

Lights Up Giant Robot

by Danny Mastrangelo

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CAST of CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

Dunne
Sam
Leah
Rachel
Old Man
Dork
Muscle Man
Giant Robot

Scene One

(Lights up. A playwriting class. They've just finished a reading. The students are politely applauding LEAH's work. Mr. DUNNE stands before the class.)

DUNNE

Okay, good work, Leah. Sam, what did you come up with?

SAM

What? Oh... um... nothing.

DUNNE

Oh, cut it, you must have come up with something. Let's hear it.

SAM

I really don't want to...

DUNNE

Leah, please tell Sam where we are.

SAM

Not this again.

DUNNE

What?

SAM

Nothing.

DUNNE

Leah, if you please.

LEAH

We are at the Sharing Table, Sam. It's a table...

(Everyone in the class chimes in. SAM does reluctantly.)

CLASS

Of sharing...

SAM

Yes, I know, Sharing Table – table for sharing. I was here the first day of class too.

LEAH

You don't have to be afraid.

SAM

Blow me.

DUNNE

Sam, that language is not tolerated at the Sharing Table. You're not following the rules of the Sharing Table. The biggest rule at the Sharing Table is we share.

SAM

Well I don't want to.

DUNNE

Sam, let me see your notebook.

SAM

Look, it's not –

DUNNE

Here.

(He reads. Pause. The pasted smile disappears from his face for an instant. He composes himself and turns the big smile back on.)

Good work today, class. Everyone can go. I'll see you on Monday.

(Everyone starts to leave.)

Sam - your notebook.

(SAM comes back for it)

Wait here, I want to talk to you about this.

(LEAH walks up to DUNNE.)

LEAH

There's still twenty minutes left.

DUNNE

I know, Leah. You're getting out early. See you on Monday.

LEAH

But...

DUNNE

Leah, you have to leave the Table now. See you on Monday.

LEAH

Okay...

(LEAH looks sad and walks out.)

DUNNE

Please sit.

(Pause.)

Sam, I want you to read me what you wrote today.

SAM

But you -

DUNNE

I know, I read it, but I want to hear you say it out loud.

SAM

But -

DUNNE

You're never going to get past this if you don't force yourself to look at it.

(Pause.)

SAM

Lights up. A giant robot -

DUNNE

Stop. Stop there.

SAM

Okay.

DUNNE

Sam, do you realize this is the 12th work you've written for this class with the opening consisting of, "Lights up. Giant Robot?"

SAM

Yeah, I know, I think it's -

DUNNE

...A phase? Right, we've talked about this before.

SAM

Right, some people have a blue period...

DUNNE

Picasso.

SAM

and I...

...And you?
DUNNE

And I have...
SAM

...And you have?
DUNNE

A robot phase.
SAM

A robot phase?
DUNNE

A giant robot phase?
SAM

Sam, what's wrong?
DUNNE

Nothing!
SAM

Sam, you don't just write 12 different plays all about giant robots.
DUNNE

Well, what about if –
SAM

You just don't! You don't write 12 p- TWELVE, Sam. TWELVE GIANT ROBOT PLAYS.
DUNNE

I know.
SAM

TWELVE!
DUNNE

I KNOW! Look, you just don't understand.
SAM

Don't understand twelve "Giant Robot" plays? You're right – I don't. Explain it to me, Sam.
DUNNE

See, the Giant Robot...

SAM

Yes?

DUNNE

It's a...metaphor...?

SAM

For...?

DUNNE

For society.

SAM

Oh God.

DUNNE

SAM

Because society's big and made of cold steel and it has no heart. It's cold and calculating and mechanical and it has the power to crush you like...

DUNNE

Like a Giant Robot?

SAM

Yes! See?

DUNNE

Sam.

SAM

What?

DUNNE

You're in a rut. A funk. You just have a block.

SAM

Right! A Giant Robot block! That was the third play, remember!

DUNNE

Oh God, it was, wasn't it? Look, you have WRITERS' block.

SAM

But...

DUNNE

I want you to forget about these robots and write something new.

SAM

But...

DUNNE

I want it on the Sharing Table by Monday.

SAM

I can't have something by then, it's too soon!

DUNNE

Look, Sam, I didn't want to have to do this. You're a good student, your past writing has been great.

SAM

Didn't want to have to do what?

DUNNE

If you don't have something new- something robotless and new by Monday, I'm afraid that I'll have no choice but to drop you from the final showcase.

SAM

You can't do that!

DUNNE

You've left me with no choice.

(Lights out.)

Scene Two

(Lights up on SAM's apartment. It is mainly lit by the glow of his computer screen. There are various articles of clothing tossed around the room. An Alf mug sits on his desk. SAM sits at his computer and stares blankly.)

SAM

...Now!

(Nothing.)

...nnnnNow!

(Still nothing.)

Hands type play...nnnnNOW!

(Nothing ensues.)

Fuck...

(SAM slumps down in his chair, picks up a large book and throws it across the room.)

Thanks a friggin' bunch, Dianetics...Mind over matter my ass.

(Pause.)

This is hopeless...What time is it? 4:30 AM? I'm screwed... You know what? Forget it. At this point there's nothing I can do, right? Right. It's over. I'll talk to Dunne in the morning and maybe he'll rethink things. What am I saying? Of course he won't. Damn it, it's not fair!

(Sigh.)

Whatever... Let's look at what I have. "Lights up. A man sits in a boat by himself. Another boat approaches. Man one: 'Nice day for boating isn't it?' Man two: 'Sure is, can't think of anything that could be better.' Suddenly a giant robot emerges from the water and vaporizes them laughing a mechanical la- FUCK.

(SAM Slumps down on the keyboard.)

(Lights fade out.)

Scene Three

RACHEL

Sam...Up Sam...Wake up Sam...WAKE UP SAM!

(Lights suddenly up, but dim. SAM is on the ground unconscious. SAM wakes up startled. Four individuals are present.)

SAM

Who's there?

(The four figures move into the light.)

RACHEL

It's us, Sam.

SAM

It's who?

OLD MAN

We're your writers.

(SAM gets up.)

SAM

You write for me?

DORK

Sure do.

SAM

All of you?

MUSCLE MAN

Yup.

SAM

And you...you can write?

MUSCLE MAN

HEY! I'm a creation of your mind! Just because I'm huge doesn't mean I'm an idiot.

SAM

Sorry, I've just always associated "muscle men" with...with...

Stupidity? OLD MAN

Mental deficiency? DORK

An incredible ability to fuck? RACHEL

Yes, yes, and ew. SAM

Sorry. RACHEL

Wait...you two don't...you don't...tell me you don't... SAM

They do! OLD MAN

Aww! In my head? You have sex in my head? SAM

Actually, yeah, we do. We have really really good sex. RACHEL

IN MY HEAD? SAM

What's so wrong with that? MUSCLE MAN

It's MY head! SAM

And we're products of YOUR mind. RACHEL

But...dripping... SAM

I think I can comfort you. You know those days when you feel really tired and can't think straight? OLD MAN

Yes? SAM

They're humpin' like bunnies. OLD MAN

That's NOT comforting. SAM

Oh, that's not the comforting part. OLD MAN

Then WHAT IS? SAM

Wha? OLD MAN

What's the comforting part? SAM

Comfowhatnow? OLD MAN

Damnit! SAM

Look Sam, you need to calm down. RACHEL

Yeah, man, cool out. MUSCLE MAN

You shut up! You ejaculate in my brain! SAM

Well technically it doesn't ever actually touch your brain. MUSCLE MAN

Right, she usually swallows it all. DORK

(They all stare at DORK for a moment.)

OH YEAH! That's it. The dork watches them. OLD MAN

SAM

What's it?!

OLD MAN

The comforting part.

SAM

THAT'S NOT COMFORTING!!!

OLD MAN

Huh...I'll be damned, you're right. Sorry 'bout that.

SAM

Look, what am I doing here?

OLD MAN

Wha? Oh, uh...dork, tell him.

DORK

You are in the mind, it smells of putrid odors. In front of you is Rachel, an old man, a muscle man, and a dork. Do you wish to cast any spells?

SAM

What the hell is he talking about?

DORK

Sorry, I have to talk that way, it's the Dungeons and Dragons that's in you.

SAM

Can someone tell me what the hell is going on here?

RACHEL

The five of us have been watching you. We know what's been going on with the teacher.

SAM

The teacher?

DORK

The evil Lord Dunne. He's a level 6 jerkface.

MUSCLE MAN

I'd love to crush his skull with my bare hands!

RACHEL

Oooo.

Scene Four

I am he. Hello Sam.

GIANT ROBOT

My fifth writer...

SAM

Yes...

GIANT ROBOT

Is a giant robot?

SAM

YES! Isn't it wonderful?

GIANT ROBOT

NO!

SAM

What do you mean? No?

GIANT ROBOT

You've made me write giant robot play after giant robot play! What's wrong with you?

SAM

Remember the first day of playwriting?

MUSCLE MAN

Yes?

SAM

And the first rule?

RACHEL

Oh shit.

SAM

Indeed.

DORK

“Write what you know?”

SAM

I want some toast. Think I'll make some. Anybody else want toast? I'm makin'.

OLD MAN

SAM

So you took that as write twelve plays about giant robots?

GIANT ROBOT

Well sure! I, being a giant robot, know how great it is to be a giant robot! But I also know the hardships and I also know that no other writer has ever dealt with the sadness of being a giant robot.

OLD MAN

I said toast! Doesn't anyone listen? TOAST! Said "I'm makin!"

SAM

The sadness of being a giant robot?

OLD MAN

Toast damnit! Is there no respect for toast! When did you lose that respect! When!?

GIANT ROBOT

We're big and cold and mechanical. But did you know that giant robots could cry?

SAM

You can?

GIANT ROBOT

You ever see My Girl?

SAM

Yes.

GIANT ROBOT

You know the scene where the kid dies?

SAM

Yes. Oh wow, I cried during that too. You cried during that?

GIANT ROBOT

Ye- What? Wait no! I laughed my metal ass off. That was funny stuff, nearly spilled my popcorn.

OLD MAN

I SAID TOAST! YOU NEVER LISTEN TO ME!

SAM

So you just made me write twelve robot plays because you thought you needed to be heard?

GIANT ROBOT

Right.

SAM

Well that sucks, Giant Robot! Do you realize how much you've screwed up my writing?

GIANT ROBOT

I know.

SAM

And where the hell were the rest of you when this was going on?

RACHEL

Um...

MUSCLE MAN

Um...

SAM

You used this as an opportunity to hump!?

OLD MAN

TOAST!

SAM

What about you?

DORK

Um...

SAM

Ah shit! That's disgusting! My other writers were either fucking or watching.

OLD MAN

(Storming out.)

THAT'S IT! NO TOAST FOR ANYONE!

GIANT ROBOT

Look, I know what I did was wrong.

DORK, MUSCLE MAN, RACHEL

And so do we.

SAM

That doesn't matter! What am I going to do about this play?

DORK

We have an idea.

MUSCLE MAN

That's right.

RACHEL

Don't worry about it, leave it to us.

SAM

Leave it to you? Leave it to the people who left my writing to that mechanical jackass?

GIANT ROBOT

Hey! I said I was sorry!

DORK

Careful, Sam, he has laser beams.

RACHEL

Sam, it's going to be fine. We're positive this time.

SAM

And I can trust you?

MUSCLE MAN

What choice have you got?

SAM

You promise it'll be okay?

ALL

We swear.

SAM

Alright...I guess I'll have to trust you guys. I mean, afterall, you're me, right? I wouldn't lie to myself would I?

MUSCLE MAN

Probably not.

Although you might.

DORK

Shut up, Dork!

RACHEL

It doesn't matter...so long as you all work together, I'm sure I'll come up with something great.

SAM

Exactly.

MUSCLE MAN

(Group hug.)

So...how do I get back?

SAM

Well...

RACHEL

Well what?

SAM

We could wait until you fall back to sleep...

GIANT ROBOT

Or?

SAM

Or the Dork can tickle you until your ready to pass out and then the Muscle Man could punch you in the face.

RACHEL

Hmm...I think I'll...

SAM

Yay tickling!

DORK

(The DORK tickles him and just before the MUSCLE MAN punches SAM, the OLD MAN re-enters with a basket of toast.)

Alright...this is the last time I ask! WHO WANTS IT?
(Punch. Lights out.)

OLD MAN

Scene Five

(Lights up. SAM is asleep at his desk. His head shoots back like it was punched, he flies out of his chair and he wakes up.)

SAM

Wha...

(Pause. SAM gets up and sits back at his desk.)

Come on, guys. Work together.

(He begins to type.)

“Lights up. A basket of toast sits in a boat...”

(Sigh.)

Yeah...

(Continues.)

“Near the basket of toast is a toaster. The boat is made out of toast. It’s a warm day – Toasty...”

(Blackout.)

AH SHIT!