

SUNDAY MORNING ROAD RAGE

by John Cosper

GENRE: Comedy

SYNOPSIS: A man suffering a case of road rage after nearly getting hit on the way to church suddenly finds himself sitting near first time visitors – who happen to be the people who almost ran into him.

TIME: Under 5 minutes

CAST BREAKDOWN: 5

TOPIC: Love, Forgiveness

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Matthew 10:38-39, Matthew 6:33

CHURCH YEAR SEASON: Any

SUGGESTED USE: Sermon Starter, Illustration

CHARACTERS:

GARY & LISA—a married couple

JIM & BECKY—another married couple

PASTOR

PROPS: A pew, purses, Bibles

COSTUMES: Church clothes.

SOUND: Five wireless microphones; piano music

LIGHTING: General stage

SETTING: Your church

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ISSN 1084-5917

Publisher: Regi Stone

Executive Editor: Kimberlee Crisafulli / Assistant Editor: Scott Crain

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Directors' Tip:

This script requires that you know your audience well. While the script content and actions are perfectly G-rated, there are references to crude gestures and crude language. None of these are ever demonstrated or spoken in the script, but they will pop into the audience's heads during the performance—a sort of mental fill-in-the-blank. Many audiences will be fine with this because they will see the greater point at the end: that we are all sinners, even on our way to church on Sunday morning, and God has called us to repent and to forgive. Some audiences, however, won't be able to hear that very important message because they will remain focused on the allusions. The cardinal rule for directors is Know Your Audience. It really applies here.

Sustained Emotion: The author describes Gary as “huffy, angry, steaming” and he remains that way for much of the sketch. The trick here is sustainability. No one can convincingly be huffy, angry, and steaming for a long time. There are levels to our anger—especially when it's the “righteous,” he-done-me-wrong type of anger. You may be really steamed about something, then simmer in silence for a while. Then something sets you off and go blow up for a minute. Then you simmer some more. Then you might get so angry you just huff and stomp around and can't even articulate why you're so mad. Do you see the levels? He's not sustaining the same kind or intensity of anger throughout; it has to vary to make it believable and to keep the audience “with” him. Work with your actor to find those levels and plan them out carefully. Do some improvisation to find the arc of Gary's anger throughout the sketch.

Good Guy Vs. Bad Guy: Prepare the actor playing Gary so he understands that not everyone in the audience will see eye-to-eye with him. Some will feel his righteous anger right along with him: that other driver cut him off and deserves everything Gary gave him. Others will understand his anger but they'll turn against him as soon as they learn about his rude gesture and name-calling—especially calling the children “flying monkeys.” Others will not understand his behavior at all and they'll never be on his side. These responses are all completely valid. But here's where the actor preparation comes in: some people won't be able to separate the character of Gary from the actor who played him because the topic and emotions it elicited are so very real for them. If audience members approach the actor after the performance—either to compliment him on his behavior or to berate him for it—help him understand that his response shouldn't be flippant. Perhaps help him develop a response or two ahead of time that serve to remind the audience member that Gary is a fictional character, not the real person in front of them. Another response could gently remind them that Gary's actions, while completely understandable, were not appropriate for a child of God. But help the actor remember that he's dealing with some potentially raw emotions that could cloud people's judgment and reason. It may be that he has no reactions like this at all, but it's always better to be prepared.

I Saw That One Coming a Mile Away: If you have a seasoned or theatrically sophisticated audience, they're going to see the “twist” in this script coming a mile away. As soon as Becky and Jim walk onstage, these audience members are going to say to themselves, and perhaps the people around them, “This is the