

Mere Mortals

Directed by Neil Truglio

Be Dead Tues

This one-act is exactly about what the title of the piece implies. It examines the everyday likelihood of the average human being and his interaction with the world. But, this play adds a little twist. Throughout the course of the piece, each of the three characters reveals their own idealistic alter egos: a Lindbergh baby, a czar of Russia, and finally an everyday average “Joe.”

The text experienced major alteration as the piece felt way to long in its original entirety and often the dialogue seemed monotonous, so the script was shortened and the ending was changed to accommodate the ongoing comic timing of the production. The original text also calls for a variation in setting as the footnotes specify the scene taking place on a girder on the fiftieth floor of a new unfinished skyscraper, but with the ongoing café theme, the director chose to pose the three workers as business executives out to lunch at the corner café, a place where they meet regularly. Therefore, the text has been changed slightly to accommodate this setting.

This section of the play acts as a continuation of *Sure Thing* in which the ladies in the scene exit after a passionate embrace by Bill and Betty at Table #3. As stated earlier, the three men in the piece are buddies in the scene and seat themselves at one of the upstage tables to have lunch and discuss their lives until the one of the characters reveals his true identity as the son of Charles Lindbergh. Also, the play sees the introduction of the waiter character as an integral part of the environment and interacts with the patrons as if they are everyday folks coming in to eat lunch.

Cast:

CHARLIE.....Matt Brown

FRANK.....Andy Bock

JOE.....Nick Ross

WAITER.....Neil Truglio

JOE is sitting alone at an upstage café table reading a newspaper as CHARLIE joins him and sits in the vacant seat across from him. FRANK joins them by grabbing a chair from the downstage table and placing it in between JOE and CHARLIE.

JOE: Unbelievable.

CHARLIE: Hey Joe.

JOE: Hey Charlie.

FRANK: Hey Joe

JOE: Hey Frank.

FRANK: Hey Charlie.

CHARLIE: Hey Frankie! Think we're going to make fifty today?

FRANK: Looks like it!

CHARLIE: Fifty down, fifty to go. I think we're gonna have this baby all punched out in a week ahead of schedule.

FRANK: Yeah...

CHARLIE: And what a view to lunch by, huh?

FRANK: Beautiful.

CHARLIE: Denver.

FRANK: Yeah.

CHARLIE: My home.

(Enter Waiter from DSR corner carrying three plates)

WAITER: Ok, gents. Looks like we got a number five, a number seven, and a number twenty-four. Enjoy your lunch.



(Exit Waiter into kitchen)

FRANK: That's what I love about working up here. We get to eat like kings.

CHARLIE: So, what's the bill of fare today? Frankie, what've you got?

FRANK: I think it's liverwurst.

CHARLIE: Joe? How bout you?

JOE: Pickle and pimento loaf.

FRANK: Wait a minute, It's not liverwurst, It's tuna. I think.

CHARLIE: Well, / got corned beef and pastrami.

FRANK: Joe, is this tuna or liverwurst? *(To Charlie)* You got corned beef?

CHARLIE: And Poupon mustard.

FRANK: On a normal Tuesday? What's the occasion?

CHARLIE: Who says there's an occasion?

FRANK: You hear that, Joe? Charlie's got corned beef and pastrami on a normal Tuesday.

CHARLIE: On bakery pumpernickel.

FRANK: On bakery pumpernickel. With Poupon!

JOE: Very nice.

(Small pause)

FRANK: What's the news today, Joe? Something hot in the paper?

JOE: Hm?

FRANK: Some kinda...you know....

CHARLIE: International developments?

FRANK: International developments? How's things in Europe? Any news?

JOE: The news is that history is a cesspool.

FRANK: Oh.

JOE: As it always was. We also find that a woman in Astoria Queens lived with a guy for fifteen years, didn't know the guy had five other wives.

FRANK: Five other wives?

JOE: In the same neighborhood.

FRANK: Did you hear this, Charlie?

CHARLIE: Many things are possible in this world.

FRANK: A guy with that many wives-is that still bigamy?

JOE: It's geometry.

FRANK: Huh. Well gimme the TV page, will you? Let's see what's on the tube.

CHARLIE: Don't let me hear anything about TV.

FRANK: I just want to see-

CHARLIE: Don't let me any hear any talk about TV. We got bowling tonight.

FRANK: I just want to see what I'm missing.

CHARLIE: Speaking of which, who's in for tonight?

FRANK: I;m in.

CHARLIE: Joe, are you in?

JOE: I can't this week, Charlie.

CHARLIE: You wanna bowl a few games tonight, or what?

JOE: I got things I got to do at home.

CHARLIE: What, you gotta nail up some dollies in your wife's powder room or something?

JOE: I got some things I got to do-

CHARLIE: So do 'em tomorrow!

JOE: I can't do 'em tomorrow, I-

CHARLIE: Hey, who's the king in your house, anyway? Who is the king? Who makes the rules?

FRANK: Gentlemen...

JOE: When Maggie wanted you to put in that new floor, you didn't bowl for two weeks,

Charlie.

CHARLIE: That was different.

JOE: And because you couldn't bowl, you wouldn't let us bowl either.

CHARLIE: That was different.

JOE: Yeah why is it so different?

CHARLIE: Just don't get small on me, Joe, okay?

JOE: Why was it so-

CHARLIE: I hate it when you get small on me like that.

FRANK: Gentlemen, please!

JOE: And it's not dollies.

FRANK: Joe.

(Small pause)

FRANK: But howbout that lawn mower you just bought, Charlie? How's that working?

CHARLIE: Aaaah, it's busted.

FRANK: No.

CHARLIE: Yeah, it's...

FRANK: Already?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

FRANK: Busted?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

FRANK: I can't believe it!

CHARLIE: It's the truth.

FRANK: Already? So, did you take it back?

CHARLIE: I don't know why I cut my grass in the first place. I like it long. I like to sit on my porch and look at it long. Where do you think the word "lawn" comes from in the first place? From "long," because grass was always *long*. Originally people said, "I'm gonna plant some seeds and grow a long." Then some moron thought he'd be different and cut his long short. The rest is history of the fashion.

FRANK: I didn't know that. *(Joe snickers)*

CHARLIE: You say something, Joe?

JOE: Who, me? No, I didn't say anything.

(Small pause)

FRANK: You know I've been sitting here eating this thing and I still don't know if it's tuna or liverwurst?

CHARLIE: Yeah well it's all the ozone up here.

FRANK: The what?

CHARLIE: The carbon dioxide at this altitude compresses the things in your nose, and you can't taste nothing. (*Joe snickers louder than before*) Did you say something, Joe?

JOE: Not me. I guess the carbon dioxide was compressing my nose or something.

(*Small pause*)

FRANK: Hey, Charlie, they got that movie about that Lindbergh kid on again tonight.

CHARLIE: They got the what?!

FRANK: That show about the Lindbergh baby who got kidnapped, with-

CHARLIE: Let me see that. (He grabs the paper)

FRANK: Hey, what's up? What the hell are you doing?

CHARLIE: I just want to see.

FRANK: Did you see that movie that time it was on?

CHARLIE: Yeah...

FRANK: With Anthony Hopkins, as what's his name?

CHARLIE: Bruno Hauptmann.

FRANK: Hey didn't that happen someplace around-?

CHARLIE: Hopewell, New Jersey.

JOE: What are they bringing that turkey back for?

CHARLIE: "Turkey"?

JOE: Yeah, who wants to see that garbage all over again?

CHARLIE: It happens to be a very thoughtful movie, for your information. And as it happens today is the anniversary of the day Charles Lindbergh's baby was kidnapped.

JOE: That happened fifty years ago! What's the big deal about-

CHARLIE: Jesus Christ died on Easter, they show *The King of Kings* that weekend.

FRANK: Gentlemen!

CHARLIE: If you'd ever do anything more important glue your little cat pictures into a photo album, they'd show the *Joe Morelli Story* on your birthday. Does that explain to you why the movie is on today?

FRANK: Gentlemen, please!

CHARLIE: And don't let me hear the word "turkey."

FRANK: Hey what's up with you today, Charlie? What's the matter?

CHARLIE: Nothing's the matter.

FRANK: You're acting all weird.

CHARLIE: I'm not weird.

FRANK: So what's up?

JOE: Turkey.

CHARLIE: I TOLD YOU I DON'T WANT TO HEAR THE WORD "TURKEY"!

FRANK: Something sure seems up.

CHARLIE: Nothing is up. Forget about it. Nothing's up.

JOE: *Gobble, Gobble.*

CHARLIE: That's it, Morelli!

FRANK: Gentlemen-

JOE: And your taste in movies is lousy!

FRANK: Gentlemen-

JOE: And if you ask me, Charles Lindbergh is overrated.

CHARLIE: Overrated?!

JOE: Yeah, overrated! So he flew across the-

CHARLIE: The greatest hero in American history?

JOE: He flew across the ocean. Big deal.

CHARLIE: Oh big deal, huh?

JOE: Yeah. And as for the Lindbergh baby-who cares?

CHARLIE: Who cares?!

JOE: Yeah who the hell cares, it's old news!

CHARLIE: Oh yeah?

JOE: It's ancient history that kid got stolen.

CHARLIE: Well for your information-

JOE: Working people get kidnapped every day in the world and they don't make no movies about them.

CHARLIE: Maybe they're not as important as the Lindbergh baby.



JOE: So why am I supposed to care about the goddamned Lindbergh baby?

CHARLIE: You don't care about the Lindbergh baby?

JOE: No, I don't care about the Lindbergh baby!

CHARLIE: You don't have any feeling for the Lindbergh baby?

JOE: No I don't have any feeling for the Lindbergh baby!

CHARLIE: Well for your information, I am the Lindbergh baby!

FRANK: What?!

CHARLIE: Yes. I am the Lindbergh baby. I am the rightful son of Charles Lindbergh,

kidnapped from the home of my parents, and I didn't mean to tell you but you forced me into it. And the hell if I will listen to my family being insulted! So there!

JOE: You're the-?

CHARLIE: Yes.

FRANK: But your name is Petrossian.

CHARLIE: Oh sure. That's what I was brought up to think my name was.

JOE: YOU THINK YOU'RE THE LINDBERGH BABY?!?

CHARLIE: Go to hell, Joe.

JOE: Have you gone off your head?

CHARLIE: No I have not gone off my head.

JOE: I don't believe this!

CHARLIE: Yeah well the truth is always hard to deal with at first sight. So live with it.

JOE: Do you know that there are separate asylums to hold all the people who



think they're the Lindbergh baby?

CHARLIE: Just mind your own business, will you? Read your newspaper. Stick to pickle and pimento loaf, Smalltime.

FRANK: Charlie, there are people who might wonder a little, if you claimed to be the Lindbergh baby.

CHARLIE: But it all fits, doesn't it? I mean-"Charles"? "Charlie"? Was I

not born in New Jersey and brought up in the town of Hopewell, where the crime was perpetrated?

FRANK: He was brought up in Hopewell, Joe.

JOE: Yeah? That makes about fifty thousand other Lindbergh babies.

CHARLIE: Well they're impostors.

FRANK: I thought the police found the kid's body.

CHARLIE: That was another kids body.

FRANK Whose body?

CHARLIE: I don't know whose body. But it wasn't my body.

FRANK: Obviously not...How come you kept this secret all these years, Charlie?

CHARLIE: Well naturally a lot of people wouldn't believe me.

JOE: OH REALLY?

CHARLIE: Plus I was already pretty well established as Charles Petrossian. You know-

driver's license, credit cards, bank account...

FRANK: Well sure, it's hard to make a change. You ought to contact the family.

You could try to pick up your inheritance. You coulda been a rich guy, Charlie!

CHARLIE: Actually...I did write to mother, once.

FRANK: You did?

CHARLIE: Yeah. But she never answered back. I figure the letter never got to her.

FRANK: Did you tell her-you know-who you were?

CHARLIE: I hinted who I was.

JOE: Oh sure. "Dear Mom. Guess who?" And then he signed it, "Your loving son, Charles Petrossian. P.S. Send the inheritance."

CHARLIE: Knock it off.

JOE: Real subtle.

CHARLIE: Anyway I told her how I was from her area. That's how I put it, I said I that I was "from her area."

FRANK: That's a hint.

JOE: Sigmund Freud would have had a picnic.

CHARLIE: I told her how I saw their house lots of times.

FRANK: You saw the house you were kidnapped from?

CHARLIE: Sure, I used to go by it all the time when I was a kid. Then later on when I knew who I really was I

used to drive out there sometimes and just park and look at it. I'd park under this tree and sit there thinking to myself, This is yours, Charlie. This is your kingdom.

FRANK: So your old man flew across the Atlantic in the *Spirit of St. Louis*. I've seen that movie lots of times on the late show, *The Spirit of St. Louis*. Must be great having Jimmy Stewart play your father and all.

CHARLIE: I wrote to Jimmy once, under my nom de plume of Petrossian.

FRANK: He ever answer back?

CHARLIE: I got a signed picture in the mail.



FRANK: You never told me that!

CHARLIE: Yeah.

FRANK: You never told me you had a signed picture of Jimmy Stewart!

CHARLIE: Well I've been keeping it a secret in case people start getting ideas about my true identity. Somebody puts a few clues together, it could have repercussions.

JOE: Yeah, they'd throw you in the loony bin.

CHARLIE: Go ahead. Scoff if you will!

FRANK: But this means that Anthony Hopkins didn't really do it.

CHARLIE: You mean kidnap me?

FRANK: Yeah.

CHARLIE: Obviously not. Not unless he was in league with the Petrossian family and handed me over to them.

FRANK: Yeah-what about the Petrossians' role in all this?

CHARLIE: My foster parents, as I like to think of them? Pawns in a bigger game, Frank. Pawns in a bigger game.

FRANK: But how did you make the transition? I mean, from being a Lindbergh to being a Petrossian?

CHARLIE: Let me just say, I got my ideas, Frankie.

(Small pause)

FRANK: You know it's very funny you should be saying all of this.

CHARLIE: What, that I've been the Lindbergh baby all these years and you never knew it?

FRANK: Yeah. Because you see, I'm the son of Czar Nicholas the Second of Russia.

CHARLIE: No.

FRANK Yeah.

CHARLIE: You're kidding.

FRANK: It's the truth.

CHARLIE: That kid that got stolen in the Russian Revolution?

FRANK: That's me. The heir to the throne of Moscow.

CHARLIE: Holy shit.

FRANK: And Sovereign of the Ukraine.

CHARLIE: I saw that movie. *Nicholas and What's-Her-Name*.

FRANK: Alexandra. That was my mother.

CHARLIE: But I thought you got shot?

FRANK: A faithful servant smuggled me out. Nobody knows I survived.

CHARLIE: And you had Lawrence Olivier in your movie and everything. I mean, Anthony Hopkins is one thing-but Sir Lawrence Olivier!

FRANK: Yeah, I felt pretty honored, having him in my movie. Though I did have a few

quibbles about the, you know, historical details.

CHARLIE: So what's your real name?

FRANK: Alexei Nikolaievitch Romanoff.

CHARLIE: By what name would you prefer to be called?

FRANK: Why don't you just keep calling me Frank. It'll be easier.

CHARLIE: Besides protecting your incognito.

JOE: THE CZAR OF RUSSIA?

CHARLIE: Now Joe-

JOE: THE CZAR OF RUSSIA?

CHARLIE: I don't want to hear a word from you, Joe.

JOE: Do you know how old you'd have to be, to be the Czar of Russia?

CHARLIE: Never you mind, Frank.

JOE: You'd have to be ninety years old!

CHARLIE: You want to hurt his feelings?

JOE: And a hemophiliac!

FRANK: I've always been a heavy bleeder.

JOE: That don't make you the goddamned Czar of Russia! I mean, the Lindbergh baby is one thing, but-

CHARLIE: Will you just shut up? Please? Shut up? You're on a lot of very

sensitive ground. We are talking about families, Joe. And Frank here lost everybody in the Revolution, so have a little sympathy. You got orphans here.

JOE: Okay then, Alexei. How do you know all this? How do you know you're the head honcho of the Ukraine?

FRANK: Well...one day I saw this picture in a book, picture of...

CHARLIE: Moscow.

FRANK: With the...

CHARLIE: Kremlin.

FRANK: And those domes...

CHARLIE: Yeah. Those onion-shaped domes.



FRANK: And I said to myself, I've been there! I've been there sometime! It was like I could remember it!

CHARLIE: Of course you'd remember it. Those communist bastards tried to rub you out there.

FRANK: And then when I saw that movie it was like I knew all the streets. Before they'd even go around the corner I'd know what was going to be on the other side. It was home.

CHARLIE: Musta been painful.

FRANK: It was pretty painful.

CHARLIE: Seeing everything you lost out on.

FRANK: It only got really bad when I had to watch myself get killed.

CHARLIE: Hey, this means if you would have married my sister, she would have been the queen of Russia.

FRANK: Czarina.

CHARLIE: Huh?

FRANK: The wife of the czar is the czarina.

CHARLIE: Is that proof, Joe? Is that the proof? I say "queen," he says, "czarina."

He's got the facts at the tips of the fingers.

JOE: I know how cars work, but that don't make me an Oldsmobile.

CHARLIE: Have you ever contemplated the restoration of your throne?

FRANK: I think I should leave that to the will of the people.

CHARLIE: Well if things had worked out different, I can't think of anybody I'd rather have on the Russian throne than you, Frank.

FRANK: Thanks, Charlie.

(Enter ALICE from SL door escorted by hostess for next scene. She sits at USR table.)

CHARLIE: Well I'll be goddamned. To think all this time we never knew it. You didn't know about me, and I didn't know about you. And Joe didn't know about either one of us...

(Silence. They turn to look at JOE)

FRANK: So, Joe...

JOE: Yeah, what?

FRANK: Who are you?

JOE: I'm not anybody.

FRANK: *Really.*

JOE: I'm Joe Morelli. Period.

FRANK: I'm not talking about that.

JOE: I'm Superman.

FRANK: Really?

JOE. No.

FRANK: Underneath it all.

JOE: I'm nobody. I'm just another guy on the street.

(Enter WAITER from DSR kitchen door and approaches men with a check in hand)

WAITER: Okay, gents. Here's your bill and it's one o'clock. *(Exit WAITER through kitchen with dirty dishes in hand)*

CHARLIE: Aaah shit.

FRANK: Already?

CHARLIE: That's what the company says. But now first things first. Who is bowling tonight?

FRANK: I'm in.

CHARLIE: And I'm in. Joey?

JOE: I told you, Charlie. I got all these things to do.

CHARLIE: You gonna let that bullshit get in your way?

FRANK: Yeah, Joe.

JOE: All right. Count me in.

CHARLIE: Great.

FRANK: But you know, Charlie, if you want to stay home and watch the Lindbergh movie tonight-we'll understand completely.

CHARLIE: Naah, I've seen it. Let's bowl!

FRANK: Okay!

JOE: As long as I'm home by midnight.

CHARLIE: What are you-Cinderella?

(Exit CHARLIE and FRANK through SL front door. JOE approaches ALICE at SR table)

ALICE: Who are you supposed to be?

JOE: *(dejected)* I'm nobody. *(Exit JOE through SL front door)*
