



**Sample Pages from  
Diatom**

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# A BOX OF PUPPIES

Constantly, Incessantly, All The Time  
Huge Hands  
Diatom  
One Beer Too Many

FOUR ONE ACT PLAYS BY  
*Billy Houck*



## **A Box of Puppies**

Four One Act Plays by Billy Houck

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## **Set**

All you need is a bare stage.

## **Welcome!**

Welcome to *A Box of Puppies*, a diverse and exciting collection of One Act Plays. Each play can be performed independently or the four plays can be performed together in the above order for an outstanding competition piece.

— Enjoy! —

# Diatom

## Characters

Dale and Robin

## Setting

A bus stop.

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*DALE and ROBIN are teenaged friends. Any gender, but they don't have a car. They are waiting for a school bus. ROBIN has a water bottle.*

DALE: Look in your water. It's full of them.

ROBIN: What?

DALE: Just look. You'll see.

ROBIN: I'll see what?

DALE: (*importantly*) Diatoms.

ROBIN: (*looks in water bottle*) What?

DALE: (*slowly*) Di-uh-toms.

ROBIN: Di – uh...

DALE: ...toms. Right. Hundreds. Thousands. Millions. Or at least a dozen.

ROBIN: I don't see anything.

DALE: You can't. They're microscopic.

ROBIN: Then why did you tell me to look?

DALE: I just thought you should know. They aren't bad. Won't kill you. Probably. As a matter of fact, you're more likely to kill them.

ROBIN: I am not. Who?

DALE: The diatoms. The little guys. The one-cell guys. They're that small. So small they can't even be seen. Your drinking them will probably kill them. Can you imagine being that small?

ROBIN: (*sighs*) Yeah. Easy.

DALE: What?

ROBIN: Easy. Like I said. I can imagine being small. Because I am.  
Because you are.

DALE: No we're not.

ROBIN: Then why are we waiting for a bus? Just waiting. Waiting here.  
Helpless. Can't do a thing until the bus comes.

DALE: What does that have to do with being small?

ROBIN: Cause if we were multi-cellular, WE'D HAVE A CAR!

DALE: Oh... yeah. I guess you're right.

ROBIN: Of course I'm right.

DALE: I wish I had a car.

ROBIN: A red car.

DALE: A fast red car.

ROBIN: A Mustang.

DALE: A Camaro.

ROBIN: An Impala.

BOTH: Yeah...

*Pause. They look for the bus. It's not coming yet.*

ROBIN: (*looking in bottle*) So what do they do in there?

DALE: Who?

ROBIN: The Diatoms? You remember. They're in the water. What do they do in there? Just float? Just wait to become bigger?

DALE: Oh. The diatoms. They don't get any bigger. They're one-celled forever. But they do...um...extrude exoskeletons.

ROBIN: Extrude?

DALE: Yeah. It means they squeeze 'em out.

ROBIN: I see. No I don't. Exo-skeleton?

DALE: Like bones. Bones on the outside.

ROBIN: Bones on the outside. On purpose?

DALE: That's right. You got it.

ROBIN: I think I saw that in a movie once.

DALE: A diatom? In a movie?

ROBIN: No. A skeleton on the outside. It was gross.

DALE: No, that's not what I mean.

ROBIN: On the other hand, a skeleton on the outside could be cool.

DALE: No, no, no.

ROBIN: It would be like armour. Keep the bullies away.

DALE: With the diatoms they're...

ROBIN: Go ahead, buster! Gimme your best shot! I've got an  
EXOSKELETON!

DALE: (*plays "screaming victim"*) Stop it! Stop it! Stop it!

ROBIN: Don't bother me, puny human. Your teeny tiny cries for help  
will never get any pity from THE EXOSKELETON!

DALE: Don't make me use the secret weapon! (*strikes "secret weapon"  
pose*)

ROBIN: You wouldn't.

DALE: Don't try me.

ROBIN: OK. Never mind. (*pause*) Hold on. Hey. Here it comes!

DALE: You are so dumb.

ROBIN: I'm gonna extrude something!

DALE: I'm not going to ever tell you about anything ever again. That's  
it. We're done. I try to explain something, and all you want to do  
is... extrude.

ROBIN: Sorry.

DALE: I know.

ROBIN: Hey.

DALE: What?

ROBIN: Wouldn't they get filtered out?

DALE: Who?

ROBIN: The diatoms. The mighty extruders. I thought they made them filter out stuff like that from bottled water so you don't get sick.

DALE: Maybe. Or maybe they're so small they slip through the filters.

ROBIN: Oh. OK. I guess.

DALE: Here comes the bus.

ROBIN: I don't see it.

DALE: I can hear it.

ROBIN: I don't hear it, either.

DALE: It's on the next block. It's coming.

ROBIN: I don't think so.

DALE: It'll be here in just a second. Just wait.

ROBIN: (*pause*) I still don't...

DALE: I said just wait.

ROBIN: Fine. (*counts off seconds*) one-one thousand, two-one thousand, three-one thousand, four-one thousand, five-one thousand, six-

DALE: ShhhHHHshh! I can't hear when you do that.

*ROBIN continues counting off seconds, but does it very quietly. DALE looks increasingly annoyed as ten seconds pass. After a very quiet "ten-one thousand," ROBIN quits counting.*

ROBIN: I don't think it's coming.

DALE: Yeah. Probably a garbage truck.

ROBIN: A garbage truck doesn't sound anything like a school bus.

DALE: Yes it does.

ROBIN: No it doesn't.

DALE: Well, it works the same way.

ROBIN: No it doesn't.

DALE: Sure it does. Pick 'em up, dump 'em off, pick 'em up, dump 'em off. Garbage truck-school bus. The same.

DALE: What time is it?

ROBIN: I dunno. Um... 7:45, I think.

DALE: We're going to be late.

ROBIN: Again.

DALE: We should run.

ROBIN: Run all the way to school?

DALE: Sure. We could make it.

ROBIN: Are you crazy?

DALE: No, I'm positive. We could make it.

ROBIN: No we couldn't.

DALE: Well, I could.

ROBIN: No way.

DALE: I'm positive.

ROBIN: You couldn't be.

DALE: I tested it.

ROBIN: Tested what?

DALE: How fast I could run.

ROBIN: When?

DALE: Last month.

ROBIN: Oh, come on. (*a beat*) How?

DALE: I used a speed measuring machine.

ROBIN: What kind of machine?

DALE: You know those electronic signs they put up on streets where they want to slow traffic down, and the sign measures your speed and then it posts the speed you're going right next to the actual speed limit?

ROBIN: Yeah. I've seen those.

DALE: Well, that's what I used. There was one over near our cul-de-sac, and I used it to test my speed.

ROBIN: Those are for cars.





[help@theatrefolk.com](mailto:help@theatrefolk.com) [www.theatrefolk.com](http://www.theatrefolk.com)

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