CULT OF THE DEAD COW

TEXT FILE No. 413

Temporary Paralysis
A One-Act Play

by

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ACT I Scene 1

LIGHTS UP

VICTOR HOLDEN is sitting in an enormous bathtub among mountains of bubbles, being fed grapes by TINA, talking on the phone with RICK SAX, whose voice we hear through speakers.

VICTOR
So what’s the word on “Dance or Die?”

RICK
You read my mind, Victor baby, you read my mind.

VICTOR
Did I get the part?

RICK
Better!

VICTOR
What do you mean?

RICK
You got the teacher.

VICTOR
What!? I was made for that lead!

RICK
Vicky, Vicky, Vicky, the pay is the same!

VICTOR
Money? You think this is about money? It’s always about money with you people.

RICK
You people? What’s that supposed to mean?

VICTOR
I’m an artist, Rick. I can’t just play any role. I have to feel the role, I have to live it. I have to be it. I’ve played this role since I was twenty-three.

RICK
And you’re fif— not twenty-three, Vic. You can’t play sixteen year olds anymore.

VICTOR
Who’d they give the part to?

RICK
Timmy Cooper

VICTOR
Timmy who? The oatmeal kid?

RICK
That was ten years ago Vic.

VICTOR
That’s not the point. He’s a hack, he’s a sellout. I can act circles around ——

RICK
Victor, Victor, Victor . . .
We both know you’re a legend. Humphrey Bogart, Jimmy Stewart, Victor Holden. But let’s face it, all the talent in the world can’t buy youth. I think it could be really good for your career if —

Victor throws his phone in the bathwater.

VICTOR
Can’t buy youth? Can’t buy youth. Do you believe that?

Tina puts down the bowl of grapes and runs her fingers through Victor’s hair.

VICTOR
Not now – get me the classifieds. Let’s see what youth is going for these days.

LIGHTS DOWN

ACT I Scene 2

LIGHTS UP

Victor is speaking with TOFER in a parking lot. Tofer is smoking a joint and looking around nervously.

VICTOR
So this stuff will make me look like I’m a kid again?

TOFER
Yeah, yeah, yeah, of course.

VICTOR
How do I know you’re legit?

Tofer takes a drag and offers the joint to Victor who waves it away. Tofer leans in and whispers to Victor.

TOFER
You know Chip Slater?

VICTOR
From “Driving 2 Fast?” Of course. That little runt stole my –

TOFER
Well how old do you think he is?

VICTOR
Twenty-five, twenty-eight?

TOFER
Haha. Double that, then add a bunch. He used to be known as Paul Newman.

VICTOR
But—

TOFER
Ever notice when the old man stopped acting? Who was on the cover of seventeen the next week?

Victor looks it up on his cell phone.

VICTOR
Well I’ll be damned. Give me all you’ve got of that stuff.

TOFER
Woah woah, one bottle should be plenty – it can have some serious side effects.

VICTOR
Can the lecture for the junkies, just give me everything you’ve got.

TOFER
You don’t understand man, dry-mouth, facial paralysis –

Victor pulls out a wad of cash. Tofer takes the money and hands Victor a carton of pills.

LIGHTS DOWN

ACT 1 Scene 3

Hospital sounds are heard as the stage is still black. Heavy breathing, machines, heartbeats, blips of heart meters.
LIGHTS UP

Victor is in a hospital bed, covered in casts. Rick enters with THE DOCTOR.

**DOCTOR**
The police report said he was reaching in the back of his car for a water bottle on the freeway on his way to an audition when he lost control of the vehicle. You were the most recent call in his phone so we figured we’d leave the decision up to you.

The doctor exits.

**RICK**
Hey Victor baby. Can you hear me? . . . I guess not. They want to know if we should pull the plug on you, Victor babe. I guess they gotta make room around here, and it’s been almost a week already. . . Okay, Vic, I don’t want to off you if you’re in there somewhere, so I came up with a system. I saw it in a movie or something. Just blink once if you can hear me, and twice if you can’t.

Rick stares at the eyes inside the cast. They do not move.

**RICK**
Come on Vic, don’t make this any harder than it has to be. Just let me know if you’re in there. . .

Rick takes the cast off Victor’s face to better see him. Victor looks very youthful.
RICK
Holy Hell! You look great!
We can definitely work with
this. . . I heard there is
some real artsy flick up for
bid about some vegetable who
defies the odds to climb
mount Everest in a hospital
bed pulled by Sherpas. . .
Yeah, “Frozen Veggies,”
something like that. Yes,
this is beautiful. Vic,
we’re back on top!

Rick kisses Vic and walks out, already dialing his phone.
He walks past the doctor who is walking in.

DOCTOR
So have you made a decis—

RICK
Doc, this is a human life.
What kind of monster are you?
Of course we’re not going to
pull the plug!

LIGHTS DOWN