

THE FREAKIEST SHOW
by Emily McClain

CHARACTERS

MARTIN- Early 20's Black man.

SOPHIE- Early 20's white woman.

EDDIE- Early 20's white man.

SETTING

Concession stand of Silver Screen Cinema
Atlanta, GA

TIME

2014

NOTE ON DIALOGUE

/ indicates the following line should begin

// indicates multiple subsequent lines begin

- At the beginning of a line is the continuation of the line
that was overlapped
- At the end of a line means the person is cut off and
stops speaking

CONTENT WARNING

This play contains an audio depiction of police violence and the
offstage murder of an unarmed Black man.

"But the film is a saddening bore
Cause I've wrote it ten times or more."

-David Bowie, *Life on Mars* (1971)

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(Lights up on the concession counter of the Silver Screen Cinemas. It is a run-down movie theatre where everything feels perpetually sticky and smells of stale popcorn. EDDIE and MARTIN are changing out the "Coming Attractions" poster and SOPHIE is sweeping up spilled popcorn.)

MARTIN

You can't separate an artist from his life- look at Woody Allen/

EDDIE

See, I knew you were going to bring/ up Woody Allen-

SOPHIE

Why shouldn't he bring up Woody Allen?

MARTIN

-and all the shit he got into over the years.

EDDIE

-and yeah, he was a creep in his old age/

SOPHIE

More than just in his old age...

EDDIE

-but you can't ignore the contribution he made to American film!

MARTIN

Yeah, okay, but I don't have to watch his movies. I don't have to financially support his work. Me, personally. Y'all do whatever because Woody Allen ain't my bag anyway.

EDDIE

Ok fine, what about someone like Mel Gibson? I know for a fact you love Mad Max and then he made Passion of the Christ and goes on a racist, anti-Semitic tirade and now I can't watch Lethal Weapon anymore without feeling guilty!

MARTIN

Man, those are good movies. Watched the first one with my little cousins a few months back.

EDDIE

Uh-uh! Sorry dude! They're canceled! No more Lethal Weapon.

MARTIN

Wait, all of 'em?

EDDIE

Yup. The entire franchise is out by your Woody Allen logic.

MARTIN

I feel like Danny Glover is getting lumped in with this and unfairly penalized and I want to file an appeal--

EDDIE

You'll have to take it up with the Social Justice Warriors Approved Entertainment League to determine the status of Mr. Glover.

MARTIN

That's too bad. I loved Operation Dumbo Drop. But I stand by my statement on Woody Allen's jank-ass.

(They all laugh. SOPHIE dumps the dustbin full of popcorn into the trashcan while MARTIN and EDDIE return to their positions behind the counter.)

SOPHIE

What about Bill Cosby?

MARTIN

Whoa now. That dude is an icon.

EDDIE

Yeah, plus he denied all that shit completely.

SOPHIE

Oh okay. That settles it then?

EDDIE

Settles it for me. Hey, did Frank post the schedule for next week?

MARTIN

Yeah. You and Soph got Thursday and Sunday and we all got Friday and Saturday.

EDDIE

Did you ask off for Sunday?

MARTIN

No.

SOPHIE

I hate working Sundays. I have an 8 AM class on Mondays.

EDDIE

Tell Frank.

SOPHIE

I did! Obviously!

MARTIN

What'd he say?

SOPHIE

Same thing he always does//

EDDIE

He's such a dick.

MARTIN

What a jackass. Sorry Soph.

SOPHIE

-and he says since we're running this new promotional thing it's "all hands on deck" but then you're not scheduled for Thursday or Sunday? That doesn't make any sense, like, why not schedule you? Honestly, /

EDDIE

(Sarcastically, gesturing to the empty lobby)

I mean we're clearly SLAMMED right now, right?

SOPHIE

-if you want the hours, you're welcome to them Martin.

MARTIN

Thanks. I don't feel like getting into it with him so I'll just say I'm covering for you.

EDDIE

Careful he doesn't try to cheat you on your hours though.

SOPHIE

God he's such a dick!

EDDIE

I'm going on my break. Anyone want anything from QuikTrip?

MARTIN

Takis.

EDDIE

What if I come back with Hot Cheetos?

MARTIN

Man, get outta here with that.

EDDIE

Nah, I'm just fuckin' with you. Takis and grape Fanta, coming right up. Soph?

SOPHIE

Nah, I'm good. Thank you though.

(EDDIE exits. SOPHIE and MARTIN resume different tasks around the counter. He glances towards the back office, presumably checking if Frank is around, then turns to SOPHIE, grinning.)

MARTIN

Hey, Soph, I'm going downtown next weekend and there's this club- would you wanna hit it up with me?

SOPHIE

What? Like a date?

MARTIN

It could be. Or it could be just chilling. Thought it'd be cool. No pressure.

SOPHIE

Yeah. Okay. Sounds fun. Is it like, hip hop?

MARTIN

Why do you say that? Because I'm black I gotta like hip hop?

SOPHIE

Yup. That's exactly what I'm saying. Caught me!

MARTIN

I knew you were a closet racist. All these years, but I finally figured you out.

SOPHIE

Certainly doesn't have anything to do with your 9 hour comprehensive history of hip hop Spotify playlist you sent me when I said I didn't know much about that style or the dissertation-length lecture I received when I mistakenly classified Migos as hip hop/

MARTIN

Because they're not hip hop! That's trap music!

SOPHIE

-and now I know they're trap, yes right, I know that now! Please don't make me watch that/

MARTIN

Ok, I'm pulling up the video--

(He pulls out his phone and starts to go to a video and SOPHIE reaches across the counter to playfully grab it from him.)

SOPHIE

-God, no, I'm not watching that again!

(MARTIN catches her hand and leans in, kissing her. She pulls back, blushing.)

Okay, Martin, seriously. We gotta be careful. Frank will lose his shit if he sees anything like that.

MARTIN

You right. You were just really cute right then and/

SOPHIE

Oh, okay.

MARTIN

-you know you are, don't be like that. *(Pause, he glances to the office again before moving around the counter to be next to her.)* So, when Eddie gets back are you gonna take your break?

SOPHIE

I could. Wanna take yours too?

MARTIN

Nah. I took mine already.

(She laughs, swatting him. He moves away, laughing.)

SOPHIE

Okay, ya jerk. That club sounds like it could be cool. Want to head down after work on Friday?

MARTIN

Yeah. I'll need to swing home and feed my dog and change clothes--

SOPHIE

Oh, I was just gonna wear this sexy thing... (*Gesturing to her Silver Screen uniform shirt*)

MARTIN

I mean, you do you. But if you wanted to bring clothes to change into after work we could leave from my house.

SOPHIE

Yeah. If I have something that's cool enough so you won't be embarrassed of me. I think your friends thought I was a pretty big dork when we were hanging out before.

MARTIN

Man, who cares about them. They don't really like that I'm dating a white chick/

SOPHIE

Are we dating now?

MARTIN

-in the first place and hell yeah we're dating. I just decided.

SOPHIE

Cool. Thanks for letting me know.

MARTIN

Oh you didn't get that letter? I sent it.

SOPHIE

Certified mail?

MARTIN

Direct from the office of Martin's Social and Sex Life Management. Official seal and everything.

SOPHIE

Sealed with what now?

MARTIN

Oh, all right, be gross like that.

(They laugh. SOPHIE gives MARTIN's hand a quick squeeze as she grabs the broom and dustbin.)

SOPHIE

I'm gonna go get started on cleanup so maybe Frank will let us out of here at actual closing tonight instead of/

MARTIN

Good luck with that plan.

SOPHIE

-being a total tool bag and making us clock out and stay after to clean.

(She exits and MARTIN restocks the candy from underneath the counter. After a few moments, EDDIE reenters in a rush with his snacks from the QuikTrip, looking shaken.)

EDDIE

Hey, man, there's something going down in the parking lot-

MARTIN

What's up?

EDDIE

There's this black guy having an argument with this white couple/

MARTIN

Oh shit.

EDDIE

-and while I was crossing back over from the store, there were a bunch of other people and I think someone called the cops. You didn't hear them shouting?

MARTIN

Nah man, nothing like that. It was dead silent in here.

(EDDIE tosses the snack bag on the counter and both he and MARTIN approach the front of the stage "looking" through the front windows of the lobby of the theater out into the parking lot.)

EDDIE

Do you see 'em?

MARTIN

No. It's too dark on that side...

(They both search out in the darkness, then there is audible shouting from the parking lot.)

EDDIE

Dude! What is that guy so pissed about? He better watch himself- that black guy could beat the shit out of him, look at his arms!

(MARTIN doesn't answer. He is visibly unsettled and then we hear the sound of police sirens approaching. EDDIE cranes his neck to see better but MARTIN has moved further away from the front of the windows.)

Oh shit! Here we go-

(EDDIE watches the cop cars arrive with weird excitement. It's not real to him. It's the action sequence of a movie. The blue/red lights shine on their faces.)

Wow... that's like, three, no, four cop cars- Martin, dude, are you seeing all this?

MARTIN

Nah, man.

(More shouting from the parking lot and then the amplified voice of a police officer: "Return to your vehicles now.")

EDDIE

Whoa, what the hell?

(EDDIE and MARTIN are both transfixed by the scene in the

parking lot. Shouting becomes more pronounced, one adult male voice clearly audible saying "Officer, this man won't let me get to my vehicle! Tell him to move because I am trying to comply! I'm trying to-" and then much louder amplified voice of a police officer: "Get down on the ground! Get down on the ground now!" and then immediately, six gunshots explode through the space. EDDIE looks away in horror after the second shot, MARTIN watches until the final shot echoes and then closes his eyes. Blackout.)

(Lights up on the concession counter. SOPHIE is sitting on the counter numbly. MARTIN is leaning on the counter, his head down. Neither speaks. SOPHIE starts to speak, but tears choke in her throat and she swallows them. MARTIN's phone buzzes on the counter. He looks at the screen, then takes a deep breath and answers the phone.)

MARTIN

Hey Ma. No, I'm good. It's okay- they won't let us leave until we give a statement to the cops. No- I know, Ma. I'm okay. Yeah. I'll call you when I start home. *(Long pause.)* No. I didn't know there was a video. I haven't been on my phone- already? Yeah. Yes ma'am, I know. I love you too, Mama.

(He puts the phone back in his pocket.)

There's a video. It's all over Twitter. Someone got the cop on video.

SOPHIE

That's good! That's good, isn't it? They won't get away with it.

MARTIN

It don't work like that.

SOPHIE

This is different- it isn't like Mike Brown, where it's just the cop's word and nobody knows what really went down. There's a video. They can't argue with that.

MARTIN

Yeah. Maybe.

SOPHIE

How much longer do you think they're going to keep us here?

MARTIN

I don't know.

SOPHIE

I don't want to talk to them! I didn't even see anything.

MARTIN

Frank said we had to give a statement. All of us.

SOPHIE

That seems like it should be illegal. Or unconstitutional or something.

MARTIN

It damn well could be. But I don't feel like arguing with that asshole about it. I gonna go in, say what I saw, and get out. Call my mom and go home.

SOPHIE

God... This day won't end. It's so horrible. *(Beat.)* I'm so sorry, Martin. Do you think- I mean, they shot him because he was black? Right?

MARTIN

Yeah.

SOPHIE

I'm so sorry. I... I don't know what else to say.

(EDDIE enters from the back office.)

EDDIE

Hey man, they asked to talk to you next.

MARTIN

Okay. *(Beat)* What'd you say?

EDDIE

I told them what I saw. That the cop shot the guy and he had his hands up and wasn't doing anything.

MARTIN

Yeah. Good.

(MARTIN exits. EDDIE crosses behind the concession counter, grabbing a box of Raisinets. SOPHIE hops off the counter.)

SOPHIE

What are you doing?

EDDIE

I need these. *(He pops the box open and pours them straight into his mouth.)* It's stressful talking to cops, man. Even when I didn't do anything. I wanted to throw up the whole time.

SOPHIE

It was horrible. That poor man... He didn't do anything wrong and they just shot him.

EDDIE

You haven't talked to them yet, have you?

SOPHIE

No. I wish I could just go home.

EDDIE

They're going to ask you about how the guy was acting before the cops showed up.

SOPHIE

But I didn't see him before? I was sweeping and doing a trash run in theater 4- I wasn't even out here until I heard you and Martin yelling and the sirens.

EDDIE

Right. You definitely want to mention that then.

SOPHIE

Okay- I'm going to tell the truth, which was my plan from the start.

EDDIE

He was pretty aggressive. Like, getting his tickets and stuff.

SOPHIE

Really?

EDDIE

Maybe like he was drunk or on drugs or something?

SOPHIE

What?

EDDIE

I don't know. It's just my opinion.

SOPHIE

Did you say that to them?

EDDIE

I thought it was worth mentioning.

SOPHIE

Why would you do that? You don't know that that's even true. You sold the guy his tickets and popcorn-

EDDIE

(Overlapping)

Yeah, I had an interaction with him that I thought was important to share-

SOPHIE

(Overlapping)

-you don't even know what was going on in the parking lot because you were in here working the counter with Martin when it all went down anyway! That's all you needed to say, that's all you should have said!

EDDIE

They asked if I noticed anything, and I noticed that, so I said something. It's the truth.

SOPHIE

You gonna tell Martin that you said all that?

EDDIE

No. He would get upset/

SOPHIE

-Wow, that's shitty.

EDDIE

-because it's like, of course he's gonna want to take the side of the guy that was shot/

SOPHIE

-They shot an unarmed man who was doing what they asked him to do! It doesn't matter if he was/

EDDIE

-and I don't blame him but we have a responsibility to help the officers do their jobs!

SOPHIE

-drunk or high or whatever! In the moment, I mean have you seen the cell phone video that bystander took? Look it up, Eddie! It's all over! There's no way those cops were in danger, that white guy he was arguing with was more of a threat but they didn't shoot him!

EDDIE

I wasn't out there and I don't... I mean, the police make the best decisions they can in the moment. Who's to say what you would do in the same situation?

SOPHIE

Seriously? Fuck you.

EDDIE

Don't say anything to Martin, Sophie. Please.

SOPHIE

Don't ask me to keep your shit secret.

EDDIE

It's confidential! No one is going to know what I said. It probably won't change anything anyway--

SOPHIE

No. Shut up. Stop talking.

EDDIE

I don't want him to hate me, okay? I don't know why I said all that, I was scared. I hate talking to the cops and I was thinking if they had some definite reason, they would just let me be done and the whole thing was making me- listen, I smoked a joint when I went on the snack run, and I was sure they could smell it on me and/

SOPHIE

So go back in there and fucking take it back! Say you were mistaken, it wasn't that guy, it was another black guy you served tonight and you got them mixed up!

EDDIE

-I wasn't thinking straight when the whole thing went down. Fuck that I'm not going back in there and saying that! What am I going to say? "Sorry officer, they all look the same to me!"

SOPHIE

When Martin finishes giving his statement, you get your ass back in there and do the right thing. Or, like, the less-completely-shitty thing. Okay? Do that, right now, and I won't say anything to Martin.

(Beat.)

EDDIE

Seriously?

SOPHIE

Yeah. But you have to do it before I go in and make my statement.

EDDIE

Fine. Okay. I can do that.

(Lights transition to indicate change in time. SOPHIE is wiping down the candy counter. EDDIE is restocking cups by the soda machine. MARTIN enters, wearing his coat and carrying his Silver Screen Cinemas uniform vest. He sees EDDIE and scowls, crossing through to the back office.)

SOPHIE

Hey Martin!

MARTIN

Hey.

(He disappears into the office to drop off his coat and put on his vest. When he comes back onstage, he crosses to the furthest point at the counter away from EDDIE and stands, glaring at him. SOPHIE stops her cleaning, looking from MARTIN to EDDIE. EDDIE refuses to acknowledge that MARTIN is staring at him.)

SOPHIE

What's up?

MARTIN

Why don't you ask your boy what's up?

(SOPHIE crosses around the counter to MARTIN but he steps

around her, speaking directly to EDDIE.)
Yo, Eddie. Did you see your buddies were reinstated? All of 'em.

SOPHIE

What?

MARTIN

Even the one that fired six rounds into a dude that posed no threat.

SOPHIE

But there was a video, everyone saw/

MARTIN

I told you that doesn't matter!

SOPHIE

-That's got to be a mistake or, or, like-

MARTIN

Nope! No mistake! *(Pulls out his phone, reading from an article on it.)* "The DA has determined that no charges will be filed against Officer Miller and all officers put on administrative leave during the investigation will be fully reinstated. Based on police autopsy reports and a statement given by a Silver Screen Cinema employee, it was determined that Anthony Beasley's agitated state was due to drugs and he posed an immediate danger to the officers and patrons at the movie theater." *(EDDIE turns around to face MARTIN, a blank expression on his face.)* Now, I feel pretty certain that I didn't mention anything about drugs- did you, Sophie?

SOPHIE

No! Of course not!

MARTIN

Huh. So where do you think they'd get an idea like that? Ed?

EDDIE

What.

MARTIN

The dude that we all watched get in an argument with some asshole in the parking lot about scratching his car- that same dude was gunned down by cops ten minutes later- you told them you thought he was on drugs?

EDDIE

I didn't say that exactly! I said he seemed agitated when he bought his ticket that night! They're twisting my words around.

SOPHIE

I can't believe you! You said you told them you made a mistake!

MARTIN

You knew he said this?

SOPHIE

He- yes, he told me while you were talking to the cops that night but he said he was going to tell them he made a mistake, that it wasn't the man in the parking lot. I believed him that he did that/

EDDIE

I did! I went back to the office and told them I wasn't positive it was the same guy and that they shouldn't assume the man in the parking lot was on anything.

(Long pause.)

MARTIN

You are a fool. That was all they needed. They just needed one person to give them the tiniest inch of an excuse. You're just... doing what y'all do//

EDDIE

-Look, I get that you're mad--

SOPHIE

-Martin, please listen to me--

MARTIN

(To SOPHIE)

-and I feel like an idiot for thinking you were any different.

SOPHIE

I'm sorry. I should have said something to you.

MARTIN

Not good enough. Did you tell the cops that Eddie was full of shit? Did you tell them he was high as a fucking kite when he came back from the gas station?

SOPHIE

No.

MARTIN

Yeah. Thought so.

EDDIE

My statement alone wasn't the thing that cleared them! Martin, there was a fucking video of the whole thing and that didn't even matter! C'mon, man, listen--

MARTIN

Get the fuck away from me.

SOPHIE

I don't understand... It was different, they had proof--

MARTIN

You think that matters? Open your eyes! It could have been me! It could have been my dad or my brother or cousin! They don't see us as people and you/

SOPHIE

I know!

MARTIN

-are just as guilty, no you DON'T know! I fucking told you when it happened it wouldn't matter if the whole thing happened in broad daylight with the 6 o'clock news truck filming the entire thing! Don't try to tell me shit about this because you don't know.

EDDIE

Calm down, Martin//

SOPHIE

(Glancing offstage)

Hey, I think I heard Frank's door open-

MARTIN

Man, you do not want to go there right now with telling me to calm down! I deserve a medal for the fact that I'm not beating your ass right now!

SOPHIE

We fucked up and I'm sorry, you're right. I don't know what to say but let's not fight about this right now, okay? We can talk later, after work?

EDDIE

Yeah, now's not the time and Frank is just looking for a reason to fire y'all anyway.

MARTIN

(To both EDDIE and SOPHIE)

This conversation isn't over. We're not cool.

SOPHIE

Okay. I know... Please don't be mad at me. It's got to get better, right? It's 2014. The police will be held accountable next time.

MARTIN

Yeah. Right.

(They slowly resume their tasks. Lights fade.)

END OF PLAY