

Title: A PLAY ABOUT A WHEELCHAIR

Author: Daniel Curzon

e-mail: curzon@pacbell.net

tel: 415-297-9220

San Francisco, CA

A Play about a Wheelchair
By _____

CHARACTERS: (2)

CHRIS, any age, either sex

HELPER, any age, either sex

SETTING; A bare stage

(Chris enters with a flying leap.)

CHRIS: (to offstage Helper) Did you see that?

HELPER: (offstage) I did.

CHRIS: How about this? (Leaps and twirls in the air.) Impressive, huh?

HELPER: Very.

CHRIS: I think I can fly! (Rises on tips of toes.) Don't try to stop me now!

(Enter Helper with a vacant wheelchair.)

HELPER: I wouldn't dream of it.

CHRIS: What are you bringing that thing for? Don't you trust me?

HELPER: Just in case.

CHRIS: You're so silly! Worry, worry, worry!

HELPER: It never hurts to have a back-up.

CHRIS: Why don't you sit in it? It's more your style than mine.

HELPER: But then it wouldn't be available, would it?

CHRIS: Well, you're not following me around with that. That's for sure!

HELPER: Let me go over here then. (Moves the wheelchair some distance away.)

CHRIS: I can still see it!

HELPER: How about here? (Moves it farther away.)

CHRIS: It's still visible!

HELPER: I'm afraid this is as far away as I can go.

CHRIS: What a killjoy!

HELPER: Thanks.

CHRIS: Despite you, I intend to have a perfectly terrific time today. What do you think about that?

HELPER: (deliberate non-answer)

CHRIS: I feel like doing a cartwheel. (Does a cartwheel.)

HELPER: Be careful.

CHRIS: It felt fantastic.

HELPER: I'm sure it did.

CHRIS: Moreover, I'm stopping to smell the roses. (Smells imaginary roses in a bush.)

HELPER: How do they smell?

CHRIS: Fantabulous!

HELPER: That good, huh?

CHRIS: And I'm smelling some lilacs too! (Smells a different bush.) You ought to try it sometime, instead of always walking around with that. (Gestures at the wheelchair.)

HELPER: Are we done now?

CHRIS: Hardly! I have just begun the day!

HELPER: What else have you got planned?

CHRIS: I leapt. I did a cartwheel. I smelled the roses and the lilacs. Now I'm going to . . .
(Hesitates.)

HELPER: Yes?

CHRIS: (forcing it) Now I'm going to walk. I don't walk enough.

HELPER: Any particular direction?

CHRIS: No. Just walk. (Walks in place, elaborately enjoying the walk.) This is incredible!

HELPER: It looks like it.

CHRIS: Was that sarcastic?

HELPER: I don't think so.

CHRIS: I think it was.

HELPER: Suit yourself.

CHRIS: I will! I do. And I am!

HELPER: How far have you walked so far?

CHRIS: Twenty miles.

HELPER: Really? So fast?

CHRIS: And nary a twinge anywhere!

HELPER: I'm impressed.

CHRIS: No, you're not! You're jealous. And spiteful.

HELPER: Maybe you're reading into me.

CHRIS: Why would I do that? I have a life. And what do you have?

HELPER: Apparently not as much as you.

CHRIS: Damn straight.

HELPER: Perhaps you're right.

CHRIS: Don't think you can just agree with me and everything will be okay.

HELPER: Are you finished with your walk?

CHRIS: Maybe. Maybe not. And they said I had bone on bone!

HELPER: Were they referring to you head?

CHRIS: Hey!

HELPER: You said not to agree with you.

CHRIS: Agree with me when I want you to, and disagree when I want that!

HELPER: My, but you're demanding.

CHRIS: I am not! I'm just a normal human being.

HELPER: Exactly my point.

CHRIS: I'm going to continue my day now.

HELPER: Okay. (Pushes the wheelchair closer.)

CHRIS: Stop it with that thing! I *get* it!

HELPER: I'm not sure that you do.

CHRIS: I'm going to get old. I'm going to die.

HELPER: That's the easy part.

CHRIS: What are you talking about?

HELPER: Oh, I don't want to be a downer. Continue on!

CHRIS: You are not going to spoil my day! I swear it!

HELPER: Have you tried sky diving?

CHRIS: I have an appointment tomorrow. So there!

HELPER: How about climbing that hill? (Points above the audience's head.)

CHRIS: I have that down for next week. And it's Mount Everest!

HELPER: You have a lot on your plate.

CHRIS: And I'm going to gobble up every morsel of it!

HELPER: Well, good for you!

CHRIS: You bet! I start on my capitals of the world tour in two weeks.

HELPER: Love Paris, hate Parisians.

CHRIS: Should I skip Bangladesh?

HELPER: I would.

CHRIS: What doesn't kill me will make me strong!

HELPER: It'll kill you. Trust me.

CHRIS: You are so negative!

HELPER: You are so positive!

CHRIS: I am going to continue on with my day now, thank you.

HELPER: Somehow I knew that.

CHRIS: You're not dragging me down. Got it?

HELPER: You are so full of . . . life! Who wouldn't cheer you on?

CHRIS: I don't hear much cheering over there?

HELPER: (imitates a cheerleader, but weakly) Go, go, go! Team, team, team!

CHRIS: You're hopeless at it. It's "Go, team, go!"

HELPER: (moving the wheelchair around) Go, team, go! Go, team, go!

CHRIS: Look at that sky! (Points upward.)

HELPER: Is that God behind that cloud?

CHRIS: Where?

HELPER: There! (Points.)

CHRIS: (looking hard) Where?

HELPER: April Fool's!

CHRIS: It's October.

HELPER: I know. . . . October Fool's!

CHRIS: I think I'll hop scotch! (Suddenly does so.)

HELPER: Cute.

CHRIS: I used to be very good at hop scotch. But it fell out of favor.

HELPER: Maybe you can bring it back.

CHRIS: You think so?

HELPER: And you say I'm negative!

CHRIS: I was excellent at running too.

HELPER: Didn't you run a marathon once?

CHRIS: Twice!

HELPER: How did you do?

CHRIS: It didn't matter. It was just the idea of completing the marathon.

HELPER: You were number 412 out of 500, weren't you?

CHRIS: I really don't remember.

HELPER: You remember.

CHRIS: I was 411th!

HELPER: That's not so bad!

CHRIS: Oh, screw you!

HELPER: Hey!

CHRIS: I bet I can beat you in a race.

HELPER: Not likely.

CHRIS: You want to bet?

HELPER: You're on!

CHRIS: For how much?

HELPER: Oh, no money! It's just for the sake of the race.

CHRIS: Okay, you got it. How about from here to the far side there? (Points away from the wheelchair.)

HELPER: How about from there to here? (Points from Chris to the wheelchair.)

CHRIS: You think you're going to get me into the thing. Only you're not.

HELPER: You don't have to sit in it, just race to it.

CHRIS: What if I beat you? Let's sweeten the deal a little bit. What do you say?

HELPER: If you beat me, I'll destroy the wheelchair.

CHRIS: You will?!

HELPER: I'll sell it for scrap metal.

CHRIS: All right! Let's get this show on the road!

HELPER: Just one thing.

CHRIS: What's that?

HELPER: What if I win?

CHRIS: Name your prize.

HELPER: How about if I name it after I win?

CHRIS: You know what? So confident am I about winning, I will take that on.

HELPER: I promise to be fair.

CHRIS: I promise to beat you!

HELPER: Your optimism is infectious.

CHRIS: I hope so. You need some.

HELPER: Like hepatitis.

CHRIS: Where shall we mark the starting point?

HELPER: You mark it. You know how far you can run?

CHRIS: I do. I've built up my strength of late.

HELPER: And I haven't run a race in ages.

CHRIS: You want to back out of the bet?

HELPER: Probably should.

CHRIS: Okay.

HELPER: But I won't. (Moves across the stage, away from the wheelchair.) Far enough?

CHRIS: Any farther and we won't be able to see the finish line.

HELPER: (pointing to the wheelchair) That's the finish line. Agreed?

CHRIS: I can't wait to see that thing in the scrap heap.

HELPER: I'm sure that you do.

CHRIS: You are so smug!

HELPER: I was about to say the same about you. . . . Shall we? (Gets into a sprinter's starting position.)

CHRIS: Don't start without me. (Comes over, gets into a sprinter's position too.) On the count of . . . ?

HELPER: Three, two, one?

CHRIS: How about five to one?

HELPER: Okay.

CHRIS: And I count.

HELPER: Fine. You count.

CHRIS: Ready?

HELPER: Ready?

(They adjust their starting positions.)

CHRIS: Five . . . four . . . three . . . two . . . one – Wait! False start!

HELPER: What?! That wasn't a false start.

CHRIS: Yeah, it was. You cheated.

HELPER: I cheated?! I didn't move an inch.

CHRIS: Yeah, you moved before I said "one." We start *after* I say "one."

HELPER: By all means, let's get the rules clear *before* we start!

CHRIS: Ready?

HELPER: Ready.

(They get into position.)

CHRIS: Five . . . four . . . three . . . two . . . Wait!

HELPER: Oh, for God's sake!

CHRIS: I have a cramp.

HELPER: So?

CHRIS: Let me walk it off.

HELPER: Jesus!

CHRIS: I'm walking it off. (Walks.) I'm walking it off. (Walks) Okay!?

HELPER: You ready? For sure?

CHRIS: Absolutely.

(They get into their sprinters' positions again.)

CHRIS: Five. . . four . . . three . . . two . . . one!

(They sprint toward the wheelchair in slow motion. Halfway there, Chris stops and is now running in place.) (in slow motion voice) No! . . . No!

HELPER: (in slow motion voice) Yes! . . . Yes!

(The Helper gets to the wheelchair first.)

HELPER: (in real time) Well, Chris, it seems that I have won.

CHRIS: What happened? I couldn't move.

HELPER: I know, I know. Want to sit down?

CHRIS: No.

HELPER: You'd better sit down.

CHRIS: Do I have to?

HELPER: You have to.

(The Helper helps Chris into the wheelchair. Chris is reluctant but goes.)

CHRIS: It feels familiar.

HELPER: I'm sorry, Chris.

CHRIS: I've been here for some time, haven't I? (Becomes completely rigid.)

HELPER: You have, my friend. I've lost count of the years. But at least you have these outings now and then. At least you have your mind left, if not speech and movement.

(Chris does not react, is immobilized. The audience realizes that the wheelchair life is Chris's true life. Everything he did before this was just a wishful fantasy.)

HELPER: Come on, it's time to go. (Pats Chris on the shoulder.) Maybe tomorrow we'll play basketball. Would you like that? (Chris of course cannot respond.) That's it then. We'll play basketball! (The Helper wheels Chris off.) You did good today, Chris. Real good. Real good.

SLOW FADE