Shuffling

Online Version

A Short Comedy by

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DEDICATION

To the artists who make the music, and to the loved ones who make it meaningful.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Lacey, a teenage girl, has finished work at the mall and is waiting – and waiting – for her boyfriend to pick her up. Left stranded yet again, she reevaluates her love life while shuffling through the songs on her phone. Actors portraying each of the songs appear with comedic monologues that stir her emotions, offer advice, and affect her decisions. Ethan, a good-humored co-worker, offers her a ride home and the possibility of future romance.

The play may be performed with anywhere from 3 to 16 actors. Actors playing Songs portray the spirit and style of the genre rather than a particular musical number. Without mimicking a specific artist, your audience may make their own connections - creating individual personal playlists - as the performance unfolds.

CAST *(1 m, 1 f, 1-14 flexible)*

LACEY: Kind, confused, and stranded in a tenuous relationship.
ETHAN: Friendly and funny, and a possible way out.
SONGS 1-14: Various tracks on Lacey's playlist.

NOTES

Lacey and Ethan are the only two characters who appear to interact in the same space. Lacey appears onscreen the whole play. Ethan's window remains on screen to the right of Lacey's allowing him to physically enter and exit for the moments they share. If possible, a similar background or a digital one that suggests the interior of a mall, may be used for both.

Actors playing songs open and close their windows to appear and vanish throughout the play. The backgrounds of these windows can be a single background color as if all the songs exist in the same space, or can be individualized to suit the style of song: a red background for a love song, a horse ranch for a country song, etc.

Actors portraying songs should remember that they are portraying the spirit and style of the genre rather than a particular musical act. Although having a song and a performer in mind will help the actor and director create each character, the specifics should not be shared with the audience. It will be more fun and effective for viewers to make their own connections as the performance unfolds.

There is a lot of flexibility within the playlist. Any script references to gender are simply suggestions, and most, if not all, may be changed with little effect on the story. Costumes and accents may be adapted as needed. SONG 1, for example, might be portrayed as an '80s metal-head, a pretentious Brit, a southern rocker, among others.

The 14 SONGS may be performed by 14 different actors or by a smaller number with several appearing in multiple roles. If need be, all 14 could be performed by one or two talented actors with an abundance of energy and large assortment of hats.

Simply put, feel free to personalize the playlist to fit the needs of your production.

SETTING

A shopping mall/present day.

Shuffling

(LACEY appears on the screen. A computer window with a background suggesting the interior of a mall sits to her right. She looks left then takes out a cellphone. ETHAN enters the right window, surprising her slightly. She relaxes and smiles.)

ETHAN: Sorry. Didn't mean to startle you.
LACEY: No problem.
ETHAN: Another fun day at work, huh?
LACEY: *(Playfully sarcastic.)* Yeah. Nothing I love more than selling books at the mall.
ETHAN: *(Playing along.)* Same here. *(Points around, leans in secretively.)* If any of these people discover this town has a library, we're in serious trouble. By the way, thanks again for bailing me out with the crazy lady.
LACEY: My pleasure. Still not sure if she was looking for books *about* her cats or *for* her cats.

(THEY share a nice laugh followed by a beat of silence.)

ETHAN: Think I'm going to shop a while before heading home. You don't need a ride, do you?
LACEY: No, thanks. I'm meeting someone any minute.
ETHAN: Okay then. Just wanted to make sure you weren't stranded.
LACEY: That's sweet. I'm good though.
ETHAN: Guess I'll see you later, then.
LACEY: Happy shopping.
ETHAN: Happy waiting.

(ETHAN exits right leaving his window empty. LACEY smiles a beat, watching him go then dials her phone. We see a little disappointment as the call goes to voicemail. She recovers quickly and leaves a pleasant message.)

LACEY: Hey, Trevor, it's me. I'm not sure why you're not answering, or why you're not here yet. *(Checks the time.)* It's after seven. I'm waiting in the lobby like we planned. I hope you're here soon. I love ya. *(SHE hangs up and dials another number. She sighs as she leaves another message.)* Hey, Vanessa. Just calling to see what you're up to. I'm at the mall waiting for Trevor. Again. Hope your Friday night's more exciting than mine. Call if you're bored. Later.

(LACEY grabs her earbuds and presses an app to open her music. As she does, a group of actors appear on screen in individual windows. They are an odd assortment; each costumed slightly differently to represent SONGS on her playlist. Lacey puts on the earbuds and presses shuffle. In a quick display of choreographed chaos, the SONGS pop on and off screen a few times. As their windows reappear in different positions, their bodies spin or shake as if they are being shuffled into a new order. They all vanish and for a beat, LACEY remains alone. Suddenly, SONG 1 pops back onto the screen, looks around, and raises his arms in triumph.)

SONG 1: Yes! *(Proudly to himself.)* First song! *(To LACEY who sits as if she is listening to the song.)* You're happy I'm here. I can tell. I know I'm not your favorite, but you didn't skip over me when I popped up, so I'm taking it as a win. I'm the perfect song to kick off a "waiting for your boyfriend" mix, anyway. My acoustic guitar, relaxing your mind. My rhythm slowly increasing, building up the anticipation…

(LACEY'S head nods slightly to the beat.)

SONG 1: *(Cont'd.)* I'll admit that I'm a fairly unremarkable rock song. Basic chords. Simple lyrics. Catchy hook. Nothing to love, but nothing to hate either. I know I don't make you think of Trevor. You've never listened to me together. I'm not romantic, but I'm setting a mood. *(Moves his arms as if playing the drums, really getting into it.)* My drums, building perfectly, like Trevor's footsteps getting closer. *(Shifts his arm movements so he is now slapping the "air bass.")* My bass quickening your pulse. Heightening the tension. *(Switches to "air guitar" and does a furious solo.)* And here's the guitar solo. Wailing… like you did when you were *solo*…in the days before Trevor. *(Begins switching between the drums, the bass, and the guitar, building in intensity until the end of his monologue.)* Those days are over. He's going to walk in the door right as I reach my crescendo. I can feel it. You can feel it. You're going to love him forever and you're going to love *me* forever, too! I'm about to cement my permanent place in an "I love Trevor" playlist! This is it! The big finish. Here it comes! Here he comes!

(SONG 1 does a leap and a windmill across the air guitar. He lands dramatically, both hands pointing left. He holds his pose as he and LACEY look left with great anticipation. A beat. Nothing happens.)

SONG 1: *(Cont'd.)* Drat.

(SONG 1 bows his head. He vanishes from the screen. SONG 2 appears with a diva demeanor, speaking with a serene confidence, passion, and dramatic flair.)

SONG 2: Fear not. Trevor will arrive before long. He has to. Why else would I have appeared at this very moment? Of all the songs on all the playlists in all of the world, you've found me: The big, sweeping ballad from the weepy romantic movie you've gone to see in the theatre. Thrice. When you first heard me, during that pivotal and passionate scene, I gave you goose bumps because I showed you how powerful love can be. When you heard me on the radio after that, I brought tears because you wished you had someone with whom to share me. Finally, you met Trevor, and you loved me again, because it felt as if I had been written exclusively for the two of you. What happens when you hear me now? You picture me playing as you and Trevor dance together at homecoming… at prom… at your wedding. You've added me, a testament to true love, as a soundtrack for soul mates. I've officially become… *(With a dramatic flourish.)* "Your Song." *(SHE holds a pose for a beat then breaks character, turning nervous and less confident.)* Okay, technically, you haven't shared any of this with Trevor yet. The one time I came on when you were together, he changed the channel to sports, and that day you mentioned my movie at lunch, he made fun of it by reenacting scenes with tater tots. But that's all right. *(Unconvincingly trying to regain her confidence.)* You don't have to like the exact same things. I make a big deal about two people "being perfect for each other," but… *(A last-ditch effort to be relevant.)* Opposites attract, too, right?

(SONG 2 forces a smile, gives a half-hearted thumbs up. Attempting, but failing to regain her diva-ness, she vanishes. SONG 3 appears with a hip-hop swagger. NOTE: To keep up with ever-shifting hip-hop flava, the director and performer are free to alter pronunciation and phrasing in this monologue. In other words, keep it real, playa.)

SONG 3: I'm really happy for her, and Imma glad you let her finish, but you're about to listen to one of the greatest songs of all time. You wanna survive while you wait for Trevor? Forget that fantasy stuff and get real. Now, I ain't a romantic song. I ain't even a tune you particularly like. If I wasn't here in this bleeped-out version, you'd find me even more personally offensive. None of that matters though 'cause when you hear me, you feel good. And why is that? 'Cause you and I got a little something-something, don't we? I was playin' when this thing with Trevor started up, and you ain't been able to shake me since. You were walking home. Rain started to fall. And you heard that boom-boom you thought was thunder. Lucky for you, it was just me, dropping my bass. There we were: Trevor, pulling up, offering a ride, and me, blastin' out the speakers to let you know he'd arrived. Rescued in distress. Ain't a bad way to kick off a love connection.

SONG 3: *(Cont'd.)* Now, Trevor only stopped 'cause he was runnin' out of gas and needed someone to chip in a few bucks…so technically, you rescued him, but either way, I was right there. Trevor turned me down and picked you up. Now, I'm here to pick you up. I just hope he ain't turnin' you down.

(THEY both look left at the same time, frowning. SONG 3 notices LACEY'S growing anxiety and frowns.)

SONG 3: *(Cont'd.)* You ain't feelin' me at all right now, are you? If Trevor's not me again. *(Notices LACEY looking at her phone.)* Why don'tcha give his number another try? If he was drivin', he wouldn'ta picked up before. Not 'cause he plays things safe, 'cause he plays things *loud.* Ain't no way he heard the phone. Try again. Maybe you'll get lucky. Imma be right here waitin' when you're d….

(LACEY hits the pause button. SONG 3 stops mid-word. He is not frozen, simply silent. LACEY dials. Song 3 watches.)

LACEY: *(Into the phone as someone answers.)* Trevor. Hey. You okay? Where are you? *(We see her face register disappointment.)* Still playing? I thought the card game was going to be over by six-thirty. *(A sigh, more sad than angry.)* You promised this wouldn't happen again. How long is a "couple more hands" going to take? *(Glances at her watch.)* Your movie starts at eight. I was hoping we could stroll around first. No. I'm not mad. Just a little disappointed. Drive safely. I lov...

(LACEY stops as she hears him hang up. She looks at the phone. SONG 3 wordlessly beckons her to hit play so he may resume. She debates for a moment then skips to the next song. SONG 3 reacts with a mix of anger and rejection then vanishes. SONG 4 appears with great enthusiasm.)

SONG 4: Snap out of it! I'm part of your workout mix, and honey, you've got things that need working out! Let's warm up with a little yoga. You know the moves.

(SONG 4 launches into a routine, oblivious to the fact that LACEY remains seated. Song 4 pushes both arms upward and rises to her toes as if at the edge of a diving board.)

SONG 4: *(Cont'd.)* "Frozen Diver!" *(SHE holds for a beat then shifts positions. Her right arm thrusts upward as if triumphantly raising a sword. Her left hand grabs her side as she leans back and grimaces.)* "Injured Warrior!" *(SHE holds for a beat.)* Okay. Last one. *(SHE squats quickly. Her right arm swoops in front of her face as if covering her mouth with a cape. Her left hand bends into a hideous claw.)* "Tiny vampire!"

(SONG 4 smiles as if revealing fangs. Her mouth drops as she notices LACEY hasn't moved. She stands angrily.)

SONG 4: *(Cont'd.)* You're not even moving! *(Pointing at LACEY.)* "Lethargic Shopper" is not a sanctioned position! *(A sudden smile.)* The music's picking up! *(SONG 4 begins to move in rhythm.)* You may not be in the mood for cardio, but your heart needs a little lift. On your feet!

(LACEY starts to respond. She looks around tentatively.)

SONG 4: *(Cont'd.)* Come on. No one's watching. Stand and move a bit. You could be here for a while.

(LACEY stands slowly. SONG 4 bounces in approval.)

SONG 4: *(Cont'd.)* That-a-girl. Let's start with something simple. A couple steps should do the trick. To the left!

(SONG 4 points left. LACEY takes a few tentative side steps to the left. SONG 4 does the same.)

SONG 4: *(Cont'd.)* That's it. You're going somewhere. Now, the other way!

(LACEY takes side steps to the right. SONG 4 does the same.)

SONG 4: *(Cont'd.)* Perfect! You're going somewhere! Freeze! You're going nowhere.

(LACEY stops and frowns as she ponders that last phrase. SONG 4 notices.)

SONG 4: *(Cont'd.)* Don't take it personally. I said, "You're going nowhere" to get you to stop. I wasn't implying your life has no direction or commenting on your relationship status in any way. *(Under her breath.)* But if the shoe fits…

(LACEY looks at her phone as if ready to change the song. SONG 4 tries to distract her.)

SONG 4: *(Cont'd.)* Speaking of shoes! How about we touch them a few times?

(SONG 4 touches her toes. As she rises, LACEY sits, lost in thought.)

SONG 4: *(Cont'd.)* No time for thinking! We're working out the body, not the mind! *(SONG 4 makes a final attempt to get LACEY to move, demonstrating each suggestion.)* If you're going to sit, how about some stomach crunches? Arm rotations? Thumb twiddles? *(Sighs.)* I get it. I was just trying to provide a healthy distraction. If this thing with Trevor doesn't *work out*, it might not be the best time stop exercising. Bring me back when you're ready. We can do a step routine to burn comfort food calories. *(Mimes a few step moves.)* We can do dance aerobics to regain confidence. *(Demonstrates some dance moves.)* We can even do kickboxing to teach that boy a lesson. *(Performs a series of quick punches punctuated by powerful spin kick and an angry vocal grunt.)* Eeeeee-yah! *(SONG 4 gathers herself, standing pleasantly and politely.)* You know where to find me.

(SONG 4 vanishes. LACEY begins sending another text. SONG 5 appears with a huge smile, manic movements, and a high-pitched cartoon voice. He launches into an exaggerated wave.)

SONG 5: Hello fellow! It's me! The nutty novelty song you play to distract that little brat you baby-sit! *(A quick double-take.)* I forgot that brat was your brother. *(A hands-to-the-head "Look at me, I'm embarrassed" gesture.)* Oopsie-doopies!

(SONG 5 lets out a loud, corny laugh. LACEY lets out an exasperated sigh as her text goes unanswered.)

SONG 5: *(Cont'd.)* Golly-wolly! You could use some cheering up. It's your lucky day! *(Adjusts his stance and outfit as if preparing for a big moment.)* Mine, too! For the first time ever, you're going to listen to me all the way thr…

(SONG 5 vanishes mid-word as LACEY realizes what she is listening to and skips to the next song. SONG 6 appears with an incredulous expression and an annoyed demeanor.)

SONG 6: What the heck was that? Don't worry. I'll wipe the memory of that freak show from your brain.

(LACEY moves to skip the song. SONG 6 notices.)

SONG 6: *(Cont'd.) (Angrily)* Ayyy! Stop!

(LACEY hesitates.)

End of Freeview

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