

# TIES THAT BIND

A short play

by

Eric Coble

© Eric Coble

Jonathan Lomma  
William Morris Endeavor  
1325 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, NY 10019  
212-903-1552  
JLomma@wmeentertainment.com

TIES THAT BIND

CHARACTERS:

THE ASTOUNDING KRISPINSKI: An Escape Artist Extraordinaire.

MARCO: His Trusty Assistant.

**TIES THAT BIND**  
**featuring**  
**The Astounding Krispinsky**

(A man dressed in exotic clothes walks out to address the audience -- this is MARCO)

MARCO

Ladies and gentlemen, please remain seated and refrain from placing anything in your mouth which can lead to choking in the event of a startle response. For what you are about to behold WILL startle. Will amaze. Will terrify. We have defibrillators and clean undergarments at the rear of the house for those in need. A need I'm sure can be attested to by they who have seen this man perform. There are those who still speak of his flight from inside a locked baby grand piano under the screaming whine of an oncoming buzzsaw as he plucked out "The Stars and Stripes Forever". And on this very stage, scarcely 18 months ago, you and your neighbors, your family, your astonished cohorts from work -- you saw this man emerge from a sealed tank of flesh-rending piranha wearing nothing but the loincloth given him for luck by his dying syphilitic grandmother. But none of that -- nothing you have ever seen or heard or dared to dream before will match the feat you will witness tonight. A feat of such cunning, such bravado, such gut-churning moxie that it will only -- CAN only - be attempted by one man. And that one man... is none other.. than the Astounding Krispinsky!!

(Wild applause. KRISPINSKY is carried in -- stiff, horizontal, hands behind his back, seemingly bound by invisible means -- by TWO STAGEHANDS. He is laid on the floor. He nods to the audience as the Stagehands leave. He is earnest.)

MARCO (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen, the man you see helpless before you has cheated death a thousand times in a thousand ways. But tonight you will be the witnesses -- the eyes, the ears, the gasping tongues that will experience the Greatest -- perhaps the Final -- Challenge Of His Life. Can we have the clock?

(A clock appears, set to count down from two minutes)

MARCO (CONT'D)

He will have two minutes. 120 seconds. Please, ladies and gentlemen, I beg you. If you are on good terms with any deity of any consequence whatsoever -- call in that favor now. Get praying. Are you ready, Krispinsky?

(MORE)

MARCO (CONT'D)

(Krispinsky nods)

Are your nerves steeled?

(Krispinsky nods)

Then... prepare... to escape... from your own Life! GO!

(The clock starts ticking down...  
Krispinsky starts wriggling, trying to  
get his hands around his legs in front  
of him...)

MARCO (CONT'D)

He's started! He's going -- he's grappling with Parental Approval! Vying for his parents' affection against three other siblings -- he's almost there -- trying out for basketball, struggling for good grades, singing operettas at family Christmas parties -- but... NO!

(Krispinsky writhes)

He's snagged by his parents' Distant Lack of Attention! His father who seems more interested in the sports page than own son's minor concussion! A mother who needs a fully stocked pharmacy to get dinner on the table every night-

(Krispinsky gets his hands in  
front of him -- struggles to  
stand...)

But he's up! By sheer force of hormonal rebellion he's on his feet!

(Krispinsky keeps twisting --  
trying to get his feet  
separated to maintain his  
balance)

But he's still got to get through his Hyper-Consciousness of His Physical Appearance -- the grotesquely outsized feet, the left ear slightly smaller than the right, the gangly arms -- the ACNE -- oh God, he's almost free of the acne -- but does he have Halitosis? No! He does not have Halitosis!

(Krispinsky gets his feet  
spread)

He's up -- he's mobile-

(Krispinsky tries to open his  
mouth with his bound hands)

-but now he's facing his Inability to Communicate with the Opposite Sex! Small talk -- using his out-sized bravado to mask his stunted inner life -- with only his parents' failed marriage and a handful of teen romance movies as guides -- can he wriggle out of his Intimacy Phobia?? He's doing it... He's doing it...

(Krispinsky SMASHES to the  
ground)

NOOO! Student Loans!! Can even the mightiest among us claw through a solid mountain of debt?? He's trying -- a financial advisor -- money management books and a seminar-

(Krispinsky writhes -- arching  
his body to get up...)

He's got automatic payroll deduction -- he's almost there...

(MORE)

## MARCO (CONT'D)

He's Standing!

(Krispinsky's legs are knocked  
out from under him)

He's Down! It's Corporate America! His boss trains by  
humiliation -- the employees lay in supplies to survive the  
staff meetings -- and his company's sold!

(Krispinsky starts spinning)

New Boss! Sold! New Boss! Sold! Old Boss! Use all your  
vacation days by next week or lose'em!

(WHAM -- He's knocked sideways  
by an invisible force)

AHH! Blind-sided by Internalized Religious Convictions! If  
it feels good, it must be wrong -- what if someone finds  
those magazines and videos under the bed?? But wait... he's  
fighting it... wrestling with God as it were...

(Krispinsky's right arm shoots  
out -- free)

An arm free! Moving out into the world-

(Krispinsky begins jerking back  
and forth -- back and  
forth...)

Get Married! Stay Single! Get Married! Stay Single!  
Get...

(Krispinsky falls to his knees -  
- struggling...)

Married! Have Children!

(He sinks lower...)

House Payments!

(Lower)

Lawn needs to be mowed, tub re-grouted, Ikea furniture  
assembled -- Can he do it??

(Krispinsky's other arm shoots  
free-)

He's almost there!!

(Krispinsky tries to stand --  
tumbles back down-)

No! A Repressed Memory! Something involving Tracy Derkins  
next door, a hamster, and an Erector set... Come on,  
Krispinsky!!

(Krispinsky staggers back up...  
a tremendous force on his back  
-- he falls-)

Oh! Inability to Please His Father rears its ugly head out  
of nowhere! His own parenting skills questioned -- the  
parent-teacher conferences he's missed -- not helping with  
the Cub Scout Pinewood Derby -- He's become his own father!!

(Krispinsky turns in on  
himself... hopping...)

He's taking care of his own father! Find the right Nursing  
Home, the right Hospice, the right Crematorium-

(Krispinsky is almost up...)

(MORE)

## MARCO (CONT'D)

But he's breaking free of his Television Habit -- cutting down the hours in front of the boob tube -- down from five -- getting stronger -- four -- not Surfing the Internet for great chunks of the day -- no more On-Line Porn -- his conscience is clear-

(Krispinsky is almost up...)

But empty! Sleepless nights -- "is this all there is?" Forty years of work and life and work -- for what? Paging Jean Paul Sartre! Paging Jean Paul Sartre!

(Krispinsky is up...)

But he's... he's... he's a Free Man!!

(Krispinsky arches back -- arms out -- legs spread -- triumphant -- FREE! The clock hits zero- Wild Applause...)

## KRISPINSKY

AAAAAHHHH!!-

(His eyes go wide, his jaw drops... he tumbles backward. Lies still on the ground)

## MARCO

And he's Dead!! Oh! Ladies and gentlemen, the astounding Krispinsky finds true freedom at last! Give it up for the Ultimate Escape!

(Marco leads applause as the two stagehands run on and carry the dead Krispinsky offstage)

(And Blackout.)