

AMULETS FOR GARTHENON

By Jake Hunsbusher

Characters:

Avery Mann, a man in his mid-20s, a quiet reserved sort.

Brooklyn Accent, a man in his early-20s, a lighthearted drifter.

Cue Card Holder, a person with the ability to hold cue cards.

Setting:

The living room of an apartment.

Notes:

This play incorporates the 'live-audience' element from televised sitcoms. Therefore it is important to have a method of goading the audience into making various responses such as, "Applause" "Laughs" "Hoots and Hollers" "Awww."

This can be done simply by having a stage hand off to one side with cards, indicating the desired audience response, or with an elaborate panel system with the responses 'lighting up' when appropriate. If using the lit panel system, disregard the lines spoken by the Cue-Card Holder in the beginning and treat all related cues as corresponding with the panel system.

In a similar vein, actors should treat this as a sitcom with a live audience. So, if the audience decides to respond without the cue cards, as they become more comfortable, the actors should stop and wait until the audience is finished before continuing. Whether it is a timed response specifically noted in the script or one that is naturally occurring.

Productions:

Flicker Theatre & Bar, Athens, GA, March 31, 2018
Manhattan Repertory Theatre, New York City, NY, April 5, 6, and 7,
2018

Director:

Jake Hunsbusher

Actors:

Avery Mann/ Garthenon: Jake Hunsbusher

Brooklyn Accent/ Aerithin: Matthew Suwalski

Cue Card Holder: Anna Corbould

Lights up. CUE CARD HOLDER comes out.

CUE CARD HOLDER. Welcome! Is everyone excited? Well, you should be because tonight you're going to be part of a very unique experience. We are in the early production phases of creating a new sitcom and we need a live audience to help gauge consumer interest. Hey, you're a live audience, right? Well, most of you seem alive. Would you mind helping us out? *(Pause for audience response. Repeat question if response is unsatisfactory.)* Alright! Now, you're smart people, I'm sure you understand how cue-cards work. *(Cue Card Holder looks over the audience.)* Actually, we should probably do a quick practice run. *(They hold up all the different cards and teach the audience about effective cue card response.)* Have you considered pursuing a career as a live studio audience? Because you've got a natural talent for this. Let's hope you can keep it up because we're rolling in Five! Four! Three! *(They mouth the word "two" then "one" while pointing to the 'camera'. Blackout. Lights up. Cue Card Holder stands to the side with cue cards in hand. AVERY MANN anxiously waits for his girlfriend to show up. He dials her number and gets the voicemail.)*

AVERY. *(To the voicemail.)* Hey, sweetie, it's me again. I know you said you'd be a little late but you're not picking up and it's kind of freaking me out. I don't mean to be that clingy boyfriend but I'm just concerned about- *(There is a loud knock on the front door. Avery is initially startled but lights up thinking that his girlfriend has arrived. He opens the door.)* Took you long enough, you nearly gave me a heart attack- *(Avery realizes that the person at the door is not his girlfriend but rather a man with a large duffel bag slung over his shoulder and a gaudy pendant hanging around his neck, BROOKLYN ACCENT.)*

BROOK. Well, I'm here, ain't I? *(This is Brook's catchphrase and it comes with its own set of movements which are at the actor's discretion. The APPLAUSE cue for the audience comes on.)*

AVERY. Oh, lord-I'm sorry. I thought you were someone else. Who are you, exactly-

BROOK. That's alright, not the first time I've been confused with someone else. Prolly 'cause of the wanted poster they got of me at the police station.

AVERY. What!?! (*LAUGHS cue. Brook walks past Avery into the living room and sets his bag down.*)

BROOK. Hah! I'm only messing with you, friend. Ah... I can already tell we're gonna have a unique chemistry you and I. (*LAUGHS cue.*)

AVERY. Oh, hah, you certainly fooled me. Speaking of you would you mind telling me why-

BROOK. Dynamic differences. That's what makes a great relationship, and not just in love or friendship either. I mean, take my butcher, Frank, for example-

AVERY. Who are you!?! (*LAUGHS cue.*)

BROOK. Oh jeez, I've done it again. I've come all the way into your house without even introducing myself. I guess I just assumed the e-mail was introduction enough. But as my Ma always used to say, "Electronic manners don't equate to real life manners. No matter how many emojis you got." Good on you for standing up for your values though, I respect that.

AVERY. Can I just have your name, please? (*LAUGHS cue.*)

BROOK. Oh! I'm Brooklyn Accent. (*A beat and LAUGHS cue.*) But my friends call me Brook for short.

AVERY. Alright, Brooklyn. I'm Avery, Avery Mann. Now that we're properly acquainted... what are you doing in my apartment?! (*LAUGHS cue.*)

BROOK. Hah! I'm here about the vacancy of course!

AVERY. The vacancy? Oh! My ad! Wait, you said you sent an email?

BROOK. You didn't get the e-mail? Oh, so that's why you were being such a rude jerk. That's a great relief. I didn't know how long I'd be able to put up with such overt rudeness. (*LAUGHS cue.*) It's probably for the best, though. That email had way too many emojis. I usually save that for the ladies. You know what I'm saying? (*HOOTS AND HOLLERS cue.*)

AVERY. Okay. Well, Mr. Accent, normally I'd show you around but I'm not exactly ready to give a tour and also someone is supposed to be meeting me here soon so-

BROOK. You don't need to make any fuss on account of me, and please call me Brook. I don't care if the place is a little 'lived in' right now. Just gives me realistic expectations.

AVERY. Alright. Well, I'll really only be free until my friend gets here. You'd be okay with a short tour?

BROOK. Well, I'm here, ain't I? (*APPLAUSE cue.*)

AVERY. Cool, then I'll show you to the bedroom.

BROOK. Why? (*LAUGHS cue.*)

AVERY. I thought you wanted to see?

BROOK. There's no need to show me every little detail. (*Brook sits down on the sofa and gets comfortable.*) This is just fine. (*LAUGHS cue.*)

AVERY. Right. Well, if you saw my ad then you'll know that the price is \$350 a month firm. Now, I know that may seem like a lot for a room in the suburbs, but you do have your own bathroom and complete access to the living room-

BROOK. Wait wait wait, hold on a second. I get my own room?! (*LAUGHS cue.*)

AVERY. Well, yeah? What did you think you were renting?

BROOK. The couch! (*LAUGHS cue.*)

AVERY. You wanted to rent the couch?

BROOK. Well, I'm here, ain't I? (*APPLAUSE cue.*)

AVERY. You thought you were paying \$350 dollars a month for a couch?

BROOK. Oh, I knew I must have read that wrong. I mean only \$350 for a couch as nice as this one? I thought this might be some sort of scam with the price being so low but I figured you were probably knocking a couple hundred off because it didn't pull out. (*LAUGHS cue.*)

AVERY. Oh no, it pulls out. (*Brook gasps loudly. LAUGHS cue.*) But the vacancy isn't for the couch. It's for my spare room.

BROOK. Well, if the couch is \$350 a month then the room has gotta be way outta my price range. (*LAUGHS cue.*)

AVERY. I'm not renting out the couch! (*LAUGHS cue.*)

BROOK. So what you're saying is?

AVERY. I'm renting out the room for \$350 a month. (*Brook gasps even louder.*)

BROOK. No! (*LAUGHS cue.*)

AVERY. Yes. (*LAUGHS cue.*) Now, I don't really have any more time to spare, on account of my plans with my friend, so if you want a full tour you'll have to come back another time.

BROOK. Well, they ain't here, are they? (*Brook does a toned-down version of his catchphrase movements. APPLAUSE cue.*)

AVERY. No, they're not but-

BROOK. Then let's get on with the tour! (*LAUGHS cue.*)

AVERY. Listen, Brook, I'd really rather do this another time.

BROOK. Oh, I see what's going on here! (*LAUGHS cue.*)

AVERY. You do?

BROOK. This "friend" you're waiting on isn't really your friend, are they?

AVERY. Well, I guess, technically they're more than a friend.

BROOK. I knew it! You've got another potential roommate coming in right after me! (*LAUGHS cue.*)

AVERY. What?

BROOK. Look, I'm not judging. You're just trying to get a good deal here.

Play the field. See who wants the room the most. Well, I want that room the most and I'm willing to pay the 350 for the first month right now to reserve my spot! (*Brook takes out his wallet. LAUGHS cue.*)

AVERY. No, no, you've got it all wrong.

BROOK. What, is the other guy offering you more? I knew \$350 was too low. How much is this guy offering? Whatever it is I'll match it. 400? 450?

AVERY. I haven't been offered anything! (*LAUGHS cue.*)

BROOK. Hey, buddy, I know how this works. Listen, I'll go as high as \$500 a month but I'm not going any higher no matter what that other guy is willing to shell out!

AVERY. Done. (*LAUGHS cue. They shake hands. Avery's phone begins to ring. He walks toward the door and answers it. It's his girlfriend.*)

Hey! Finally you call back! Where are you? No, look, its fine. It's not even that big of a deal. Everyone is late now and again. Just come over as soon as you can and we'll talk about it. (*A beat.*) What do you mean? How could you say that I- Hello? Hello? (*Avery puts his phone away and sits on the couch.*)

BROOK. So, your friend isn't coming?

AVERY. No.

BROOK. Was it because of the couch? (*LAUGHS cue.*)

AVERY. (*Sarcastically.*) Yes, Brook, it was because of the couch. (*LAUGHS cue.*)

BROOK. I'm sure if you pulled it out they'd give you another chance. (*LAUGHS cue.*)

AVERY. No, it's not really about the-

BROOK. Just, pull it out, show them how big it is, and I'm sure they'll want to sit right on it. I mean, hey, I'm here, ain't I? (*HOOTS AND HOLLERS cue.*)

AVERY. It wasn't anyone answering the ad. It was my girlfriend. She was supposed to meet me for our date but she just dumped me. Way to go, Avery. You drove another one away! (*LAUGHS cue. Avery puts his head in his hands. Brook leans Avery's head onto his shoulder and tries to comfort him.*)

BROOK. Hey, buddy, hey. It's not your fault. You're the one who got stood up. Not her. If anyone should'a been dumping anyone it should'a been you dumping on her. (*LAUGHS cue.*)

AVERY. No. No. She was great. I'm just a loser.

BROOK. No way! You're great! I've only known you for a few minutes, but you've got a great apartment. And you're probably a really great guy too. (*LAUGHS cue.*)

AVERY. You mean it?

BROOK. Yeah, I mean, probably! (*LAUGHS cue.*)

AVERY. Thanks, Brooklyn. (*Avery lifts his head off of Brook's shoulder.*) You're being nice, and I appreciate it, but I'll be okay. You don't have to hang around here to comfort me... if you don't want to.

BROOK. (*In a genuine tone.*) Well, I'm here, ain't I? (*AWW cue.*) Listen, I've been through this kinda heartache before. There was a time when the girl of my dreams just up and dumped me. And I didn't even get a phone call! All I got was a poorly worded text message. Not a single emoji.

AVERY. Not even a crying one?

BROOK. Nope. The only crying face I saw was the one in the mirror. (*LAUGHS cue.*) Yeah, I was so broken up about it I was crying for days. Eventually my uncle Tony busted into my room, slapped me cross the face, and told me... a little story about love. Then he gave me this. (*Brook points to his pendant.*) He was planning on giving this ugly old necklace to his girl but she dumped him before he could. He was so obsessed with the girl that he started wearing the thing around town. Embarrassing. But after only six months he met Aunt Gina. He figured it must'a been a good luck charm all along. (*LAUGHS cue.*)

AVERY. (*Indicating the pendant.*) So, this was a gift from your uncle?

BROOK. Yeah. What?

AVERY. Well, why did he give it to you instead of your aunt? Did he keep wearing it even after they got married? (*LAUGHS cue.*)

BROOK. You're missing the point. The necklace is a reminder that good luck will always find you. Sometimes you just gotta look for it. This thing helped me through some tough times in my life. But it seems like there's someone here who needs it even more. (*Brook puts the necklace on Avery.*)

AVERY. You're giving this to me?

BROOK. Yeah, but only until you're outta this funk. I ain't married yet. So, I'm gonna need that back. (*LAUGHS cue. Avery Mann stands up holding the pendant and walks away from Brook while examining it.*)

AVERY. Wow, Brook you're... A COMPLETE FOOL!

MWEHEHEHEE!

BROOK. *(Without a Brooklyn accent.)* No! No, it can't be! *(Brook stands in shock while Avery removes his beanie to reveal a mystical looking pattern tattooed on his forehead.)* It is!

GARTHENON. The great and powerful GARTHENON! *(Brook recovers from his shock and tries to rush Garthenon and take back the pendant but Garthenon holds it up and uses its power to command Brook.)* FREEZE! *(Brook freezes in his tracks.)* Now, go sit on that couch you proclaim to love so much. *(Brook complies.)* There, aren't we more comfortable now? Aerithin?!

AERITHIN. Do you really think you'll get away with this?

GARTHENON. Funny. I was planning to ask the same of you. Did you really think there was a place in the multi-verse where I would not find you? Did you think there was a limit to my thirst for the power of the amulet of Taromesh? There is no black hole dark enough, nor gravity well deep enough, to keep me from my birthright!

AERITHIN. The elder council revoked your claim to the throne!

GARTHENON. The elder council. Pah! They are mere children compared to my intellect! My ambition!

AERITHIN. What you were doing was wrong!

GARTHENON. You dare question the ethics of Garthenon!? I find you here, in the deepest recesses of the universe, and what are you doing? Living under an assumed name, trying to master the powers of the amulet, just as I was.

AERITHIN. I'm nothing like you! I was learning how to control the amulet so it could be used for good!

GARTHENON. Hypocrisy! You can change your name, Aerithin, but I know you now as I knew you then. Young and foolish! With a thirst for power to rival my own. Why else would you be harnessing the sheer potency of the comedic duo ritual? Gaining strength from the catchphrase incantation?

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