

AIDS GIVES A PARTY
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SYNOPSIS
AIDS GIVES A PARTY

AIDS welcomes his competitors (MALARIA, TB, DIARRHEA, PNEUMONIA and INFLUENZA) to a party. He then asks a favor... which is refused.



AIDS GIVES A PARTY

Cast of Characters

AIDS.....young actor; strong; self-confident

DIARRHEA.....

TB.....

MALARIA.....

PNEUMONIA....

INFLUENZA.....old actor; grizzled; tired

(Characters are played by actors in heavy, vividly colored, makeup. Or masks. If the budget permits, fright wigs can be added. Attire should be loose, baggy, so that men and women are indistinguishable.)

RE: CAST SIZE. If the director chooses, the cast can be cut to five by leaving out PNEUMONIA. The only change of significance would be to cut the stage direction and last line of dialogue on page four. At the top of page five:

TB

Well, if PNEUMONIA does make it we'd have him plus AIDS, DIARRHEA, MALARIA and me, TB. That's one virus and three bacteria.

The rest of his lines can be distributed among the other characters as the director wishes.

AIDS GIVES A PARTY

(Discover a living room; AIDS is scurrying around, getting the place tidy for his expected guests. There is a knock at the door; AIDS opens it.)

AIDS

Hi, come on in. I'm HIV but most people think of me as AIDS, so just call me that. I'm new to the 'hood so I thought I'd throw a little party to meet my neighbors. Welcome!

DIARRHEA

Hi; my name's DIARRHEA. I've seen you around.

AIDS

DIARRHEA? Nice to meet you. But, have I heard of your work? Oh, I mean, we all know about "the trots," but...are you sure you're at the right party?

DIARRHEA

(laughs)

Oh, yeah. I get that a lot. I mean, what with you in the neighborhood, who worries about me? Maybe it would help if I told you some of my aliases: cholera...dysentery? Ring a bell?

AIDS

Oh, yes...forgive me! God; how could I have doubted... And, I know you're just being modest, but don't you sometimes work as typhoid?

DIARRHEA

Very good! You do know your germs, don't you? You

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didn't invite me, actually. But, when I heard that you were having a party for the big players, I knew I'd be welcome. It's common knowledge but I AM one of the Big Six.

Not

AIDS

Of course you're welcome.... more than welcome .

(knock on the door; AIDS answers it, MALARIA and TB enter)

Hi, my name is AIDS. Welcome to the party; so glad you could make it. And you're ... don't tell me ... MALARIA . And I'll bet you're TUBERCULOSIS.

TB

You're good; nailed us the first time around. But, please, call me TB.

T.B AIDS

I'd be honored to ~~Let~~ me introduce you ... this is DIARRHEA.

MALARIA

Hey....we've known each other for centuries. Good to see,

Trotster,

DIARRHEA

Good to see you, too. But, please no trots joke tonight.

AIDS(to TB)

Well, I'm so glad you two could make the party. You and MALARIA have been my idols. Ever since I got in the business, I've been watching your work. I must say, you have piled up some amazing figures...just amazing.

MALARIA

Aw, thanks. Nice of you to notice. Of course, TB and I have been in the game for a long, long time. So naturally, we've gotten pretty good at it.

AIDS

And you do it with mosquitoes! What a delivery system. A bit later, I'm going to ask a favor 'cause your tally is awesome. I checked on Google and could hardly believe what I saw. You rack up a million vice a year!

MALARIA

Yeah, in round numbers. I must say, we could use better score keeping but...what're you going to do? When you work in third world countries, they don't pay all that much attention to WHY a guy stops breathing. A bit unfair, I'd say.

TB

I've noticed that, too. Almost all of my business is in places like that. Still...and I probably shouldn't brag...the CDC gives me credit for a million five vics each year.

AIDS

I know; you are the king of the hill. But, I think I can point out, that you've been getting some help from me lately.

TB

Point taken. You make 'em weak and I mow 'em down!

(they both laugh)

AIDS

Hey, forgive me. What would you like to drink? I've champagne or sodas.

DIARRHEA

Anything but Pepto Bismol

(they all give orders)

AIDS

Let's see who's missing?

TB

Another friend of mine...PNEUMONIA. We do a lot of work together. She phoned; wasn't sure she could make it.

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AIDS

Right! Hope there's no problem. Maybe some new medi~~---~~ *cut*

OTHERS

Don't say it!

DIARRHEA

Don't even think it! I *DREAM* of the tally I could have had if it hadn't been for that interfering Doctor Fleming...him and his penicillin! Oh, how I hate that man.

AIDS

Tell me about it. And now there's Lamivudine and Abacavir and Tenofovir...the list goes on and on---

MALARIA

Please; let's move on to happier topics. PNEUMONIA may be late, but I don't think she'll miss the party. What was it they called her in the last century..."the old man's friend?"

4A

Yes, that's right.

DIARRHEA

But, what's it mean? "The old man's friend"?

AIDS

Well, they didn't really have any medications back then. If you got really sick, you were probably going to die. Old and sick? You were going to die. So, the nurse would open the window and peel back the covers. Little Miss Pneumonia would arrive....

DIARRHEA

So, it was really euthanasia?

MALARIA

Yeah; but at least the old guys went quick. That was the whole point.

DIARRHEA

AIDS

Speaking of "old"...we're going to have an honored guest tonight---

TB

You don't mean The Champ? Influenza himself? .

AIDS

Yes, I do. I spoke with him myself; he said he'd be here.

(knock on the door; AIDS answers)

And you must be...PNEUMONIA.

PNEUMONIA

That I am; thank you so much for inviting me. Sorry if I'm late. I've been so busy...well, we all have, haven't we? Let's see...who's here? We have AIDS, TB, DIARRHEA, and MALARIA. That's one virus and three bacteria.

AIDS

Well, we don't discriminate here by ethnic background. We're all in the same line of work and I just thought it'd be nice if we got together for a chat. Oh, forgive me...

(to late arrivals)

would you like a beer? Or a Coke?

(they order; he gets)

TB

You say we're in the same line of work. That's true. But, you must admit, some of us are better at it than others---

DIARRHEA

OK; let's keep the party polite. We're all at the top of the list...world wide, that is. The damn so-called First World has knocked us about pretty well. But, I still get my million-plus a year.

AIDS

Yes; we're all doing OK. But...let me confess...I do feel a bit envious of some of you...especially TB and MALARIA

MALARIA

Really? Why's that?

(there is a pounding on the door; AIDS answers)

AIDS

(takes a step back; INFLUENZA walks in)

My god; you came! What an honor. Let me introduce you to our other guests...this is TB---

INFLUENZA

Listen, sonny, I know these germs. Known them for, what, a few dozen millennia, at last. I suspect they think I've lost it...can't get the numbers the way I used to. They run up a score of a million, two million a year, and think they've hot shit.

TB

Please; no need to be abusive---

INFLUENZA

Sorry; I'm just a little defensive. It's been a long, long time since I got much respect. Now, people are worrying about SARS or West Nile or mad cow disease. Those johnny-come-latelies! Why, in my day---

(grabs chest; sits)

AIDS

Oh, don't...don't excite yourself. We know your work. Why, just five minutes ago, we were talking about you...you're still The Champ.

TB

Yes; he's the old champ. But, in modesty, who's the new one?

DIARRHEA

Hey; you may be. Or or maybe MALARIA is. Maybe I am. CDC says one thing; World Health Organization says another. Nobody really knows---

PNEUMONIA

Come, ^{DM!} We're all good; we know that! What does it matter? It's just statistics. A couple hundred thousand, one way or the other? Who cares?

TB

Right. It's bad enough with those minor league players getting all the press...let's not fight among ourselves. Every time I read about Ebola or Lyme disease, I just want to throw up. A few hundred, a few thousand! Hardly worth mentioning, in my opinion.

AIDS

I agree. But, now that The Champ is here, I'd dearly love for him to tell us about his glory days---

INFLUENZA

Well, don't mind if I do. It was back in '18...1918, that is. I was king of the hill! For 600 hundred years, nothing had rolled up the numbers the way I was doing.

DIARRHEA

Six hundred years? That'd take us back to the thirteen-hundreds, right? Ah! The plague! The Black Death. Now...there was a major, major player. Took out something like one third of the population. Of Europe, that is. Probably did as well in the rest of the world...nobody kept a record.

OTHERS

Wow; amazing; what a germ that was!

INFLUENZA

Right. And I'd really like to get my hands on the sucker who made up that poem.

MALARIA

Oh, I know the one you mean. "There was a little bird; it's name was Enza. I opened up the window and in-flew-enza."

INFLUENZA

Ha, ha and a hardy-de-har-har. But, do you read the papers? Catch what I'm doing in Asia? I'm working WITH birds! Chickens and ducks mostly. Only getting a little cross-over to humans now but excellent mortality. Excellent.

MALARIA

Really? As much as 50%?

INFLUENZA

Fifty? That's for you kids. I'm getting over 70%.

TB

But, isn't that kind of self-defeating?

AIDS

Self-defeating? How do you mean?

INFLUENZA

TB, you're right. And this is a lesson for all of us. Especially you, AIDS. Yeah, you want mortality...more vics...that's what we're all about. But, you can't take 'em out too soon. Let me tell you how I did it back in my glory days.

AIDS

This was 1918, right?

INFLUENZA

Yeah; what I told you. Guess what my mortality rate was back then.

DIARRHEA

Forty percent? Maybe 45?

INFLUENZA

No, no...way too high. Five per cent.

ALL

Five per cent???

INFLUENZA

That's right; just five. See, you get almost everybody

infected. They ALL carry the germs; spread 'em like confetti. If you're too lethal, knock 'em over too quick, they're just lying there, right? Can't spread the good word, so to speak. No, no; you want your customers to live long enough to walk around. They cough. Sneeze. Get those germs flyin' thru the air, land on new vics. That's how I did it. I tell you, it was beautiful.

TB

So you landed only 5% but still racked up 40 million? Amazing; just amazing.

INFLUENZA

Hey; I could use another drink!

AIDS

Oops; sorry gang, I'm not being a very good host. Here, let me get you another.

(does so for all)

But, maybe now's the time to ask my question.

TB

Your question?

AIDS

Well, more of an observation, really. Remember...just before The Champ arrived...I said I was envious of you, MALARIA? And TB?

MALARIA

Yeah.

AIDS

Let me tell you why. Oh, I did want to get together with you guys. But I also have a problem. And I know you can help.

DIARRHEA

What's the trouble, bro?

AIDS

Well, you know I've been racking up some pretty good numbers. Especially for a young guy. But I just know I could do better---

DIARRHEA

OK, kid; I've watched your work. And I'm impressed. But you have a problem with---

AIDS

---with my delivery system! Yes; I know.

MALARIA

Yep; that's a problem. I've thought so all along. I mean, pal, you are one lethal germ. Give you credit for that. And your vics? Many of them young, strong, healthy. You get in there and, BAM, that's all she wrote. But, I agree..."sharing bodily fluids"...what an old fashioned way to get from one vic to another.

AIDS

I know; I know. It's like I've got the infantry, all right...but I need to go airborne. I mean, where would you be, MALARIA, without mosquitoes?

MALARIA

Where would I be without my li'l flying friends? I'd be in the ash-can of history...a nobody...a non-starter.

Two? TB?

AIDS

And you, Champ? How far do you think you'd have gotten, spreading yourself around the way I've been doing?

INFLUENZA

Hey; I admit it. I'd be in the damn ash-can myself.

T.B.

ME, TOO.

AIDS

OK; so we're all agreed. The only way I can really, really deliver the goods is going by air. Now, which do you think is best? Mosquitoes are good...they're almost every where. And every rainy season, they multiply by the

billions. But, you know, I think I'd really rather go face-to-face, Just think...a cough...a sneeze...and, ka-blam, germs all over the place. So, while I appreciate your work with the mosquitoes, MALARIA, I think I really would like to get around the way The Champ does.

INFLUENZA

Humm-m-m; that's very flattering---

AIDS

Champ; you've been my ideal ever since I came out of Africa. Now, be a pal...tell me, how can I go airborne?

PNEUMONIA

Do you want to tell him or should I?

AIDS

What? What do you mean? All I'm asking is---

INFLUENZA

(to PNEUMONIA)

It's OK; Ill tell him.

(to AIDS)

Yes; we know what you're asking. You want to transmit thru the air. You want more vics. Oh, you're lethal; you're one of the best. And that's a problem for the other guys and me.

AIDS

I don't understand. What are you trying to tell me?

INFLUENZA

The problem is...you're too good. Now, the guys and I thank you for your hospitality. But, the truth is, we've been keeping an eye on you for a long time. Oh, yes; we've met and talked about your tally. Been kind^{OF} in awe, to tell you the truth, about how good you are.

AIDS

OK; I'm good; I want to be better. What's wrong with that?

MALARIA

I'll tell you, AIDS. You're too good. Too damn good for your own good, if you want the truth. And way too damn good for our good.

AIDS

Come on; you're talking in riddles. Why won't you help me?

PNEUMONIA

Because, hot shot, if we did...we think maybe you'd run the table.

AIDS

"Run the table"? You mean...you think I could rack up...100%? All? Everybody? Wow; what a dream! I never...you really think I could do that? Wow!

TB

Exactly. And it's that kind of wild enthusiasm which scares the living crap out of us.

AIDS

But...I'd be the new champion!

INFLUENZA

That you would. And I'd be lying if I said I wouldn't hate to lose the crown. But that's not what's bothering us---

AIDS

Then what is?

DIARRHEA

Think about it. You go airborne. HIV spreads faster and faster, farther and farther. Until, as PNEUMONIA said, you run the table. What happens then?

AIDS

What happens? What do I care what happens?

TB

What happens, you idiot, is that there will be no more vics. The rest of us are out of work! We're gone; finished. Game, set and match...all over.

AIDS

Aw, I couldn't get them all! There's bound to be some island...some pockets where I can't go. Come on, 'FLU', this is my big chance! Help me; tell me how to transmit thru the air!

(the others get ready to leave)

PNEUMONIA

Sorry; not going to happen. You're doing ok; we don't want you doing any better than you are. Thanks for the party.

(all but AIDS leave)

AIDS

(shouts after them)

This isn't the end, you know! I'll wait; I'll watch!
I'll learn! You can't keep me out of the air! And when I
do...I will run the whole damn table.

BLACKOUT