

BURNING UP THE DICTIONARY

By Meron Langsner

BURNING UP THE DICTIONARY

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BURNING UP THE DICTIONARY

Production/Development History:

Premiere:

Boston Center for the Arts, Calderwood Pavilion, Vagabond Theatre Group - November - December 2012

Cast:

Tim Hoover - George

Cassandra Meyer - Suzi-Fay

Production Team:

James Peter Sotis – Director

Zach Winston – Assistant Director

Josh Friedensohn – Technical Director, Scenic Design

Cara Grace Pacifico – Costume Designer

Lucas Garrity – Lighting Designer

Sam Sewell – Sound Design

Angel Veza – Fight Director, Movement Specialist

Santiago Cardenas – Original Music

Jennie Kilduff – Props Master

Erica Magelky – Stage Manager

Tyler Brewer – Assistant Stage Manager

Eveleen Sung – Assistant Technical Director

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This play was nominated for an IRNE Award for Best New Play
(Independent Reviewers of New England)

Development:

Readings at the Lark Play Development Center in NYC, and in Boston
with Playwrights' Commons, Interim Writers, Vagabond Theatre,
Bostonia Bohemia, and the Small Theatre Alliance of Boston

Characters: GEORGE & SUZY-FAY

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ACT 1
SCENE 1

FIRST ENDINGS, BEGINNINGS, AND THINGS IN BETWEEN

SUZIE-FAY and GEORGE are walking in a park.

SUZIE-FAY. You can go first.

GEORGE. Why do I feel like I'm being set up.

SUZIE-FAY. I'm just trying to be friendly.

GEORGE. That's the problem isn't it.

SUZIE-FAY. That now we have to try?

GEORGE. Yeah.

SUZIE-FAY. Is that what you wanted to talk about? Being set up?

GEORGE. No. I guess not.

SUZIE-FAY. Well. Go ahead then.

GEORGE. When was the last time I made you happy?

SUZIE-FAY. *(caught by surprise.)* At the airport. When you picked me up from Spain.

GEORGE. And not since.

So what's been going on the past few months?

SUZIE-FAY. Inertia.

GEORGE. Wow.

SUZIE-FAY. Buddy. Will you promise me something?

GEORGE. I don't know if we can still call each other Buddy.

SUZIE-FAY. You're right. *(pause.)* George.

GEORGE. What?

SUZIE-FAY. I need you to promise me.

GEORGE. Promise you what?

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SUZIE-FAY. Promise me that my story won't be 'I was dating this girl and then she lost her mind.'

GEORGE. Why would it be? Why would it even matter?

SUZIE-FAY. It's a story you told me about your last girlfriend.

GEORGE. It was true about her.

It's not true about you.

SUZIE-FAY. Promise me.

GEORGE. I don't need to promise you something that's already true.

SUZIE-FAY. What is my story?

GEORGE. What's mine?

SUZIE-FAY. You were my best friend.

And then you were my boyfriend.

GEORGE. And then?

SUZIE-FAY. And then we broke up.

GEORGE. Did we?

SUZIE-FAY. Isn't that what why we're here?

GEORGE. Last time we had this conversation, we decided not to.

SUZIE-FAY. I know. And then I was miserable.

GEORGE. Yeah. Me too.

SUZIE-FAY. Thanks.

GEORGE. So long as we're being honest.

SUZIE-FAY. Now what?

GEORGE. We forgot how to talk to each other, didn't we Buddy?

SUZIE-FAY. You can't call me that. We can't call each other that.

You just said so yourself.

GEORGE. Sorry.

SUZIE-FAY. There's no more Buddies.

Buddy was a made up person.

GEORGE. Fine.

SUZIE-FAY. Sorry.

GEORGE. We should go.

SUZIE-FAY. Sorry.

GEORGE. I still love you you know.

SUZIE-FAY. I still love you too. *(They embrace.)*

GEORGE. Goodbye Buddy.

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SUZIE-FAY. Goodbye Buddy. *(They walk apart.)*

SCENE 2 A PHONE CALL

GEORGE. *(answering the phone.)* Suzie-Fay?

SUZIE-FAY. You know, no one else calls me Suzie-Fay. Most people just call me Suzanne. Or Suzie.

GEORGE. Should I stop?

SUZIE-FAY. No. I guess I still like it.

GEORGE. What's up?

SUZIE-FAY. Wanna play racquetball this week?

GEORGE. I can't. I'm on a big project and won't get a whole lot of free time.

I thought you knew about that.

SUZIE-FAY. I guess I did.

GEORGE. Please don't take this as hostile. Why do you ask when you know I can't?

SUZIE-FAY. I'm being friendly. Remember the whole, 'we were always friends so we're still friends' thing.

GEORGE. Suzie-Fay.

SUZIE-FAY. Yes George?

GEORGE. What is this really about.

SUZIE-FAY. Maybe I just wanted to talk. You know, like friends do.
(Pause.)

GEORGE. Sorry. I didn't mean to be defensive.

SUZIE-FAY. It's fine. People get preoccupied.

GEORGE. Racquetball would be great if I actually could right now.

SUZIE-FAY. Are you going to Tom's party?

GEORGE. Yes...

SUZIE-FAY. Who are you bringing to Tom's party?

GEORGE. Why?

SUZIE-FAY. I saw your RSVP. You were plus one.

GEORGE. Does it matter?

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SUZIE-FAY. I want to know.

GEORGE. My friend Katie.

SUZIE-FAY. Katie from work?

GEORGE. Katie from work.

SUZIE-FAY. The new girl?

GEORGE. Yes.

SUZIE-FAY. The one you told me about a few weeks ago?

GEORGE. Yeah. I think you'd like her. I told you that when she first started.

SUZIE-FAY. Are you dating her?

GEORGE. I'm not dating anybody.

SUZIE-FAY. Really.

GEORGE. I just got out of a relationship not even a month ago. Remember?

SUZIE-FAY. I know. I was there.

I broke up with you.

GEORGE. We broke up with each other.

SUZIE-FAY. If you say so.

GEORGE. Are you calling me to fight with me? Didn't we break up so that we wouldn't have to do this anymore?

SUZIE-FAY. Do you like her?

GEORGE. She's nice.

SUZIE-FAY. Why are you bringing her?

GEORGE. Why shouldn't I bring her? She's my friend.

SUZIE-FAY. Whatever. I hate her.

GEORGE. You never met her.

SUZIE-FAY. It doesn't matter.

GEORGE. Was I supposed to wait until you started dating someone new to bring my friend to a party?

SUZIE-FAY. Is that what I said?

GEORGE. Is that why you called me?

SUZIE-FAY. I wanted to play racquetball.

GEORGE. You knew I was busy.

SUZIE-FAY. Fine.

GEORGE. Can we please not fight?

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SUZIE-FAY. We're not fighting.

GEORGE. I'm not dating her. I don't see why you care.

SUZIE-FAY. I just wanted to know. For the party.

GEORGE. I didn't even think you'd be in town for the party.

SUZIE-FAY. Do you need me to be out of town to go on a date?

Because I can plan a trip to New Jersey if that's the case.

GEORGE. I would not wish New Jersey on anybody.

SUZIE-FAY. I should hope not.

GEORGE. I have to go.

SUZIE-FAY. Go.

GEORGE. Goodbye. (*Hangs up.*)

SUZIE-FAY. Bye bye Buddy.

SCENE 3 AT THE PARTY

GEORGE. Hi.

SUZIE-FAY. Where's 'Katie?'

GEORGE. You scared her off.

SUZIE-FAY. Me? What are you talking about?

GEORGE. She didn't like the idea of being 'the other woman' and showing up to a Christmas party with a "newly minted ex-boyfriend."

SUZIE-FAY. That's nice of her.

GEORGE. Very.

SUZIE-FAY. So where is she tonight?

GEORGE. She has friends of her own.

SUZIE-FAY. That's important in a girlfriend.

GEORGE. She's not my girlfriend.

SUZIE-FAY. I know.

GEORGE. You look nice.

SUZIE-FAY. Thank you, George. I did my cute-ups this morning.

GEORGE. It shows.

I almost forgot about cute-ups.

SUZIE-FAY. Liar.

GEORGE. I have not seen one executed in a while. Refresh me.

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SUZIE-FAY. That was transparent.

GEORGE. But possibly effective.

SUZIE-FAY. Or not.

GEORGE. Or not yet.

SUZIE-FAY. Hope is a beautiful thing.

You look pretty good yourself.

GEORGE. I know.

SUZIE-FAY. Modest too.

GEORGE. Thank you. I take great pride in my modesty.

SUZIE-FAY. Rightly so.

GEORGE. It takes work you know. Especially when I look this good. I was scared to leave the house today.

SUZIE-FAY. Were you now?

GEORGE. Looking this good? I thought I would have to beat the women away.

SUZIE-FAY. Well you're safe from me.

GEORGE. Thanks Buddy.

SUZIE-FAY. Who you calling Buddy, Buddy?

GEORGE. Just some girl I ran into at a party. Buddy.

SUZIE-FAY. Don't call me that. It isn't fair.

GEORGE. Didn't you just call me the same thing?

SUZIE-FAY. It was a mistake. Old habits.

GEORGE. You know. Work has gotten harder.

SUZIE-FAY. Has it now.

GEORGE. When we work with female clients and they flirt. I can't say the 'girlfriend' word.

SUZIE-FAY. You know what you can do?

GEORGE. Tell me.

SUZIE-FAY. You can try to not be a flirt.

GEORGE. *(Taking a large step backwards.)* I have no idea what you're talking about. *(Suzie-Fay laughs. With great innocence.)* What?

SUZIE-FAY. You do realize that you just stepped under mistletoe.

GEORGE. Maybe.

Wanna dance?

SUZIE-FAY. We shouldn't.

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GEORGE. Why not?

SUZIE-FAY. What would Katie say?

GEORGE. I don't know that she has a say. If she wanted one she might have come with me.

SUZIE-FAY. These aren't the shoes for it.

GEORGE. You left the house wearing shoes you can't dance in?

SUZIE-FAY. I'm not dating a dancer anymore.

GEORGE. I suppose not.

SUZIE-FAY. Where are you going after the party?

GEORGE. Home I guess.

SUZIE-FAY. Me too.

GEORGE. It's late.

SUZIE-FAY. I know.

GEORGE. Do you have someone to walk you home?

SUZIE-FAY. I can take care of myself.

GEORGE. I know. But it doesn't mean you always have to.

SUZIE-FAY. Are you offering?

GEORGE. Only if you want, Buddy.

SUZIE-FAY. Stop that.

GEORGE. Slip of the tongue.

SUZIE-FAY. Your slippery tongue can get a girl in trouble.

GEORGE. Only if she's lucky.

SUZIE-FAY. Then I hope Katie's magically delicious.

GEORGE. Suit yourself. *(George starts to go. Suzie stops him.)*

SUZIE-FAY. I don't want to leave with you. Everyone is looking at us anyway.

GEORGE. And?

SUZIE-FAY. I'll leave first. Meet me at the corner.

GEORGE. Are you asking me to walk you home all of a sudden?

SUZIE-FAY. No. I'm telling you to.

GEORGE. Are you now?

SUZIE-FAY. Why, yes.

GEORGE. And this will work?

SUZIE-FAY. Absolutely.

GEORGE. You must have done a lot of cute-ups this morning.

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SUZIE-FAY. I had a feeling that I'd run into my newly minted ex-boyfriend. You know how it is.

GEORGE. I do unfortunately.

SUZIE-FAY. So you'll wait for me?

GEORGE. I might.

(Suzy-Fay makes sure no one is looking, then does two "Cute-Ups." They are freakin' adorable. And she knows it. This is of course one more of their many inside jokes. She may use this gesture at strategic times during other interactions.)

SUZIE-FAY. How about now?

GEORGE. That was kind of adorable.

SUZIE-FAY. I know. Walk me home.

GEORGE. But you don't want to be seen leaving with me?

SUZIE-FAY. It's weird.

GEORGE. Yes. Yes it is.

SUZIE-FAY. It's complicated.

GEORGE. And you think no one will notice.

SUZIE-FAY. I don't know.

GEORGE. Where are you going to wait?

SUZIE-FAY. Just around the corner.

GEORGE. How long?

SUZIE-FAY. Give me five minutes.

GEORGE. And if I suddenly think this is a bad idea?

SUZIE-FAY. Please Buddy?

GEORGE. That's not fair. You said as much.

SUZIE-FAY. I know it's not fair. But it's not fair in my favor.

GEORGE. Five minutes. *(Suzie-Fay walks off.)*

SCENE 4 STORYTIME (1)

George and Suzy-Fay address the audience.

SUZIE-FAY. We were friends before we were anything else.

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GEORGE. Apparently she had a crush on me for the better part of a year and I was Captain Clueless.

SUZIE-FAY. We didn't know when our anniversary was. Our 'Buddyversary.' Once it was clear to both of us that we weren't kidding around, which was at the one year mark or so we tried to figure out the date. It made sense to mark it from our first kiss.

GEORGE. Which was also around the time we started calling each other "Buddy."

SUZIE-FAY. We had a vague idea that it fell in the third week of June or so. The three years and change that we were together we'd decide on a day that week and celebrate our "Buddyversary."

GEORGE. Some time after we were broken up for good, when it was impossible for either of us to speak to the other, I was sifting through old correspondences looking for something completely different, and I found something that would have placed that first kiss on a specific date. But of course by then it didn't matter.

SCENE 5 WALKING HOME?

George follows Suzie-Fay out and meets her at the corner. They embrace. She kisses him. Then she starts beating him on the chest. She alternates between kissing him and beating him on the chest for a moment. He holds her very tightly so that she cannot move until she calms down.

SUZIE-FAY. It's not fair! It's not fair it's not fair it's not fair!

GEORGE. It's ok Buddy.

SUZIE-FAY. I hate you!

GEORGE. Suzie Buddy?

SUZIE-FAY. (calm.) George Buddy?

GEORGE. Do you really hate me?

SUZIE-FAY. No.

GEORGE. Can I walk you home?

SUZIE-FAY. Yes.

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GEORGE. Let's go. It's cold.

SUZIE-FAY. Ok. *(pause)* George?

GEORGE. Buddy?

SUZIE-FAY. Will you come in with me?

GEORGE. Is that a good idea?

SUZIE-FAY. No.

It's a brilliant idea.

GEORGE. What about Katie?

SUZIE-FAY. If she wanted a say she should have come to the party.

GEORGE. I want to.

SUZIE-FAY. She isn't your girlfriend.

GEORGE. You aren't my girlfriend either.

SUZIE-FAY. It would be fun.

GEORGE. I don't want to hurt my best friend.

SUZIE-FAY. How is she suddenly your best friend?

GEORGE. I wasn't talking about her.

SUZIE-FAY. Oh.

GEORGE. Come on. I'll tuck you in.

SUZIE-FAY. Ok.

GEORGE. And then I'm going home.

SUZIE-FAY. Maybe.

GEORGE. Don't tempt me.

SUZIE-FAY. Temptress? Me? Impossible.

GEORGE. I mean it Suzie.

SUZIE-FAY. Tuck me in?

GEORGE. Yes.

SUZIE-FAY. You know that means you're going to kiss me goodnight.

GEORGE. Maybe.

SUZIE-FAY. Tease.

GEORGE. Flirt.

SUZIE-FAY. You like it.

GEORGE. That's the problem.

SUZIE-FAY. Who says it's a problem.

GEORGE. I am tucking you in.

SUZIE-FAY. Of course you are.

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GEORGE. And then I am going home.

SUZIE-FAY. Of course, you are Buddy.

SCENE 6 PLAYING PRETEND

SUZIE-FAY. George?

GEORGE. Yes.

SUZIE-FAY. Are you working today?

GEORGE. No.

SUZIE-FAY. Do you have plans?

GEORGE. I did, but they fell through. Why?

SUZIE-FAY. So you're free.

GEORGE. I guess I can be.

SUZIE-FAY. How good are you at Playing Pretend?

GEORGE. Playing Pretend?

SUZIE-FAY. Yes.

GEORGE. Probably a lot better than I should be.

SUZIE-FAY. Wanna play?

GEORGE. *(He takes a moment to consider.)* Yes.

SUZIE-FAY. I'll be over in a minute. *(She comes over. They hold an embrace for a long time without speaking.)*

GEORGE. Hi Buddy.

SUZIE-FAY. Hi Buddy.

GEORGE. This is a bad idea.

SUZIE-FAY. Shut up. We're playing pretend. *(They embrace for longer.)*

GEORGE. What do you want to do?

SUZIE-FAY. I don't know. We have all day.

GEORGE. You look beautiful.

SUZIE-FAY. Thank you.

GEORGE. And really cute.

SUZIE-FAY. You say that like they're mutually exclusive.

GEORGE. Not on you they aren't.

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SUZIE-FAY. I don't blush so easily anymore you know. You'll have to try harder.

GEORGE. It's like we need a new word for you.

SUZIE-FAY. I get my own word?

GEORGE. You do.

SUZIE-FAY. What is it?

GEORGE. Cutieful.

SUZIE-FAY. I like it.

GEORGE. It's like, cute and beautiful in the same word.

SUZIE-FAY. I get it.

GEORGE. It's not everyday I get to contribute to our great language.

SUZIE-FAY. You make up words all the time. It's called bad grammar.

GEORGE. But you always knows what I mean Buddy.

SUZIE-FAY. You can't use it for anyone else.

GEORGE. Why not?

SUZIE-FAY. Cause it's mine. I want my own word.

GEORGE. Cute.

SUZIE-FAY. I know. *(Pause. Perhaps she does a "cute-up.")*

GEORGE. Suzie Buddy Fay?

SUZIE-FAY. Yes George Buddy?

GEORGE. *(Pause.)* Do you think we'll ever be Buddies again?

SUZIE-FAY. No. *(Small pause.)* Do you?

GEORGE. Not anymore I guess.

SUZIE-FAY. Oh.

GEORGE. I'll miss being a Buddy.

SUZIE-FAY. Me too.

GEORGE. That doesn't mean I can't hold onto you right now though.

SUZIE-FAY. I guess it doesn't.

GEORGE. This is nice.

SUZIE-FAY. It's sad.

GEORGE. I know.

SUZIE-FAY. I'm sorry we won't be Buddies.

GEORGE. Even if we're not Buddies, you'll always be my Buddy.

SUZIE-FAY. You're my Buddy too.

GEORGE. A Buddy is a Buddy, no matter what else happens.

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SUZIE-FAY. Good. *(Pause.)* What about your “new Buddy?”

GEORGE. Who?

SUZIE-FAY. Whatsherface.

GEORGE. Katie?

SUZIE-FAY. Her.

GEORGE. She’s nice.

SUZIE-FAY. You replaced me.

GEORGE. I don’t replace people. It’s a whole different thing.

SUZIE-FAY. I want to hear about her.

GEORGE. Are you sure?

SUZIE-FAY. You’re my best friend. I want to know who’s dating my best friend.

GEORGE. I’m not dating her.

SUZIE-FAY. Not yet.

GEORGE. She knows I just got out of something really serious.

She thinks she’s a band-aid.

SUZIE-FAY. What’s that over there?

GEORGE. It’s a Christmas present. From her.

SUZIE-FAY. You’re Jewish.

GEORGE. Yes. There was a bar-mitzvah. Years ago.

SUZIE-FAY. Does she know that?

GEORGE. About my bar-mitzvah?

SUZIE-FAY. You’re trying to change the subject. Does she know?

GEORGE. It came up in conversation.

SUZIE-FAY. And she got you a Christmas present.

GEORGE. A Generic Winter Holiday Celebration present.

SUZIE-FAY. It’s nice.

GEORGE. She has good taste.

SUZIE-FAY. How so?

GEORGE. She likes me.

SUZIE-FAY. It looks expensive.

GEORGE. She... comes from a pretty well-off family. Some people do.

SUZIE-FAY. I suppose.

GEORGE. You do.

SUZIE-FAY. It’s really nice.

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GEORGE. I guess.

SUZIE-FAY. I don't think she thinks she's a band-aid if she got you that.

GEORGE. It's her phrase.

SUZIE-FAY. Whatever. Tell me about her.

GEORGE. I told you about her when I met her.

SUZIE-FAY. She works with you. She's new in town. From Toronto. She dances. Or used to anyway. She comes from a family that lets her buy you expensive presents.

GEORGE. She used to be a model.

SUZIE-FAY. She's a rich dancer-model with an accent. Great.

GEORGE. Don't you want me to be happy?

SUZIE-FAY. Yes.

GEORGE. I don't want to talk about this if it's going to upset you.

SUZIE-FAY. Yes you do. You were so proud to tell me she's a model.

GEORGE. You're my best friend.

I want to be able to tell you things.

SUZIE-FAY. Good. I want you to be happy.

GEORGE. Suzie-Fay?

SUZIE-FAY. Yes George?

GEORGE. She's no Buddy. *(They embrace again.)*

SUZIE-FAY. Can we go back to playing pretend?

GEORGE. Yes.

SUZIE-FAY. Hey.

GEORGE. Hey.

SUZIE-FAY. You know what?

GEORGE. Tell me.

SUZIE-FAY. There should be a lot of sex.

GEORGE. There already was a lot of sex.

SUZIE-FAY. There should be more.

GEORGE. This is brilliance.

SUZIE-FAY. I am glad you feel this way.

GEORGE. *(Running his hands over her.)* I am glad You feel This way.

SUZIE-FAY. Hey.

GEORGE. Hey?

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SUZIE-FAY. Is that my rope?

GEORGE. *(Pause.)* Yes.

SUZIE-FAY. Don't you think it's a little weird. To be starting to date someone new. And have a silk rope on your nightstand? Shouldn't something like that be put away?

GEORGE. *(Pause.)* It was. *(She starts to cry. He tries to comfort her. She pushes him away at first. Eventually she lets him.)*

SUZIE-FAY. Tell her she can get her own damn rope.

SCENE 7 RACQUETBALL

They are playing racquetball

GEORGE. I never told her how hot she was playing racquetball.

SUZIE-FAY. I never told him. It would get to his head. We got sweaty together at the gym before getting sweaty together any other way. We started playing around when I first realized I had a crush on him.

GEORGE. She always wore these tiny shorts. It killed me. Nothing indecent I mean, just, you know...

SUZIE-FAY. I learned to play when I found out he had just taken it up. I bought new gym clothes just for him. Usually, I don't want to be noticed when I work out. This was something else.

GEORGE. We followed the rules at first.

SUZIE-FAY. He always seemed so in control on the court. More often than not he'd win. Which was fine. I mean I don't know that I wanted to lose, but it's like a playfight. You don't ever Really want to win a playfight. Unless it's really funny. And even then, it had better be Really funny.

GEORGE. Eventually, we started to Calvinball the game. We "kept score" more by jokes. Jokes and ridiculous shots than formal points. It's lucky our club had closed courts. We probably looked ridiculous.

SUZIE-FAY. When we stopped being able to really talk to each other, we started playing racquetball by the rules again.

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GEORGE. Neither of us said anything about it. It just happened. It was slow, but one day a formal point mattered more than a witty comment, and then we started keeping score as if it mattered.

SUZIE-FAY. I didn't like it quite so much anymore when George won. Or when he got casual about the rules. We still played though. It was never the same again, but we still played.

SCENE 8 A FRIEND

GEORGE. *(Contemplates his phone. Makes the call.)* Hi.

SUZIE-FAY. Hi George. What's up?

GEORGE. You know how you told me, that if I needed a friend, I should call you?

SUZIE-FAY. Yeah.

GEORGE. Well I can use a friend.

SUZIE-FAY. What's wrong?

GEORGE. Wanna play racquetball?

SUZIE-FAY. Sure.

GEORGE. Great. See you at the gym.

SUZIE-FAY. See you there.

GEORGE. Bye Suzie. *(Hangs up.)*

SUZIE-FAY. Hmm. Bye Buddy.

SCENE 9 ON THE COURT

Playing racquetball.

GEORGE. It's funny you know.

SUZIE-FAY. What is?

GEORGE. Being home for the holidays. Seeing my family. Having everyone ask about you. I thought news would travel faster.

SUZIE-FAY. I know. I'm getting a lot of the same thing.

GEORGE. Crazy.

BURNING UP THE DICTIONARY

SUZIE-FAY. What's crazier are the rumors.

GEORGE. Rumors?

SUZIE-FAY. Yeah. I thought we'd managed to keep really separate lives. I forgot how many friends we really had in common.

GEORGE. What rumors?

SUZIE-FAY. The one about us getting back together.

GEORGE. Yeah. That really threw me.

SUZIE-FAY. I think it started at the party.

GEORGE. And here we thought we were being all slick.

SUZIE-FAY. We were. It's a fun rumor though. In all its incarnations.

GEORGE. I've heard eight versions so far.

SUZIE-FAY. We'll have to compare notes. I've only heard five.

GEORGE. That's it?

SUZIE-FAY. In one of them you proposed.

GEORGE. *(He misses what should be an easy shot.)* Wow.

SUZIE-FAY. Yeah. That one was pretty spectacular.

GEORGE. The point? Or the rumor?

SUZIE-FAY. Both. But I only take credit for the point.

GEORGE. We can't keep doing this you know.

SUZIE-FAY. Playing racquetball George? This was your idea.

GEORGE. I can't keep seeing you. We aren't together anymore. And we haven't not been together for that long. I don't know what to say to you when I see you.

SUZIE-FAY. What happened to staying friends? Remember that time you were my best friend?

GEORGE. We're not really friends any more. Not yet. I don't know what we are. It'll be a while till we can even try to be again. I don't even know how long.

SUZIE-FAY. Oh please. You're just grouchy because you think I'll beat you in racquetball. Your serve.

GEORGE. Suzanne. Really. It hurts too much. I can't do this. I don't know what to say to you anymore.

SUZIE-FAY. You're saying a whole lot right now.

BURNING UP THE DICTIONARY

GEORGE. It's like every couple has their own language. And when we stopped being a couple we threw our dictionary on a bonfire. But I still remember all the words but not what they mean anymore.

SUZIE-FAY. I still understand you. Who else can say that?

GEORGE. None of the things we used to say to each other mean the same things any more. Or if they do, they aren't ours to use. Not any more.

SUZIE-FAY. I'll miss you you know. If you decide to go.

GEORGE. I miss you already.

SUZIE-FAY. Then what do you want.

GEORGE. Can we just say we won't try to contact each other for a few months?

SUZIE-FAY. How many?

GEORGE. Three?

SUZIE-FAY. Fine.

GEORGE. I'm serious. When I don't hear from you I think you hate me. When I do hear from you half the time it's awkward. The other half is way too comfortable. I think we just need time to cool off if we're going to be friends.

SUZIE-FAY. Is Katie your girlfriend?

GEORGE. She's my friend.

Are you seeing anyone?

SUZIE-FAY. I went on some dates.

GEORGE. I don't want to know.

SUZIE-FAY. You asked.

GEORGE. I'm better off not knowing.

SUZIE-FAY. And you want to stay friends?

GEORGE. No. I want to be able to be friends again.

SUZIE-FAY. That hurts George.

GEORGE. I'm sorry. I'm trying to be honest. I always loved that I could be honest with you. And now I don't feel like I can. It's not fair to you or me.

SUZIE-FAY. And cutting each other off is your solution. Great plan.

GEORGE. I want some time to cool off. I lost a Buddy. I don't want to lose a friend too.

BURNING UP THE DICTIONARY

SUZIE-FAY. Three months?

GEORGE. Yes.

SUZIE-FAY. Buddy hug?

GEORGE. Yes.

SUZIE-FAY. Buddy kiss?

GEORGE. It's a bad idea.

SUZIE-FAY. Last Buddy kiss? (*They kiss. They separate.*)

SCENE 10 STORYTIME (2)

Suzie-Fay and George address the audience.

SUZIE-FAY. Our first breakup conversation was on a Saturday morning. I was working on a project and went from seeing him to working all day. I guess he changed his relationship status online somewhere because I kept getting calls all day from mutual friends asking me if I was ok. I was. I didn't want to talk about it though. Not with them.

GEORGE. I went home from the conversation and started cleaning things out. I took down all her pictures. We'd been together a while. There were a lot of pictures. I put away some of the gifts she'd given me. Not all of them, just the ones that were weird. There was a piece of silk rope hanging from my nightstand. I put that away too. There was a story behind it. Probably one of my best boyfriend moments.

SUZIE-FAY. When I'm with someone and I can let go, I mean, really let go, I get... pretty wild. But it takes a lot of trust. George said to me once that he had to hold me down for his own safety. Hot. I loved feeling how much stronger than me he was. I loved being able to completely let go and still not really be able to move. I loved being able to trust him with that. He asked me once if I would ever want to be tied up. I said yes. And then I forgot that whole conversation.

GEORGE. I was on a business trip. I had a long layover in San Francisco. Met up with an old friend. A woman. She paints now. Pretty bohemian. She showed me around. There was this part of town we

BURNING UP THE DICTIONARY

went to, also really bohemian. Lots of sex shops. I told her what I was looking for. We'd had a history of our own, years before. Somehow that made it less weird. She helped me find it.

SUZIE-FAY. He got back from his business trip. It was a long one. Two weeks. Most of that summer, we'd gotten used to seeing each other all the time. He left not long after what we decided was our Buddyversary. I picked him up at the airport. Airports were a running joke at the time. They stayed an inside joke the whole time we were together actually.

GEORGE. We were so happy to see each other. I managed to slip the rope under my pillow long before we got to bed. She seemed into the idea when we talked about it a couple months before, but that's not the same as actually being tied up. I was completely prepared to play it off as a joke if it freaked her out.

SUZIE-FAY. He surprised me.

GEORGE. I held her down and then pulled the rope out for her to see. Her eyes lit up. She understood. I loosened my grip on her.

SUZIE-FAY. I held my wrists out to be tied. I knew no matter what happened he would never hurt me.

SCENE 11 BREACH OF CONTRACT

GEORGE. (*Answers his phone*) Suzanne?

SUZIE-FAY. Why are you calling me that?

GEORGE. It's your name. What's going on? It's late.

SUZIE-FAY. Are you alone?

GEORGE. Yes.

SUZIE-FAY. I miss you.

GEORGE. I miss you too.

SUZIE-FAY. Come over.

GEORGE. Suzanne.

SUZIE-FAY. What.

GEORGE. We can't do this.

BURNING UP THE DICTIONARY

SUZIE-FAY. Come over.

GEORGE. Suzanne.

SUZIE-FAY. George Buddy.

GEORGE. That's not fair.

SUZIE-FAY. I'll come over there.

GEORGE. Three months. Then you can call me again. Not until then.

(He hangs up.)

SCENE 12 10 DAYS LATER EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

SUZIE-FAY. I didn't think you'd come.

GEORGE. You put me on the email.

SUZIE-FAY. It hasn't been three months. I broke the agreement again.

GEORGE. Some things are more important.

SUZIE-FAY. I'm scared.

GEORGE. She'll be ok. She has you.

SUZIE-FAY. Promise?

GEORGE. I promise.

SUZIE-FAY. Nutmeg died.

GEORGE. Her dog?

SUZIE-FAY. Our dog. She doesn't know yet.

GEORGE. Has she woken up yet?

SUZIE-FAY. No. Not really.

GEORGE. When are you going out there?

SUZIE-FAY. Tomorrow. My dad is looking for flights. I'll get there first.

GEORGE. Who was driving?

SUZIE-FAY. She was. There was a drunk driver. Her car basically exploded. Her friend is ok. They think she was knocked unconscious and that my sister pulled her out. She only has burns from the airbag. They think Lisa went back to try to save Nutmeg and that's where she got really hurt.

BURNING UP THE DICTIONARY

GEORGE. I'm so sorry.

SUZIE-FAY. You didn't need to come.

GEORGE. What kind of a Buddy would I be if I didn't?

SUZIE-FAY. A really really bad one.

GEORGE. And do you honestly think I would be a bad Buddy?

SUZIE-FAY. You're too good a boyfriend to be a bad Buddy.

GEORGE. Suzy-Fay?

SUZIE-FAY. Yes George?

GEORGE. I'm not your boyfriend.

SUZIE-FAY. Then don't call yourself my Buddy.

GEORGE. I thought we said a Buddy was a Buddy, no matter what else.

SUZIE-FAY. There's no such thing. Buddy is a made up person.

GEORGE. Can we please not fight about this now?

SUZIE-FAY. *(formal)* I'm sorry to have bothered you George. I was hoping for someone who was committed to helping me right now. I have to go help my family.

GEORGE. Do you need a ride to the airport?

SUZIE-FAY. Stop that.

GEORGE. What?

SUZIE-FAY. That was Not ok.

GEORGE. I didn't mean it?

SUZIE-FAY. What?

GEORGE. I mean, I meant that in the most practical, not loaded, helpful way I could have possibly meant it. I'm sorry. I was trying to help. I forgot.

SUZIE-FAY. You forgot?

GEORGE. Suzy...

SUZIE-FAY. You're an asshole. I'm sorry I picked up the phone.

GEORGE. You emailed me and everyone else that Lisa was in a wreck in fucking Idaho and expected me not to call?

SUZIE-FAY. I need to go.

GEORGE. You can call me. If you need to talk to someone. If you need to talk to me.

SUZIE-FAY. I don't think so. *(She starts to go.)*

BURNING UP THE DICTIONARY

GEORGE. (*He stops her.*) Stop.

SUZIE-FAY. What are you doing.

GEORGE. Trying to stop you from being an idiot.

SUZIE-FAY. This would be that old-fashioned chivalry of yours I used to be so proud of. Very gallant. I remember how it swept me off of my feet.

GEORGE. Suzanne. Your sister is in the hospital.

SUZIE-FAY. I know.

GEORGE. You need someone.

SUZIE-FAY. You're right. Too bad no one is around.

GEORGE. You reached out to me because you knew I would be there for you.

SUZIE-FAY. It was a mistake. I was a little distracted. Sister in the hospital. Dog dead. You know, Tuesday.

GEORGE. It wasn't.

SUZIE-FAY. Wasn't what? Dead? I'm pretty sure Nutmeg is really dead.

GEORGE. A mistake. It wasn't a mistake.

SUZIE-FAY. What are you doing.

GEORGE. Being a friend. You need a friend.

SUZIE-FAY. What are you going to do.

GEORGE. I'm going to help you pack. And then I'm going to take you... to your flight.

SUZIE-FAY. At the airport?

GEORGE. I'll take you to the airport.

SUZIE-FAY. Thank you George Buddy.

GEORGE. A Buddy is a Buddy, no matter what happens.

SCENE 13

PAGES OF THE DICTIONARY

GEORGE. (*To audience.*) So many things became inside jokes. So many inside jokes became ways of saying "I love you." There was an article in Cosmo: How to tell if he really loves you. Somewhere at the top of the list was "He offers to take you to the airport."

BURNING UP THE DICTIONARY

SUZIE-FAY. Would you give me a ride to the airport?

GEORGE. I would drive you to the airport any time.

Embrace. Kiss. He goes.

SUZIE-FAY. We used to call each other Buddy. It was sort of a joke, but a serious one. It was back when we started, when we were friends exploring benefits. And then we were more but wouldn't admit it. It was funny that his name is George. I could hug him and squeeze him and say his name and it would be like telling him I loved him. In a Bugs Bunny sort of way. I was sad my name couldn't be the same for him.

GEORGE. We were watching this HBO movie, *Angels in America*. I had heard really good things about it. We were both supposed to read it in school and never did. Anyway...

SUZIE-FAY. ...there was this Mormon couple. Except he was gay. It's complicated. Great movie though. Anyway, the couple, they called each other "Buddy." They had "Buddy Kisses," "Buddy Hugs" and presumably "Buddy Sex." George said that they weren't so good at being Buddies. I leaned in close to him and said "Buddy Kiss." He said it was a bad idea.

GEORGE. I thought it would screw up the friendship. We'd seen each other date all these other people. And never really be happy. And always come back to each other.

SUZIE-FAY. I kissed him on the cheek. He kissed me on the cheek back. Then I kissed him on the neck...

GEORGE. Then we had to put the movie off for another day. "Buddy" became our name for each other. And a way to say "I love you" before we were brave enough to say it out loud and for real.

SUZIE-FAY. We actually saw the rest of the movie a couple weeks later. The name "Buddy" had stuck by then. I don't know that it would have had we seen the movie all the way through.

GEORGE. Maybe we should have stuck with the giant ninja robot movie we were going to see.

SUZIE-FAY. But then who knows what we would have been calling each other.

BURNING UP THE DICTIONARY

SCENE 14
IDAHO

GEORGE. (*Answering phone.*) Suzy?

SUZIE-FAY. George Buddy?

GEORGE. How is she?

SUZIE-FAY. Unconscious. But stable.

GEORGE. Is your family there yet?

SUZIE-FAY. Tomorrow. I think. Her boyfriend is flying out too.

GEORGE. Did they say anything about how long she'll be unconscious?

SUZIE-FAY. They don't know.

GEORGE. How are you holding up?

SUZIE-FAY. She looked really bad.

GEORGE. I understand. But how are You.

SUZIE-FAY. I'm ok.

GEORGE. Did you eat?

SUZIE-FAY. I'm ok.

GEORGE. That's not a yes.

SUZIE-FAY. It's not like I'll get to go running here. I don't need as much.

GEORGE. Suzy...

SUZIE-FAY. Stop.

GEORGE. Didn't the doctor say you have to eat?

SUZIE-FAY. George. Stop.

GEORGE. I'm trying to help.

SUZIE-FAY. You don't get to quote my doctor at me. I should never have told you that.

GEORGE. I'm sorry. I'm trying to help.

SUZIE-FAY. This isn't about me. I am here for Lisa. This is about Lisa.

GEORGE. And I am here for Suzy. And Suzy is going to fall over and not be a whole lot of use to Lisa if Suzy doesn't eat.

SUZIE-FAY. I'll eat.

GEORGE. Are there... sandwiches?

SUZIE-FAY. Of course, there are sandwiches.

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GEORGE. Sandwiches make everything better.

SUZIE-FAY. You're a goof.

GEORGE. I'm a goof who knows how to take care of you.

SUZIE-FAY. I'll get a sandwich.

GEORGE. Promise?

SUZIE-FAY. Fine. I promise.

GEORGE. Good.

SUZIE-FAY. Goof. - Her hands were all covered in bandages.

GEORGE. They would have to be. She just got there.

SUZIE-FAY. I asked if she would still be able to play the piano. They didn't even know she was a musician.

GEORGE. Suzanne, they probably had other things on their mind when she came in.

SUZIE-FAY. They don't know if she'll be able to play the piano.

GEORGE. They can't really say anything. Not yet. How did she look otherwise?

SUZIE-FAY. Pretty banged up. But more or less in one piece.

GEORGE. She'll pull through.

SUZIE-FAY. How do you know.

GEORGE. Because you are there for her. And I am here for you.

SUZIE-FAY. Would you still be there for me if I moved to another part of the country for a while? Like I was talking about?

GEORGE. That's a different conversation. One we never really finished.

SUZIE-FAY. I still wonder.

GEORGE. Me too. It's not like this is practice.

SUZIE-FAY. Only because no one goes to Idaho by choice.

GEORGE. You're a snob.

SUZIE-FAY. It's the company I keep.

GEORGE. Touche.

SUZIE-FAY. George Buddy?

GEORGE. Suzanna Fay Buddy?

SUZIE-FAY. I love you.

GEORGE. I love you too.

BURNING UP THE DICTIONARY

**SCENE 15
STORYTIME (3)**

BACK WHEN THINGS WERE BETTER. COUGH DROPS.

Hand in hand. A store.

SUZIE-FAY. I am shocked.

GEORGE. Shocked you say?

SUZIE-FAY. Shocked I tell you.

GEORGE. And appalled?

SUZIE-FAY. No. Just shocked.

GEORGE. And why are you shocked, oh Buddy of mine?

SUZIE-FAY. Because Buddy dear, I simply do not believe that they have those out here where little kids can see them.

GEORGE. What?

SUZIE-FAY. And cherry flavor too. That's just dirty.

GEORGE. *(Noticing.)* Oh. Yes. Filthy.

SUZIE-FAY. Took you a second, huh, Buddy?

GEORGE. It did.

SUZIE-FAY. Usually, you're the one who's dirty.

GEORGE. No.

SUZIE-FAY. Yes.

GEORGE. Well. I have good inspiration.

SUZIE-FAY. Blush.

GEORGE. *(Whispering in her ear.)* Cherry's my favorite flavor.

SUZIE-FAY. *(Whispering back.)* I know. I like how it tastes on you.

GEORGE. Cherry menthol Buddy flavor.

SUZIE-FAY. Mmm.

GEORGE. Tingling are we?

SUZIE-FAY. Not yet. Maybe later. Maybe if you're good.

GEORGE. Or bad.

SUZIE-FAY. Or bad.

GEORGE. And what might I have to do now Buddy?

SUZIE-FAY. You might want some cough drops.

GEORGE. Are we out?

BURNING UP THE DICTIONARY

SUZIE-FAY. With any luck we will be soon. (*As George begins to select.*) Not those. Too much menthol. That kind feels the best.

GEORGE. I know your favorites, Buddy.

SUZIE-FAY. Thank you, Buddy.

GEORGE. They're my favorites too.

SUZIE-FAY. They should be. They make me feel the best.

GEORGE. Well. There is that.

SUZIE-FAY. Is there more?

GEORGE. They're just strong enough. I love you Buddy, but sometimes, when you take a while...

SUZIE-FAY. When I take "a while?"

GEORGE. I'm not complaining Buddy. But a Buddy can only have so much endurance. And you taste strong. And I love that extra cherry tingle flavoring my Buddy.

SUZIE-FAY. Not honey-lemon?

GEORGE. You're already my honey.

SUZIE-FAY. Your honey? Seriously? That was not your best work.

GEORGE. You'll forgive me though.

SUZIE-FAY. You sure about that.

GEORGE. With a menthol cherry on top.

SUZIE-FAY. Mmm. The things you learn in Cosmo.

GEORGE. One day, I am going to have to tie you up.

SUZIE-FAY. Are you now?

GEORGE. I think so. For my own good.

SUZIE-FAY. Promises promises.

GEORGE. The way you thrash. I am not kidding. A man might get his tongue sprained.

SUZIE-FAY. Flattery will get you everywhere.

GEORGE. Really?

SUZIE-FAY. Maybe.

GEORGE. Have I mentioned that you look absolutely delicious this evening?

SUZIE-FAY. Delicious?

GEORGE. Succulent.

SUZIE-FAY. Buddy?

BURNING UP THE DICTIONARY

GEORGE. Yes Buddy?

SUZIE-FAY. We shouldn't be having this conversation in the store.

GEORGE. Cause kids might hear?

SUZIE-FAY. Cause kids might see.

GEORGE. I like how you think. Your place or mine?

SUZIE-FAY. Which are we closer to?

GEORGE. We're closest to the movie Buddy.

SUZIE-FAY. Fuck the movie.

GEORGE. (*Oh so innocent.*) Fuck the movie? Weren't You the Buddy who insisted we see this? Something about me getting cultured?

SUZIE-FAY. Ok, fuck you. As soon as possible.

GEORGE. You know what I think?

SUZIE-FAY. You think you're going to keep this up all night until we get home.

GEORGE. I am. Is that ok?

SUZIE-FAY. You don't have to be anywhere in the morning, do you?

GEORGE. I don't.

SUZIE-FAY. Good. Because you aren't sleeping much.

GEORGE. I wasn't planning on it. (*George breaks away and faces the audience.*) When it was all over. When we couldn't speak to each other. She left me a message. In the comments of the online presence of a mutual friend who was trying to be Switzerland. In our language.

SUZIE-FAY. "It's funny, I've never felt better or healthier in my life. But I keep running out of cherry cough drops." (*She does a "cute-up."* *It is for someone else.*)

END ACT I

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS –
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