

# **ONE MAN BAND**

By Chris Gomez

## CHARACTERS

GENE, 32 - A depressed widower trying to cope with a recent accident. His crippling neurosis and delusions isolate him from others and triggers a disturbing unpredictability.

ANDREW, 32 - Gene's best friend. The man Gene has always wanted to be. Confident and free-spirited.

JEANETTE, 35 - Gene's older sister. A kind and busy woman who struggles to maintain a normal life while also caring for her brother and son.

RON, 36 - Jeanette's husband. He is often abrasive, dismissive and cold but loves and supports his family nevertheless.

CINDY, 34 - A close friend of Jeanette and Ron's. Playful and flirtatious.

VERONICA, 35 - A close friend of Jeanette and Ron's. Snarky and outspoken.

STEPHEN, 37 - Veronica's husband who is friends with Jeanette and Ron. Caustic and gruff.

MARC, 34- Cindy's boyfriend who is friends with Jeanette and Ron. Self-centered and childish.

DAVEY, 6 - Jeanette and Ron's son. Curious and bright.

DETECTIVE CAHILL, 45 - A stern and practical detective tasked with interrogating Gene.

## SETTING

A large lake house in a wooded area in the midwest. A hospital.

## TIME

Present Day.

## SCENE ONE

*A single, dim spotlight shines a wide circle around the scene onstage. A small hospital bed faces the audience on centerstage. GENE lies upright in bed and is tightly gripping the edge of the mattress. He is visibly distraught and spaced out, wobbling ever so slightly. He is facing towards where DETECTIVE CAHILL is standing above him to the left side of the bed. His back is to the audience and he is shrouded in shadow. A notepad and pen are in his hands.*

GENE

*(listlessly)*

My father liked to use his belt on me. He liked to drink really hard and spank me with it. Sometimes he was too plowed out of his mind to see me clearly. So he'd swipe my back or face instead ...why did he have us?...why would he have us if he was just gonna drink and ...rough us up until he got bored or pass out?...why did he do anything?...why did he even bother / with

CAHILL

That's not what I asked you, Mr. Pickard. *(Beat)* Let's try this again. How well did you know the murdered party? Were you, at any point, close to them? Or, to your knowledge, were they close to you?

GENE

He hurt me. He hurt me. He hurt me. He hurt me until I was too numb to feel how hard he was hitting me. And then Andrew came. And it made him mad. He didn't like Daddy. He didn't like what he was doing to me-

CAHILL

Andrew? So...*you* were mad? And you didn't like your father? And what does this have to do with Mr.-

GENE

No...no, no, no, *Andrew* was mad. *I* was scared ...scared of what he'd do to Daddy. And he hurt him bad. Because he was hurting me-

CAHILL

Mr. Pickard, you're confused. I understand you're under a lot of stress at the moment but this procedure will go by a lot smoother if you just cooperate with me. I'll ask again, what do you know about the murdered party? More importantly, what was the main source of which that led to your motive to commit murder?

GENE

Me?...ME?! *(Beat)* What does this have to do with me? It was Andrew. He was my best friend. We've been friends for a long, long time...he protected me. But he didn't like what my father did to me. And he didn't like what *that* bad man did to me. So he did what he did to protect me...cause he loved me. And I loved him....

CAHILL

Mr. Pickard ...are you telling me "Andrew" isn't you?

GENE

N-no. No, of course not. Andrew's not here. He went on vacation. He's h-hibernating. It's just me, Gene.

*Beat.*

CAHILL

Listen, Andrew, I don't think we / should be

GENE

He's not here! *I'm* Gene! He's the one who did it to him! I wanted to stop it! But he wouldn't listen! He just wanted to help me and I killed him for it! Ok?! I KILLED HIM!

CAHILL

*(Firmly)*

We've established that already. What I'd like to know is *why*? What motivated you to want to commit such a heinous crime in the first place?

GENE

*(In tears)*

Because he hurt people! People hurt me, so he hurt them back. I didn't want him to do anything but he said they'd leave me alone if he did do something. So I let him! I let him hurt them. Because they were hurting me.

CAHILL

Sir, do you understand the gravity of your situation? A man is *dead*. *You* killed him. It's a hell of a lot more severe than simply "hurting" someone, alright?

GENE

Yes I did. I did it to him. I killed him...I killed him...I killed him...I killed him. I killed Andy ...because he hurt the bad man....

CAHILL

Yes, as I've said before, we've established all of this, Mr. Pickard. But it was unsuccessful. Or at least the suicide was. Now we can't / say for

GENE

W-what?! N-no, he didn't kill himself. *I* did it. *I* killed him. *I* killed Andrew. He died right in front of me!

CAHILL

No ...you didn't. It didn't work. You're still here. The only one who isn't here is the same one I'm questioning you about right now. The same man *you've* committed murder to. Mr. Pickard ...do you understand what's going on?

GENE

I...I ...it was Andrew. He did it. It was him!

CAHILL

*(Irritated)*

Mr. Pickard, if you cannot give me a straight answer about your involvement in Mr. Rushman's murder, I'll have to use more strenuous methods of communication. Do you want that?

GENE

N-no! It wasn't me! It was Andrew! He killed him! I didn't kill that man. Andrew killed him! And then I killed Andrew!

CAHILL

But you *are* Andrew!

GENE

STOP IT! STOP SAYING THAT TO ME!! I'm not Andrew! He's not here anymore! I'm Gene! Just Gene! Gene....just ...Gene ...Andrew is gone. He's...he's....

*GENE begins to quietly sob in his hands as DETECTIVE CAHILL looks on. Lights go dark.*

## SCENE TWO

*TEXT: FOUR MONTHS AGO. Lights slowly come to life over the interior of a large, spacious lakehouse. A huge walled backdrop makes up the surrounding interior with the front door attached near stage left. The entire set is made up of two floors with a small staircase leading up to a window and second door leading to backstage on the top floor and leading down to a space on the ground floor next to the front door. On the ground floor is a large couch and a few armchairs near the door with a table in between, a dining room table with chairs, a kitchen area with a window and a couple end tables with lamps. The front door gently swings open and JEANETTE walks in carrying a few grocery bags and her purse. GENE tentatively follows her inside carrying a large duffel bag.*

JEANETTE

*(while walking in)*

Well...here she is.

*GENE glances around interestingly as she sets down her bags on the dining room table.*

GENE

It's...big.

JEANETTE

Yeah, I know. *(Beat)* It's...it's a bit much but Ron insisted that we, uh, take advantage of the location and get a place with lots of square feet and whatnot. He was really gunning for a huge yard with a view of the lake so Davey had somewhere to play. You know Ron. Loves spending money.

*She laughs awkwardly as GENE nods and takes another glance around. Beat.*

GENE

Is...is he here?

JEANETTE

Ron? No, not yet. But he will be in like...five or ten minutes. Longer if he's decided to get a drink with his colleagues after work. Don't worry. You'll like him.

GENE

Does he know?

JEANETTE

Of course.

GENE

What'd he say?

JEANETTE

He...um...well...you know what? Doesn't matter. He said it was fine. Now why don't you put your stuff down and relax? Are you hungry? I got the groceries so I'll make you whatever you want tonight ok?

GENE

I'm...I'm ok. Thanks.

JEANETTE

Oh? Ok. Yeah, that's fine. But whenever you get hungry, just ask ok? This is your house now too. And you can go wherever you want to...except Ron's office upstairs. He...doesn't like to be disturbed when he's working there. Um ...the TV's over here if you wanna sit and watch something.

GENE

Um...uh that's ok. I just...wanted to see if I could...rest for awhile.

JEANETTE

Ok. Sure. I'll take you upstairs then-

*The door swings open suddenly and DAVEY comes barreling in excitedly. He runs over and latches onto JEANETTE's legs with laughter.*

DAVEY

I'm home, mommy!

*JEANETTE, laughing, swoops down and hoists him into her arms.*

JEANETTE

*(Kissing his face and hair)*

Awwww, how are you baby? Mommy's missed you all day! Did you help daddy with work today?

DAVEY

Yeah! I got to help shred daddy's papers and make copies.

JEANETTE

You did! That's my boy. They should hire you right now to be their little office assistant, shouldn't they?! What else did you do today?

*GENE stands stiffly and frowns as he watches the exchange. RON walks inside carrying his bag and paperwork. He stops upon noticing GENE standing there. JEANETTE looks up at RON and clears her throat. DAVEY examines GENE curiously and clings tighter to his mother.*

Ron...this is Gene. Davey, this is the man I was talking about yesterday. This is your Uncle Gene. Say hi sweetie!

DAVEY

*(Waving)*

Hi!

*GENE waves back nervously. RON sets down his belongings and approaches him.*

RON

Gene...it's good to finally meet you.

*He holds out his hand. GENE stares at it for a second before going in and shaking it.*

GENE

You too...

RON

I..uh, heard about what happened. That's...that's gotta be tough, huh? With the...crash and all...

GENE

Very.

RON

Hmmm ...you know...I know a guy you might like who specializes in this sort of / thing-

JEANETTE

RON! Ron, that's...that won't be necessary. At all. *(To Gene)* We're all very happy to have you here, Gene ok? No place better than here. *(To Ron)* Right?

*RON sighs and nods.*

Right, Davey?!

DAVEY

Yeah!

JEANETTE

Yeah! See? We're all gonna have a great time together. You'll see. Gene, since Ron and Davey are already here, I'll probably start dinner soon. Did you still wanna rest? It's up to you.

GENE

Um...I-I'm just gonna ...call Andrew. Where's your phone?

JEANETTE

Gene...I don't think you should / be

RON

Who's that?

JEANETTE

*(sharply)*

Friend of his...remember, Ron?

RON

Oh...Jesus Christ. Right. That Andrew... Alright, well, I got some stuff to take care of so I'll be upstairs.

*He goes over to kiss JEANETTE and DAVEY and brushes past GENE to exit upstairs through the door.*

JEANETTE

*(Sighing)*

It's over by the door on the wall, Gene.

*She turns back around with DAVEY, strolls over to the kitchen and starts unloading the bags. GENE fumbles over to the landline on the wall and dials a number. He waits for the dial tone as the lights go dark.*

GENE

Andrew?...



### SCENE THREE

*Lights slowly turn on. They settle dimly onto a modest bedroom but just enough to still make out what is onstage. A three-walled backdrop encloses the room. A door is attached to the end of the right wall. Opposite to it is a small bed layered with sheets. A nightstand and lamp sit next to it. An armchair sits in the far right corner. A window on the center wall faces the audience. GENE sits on the sill and is staring out the window. He stands up and begins pacing slowly around the room for half a minute. Then he begins tracing the walls with one hand while staring ahead. He may smile or laugh every now and then before frowning or shaking his head. This lasts for a couple minutes. A knocking comes at the door.*

ANDREW

Knock knock!

*Beat.*

GENE

Who's there?

ANDREW

Police!

GENE

Police who?

ANDREW

Police better get their asses down here and hold me back cause I'm about to smash right through this damn door if you don't open the fuck up!

*GENE runs to the door and unlocks it. ANDREW swings it open suddenly and tackles GENE to the ground in a wild frenzy of laughter and surprise. They wrestle around for a bit until ANDREW finally relents and slides back, panting.*

GENE

What the hell?! Don't scare me like that!

ANDREW

Awww, you can't tell me you weren't at least expecting that though right? Thought I was gonna find you out here behind a closed door and *not* pull off a grand entrance? C'mon! You know me better than that, Gene.

GENE

Unfortunately. And you didn't find me ...I told you how to get here. Weeks ago, too! Took you long enough. It wasn't that hard.

ANDREW

Touché. Then again, they really barred this place up haven't they? It was like looking for fuckin' Bigfoot around here. Near impossible. So many detours...

GENE

Can't see why that would bother you in any way.

ANDREW

Ain't nothing wrong with a slow ride! I like a little detour here and there. Would've been boring otherwise. But that's ok. The more stops, the longer the journey. And the more worthwhile the rendezvous, am I right? What can I say? Luck's always kinda been my thing.

GENE

Really not in the mood, Andy ...you should know that better than anyone.

ANDREW

Nah...I bet you are. You're just being a stick in the ass...again. *(Laughs)* Besides, why else would I be here, huh?

*GENE looks down and smiles. ANDREW leans in and chuckles.*

Uh! Is that a smirk I see?! You're so easy, you know? Where would you be without me?

GENE

Probably dead.

*Beat. ANDREW shakes his head and frowns.*

ANDREW

Eh...maybe. But if that were true, you'd be laying down in some box six feet underground with only the worms and maggots to keep you company. Just be glad that truck only screwed up your arm instead of slamming you headfirst into the windshield. Now *that* is some damn good luck right there.

GENE

Well...not everyone can walk away from that with only a busted arm.

*Beat.*

ANDREW

It wasn't your fault, you know? You can't blame yourself for what happened. She was the driver. Not you.

GENE

But I was the one instructing wasn't I? It was my responsibility. To take care of both of us. Now I can't even take care of one of us. Cause the other one's not here anymore.

ANDREW

Well, technically, they are. They're just ...sleeping it off! On a vacation. Hibernating...like a bear!

GENE

A soft... sweet... warm... gentle little bear (*Sigh*)... Andy, when is she coming back?

ANDREW

No idea, Geney. Not a clue when. Or how. But she will.

GENE

You're sure? How do you know?

ANDREW

She's done it before, hasn't she? Can't stay away from you too long can she?! *I* bet she will. She wasn't done with any of us yet. And she's definitely not done with you. Trust me. She's got too much to do here! We haven't reached the end of that book yet. Not even halfway through as a matter of fact. A dozen or so chapters have yet to be cracked open. Em will be here soon. I know it.

GENE

And the others?

ANDREW

Well, that depends.

GENE

On what?

ANDREW

On how much your folks are willing to let us drop by.

GENE

They'll let you! They have to! At least I know my sister will. I'm not so sure about her husband though.

ANDREW

*She* will? She thinks we're a bad influence. That you can't have us bothering you at a time like this. At least that's what you said, right? Besides, you haven't talked to her in... years.

GENE

I know. But she's unhappy about it. Been trying to make up for it. I can tell. She's always watching her choice of words whenever I'm in the room. Especially when Ron's nearby. She lets me sleep in if I want. Always gives me an extra helping of sugar or butter for my coffee and bread in the morning. I get the first slice of anything. Not that I ever eat any of it. I don't even care. My stomach must have shrunk since the crash. Cause nothing ever tastes as sweet as it used to. She tries. But it's getting annoying having her hover over me. She even took time off of work for me. The only time she's not here is when she runs errands and Ron is too busy with work to watch me. Let's me walk around the house and anywhere outside in the yard if I want to. But I think she's afraid I'll...try running away or throwing myself over a ledge or something. So she watches me while I stroll. She doesn't think I know that. I always do. She won't even let me near the lake. I suppose she assumes I'll wander in too far and not care enough to stop wandering deeper and deeper until my head is gone. But I'm not interested in that. The chance of any of that happening scares me too much. And I have enough to be scared about as is.

ANDREW

Ahhh, gotcha. So that's where they're at. At least she seems charitable. That works. Will it be enough for us to come by, even if they're both here, though?

GENE

I don't know. Ron definitely won't. I don't think he likes me. He doesn't know me. And he's always...suspicious of what I'll do. But then again, so is Jeanette. It doesn't matter. I don't know them. And they don't know me. But you do. I can't be by myself here. I need you. I need all of you. I need Em.

ANDREW

And you have us. You know you do. Remember what I said? We don't have much. We don't have anybody else. Nobody wanted any of us, so they threw us all away. We couldn't make something out of what we used to have. But we did make something out of each other. Nobody's gonna rip one of our own from the party without a fight, ok? It's been too long. Can't break up the band now, can we?

GENE

No. We can't. But maybe I can persuade them. Make them see that I'll be better off if I have all of you with me. Then maybe they'll listen. Once they see how much you guys matter. I'll beg for as long as I'm here if I have to.