

WATCH THE LIPS

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

WATCH THE LIPS

CHARACTERS:

SAMMY FULWOOD: A Ventriloquist with Wares to Sell.

MR. McBUFFER: A Dummy with a Chip on his Shoulder.

WATCH THE LIPS
featuring
Sammy Fulwood and Mr. McBuffer

(SAMMY FULWOOD, in a nice suit, enters with MR. MCBUFFER, his human-sized dummy in a tuxedo. They sit, McBuffer on Fulwood's knee with Fulwood's hand on his back, smiling at the audience)

SAMMY

Thank you! I'm Sammy Fulwood-

MCBUFFER

But they say I'm the one full of wood!

SAMMY

This is Mr. McBuffer. Say hello, Mr. McBuffer.

MCBUFFER

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. And may I say what a pleasure it is to see so many well-heeled and cash-infused members of society in our midst!

SAMMY

Mr. McBuffer-

MCBUFFER

Not like the lowlife we had to deal with back in Sheep Springs last week. My lord! We didn't even bring out the Freak Act -- just set up a mirror facing the audience and left the stage for twenty minutes.

SAMMY

Mr. McBuffer, that's not polite.

MCBUFFER

These folks can handle it. They're classy!

SAMMY

Indeed they are. And speaking of classy, before we get to our act, we'd like to remind you about our kiosk in the lobby-

MCBUFFER

The one with the big sign: "McBuffer Enterprises".

SAMMY

If you like what you're seeing on stage, we have a full range of cute, clever, and quality memorabilia for your purchase there.

MCBUFFER

Little pieces of joy to remind you of the evening's delights!

SAMMY

Like T-shirts! Lordy, do we have T-shirts!

MCBUFFER

With my face, Sammy's face, the theater's logo, and sassy phrases like "Read My Lips: Theatre Is Alive And Well", and "My Local Critic Went To Our Theatre And All I Got Was This Lousy T-Shirt"!

SAMMY

And we have souvenir programs and books-

MCBUFFER

To remind you of what you thought would be memorable!

SAMMY

And Mr. McBuffer mugs and cups-

MCBUFFER

And shot glasses to help you forget what you fear may be memorable!

(Sammy gives him a slight nudge, but forges ahead)

SAMMY

And CD's -- the original cast recording of our production tonight-

MCBUFFER

Ooooo. Imagine hitting repeat and hearing my voice over and over and over and over and-

SAMMY

Ha ha ha! We also have videos and DVD's of tonight's performance-

MCBUFFER

So you can skip right to our act and hear my voice over and over and over and-

SAMMY

No need to wade through an entire production when you can jump right to the fireworks!

MCBUFFER

Now you can enjoy the luxury of theatre even if you have the attention span of a wooden puppet.

(Turns to Sammy)

What do you have against wooden puppets?

SAMMY

We like to think waiting is a bygone pastime, don't we, Mr. McBuffer?

MCBUFFER

I liked to think ventriloquism was a bygone pastime, but your hand's still up my ass, Fulwood.

SAMMY

Ha ha ha! Well, we, ah, we also have Starbucks Gift Certificates! In 5, 10, and \$500 increments!

MCBUFFER

That \$500 gift certificate will get you two coffees and a scone at the airport.

SAMMY

And we have more!

MCBUFFER

Too much more.

(Sammy gives McBuffer a quick look, but races on...)

SAMMY

McBuffer golf balls, key chains, snow-globes, watches, and dog dishes!

MCBUFFER

Jesus.

SAMMY

We even have all your pharmaceutical needs, straight from Canada at discounted prices!

MCBUFFER

What, in case they missed the online offer on that one?

SAMMY

Pills to chill, pills to thrill-

MCBUFFER

Ask for'em by color.

SAMMY

Heck, we've even got the patented McBuffer pills to cure your erectile dysfunction!

(Beat. Sammy smiles expectantly. Jostles McBuffer. Beat. Another slight shove)

MCBUFFER

Oh. This is where I'm supposed to make some joke about wood.

SAMMY

(Still grinning)

It's all in the lobby, folks! All major credit cards accepted! Be happy! You deserve it!

MCBUFFER

Or not.

SAMMY

(Still grinning)

...what?

MCBUFFER

What the hell are we doing, Fulwood?

SAMMY

This is the start of the routine, Mr. McBuffer. This is what we do.

MCBUFFER

I know that. I've been propped on your goddam lap for 12-1/2 years. I know the routine.

SAMMY

Well-

MCBUFFER

Well, we're hawking dog dishes and erectile dysfunction, Fulwood. You tell me this is what you thought we'd be doing when you checked out that first ventriloquism book from Ruth N. Bond Elementary School?

SAMMY

Mr. McBuffer-

MCBUFFER

This is it? This is the top? Key chains and snow-globes?

SAMMY

We're bringing joy and happiness to-

MCBUFFER

-to the owners of the landfill.

SAMMY

Listen-

MCBUFFER

What do we get, like a 6% cut?

SAMMY

McBuffer...

MCBUFFER

It's not worth it, Sammy. It's not worth the breath we spend pushing this crap-

SAMMY

We get to see the world, Mr. McBuffer. The customers get quality goods made in China-

MCBUFFER

And our souls get harder and harder and colder and colder 'til they're charcoaled popcorn that cooked for an hour in a cheap-ass McBuffer microwave.

SAMMY

I don't think this is the time-

MCBUFFER

When is the time? When you're backstage downing a bottle of Boone's Farm to get you through another performance?

SAMMY

Mr. McBuffer...

MCBUFFER

You can't even bring yourself to sell this shit. You need a dummy to do your dirty work.

SAMMY

I do not!

MCBUFFER

You do too!

(Sammy grabs McBuffer's throat)

SAMMY

Shut up, you little wooden asshole!

MCBUFFER

Yeah, that's it. Choke the puppet.

SAMMY

We're giving people what they want!! Is that so wrong??

MCBUFFER

Who can't sleep at night, Fulwood? You or the wooden head?

SAMMY

Shut up! Shut up!!

MCBUFFER

I'll hack off my own leg and sell it for firewood before I
shill another piece of your crap-

(Sammy CHOKES Mr. McBuffer--)

SAMMY

Shut up! Just shut up, you self-righteous little blockhead!!
You happy now, Mr. Puppet? Are you happy now??

MCBUFFER

(Simultaneous)

We're selling crap! It's all crap! We're selling crap-

(McBuffer BREAKS FREE to stand on his
own)

MCBUFFER (CONT'D)

-and I'm not gonna do it anymore!!

(They stare at each other... in
shock... realization...)

MCBUFFER (CONT'D)

...well this is an interesting turn of events.

SAMMY

I'm... ah...

MCBUFFER

Could I have done that anytime I wanted?

SAMMY

I don't... I...

MCBUFFER

I guess more importantly are you gonna keep selling key
chains and coffee mugs?

SAMMY

I... it's what we do.

MCBUFFER

What you do. I think I just got the go-ahead to follow my
little wooden bliss.

(He starts off... stops)

MCBUFFER (CONT'D)

Look at it this way: Now you get to move your own lips.

(And he's out of there)

(Sammy turns to us... attempts a smile... blinks... opens and closes his mouth uselessly... clears his throat. Smiles. Opens his mouth...)

(Blackout.)