

The Catch
(A One-Scene Short Play)

Playwright: Scot Savage

(Based on a short story of the same name by Shawn Michel de Montaigne)

THE CATCH
A One-Scene Short Play
For One Man and One Woman

THE CATCH was first presented by Triton College as part of the *First Annual Tritonysia Short Play Festival* in the George R. Cox Auditorium Theatre in River Grove, IL on May 5, 2017. The performance was directed by Isabella Cartagena and Diamond Gray and the set design was by Alec Long. The cast was as follows:

ANGEL.....Jamie Mann
BRIAN.....Patrick Ford

CHARACTERS*
(in order of appearance)

ANGEL

Female, Age 25-55

A witty Denizen from Heaven with a slightly teasing, sarcastic manner who also has a playful and loving nature to those she deems “morally worthy” of her affections.

BRIAN

Male, Age 25-55

An under-employed aspiring writer who has a somewhat jaded view of the world and yearns for critical and commercial validation for his artistry—but on his own terms!

*At the director’s discretion, the gender of the roles can be reversed with ANGEL as a male and BRIAN as a female (in which case, the name should be switched to BRIANNA). The reference to “Dexter” in the script should be changed to “Dina.”

SETTING

The Present

PLACE

A beach somewhere in the Continental United states

TIME

Early in the Morning

SCENE

In the DARKENED theatre, the sounds of the rolling waves and seagulls of a beach FADE UP (SFX – BEACH AND SEAGULLS).

Shortly thereafter, the LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE UP to reveal ANGEL, wearing sunglasses, reclining and relaxing on a beach chair at C. She is getting some much-needed sun and seems to be enjoying her brief respite from her Heavenly Duties.

A few moments later BRIAN ENTERS R and CROSSES UR strolling with his hands in his pockets. He is deep in thought and he either doesn't notice ANGEL or, perhaps care to acknowledge that he is not alone on the beach.

ANGEL seems undaunted that BRIAN has not noticed her. She sits up straight in her chair and takes off her sunglasses which she places on L of her chair. She patiently awaits for the moment when BRIAN does notice her—as do all mortals she is charged to attend.

BRIAN pantomimes picking up an imaginary stone as he throws it off into AUDIENCE, putting his hands over his eyes to shade them so he can see how many times he made it skip. (SFX – STONE SKIPPING ON WATER).

Satisfied he made the stone skip a decent amount of times, BRIAN starts to CROSS R. As he CROSSES, he finally notices ANGEL in the corner of his eye. At this point, BRIAN only perceives ANGEL as just another typical beach-goer.

When ANGEL realizes that she is in BRIAN's field of vision, she grabs his attention by giving him a friendly, cutesy finger wave. As she trills her fingers, her hand wave gives of a sound similar to the quick plucking of harp strings (SFX- MAGIC WAND TRILL/HARP STRINGS).

BRIAN, still in deep-thought, is oblivious to the sound and still does not notice that ANGEL is something out of the ordinary. However, being the gentleman he is, he offers an obligatory, nonchalant wave back as he continues to CROSS R as if to EXIT the scene.

ANGEL still does not seem annoyed that BRIAN has not noticed what she really is, but he will—they all do! Eventually, what BRIAN saw out of the corner of his eye will catch up to his contemplating. It's just a matter of a few seconds when BRIAN's reaction will kick in.

After a few more steps, BRIAN suddenly stops dead in his tracks. His eyes widen (SFX – BOING) as he now realizes that he's in the presence of a Heavenly Creature. He slowly turns around to get a better look at ANGEL. A sudden blast of Heavenly Music (AHHHH!) (SFX – HEAVENLY CHORUS) confirms that ANGEL is, indeed, an actual angel!

ANGEL. Nice day for a walk on the beach, huh? *(Smiles at BRIAN and playfully flutters her eyes)*

BRIAN. Uh, yeah. *(Rubs his eyes to make sure that he's not dreaming)*

BRIAN slowly approaches ANGEL until he is standing next to her at R of chair. Still unable to determine if she is, indeed, real or a figment of his imagination, he summons enough nerve to poke her firmly on her shoulder, but not too hard as to hurt her.

ANGEL. (*Annoyed*) Hey, watch who you're poking there, fella! Who do you think I am? The Pillsbury Doughboy?

BRIAN. (*Startled and feeling foolish for poking her*) Sorry. I just wanted to make sure that I wasn't seeing things.

ANGEL. I'm very much real. Now that you're here, let's begin. (*Clears her throat*) Dexter, I've got a deal for you. I'm going to offer you one of two possible paths. One has real potential to lead to true happiness, true fulfillment, and true peace—something very few human beings ever experience. The other—

BRIAN. (*Interrupting her*) Brian.

ANGEL. (*Taken aback*) Sorry?

BRIAN. (*Slightly annoyed*) My name is *Brian*—not Dexter.

ANGEL. (*Groans in annoyance and rolls her eyes*) That dumb Cupid messed up on me again. (*Mutters under her breath while she pulls out a rolodex stashed under her chair and flips through it*) Ah, not Dexter. Right... right. My apologies—Brian. I'm gonna redder that little twerp's behind when I get back. (*Finds the card she's looking for*) Here you are! Weeeelllll... let's try this again, shall we? (*Takes a breath*). Brian, I'm going to offer you two paths: one that holds the real potential of true peace, true fulfillment, true happiness and joy. The other guarantees fame, fortune and riches. Understand? (*Hikes up her robe*) Do you mind? I need to get some sun. My legs are a little pale.

BRIAN. (*Distracted because he is blatantly staring at her sexy legs*) Huh?

ANGEL. (*Conceals a smile that she is secretly flattered that BRIAN was "checking her out"; however, as a Divine Representative, she has to display a certain degree of proper decorum or, at the very least, make it appear that way*) Yoo-hoo! I'm up here! (*She waves her hand in front of his face*) I'll take an answer for 500, Alex. Do you understand?

BRIAN. Oh, sure. (*Startled and embarrassed he was glaring at her, he shakes his head in order to snap out of his little fantasy and regain his proper composure so he can give ANGEL his full, undivided attention as well as the respect she deserves*) I understand. But how do I know that this isn't some sort of trick? How do I know that you're not the Devil?

ANGEL. Do you see me holding up a contract, Bri? Am I asking you to sign it in blood? Well am I?

BRIAN. Uh, no.

ANGEL. You're free to turn me down at any time and go on with your life. No obligations or commitments here. The Devil doesn't do that. Besides, I can't be the Devil

BRIAN. Why's that?

ANGEL. He's too busy collecting a debt from a recent presidential candidate.

BRIAN. Really?

ANGEL. Of course. How did you think some of these politicians get themselves nominated and elected—and then *re-elected*? Way too much profit when it comes to certain sleaze-balls. (*Gives BRIAN a quick sizing-up*) And, if you'll excuse me, you're hardly... well....

BRIAN. Important?

ANGEL. *(Shrugs her shoulders)* Well, Big Bri?

BRIAN. Let me see if I got this right. You're offering me two possible life paths...

ANGEL. Yes.

BRIAN. The first offers the *potential* for true peace and happiness, but the other *guarantees* fame and fortune.

ANGEL. Don't forget the riches!

BRIAN. *(Sarcastic)* Ah, yes. Manna from Heaven, I suppose?

ANGEL. Truckloads. And all that go with it.... *(Flips through Rolodex, when BRIAN tries to lean over to peek, she jerks it away from his view and glances at the card again)* Says here you haven't... er... well... hmmm. Had some lonely nights, have you?

BRIAN. *(Turns away from her and answers softly)* A few.

ANGEL. Well, Buddy, those days are ooo—veeeeer! *(Gently nudges BRIAN with her elbow and give him a few playful winks)* You'll be busier than a porn star at a college Republican prayer breakfast. Sound good?

BRIAN. *(Pauses before answering as if pondering that if something is too good to be true, it probably isn't)* What's the catch?

ANGEL. You're astute.

BRIAN. There's *always* a catch.

ANGEL. You're a writer, yes?

BRIAN. I write, yes. But I've never been published. Many say that only makes me a novice or an amateur, at best, but not a "real writer." *(Makes the quote sign with index and middle fingers of each of his hands as he says "real writer")*

ANGEL. You've had many opportunities to submit your work to publishers. Yet, you've not done so. Why?

BRIAN. I've looked. Publishers don't want what I have to write.

ANGEL. And...?

BRIAN. And? And... I want to write something pure in my life. *Pure!* I don't want editors tearing up what comes out of my heart—my soul: I don't have any desire to write to formula or to popular tastes; I have no interest in altering what I have bled onto a page for cash—or for any other reason whatsoever that doesn't pass muster with my integrity. Do you, at least, understand that?

ANGEL. *(Shrugs shoulders)* I guess.

BRIAN. Everything is for sale. Everything! We measure each other, not by the wholeness of our spirits, but by our bank balance. We are willing to sell anything—anything: our children, our futures, our souls... for riches... for fame... for fortune...

ANGEL. You couldn't pay rent last month.

BRIAN. That's right.

ANGEL. Your best friend paid it for you. You tutor her daughter; you're teaching her to swim, too. But she owes you no money for those services; In fact, to help you out in other hard times in the past, she's paid on those accounts to the point where she doesn't owe on them for anytime in the foreseeable future.

BRIAN. Yeah.

ANGEL. You're writing a novel featuring that same daughter as the hero who discovers this *Pier*—a Pier that goes on Forever?

BRIAN. That's right. The book is called *Melody and the Pier to Forever*.

ANGEL. We've been watching you, you know. We've got a pool on you.

BRIAN. A pool?

ANGEL. A pool. It's currently five to one—against.

BRIAN. Against—what?

ANGEL. (*Reaches for BRIAN's hand*) This *novel*... you've been working on it for two years?

BRIAN. A little more... yeah.

ANGEL. You're writing it—for love.

BRIAN. Love, yes.

ANGEL. Five to one against your continued integrity as you write it. There's talk of starting another pool after you've completed it.

BRIAN. Why must I write for any other reason?

ANGEL. I didn't say you had to—

BRIAN. (*Releases ANGEL's hand and crosses slightly DR*) I don't want them touching it, you understand? I don't want them putting their filthy paws on it! You got that?

ANGEL. They'll have suggestions for improvement. If you just make it more like... *Harry Potter*...

BRIAN. *Harry Potter*? It never fails. (*He throws up his arms*) I always have my work compared to J.K. Rowling. I'm not J.K. Rowling! I don't want to emulate her style. I have my own style! I got to admit she really caught lightning in a bottle on that one. What a phenomenal break! I really thought she would tank after she wanted to stop the *Harry Potter Series* to write adult fiction—but, she didn't tank. (*Has an after-thought*) Say,

did she make the same type of deal with you guys? (*Looks down and gestures to ground*) Or that *Other Guy Below*?

ANGEL. (*Nonchalant*) Nope, she did it all on her own.

BRIAN. Of course. (*Throws up his arms again as this is just the catalyst he needs to now going off on his tangent that so many before ANGEL have heard before—time and time again*) One book, I tell you. That's all these big-leaguers need is one hot-selling book. After that, they can put out a mediocre one and it will still pre-sell a million copies before anyone gets wise. But, at least, they can write. Now there's crap out there published by people who can't even put together a decently structure paragraph. If I tried to turn that stuff in to my professors back in my university days, they'd throw me out of the English Program and tell me to go back to flipping burgers. But, as long as you write about whips, chains and domination, they'll overlook your lack of literary prowess if you make the best-seller list. If you're a celebrity or someone in the public eye or a spouse, friend or garbage man to someone like that, you get a book deal—just like that! (*Snaps fingers*) The kicker is that they don't even write the book; they just put their name on the cover and someone else writes it for them. I don't want to be published that way. I want to be successful on my own artistic merit... not... not some cheap, sleazy, backdoor, short-cut bullshit!

ANGEL. (*Unfazed during BRIAN's tirade as she, too, has heard this while secretly watching him in the past from above*) Don't hold back, Brian. Tell me how you *really* feel.

BRIAN. You know what? The hell with *Harry Potter*... and the hell with you!

ANGEL. (*Still unfazed as she knows BRIAN is just venting and doesn't really mean it, so he tries to alleviate the situation with a little wry humor and honesty*) But you love *Harry Potter*, Brian.

BRIAN. (*Nods reluctantly*) Yeah, I do.

ANGEL. Fame, fortune, and riches... It's a guarantee.

BRIAN. A guarantee?

ANGEL. Yes, a guarantee.

A long moment of silence passes before BRIAN answers

BRIAN. You bet against me, didn't you?

ANGEL says nothing. She gets up from her chair and slowly approaches BRIAN and merely stares into his eyes. BRIAN gently cups ANGEL's chin as they both lean in for a kiss.

Just as their lips are about to touch the LIGHTS SUDDENLY BLACKOUT.

The scene is in DARKNESS long enough so ANGEL can EXIT R without the audience seeing her EXIT.

The LIGHTS SUDDENLY COME UP.

BRIAN is still in the same position before the blackout. He is still cupping the chin of a person who is no longer there!

Disappointed, BRIAN flops down on the chair and puts his hands over his face.

BRIAN (*Cont'd*). That figures. It was all just a hallucination.

After a few brief moments alone, ANGEL RE-ENTERS R and CROSSES to BRIAN standing directly behind him without him seeing her.

ANGEL gently places her right hand on BRIAN's left shoulder. Without turning around, BRIAN cross over his right hand to put on top of ANGEL's hand.

ANGEL. I bet on you, Brian. I bet on you....

ANGEL smiles as she kneels down so she can rest her chin on BRIAN's left shoulder while she wraps her arms around him.

BRIAN smiles and turns his head to look into her eyes.

A blast of Heavenly Music (AHHHH!) is heard again (SFX – HEAVENLY CHORUS).

The sound of the beach and seagulls slowly FADE IN (SFX – BEACH AND SEAGULLS) while the LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE OUT.

After a few moments of a DARKENED theatre, the beach and seagulls slowly FADE OUT as well.

THE END.

COSTUMES

ANGEL:

- White Gown/Robe*
- Angel Wings
- Halo (Optional)
- Sunglasses (Optional)
- Sandals, Slippers or Flip-flops

*In lieu of White Gown/Robe, Director/Costumer can use his/her creative imagination and have ANGEL dressed in some sort of alternate all-white motif. Any outfit will do so long as there is something on her costume to tip off BRIAN and the audience members to ANGEL is a Heavenly Creature (e.g. Angels Wings and/or Halo or some other creative way you can think of)

BRIAN:

- Tank top or T-shirt
- Short-sleeve Shirt (preferably Hawaiian flower pattern)
 - Worn loosely and unbuttoned over Tank top/T-shirt and not tucked in
- Shorts
- Sandals, Slippers, Flip-flops or Sneakers (No socks)
- Baseball/Billed Cap, Sun visor, Fishing Hat, Beach Hat
 - or Sunglasses resting on top head in lieu of hat/visor (Optional)

GENERAL PROPERTIES

Beach/Lawn Chair – Preset C on stage
(a simple folding chair will also do if this is not available)

PERSONAL PROPERTIES

ANGEL:

- Rolodex with cards inside – Preset under chair

BRIAN:

- None

SOUND EFFECTS (OPTIONAL)*

- Rolling of waves with seagulls in the background (The Beach)
- Stone skipping across water
- Magic Wand Trill - Quick Plucking of Harp Strings – 2 to 3 seconds (ANGEL's hand wave)
- BOING sound
- Heavenly Chorus – 3 to 5 seconds (e.g. AHHHHHH)

*Contact scot_savage@sbcglobal.net to have the sound waves files sent to you.
If a sound technician is unavailable, sound effects can be omitted.