

The Actor's Nightmare
By: Christopher Durang
GEORGE

Setting: A theater Situation: An accountant named George Spelvin is baffled to find himself on the stage of a theatre. The stage manager tells him that "Eddie" (Edwin Booth) has been in a car accident and George will have to go on for him. The curtain goes up on a play with is either Private Lives, Checkmate or Hamlet. George wings it as well as he can, but is lost when his co-stars exeunt.

Oh don't go! *(Pause, smiles uncomfortably at the audience.)* Maybe someone else will come out in a minute. *(Pause.)* Of course, sometimes people have soliloquies in Shakespeare. Let's just wait a moment more and maybe someone will come. *(Spotlight suddenly flashes on GEORGE.)* Oh dear. *(GEORGE fidgets awkwardly then decides to do his best to live up to the requirements of the moment.)* To be or not to be, that is the question! *(Doesn't know any more.)* Oh maid! *(No response, he remembers that actors call for "line")* Line. LINE! Ohhhhh. Oh, what a rouge and peasant slave am I Wheater tis nobler in the mind's eye to kill oneself, or not dreams are made on ; and our lives are rounded by a little sleep. *(Lights change. Spot goes out.)* Uh, thrift, thrift, Horatio! Neither a borrower nor a lender be. But to thine own self be true. There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. Extraordinary how potent cheap music can be. Out, out damn spot! I come to wive it wealthily in Padua. *(Sings.)* Brush up your Shakespeare, start quoting him now...Da da da!!! *(GEORGE moves center stage)* I wonder whose yacht that is. How was China? Very large, China. How was Japan? Very small, Japan. *(Looks around nervously, then says the first thing that comes to mind.)* I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under god, indivisible with liberty and justice for all. Line! Line! Line! Oh my god. *(Gets idea.)* O my god, I am heartily sorry for having offended thee , and I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell. But most of all they offend thee, GOD, who art all good and deserving of my love. And I resolve to confess my sins, to do pennance, and to ammend my life. AMEN! *(Friendly.)* That's the act of contrition that Catholic schoolmasters say in confession in order to be forgiven for their sins. But ARGH! I'm not Catholic or a school master! What am I doing? *(Explaining)* When you call for a line, usually the stage manager gives it to you! Y'know to just refresh your memory! LINE! The quality of mercy if not strained. It droppith as the gentle rain upon the place below. Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him well. Get thee to a nunnery!! Line! Nunnery! Oh who am I kidding? I am an accountant. I've studied ogarithms, and cosine and tangent..... *(irritated.)* LINE! *(Apoligetic.)* I'm sorry. This is supposed to be Hamlet or Private Lives or something. And I keep on rattling like a maniac. And I expected to see Edwin Booth, and now I have to go on for him! I'm so embarassed. Line! I don't know what else to do? *(Sings alphabet song.)* A B C D E F G.....etc. *(As he starts to sing, ELLEN TERRY enters dragging to large garbage cans. She puts them side by side, and gets in one.)* Oh, good. Are you Ophelia? Get thee to a nunnery. *(She points to the other garbage can indicating he should get in it.)* Get in? Ok! *(He does)* This must be one of those modern Hamlets.