

# JUST THE TWO OF US

By Steve Gabe

NAME: Steve Gabe

WHERE YOU ARE FROM: Madison, NJ

BIO: Steve Gabe is from Tenafly, New Jersey and is a licensed Attorney in New York. Studied with and was Key Student (assistant) for Actors Studio Board Member Salem Ludwig's Scene Study Class at HB Studio in New York from 2000-2005. His first acting credits were in the *Ridicufest 2000* at legendary Off-Broadway Todo Con Nada Theater in Ronald Tavel's *Shower* and *The Life of Juanita Castro*. Other acting highlights include playing: Uncle John and the Guitar Player in Chatham Community Players Perry Award winning *The Grapes of Wrath* (2012); The Father in Nicole Pandolfo's premier *I Thought I Liked Girls* (2015); and as Lazar Wolf in Maplewood Strollers *Fiddler on the Roof* (2019). He is very excited to participate in the Bake-Off!

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What's keeping me positive? My lovely wife Anne and hopes of a regime change, BIDEN2020!

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## **CHARACTERS**

Ralph, age 62 regular New Jersey Transit commuter to New York exiled in New Jersey working from home sporadically as an attorney for various multinational companies reviewing documents. Animated with a naturally loud voice. Prone to mood swings from jolly to morose and all points in between. Wants to be a writer.

Alice, age 61 continuing to work from home as a foreign language specialist for a large publishing company editing and updating databases. Soft-spoken, opinionated and very particular with two master's degrees in Anthropology and Library Sciences.

## **TIME**

July 2020, 8 am.

## **PLACE**

Scene: their two-floor townhouse apartment in Madison, NJ.

They are talking to each other from their respective computers on separate floors after eating breakfast, going to the bathroom and watching snippets of the morning news shows on the networks CBS, NBC and FOX. All the news is filtered through a seesaw of hope and despair.

ALICE

You know that girl, the White House press secretary? Her parents received millions in PPP loans. They're in the roofing business, wow!

RALPH

To the moon with her and the rest of those self-dealing crooks!

ALICE

You're so negative all the time, lighten up. I just thought you'd like to know. You don't have to take it so personally.

RALPH

Yeah right. We had our chance. We coulda been contenders! I was going to invest in the big four MAGA companies that last day the stock market was way down. But it was my first day of working from home and people were dying left and right. I got nervous and didn't pull the trigger. I could shoot myself Alice. Buy low, buy low, what didn't I know? Hi ho, hi ho, off to work I go...

ALICE

Yeah Ralph woulda, coulda, shoulda story of your life. Stop your belly-aching and be happy you got your job back. Just think how lucky we were to get that last laptop computer from Staples.

RALPH

Don't get me started on Staples Alice. I'm warning you!

ALICE

Oh yeah, I forgot you were the paper clip prince until they stepped in with Wall Street money and lowballed everyone in the stationary business out of business. Isn't that right? What's it called, that law they never use?

RALPH

Predatory Pricing, Robinson-Patman Act of '36. Those bastards. I'll show them who's predatory. At least their stock is still in the toilet. Those MAGA stocks I was going to buy? Even with the dip in the market they were still tripled from when that guy took over in 2016. Tell me that those companies tripled in value? That fascist prints money. I know a Hitler when I see one.

ALICE

Yeah Ralph. I know they made you watch all those movies at Jewish Sunday School when you were a kid with all the scrawny bodies being dumped into a ditch after being gassed in the showers.

RALPH

They made sure we'd never forget.

ALICE

You know my parents told me their horror stories too being stuck in Paris during the occupation. It was no picnic for them either. My twelve-year-old mother had to walk with masses of people out of Paris during the Exodus while the French bombed the bridges to delay the German invasion and the Italians sprayed them with machine gun fire from the air. My father was searching for food in garbage cans to survive. Squirrels they ate! Feeding nine brothers and sisters after his father killed himself? We don't have it so bad.

RALPH

That dip in March was our big chance to finally make it! I had my Charles Schwab brokerage IRA account open ready to push the magic button, but as they say it's hard to catch a falling knife...

ALICE

Shut up already so you didn't do it. You're driving me crazy! We'll be alright, we can scrimp and save and hope we don't get it and die. I'm so glad you stopped commuting to the city a week before they shut it down. I couldn't live without you. I was so sick with worry. I love you so much!

RALPH

I love you too. You're the greatest. I'm working on it. It's just ten grand I left on the table. But it's hard, all I had to do was bet 20K and get an easy ten. But we have so little for retirement I just couldn't risk it. I'm a scarred old man counting his pennies. Stacking change like when I was broke living in Brooklyn and you saved me. Brought me back to Jersey. But I'm still a loser. They're winning Alice. As the president says UP! UP! UP! and we just stay the same. I'm a loser Alice, a real bum. You could have married a rich guy.

ALICE

No don't say that you're a great man. You work so hard and you are so loving and creative. You're my best friend. Please don't get depressed. It's such a waste of time. You know that I love you?

RALPH

I know I love you too. *(long beat, only the clicking of keys of their respective computers is heard)*

Working man gets no credit today. No respect. It's the Wall Street crowd who get all the money and they do nothing. Just push buttons! And now they're getting our tax dollars, millions and millions given out to his friends. The worst of it is everyday we have to listen to the ravings of a madman blaming everyone else for all his bad decisions that always seem to benefit him. And the disease is getting worse and worse every day! I need to calm down. I know. I don't want to have a heart attack. Especially without any health insurance!

ALICE

Shhh...It's a secret we don't the neighbors to know. By the way that reminds me. I have to go to the doctor and get some lab tests done.

RALPH

More money out and we still paid the mandatory penalty for not having it, \$2000 bucks this year! We never even got the tax break from the unmatched genius getting the kangaroo court to approve repealing that portion of the ACA. Last year it didn't go into effect and this year Jersey took it because the Feds stiffed them. But the big boys got their tax breaks and goosed the market with the windfall. I understand how that trickle-down scam worked, they bought their own stock back, retired it and increased the value of individual shares. But will someone please tell me how the hell the stock market is sky high now? The highest it's ever been? And we're in a recession with tens of millions unemployed? Businesses can't open? So many living with food insecurity? So many getting evicted and can't pay their bills? How Alice? Please tell me how?

ALICE

I don't know Ralph. But please let me speak. We have to figure out how I'm going to be able to get my lab tests done. I can't take my daily medicine I need to live until they draw the blood and you have to wait your turn in your car, then they ping you when you can come in. I'm so worried I'll have to wait too long and I'll pass out or get palpitations.

RALPH

Relax, I'll go with you and make sure you have water to take your pill in case you start to pass out. If they make you wait too long, you'll take your meds and we'll re-schedule it for another day. I'll take care of you honey don't you worry.

ALICE

Thanks Ralph. You're a good husband. At least they're not doing Covid testing at that location so I won't be exposed to it...hopefully.

RALPH

The Covid infection numbers are as sky high as the market. That last climb from March until now? The whole market almost doubled? Who's benefiting from this disease? Someone is, but not us. That kind of windfall of Wall Street money mostly to the rich was completely unexpected, or was it? I shoulda known. It happens every time like magic. I'll tell you he knows which palms to grease.

ALICE

Like the check-out lady at Whole Foods who thought you were one of them because you said something about looking forward to not wearing your mask. She credits the president for asking congress to get another Wall Street bailout package rolling. We need the money Ralph so I'm glad he wants to help us out a little at least. When you mentioned stocks, she lit up and said she's got stocks it's the unemployment handouts that disgusts her, then you turned around as we walked out and said "You can't trust that bastard". Now why did you have to go and say that?

RALPH

Maybe that's my problem. I should switch sides. But just like the old cigarette slogan, I'd rather fight than switch! I guess that's America now. Everyone has their price, I guess. What's your number honey?

ALICE

I don't have a number but I wouldn't turn down another stimulus check. Your wages are down and prices are going up. Do you know we spend \$300 a week on food for just the two of us?

RALPH

Yeah, I know you tell me every week. Alice, when my ship comes in, I'll get us that little house with a wrap-around porch like you always wanted. We'll use the stimulus as the down payment.

ALICE

Funny, I know we still owe money from the Recession of '08 when had to borrow money to sell our house in the Berkshires. Now this whole thing? They bring mayhem to our lives and make it so unnecessarily stressful. For what? How much money do they need?

RALPH

They need it all and the best part there's no risk? It's always the taxpayers bailing out the rich. There will be the Devil to pay when all this gets uncovered. Tell me has the market ever boomed in a pandemic? In a recession? The Fed prints money and he gives it to his corporate buddies but when it came to helping real small businesses like local restaurants they ran out? This makes the housing collapse look like a blip on the screen.

ALICE

There is so much injustice now with the police killing black people for no reason and the protests and all. It's so sad. America has become so divided and all that he can say is "law and order"? This isn't a TV reality show where ratings are all that matters, these are real lives, black lives! And the nerve of that man raising the bible after gassing, beating and forcing lawful protesters out of his way for a photo op in front of a church? How come you don't rant and rave about that?

RALPH

Oh, believe you me Alice don't get me started on that. Black Lives Matter movement is the most important protest in the history of the world. The most people ever protesting at one time. This is about who gets to live and die in this country. Have they even read the Constitution? A more perfect Union? This Union is as imperfect as it gets! The Declaration of Independence is so much toilet paper flushed down his majesty's golden toilet bowl. Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness? Not for black and brown people. And what do they do? Send Tim Scott, their token black Republican Senator to help draft an Executive Order that doesn't even address choke holds? They need to collect data? I think the data is in and time for action is now. Then when that fake order flopped Senator Scott went against the House Bill because it "Demonized Police"? When all it did was hold them accountable? And now no bill? No law? Nothing? Vote him out I say! Give me liberty...

ALICE

Just stop talking for one minute! I can't take it anymore! I agree but we both have to work. Stop talking! I need silence!

RALPH

OK, I'll shut up. Wanna have some lunch?

ALICE

OK I'll be down in a minute.

1:00pm and they're downstairs making lunch. A routine that has gone on everyday exactly the same for four months. Like a dance they move around each other cooking their meals. Sharing the tasks that overlap like washing the lettuce but mostly taking care of themselves. Alice eats only non-gluten meals usually anchored by a fried egg and it takes her much longer to prepare. Ralph eats a piled high dagwood sandwich, surrounded by pickles, raw onions, olives and potato chips.

RALPH

Everything for the rich. Push a button, wear a too-tight blue suit with a pocket square and light brown wing-tip shoes, looking like a regular Howdy Doody. Be a loyal plastic robot for a world that doesn't care. Smile at every ugly shine on your shoes and cut your hair...Brown Shoes Don't Make It. And they complain about handouts?

ALICE

What are you mumbling about now?

RALPH

Nothing.

ALICE

I heard you say something.

RALPH

You don't want to hear it.

ALICE

Now I do.

RALPH

It's an old Frank Zappa song I was reminded of.

ALICE

Sing me a song. You have such a nice voice and you'll forget all your troubles. Let's dance!

RALPH

Don't be silly Alice it's not Friday night yet. OK come here my darling let's try to remember the few dance steps we learned at adult night school before the shut-down.

*(They dance a ragged waltz while Ralph sings the spiritual Texas tune “The Last Trump”)*

RALPH *(singing while they dance throughout the following.)*

When the last trumpet sounds, when the last trumpet sounds where will I be when the last trumpet sounds? Oh Lord help me to be strong till the last battle has ended in a crown and the last trump sounds... You know that's from Corinthians 15:52 The story of Revelation...when the good will go to heaven and the evil non-believers will burn in a lake of fire. Oh Lord help me to stand till the last man has fallen to the ground and the last trumpet sounds. The last trump... The last trump...

ALICE

Oh, that was lovely and it sounds like a Roy Orbison song kind of sweet and sorrowful.

RALPH

It's a record I got for \$2 at the candy store J.T. Adams and his Texas Men. Gee I hope the best for all the little stores and restaurants they're the ones who should have gotten bailed out and now it's extended indefinitely until the virus gets under control. Which is when? Remember when he said it will magically go away when it gets warm? The numbers are going up every day! The US is the worst in the world at handling the pandemic. There isn't anything like the simple use of a mask that they can't make into a divisive issue. How the hell did they make wearing a mask, opening up businesses and resuming school a political question? The virus knows no political agenda and favors no party.

ALICE

Divide and conquer.

RALPH

Well at least the Supreme Court ruled yesterday that nobody is above the law. Even a sitting president has to answer a subpoena for his tax records in a criminal case. I guess Gorsuch and Kavanaugh are worried their legacy will be tainted if they rule in favor of their benefactor. I thought maybe they had grown a conscience overnight. But now I see some Republicans are starting to make sense.

ALICE

That's good. Why does anyone want to hate all the time?

RALPH

HATE! IF I had the chance, I'd send that guy to the moon. Alice, Bang! Zoom!

ALICE

Ralph, don't say that! Do you know what that does to your karma?

RALPH

I know, I know, I didn't mean it, it's just every day for four years never a break from the attacks.

ALICE

You need to be calm for the both of us. We're all we have. Don't let it affect you like that.

RALPH

Did you hear his lawyer Kasowitz got millions in PPP? A law firm getting millions? That's rich! Ha! Get it? That's rich, LITERALLY! I interviewed for that law firm and I'm damn lucky they didn't hire me.

ALICE

So, to change the subject...Where do you want to go for dinner this weekend?

RALPH

Good one sweetheart. That joke never gets old. We haven't been out in four months. Social distanced outdoor dining. That'll bring the economy back. How about TJ Maxx? Or socially distanced theater? Actually, this morning I got an email and bought us two tickets to the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey's outdoor socially distanced production of Molière's *The Love Doctor* and Edna St. Vincent Millay's *Aria Da Capo*. Bonnie Monte has been busy adapting them along with another play in repertory *Verily, Madly Thine* a collage of Shakespeare scenes that depict how crazy people get when they are in love. Just like us these days! Did you know that the Globe Theater where they put on Shakespeare's plays was shuttered because of the plague in 1592?

ALICE

I did not know that. See you're good for silly little anecdotes if nothing else. Ah, the more things change the more they stay the same. We shall go to the theater my dah-ling, with masks on like commedia dell-arte actors. Ralph, everything is going to alright. Isn't it?

THE END