

Writers Block
By Daniel Mitzimberg
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Stage is set with a desk stage right. A typewriter on it with lots of paper and other desk items you would find on a writers desk.

The rest of the stage will be constructed as the play evolves.

Lights need to be set up so they illuminate only sections of the stage, this way stage hands can move things around in the dark parts of the stage. At least three different separate areas.

Characters: (some play multiple parts)

Jonathon Smyth – Playwright

Jody – actress

MAN – antagonist

THREE other men - who play cops and other stuff

Actor enters from far stage and walks to the desk talking to himself. Lights follow across stage – no follow spot - they light up in sections as he enters. Lights up the desk last.

SCENE 1

JOHN: *(walking and waiving arms)* I have to finish this play in one night

(pause) How can anyone expect to do that?

(stops near desk)

I don't have a main character.

I don't have an antagonist.

I don't have a conflict.

I don't have a climax.

I don't have crap.

(pause) Maybe - crap is all I do have.

(sits at desk and puts paper into typewriter - sarcastically)

I choose not to use a computer because it helps with my creative flow.

It's my trademark. *(beat)* What a bunch of crap I dished out to those guys.

(pause)

(Hitting self on head) Think – Think – What can I write about that has not already been written?

(Pause)

Love story? Naw. *(beat)* Drama? Naw. *(beat)* Murder Mystery. That may work.
(Pause)

(starts typing)

(Lights come up on the stage – far right - as the scene begins - reading as he is typing)
It was a dark night – the damsel in distress, Jody, is running from her would-be assailant.
She trips and falls looking back at the stalker. Putting her hand over her face, she screams.

(Lights dim on the desk)

(Typewriter –clicking - going during the play)

JODY: *(immediately SCREAMS)* No! please, I'll give you anything.

(Man enters the room in trench coat - pointing a weapon - She holds up her wrist)

Take my bracelet, it's very valuable, please don't hurt me.

MAN: *(Tough guy)* You think I'm after your money? I want more from you than just your money. *(He grabs her and lifts her from the floor and holds her close to him)*

I want what every man wants.

JODY: Tell me, what does every man want?

(Lights come up at the desk)

JOHN: *(Reading it back to himself - sarcastic)* I want what every man wants? I can do so much better than that. I am not sure what every man wants. I wanna write a play.

(He pulls the paper from the typewriter as he wads it up and throws it away the lights dim and the characters quietly exit the stage)

(sarcastically - mocking) I want what every man wants? *(beat)* Crap.

Let's see.

(Puts more paper in typewriter)

How about?

(Starts to type – reading as he types)

Lady exits a bar and walks across the street.

(Lady walks from right to center stage with lights come up as she gets into the area - lights dim behind her – no follow spot)

She stands and waits for someone.

(Lights at desk dim)

MAN: *(Enters from behind)* Been waiting long?

JODY: Just got here.

MAN: Didja do what I asked you to do?

JODY: Think I'd be here if I didn't?

MAN: I don't know – wouldja?

(He grabs her and brushes her hair back from her face and looks her in the eyes)

JODY: Sure this is what you want?

JOHN: *(Lights come up at the desk)* No that's all wrong, I don't want a love story.

(pause - They do as he says/types on stage)

He pulls her close and holds a knife to her throat.

MAN: *(holding knife to throat)* Bring the jewels?

JODY: *(struggling)* Of course I did. What'd ya expect?

MAN: I expect you not to scream.

(Lights come up on desk)

JOHN: That is all wrong, you're not holding the knife in a threatening way.

(John gets up from desk and walks over the MAN. He backs him up and stands in his place, he turns JODY around to expose her neck and holds the knife closer to her throat)

That's how is should look.

(The MAN replaces John as he heads back to the desk and type some more)

The man starts to pull her back away from the light.

(They copy this on stage)

(The lights go down over the desk)

MAN: Let's have 'em.

JODY: I didn't bring with me, I knew you'd double cross me.

MAN: *(Pushes her down - Grabs her purse and rifles through it)* Where are they?
(He bends over and grabs her again holding the knife to her)

JODY: A Safe Place.

MAN: Come-on. Get up.

(Lights come up over the desk)

JOHN: *(sarcastically)* A safe place? Sure. Now where do I go from here? A safe place?
(He pulls the paper from the typewriter – wads it up and throws it away – the lights over the actors go down at the same time – they sneak off stage)

I've got to get something together tonight. But What?

(pause) Crap! Crap! Crap!

(stage crew places a chair far stage left under a lit area – now unlit)

I know. *(Starts to type)*

Sit down Mrs. Worthington.

(Lights come up on stage Left as MAN holding JODY by arm sits her down - forcefully)

He turns and walks around behind the chair.

(Lights go down at desk)

MAN: We know you killed your husband. We also know how you did it.

JODY: I didn't kill my husband.

MAN: You did and I'm going to tell you how. *(He points to her)* You've wanted to kill him for a long time now.

JODY: I haven't ever wanted to kill my husband. I loved my husband.

MAN: *(walking around the chair and talking in her ear – near her head)* That's what you wanted everyone to think. But you thought wrong. We were on to you from the start.

JODY: *(scared)* From the start of what? I don't know what you are talking about.

MAN: You do. Don't deny it.

JODY: But I do deny it. All of it.

MAN: You're not clever enough for me.

JODY: It isn't true any of it.

MAN: Yes it is. It was you *(pause)* with Colonel Mustard in the Library.

JOHN: *(lights go up at the desk - John hits his head on the desk)*

(Frantically sarcastic - loud)

Colonel Mustard in the Library??? Oh My God, I am supposed to be a writer.

(he pulls the paper from the type writer and throws it away)

(The lights dim at the same time from across the stage and the actors leave the stage - the chair is removed)

I needed murder, I need suspense, I need dancers.

(walking around the stage)

Dancers? *(thinking)* Naw. *(beat)* I need a mystery. *(beat)* Ya, a mystery murder.

What am I going to do? I need a plot, characters, a script, and I need it yesterday.

(looking at watch)

I need it now. Damn.

(sits at desk and begins to type)

Four policemen walk out on the stage and line up across.

One of them blows into a pitch pipe and they begin to sing.

(following these stage directions – at the same time - the four policemen are center stage)

FOUR POLICEMEN: *(After the pitch pipe is blown - one gives a hmmm – barber shop style)*

(lights go down above the desk - Sung to 'Men in tights' song)

(break into a song)

We are cops - Cops - who pick up bad guys

(two middle cops pull out guns - standing in same line – just holding guns)

We have big guns - And lots of fun

(return the guns to holster – the other two drop to knees)

We are cops - Were at the precinct

(the cops stand) We hose 'em down - And lock 'em up.

(desk light comes on)

(John stands interrupting them – clapping his hands walking to the front of center stage – angry director)

JOHN: *(clapping hands)* No – No – No - That is not it.

(he moves them back into the first position) First position everyone. Now take it from the top.

FOUR POLICEMEN: *(Singing)* We are cops. Who pick up bad guys.

(cops start to pull guns)

JOHN: *(clapping hands)* Stop! Stop!

You two with the guns – STOP!

You two on the ends pull out your guns and step in front.

(pause) Then turn and point them at yourselves. Try that.

(yelling) From the top.

FOUR POLICEMEN: *(singing)* We are cops - Who pick up bad guys

(The two on each end pull guns and point to each other)

We have big guns - and lots of fun

JOHN: Stop! Better- but there is something missing.

COP ON FAR RIGHT: Maybe if we shot the guns.

JOHN: *(talking to self)*

That won't work. I can't afford the bullets.

(talking to everyone) No, there is something else missing.

(thinking and rubbing his chin he heads back to the desk)

Take it from the top.

(conducting) And a one and a two.

FOUR POLICEMEN: *(singing)*

We are cops - Who pick up bad guys

(John grabs the paper from the typewriter and yanks it out.)

FOUR POLICEMEN: *(they pull out the guns and face each other)*
We have big . . .
(Interrupts song)

(John wads up the paper and throws it in the garbage)
(the cops stop quickly – lights go out – they leave the stage)

JOHN: I can't write a musical.
(singing to himself – bouncing head around – making fun of song)
We're cops - With big guns
We shoot the bad guys.
(puts his head into his hands as he sits and looks at his typewriter – shakes head)
Everything has already been written. All the greats have already been done.
(pause) All I need is one act – one stupid act – is that so much to ask?
(looks upwards) Is it? *(Louder)* Is It!
(pause - looking down)
I wouldn't think so.
(pause)
(loading typewriter with more paper)
(by now a large bunch of crumpled papers should be on the stage)
A love story. A love story. Should I write a love story?
It would be fast and easy. Easy - what's so easy about love?
(starts typing)
It's a dark and star lit night.
Jody the beautiful mistress is standing near a street corner.
(The scene starts to build as Jody walks center stage and takes a sexy stance)
She holds her arm as she waits for her man friend
(Man walks out and stands next to her)
(lights go down at desk)

MAN: I am so happy you decided to come.

JODY: *(She turns to him)* You know I can't say no - to you.

MAN: I am - so glad you can't.

JODY: So, is your wife wondering where you go late at night.

MAN: I tell her I'm just going for a walk. I invite her along every night - she never comes.

JODY: You know we shouldn't be doing this. You're married and I – well – let's just say I'm not.

MAN: *(He grabs her arms and looks into her eyes – no passion in voice)*
When I look into your eyes I see so much woman.

JODY: When I look into yours I see the man I've always wanted.

MAN: *(pulls her close)* I can't keep my hands off of you.
(He starts to kiss her – lips touch)

JODY: *(Spits and pulls away in disgust)* We hardly know each other.
(lights come up at the desk)
(Jody pushes away from the MAN and walks toward the desk - talks to John)
What kind of crap is this?

JOHN: *(turns to Jody)* What do you mean, this is a love story.

JODY: This is no love story. It's turning into a 'make-out' scene in the middle of the stage.

JOHN: No it'll work. Give it a try. Watch.
(John takes Jody by the hand and leads her to center stage – pushes the man back and takes his place – he holds Jody by the arms and looks in her eyes)
(passionately)
When I look into your eyes I see a beautiful woman.

JODY: When I look in yours I see the man I always wanted.
(she slumps a little in his arms)

(He kisses her passionately for a short period of time – turn head from audience to simulate kiss and make it last longer than a simple kiss)

MAN: *(trying to interrupt kiss)* Excuse me. That should be me kissing her.
(they stop kissing)

JOHN: See -- that'll work just fine.

JODY: Yes, but not with him.

MAN: You didn't give me chance.

JOHN: Take it from the top.

(he walks over to desk and sits – light dim at desk)

MAN: I'm so happy you decided to come.

JODY: *(She turns to him)* You know I can't say no to you.

MAN: I am so glad you can't.

JODY: So, is your wife wondering where you go late at night.

MAN: I tell her I'm just going for a walk. I invite her along every night - she never comes.

JODY: You know we should not be doing this. You're married and I – well – let's just say I'm not.

MAN: *(He grabs her arms and looks into her eyes – with passion)*
When I look into your eyes I see such a beautiful woman.

JODY: When I look into yours I see the same man.

MAN: *(pulls her close)* I must have you - now.
(He starts to kiss her – lips touch)

JODY: *(She pulls away)* This isn't working
(lights come up at the desk)
(Jody pushes away from the MAN and walks toward the desk - talks to John)
What about the mystery and the murder?

JOHN: What about it?

JODY: I am not ready to do a love scene. We need mystery.

JOHN: We need a murder. *(he escorts her back to center stage)* I will add mystery.
(He walks back to the desk as he is saying) Take it from the top.

JODY: Crap.

(Continues to type)

MAN: I am so happy you decided to come.

JODY: *(She turns to him)* You know I can't say no to you.

MAN: You had better do as I say or else.

JODY: What? What are you trying to tell me?

MAN: Do you think I asked to here because I wanted to make love to you?

JODY: Well, actually – Yes.

MAN: *(He grabs her arms and looks into her eyes)* No. I have your dog.

JODY: Scraps? You have Scraps?

MAN: *(pulls her close)* Yes.

JODI: *(steps to side – looks at desk – yells)* Scraps? You named my dog Scraps?

JOHN: *(yelling back)* Deal with it.

JODY: *(looking back to Man)* What do you want with him?

MAN: Money. If you want to see him alive again.

JODY: *(She pulls away from his grasp)* How much?

MAN: \$20,000

JODY: For a dog?

MAN: Yes, if you want to see him alive again.

(Jody walks towards the desk – lights go up at desk)

JODY: You've got to be kidding me. A dog?

JOHN: *(turns to her)* Yes - a dog. That human thing has been done over and over.

JODY: A dog? *(Beat)* Knowing me, I would have gotten the dog from a dog rescue. *(beat)* Hell, I wouldn't give \$20,000 for my brother.

JOHN: But you would a dog.

(She turns and walks back towards center stage)

JODY: *(muttering to herself)* A dog.

JOHN: *(stands, turns and yells back to Jodi)* 'A' D-O-G – Dog. Some guy gets beat up - left in the street to bleed to death , everyone says, 'Oh poor guy got beat up.' You ruffle the feathers of poor little Fido and every damn activist group comes out of hiding wants to rip you a new one. YES! A Dog.

JODI: A dog.

(John takes the paper out of the typewriter – wads it up and throws it away just as the lights center stage go down and the actors leave quietly)

JOHN: *(Yells)* Damn right a dog!

What is wrong with a dog?

(pause – quiets down) Not a dog.

(talks to self)

I have to create better characters. Ones that don't argue.

(Pause)

(stands up and stretches) I've been going at this all night.

(pause)

I need murder and I need mystery. A murder Mystery.
A love murder mystery. (beat) musical.
A murder mystery love story musical. (beat) Right.

(Puts paper in typewriter and starts to type)

JOHN: Two thugs bring lady in, one on each arm and throw her to the floor – center stage.

(scene unfolds as the directions are given)

(Lady looks up and the men with her hands protecting her face)

JODY: Please I didn't do anything.

MAN1: No - but your boyfriend did.

MAN2: *(stands over her in a threatening manner)* Where is he? Don't lie.

JODY: I don't know, honest.

MAN1: Don't lie to us.

JODY: I said – honest.

MAN2: *(grabs her by the arm and holds her up)* You had better figure out where he is, and soon, or else.

JOHN: *(lights come up quickly at desk)* No. that doesn't work.

(goes back - typing away)

MAN2: *(Holds her up by her arm)*

You had better tell us if you want to see the sunrise again.

JOHN: No. Not that. How about ..

(goes back -typing)

MAN2: You had better take us to him or we're gonna hurt you.

JOHN: Crap. What can he say?

(typing)

MAN2: You had better figure it out quickly. We don't have much time.

(lights dim at the desk)

JODY: Why? What has he done?

MAN1: You don't wanna know

JODY: Yes I do.

(one of the men help her to stand – she brushes herself off)

MAN2: No you really don't. It would be best for you.

JODY: I can't help you. I've no idea where he would be.

MAN1: Wrong answer. *(he pulls out a knife)*

JODY: *(pleading)* No. Please. I really don't know. Did you try his house?

MAN2: He's not been there for a couple of days.

JODY: What'll you do if you don't find him?

MAN2: You're not much help and not much use to us.

JODY: Yes I am. Honest. I can help you find him.

MAN1: Where's he right now.

JODY: I don't know but I know where he'll be in the morning.

MAN2: Where?

JODY: At work. He works at Starbucks. He opens every morning at 5 A.M.

MAN1: What one? There's hundreds of 'em.

JODY: The one on 3rd street. Near Wal-Mart.

MAN2: What one?

JODY: The one by McDonalds.

MAN2: The one with McDonalds in it or the one with it next to it.

JODY: The one with the Subway in it and the McDonalds next to it.

MAN1: The on the South side or East side.

JODY: Neither. The one on the west side by the Target.

MAN2: The Target is up North

JODY: But there is no Wal-Mart I the North side.

MAN2: I wonder why?

JODY: The Starbucks by Wal-Mart next to McDonalds on the West side across form Target.

MAN1: Oh, I know that one.

JODY: *(She points across stage – the men both look)* Ya, you can see it over there - just past the Jack-in-Box.

MAN1: Oh ya. I see it.

MAN2: Then we'll be waiting for him. *(Pause)* She's no use to us. Kill her.

(man1 grabs Jody from behind and holds knife to her throat)

JODY: Please NO. I told you what you wanted to know.

MAN1: But now you know too much.

(He slashes her throat and drops her to the ground)

JOHN: *(pulls the paper from the typewriter and throws it away)*

(they both walk off stage and leave Jody on stage - dead)

(the lights dim over Jody but she stays on stage – the lights stay low enough to be seen)

(Puts new piece of paper in the typewriter)

That was too corny, no-one would believe that. How about if I start with a cop.

(he gets up and walks around ignoring the body on the stage)

No. How about a couple walking in a park.

If I start with the crime then I have to figure out how to solve the murder - Or - I could start with the planning of a murder and never solve it.

(Walking back to desk)

It will be easier to solve the murder.

(starts to type)

A policeman is walking his rounds on a quiet city street.

He turns the corner.

MAN3 – POLICEMAN: *(he sees the woman and bends over to take her pulse)*

(talking on his radio) I have a woman down on 5th and Burnson. No need to send an ambulance – *(sad)* she didn't make it.

(policeman looks over the body – puts hand on neck)

Please send some backup. She hasn't been here long.

(another policeman arrives on the scene)

MAN4 – POLICEMAN: Whatcha got?

MAN3 – POLICEMAN: *(looking at woman)*

Young lady in her twenties - her was throat sliced from ear to ear.

MAN4 – POLICEMAN: See anyone suspicious around tonight?

MAN3 – POLICEMAN: Just your regulars.

MAN4 – POLICEMAN: I'll ask around.

(man3 starts to write in his book)
(he turns away from the victim as a man walks by)

MAN4 – POLICEMAN: Excuse me.
(the man stops) There's some trouble here a few minutes ago. Did you see anything strange or unusual?

MAN1: No man. I just got here. What happened?

MAN4 – POLICEMAN: Nothing important. Move along.
(another man walks by) Excuse me. Did you see anyone around her in the past 10 minutes?

MAN2: *(points to the John at the desk)* Just him.

MAN4 – POLICEMAN: Thanks.
(man4 walks over to man3 and taps his shoulder)
(man3 three looks at man4 as he nods in the direction of John)

MAN3 – POLICEMAN: Think he's our man.

MAN4 – POLICEMAN: Only one way to find out.

(they walk to towards the desk – lights go up at desk)
(John is nodding his head and pulls the paper from the typewriter)
(before he can wad it up the a policemen grabs his arm – takes the paper away from him)

MAN3 – POLICEMAN: May we ask you some questions?

JOHN: What for? *(beat)* You don't ask questions - You're in my play.

MAN4 – POLICEMAN: I'm askin' questions this time.

(They pull john away from his desk and start to walk him to the body – he pulls back to the desk)

JOHN: You don't understand. You're part of my play.

MAN3 – POLICEMAN: You need to come along with us.

JOHN: *(He grabs the paper and tries to wad it up. The policeman takes it back from him)*
This is just a play.

MAN4 – POLICEMAN: *(takes the paper – un-wads it and looks at it)*
Looks like a confession - We'll need this for evidence.

JOHN: No wait. I can prove it.

MAN3 – POLICEMAN: *(they walk across the stage and past Jody)*
You are under arrest – you have the right to remain silent. I suggest you do so.
(they walk off stage while John is yelling)

JOHN: *(yelling)* You have it all wrong. I'm a playwright. This is a play I was writing.
(beat - Struggling voice) Let – me - go.
(everyone leaves the stage except Jody)
(a minute goes by and she stands up shakes it off and walks to the desk)

JODY: I thought he would never leave.
(She puts a paper in the typewriter and starts to type)
Let's write a real murder mystery.

It was cold and clammy, so dark you could not see if there was a person next to you.
Jane was walking home from work, she was in a poor part of town . . .
(she rips the paper from the typewriter and throws it away)
(puts paper into the type writer)
There he was, just standing there waiting for Miss Right to come along.
Or Miss Right-Now.
(she pulls the paper from the typewriter)
Oh God
(she puts her head in her hands on the desk and shakes her head)
(lights go down)

(Curtin)

