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THE SECRET WORD FOR TODAY
IS CARROT
[EXCERPT]

a very short play
by

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CHARACTERS

EMILY BRONTE, LILLIAN HELLMAN, and SYLVIA PLATH (all played by the same male actor)

HARRY (played by a woman)

MANAGER

The disembodied head of JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

Jean-Paul Sartre's headless BODY

A BOY

A group of SHOPPERS

Four VOICES on tape

SETTING

The action takes place in K-Mart, Pathmark, Bob's Bait Barrel, and hell from Sartre's play No Exit.

SCENE ONE

(Darkness)

VOICE #1

The secret word for today is carrot. The secret word for today is carrot.

(Pause)

Carrot is today's secret word. Carrot.

(Pause)

Carrot. Remember.

(Pause)

Carrot.

(Pause. Lights up on aisle 5 in K-Mart. Pause.)

VOICE #2

Attention K-Mart Shoppers! Blue-light special in aisle seven on Aqua-Net hairspray.

(A group of K-Mart Shoppers enters, runs across the stage, and exits. Pause.)

Attention K-Mart Shoppers! Blue Light Special in aisle three on Florida swamp land.

(The shoppers run across the stage. Pause.)

Attention K-Mart Shoppers! Blue-light special in aisle seventy-one on all-purpose lard.

(The shoppers start to cross the stage.)

And while you're at it, pick up a carrot.

(The SHOPPERS stop suddenly on the word "carrot." All but two of the SHOPPERS sing "America the Beautiful" and dance a desperate jig. When they are done, the SHOPPERS who danced pelt those who did not with eggs. The SHOPPERS run off. Pause. HARRY enters, leading EMILY BRONTE on a leash. The MANAGER enters.)

MANAGER

Excuse me, sir. What is that?

HARRY

This is Emily Bronte, my dog.

MANAGER

Dogs are not allowed in K-Mart, sir.

HARRY

Then this is not my dog.

MANAGER

In that case, I'll have to put it to sleep. I'm sorry. I have no choice.

(The MANAGER produces a hypodermic and prepares an injection. HARRY weeps. A small BOY wheels in a pedestal, on which rests the head of Jean-Paul SARTRE.)

SARTRE

Hell is other people! There is no exit! Get me some Palmolive!

(The BOY exits.)

Man, why do you weep?

HARRY

Emily Bronte must die!

(SARTRE weeps.)

SARTRE

Who is Emily Bronte?

HARRY

Emily Bronte is my dog.

SARTRE & MANAGER

Dogs are not allowed in K-Mart, sir.

(The BOY returns with an empty Palmolive bottle.)

HARRY

Then this is not my dog.

BOY

In that case, I'm afraid I'll have to put it to sleep. I'm sorry. I have no choice.

(The MANAGER weeps.)

VOICE #2

Attention K-Mart shoppers! Blue light special in aisle two on Wuthering Heights, by Emily Bronte!

(The SHOPPERS run across the stage.)

EMILY

Who is Emily Bronte?

HARRY

Emily Bronte is my dog.

EMILY, MANAGER, & SARTRE

Dogs are not allowed in K-Mart, sir.

HARRY

Then this is not my dog.

EMILY

In that case, I'm afraid I'll have to put it to sleep. I'm sorry. I have no choice.

(The BOY weeps. EMILY BRONTE produces a carrot and tries to prepare an injection but fails because he has a carrot, not a hypodermic. Confused, he accidentally pokes the BOY in the eye with the carrot. Unable to see, the BOY gropes about, accidentally injecting the MANAGER with the hypodermic. The MANAGER dies horribly, knocking over the pedestal on which SARTRE's head rests. SARTRE dies horribly, and his pedestal falls on the boy, crushing him. The BOY dies horribly. Pause. HARRY and EMILY BRONTE exit. Pause.)

VOICE #2

Attention K-Mart Shoppers! Blue-light special in aisle thirteen on existential malaise.

(The SHOPPERS run across the stage. One of the SHOPPERS stops to pick up the empty Palmolive bottle, and another SHOPPER tries to wrest it from the first as the other SHOPPERS exit. Locked in mortal combat, the last two SHOPPERS exit. Pause. Blackout.)

[END OF EXCERPT]