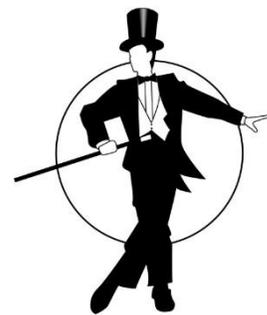


**Fool Me Once, or
Henrietta's Absolutely Horrible Day**

James Buglewicz



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FOOL ME ONCE,
OR
HENRIETTA'S ABSOLUTELY HORRIBLE DAY

An Educational Farce in One Act

By James Buglewicz

CAST

SAM SCAM: A crusty detective, short on cash and cases but able to spot a scam a mile away.

DORIS: Henrietta's daughter, a desperate woman at the end of her rope.

HENRIETTA BUENAVIDA: Recently widowed she is determined and smart. She wants to move forward but takes all the wrong steps.

MR. RUDY VECINO: Henrietta's neighbor.

MS. DOSCARA: A smooth talking ice queen and check kiting scam artist specializing in burial plots.

LEONORA: A soap opera diva in love with Martin, a man below her station.

MARTIN RIVAS: A soap opera hunk in love with Leonora, a woman above his station.

DANA CASHOLA: Big eyes and lovely smile, she only delivers C.O.D. to widows and widowers.

B.D. METTISIN: A sleazy opportunist who sells medical insurance that people don't need.

DONUT HOLE C.S.R. (Customer Service Representative): A secretary clueless to the fact she is participating in Medical Fraud.

RUSTY BENTNAIL: A man who knows his way around a hammer but he doesn't hammer straight. The only thing he builds is more problems and huge bills for his customers.

The same actress can play the roles of Doris, Leonora and the Donut Hole CSR. The roles of Mr. Vecino, Rusty Bentnail, Martin Rivas, and B.D. Mettisin can also be doubled and played by a single actor.

Time

The present.

Place

Los Angeles, California.

Setting: On one side of the stage is the suggestion of an office. This area serves as SAM SCAM's, MS. DOSCARA's and B.D. METTISIN's office. (Using a removable sign with the business' name can indicate each office.) Downstage center is a television and directly upstage of the TV is a large cutout frame with a pulleyed curtain simulating a TV screen where the commercials and the soap opera are performed. On the opposite side of the stage is HENRIETTA's living and dining room. There is a door to the outside and a doorway or stairway that leads to the rest of her house. There is a picture of her late husband in Marine Corp uniform and an ornate box on a high shelf where his ashes are currently at rest.

At Rise: Inside his office, SAM is dressed in a fedora, trench coat and tie loose around his neck, a bottle of whiskey and a phone are on his desk; the iconic private eye. A sign reads, 'Scambusters Detective Agency, Sam Scam Private Eye.' SAM is snoozing, with his feet on the desk and newspaper covering his face.

VOICE OVER: And now ladies and gentlemen [_____] Mystery Theatre presents the thrilling detective drama *Fool Me Once*, featuring our rugged, streetwise hero Sam Scam...

SAM: It was a hot afternoon, so hot, even the flies were sweating, a crooner crooned on the radio. Business was slow and my alimony was due. ARGGGGH...the old battleax! (*SAM fights off the newspaper, direct address to audience*) But I'm not worried. The first of the month is right around the corner. That's when people get paid, government and pension checks drop, and everybody's flush. The time when the ordinary 'Joe' feels like he's rich...at least for a few days, before the bills and the mortgage or the rent comes due. That's when the vermin run their game--phony home repair, pyramid schemes, clean your ducts of microscopic bugs, slap another lean on the property, at rates so high you could get a better one from Chuy the loan shark down at the corner store! (*SAM starts tossing a coin in the air Jimmy Cagney style*) Yeah...I've seen it all...Sam Scam here, Scambusters Detective Agency. Scam's the name, and scam bustin's my game. (*He drops the coin and bends over. Enter DORIS knocking SAM over spread eagle on the floor.*) And that's when she came in. I'd never seen her before. All I knew was that she hit like a linebacker.

DORIS: (*looks like she is straight out of a 1940s film noir detective film or novel, the 1940s version of a damsel in distress*) Oh, Oh, Oh, I'm so sorry. Silly me. Let me help you up. I wasn't looking where I was going was I? Although I did imagine you'd be taller. I'm just so upset. You see it's my mother. My father died and now all these people are taking advantage of her and I don't know what to do...if she keeps going like this...oh, I just can't imagine what might happen.

SAM: Slow down, slow down...everything's going to be all right, little lady.

DORIS: And the worst part is...it's my fault!

SAM: Now, why don't you sit down? (*DORIS sits*)

DORIS: Oh, if I hadn't put it in her head to sell those cemetery plots over the internet, none of this would have ever happened!

SAM: What cemetery plots?

DORIS: They bought them when they were first married and they lived up north. But we're all here in Los Angeles. Our whole family. And besides, my Dad was cremated. He wants us to scatter his ashes on the beach at Camp Pendleton. 'Once a Marine, always a Marine.' So I told my mom to sell them...

SAM: And somebody wanted to buy them. Yeah, I'll bet they did. And they offered you more than they were worth. Well you've come to the right place. Sam Scam here, Scambusters Detective Agency. Scam's the name, and scam bustin's my game. Now let's just start from the beginning.

DORIS: Well, after we posted the ad on the internet, my mom got a call almost right away. I remember I was on the phone with her...we were gossiping and I was trying to do my dishes.

(HENRIETTA enters through interior door already on the phone. DORIS briefly exits as HENRIETTA enters. DORIS enters and crosses downstage of SAM'S office. She is dressed in an apron holding a plate and dishtowel listening on the phone.)

HENRIETTA: *(dusting and straightening up as she speaks with DORIS on the phone)* I saw her in the church giving me the 'evil eye' and then she didn't even talk to me at the reception.

DORIS: Graciella just thought it was too soon.

HENRIETTA: Too soon! I went to the wedding. I wore black. She can just get over it.

DORIS: Well you know how she is...

HENRIETTA: And like she can talk...too soon? She's the one who became Mrs. Barney Rico before her poor Harold was cold in the ground.

DORIS: You get a big head when you're president of the Garden Club. What can I say?

HENRIETTA: So I was supposed to sit at home alone? Your dad never went to weddings anyway. Said it reminded him of his lost youth. But he always went to the receptions. I guess that's where he tried to find it.

DORIS: *(laughs)* Oh Mom...

(MR. VECINO, HENRIETTA'S neighbor knocks on the door. He carries the gate from HENRIETTA'S front fence.)

MR. VECINO: Henrietta, Henrietta?

HENRIETTA: I'm coming...Just a second, Doris...someone's at the door. *(she puts the phone down and crosses to the front door)* Oh Rudy! I'm so glad to see you. I haven't seen you or Liz since the wake.

MR. VECINO: Well, we've been meaning to come over. Maybe you and Doris can come to dinner sometime.

HENRIETTA: Rudy, is that my front gate?

MR. VECINO: Yes, I'm afraid it is, Henrietta. *(HENRIETTA sighs and turns away. MR. VECINO puts down the gate and comes in the house.)* Henrietta, now I know with Mario gone, these kind of things might slip by, but I can come over on Saturday and me and Jimmy could prop up the whole fence and fix it.

HENRIETTA: Oh I couldn't. I just won't have it. Mario and I never accepted charity and I'm not going to start now.

MR. VECINO: Now please, Henrietta, be reasonable.

END OF FREEVIEW

You'll want to read and perform this show!