



William Cameron

Norman Maine Publishing

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For T.S. Frank

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Doofus was first performed by the Little Lake Theatre Company for the Pittsburgh New Works Festival, Pittsburgh, PA, September 2000: Art DeConciliis, director.

ALICE: Juliette Mariani
BECK: Chris Bondi
CLIFF: Christopher Scott
DANA: Cori Begg
ERIK: Darren Gardner

Doofus

Winner, Best Play and Best Production, Pittsburg New Works Festival, 2000

COMEDY. Dana has written a play inspired by her relationship with her fiancé, Cliff. At the final dress rehearsal, Cliff watches the play for the first time and is horrified to discover that his character "Clint" is portrayed as a total...doofus! Angry and humiliated, Cliff confronts Dana, who claims the character isn't "entirely" based on him. However, the actor playing "Clint" insists the character is truly a complete doofus. Then, to add insult to injury, the actor playing Dana's character dismisses Cliff's protestations and declares him unable to face the truth about himself and clearly someone with no understanding of the restorative powers of theatre. Distraught, Cliff storms off and some spicy cast secrets are revealed. Audiences will love this sidesplitting comedy! Easy to stage.

Performance Time: Approximately 30-45 minutes.

Characters

(3 M, 2 F)

DANA: Aspiring director and playwright who has written a play about her relationship with her fiancé Cliff; comes from a family of accountants; female.

CLIFF: Dana's fiancé, who works for her father as an accountant; wears a V-neck sweater, oxford shirt, khakis, penny loafers, tortoise shell glasses; male.

ALICE: Stylish, sophisticated actor playing the character "Danielle," who is very much like Dana; female.

BECK: Smart-alecky actor playing the character "Clint," who is very much like Cliff; wears the same clothing Cliff is wearing, complete with a V-neck sweater, oxford shirt, khakis, penny loafers, and tortoise shell glasses; male.

ERIK: Stage manager; wears headphones; male.

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Setting

Small black box theatre.

Set

Onstage there is a table with two chairs. The table is covered with a tablecloth and is set for two.

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Props

Headphones, for stage manager
Coat, for Cliff
Scripts
Jacket, for Alice
Purse, for Alice
Cell phone, for Cliff
Keys
Purse, for Dana

Sound Effect

Car alarm

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**“Of course, we’re a mess!”
We’re theatre people!**

—Beck

Doofus

(AT RISE: *Small black box theatre. Alice and Beck are rehearsing a scene onstage. They are seated at a small table opposite each other. Cliff and Dana are seated in the audience far apart from each other.*)

ALICE: *(As Danielle.)* "I'm related to the Wright brothers."

BECK: *(As Clint.)* "Really?"

ALICE: *(As Danielle.)* "Really."

BECK: *(As Clint.)* "Wow. Both of them? *(Realizes.)* Dumb, that is so dumb. *(Slight pause.)* Don't you think that's dumb?"

ALICE: *(As Danielle.)* "Yes, I do."

BECK: *(As Clint.)* "Oh. *(Pause.)* So, the Wright brothers?"

ALICE: *(As Danielle.)* "Yes, they invented the airplane."

BECK: *(As Clint.)* "The airplane. I knew that. *(Alice nods.)* And the bicycle."

ALICE: *(As Danielle.)* "Excuse me?"

BECK: *(As Clint.)* "And the bicycle. They invented the bicycle, right?"

ALICE: *(As Danielle.)* "No."

BECK: *(As Clint.)* "Oh."

(From the audience, Cliff sighs loudly.)

ALICE: *(As Danielle.)* "Although—and this may be the source of your confusion—they did own a bicycle shop in Dayton."

BECK: *(As Clint.)* "Ohio!"

ALICE: *(As Danielle.)* "Right. They owned a bicycle shop there and—"

BECK: *(As Clint.)* "See, that's the source of my confusion. The bicycle shop...and I knew that they were inventors, and so—"

ALICE: *(As Danielle.)* "Anyway, my mother is from Dayton and—Ohio—and she...well, her father—"

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BECK: *(As Clint.)* "Your grandfather."

ALICE: *(As Danielle.)* "Right, my grandfather. *(From the audience, Cliff sighs loudly. Annoyed, Alice shoots Cliff a hard look.)* His mother was a Wright...my grandfather. Somehow there's a connection. Cousins, maybe? I'm not sure. But, anyway, I'm related to them."

BECK: *(As Clint.)* "That's interesting. It is."

ALICE: *(As Danielle.)* "You asked me to tell you something about myself, and it was the first thing that came to mind."

BECK: *(As Clint.)* "And it's a very interesting thing to know, believe me. The Wright brothers, wowie-zowie. Interesting."

ALICE: *(As Danielle.)* "Thank you."

CLIFF: *(From the audience, shouts.)* Unbelievable!

DANA: *(From a different area of the audience, loudly.)* Cliff, shhhhhhhh!

(Ignoring them, Beck and Alice continue the scene.)

BECK: *(As Clint.)* "Boy, I'm not related to anybody famous like that."

ALICE: *(As Danielle.)* "Well...why don't you tell me something about yourself?"

BECK: *(As Clint.)* "Sure, I can do that. It's not gonna be anywhere near as interesting as the Wright brothers, though. Boy, oh, boy, that is fascinating stuff."

CLIFF: *(From the audience, shouts.)* Give me a break!

ALICE: *(Breaks character. To Cliff, shouts.)* Is there a problem?!

CLIFF: *(From the audience, shouts.)* Yes!

(Erik, the stage manager, enters and peers into the audience. He is wearing earphones.)

DANA: *(From the audience, shouts.)* Cliff! *(Sweetly.)* No, Alice, there's no problem. Go on...

ERIK: *(Shouts.)* Quiet in the house, please!

DANA: *(Standing at her seat in the audience, shouts.)* Cliff, is something wrong?!

BECK: *(To Erik.)* Is this five?

ERIK: No.

DANA: *(Heading from the audience toward the lobby.)* Just give me a minute, Erik. Cliff, may I speak with you in the lobby?

(Cliff stays in his seat.)

ERIK: *(To Alice and Beck.)* That's five, people. *(Beck pulls out a cigarette.)* No smoking in here, Beck. That owner guy told me no smoking.

(Dana exits to the lobby. Beck offers Alice a cigarette.)

ALICE: No, thank you. I promised my husband I would quit.

(Beck holds the cigarette out to Alice. Pause. Alice takes the cigarette.)

ERIK: C'mon, guys. The owner said. *(Beck offers a cigarette to Eric. Eric takes it.)* Thanks.

DANA: *(Pokes her head back in, shouts.)* Cliff!

BECK: Cliff, you a smoker?

(Angry, Cliff approaches the stage.)

CLIFF: You know those things cause cancer!

BECK: Cancer? Really? Why have the American people been kept in the dark about this?

(Cliff grabs a cigarette from Beck, throws it on the ground, and stomps on it. Alice and Erik immediately throw their unlit cigarettes to the ground.)

ALICE: I swear, I'm quitting. I'm wearing a patch right now.
(Lifts her sleeve to reveal a nicotine patch.)

(Dana enters.)

DANA: *(Shouts.)* Cliff, that's enough!

CLIFF: I know that the Wright brothers didn't invent the bicycle.

DANA: What?

CLIFF: And I have never said "wowie-zowie" to anyone under any circumstances!

BECK: And, apparently, he has some startling information about cigarettes!

ALICE: Stop it, Beck.

DANA: Cliff, you are overreacting. There is nothing in this play to even suggest that this character is—

CLIFF: I gotta get out of here!

(Cliff heads to his seat in the audience to collect his coat. Dana follows him.)

DANA: You're not leaving, are you?

ERIK: Dana, we gotta boogie. If you want to do a full run-through—

BECK: Erik, lighten up. It's a two-person, single set, 90-minute play with no light cues—

ALICE: We do open tomorrow night.

BECK: We've been rehearsing for six weeks. I think we can—

(Cliff puts his coat on and starts to exit out of the theatre. Dana follows him.)

DANA: *(Shouts.)* Cliff, stop! This is dumb!

CLIFF: Dumb?! Are you calling me dumb?!

DANA: No! I just—

ERIK: Dana—

DANA/CLIFF: (*Shout.*) Shut up!

(*Erik, Alice, and Beck freeze. Cliff heads toward the stage. Dana follows him.*)

DANA: Cliff, I want you to tell me what's wrong!

CLIFF: Not in front of these people. (*Indicating Erik, Alice, and Beck.*)

DANA: Excuse me, but you started something in front of these people, who happen to be my friends. You disrupted a very important rehearsal...a very important *professional* rehearsal. You hear that? *Professional*. And you know how important that is to me, Cliff, and you know how hard I've worked to get this company on its feet and –

CLIFF: And I know how much your father put up to pay for this *professional* thing.

DANA: Yes, and when my father gave me the money, I promised him that this company would always adhere to the most rigorous professional standards, and in keeping that promise, I will not allow myself to be distracted from my noble purpose by some disgruntled boyfriend. We are doing this play whether you like it or not!

ERIK: You tell him, baby! (*To Alice and Beck.*) Places, people!

DANA: (*To Cliff, whiney.*) But, first, tell me why you're so mad at me. (*Cliff starts to speak.*) And don't tell me it's this stupid Wright brothers thing.

CLIFF: "Stupid"! "Dumb"! See?!

DANA: What?

CLIFF: It's nice to know, finally, what you think of me.

DANA: Cliff, I do not think you are stupid. I do not think you are dumb. And I never said the character was entirely based on you, anyway.

CLIFF: Yes, you did.

DANA: No, I didn't.

CLIFF: You told me this play was about our relationship.

DANA: Yes...our relationship...but not necessarily about...us. I mean about...you. Look, the character in the play is not just based on you.

BECK: *(Surprised.)* Really? Who's it based on, then?

CLIFF: *(To Dana.)* Yeah, who?

DANA: It's an...amalgam of...several different—

BECK: Fiancés?

DANA: No.

ALICE: Be quiet, Beck! You are only making things worse!

BECK: *(Sarcastic.)* Begging Your Highness's pardon.

(Alice shoots Beck an angry look.)

CLIFF: *(To Dana.)* You said this play was about our—

DANA: Relationship. Yes, it is about our relationship.

CLIFF: And me?

DANA: Yes, but—

CLIFF: And so you think I'm stupid?

DANA: No!

CLIFF: It's the first line of the play! "I'm related to the Wright brothers. Oh, really, both of them? Wowie-zowie, am I ever dumb."

DANA: But that's what you said!

BECK: *(Confused.)* What?

DANA: "You're really related to the Wright brothers...both of them?" *(To Clint.)* You said that...those exact words...on our first date, remember?

BECK: *(To Cliff.)* Really?! You said that?! *(Laughs.)*

DANA: *(Admonishingly.)* Beck, please!

CLIFF: *(To Beck.)* I was nervous, okay? It was a blind date...beautiful girl, artistic type. *(To Dana.)* But I know that the Wright brothers didn't invent the bicycle! I know that Dayton is in Ohio, and I know that you...think I'm stupid!

DANA: I do not.

CLIFF: *(To Beck and Alice, indicating Dana.)* She looks down on me because I'm "just an accountant."

DANA: My father's an accountant! How could I—

CLIFF: *(To Beck and Alice.)* She actually said that when she introduced me to her college roommate. *(As Dana.)* "No, Cliff's not in the theatre, Eleanor, he's just an accountant."

DANA: How many times do I have to apologize for—

CLIFF: And now you write this play! This play, which I am attending tomorrow night with your entire family, including your father, who not only put up the cash for this play but who also said to me just today that he might make me a partner in his major accounting firm because I demonstrated such remarkable intelligence in my handling of the Dorfman account.

DANA: *(Overjoyed.)* Partner! Honey, that's wonderful! Why didn't you tell—

CLIFF: Intelligence! *(To others.)* You hear that? Intelligence! Do we all know what that means?

ERIK: *(Raising his hand.)* Smartness?

CLIFF: Yes, smartness!

BECK: Teacher's pet.

CLIFF: Smartness of a very...high...remarkable level of intelligence!

BECK: *(Sarcastic.)* Wowie-zowie.

CLIFF: I am not some moron... *(To others, indicating Beck.)* ...like this smart ass.

DANA: Beck, shut up.

BECK: I didn't say anything.

DANA: But you were going to.

BECK: No, actually, I agree with him.

DANA: You agree with him how?

BECK: He's a doofus.

CLIFF: I am not a—

BECK: Not you. The guy, Clint. The character in the play. He's a doofus.

DANA: Clint is not a doofus.

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ALICE: *(To Beck.)* I don't think so at all.

BECK: Excuse me, but the guy's a total doofus.

CLIFF: *(To Dana.)* See?!

ALICE: Cliff, believe me, Beck is not your best source on who is or is not a doofus.

DANA: Beck, you clearly have not explored this character very thoroughly.

BECK: Hey, I did that character-sketch crap you wanted us to do. I listened to you jabber on about poor Clint's childhood...about his pushy father, about how he wanted to be a rock star...

CLIFF: *(To Dana, horrified.)* You told him I wanted to be a rock star?!

BECK: ...and about the bedwetting.

(Humiliated, Cliff puts his head in his hands.)

DANA: *(Admonishingly.)* Beck!

ALICE: Beck, has anyone ever suggested to you that saying exactly what you think at the exact moment it occurs to you isn't always the right thing to do?

BECK: Yeah...you.

ALICE: When?

BECK: Other night when I mentioned that it was taking you too long to—

ALICE: Beck!

ERIK: Too long to what?

ALICE: Nothing! Too long to do nothing!

DANA: I don't understand how you can call Clint stupid, Beck. And especially now! We've been working on this play for six weeks, and you've never said a thing about Clint being a—

BECK/CLIFF: Doofus.

DANA: Stop using that word!

BECK: Sorry, you're right. I never said anything about it. But you did.

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DANA: I did? When?

BECK: At every rehearsal. *(As Dana.)* "Clint's a little slower than you're playing him, Beck."

DANA: By "slower" I meant that—

BECK: *(As Dana.)* "Can you stumble over your words a bit more there, Beck? Scratch your head, Beck, like you're clueless. Beck, could you play Clint a little dumber when Danielle tells him about her art history class? Like when she says 'Picasso,' pretend you don't know who that is, okay? You're playing him too smart, Beck. He's not that smart."

DANA: Oh.

BECK: And don't get me started on the "ordering in French" scene.

DANA: *(Quickly.)* We cut that scene.

BECK: Only because the actor playing the waiter got a better gig, and you decided it wasn't worth paying another pimply college boy to speak seven lines.

ERIK: *(Laughs.)* I liked that scene.

BECK: Yeah, there's nothing funnier than watching some doofus try to order a cheeseburger in French. *(As Cliff, with a comical hick accent and mispronouncing it badly.)* "Un burger de fromage, s'il vous plait."

ERIK: *(Laughs.)* I love that part!

DANA: Oh. *(Pause.)* Cliff...

ERIK: Dana, we gotta get going here if we're gonna get in a run-through.

CLIFF: *(In a huff.)* Don't let me hold you up. *(Starts to exit.)*

DANA: Cliff, wait! *(As Cliff exits.)* Two minutes, Erik, just give me two minutes!

ERIK: Dana, I'm the stage manager guy. I'm just doing my job.

BECK: *(Sarcastic.)* Well done, stage manager guy.

DANA: Two minutes! *(As she turns back to Cliff, she sees that he is gone and runs out after him. Offstage, calls.)* Cliff! *(Pause. Silence. Offstage, calls.)* Cliff! *(Pause. Silence. Calls, barely a*

whimper this time.) Cliff... (Pause. Silence. Enters. To others, sadly.) Okay, places. Let's do this. (Dana heads to her seat in the audience. Erik puts on his headphones and starts to exit offstage.)

ERIK: We go in, like, two. *(Exits.)*

BECK: Good call, stage manager guy!

(Beck pulls out his script and goes over it. Alice approaches Dana.)

ALICE: *(Shouts.)* Dana, are you sure you want to go on?

DANA: I'm fine.

ALICE: You are not fine, sweetie.

DANA: *(On the verge of tears. To offstage, calls.)* Erik, we ready? Let's do this! *(To Alice.)* I'm okay, really. This is for the best, right?

ALICE: Right! *(Dana goes to where Cliff exited and glances out. Alice crosses to the stage. Beck approaches Alice, but Alice sees Beck approaching and she makes a beeline to offstage. As she exits.)* Is this places, Erik?

ERIK: *(Offstage, shouts.)* Places! *(Beck stands alone for a second, looking after Alice.)* Places, Beck! *(Beck exits. From offstage.)* And...blackout!

(Lights out to blue preset. Beck and Alice enter. Lights up. Beck and Alice are seated at the table as before. Note: The scene lacks any enthusiasm or nuance this time around. The tension between Alice and Beck is palpable.)

ALICE: *(As Danielle.)* "I'm related to the Wright brothers."

BECK: *(As Clint.)* "Really?"

ALICE: *(As Danielle.)* "Really."

BECK: *(As Clint.)* "Wow. Both of them? *(Realizes.)* Dumb, that is so dumb. Don't you think that's dumb?"

ALICE: *(As Danielle.)* "Yes, I do." *(Dana sobs loudly. Alice breaks character and approaches Dana.)* Oh, Dana, poor thing.

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I'm so sorry, sweetie. (*Beck leans back in his chair. Erik enters and sits. To Dana.*) You have written a very brave play...brave and honest...too honest for poor Cliff. He clearly has no understanding of the healing and restorative powers of the theatre or he would have stayed to hear it all. He couldn't face it. He couldn't face the truth about himself.

(*Gently, Alice starts to lead Dana to the stage.*)

DANA: You really think so?

ALICE: Absolutely. (*Alice and Dana have reached the stage. Alice shoos Erik from his chair, seats Dana in it, and kneels beside her.*) Believe me, I've been married for three years, and it is hard work. You both have to give, and give, and keep on giving. (*Beck laughs. To Beck, annoyed.*) What is so funny?!

BECK: Begging Your Highness's pardon.

(*Short pause. Standoff between Beck and Alice. Alice turns back to Dana.*)

ALICE: Dana, it is clear to me, and I think if you search your heart, you'll see that I'm right. Cliff cannot give like that. He doesn't possess the quality that makes you such a fine artist...that level of honesty, that willingness to look life in the face and say, "Hey, I'm flawed. I'm not perfect. I must change." Cliff can't do that...can't understand that.

BECK: (*Shouts.*) He's a doofus!

[END OF FREEVIEW]