

THE THINK TANK

TEN MINUTE PLAY

By Frank Ritter

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SYNOPSIS: At times like this, a man needs ideas. Good, bad, small, and brilliant ideas.. Zoom-in on Man’s Mind, with help from the emotions department and the imagination department, as he wrestles with ambitious new ideas that just may save his job and his company. And watch as the mind chooses which idea will prevail. The answer may surprise you in *THE THINK TANK*.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6 male, 3 female, 3 either)

- MIND (m)..... Older man, nicely dressed, trim physic, glasses optional. *(37 lines)*
- GOOD IDEA (f) Young to mid-age, pretty, but not “sexy”. Dressed in flowing white gown or anything white and flowing that gives an “angel” impression (no wings). *(2 lines)*
- BAD IDEA (m)..... Adult; Costume that denotes “bad”: perhaps black-cloaked with a mustache. *(9 lines)*
- SMALL IDEA (m/f) 10-Adult. Person *must* be small of stature, definitely and obviously the smallest person on the stage. Costume can be normal street wear. *(5 lines)*
- BRILLIANT IDEA (m) Older adult; an “Einstein type.” *(12 lines)*

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- BIG IDEA (m/f)..... Adult; business suit; actor must be HUGE or made up to appear both tall and very rotund to the audience. (4 lines)
- SEXY IDEA (f)..... Voluptuous and sexy; costume: a cocktail dress with high heels. (6 lines)
- BOLD, BRAVE, AND DARING IDEA (m)..... 20-40, excellent physic; costume: dressed like Zorro. (6 lines)
- BODY (m) 40s, off-stage voice (3 lines)
- BOSS/EMPLOYER (m/f)..... Older off-stage voice (3 lines)
- IMAGINATION DEPT. (m)..... Adult, off-stage voice. (4 lines)
- EMOTIONS DEPT. (f)..... Adult, off-stage voice. (8 lines)

DURATION: 10 minutes

SCENE: Inside late-thirties or early-forties man's head.

TIME: Present

STAGING AND PROPS

The stage must appear to be the inside of a head, but not gory, and not necessarily recognizable for what it is. Whatever will make a non-gory interior head, director's choice. At upstage rear, two large holes that look like eyes, out of which "MIND" can peer. The holes are one to two feet apart. On the wall, left and right of the "eyes" are two large breaker switches (think Frankenstein movies). Above LEFT switch, which is to the left of the left eye, the large words: ENGAGE BRAIN, immediately below "Engage Brain" is word "ON", below the switch is word "OFF." Above RIGHT switch, which is to the right of the right eye, the large word: SPEAK, immediately below "Speak" is word "ON", below the switch is word "OFF." Small business desk and chair; nothing on desk but an "intercom" box with a variety of buttons – the more visible buttons the better. 12 straight-back chairs grouped together, facing audience. Only 7 will be sat upon, but more than 7 are necessary so cast can move around.

DO NOT COPY

SCENE 1

AT RISE: *Mind is in front of the “eyes”, looking out, his back to the audience*

MIND: Hmm, I wonder what the Boss wants.

BOSS/EMPLOYER: *(Off-stage.)* Welcome back, Gary. I hear you had a great vacation. But now that you’re back, you need to know that we’re up against the wall. If we don’t come up with something soon, we’re out of business...and I mean soon!

Without looking at the switches, MIND throws “speak” switch to “on.”

BODY: *(Off-stage.)* Jeez, Boss, I don’t know. Things seem pretty good to me.

BOSS/EMPLOYER: *(Off-stage.)* Seem pretty good to you? Have you lost your mind? Didn’t you hear what I just said?

Recognizing his error, MIND rapidly throws the “speak” switch to off. He then throws the “engage brain” switch to “on”, followed by the “speak” switch to “on”.

We’re going out of business unless—

BODY: *(Off-stage. Cuts off BOSS.)* Sorry, Boss, I’ve still got some jet lag. What I meant to say is that I’ll get right on it.

BOSS/EMPLOYER: *(Off stage.)* That’s better. You know I’m counting on you. All of our incomes are at stake here! And I mean all!

MIND: *(To himself.)* That was stupid...easy now...just relax. *(Throws “speak” switch to “off” and then presses intercom button.)* Emotions Department?

EMOTIONS DEPARTMENT: *(Off-stage.)* Yes?

MIND: How’s Body doing?

EMOTIONS DEPARTMENT: *(Off-stage.)* He’s running high and getting near red line, but holding now.

MIND: All right, but keep me informed...especially if he starts edging toward red line again.

EMOTIONS DEPARTMENT: All right.

MIND: *(Pushes another button on intercom.)* Imagination Department?

IMAGINATION DEPARTMENT: *(Off-stage.)* At your beck and call.

MIND: You know Imagination, you drive me nuts.

IMAGINATION DEPARTMENT: *(Off-stage, Chuckling.)* You know that's why you love me...and rely on me to get Body out of trouble.

MIND: Yeah, well, I need you again. So, send in some ideas. I don't want any that are Flakey, Stupid or Childish, and I especially don't want any Weak ones—they always have to be propped up with another idea or two.

IMAGINATION DEPARTMENT: *(Off-stage.)* What about Bad Ideas?

MIND: Send in the worst one. I need to keep an eye on him.

IMAGINATION DEPARTMENT: *(Off-stage.)* Okay. When do you want them?

MIND: Immediately! This is a crisis! Get those ideas in here now!

GOOD, BAD, SEXY, BIG, BOLD BRAVE AND DARING, BRILLIANT and SMALL IDEAS all enter and sit; SMALL IDEA sits farthest from MIND, but next to BRILLIANT IDEA.

MIND: Body is in big trouble, and it's up to us to save him and his job.

The following dialogue is blurted out simultaneously by all but SMALL IDEA, who says nothing.

GOOD IDEA: I can deal with this!

BAD IDEA: Just what I've been waiting for!

BRILLIANT IDEA: Let me see...how can I...

BIG IDEA: Now's my chance!

SEXY IDEA: Ummm, sounds like fun!

BOLD, BRAVE, AND DARING IDEA: I will handle this!

MIND: *(Interrupting.)* Quiet! Settle down! Don't come at me all at once. I need some order here.

EMOTIONS DEPARTMENT: *(Off-stage.)* Mind! Mind! Can you hear me?

MIND: (*Presses intercom button.*) I'm here, Emotions.

EMOTIONS DEPARTMENT: (*Off-stage*) What's happening? He's racing toward red line. Wait...wait...Okay, he's calming down. He's holding, but just below red line.

MIND: Thanks for the heads-up. I'll keep better control over you.

EMOTIONS DEPARTMENT: (*Off-stage.*) It's best that way...Mind, you know, even though I'm on your side, I won't have any choice—
—if Body crosses red line I'll have to throw you into panic mode. Sorry, but it's the rules.

MIND: I understand. Please keep me informed. (*Releases intercom button and addresses the ideas.*) I need all of you to calm down. This is a very serious matter. Small Idea, I noticed you didn't blurt out anything.

SMALL IDEA: It doesn't do any good, 'cause nobody ever listens to me.

BAD IDEA: Oh, quit whining!

MIND: (*Looks hard at BAD IDEA, but speaks to SMALL IDEA.*) I see. Well...let's get on with it.

BIG IDEA: It seems to me that I am exactly what is called for...a really Big Idea!

BOLD, BRAVE, AND DARING IDEA: Yeah, right. We need to save the day—and that's what I do best. If ever there was a situation designed specifically for a Bold, Brave and Daring Idea...this is it!

BRILLIANT IDEA: Nonsense! I am what is needed. Team me with one of the others and I'm unbeatable.

BIG IDEA / BOLD, BRAVE, AND DARING IDEA: Like me!

MIND: (*Waiving off BIG IDEA, and BOLD, BRAVE AND DARING IDEA.*) I'm sorry, I know you're a Brilliant Idea, but I can't trust you.

BOLD, BRAVE, AND DARING IDEA: Wow! That was a low blow. If I were you, Brilliant, I wouldn't stand for that kind of treatment.

BRILLIANT MIND: (*Blustering. To BOLD, BRAVE AND DARING.*) Quiet! (*To MIND.*) What do you mean, you can't trust me? I'm the only one who gets the job done.

MIND: You're too erratic and undependable.

BRILLIANT IDEA: (*Really blustering now.*) Wha...Wha...What are you talking about? I'm as dependable as they come!

MIND: No, you're not! (*To ALL.*) As your ideas flit in and out of other minds, you look for bodies in need—right? (*Directly to BRILLIANT IDEA.*) Nearly a century ago you put those guys, Daimler and Benz together.. Daimler had the engine, named after his lead engineer's daughter, and Benz had the body —and (*Clapping his hands.*) BAM! the Mercedes-Benz was born. Remember?

BRILLIANT IDEA: Of course I remember. It was brilliant, if I do say so myself, but you seem to be proving my point.

MIND: Am I? You didn't do that by yourself because you had Good Idea with you.

GOOD IDEA: Thank you. Brilliant Idea was leading the others to believe he did it all by himself.

BRILLIANT IDEA: (*Winking at GOOD IDEA.*) We did it together... because we make a terrific team.

MIND: Yes, you do. The problem is that you don't always team with Good Idea. Some decades later, you were in Detroit and decided to do it again. Remember?

BRILLIANT IDEA: (*Subdued.*) Well, yes, I seem to have a vague...very vague...recollection of that.

MIND: Yeah, I'll bet you do. Only this time you didn't have Good Idea with you...Oh no, you were traveling with Bad Idea, and (*Clapping his hands.*) BAM! The Edsel was born!

BAD IDEA: That was definitely one of my better ones.

BRILLIANT IDEA: Oh, shut up. You're just a Bad Idea that can be found on any street corner.

BAD IDEA: Oh yeah? See if I ever help you again.

BRILLIANT IDEA: I should be so fortunate.

MIND: Quiet down. Brilliant Idea, I'm sorry, but I just can't trust you to do the right thing.

BRILLIANT IDEA looks dejected.

SMALL IDEA: What about—

MIND: (*Interrupting SMALL IDEA.*) Not now. Frankly, I'm not sure why I even allowed you in here.

SMALL IDEA looks dejected.

SEXY IDEA: Mind, you know, sex sells. Perhaps a Sexy Idea is exactly what is needed. People seem to fall all over themselves to be involved with me.

EMOTIONS DEPARTMENT: *(Off-stage.)* Mind! Mind! Body just inched up a bit. He's getting very close to red line. He's so close, in fact, that I had to take the safety cover off the panic button.

MIND: *(At intercom.)* Sorry. Sexy Idea was speaking. Is he holding?

EMOTIONS DEPARTMENT: *(Off-stage.)* I see. Well, yes, but barely. He keeps looking at his watch. He has party plans later and is getting anxious.

MIND removes finger from intercom.

SEXY IDEA: Oh boy! Not again! Remember the last year?

SMALL and BRILLIANT IDEAS have a short, serious, quietly-whispered conversation while others are talking.

MIND: Do I ever! Body's partying had me so dizzy I could barely function.

SEXY IDEA: You think you had it rough. I couldn't get out of the Imagination Department, and those guys in there are buds with Bad Idea. *(She sticks her tongue out at BAD IDEA)*

MIND: I vaguely remember that, too...but this isn't getting us anywhere. We need to focus.

BOLD, BRAVE, AND DARING IDEA: I think if you team me with Good and Brilliant Ideas we can really pull this off. We're just what's needed.

MIND: Sorry, past experience tells me that the combination of the three of you might overwhelm Boss. Body needs something more subtle.

SMALL IDEA: *(Standing up.)* I think—

MIND: Small Idea, I told you to—

BRILLIANT IDEA: *(Cutting MIND off.)* Let him speak. He may be the solution.

MIND: All right. Perhaps I've been a bit hasty.

SMALL IDEA: I have the advantage of being able to grow...to change as needed, unlike other ideas. Because I'm a Small Idea I won't frighten off Boss, and I know I can do this.

BRILLIANT IDEA: He and I have discussed this, and I believe it is possible, but it will take all of us to make it work.

BAD IDEA: I'm available.

MIND: (*Frowns at BAD IDEA, and to SMALL IDEA.*) Go on.

SMALL IDEA: First, I team with Good Idea and Brilliant Idea. Then, as I grow, we add Bold, Brave and Daring Idea. Eventually I'll grow into a truly Big Idea that would save the company.

SEXY IDEA: What about me?

MIND: Perhaps you can come on board later.

BAD IDEA: Sexy Idea and I do very well together.

MIND: (*Glaring at BAD IDEA, but speaks to SMALL IDEA.*) However, we must keep Bad Idea away from you.

BAD IDEA: That's not fair. I'm an idea, too!

ALL IDEAS glare at BAD IDEA.

MIND: (*To BAD IDEA.*) Yes, and the more's the pity for it.

BAD IDEA: What do you mean? Look at all the work I did in aviation before Brilliant Idea and Bold, Brave and Daring Idea teamed up in the Wright Brothers.

BOLD, BRAVE AND DARING IDEA: Oh yeah—disguising yourself as Good Idea. A lot of my friends were shamed for teaming up with you. I mean—people jumping off cliffs and flapping their arms like wings?—Good grief!

BAD IDEA: That was a rather good one, wasn't it? Well, I got a whole era named after me—the Era of Bad Ideas—and that's more than any of you ever got!

MIND: Enough of this incessant bickering. Is Small Idea the best we have?

BRILLIANT IDEA: Absolutely!

BOLD, BRAVE, AND DARING IDEA: I'll back him. He's got spunk.

BIG IDEA: Hey, I'll back any idea but him. (*Points at BAD IDEA.*)

SEXY IDEA: If he promises to try to get me involved, I'll back him.

SMALL IDEA smiles at *SEXY IDEA*.

MIND: Well then, Small Idea it is!

MIND throws the “speak” switch to on.

BODY: Hey, Boss. Have I got an idea! It may seem like a small one, but it’s something we’ve never tried before and it’s sure to grow!

BLACKOUT.

THE END

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