

TWO CREAM, ONE SUGAR

Scene

The scene is a small office that belongs to a college professor. There is a desk with one or two chairs for visitors, and as many books around as would be practical for the stage set-up. Ideally, the door to the room should be positioned so that when entrances and exits are made, the person coming or going is not visible when he is not in the office.

Cast of Characters

Professor – A college professor of drama. While older than his students, he is quite youthful and good looking.

Roger – A college student.

Scene One

As the lights come up, the professor is seated behind his desk reviewing some papers. There is a knock at the door.

Professor: Come in.

Roger enters, carrying a paper cup of take-out coffee.

Roger: You wanted to see me, Prof?

Professor: Yes, Roger. Have a seat.

Roger sits, putting his coffee on the desk.

Professor: I'd like to talk to you about your last writing assignment. Do you remember our class discussion about constructing a scene so the tension mounts to a climax at the end?

Roger: Sure do.

Professor: For a homework project, I asked everyone to write a short play, where a man in a gorilla suit bursts into a room, carrying a gun.

Roger: Yup. That's what I did.

Professor: But Roger, I don't think you understood the purpose of the exercise. So I thought it might be best if we performed your version together, to illustrate the point of my lecture.

The professor hauls out a gorilla costume from under his desk, and hands it, with a plastic gun to Roger.

Professor: Go out into the hallway and put this on. Make your entrance when you're ready. And here. That's the paper you handed in, if you need to refer to it.

The professor offers Roger a sheet of paper.

Roger: Wow! That's a cool costume!

Professor: Yes. It'll help you play your part.

Roger exits, carrying the costume, the gun and the paper. The professor continues at his desk, reviewing his notes.

Scene Two

Roger, wearing the gorilla suit, leaps through the door unannounced, brandishing the gun. He carries the assignment sheet in his other hand. He holds the gun in firing position, aiming it at the professor who cowers behind his desk.

Professor: No! No! Please! Don't shoot!

Roger: *(pulling the trigger three times.)* Bang! Bang! Bang!

The professor slumps across his desk and lays motionless.

After a few seconds, the professor raises his head and sits up. Roger sits down, takes off his gorilla mask and has a sip of coffee.

Roger: Pretty good, eh?

Professor: Well, Roger, it was concise and direct. But don't you think you brought it to a climax just a little quickly?

Roger: Hell no. When someone comes along with a loaded gun, that's the only thing that counts, no matter what he's wearing.

Professor: But Roger, if you don't reveal the relationship between the characters, and why one is compelled to murder the other, and what events have transpired to escalate the conflict, then you're cheating your audience out of what they need to know.

Roger: I was just holding true to how the moment would actually play out.

Professor: Still, you can't expose the ultimate outcome in the first scene. You've got to save something for the final act.

Roger: You can get all high and mighty and dramatic about it if you like. But here's the thing. If a person wants to kill someone, he's going to do it right away, and not stick around to talk about the weather.

The professor takes another paper from his pile. Roger takes another sip of coffee.

Professor: This is the same assignment, submitted by another student. I'd like you to run through it with me, to show how the scene has the potential to build and take shape. To make it easy to follow, I've substituted our own names for the main players.

Roger: OK, Prof. Whatever you say.

Roger picks up his gorilla mask and the new sheet of paper and exits. The professor remains at his desk.

Scene Three

Roger the Gorilla again enters with a flourish, waving his gun wildly. He awkwardly refers to the paper in his hand for his lines. The professor also has a copy of the same script.

Roger: Prepare to die!

Professor: Roger? Is that you?

Roger: How... How did you know?

Professor: By your voice, of course. (*Relaxing.*) You had me worried there, barging in like that. But why the ridiculous costume?

Roger: (*Still agitated.*) It's my disguise.

Professor: You make a fine gorilla. (*Reaching out.*) May I stroke you?

Roger: (*Waving the gun.*) Keep your hands off!

Professor: But why on earth do you need a disguise?

Roger: So no one will recognize me. I must stay incognito.

Professor: But what for?

Roger: (*Still waving his gun.*) I've come to kill you Professor. I have no other choice. You must know the reason!

Professor: (*Becoming more agitated.*) Roger – I have no idea. But,, but I'm sure we can work things out. What do you want from me?

Roger: My girlfriend – Sandi – whenever we're together, all she talks about is you.

Professor: You mean Sandi with an "i"? The cute redhead who always sits in the front row? That Sandi?

Roger: Cute Redhead? You bastard! And you know how to spell her name! I knew there was something going on between the two of you.

Professor: Please Roger. She's simply a sweet young girl...

Roger: So you do think she's special!

Professor: Not in a romantic way. She's just a nice person. Lot's of female students admire – even adore - their professors. It happens all the time, but there's nothing of any substance on either side.

Roger: (*Waving his gun.*) Whatever you claim makes no difference. Her choice between you and me is going to get a whole lot easier – as soon as I blow your head off!

Professor: Wait. Roger... Why don't you just ask Sandi? Shouldn't she be the one to decide? And I'm sure she'll pick you. She only knows me from the classroom. Honest.

Roger. You... you think she loves me after all?

Professor: Roger – Sandi is all yours. Believe me. Now... Let me have the gun. (*He reaches out his hand.*) Please?

Roger: Well... Thanks Prof. (*He hands over the gun.*) I guess I just wasn't thinking straight. Sorry if I gave you a scare.

Professor: (*Putting the gun in his drawer.*) No harm done, Roger. Call Sandi right now and tell her you miss her. And if you need someone to swear on your behalf – to attest to your devotion - then I'm your man. After all, you've just shown me some pretty convincing proof.

Roger: Sandi was right. You're the best. And you can stroke me if you like.

Professor: (*Checking his page.*) Roger! That last line wasn't in the script.

Roger the Gorilla and the Professor share a hug to end the scene. Then Roger sits down and takes off his gorilla head, and has another sip of coffee. The professor also sits back behind his desk.

Roger. That fairy tale must have been written by a girl. No man would ever introduce a character who waves a pistol around without firing it.

Professor: Sometimes a theatrical moment can be more powerful when an explosion is averted.

Roger: I'll bet Sandi wrote it herself. To let you know she has the hots for you.

Professor: But Roger, did you appreciate how the scene had a narrative arc that went from a chaotic beginning to a reconciled conclusion? That's what's important to understand. It's how basic theatre is supposed to work.

Roger: You can call it drama if you like. But I still say a for-real killer with a drawn gun isn't going to ramble on, spilling his guts to his victim about his love life, or how he takes his coffee or whatever else. Not when time is of the essence, as my grandmother says.

Professor: But whether you agree or not, Roger, you're going to have to start providing me with back stories and motives. Because I'm the one who decides if the scripts you submit have any dramatic value, or if they're just exercises in typing. And I'm sorry to tell you that as far as I'm concerned, this particular piece of yours has no literary merit, and I'm giving it a failing grade.

Roger: So I'm a typist. Not a writer.

Professor: There'll be other projects. I wanted to let you know my expectations early in the term, so you can improve your style and do well on them.

Roger: Great Prof. Thanks for being so harsh. You've shown me how to survive in the land of make-believe, and it's a lesson I'll never forget. And if I can ever return the favour and teach you about the real world, it'll be my pleasure.

Professor: I know you're upset...

Roger: Don't worry Professor. Your academic slaps won't break my bones. I'm just anxious right now to get back to my computer keyboard. 'Cause if I keep wearing this monkey suit, and tapping constantly for a few zillion years, I might produce a sequel to the Bible, or Romeo and Juliet, or at least The Cat in the Hat. You've given me some great inspiration.

Roger exits carrying his gorilla head. The professor is again sitting at his desk, shuffling his papers.

Scene Four

Roger enters suddenly without knocking, still wearing the full gorilla costume. He is carrying a "real" gun which he points at the professor. The professor sees him and the gun, and sits straight in his chair with his arms raised.

Professor: No! No! Please! Don't Shoot!

Roger: Here comes the final act, Professor. Just like you wanted. *(Picking up his coffee cup and showing it to the professor.)* By the way. Two cream. *(He shoots two bullets into the professor's chest. The professor stays in a sitting position, with a look of surprise and horror frozen on his face.)*

Roger: One sugar. *(He shoots another bullet into the professor's body. The professor slumps over onto his desk, face down on the pile of assignment papers.)*

Roger: How's that for sharing a back story, Prof? *(He sets down his cup and pushes the professor's face into the papers.)* And you thought I wasn't listening.

Roger faces the professor, exultantly pumping the gun above his head with one hand.

Roger: And here's to Sandi with an "i"! *(He raises his coffee cup in a toast.)* She's now mine and mine alone!

Roger exits, taking his gun and his coffee.

Fade to black.