

Playwrights Versus Zombies!

A play for Zoom or Stage

This can be played on Zoom or similar, or can be staged. If staged, the two playwrights should be at either side of the stage, with something to split them, physical or metaphorical. Steve's side can be furnished as seen fit, but must include a desk and computer/laptop. He should have a TV remote, but the TV will be 'in the audience'. Nick's side similar, including desk and laptop, upstage behind needs to be some balcony doors leading to a shallow balcony.

Cast: (All cast is gender irrelevant, can be anyone, any age etc)

Steve/Sarah: Playwright, calm, assured.

Nick/Nicola: Playwright, stressed, working to a deadline.

Zombie Mr/Mrs Harris: Before becoming a Zombie he/she was a friendly neighbour from across the hall of Nick's apartment.

Sandra/Simon: Nick's agent. Gender irrelevant, can be anyone, any age.

(Note: For ease, the play is written as Steve and Nick etc, feel free to change the names as suits. Any combination is fine. It should be fast paced, urgent.)

Setting:

Two playwrights offices/studios.

Time:

The near future. Early evening, before dinner.

At the beginning, Nick is stressed, typing quickly at his laptop, he curses, deletes, types again. Steve is stood to one side of his desk/table, he is watching the news on an unseen TV. He's concerned but not overly worried.

Nick: *(at his laptop)* No no no, this is all trash, complete garbage. Sandra can't be in Los Angeles. Not while her mother is there, it just won't tie in!

Steve: *(at the TV)* Oh no, really? They're getting everywhere.

Nick: *(at his laptop)* But Sandra has to be in Los Angeles to get the money. So where on Earth should her mother be? Her Dad's in New York, so she could be with her Dad, but no..... no no NO!

Steve: *(at the TV)* It's about time the army is drafted in, they're getting out of control.

Nick: *(at his laptop)* Oh but what the hell, no one will notice. Who am I kidding? Everyone will! Nothing for it, I'll have to redraft act one! Damn it!

Steve: *(at the TV)* And who's going to tidy them all up now that the..... oh... new season of Top Gear, cool.

Nick: *(sits back, turns on Zoom.)* Steve will know what to do. *(Taps away and waits.)*

Steve: I need to tell Nick there's a new season. *(looks to his own open laptop, and taps it.)* Ah, speak of the devil! Yo Nick, what's up buddy?

Nick: *(Urgent, almost panicky)* Sandra's in Los Angeles but she can't be because her mother Elaine is there too, only Elaine can't be there because her husband's in New York, where Elaine should be! So to get Elaine back in New York I have to make sure Sandra has got all the money because otherwise Jeff won't be able to see Elaine!

Steve: So are you saying Jeff and Elaine are in New York?

Nick: No, only Jeff. But Elaine needs to be there, or/

Steve: Are they safe?

Nick: Yes of course, eh? Why do you ask?

Steve: New York isn't that safe at the moment. Too many. Who's Jeff?

Nick: Jeff is Elaine's husband, Sandra's dad. keep up.

Steve: Ah, OK. There's a new season of Top Gear coming on.

Nick: Cool.

Steve: New hosts apparently.

Nick: Not cool.

Steve: Agreed.

Nick: So how do I get Elaine back to New York?

Steve: I don't know. Train? Greyhound?

Nick: You're missing the point.

Steve: Am I? Anyway who's Jeff and Elaine? Friends of yours? Relatives? Either way they shouldn't be here. Not safe.

Nick: Jeff and Elaine are Sandra's parents!

Steve: Yes, we've established that. So...?

Nick: So I need to get, well if I don't, well.. if I don't I will have to completely rewrite act one.

Steve: Oh right. Your play.

Nick: Yes, what did you think I meant?

Steve: Have you eaten?

Nick: No. Why? Does it matter?

Steve: To me it does. I'm your friend, I worry. You sound hangry. (**hungry/angry*)

Nick: I'm fine. Just a bit touchy. I need to get this finished by Thursday noon, otherwise Sandra will pull the plug!

Steve: Ah yes, Sandra. So tell me why you've named the heroine of your latest play after your agent?

Nick: Because she insisted, said she'll prom..... wait, did you say New York is not safe?

Steve: When is it ever? But it's worse right now.

Nick: How so?

Steve: They're everywhere.

Nick: Who's everywhere?

Steve: Them!

Nick: I don't follow.

Steve: You know!

Nick: No.

Steve: Really?

Nick: No. No idea.

Steve: Have you had your head in the clouds?

Nick: I've been too busy writing, as I told you I only have until Thursday at lunchtime.

Steve: But they must be with you too, I've heard they're everywhere now.

Nick: Mexicans?

Steve: No!

Nick: Then who do you mean? Who are everywhere?

Steve: Zombies.

Nick: (*pause*) Have you eaten?

Steve: No, not yet. I have a pizza in the freezer I think. Why?

Nick: I'm your friend, I worry. You sound hangry.

Steve: Ah, touché!

Nick: Seriously man, what, or who are you on about? Zombies?

Steve: Has Sandra been working you that hard? Have you not been watching the news for the last three weeks?

Nick: No. You know I'm busy. This is a big deal. If I don't get this written they'll drop it. All the actors and crew will be out of work. They've already started rehearsals, run starts next month.

Steve: If they're still alive.

Nick: What?!

Steve: They're everywhere buddy. In every city and town, this is already making Covid look like a kitten!

Nick: Wow, really? Even here in L.A.?

Steve: I expect so.

Nick: Wait a minute! Haha well done!

Steve: What?

Nick: You totally had me there!

Steve: No, listen Nic/

Nick: Hook, line and sinker, nice one! Catch me while I'm tired and stressed. Revenge will be sweet my friend, watch your back haha!

Steve: Nick!

Nick: Haha, brilliant!

Steve: NICK!

Nick: What?

Steve: I'm not joking, not this time, put the news on, any news. It's everywhere, they are EVERYWHERE!

Nick: Now you want me to Google 'Zombie Apocalypse' I guess, oh OK, I'll humor you. *(taps at his laptop.)* oh..... but....no! Damn you're not joking!

Steve: I told you. So I wouldn't worry about your script for a while. Maybe call Sandra, see if the cast are still alive or have joined the walking dead.

Nick: That's not funny.

Steve: I wasn't trying to be.

(there is a knocking from Nick's side of the stage.)

Nick: Hold up man, there's someone at the door.

Steve: Don't answer it! It might be one of them!

Nick: I doubt it. I'm on the twenty-seventh floor.

Steve: How many times do I have to tell you, they're *everywhere* Nick!

(another knocking)

Nick: Let me just go check.

Steve: No!

Nick: Relax, I have one of those eye hole peeking things in the door, what do they call them?

Steve: Squinty holes I think. Just don't open it!

(Nick goes to his door, holds his face up to the door, he recoils)

Nick: Yikes!

Steve: What's up Shaggy?

Nick: There's one in the corridor!

Steve: Don't let it in.

Nick: I wasn't planning to! *(has another look)* Hold up, I think it's Mr Harris from across the hall.

Steve: Don't let it in.

Nick: Him.

Steve: It. He's definitely an *it* now. Sorry buddy.

(another loud knocking, this time frantic. A shout is heard)

Nick: What do I do? Steve, what do I do? I've never met a Zombie before!

Steve: Calm down, come to the screen so I can see you properly. *(Steve does)* That's better, man you look like you've seen a ghost!

Nick: Haha.

Steve: Sorry, just sit down for a minute, you've had a shock. It's a shocking state of affairs I can tell you. Does it smell?

Nick: Does what smell?

Steve: The Zombie that is, I mean *was*, Mr Harris?

Nick: I can't smell him through the door.

Steve: He can smell you though. That's why he's there probably.

Nick: Why? Why does he want *me*?

Steve: Because he's HANGRY!

Nick: Honestly man, there's a zombie at my door and *still* you make jokes?

Steve: Has he asked for your brain yet?

Nick: No, he just said 'rain' which is odd because he's indoors. Oh.... Maybe he did say brain? Do they really say "Brains!"?

Steve: Not sure to be fair, no one whose got that close to one has lived to tell.

(Nick's door is knocked again, very loud, we hear 'Mr Harris' shout "Brains")

Nick: He's going to break the door down, what do I do?

Steve: Have you got an escape route? Outdoor steps?

Nick: No, just a balcony.

Steve: Oh, bummer.

Nick: What are you saying?

Steve: So your only way is through that door and past Zombie Mr Harris?

Nick: *(deflated)* Yes, I guess so.

Steve: Then you'll have to sit it out, hope it gets bored, or its head falls off.

Nick: Is that what happens?

Steve: In some cases, apparently. I haven't seen one yet, well not up close. When I look down onto the streets I see loads of them, and loads of bits of them, arms, legs, heads, pairs of legs still walking, well staggering. It's quite funny really!

(more knocking on Nicks door, garbled demands for 'Brains')

Nick: You've got to help me Steve, what do I do?

Steve: Not much you can do I'm afraid.

Nick: *(Starting to panic)* Is that it? Is that all you can say?

Steve: Calm down buddy, breathe.

Nick: I can't, I can't! It's going to break the door down!

Steve: That's good.

Nick: What? How is this *good*?

Steve: You're using the past tense to describe Mr Harris, that's good. It shows you have accepted the situation.

Nick: *(breathing heavily, starting to hyperventilate)* This isn't a script!

Steve: It would make a great script, are you recording this?

Nick: Steve! *(heavy breaths)* Help me!

Steve: OK, OK.... Nick, sit down at your screen so I can see you properly. Good, now big, deep breaths, in through your mouth, out through your nose. That's it, good. *(Nick is acting this as Steve speaks)* Now, remember what we did the last time? When you had the panic attack about where the intermission should go. Remember what to think about, where to take your mind?

Nick: Empty desert. Empty desert. Empty desert.....

Steve: *(Casually opening a chocolate dessert treat and taking a bite.)* That's it, calm, quiet, empty *dessert*, just you and chocolate....I mean just you and the sand.

Nick: Empty desert, just me and *(he is interrupted by the sound of the door being broken down, wood splintering)* STEVE!! IT'S GETTING IN!! Help me!

Steve: Calm, ignore it, sit still.

Nick: What, but how, how am I supposed to do that?! *(more crashing sounds as the door breaks.)* It's getting in, it's getting in!

Steve: Nick, Nick, NICK! Stay with me buddy. Do some writing.

Nick: WHAT!?

Steve: Write some of the script you're working on, just write anything that comes to mind!

Nick: I really can't see how that's going to help!

Steve: Trust me, do as I say. Sit!

Nick: *(Nick sits at his laptop and starts to type the best he can while shaking so much.)* What shall I write?

Steve: Anything, write anything! Write what Sandra is doing, give her some extra lines.

(The door completely breaks up and Zombie Mr Harris enters behind Nick, it's a total mess, scruffy hair, rotting face, dirty torn clothes – a typical Zombie.)

Nick: IT'S IN! Help me Steve!

Steve: Write!

Nick: OK I'm trying! I get that the pen is mightier than the sword but this is stretching it!

Steve: Let me help you, screen share quickly and I'll help you write the lines.

(Zombie Mr Harris is staggering around, confused.)

Nick: OK... you're in, can you see it?

Steve: Yes, I've got it.

Nick: Then help! What do I write?

Steve: I don't know, what is Sandra up to right now?

Nick: Er, she's just arrived in her apartment in LA.

Steve: Ok, good. Is she tired? Does she make a phone call?

Nick: Well she's supposed to call her mom, but I don't know where her mom is! (*Zombie Mr Harris finally realises Nick is there, so he starts to walk towards Nick, slowly, awkwardly.*) It's coming for me Steve!!

Steve: Yes, it will. (*beat*) Maybe Sandra's hungry.... Open brackets, stage directions - she goes to the fridge, close brackets.

Nick: (*typing as fast as he can, repeating Steve's last words.*) Got it.

Zombie Mr Harris: Brains!

Nick: Help me!

Steve: Write with me, (*starting to sing*) write with me our strange duet!

Nick: No time to be quoting Phantom at me!

Steve: Write once again with me, our strange duet!

Nick: STEVE!!

Steve: The Zom.....bie of Mr Harris is there..... inside your flat! (*He laughs at his own joke.*)

Nick: Not helping! It's coming for me, albeit very slowly. Shouldn't I just smash it with a chair or something?

Steve: Write this.... Sandra goes up stage left to the fridge and finds a slice of left over pizza.

Nick: OK, if you think that will help, but just know that as soon as I'm a zombie I'm coming for you, *buddy!* (*he types frantically*)

Zombie Mr Harris: PIZ-ZA!

Nick: What?

Steve: Did it just say *pizza*?

Nick: I think so.

Steve: Weird, maybe it's even more confused than we thought?

Zombie Mr Harris: PIZ-ZA!

Nick: It said it again.

Steve: Interesting turn of events.

Nick: Maybe it's listening to us? (*To Zombie Mr Harris*) There's pizza in the fridge if you're hungry!

Steve: Does it still have ears?

Nick: I can't really tell, er yes, one at least is intact.

Zombie Mr Harris: BRAINS!

Steve: Oh, back to brains.

Nick: It's going to kill me Steve! Help me man, help me!

Steve: Write this! Sandra takes a bite of pizza and notices a bottle of wine in the fridge door, it's open, she takes a swig.

Nick: Right. *(types the above quickly)*.

Zombie Mr Harris: WINE!

Nick: What?

Steve: Now that *is* odd.

Nick: Yes Mr Harris, have some wine, it's in the fridge!

Zombie Mr Harris: BRAINS!

Nick: *(trying to reason with Zombie Mr Harris)* No, not BRAINS! WINE! Much nicer than brains!

Zombie Mr Harris: BRAINS!

Steve: BRAINS!

Nick: Steve!

Steve: Sorry. Write some more, anything!

Nick: My mind's gone blank, what?

Steve: OK, let me think. Sandra finishes the slice of pizza, takes the bottle of wine and walks down stage centre, sits on the couch.

Nick: *(types the above very quickly, then looks round.)*

Zombie Mr Harris: WINE! *(Zombie Mr Harris, turns slightly and sits on the couch)* WINE!

Steve: Well I never!

Nick: What's it doing? Shall I make a run for it?

Steve: I wouldn't advise it. They're everywhere. If you do, take the stairs not the elevator. Zombies hate stairs.

Zombie Mr Harris: *(starts to stand up.)* BRAINS.

Nick: Oh no, back to brains.

Steve: Write this. Sandra drinks some more wine, lays back on the couch and takes out her phone. She calls her mother.

Nick: OK, I'm writing it. *(he types quickly.)*

Zombie Mr Harris: WINE! *(Zombie Mr Harris collapses down onto the couch)* PHONE!
...MOTHER!

Steve: This is getting really odd.

Nick: Agreed.

Steve: I've got an idea. Write this: There's no answer from her mother so Sandra stands up and begins to tap dance.

Nick: What the hell Nick, you're really enjoying this aren't you?

Steve: Just type it quick, it's getting up again.

Zombie Mr Harris: *(starts to try to stand)* BRAINS!

Steve: Type it quick!

Nick: *(types quickly.)*

Zombie Mr Harris: *(now standing)* TAP! *(starts to tap dance, badly.)*

Nick: What the.... It's doing just what we say.

Steve: Close. It's doing just what you... *type!*

Nick: Really?

Steve: Seems to be the case. Write, erm write.....Sandra raises her arms up and dances the Riverdance, her legs kick up.

Nick: Ok, *(he types quickly.)*

Zombie Mr Harris: *(stands awkwardly, raises his arms and starts to dance, kicking his legs out.)* De de de deee de!

Steve: Hahaha I love it! Write Sandra scratches her butt!

Nick: *(Types.)*

Zombie Mr Harris: BUTT! *(scratches his butt.)*

Steve: Brilliant! Write: Sandra sits on the couch and eats a cushion.

Nick: How will that help?

Steve: It will buy you some time.

Zombie Mr Harris: *(stops dancing)* BRAINS!

Steve: Write it quickly!

Nick: *(types quickly)* There!

Zombie Mr Harris: *(sits back down, picks up a cushion and starts to eat it)* CUSHION!

Nick: OK, it seems to be working.

Steve: You need to get out of there, but don't use the elevator.

Nick: Right, I'm going to check the hall first and then come back to the screen.

Steve: Go for it.

Nick: *(Goes to the broken down door. He is off stage for a moment, then returns in a rush.)*
The hall is empty, but I can hear screams all round.

Steve: Yep, it's getting pretty messy.

Nick: How come you're so calm? Aren't there any in your block?

Steve: No, not yet. I don't think they can get in, this place has great security. Fingerprint entry, you need a pulse.

Nick: What shall I do now, it's nearly eaten the whole cushion!

Steve: Go to your balcony, keep clear of Zombie Mr Harris whatever you do, then open the doors.

Nick: Am I writing this or actually doing this?

Steve: Best to actually do it this time, its hand might fall off in the door mechanism.

Nick: OK, I'm going. Don't go anywhere man, stay with me I need you! *(He carefully skirts round Zombie Mr Harris.)*

Steve: Be brave young man, I have your back!

Nick: *(Opens the glass doors upstage, he carefully returns giving Zombie Mr Harris a wide berth)*

Zombie Mr Harris: BRAINS!

Nick: Oh no!

Steve: Quickly Nick, write this: Sandra stands up, walks up stage and onto the balcony.

Nick: Right! *(he types quickly.)*

Zombie Mr Harris: BALCONY! *(he stands and staggers his way upstage to the balcony.)*

Steve: Excellent, it's working. Type: Sandra screams SAUSAGES and throws herself off the balcony.

Nick: Why would she say that?

Steve: I just thought it would be funny!

Nick: *(types quickly)*

Zombie Mr Harris: SAUSAGES! *(Zombie Mr Harris disappears off the balcony and out of sight.)*

Nick: It worked! It worked!

Steve: It did. I've absolutely no idea how!

Nick: Thanks buddy!

Steve: No worries. Now if you don't mind I have a screenplay to finish. You going to be alright now buddy?

Nick: Yes. No. I don't know. I can hear more screaming from down the corridor.

Steve: Ah yes. Annoying isn't it? Don't use the elevator.

Nick: I won't.

Steve: Get some supplies, quickly, as much as you can grab, then lock yourself in the bathroom, wait for all this to blow over. That's kind of what I'm doing.

Nick: Thanks man, I will. You're the best!

Steve: No *you* are!

Nick: No *you* are!

Steve: Just get your stuff together!

Nick: I'm on it! *(about to close the call on his laptop.)*

Steve: Oh and Nick?

Nick: What's up?

Steve: Nothing.... Take care buddy.

Nick: You too. *(he closes the laptop, looks around. Then rushes to the fridge, finds some pizza and an open bottle of white wine. He scoffs some pizza and swigs from the wine bottle.)* Nice!

(There is a loud knock coming from the broken door. Nick rushes to the door to be faced with his agent, Sandra. Sandra looks fairly well, if only a little dishevelled. He shows her in.)

Nick: Ah Sandra, thank God you're here! How did you get past the zombies? Anyway, you'll be pleased, I've nearly finished the script, I'll have it on your desk in two days I promise, just one little bit to tie up. Have a seat, do. Would you like some wine?

Sandra: *(Walks towards Nick)* BRAINS!

Instant blackout.

END OF PLAY