

MARBLES

Dennis Burns, Paradise Valley Community College
First Place, One-Act Play

CHARACTERS: Joe, a boy in his early teens, a bad complexion, a bit pudgy or dumpy looking.
Lew, a boy in his early teens, very good-looking, tall muscular and appealing.
Narrator/Voice over

SETTING: A typical young boys bedroom. An unmade bunk bed with Power Ranger or Superman sheets, blanket and pillows. A bookcase crammed full of toys, models, adventure books, comics and action figures. A desk cluttered with toys, papers, empty soda cans and a barely concealed computer monitor. Posters on the wall haphazardly tacked up of sports figures, cars, motorcycles, comic heroes and one old Farrah Fawcett glamour shot. A large jet-black throw rug takes up most of the floor.

(The curtain rises with Joe arranging objects on the rug and Lew is reading a comic book on the top bunk. Joe is laying down on the rug, in a relaxed crumple typical of children at play. He is setting several large balls of various sizes all the way to large marbles onto the black rug. In the middle is a large bright yellow ball, next he lays out twelve varied balls and marbles of varying colors)

JOE: *(In a factual voice as he points to the balls from the center, outward)* Hmm! Let's see, first I need to do an inventory, I separated by type; hot, hard, soft and then cold, yeah that's it! (Joe stands up and looks down with some pride at the eleven neatly lined up and placed balls and marbles.)

LEW: *(Lew laying on his back reading the comic upside down looks at Joe with a undisguised trace of disgust)* No! No! No! just jumble them up, like you did with all the others. Just toss 'em in the air then let them drop where they may...place them where they fall. It makes things so much more interesting.

JOE: *(Joe looked at this interruption by his friend Lou as if he had just coughed up a fur ball in the most, messiest of manner. Joe speaks with increasing agitation and passion.)* I will not, I didn't just throw the others about like some dog shaking water from it's back like you would. There's a definite pattern in my designs. Besides I've seen some of the ones that you have done that way. What a mess! Things flying here and there, stuff everywhere with no regard for style or rhythm. Very confusing, very haphazard, and it is so unpredictably messy. You never follow the rules. Any rules. The laws of common sense mean nothing to you. I won't even speak of the zoning laws or even the...the...laws

of nature you violate. You place so many things in dangerous situations; it's down right criminal and you just don't even give a rat's ass, do you? Christ....It's wrong, just plain wrong! *(Joe places his hands on his hips with a look of defiance at his friend)*

LEW: *(Looking sheepishly at his friend)* So...? It's who I am, and it's what I do. It may seem confusing to you, *(Gaining confidence)* But I have made some very beautiful things. Order and neatness has its points I guess but...it's so, so...neat. Yuck! I like the grandiose diversity that occurs when life tries to place the chaotic into some sort of slot...in order to...*(Chuckling)* Well...make order.

JOE: *(Rolling his eyes at his friend)* Your reading too many comic books, you sound like some bogus bad guy...sheesh. Granted I'll admit that some of the things you have made are very nice to look at and some have been even nice in the way they made me feel. But your creations... they are short lived or become unstable in time or...Christ! Even deadly... remember that time you made those poppers they almost burnt the...

LEW: *(Interrupting with a pained look on his face)* Why must you keep saying that...?

JOE: *(Puzzled look and questioning voice)* What? That you're a danger to all things living or that you have no sense of structure? That you're a menace to all you come in contact with...that you have no sense of decency ...or...

LEW: *(Interrupting again more agitated)* No! It's that name you use when you get so hyper...

JOE: *(Interrupting)* I don't get hyper, I just get...passionate, yeah, passionate about making things right and orderly. A proper place and a proper time with a proper tool like my Dad says. It's the way, it's the right way...it's the only way...

LEW: *(Rolls over and throws the comic book across the room, he wails)* Damn you're so freak'n anal. Give the law and order stuff a rest please!

JOE: *(Shocked look)* Oh, ok sorry, don't get your panties in a wad. Christ, you're the one who's hyper! Maybe you better stop stealing sips of your Dad's morning coffee, Christ! *(Mused Joe as he arranged the different sized balls and marbles in ring patterns around the largest yellow ball.)*

LEW: *(Crying out)* There you said it again!

JOE: *(Exasperated)* What...What did I say now! Christ you're starting to bug me, Lew.

LEW: *(Yelling)* THAT NAME, WHY DO YOU KEEP SAYING IT?

JOE: *(Concern turning into understanding)* What...oh, do you mean...Christ?

LEW: *(Calm exhaustion)* Yes, why do you say it when you are mad?
JOE: *(Thoughtfully)* Uh, I don't know it just seems like the right thing to say when I'm frustrated...the right name for how I feel and it's kinda nice, I like it. Why?
LEW: *(Quietly)* Well...it makes me feel uneasy, anyway I don't like cursing...
JOE: *(Interrupting)* I was not cursing, it just seems right. It has just the right sound; the right feel for when I'm frustrated. But if it bothers you... I'll stop. Sheesh!

(Joe goes back to the circle of marbles, idly rolling and spinning them all in the same direction)

LEW: *(Agitated)* Oh, come on. You're not gonna make them in a ring again are you? Please try something different. Try putting them at different distances and make them go in different directions just for fun!
(Pleading) Please...for me...
JOE: *(Shocked disbelief turning into agitation)* Oh no! You got me to do that with those teeny tiny little things you called poppers. Those suckers spin so fast that it looks like a bigger ball. You can barely see the ones in the middle. And talk about unstable! Some of them pop! With some power I might add. The last one that popped hurt my fingers.

(The offended fingers in question unconsciously burrowed into Joe's mouth, which when noticed, are hastily removed from that orifice with an audible "POP!")

LEW: *(A pleased look of happy memory)* Yeah, but that was fun and they have so much potential.
NARRATOR: *(Fades in...with no notice by the boys who freeze frame. Along with Narrator voice are the sounds of the action being expressed)* Lew's eyes closed at the memory of that day when the "POP" caused Joe to trip over the spare parts bin spilling bits and pieces every which way. *(Voice-over sounds: Pop: followed by a yelp from Joe then the sound of Lew laughing as crashing and breaking sounds occur)* Lew never laughed so hard in his life as on that day.
LEW: *(Laughs as the voice over fades out)*
JOE: *(Embarrassed look)* Christ, are you still laugh...
LEW: *(Glares abruptly)*
JOE: *(Embarrassed look, becoming concerned)* Oops sorry... are you still laughing about that day, all those parts spilled? Well, you still have to help me pick this stuff up later. Not like you did that day and ran out of here laughing your ass off, you are gonna help clean up this time. So I...uh I mean or we'll get into some big trouble. Right? RIGHT?

LEW: (*Grimacing*) Yeah, yeah, I'll help you but please don't put them in a ring and spin them the same way ok?

JOE: All right. What do you suggest?

LEW: (*Contemplative*) I'm thinking maybe make them at different distances and if you need to be orderly, spin them all in the same direction but at different speeds.

JOE: (*Agreeable*) Hmm! That sounds ok, but I want them to be in the order I placed them...hot...hard...soft....and cold. Ok? (*Joe watched his friend closely*)

LEW: (*Getting in the spirit*) That's cool, but size does not matter, ok?

JOE: (*Begrudgingly*) OK. Fine, but I will make them spin around this big yellow ball in a logical manner following the laws of phy...physss... ah nature. Is that all right with you?

LEW: (*Jumps from the top bunk and joins Joe at the carpet*) That is fine but I pick the colors? Ok?

JOE: (*Happy to have his friend back*) OK.

NARRATOR: (*Stage lights dim to half light, with spot directed at the yellow ball, Joe and Lew begin playing and following the narrator's words, Narrator voice-over fades in*) So Joe starts spinning the balls and marbles in a clockwise direction around the bigger ball. As they began to spin, Joe attaches a very fine line of logical thread to each spinning ball; he then attaches them to the large yellow ball in the center until ten balls are attached and spinning around the big yellow ball. But unknown to Joe, when he was not looking, Lew carefully slips from his pocket a bottle filled with the teeny tiny spinning balls that they had discussed earlier called poppers. On the bottle were the words "finger poppers." Lew pours a liberal amount of the stuff on the big yellow ball.

(Lew replaces the bottle, barely containing a huge grin)

JOE: (*Admiring his handywork*) Ok, that should be it.

LEW: (*Concerned sounding*) Nope, it's not quite done.

JOE: (*Shocked*) WHAT?

LEW: (*Very concerned look, shaking his head*) Nope. There's definitely something missing.

JOE: (*Mirroring concern and looking at the balls and marbles*) What? I got them spinning and they are all in a line...in the order I chose... plus they are all spinning at different speeds and with a chaotic riot of colors like you wished. So Christ...oops...damn...sorry...what is missing? (*Looking most perturbed and confused*)

LEW: *(Looking serious)* Well, it's too dark and it seems too cold. Yeah, I know the middle one is hot...but it's not very bright! Hmm! You know, if you rub your heel on the carpet right here fast enough you should be able to give it a boost of light. Using the electrical spark like we used on the cat.

JOE: *(Amused)* You concerned about not enough light? That's a twist. You hate my nightlight and you're always wearing dark glasses...but you know, you may be right.

(Joe swipes his feet rapidly back and forth on the carpet faster and faster. Lew encourages more friction. Flashes occur off stage directed at Joe, along with the sound of electrical discharge)

LEW: *(Barely hiding his amusement)* That should be enough, Joe, now just touch the big yellow ball

JOE: *(Panting)* Good...(pant)...I was getting tired.

(Stage: cast freeze just at the point that Joe will touch the ball. Narrator fades in. A movie projection of lightning is projected onto the stage and the cast)

NARRATOR: As Joe reached towards the yellow ball, streaks of electrical power stretch towards the sphere, the same yellow sphere coated with the little teeny tiny balls called "Poppers." When the first rapidly spinning ball is touched *(Movie shifts to high school film showing an animated piece of the splitting of the atom splitting more atoms etc)* it pops into two pieces, sending those pieces into its neighbors. They in turn, being mindless and unoriginal beings, follow suit ad infinitum. This results in first one "pop" then more, and more. Then into the sound akin to a barbecue grill igniting when utilizing racing nitro fuel instead of charcoal lighter. Sort of like this...

(All actions occur simultaneously. Amplified sound of a barbeque igniting. Movie shows a series of nuclear explosions. Flash powder is ignited from behind the yellow ball. Strobe light blankets stage as Joe is thrown back from the center of the rug. Lew is laughing and rolling on the stage floor)

Joe is thrown very far away from the bright (VERY BRIGHT) yellow ball. In Joe's haste to evacuate the immediate area he lands on the fifth ball smashing it into a billion pieces *(this winds up following the original path just a bit more spread out than he had ever planned)*. Then in his hectic flight and scramble, his head hit the last spinning

marble knocking it out of its normal plane by about 40 degrees. Lou becomes hysterical in his laughing fit, almost to the point of being beyond good taste. He then throws another ball into the mess; this flies so far out of alignment with the rest that there is no telling when it will find it's way back into the circle. In his throes of amusement, spittle flew and struck a few marbles. A few caused chips to fly and spin on their own around their parent orb. Tears streaked from his eyes and flew in long erratic ellipses around Joe's creation leaving vaporous trails.

(Lights return to normal, film stops, as Narrator fades out)

LEW: *(Laughs hysterically rolling around holding his sides)*

JOE: *(Dusting himself off, with anger)* Damn you! Lucifer, it's not freak'n funny. This thing is no good anymore, it's out of whack...damn, you. Shut up!...Stop laughing...AH...*Go to HELL, ASSHOLE!* Mom...Lew is not to play here anymore. He's being a great big Putz! (looks sad and dejected at the mess, reaches down and picks up a blue green ball and starts to blow the dust off of it...freezes as stage lights dim)

LEW: *(Gets up and leaves continuing to laugh off stage, slowly fades as stage lights go down)*

NARRATOR: And, as Lucifer faded once again from Jehovah's playroom, the tainted creation is placed in the far corner of the room and was forgotten for some time. Much later in the dark side alley of the galactic spiral arm on the third hard marble of this creation, some type of microbes started to call Jehovah by name. But that, my friends, is another story all together.

(Curtain comes down)

