

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS CRIME

a short play

by

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DAYLIGHT SAVINGS CRIME

Characters

Laura: A clever, energetic, and determined protagonist. 25–45.

Kyle: Laura’s easygoing but precise-minded boyfriend. 25–45.

Dr. Secondhand: A foppish, campy, lovable, not-at-all-scary villain (in the tradition of such characters as Snidely Whiplash from *Dudley Do-Right*, Zachary Smith from *Lost in Space*, and Siegfried from *Get Smart*). He is a cartoonish blend of maniacal ambition, cuddly ineffectuality, juvenile sulkiness, and buffoonish conceitedness. His outfit should be a ridiculous combination of outlandish and shlumpy, like a mid-twentieth-century genius supervillain wearing a homemade costume. 45–65.

Time: The Present

Place: Outside the Daylight Savings and Loan building

(The stage is empty except for a small plastic kiddie pool that is set upstage.)

(LAURA and KYLE enter; they are supposed to be exiting the door of the Daylight Savings and Loan building, which is out of sight in the wings. LAURA carries a wine bottle, a receipt, and an argyle sock. They do not see SECONDHAND.)

LAURA

Well, that didn't take long. I thought there might be a line.

KYLE

(Looking back offstage, in the direction they've come from)

It's funny that I never noticed this bank before: Daylight Savings and Loan.

(Turning his attention to LAURA)

Anyway, that must be a pretty special bottle of wine, for you to have kept it in a safe-deposit box.

(Laughing)

Are you sure I'm worth it?

LAURA

(Laughing with him, taking his hand)

Of *course* you're worth it. And I told you, I want to make our anniversary really special. But this isn't wine.

(She passes him the bottle, so he can examine it.)

KYLE

Huh? It sure looks like a wine bottle. What is it, then? Mead or something?

(Scrutinizing the bottle, guessing wildly)

Balsamic vinegar? Bubble bath?

LAURA

Read the vintage.

KYLE

(He does so.)

It says 1996. So?

LAURA

No, read the rest of it.

KYLE

The rest of it?

(He looks more closely at the label. Reads.)

1996 . . . March 3rd, 2 a.m. Wow, that is definitely the most *specific* beverage I've ever encountered.

(He passes the bottle back to her.)

LAURA

It's not a beverage.

KYLE

Oh. Well, what is it, then?

LAURA

It's time.

KYLE

(He looks around, puzzled.)

Time for what?

LAURA

No, it's *time*.

(She holds up the bottle.)

In here.

KYLE

Oh, *thyme*? Like the herb?

LAURA

No, *time*. Like the intangible chronological paradigm.

KYLE

Ah, yes, I see.

(Beat)

Uh . . . *what*?

LAURA

Look, Kyle, you've heard of "time in a bottle," haven't you?

KYLE

(He is relieved to be on firmer ground.)

Sure—it's a John Denver song.

LAURA

No, it's Jim Croce, actually.

KYLE

Oh, right—of course. I must have been thinking of "Grandma's Feather Bed."

LAURA

And . . . here it is.

(She gestures at the bottle.)

KYLE

Grandma's feather bed?

LAURA

No, time in a bottle. Courtesy of my great-uncle Hugo.

KYLE

Hugo . . . Have I met him?

LAURA

Nah. he's been dead since 1996. That's the point.

KYLE

The point of what?

LAURA

The point of why we have Uncle Hugo's extra hour.

KYLE

His *extra hour*? How in the world did Hugo end up with an *extra hour*?

LAURA

The same way we all do: he gave up an hour when the clocks were turned ahead for Daylight Savings Time in the spring . . . meaning that when it was time to set the clocks back again in the fall, he had an extra hour waiting. However, on this occasion—1996—by the time the extra hour was available for redemption, Hugo had passed away.

KYLE

You mean . . . he died in between giving up the Daylight Savings Time hour and getting it back?

LAURA

Precisely. On June 27, I believe.

(She makes a perfunctory swipe at a sentimental tear.)

And, by the terms of his will, the extra hour was put in trust for his great-niece, yours truly.

KYLE

I *see*.

LAURA

(Affectionately)

And, until you came along, I'd never met anyone worth spending an extra hour *with*. So to celebrate our first anniversary, I thought we could spend Hugo's hour together. It's just a matter of finding the time.

(She chuckles snortingly, showing off the bottle again and elbowing him in the ribs.)

Get it? Finding the *time*.

Yes, that's cute.

KYLE

(During the dialogue that follows, DR. SECONDHAND sneaks onstage, unseen by LAURA and KYLE, and lurks in the vicinity of the kiddie pool.)

Actually . . .

LAURA

(She looks at the receipt.)

It's closer to an hour and eighteen minutes now. Compound interest, you know. Oh, plus this argyle sock.

(She holds it aloft.)

KYLE

Yeah, I was going to ask you about that.

LAURA

Well, according to the family lawyer, one of Hugo's socks disappeared into a black hole the week he died—as socks do—and it ended up coming back to the estate with the DST hour. So I get to keep it.

KYLE

Makes sense. So . . . what does one even *do* with a 1996 hour?

LAURA

Oh, you know . . . you can get an AOL account, do the Macarena, stuff like that.
(Frisky)

But *we* can do whatever we want with it. In fact, I was thinking we might . . .

(She whispers intimately in his ear.)

KYLE

(Pleased by her suggestion)

Sounds good! I mean, all we'd have to do is reverse the last two digits . . .

(LAURA and KYLE exchange amorous glances and gestures while the audience takes a moment to process the “sixty-nine” joke. Then, as they continue their conversation, SECONDHAND creeps up on them.)

KYLE

Hey . . . if we make any incidental purchases while we're using Hugo's hour, will we pay 1996 prices?

LAURA

Good question. I'm not sure how that all works, but I—

(SECONDHAND snatches the bottle from her.)

LAURA

Hey! Give that back!

SECONDHAND

No. It's mine now.

LAURA

(She looks him over. She is not impressed with his appearance. Scoffing.)

Yours? According to *what* reasoning?

SECONDHAND

According to the dictum, "Possession is seven and an eighth of the law."

KYLE

Don't you mean nine tenths of the law?

SECONDHAND

Yes. Thank you. I always get that confused. Seven and an eighth is my hat size.

LAURA

Who the hell are you, anyway?

SECONDHAND

My card.

(He hands it to her.)

LAURA

(Reading)

"*Solomon Shaw, erotica author*"?

SECONDHAND

Damn, sorry. That's my other card.

(He digs out a second card and proffers it.)

Here.

(LAURA takes the new card, and though SECONDHAND is expecting her to return the first one, she deliberately pockets that—to check out later. She reads the new card.)

LAURA

Dr. Secondhand, collector of heirloom ticks and tocks. "Dr. Secondhand"?

SECONDHAND

At your service. Or, to be more accurate, *my* service.

(He laughs a campy, theatrical laugh.)

LAURA

Look, buster, that's my late, great uncle Hugo's hour.

SECONDHAND

Not anymore, it isn't.

(He steps nimbly out of her reach and unscrews the lid of the bottle. With a dramatic flourish.)

First, I'll pour it into the hot tub.

(He moves toward the kiddie pool.)

LAURA

Hey—what are you . . . ?

KYLE

(Indignantly, as he's a stickler for accuracy)

That's not a *hot tub*. That's a plastic kiddie pool, like you'd get at K-Mart.

SECONDHAND

(Down to earth)

Look, do you have any idea how expensive a real hot tub is? The neighbors were giving *this* away for free.

(Now beaming manically with self-infatuation)

And with *my* expert knowledge, it was easily converted into a time-laundering machine.

(He does a brief version of the big campy laugh.)

LAURA and KYLE

(Together)

A time-laundering machine?

SECONDHAND

Exactly. My patented process removes all traces of human DNA from the proprietary temporal elixir, while preserving the raw time content intact.

(Lecturing out to the audience)

In any isosynchronous system, the subcrystalline helical metadata is fundamentally *fragmentatable* with respect to the chromomolecular superstructure.

KYLE

(He has no idea what SECONDHAND is talking about, but he's fascinated by the technobabble and wants to show interest. Nodding knowingly.)

I'll say it is.

(LAURA gives him a dubious sideways look.)

SECONDHAND

And this, my friends, is the only device of its kind in existence. Another fellow tried to manufacture one a few years ago, but my lawyers soon put an end to that. I was awarded *ten thousand dollars* in damages.

KYLE

You're kidding. In a court of law?

SECONDHAND

(Sarcastically)

No, dummy, in a court of *badminton*.

(He rolls his eyes to punctuate the retort.)

After just twenty minutes in my machine—well, twenty-five if I use the “spin” cycle—that hour of yours will *never* be traceable to Uncle Hugo. It will have become part of my vast storehouse of appropriated surplus hours. Why, do you realize how many people pass away each year between the first Sunday in March and the first Sunday in November?

(To audience)

That period spans roughly two thirds of the entire year.

(Once again addressing LAURA and KYLE)

Granted, there's a slight increase in deaths during the winter months, so that works against me. But still.

(Rubbing his hands together, with cartoonishly maniacal greed)

All those forfeited hours . . . why, it's an enormous, untapped black market—and I have it all to myself!

LAURA

(Aghast)

And just what do you plan to *do* with all this extra time, now that you've *stolen* it?

SECONDHAND

(Matter-of-factly)

Oh, I'm thinking of taking up crossword puzzles . . . maybe some gardening, a little travel . . . And if that wears thin, there's always making faces in the mirror—though attendance is down lately.

LAURA

Look, Dr. Secondhand, I don't want to steal your thunder, or rain on your parade . . .

SECONDHAND

That's a *terrible* mixed metaphor.

LAURA

(Ignoring the interruption)

. . . but I'm going to have to insist that you give me Great-Uncle Hugo's hour back.

SECONDHAND

Boy, was that a bad metaphor.

(Scrunching up his nose)

P.U.

LAURA

Give it back!

SECONDHAND

(He puts the kiddie pool between himself and his adversaries, thus preventing them from reclaiming the bottle.)

No! It's mine, and that's that.

(He waits for a reaction, which does not come. Anticlimactically.)

Uh . . . any questions?

(LAURA and KYLE look at each other, unsure what to do next. Finally, KYLE speaks.)

KYLE

Yes: What did you do before you became a Daylight Savings Time pirate?

SECONDHAND

I was an orchestra conductor.

LAURA

You? They let *you* near an orchestra?

SECONDHAND

Certainly. I was extraordinarily good at

(He turns to the audience to deliver the punch line, playing it "big.")

keeping the time.

(He turns back to LAURA and KYLE.)

Why, I've conducted all the great operas.

(During the dialogue that follows, LAURA and KYLE advance slowly and nonchalantly on the kiddie pool, but SECONDHAND, in an equally leisurely fashion, circles around it and thus remains continually out of reach.)

KYLE

Really? All the Italian operas?

SECONDHAND

Yes.

LAURA

And the German ones?

SECONDHAND

Naturally.

KYLE

And . . . uh . . . the Russian?

SECONDHAND

Of course-akov.

(Beat. They have all stopped moving now.)

SECONDHAND

That's also how I got the doctorate—it's in musicology.

KYLE

Ah, so you're not a "real" doctor, then, you're just a—

SECONDHAND

(Fiercely)

Watch it, kid. We PhDs are *very* touchy about that.

(More mildly, now)

Any other questions?

LAURA

Um . . . why are you dressed that way?

SECONDHAND

(Insecurely)

You think it's too much? I have another scarf that's just black.

LAURA

Yeah, that might be better. You should keep the ridiculous laugh, though. Don't you think, Kyle?

KYLE

Absolutely. The laugh is definitely working for me.

SECONDHAND

Oh, thank you! That's great to hear. I've put a lot of work into that laugh, you know.

LAURA

Well, it shows.

SECONDHAND

(Gently, with uncharacteristic humility)

Aw, thanks. Hey, listen, I really appreciate your feedback.

KYLE

No problem.

SECONDHAND

Really, it's a huge help.

LAURA

Well, good. So . . .

(She clears her throat.)

May I have my uncle's hour back now?

SECONDHAND

(Firmly)

No.

LAURA

(Taking him by surprise, she finally corners him.)

Seriously? Come on, dude.

SECONDHAND

No!

(He pushes LAURA away, then stands back and chugs the contents of the bottle.)

There! As soon as my system absorbs your great-grandfather's hour—

KYLE

Great-*uncle*.

SECONDHAND

Whatever. Like I was saying, as soon as it's in my system, I'll be able to jump an hour ahead of you two. You'll never catch up with me then.

LAURA

Damn you, Dr. Secondhand!

KYLE

But wait—doesn't that mean you'll be *spending* the extra hour just to have successfully stolen it? Sounds like a wash to me.

SECONDHAND

(He shrugs.)

Hey, it's only a hobby.

(Beat)

That's funny: I really should have jumped ahead of you by now—but you're still here.

(Suspiciously)

Say, you two weren't already standing there for an hour before I arrived, were you?

KYLE

(Defensively)

No.

SECONDHAND

(Scrutinizing the bottle)

I don't understand it . . . the lid was perfectly tight . . .

LAURA

(Grabbing the bottle)

Let me see that.

(Looking at the label)

There's something funny about this, now that I think about it . . .

(Reading)

March 3, 1996. March, 1996.

(Suddenly)

Of course-a-kov!

KYLE

What?

LAURA

In the 1990s, Daylight Savings Time didn't begin in March—that came later. In other words, at the time of Hugo's death, DST always began on the first Sunday in *April*.

KYLE

But I don't get it.

LAURA

Don't you see . . . if this were *really* Great-Uncle Hugo's bequeathed hour, it would say . . .

(Does quick calculations on her fingers, abacus-style)

April 7th—*not* March 3.

KYLE

(Excited)

So then this hour was . . .

LAURA

Precisely: a forgery!

SECONDHAND

What? Let *me* see that!

(He grabs the bottle back.)

Damn it! I thought it looked familiar.

(Rolling his eyes.)

This is *my* forgery.

LAURA

What?

SECONDHAND

Yes, I remember now . . . I used someone else's extra hour from 1996 to go *back* to 1996 and substitute this forgery for your uncle's extra hour—so I could make off with the real one.

KYLE

Ahem. Once again, I must point out that you *used up* one pilfered hour simply to acquire another pilfered hour. There's no net gain.

SECONDHAND

Oh, shut up.

LAURA

But then what did you do with my uncle's hour?

SECONDHAND

(He shrugs.)

I haven't the faintest idea. Nineteen-ninety-six was a long time ago, you know.

LAURA

(Sternly)

All right, Dr. Secondhand, you've had your fun . . .

SECONDHAND

Well, it wasn't *that* much fun.

LAURA

You owe me, buster. You owe me . . . uh . . . *small* time.

KYLE

Yeah!

LAURA

One hour and eighteen minutes, to be precise.

KYLE

And an argyle sock!

LAURA

No, we still have that.

(She holds it aloft again.)

SECONDHAND

(Sheepishly, clearing his throat)

Uh, actually, no, that's also a forgery.

LAURA

(Incredulously)

A forged *argyle sock*?

SECONDHAND

Yes. It's just an ordinary, cheap gym sock that I dusted with some argyle *glitter*. It's a craft thing . . . I have an Etsy shop.

(He hands LAURA another business card. This one she tosses unceremoniously, without even looking at it.)

LAURA

Never mind the Etsy shop. I said you owe me an hour and eighteen minutes, Secondhand.

(She is really in his face now.)

What are you going to do about it?

SECONDHAND

(Intimidated)

All right, all right—calm down!

(Thinking)

Now, let's see . . . Oh! I know.

(Smoothly)

There's a little property I have out at the Cape.

LAURA

(Guardedly)

Yes . . . ?

SECONDHAND

Beautiful place, fully renovated. And I tell you what I'm going to do. In exchange for your seventy-eight minutes, I'll let you have seventy-*nine* minutes' use of this lovely beachfront property, whenever you like.

LAURA

(Considering the proposition)

Well, I *guess* that'll be OK . . .

(LAURA exchanges glances with KYLE, who seems to agree that it's an acceptable offer.)

LAURA

(With a businesslike insistence)

As long as there's nothing *shady* about it. I mean, do you promise us you have the legal right to use the property—and to let *us* use it?

KYLE

And to rent it to us for *minutes* instead of money?

SECONDHAND

Yes, yes, absolutely. You see, it's a

SECONDHAND, LAURA, and KYLE
(Together, out to audience)

Time-share.

(KYLE and LAURA groan. SECONDHAND shrugs.)

(The End)