

# HURRICANE GRANDMA

by Phil Olson

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# HURRICANE GRANDMA

*A One-Act Play*

by **Phil Olson**

**SYNOPSIS:** With a hurricane raging outside, three strangers are evacuated into a school gymnasium to wait out the storm. Robert, a work-a-holic advertising executive, is desperate to escape in order to close a deal with the large corporation, Grandma's Cookies. He is now trapped with a bold elderly woman who, to his dismay, is playing match-maker with a woman he despises. The only thing that might bring these three together is battling the overzealous school security guard.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(2 females, 2 males, 0-1 either)*

SARAH (f).....28; Calm, pretty, with somewhat of a hippie/bohemian look. *(76 lines)*

ROBERT (m).....33; Well groomed, slick, impatient, wearing a business suit, looking very professional. *(118 lines)*

CARL (m).....35; Wears a security guard uniform, with a can of mace attached to his belt. *(65 lines)*

HELEN (f).....82. *(61 lines)*

LOUDSPEAKER (m/f).....Pre-recorded or offstage voice. *(1 line)*

**DURATION:** 25 minutes.

**TIME:** Present day.

**SETTING:** School gymnasium.

**AT START:** *The set is a high school gymnasium. On the floor are four workout mats, lined up in a row. A drinking fountain is off stage right. Sitting on one of the mats against the wall is SARAH reading a book. In walks CARL followed by ROBERT. ROBERT is on a cell phone. CARL takes himself way too seriously.*

**ROBERT:** *(Into cell phone.)* Yeah, can you believe it? I have to stay in a crummy high school gymnasium until the hurricane is over...

**CARL:** It's not crummy, sir...

**ROBERT:** *(Still on his cell phone, looking around.)* And what is that smell?

**CARL:** Bananas, sir. Ripe bananas.

**ROBERT:** Great. *(Into phone.)* Listen, Dave, I'm going to need you to finish the Grandma's Cookie proposal and send it off. It's due in... *(Looks at his watch.)* Oh, crap, it's due in an hour...

**CARL:** Sir, I'm gonna have to ask you to get off the phone.

*SARAH puts down her book and watches the exchange.*

**ROBERT:** *(Into phone.)* Just a second. *(To CARL.)* Excuse me?

**CARL:** Please get off the phone, sir. It's for your own safety.

**ROBERT:** *(Into phone.)* He wants me to get off the phone.

**CARL:** It's very important, sir. I have to go over the safety rules.

**ROBERT:** What's to go over? We're in a crummy gym.

**CARL:** Sir, I'm gonna have to ask you to step away from the phone.

**ROBERT:** It's... it's a cell phone. I'm holding it.

**CARL:** Put the phone down right now, sir.

**SARAH:** Dude, I'd put it down.

**ROBERT:** *(Ignoring him, into phone.)* Look, Dave, go ahead and do a spell check, put in the paragraph about the packaging suggestions, and we still need to come up with a slogan if we're going to win the account, so start thinking.

*CARL pulls out his can of mace and aims it at ROBERT.*

**CARL:** Sir, you're gonna have to put the phone down or I will be forced to use this.

**ROBERT:** *(Into phone.)* My battery is low. I'll call you back. *(Hangs up and puts the phone away. To CARL.)* What is your problem?

**CARL:** My problem is your safety, sir.

**ROBERT:** Aiming a can of mace at me is for my safety?

**CARL:** It's pepper spray, sir.

**ROBERT:** What's the difference?

**CARL:** *(Thinks.)* The pepper. *(Puts the mace away.)* We've got a hurricane a brewin' out there, sir, a storm with 90 mile an hour winds, and if we have one wildcard among the group, i.e. you, this little house could come tumbling down faster than a deck of cards.

**ROBERT:** *(Can't believe what he's hearing. Looks at SARAH.)* Is he serious?

**SARAH:** Oh, yeah.

**ROBERT:** Look, I have to finish this phone call, okay? I have a proposal due in an hour, and if I don't come up with a slogan for the campaign...

**CARL:** Sir, if you don't stop your jabberin' and listen up, you might not be alive long enough to enjoy your big old important business career.

**ROBERT:** This is ridiculous. You can't hold me here. *(Starts to leave.)*

**CARL:** You take one step out that door, I will have you arrested faster than you can say Okachobee, and I guarantee you will never make that phone call.

*ROBERT stops.*

**CARL:** The faster you listen up, the faster you get to your call. *(ROBERT listens attentively.)* Very good. *(Much louder than he has to be.)* Okay, if I can have everyone's attention, here, I'll go over the safety rules.

**ROBERT:** *(Looks around.)* Can you turn down the volume a little? It's just us.

*CARL puts his hand on the mace indicating he might use it. ROBERT puts his hands up indicating for CARL to go ahead with his speech.*

**CARL:** Thank you. As I was saying, we have a level three hurricane comin' our way. They've evacuated the homes, closed off the bridges, directed you to the Hilldale High School gymnasium, my alma mater, home of the Fighting Monkey Squirrels. You're here for your own protection, and you are stuck here until it's over. Which may be a long time.

**ROBERT:** I've got to get back to work.

**CARL:** Sir, one more outburst like that, I'm afraid I'm gonna have to unleash Cassandra. *(Puts his hand on his mace.)*

**ROBERT:** You named your mace?

**SARAH:** Let it go.

**CARL:** Pepper spray... now, my name is Carl. You can call me Carl. A few things to go over. First, you will each be assigned a floor mat. Such as the mat that... *(Trying to remember her name.)*

**SARAH:** Sarah.

**CARL:** Such as the mat that Sarah is sitting on. Your mat will be your home. Treat it well and it will treat you well. What is your name, sir?

**ROBERT:** Robert.

**CARL:** Robert, this will be your mat. *(Pointing to the mat next to SARAH.)*

**ROBERT:** How about a chair? Can I have a chair?

**CARL:** No chairs. Chairs are dangerous. A chair caught up in a stiff wind can take your head clean off. *(Makes a head-cutting-off gesture with his hands.)*

**ROBERT:** Fine. A mat then. I'll take this one. *(Pointing to another mat.)*

**CARL:** No, you won't, sir. This is your assigned mat, right here. *(Pointing to his assigned mat.)*

**ROBERT:** But this one has a better view.

*SARAH stifles a laugh. CARL glares at ROBERT. With his hand hovering around the mace.*

**ROBERT:** This one will be fine. *(Gesturing to his assigned mat.)*

**CARL:** Thank you. Now, there's a water fountain over there. Since we don't know how long we'll be here, we're gonna have to ration the water. What does that mean? I'll tell you what it means. No more than one trip to the water fountain in any two hour period. No more than 15 seconds of drinking per trip. The bathroom is down the hall. No drinking out of the sink. If I catch anyone cheating, say hello to Cassandra. Any questions? *(No one says anything.)* Good. Okay, I'll be back in a little bit to check on you. Make yourselves comfortable. You're in my home now. *(Exits.)*

**ROBERT:** What a jerk.

**CARL:** *(From outside the room.)* I heard that.

*ROBERT takes out his cell phone and punches in a number. SARAH watches him.*

**ROBERT:** Yeah, Dave, it's me. You come up with anything on the slogan? ... Crap. Okay, keep thinking. I'll call you back. I gotta save my battery.

*ROBERT hangs up and looks at SARAH. SARAH smiles at him.*

**ROBERT:** Am I amusing you?

**SARAH:** A little. *(Goes back to reading her book.)*

**ROBERT:** I'm glad I could help. *(Pacing back and forth, muttering.)*  
Tastes like nothing you've ever had... like a sugary treat... like flavor crystals of happiness... come on, think of something. *(SARAH coughs.)* Excuse me, I'm trying to concentrate, here.

**SARAH:** *(Reading her book.)* Yeah, whatever.

**ROBERT:** What's that supposed to mean?

**SARAH:** Nothing.

**ROBERT:** Look, I've got a big account I'm trying to close, okay? I'm trying to focus.

**SARAH:** *(Still reading.)* Fine.

**ROBERT:** "Fine." ...Sitting there all relaxed. Not a care in the world. What are you, a secretary or something?

**SARAH:** Something like that.

**ROBERT:** Yeah, I thought so. All happy go lucky. Just sittin' there, reading your book, no responsibilities. What a life. Must be nice.

**SARAH:** You're stalling.

**ROBERT:** What?

**SARAH:** You can't think of a slogan, so you're wasting time talking to me.

**ROBERT:** Oh, now you're a psychologist.

**SARAH:** Just trying to help.

**ROBERT:** Thanks, but I don't need your help, okay? I'm Robert Stevens. Maybe you've heard of me. Stevens and Gardner Advertising. I won three Addy Awards last year.

**SARAH:** Congratulations.

**ROBERT:** Thank you... now, if you don't mind, I've got to go back to work. *(Begins to pace.)*

**SARAH:** Don't let me stop you.

**ROBERT:** *(Muttering to himself.)* Cookies... chocolate chip cookies... chocolatey goodness... a burst of zesty chocolate... a carnival in your mouth... what do you say about chocolate chip cookies?

**SARAH:** *(Looks up from her book.)* Are you asking me?

**ROBERT:** No, I'm just thinking out loud.

**SARAH:** Okay. *(Goes back to reading.)*

**ROBERT:** "Grandma's Cookies." That's the name of the company. "Grandma's Cookies." I need to come up with a slogan in... *(Looks at his watch.)* Oh, crap... cookies. Chocolate chip cookies.... *(No response from SARAH.)* Any thoughts? *(SARAH looks up.)*

**SARAH:** Still thinking out loud?

**ROBERT:** No, I'm asking you, okay? Even a blind monkey squirrel can find an acorn, sometimes.

**SARAH:** You really have a way with people, don't you?

**ROBERT:** Look, I'm under a lot of pressure, okay? Something you're not accustomed to.

**SARAH:** Yeah, you're right. You know, I don't think I'm going to be much help to you.

**ROBERT:** Well, at least you're honest. *(Continues to pace, muttering.)* Grandma's cookies... a mouth full of cookie goodness... cookie-licious...

**SARAH:** Just like grandma used to make.

**ROBERT:** What?

**SARAH:** Nothing.

**ROBERT:** No, really, what did you say?

**SARAH:** I don't remember.

**ROBERT:** Come on. You said something.

*Suddenly, from outside the gym, they hear CARL'S voice.*

**CARL:** *(Offstage.)* ...and if you just follow me, I'll show you to your mat.

*CARL and a very old woman, HELEN, enter the gym. HELEN moves very slowly.*

**CARL:** It's right in here, ma'am.

**HELEN:** *(Looks around.)* Oh, for cryin' out loud, would you look at this.

**CARL:** You'll be safe in here, ma'am. As long as you follow the safety rules.

**ROBERT:** *(To SARAH.)* What did you say? About the cookies.

**SARAH:** *(Putting her finger over her lips.)* Shhh.

**HELEN:** It smells like sweaty jocks.

**CARL:** That's bananas, ma'am.

**HELEN:** You have bananas? I'll have a banana.

**CARL:** No, ma'am, we don't have any bananas.

**HELEN:** You just said you had bananas.

**CARL:** Old bananas, ma'am. They're rotten.

**HELEN:** Well, what are you doing with rotten bananas?

**CARL:** They were left under the bleachers. Now, if you'll listen up, I'll go over the rules.

**HELEN:** *(Looks at ROBERT and SARAH.)* Oh, would you look at that, there are people here. I'm Helen.

**ROBERT:** Robert.

**SARAH:** Sarah.

**HELEN:** Those are nice names.

**CARL:** Ma'am, this is your assigned mat. This is where you will sleep.

**HELEN:** You want me to get down on the floor?

**CARL:** It's a mat, ma'am. It's got padding.

**HELEN:** What are you trying to kill me? If I get down on that floor, I'll never get up. Why don't you just dig me a grave?

**CARL:** I'll help you up, ma'am.

**HELEN:** Oh, yeah. Any excuse to grope an old lady.

**CARL:** I won't grope you, ma'am.

**HELEN:** *(To SARAH.)* Has he groped you, yet?

**CARL:** Ma'am, if I can just have your attention for a moment...

**HELEN:** Is that a water fountain? I am so thirsty. *(Starts to cross to the water fountain.)*

**CARL:** Okay, if you can just hold up a second there, ma'am. I just need to go over a few things.

**ROBERT:** Why don't you mace her?

**HELEN:** When do you serve lunch?

**CARL:** Um, there's no lunch, ma'am.

**HELEN:** Well, what kind of a place is this, anyway? *(Drinks from the fountain.)*

**CARL:** It's a gym, ma'am. You're here for your safety.... Ma'am, your time is up on the drinking fountain.

**HELEN:** What?

**CARL:** You only get 15 seconds on the fountain.

**HELEN:** Oh, lighten up, Skippy.

**CARL:** It's Carl, and it's for your own safety, ma'am.

**HELEN:** I'd like a sandwich. Tuna fish on whole wheat. *(Still drinking from the fountain.)*

**CARL:** We don't have sandwiches, ma'am.

**HELEN:** Is there a cafeteria in this school?

**CARL:** Yes, ma'am.

**HELEN:** Well, then you have sandwiches, now, don't you?

**ROBERT:** She's got you there.

**HELEN:** You want me to tell everyone you tried to starve an old lady?

**CARL:** No, ma'am.

**HELEN:** I'd like the bread to be toasted. Chop chop.

*Carl turns and slowly leaves.*

**HELEN:** Someone's gotta remove that pole from his butt.

**CARL:** *(From outside the gym.)* I heard that.

**HELEN:** So, are you two married?

**ROBERT and SARAH:** NO!

**HELEN:** Engaged?

**ROBERT:** We just met.

**HELEN:** Well, you should be married. You look good together.

*SARAH laughs. ROBERT looks at her.*

**ROBERT:** What's so funny?

**SARAH:** That we look good together.

**ROBERT:** What, are you saying that I'm not a good looking guy?

**SARAH:** You're okay.

**ROBERT:** I'm just "okay?"

**SARAH:** I think your personality gets in the way of your looks.

**ROBERT:** What does that mean?

**HELEN:** You argue like you're married.

**ROBERT:** We're not.

**HELEN:** You've got all this sexual tension built up between you. You could cut it with a knife.

**ROBERT:** There's no tension.

**HELEN:** Oh, come on, you're wound up tighter than a frog's ass.

**ROBERT:** I have a deadline at work. I'm under a lot of stress right now.

**HELEN:** There's more than that going on here. I know. I was married three times. You know where the lady's room is? I've got a bladder the size of a walnut.

**ROBERT:** It's just down the hall.

*HELEN starts toward the bathroom.*

**HELEN:** I'll just let you two continue to flirt with each other.

**ROBERT:** We're not flirting.

**HELEN:** Denial ain't just a river in Egypt.

**ROBERT:** There's no denial.

**HELEN:** Right. *(She's gone.)*

**ROBERT:** That's funny that she thinks we look good together.

**SARAH:** Hilarious.

**ROBERT:** Now, what were you saying about Grandma's cookies.

**SARAH:** Excuse me?

**ROBERT:** You said something, like a possible slogan or something.

**SARAH:** Oh, yeah. I don't remember.

**Thank you for reading this free excerpt from:**

***HURRICANE GRANDMA***

**By Phil Olson**

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