

Double Walker

by

Mark Cornell

Mark Cornell
Chapel Hill, NC
310-738-0796
markcornell53@yahoo.com

DOUBLE WALKER

By Mark Cornell

Characters:

Alex, 40s

Peter, 40s/50s

The doppelganger

Various patrons, all non-speaking.

Setting:

A cafe.

Note: This play can only be done with identical twins. For the purposes of surprise, the character of the doppelganger should not be listed in the program. The doppelganger should be on stage the entire play, but obstructed by the various patrons, who can be played by actors from the other plays (if part of a festival).

Lights up on a busy cafe with many patrons. ALEX sits center stage with coffee. His laptop is open on the table in front of him. ALEX is in jeans. He is sitting on a red hoodie, crumpled, and mostly unseen, on his chair. PETER enters, looking around, as if looking for someone. He rubs his arms, suddenly chilled. PETER spots ALEX. He hesitates, then approaches.

PETER

(stunned)

Alex?

ALEX looks up.

PETER (cont'd)

Oh, my God. It *is* you.

ALEX

(blindsided)

Hey, Peter.

PETER

Wow, it's so good to see you. How are you?

ALEX doesn't get up.

ALEX

I'm good, I'm good.

PETER

Wow, how long has it been?

ALEX

Uh...five years.

PETER

Of course, right. This is unbelievable.

ALEX

Yeah. Sure is.

PETER

You live here?

ALEX

I do.

PETER

Yeah?

ALEX
Slower pace. Nicer people. Listen, uh...

ALEX looks around, nervous.

PETER
I should move down here. The weather is fantastic.

ALEX
Wh-what are you doing here?

PETER
There's a genome conference. We're down by the water. At the Hilton.

ALEX
Listen, Peter-

PETER
Do you mind if I sit? I'm going to get some coffee.

PETER turns like he's going to order.

ALEX
Yes, I do mind.

PETER stops.

PETER
What?

ALEX
(paranoid)
You shouldn't be here.

PETER
Why?

ALEX
I can't explain it. But I want you to get out of here right now.

ALEX stands in a threatening manner.

PETER
I'm not leaving.

ALEX takes PETER by the arm.

ALEX
Goddammit, Peter, get the fuck out of here!

PETER
No!

PETER frees himself. His jovial manner, which was fake, is gone.

PETER (cont'd)
(confrontational)

What is wrong with you? We weren't just colleagues you and I. We were friends. You were in my wedding. My daughter adored you. Don't you remember? The summers at the lake? You were part of my family. (beat) I've had to answer for you for five years. No more. I'm sitting down. I want you to sit down with me. I want to talk to you.

ALEX makes a sudden move for the door, but PETER immediately grabs him.

PETER (cont'd)
Whoa, whoa, whoa, you're not going anywhere.

ALEX
You don't understand.

PETER
Sit down.

PETER forces ALEX back into his chair. PETER sits, too. From here on out, the other patrons, uncomfortable with the sudden cold, will slowly, one-by-one, or in pairs, exit.

PETER (cont'd)
What happened to you, Alex? After the shooting, you just, sort of, disappeared.

ALEX
Yeah. I had to.

PETER
I can understand, but...

ALEX
I should have told people, I know.

PETER
Yeah. We were worried about you.

ALEX
I'm sorry.

PETER
There was a fucking tragedy, Alex. The department was in chaos. And then you went missing-

ALEX

I'm sorry. My intention was not to leave in a lurch like that.

PETER

The campus police, the local cops were already on high alert-

ALEX

I didn't mean to scare everyone.

PETER

We didn't know where you went. We got no word, no nothing.

ALEX

I'm sorry.

PETER

We thought...that something terrible...

ALEX

Yes, I'm sure you did.

PETER

My daughter cried herself to sleep for a year. My wife was... (beat) What happened to you?

ALEX

Leave it alone, Peter. *Please.*

PETER

No. I'm not going to. You were my closest friend. I deserve some answers.

ALEX

This isn't a coincidence, is it? (beat) There's no conference, is there?

PETER

I want to know the truth.

ALEX

How did you find me?

PETER

I'm asking the questions. What happened?

ALEX

Goddammit, Peter.

PETER

Talk to me, Alex. Right now.

ALEX takes a long time to respond.

ALEX

After Tracy was killed, I...it was all pretty intense.

PETER

I know. We were all...

PETER gestures with his hands to suggest "crazy."

ALEX

Right. But I was *there*, Peter. It happened in my fucking office.

PETER

I know.

ALEX

One of my students was shot to death. Two, if you count James shooting himself. It was difficult to deal with.

PETER

I *know*.

ALEX

You don't know anything. (beat) Tracy's mother confronted me one day, a few weeks later, in the grocery store. I was still just in a daze, just stunned, and just so, you know, like a zombie, and she comes up to me and says "You should be dead, not Tracy."

PETER

Ah, fuck.

ALEX

I know she was grieving, and just totally destroyed-

PETER

She was, yes, but that's bullshit.

ALEX

I know she was just lashing out, but it just rocked me. And I realized, she was right, of course. I should have died. James came into my office to kill me. His poor grade in my class. Getting rejected from grad school. He blamed me. (beat) I don't know how he missed me. I was at point blank range. (beat) After Tracy's mother said what she said, I just started feeling guilty in the worst way, you know? That I was alive. That the whole thing could have been avoided if I had just given James a "C." I couldn't eat or sleep. (beat) And then, one day, long after I'd been put on leave, I was at the movies, just to take myself away. And in the middle of the movie, I look over, in the dark, and I see someone, just a couple seats over, who looked exactly like me.

PETER

What do you mean?

ALEX

I mean, the fucking guy was *me*. Not someone who looked kind of like me, but someone who was exactly me.

PETER

(not believing him)

OK. How can you be sure?

ALEX

The guy was wearing the same clothes I had on, same old Red Sox hat, crossing his legs just like me. It was terrifying. I hadn't been sleeping and I thought I was hallucinating. Or that my eyes were playing tricks because it was dark in the theatre. Or it was some gag related to the movie, I didn't know. Some 3-D shit. But my eyes adjusted in the dark and it was clear I was looking at myself. And not a fucking mirror.

PETER

Did he speak to you?

ALEX

No.

PETER

What did you do?

ALEX

I just stared at him, and he stared at me. Seemed like forever. He had absolutely no expression on his face. None. Creepy. And then, I just got up and walked out. I went outside and walked around. Completely thrown. It was raining. I was soaked. I ended up downtown. I was lost. (beat) Then a week later, I saw him again. I was on the subway and it was late. And we went into the 3rd street tunnel. But the train lights went out. And then there was this "bang, bang, bang!"

ALEX slams his hand down on the table three times.

ALEX (cont'd)

And the lights came on and there he was again. At the end of the car, just looking at me. And the train car got so cold, so quickly. Freezing. Weird. We came out of the tunnel, the lights flickered, and he was gone again. And I knew, I knew who he was. My doppelganger.

PETER

Your doppelganger?

ALEX

Yes.

PETER

All right, you saw some guy who looked like you, so what? Facebook had a whole thing about it. Doppelganger Week. Which celebrity do you look like? Mine was Aaron Eckhart. It doesn't mean anything.

ALEX

A doppelganger, Peter, is not some shit on Facebook. It's your paranormal double. It's an omen.

PETER

Meaning what?

ALEX

Meaning, if you see your double, you will die. I saw my double because I was supposed to die that day in my office. And I didn't. And the cosmos was saying "it's time for you to die, Alex! We fucked up and it's time to make it right! And it's going to happen at any moment, too! Step off the curb and *bam!*" (beat) That's when I left the city and came here. I just left everything, the apartment, my clothes, my books, everything, and I got in the car and just drove. Until I stopped. Here. And I've been fine. Actually, I've been great. I don't teach. I work for myself. I'm an IT guy. No one knows my story here. I've disappeared. I'm happy. And I haven't seen my doppelganger again.

PETER

Why do you think that is?

ALEX

Because I left that life behind. I haven't seen anyone at all from my former life. No one. (beat) Except you. Here. Today.

ALEX looks gravely at PETER.

PETER

Alex...I...I want you to come home.

ALEX

You don't believe me.

PETER

You can stay at my house. I can get you a lectureship.

ALEX

Are you out of your mind?

PETER

I can help you. There is nothing to fear.

ALEX
You think I am making this up?

PETER
Alex, I know some people you can talk to-

ALEX
You'd better go now, Peter.

PETER
You don't have to be afraid anymore.

ALEX
Get out of here.

PETER
You don't have to keep blaming yourself for what happened!
You didn't pull the trigger!

ALEX
I mean it, Peter, get the fuck out of here! I never want to
see you again!

PETER
Don't be this way.

ALEX
If you're truly my friend, you will leave. Now.

PETER, gets up, starts out.

ALEX
Peter?

PETER stops.

PETER
Yeah?

ALEX
Do me a favor. Pretend like you never saw me. OK?

PETER
I can't do that. I'm not going to do that.

ALEX
("get out")
Goodbye, Peter.

PETER
Goodbye, Alex.

Turning, PETER leaves. After he goes, the last group of patrons leaves, revealing one man, at a table in the back, in a red hoodie (the hood is up) who has his back to ALEX and the audience. ALEX doesn't see him. Feeling frightened at PETER'S appearance, ALEX packs up. Chilled, he puts on his hoodie (and puts the hood up), which he has been sitting on. It should be clear now ALEX is putting on the same hoodie as the man sitting in the back. Bag over his shoulder, ALEX starts out. Just as he is about to get to the door, he stops, sensing something. He turns to the man in the hoodie. The man looks up at him. It's his doppelganger. ALEX gasps. He drops his bag. The doppelganger stands and steps towards ALEX (they should be dressed exactly alike, hoodie, pants, shoes). They look at each other. ALEX and the doppelganger slowly remove their hoods at the same time, like a mirror. They stare at each other.

Slow fade out.

The End