

BOLT-CUTTER MAN

A ten-minute play by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS for BOLT-CUTTER MAN

KEITH – mid 20's or early 30s

KAREN – Dan's wife, mid 20s or early 30s

THEY are new parents.

TRICK-OR-TREATER – Teen

TIME: Present

PLACE: House in the suburbs

We hear the metronome beat of a motorized baby's swing. KAREN, mid 20s stands nervously at the door and keeps watch.

KAREN: You're clear! Hurryhurryhurryhurryhurry—hi.

Enter a completely out of breath KEITH, mid 20s, KAREN'S husband.

KEITH: I—I—I—I—

KAREN: Just tell me, tell me! But hurry up, it's almost 5:30 and you know what that means.

KEITH: Whoo—I can't catch my breath here.

KAREN: I will just order some decongestion bronchial spray and they will deliver it through the slot in the door just like the baby's medicine, groceries and clothes and how it all comes to us.

KEITH: I'm just a little out of shape is all.

KAREN: Oh sure. Sure. I hadn't noticed.

KEITH: I can't run with that kind of urgency. When was the last time we got some exercise?

KAREN: Well, I had the baby almost a year ago. That was strenuous. And remember, you had to hold my legs while I pushed.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah, that works the triceps and and I think the trapa-thingies.

KAREN: Now, did you do it, Keith? Were you successful?

KEITH: Oh, oh! Yes. I did it. It's locked. The front gate is completed bolted. Nobody's gettin' in and nobody's gettin' out.

KAREN: (very relieved) Oh thank you thank you thank you.

KEITH: I just want to make sure we have a key to it in case we ever do want to get out.

KAREN: With our job situation being totally *internet-ed*, I think we're in the clear there.

Beat. Then KEITH grabs her wrist and looks at her watch.

BOTH: Ahhhhh!!

THEY bolt for the t.v.

KAREN: I think we just missed the opening credits with our chitter-chatter—hurry, turn it on!

KEITH: Where's the GOSH-NABBED FORKING remote?!

KAREN: It's a clicker and it's right here and don't use that kind of tone because the baby is repeating tones lately.

SHE clicks on the NEWS. We hear the report given in Peanuts- Adult style. After a blurb of news BOTH gasp in horror. Another blurb, another gasp of horror. One more blurb-gasp, and then BOTH exhale – the flurry, for now, over.

KAREN (cont.) Weird for weather to be next this early in the news broadcast.

KEITH: No, no, dear. It's Halloween... Although, our child doesn't really do Halloween—

KAREN: He's watching Elmo in the swinging thing that shuts off in exactly seven minutes.

KEITH: Right. (slightly disappointed) Elmo. (sighs)

KAREN: Shame on you, Keith. Babies need routines they can depend on. What? Do you want to start breaking things, Keith? I think the garbage disposal still works. Why don't we stuff a pumpkin down in it? Then it will feel just like Halloween. Is that what you want?

KEITH: You're right. You're right. It's just...

KAREN: That's it—get the list.

KEITH: The list? I don't think—

KAREN: It will be good for us to review the list and then you can tell me all of your feelings. C'mon before it gets too dark outside. C'mon.

THEY move to a spot on the stage where KEITH removes a secret floorboard and retrieves a piece of paper. He unfolds and opens it. She reads:

KAREN (cont.) Okay. "Things that scare us." Let's read responsively, Keith. You do the first one.

KEITH: People.

KAREN: Right. In general. Not all people just ones we don't know and/or ones we've known for a long time.

KEITH: Do we have to do this now?

KAREN: Next – afraid to teach – that's for both of us, former teachers in buildings.

KEITH: Afraid of snipers...that one was mine.

KAREN: That's a good one, Dear. Afraid of poisons. Like in the air and also your basic general cleaning products, which are full of toxins. You know, even sidewalk chalk has toxic dust particles.

KEITH: Afraid to get gas...for the car that is. Afraid of...gas.

KAREN: That was mine and now it's yours too! Afraid to drive on the freeway. Afraid to merge onto the freeway too, you know, afraid to merge.

KEITH: Afraid of bodies of water, even puddles, puddles can kill. You can't put a self-contained gate around every Gosh-nabbed puddle.

KAREN: Afraid of baby books and doctors that say you should let your baby cry it out.

KEITH: Afraid of breast pumps.

KAREN: Afraid of your mother. And etc. Okay, now, tell me your feelings.

KEITH: Oh, well, ah, it's Halloween. And, and soon it will be dark...It's just Halloween is all.

KAREN: Maybe you have forgotten the scale of things, *dear*, AND our lengthy discussions during pillow talk night after night about the responsibilities of starting a family AND our duty to protect and serve our family while we wait patiently for the government, who we trust, to clean up all of the chaos. Does pillow talk mean nothing to you anymore?

KEITH: No. Yes. I mean I know, sugar fly, I don't doubt what you're tellin' me. It's just sad.

KAREN: We don't have the freedom to judge it—no, go ahead, express your feelings, dear. (deep collecting breath) You're sad, go ahead, express.

KEITH: I just think about how one year as a kid I dressed up like Darth Vader and went to school and did the breathing thing and thought for a little while at least that I could control the dark side of things. It was quite, I don't know... wonderful.

KAREN: And what happened right before you went trick-or-treating that night or don't you choose to remember?

KEITH: What do you mean?

KAREN: Oh, c'mon Keith. Who ruined it?

KEITH: Nobody.

KAREN: Keith? Who ruined it?

KEITH: (reluctant to admit) My mom.

KAREN: Ah-huh. And how did she do that?

KEITH: (reluctant to admit) She made me put on a winter coat.

KAREN: Keith, can I tell you something? I will never do that to you. I will never make you wear a winter coat.

KEITH: But we never go outside anymore.

The doorbell rings.

BOTH: Aahhhhh!

KAREN: I thought you locked the front gate!

KEITH: I did, you saw me!

A beat as they stare at each other in perfect silence and then bolt in opposite directions to check the baby. They enter running.

KEITH: The baby's fine, he's okay, he's stationary. KAREN: Oh sweet mother Lord of Jesus.

KEITH: It's a sniper! Gotta be.

KAREN: No snipers don't make house visits. We googled it. They shoot you through the window.

KEITH: We boarded up the windows.

Doorbell.

BOTH: Aaaah!

KAREN: It's a raper, ah, ah, rapist!

KEITH: No, honey, we've read about this too. Rapers only get you in dark stairwells and they don't take mothers because they think it's gross to violate the birth canal.

KAREN: It's a kidnapper then!

Doorbell.

KEITH: No, kidnappers only kidnap when the people try and help other people and we never help other people on purpose.

Doorbell.

KAREN: Who is it then and how did they get past our locked gate?! Barbed wire doesn't go bad. Right? They can't just climb over, right?! (Doorbell.) Just shhhhh. We'll act like we're not home. But maybe it's a robber and they have been casing the joint then they'll know when we come and go.

KEITH: But we don't come and go. We don't go at all.

KAREN: Don't you sound spiteful, Keith. That was a family decision we made a long time ago when you were working on the computer and I was watching the news with the baby who we have both committed to loving unconditionally.

Beat. Doorbell. Beat.

KEITH: I'm going to answer it.

KAREN: What?

KEITH: I'm going to answer it. It's probably just, just an innocent trick-or-treater.

KAREN: Keith Jonathan Miller, if you answer that door you had better be prepared to deal with the consequences of going against a pact that we made as a family.

Doorbell.

KEITH: It will be okay, Karen. Go be with the baby.

KAREN: Wait! No. I am watching your back, Mister.

KEITH: (To the door.) Ah, who is it?

VOICE: (menacing Darth-Vader like) Trick or treat.

KEITH: (to KAREN) Go get this kid an apple.

KAREN: Alright, Mr., but you stall until I come back with that apple.

SHE goes.

KEITH: (to door) Ah, yes, we're not doing that this year, kiddo. (Doorbell) Ah, yes, we're not doing—

VOICE: Trick or Treat.

KAREN returns with apple.

KEITH: It's just a kid. I think I'm going to open the door.

KAREN: Wait. I love you. Wait. Okay. Wait. Okay. What ever happens, I love you.

KEITH: Me too. I mean, I love you too. Whatever happens.

KEITH opens the door. A teen in costume that looks like Death with a cape. In one hand is a trick-or-treat bag with a skull and cross bones on it. In the other are bolt cutters. The TRICK OR TREATER breathes like Darth Vader.

KEITH: And, and who are you supposed to be, Sport?

IT just breathes like DARTH VADER.

KAREN: Here's an apple for you, Sporto.

IT then drops a bolt-lock and chain in front of the COUPLE.

TRICK OR TREATER: I am Bolt Cutter Man...man. (breathes) I am here to destroy all peace and release your children from tyranny.

KEITH: Look, honey, it's, it's Bolt Cutter Man. He just cuts through locks.

TRICK OR TREATER: You can not lock up evil and expect to throw away the key, man.

KEITH: It's, ah, part of his costume to just, just cut through locks, honey. And we happened to have one on our gate.

TRICK OR TREATER: (breathes) If there's a razor blade in that apple, if you gave me a bad apple, man, my mother will find you. (breathes)

KEITH: That's a deal.

KAREN: Deal.

HE breathes and retreats. THEY close the door and breathe sighs of relief.

KAREN: Oh my God.

KEITH: That was close, close as it gets.

KAREN: (recovering, beat) Keith?

KEITH: Yeah.

KAREN: What was it like out there? You know, when you were out there earlier?

KEITH: Oh. Well, I'll tell you I'm not in the kind of shape I used to be.

KAREN: That's my fault. I should be watching your fatty acid intake.

KEITH: I think I saw a neighbor.

KAREN: Really?

KEITH: And I saw some kids starting to trick-or-treat. The younger ones before it gets dark.

KAREN: With their little costumes and you could see their masks and all?

KEITH: This year the popular one is Spider Man.

KAREN: (getting excited) Because of the movie, right. Oh, that is so cute. I'll bet Keith Jr. will love Spider Man. He already loves all the insects in his insect book. Plus he looks so good in red, I can see him being Spider Man when he's old enough. I mean if he ever, you know, I mean if he...

Pause. We hear a couple more beats from the baby's swing and then we hear it end. Beat. The couple notices and then:

BOTH: Oh my God! The baby!!!!

Blackout.