

# Cogs In Something Bigger

By Pete Malicki

© Pete Malicki 2013

Permission to perform any or all of this play for any reason must be obtained from the author. Please contact him via email if you wish to use it.

Performance of this play may be subject to a royalty. Students, amateur/community theatres, auditionees, co-ops and not-for-profit enterprises are generally able to perform these plays for free.

(but small payments are greatly appreciated)

Contact:

[petemalicki@gmail.com](mailto:petemalicki@gmail.com)

More plays and Pete's latest news:

[www.petemalicki.com](http://www.petemalicki.com)

## **Cogs In Something Bigger**

© Pete Malicki 2013

*Cast – a young woman who’s recently become a celebrity.*

I had no idea how all of this worked. No idea at all. That’s all I can think as I stare down the barrels of a pure gold Duofold Parker pen and what I’m told is a 44 Magnum.

From the outside this world looks ridiculous: spoiled brats splurging on diamond-encrusted Lamborghinis and partying all the way to rehab. Spontaneously marrying ex-boyfriends and popping out kiddies called “Blanket” and “Spec Wildhorse.” I’m told to pick a hand. Any hand.

I was nobody a few years ago. Just a waitress who sang at jazz clubs on Friday nights. Didn’t even make the minimum wage and often wondered if I should have met with that producer who wanted to set me up in the adult industry. I was discovered by luck. The right person came to a party at the club one night and six months later I’m a pop star.

Somewhat reluctantly, I point towards the hand holding the pen. It might be easier if he just blows my brains out all over the basement wall. I’m about to become one of them. One of those idiot celebrities with idiot personal lives for bored idiots to talk about.

A piece of paper is shoved under my nose. I’m told to sign before he makes balloon animals out of my intestines. I almost tell him they won’t expand if you blow in them but he’d be too dumb to get it. I sign. He takes the contract, slides it into a folder and disappears.

I wait a minute like he asked me then head upstairs. Somehow I’ve held off on crying so there’s no need to redo my makeup and moments later I’m in the thick of the party again.

A couple of movie starlets come up to me with these huge, shit-eating smiles on their faces. “Oh my gawd, how far along are you?” “What you gonna call it?”

How do these people know? I’ve been pregnant for like two days! “I was thinking of Pixie Peaches if it’s a girl or Rocket Racer for a boy.”

They don’t know if I’m taking the piss or being dead serious. It’s hard to tell in these circles. I say nothing more and they give each other a look and leave. A movie producer appears from out of nowhere. “There you are! I’ve been looking all over for you. Have a minute?”

I have a minute. I’m still recovering from having a gun to my head so my schedule is more or less open. He leads me to a quiet corner and leans in close. The whole room watches us from the corners of their beady little eyes. “It’s a funny game, isn’t it? One day you’re Sally Nobody singing in a nightclub, the next you’re Charisma with three top ten hits.”

I nod as he reminds me how stupid my stage name is. At the time it seemed so wonderfully appropriate; when I sing, that’s what I embody. I feel like I should be called

Cynico now. “Let’s cut to the chase. You’re hot property and we want you as the lead in the sequel to *Coming Home For Death*. Contract’s worth one mil and we start shooting next month.”

I’m breathless. “Um, but, I can’t act. I mean, it sounds great, and I’m excited – don’t get me wrong – but I’ve never acted and I, well, can’t.”

He grins and slaps me on the back. “Biggest load of crap I’ve ever heard. You’re a great performer. Besides, when has being shit ever stopped anyone from taking a lead role?”

I’m dazzled for the rest of the night. When I get home, I tell my husband about the offer and he’s over the moon. I don’t talk about the threats and extortion. Not now. We make love and the next thing I know I’m in front of lights and cameras and everyone is trying to meet me and touch me and talk to me. I lose myself in the sea of celebrity again and I forget about gangsters with fancy pens and fancier firearms. My husband meets me on set and smiles to everyone and the magazines start calling him Charm. Charm and Charisma.

A couple of months into shooting I start to show. The Executive Producer calls me in for a meeting and throws a big bucket of show biz reality in my face.

“What the hell is with the muffin top? You sleeping in the goddamned catering van?”

“I’m three months pregnant,” I say.

“Actually, you’re not. No one told you you could get pregnant so you’re three months nothing. Get rid of it.”

I’m so shocked I can barely breathe. I tell him he’s got to be kidding and he says he has no time for a sense of humour and gives me a slip of paper with some numbers on it. I rip it up in front of him and he tells me he’ll ruin me. I ask what the problem is anyway. He says they don’t have a special effects budget to fix the bulge and the body shots will be screwed. I tell him to leave my trailer before I stab his misogynistic arse with my positive pregnancy test. He tells me I’m done for, leaves, and I never see him again in my life.

As upset as this makes me, I keep it to myself and never so much as sniffle in front of anyone. The director tells me he’s very happy for me but we’ll have to rethink some of the shots to hide “the evidence”, as he calls it. We get towards the end of filming and it looks like the Executive Producer was all bark.

Daniel picks me up on the last day of shooting and he’s stony faced. “What’s wrong, honey?” “Did you sleep with Javier?”

I’m taken aback. Did I shag my *Coming Home For Death* co-star? “What would make you say that?” I ask.

“The story and incriminating photos in *OK!*.”

As if on cue, a paparazzo takes a photo where my mouth is open in shock and anger and my husband is scowling. The headline reads: “A little too Charming? Charisma reacts to hubby’s ‘revenge affair’ revelation.”

We both know what's going on after that and do our best to ignore it. The "Who's the real baby daddy?" crap is pretty tough to stomach but in a weird way our deteriorating public relationship makes our actual relationship stronger.

Then, I get a call from my record company. They tell me my upcoming gigs have all been cancelled due to my pneumonia.

"Did I miss a memo? I don't have pneumonia."

"According to the rags you do," says the head of A and R. "Sorry *Charisma*, but this label ain't gonna tour an unwell pregnant chick and endanger her unborn."

He hangs up on me and I severely endanger my "unborn" by throwing half my living room into the swimming pool. Daniel is super understanding and even uses the excuse to add in that designer lamp he's always hated. We have one of those laughing-and-crying-at-the-same-time moments and it's kinda nice.

I shut myself off from the world for the next few months and slowly start to feel like a normal person again. My water breaks one ordinary day and an ambulance takes me to hospital. The media are thankfully absent but, of course, I don't get off that easily. I can't help but notice one of the midwives is the very same man who held a gun to my head and forced me to sign a contract no sane person would ever willingly sign. You know who this guy is? He's a goon from some kind of mafia-esque crime gang. Thousands of perverts are placing bets on what name I'll give my child and they have a *lot* of money on me calling it Magnet.

My blood boils as I see this guy. You think celebrities want this idiocy? You think we actually *want* to call our kids Dusti Raine and Daisy Boo and Heavenly fucking Hiraani? These people *own* us. We are nothing but their pawns. Tiny little cogs in their enormous money-making machines. They pluck us out of nowhere and raise us all the way up to the very top of the world just to bring us crashing down in a flaming heap of humiliated, failed debris.

No.

Fuck. This.

I give birth like you wouldn't believe to a beautiful baby boy. I'm in Heaven. I wait and wait until I'm given the certificate to sign. The goon brings it to me and I write Thomas under first name.

The thick bastard stares at it and I can see the gears grinding away. "Go right ahead and sue me," I spit.

"The boss said if you don't call him Magnet, I'm to note him down as stillborn. He said you'd know exactly what I mean."

"You asshole! You're going to murder my baby? Don't you think the other nurses will notice?"

He grins at me and I realise he has them on the payroll. My mind desperately searches for a solution and I blurt out the first thing I come up with.

“I’ll give you two million to let me call him Thomas and piss off out of my life. Let me quit ‘show biz’. You can have everything I’ve got in exchange for a normal life.”

He tells me he’ll have to phone this one through. He fumbles with a Blackberry and goes outside. Five minutes later he comes back in and dumps my boy in my arms. “Thomas,” he grunts. “You’ll be seeing me for the money.”

I’ve just let a criminal extort two million dollars from me but I don’t care. I have my baby boy, and his name is Thomas. No fortune, no fame, nothing.

And I couldn’t be happier. I have everything I could ever want or need right here in my arms and on a plane coming to meet me. I have my family.

Tears of joy well in my eyes. I am Sally Nobody again.