is *(Slows for dramatic ending.)*
Achieving my first...first base.

(Looks up smiles, closes book jauntily, and turns SL to head off. Suddenly, ALL OFFSTAGE ACTORS erupt in baseball cheers, as BASEBALL PLAYER runs at POET and slides, knocking Poet to ground. Louder cheers, as UMPIRE rushes on from SR to them and yells, "SAFE!!" Poet sits up for a moment, groggily, then collapses back to stage. Umpire and Baseball Player grab Poet by each leg and pull offstage. BLACK OUT.)

END OF SCENE

Scene 2
FIRST IN LINE

GARY - exuberant young man who finds himself first in a concert ticket line
LISA - a calm, rational young woman who is second in line
JAMES and JANET - a overly-enthusiastic, in-love couple also in line
ROGER and OTHERS - other people seeking to buy tickets to the concert
DAWN and KAREN - ticket takers

SETTING: Two ticket counters, mimed or real. The first is DSC. The second is SL.

(AT RISE: GARY enters from USR looking around, and swiftly moves to CS, lining up in an imaginary ticket line which faces the audience. Ticket to "The Lifers" are about to open in about ten minutes. Gary is very pleased with himself and punches the air several times, uttering a war whoop.)

GARY: *(Talking to HIMSELF.)* This is great. This is GREAT! First in line, baby, Jenny's gonna love me! Front row tickets to see "The Lifers" - here we come! Ha!

(HE mimes a guitar and whoops out a few rock notes as LISA enters from DSR swiftly, anxiously. She notices Gary, lines up behind him. After a moment, she smiles at Gary.)

LISA: Can't believe "The Lifers" are coming here, can you?

GARY: Huh? Oh, yeah, yeah! Unbelievable. Last stop on the tour, too. They may not be going on tour after this show...

LISA: ...for years. Yeah, I read that, too.

GARY: *(Looking at wristwatch.)* Should be just another few minutes before they open. I really never thought I'd be first in line, you know?! *(Realizing HE's boasting, tries to make HER feel good.)* Well and...and you're second in line! Pretty good!

LISA: *(Smiles.)* Yeah. *(Looks around HER to SL. Distracted.)* Shouldn't be any problem getting a ticket, that's for...*(Stops talking.)*

GARY: *(Noticing.)* What?

LISA: Oh nothing. Just noticing, you know, that other counter...You don't think...

GARY: What? *(Seeing what SHE's saying.)* Oh, that. That's the...no...no, I don't think so. I mean this counter is...you know, facing...this way...

LISA: Right. Right...

(After a pause, a couple - JANET and JAMES - enter from DSL. They hold hands and coo excitedly to each other about the tickets. They pause on entering, glance at LISA and GARY who smile back at them, and then head to the "counter" at SL and continue talking quietly and laughing to each other. Lisa and Gary are quietly unnerved by that. After a moment of glancing and fidgeting.)

End of Freeview

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