

Jerry's Funky-Chicken Death March

a comedy in one act
by Scot Moore

Jerry: A disgruntled Funky Chicken employee
Gina: Nosy “granola” film student
Bob: Homeless guy from dumpster
Terry: A “grocery delivery girl”

Setting: Dingy apartment with a window and a door, and a bathroom door. There is some filthy furniture and a refrigerator. There is also a television on a microwave cart, but it isn't plugged in.

At open, JERRY is standing alone in his apartment, loaded .45 caliber revolver in hand, singing to himself. There is the distinct sound of “bed noise” coming from upstairs.

JERRY

(softly to himself while spacing out)

I can't get no... satisfaction... I can't get no... good employment... I can't get no... sex. *(looks toward the ceiling)* Can't y'all do that somewheres else? I mean, c'mon! For the love a' God you're doin' it twelve hours a day, don't ya get sore? *(noise gets louder)* Ain't that supposed to be a private kinda thing? *(we hear the two fall off the bed onto the floor)* All I want's twenty minutes to myself! This is supposed to be a private time in a man's life. Couldn't ya stop for twenty minutes? A man can't e'en off himself in peace. Y'all er one a' the reasons this here shit's comin' to a head. I can't e'en get any play from that grocery delivery girl upstairs and you two'er flauntin' it in my face... *(still more noise)* COULD YOU TWO STOP IT FOR ONE DAMN MINUTE! *(noise stops)* All right... *(he kneels in front of the sofa and puts the bottle on the table)* God, it's Jerry. I'm comin' up... there's just a couple a things I want you to know 'fore Saint Peter kicks me out, though. First of all, that kid ain't mine! I don't care what the girl says. Well, you probably already knew that, but anything worth sayin's worth sayin' to God, right? Yeah. So, I guess you know about the whole... right... you knew that too. Shit. Then I guess I'm just gonna tell you how I feel. Man, I been workin' at the Funky Chicken for three years now, and I still don't get to work a register. I mean... cleanin' out slop buckets ain't my idea a' livin', man! Now, talkin' to customers – solvin' their troubles... that's the life. I just want to help people... help people eat. I don't think that's too much to ask – but you're testin' me. I can see that. Well... Damnit! I failed. I don't think that's such a terrible thing. At least I made it to twenty six. Some kids at the Funky Chicken ain't even finished High School – what about them, huh? They're failures too, God! So, this is my solution... You like it? I think a forty-five oughtta do the job right. Maybe even give them cops somethin' to clean up – keep 'em busy. It'd still be better than cleanin' out slop buckets. Awe... even the slouches on the police force get better jobs than I do. Now, I suppose I could've told you all this once I got up there, but in all the movies people work things out before hand, so I figured I'd go with that there established circumcission... er, circum... circumstance? Circumstance. The way I figure it, if you're gonna kill yourself, someone's already done it better – might as well learn from history, right? Okay, here goes...

(JERRY raises the gun, opens the chamber to make sure it's loaded, reassures himself, closes the chamber, and aims it at the side of his head. He begins to pull the trigger, but looks a little worried. Slowly, he turns toward the gun without moving it. He looks at it for a second, then looks forward again. He starts to pull the trigger but hesitates. Suddenly GINA bursts in through the door, scaring him half to death. He jumps up, dropping the gun at his feet)

JERRY

SON OF A BITCH! What're you doin' Gina?

GINA

Oh, Jerry. I just wanted to borrow some beer.

JERRY

Beer? Are you nuts? I'm busy here!

GINA

Busy? What do you mean?

JERRY

I mean I'm... busy!

GINA

I've been here for six months and you've never been busy before. Why should I believe you are now?

JERRY

'Cause I ain't never been busy before! Like ya said. Obviously, this must be important.

GINA

Well, I'm sorry! Usually you're in the bathroom when you do that. I just figured I'd drop by and... *(she notices the gun)* What's that?

JERRY

(picking it up)
Nothin'.

GINA

Was that a gun?

JERRY

Maybe.

GINA

You were going to kill someone weren't you?

JERRY

That's none a' your business!

GINA

You can't just kill people! That's against the law, Jerry!

JERRY

I know that!

GINA

My brother used to do that shit all the time! He used to be in a gang and they were killing rival gang members for years. He made me hold the wheel for him, Jerry!

JERRY

Where's your brother now?

GINA

Prison, but he ought to be out in another five to ten.

JERRY

Oh...

GINA

(she looks around as he strokes the gun)
Just out of curiosity, who were you planning to kill?

JERRY

No one.

GINA

Oh...

(she crosses away from him and to the refrigerator. She retrieves her beer and starts quickly to the door)

JERRY

Uh... Gina?

GINA

(She stops) What, Jerry?

JERRY

Um... Ya can't go to jail for shootin' yourself can ya?

GINA

Last I heard, it was illegal – but then, so is jaywalking and I don't think you can go to jail for that. But, I suppose suicide is murder. Yeah, I guess you'd probably do some time.

JERRY

That's no good...

GINA

Why? You weren't thinking of killing yourself were you?

JERRY

Why not?!

GINA

Well... *(flustered)* You... can't kill anyone else if you're dead!

JERRY

What?

GINA

You had someone to kill, didn't you?

JERRY

No! I don't wanna kill no one else.

GINA

Oh. You mean you just want to kill yourself? Nobody else?

JERRY

I just said I don't wanna kill nobody else. You don't listen very well...

GINA

Well, I thought you were talking about... Nevermind. Oh... So, why do you want to kill yourself?

JERRY

No reason...

GINA

It's an awful way to cure boredom, Jerry. I would think there's probably a very good reason for wanting to kill yourself.

JERRY

Maybe I just don't wanna talk about it.

GINA

You have to.

JERRY

You're only sayin' that cause it's what they do in films.

GINA

No I'm... Well, I'm a film student jackass!

JERRY

That's why you gotta hear why I wanna off myself?

GINA

It's called exposition. Nothing's complete without an explanation.

JERRY

I don't wanna be complete.

GINA

This has nothing to do with you. I have to know.

JERRY

Well, all right. But just for you.

GINA

Thank you.

JERRY

So, you ever worked at the Funky Chicken?

GINA

No.

JERRY

Did you know that you have to work as a slop scrubber for four years before you get to work a register?

GINA

(pause) That's bull shit.

JERRY

No it ain't.

GINA

Yes it is!

JERRY

No it ain't!

GINA

Okay... *(she sits)* Enlighten me.

JERRY

Whatever that means. Anyway, I been there for three years and they ain't promoted me yet. I'm startin' to think it's a conspiracy.

GINA

Jerry, you're getting railroaded. You have to buck up and ask for a promotion.

JERRY

I did. Five times.

GINA

And?

JERRY

No, just five times. And you know what? They done turned me down every time. They always go and promote some sixteen-year-old, pimple-faced, blood... suckin'... kid to take my place.

GINA

Well, it's obviously possible to move up faster than that – besides, there's plenty of other jobs out there.

JERRY

No there ain't.

GINA

Yes there are.

JERRY

No there ain't!

GINA

Yes!

Nuh-Uh!

JERRY

Why not?!

GINA

Gina, I tried already! Nobody'll hire me for anything else.

JERRY

Why not?

GINA

Oh, that... Well, you see... Okay, there was this thing a couple years back with this girl...

JERRY

She turned you stupid, didn't she?

GINA

What? No, but she's got a kid now... and... to make a long yarn short she told the cops the kid was mine, and... that I made her do it-

JERRY

(horrificed) You raped her?!

GINA

No! She did my dad. But, the D-N-R matched-

JERRY

D-N-A.

GINA

The what?

JERRY

It's DNA, trust me.

GINA

That's not how I recall it. Anyway, the... D-N... A-

JERRY

Thank you.

GINA

...matched close enough, so...

JERRY

Did you have to go to jail?

GINA

JERRY

Naw, she didn't press charges for that. But, she was only fourteen, so I still have to make the rounds declarin' myself every time I move and when I apply for jobs, so then no one wants to hire me.

GINA

I see. So, just out of curiosity, how did you keep your job at the Funky Chicken?

JERRY

Owner's my dad. He told me one more charge though and he was gonna have to let me go, so I kinda got to keep a low profile.

GINA

That's fucking sick!

JERRY

That's mighty un-wordy for you.

GINA

Jerry do you not see the conflict of interest here?

JERRY

...No?

GINA

Your father is blaming you for impregnating your supposed underage rape victim with a pre-marital love child which is keeping you from ascending the Funky Chicken ladder!

JERRY

Huh.

GINA

He's screwing you over, Jerry!

JERRY

Oh, right that. Well, when you put it in words I can understand...

GINA

Turn the bastard in!

JERRY

I can't do that. He's a highly respectable business man in these parts. He can't afford to have that kind a' charge made public. I just had to take the fall for him that's all.

GINA

(raising the gun) If my father pulled that shit on my I would have shot him!

JERRY

(ducking) God damnit, it's loaded!

GINA

Oh, relax. The safety's on.

(she re-aims it at his head and attempts to pull the trigger. He ducks again. Nothing happens. He turns back and crosses to her)

GINA

See. You have to push this forward.

JERRY

I'll be damned.

GINA

Here you go.

(she hands the gun back to him)

JERRY

Go ahead and grab yer beer. I have work to do.

GINA

You're not seriously thinking about killing yourself, are you?

JERRY

Well yeah. I ain't got much to live for do I?

GINA

Who cares? Can you imagine the mess you're going to leave for the cops to clean up?

JERRY

I just though it'd give 'em somethin' to do.

GINA

Are you kidding? That's worse than cleaning out slop buckets.

JERRY

How do you know?

GINA

Jerry!

JERRY

Even if it is worse they don't have to do it that often, right?

GINA

At least do it in Japan then. They're used to it over there.

JERRY

Really?

GINA

Sure. They have people jumping out of windows every day. They even have special cleanup crews for the job.

JERRY

You serious?

GINA

Oh yeah. I read it in Time magazine.

JERRY

You see?!

GINA

No?

JERRY

I can't even afford Time magazine. I would'a figured this all out by now.

GINA

I can't either.

JERRY

Where'd you get it?

GINA

Five-finger discount.

JERRY

That a news stand 'er somthin'?

GINA

Something like that. I'm trying to stay with the times, you know. The industry is changing so fast.

JERRY

Sure. I guess you gotta be up to date 'n stuff. Well, I can't afford to go to Japan anyway so it don't matter.

GINA

What do you hope to accomplish by killing yourself anyway?

JERRY

You know...

GINA

Not really.

JERRY

They say heaven's full a' milk and honeys so I figured it must be better than here.

GINA

Oh, no Jerry. If you kill yourself you go straight to Hell – well, maybe purgatory if you're lucky. What denomination are you?

JERRY

Demon, what?

GINA

What church do you go to?

JERRY

Luthern.

GINA

Forget it. It's against the rules, let's leave it at that.

JERRY

I ain't never done anything wrong. I been good all my life and all I get's the shaft.

GINA

Usually it's women you hear that from.

JERRY

Huh?

GINA

Listen Jerry. I'm going to be serious with you for a minute. Sit down. (*they sit*) I think you're a nice guy. No, I'd never have sex with you, but that's a different subject. You've been on this planet twenty-six years now and all you've got to show for it is a shabby apartment filled with duct-taped furniture and a job scrubbing slop buckets at the Funky Chicken. That's pretty pathetic.

JERRY

I ain't feelin' any better, Gina.

GINA

Just listen. It could be a whole lot worse.

JERRY

How?

GINA

Just look at Bob. He's been living in our dumpster for five years. You don't see him complaining do you?

JERRY

No, but I hear him. He's only three floors down you know.

GINA

He hasn't killed himself is what I'm saying.

Couldn't you say off? Kill sounds so... JERRY

Dramatic? GINA

Yeah. JERRY

Well, this is a dramatic thing you're doing here. I think you should use proper terminology. GINA

Daddy brought me up to call it offin' so as not to arouse suspicion. JERRY

Your daddy also fucked a fourteen-year-old and got you charged with statutory rape! Something tells me you should be very cautious of that man's advice. GINA

I just don't think you understand how much my life sucks. JERRY

Jerry, you don't want to kill yourself. GINA

Oh yeah? Why not? JERRY

Because you're not a main character. GINA

I am to me. JERRY

That's not what I mean. See, suicide is for someone that people care about. Famous people, public figures... GINA

Public figures...? JERRY

Uh-huh. GINA

Like, prostitutes? JERRY

Sure. Or, at least people with a lot of... accomplishments, and things to be proud of. GINA

Really? JERRY

Historically speaking, yes. GINA

I got third in the pinewood derby once. JERRY

Okay. No one cares, Jerry. GINA

Shoot. I ain't even had sex yet. JERRY

See what I mean? You haven't even... You've never had sex? GINA

Do we have to talk about this? JERRY

You just haven't experienced the other things that life has to offer. GINA

But once I do, you'll let me off myself? JERRY

I guess if that unlikely moment were ever to arise, I wouldn't really have any objections. GINA

Naw... Sex's what got me in this muck in the first place. It can't be all that. Yeah, I guess I'll just off myself now. JERRY

I can't talk you out of it? GINA

No, but I sure appreciate the effort. JERRY

Well then. Be sure to write. GINA

I will. JERRY

(she starts to exit as JERRY gets to his knees and checks the safety. He levels the gun at his head and is about to fire as GINA reaches the door)

Jerry wait!! GINA

Jesus Christ, Gina! What the hell is it now? JERRY

GINA

I just got a great idea!

JERRY

If it involves you takin' yer clothes off and tyin' me up I'm all ears.

GINA

What?! God no! I have standards. No, what I was thinking is that if you're really going to do this... and you really are?

JERRY

For the thousandth time, yes.

GINA

Well, I've been looking to do a documentary for one of my film classes and thought you could make a perfect subject.

JERRY

Subject?

GINA

You know... The trials and tribulations of the pathetic working class?

JERRY

I'll have to trust ya on that one.

GINA

Let me put it on film and your tragic tale will be recorded for all of mankind to see.

JERRY

I don't know. That sounds awful... *(pause as he thinks)*

GINA

Yes, it does sound awful. That's the point. I'll be the Upton Sinclair of the twenty-first century!

JERRY

You wanna film my offin'?

GINA

You just do whatever you were going to do. Say your prayers...

JERRY

I already said my prayers.

GINA

Say them again. You don't have to change a thing. I swear you won't even know I'm here.

JERRY

What'd'ya mean? You'll be standin' there with a camera!

GINA

Yes... And, you could let that distract you, or you could think about the royalties it'll bring in!

JERRY

But... Hang on a second, if I'm dead I won't make any money off this here filmin'.

GINA

No, but I will, and your illegitimate child.

JERRY

I don't have a kid.

GINA

But in the eyes of the law you do. Now, quit arguing with me and get yourself set up. I'll be right back with the camera.

(GINA exits and JERRY plops down on the couch, stroking the .45. After a moment of contemplation, BOB crawls through the window from the fire escape. HE crosses to the refrigerator and opens it. Out of incredulity, JERRY finally acknowledges him)

JERRY

Hi Bob.

(BOB slams the door shut and falls over startled)

BOB

Why don't you make your presence known when you walk into a room? *(pause)* Damn it boy! You could've given me a heart attack. You want me to die or something?

JERRY

I wouldn't mind ya knockin' on occasion.

BOB

-the hell are you talking about?

JERRY

I don't even know anymore.

BOB

What's wrong with you anyway. *(cracking open his beer)*

JERRY

What? Why?

BOB

Oh, nothing. Just – you got yourself a pretty big gun there. Just polishing it?

JERRY

You afraid a' dyin' Bob?

BOB

(HE gulps hard on the beer, staring at the gun) Sure.

JERRY

Really?

BOB

Damn straight. Don't you think if I weren't I would have ended my pitiful existence a long time ago?

JERRY

What's stoppin' ya?

BOB

I don't know. Well, I read something somewhere that unless you kill yourself in Japan, you go straight to hell. I may not be too happy, but the way I figure it it's better than burning up twenty-four hours a day for all eternity.

JERRY

I guess that would suck.

BOB

No shit.

JERRY

Where'd you read that?

BOB

Time magazine. It's the only one out there worth something. You read it?

JERRY

(pause) Sure... Yeah, all the time. Nothin' like getting' edumacated while you're readin'.

(BOB kicks back in a chair and puts his feet up on JERRY's table)

BOB

You see, son, life is a series of ups and downs. You take a few uppers, you take a few downers... Pretty soon it's all down. But, God's got a purpose and unless you die on his terms, you're goin' straight to hell.

JERRY

You're tellin' me I can't decide on my own when I get offed?

BOB

Not that I'm aware of. Although, I did read about this church once where they all killed themselves with kool-aid. I was a little confused at first, 'cause, the way I figure it you'd have to down a few gallons of the stuff before your bladder caused a life-threatening situation.

JERRY

No kidding?

BOB

Well, then someone told me that they poisoned it and everything cleared up for me.

JERRY

Wow.

BOB

After that I started thinking all you have to do to make sure you're safe is to take a few others down with you.

JERRY

You mean off yourself in a group.

BOB

(pointing to his head) Time magazine.

JERRY

Well I'll be.

BOB

Think of it this way. If one man kills another man, it's called murder. But, if a thousand men kill a thousand other men, it's called heroic – it's warfare. Then it's okay, see? You simply apply the same logic to suicide. One person doing it by themselves must be wrong. But, if you get a whole bunch of folks to agree it's the right path – you got a happening. Nothing's wrong with having a party. The issue is that I never could find a group to join in though. Went to a meeting once where they were talking about some twelve steps or something and I asked them if they wanted to do it with me. Then this big bastard threw me out.

JERRY

Where do they get off?

BOB

Had some cookies and a cigarette though.

JERRY

I guess that can't be all bad.

BOB

(swilling beer) No sir.

(GINA re-enters with a video camera and a tripod)

GINA

Oh, hi Bob.

BOB

Hey there Gina. What's happening?

GINA

Well, Jerry and I are about to make a video.

BOB

You sly son of a bitch!

(JERRY tries to straighten BOB out. GINA doesn't notice/care what BOB's talking about)

GINA

You wouldn't mind doing this in front of the couch would you?

BOB

You're sitting here talking about death while you're supposed to be finding your silk pajamas.

GINA

Jerry, you're going to have to get him out of the picture, it'll ruin the whole thing.

BOB

You mean I can watch?

GINA

Why would you want to watch this idiot kill himself, Bob?

(JERRY once again tries to correct BOB)

BOB

You were going to kill yourself? Didn't I just explain unless you do it in a group you're going to hell?

GINA

In a group? Where the hell did you hear that?

BOB

Time.

(she nods and returns to setting up the camera)

JERRY

It don't have nothin' to do with that. I just wanted to get her an A in her class.

GINA

And don't think I didn't try to talk him out of it.

BOB

You're serious about this?

GINA

He's serious.

BOB

What the hell kind of class is this?

GINA
My film class, now would you get out of the picture?!

BOB
They make you film someone's offin'?

GINA
Offin'?

JERRY
What'd I tell ya?

GINA
No. I chose this assignment about ten minutes ago. Bob, you're in the damn picture!

BOB
Oh! Sorry. *(he gets out of the shot and rests on the refrigerator)* So... How's this work again?

GINA
Well, he's going to talk about his sad little life...

JERRY
I'm what...?

GINA
...explain why he's choosing to shoot himself...

JERRY
I am...?

GINA
...and then he's going to shoot himself.

BOB
Sounds like a plan, I guess.

JERRY
It does?

BOB
I still say you should do it in a group.

(We begin hearing the thumping sounds from upstairs again)

GINA
Oh, really?

BOB
Yes, really.

JERRY
Wouldn't that get a little messy?

GINA
Not only that, but where in the hell are we going to find a group of people to kill themselves... Besides, Jerry's right. I don't want to clean it all up.

BOB
Imagine the grade on the project, though.

JERRY
Wha'?

GINA
What did you say?

BOB
You know- on your project.

GINA
You think I should film multiple suicides?

JERRY
I'm feelin' less and less special here.

BOB
What the hell. I'll do it. All we need's a third person.

(by now the sounds have reached a "climax". They all look up)

BOB
I'll go get her.

(BOB climbs out the window)

JERRY
What's goin' on?

GINA
Bob's getting Terry.

JERRY
Terry? Why?

GINA
She's going to be in our film.

JERRY
Our film? What's she wanna do with a suicide film?

GINA

What do you mean, what's she want to do with a suicide film? She's been trying to "off" herself for a couple of years now.

JERRY

Why'd she wanna go and do that? She's got a good job. She's a... a grocery deliver girl.

GINA

Grocery deliver girl?

JERRY

Yeah. She delivers groceries.

GINA

Groceries? Jerry, she only delivers groceries if they include condoms, whips, or.. or.. paddles. She's a hooker, Jerry!

JERRY

A what?

GINA

Just shut up and get your speech ready.

JERRY

I don't want to give a speech.

GINA

Jesus, I'll do it myself.

JERRY

Fine... But she's a hooker?

GINA

Yes. You couldn't tell by all the sex?

JERRY

I thought she was just real- affectionate.

GINA

Whatever. Oh!

JERRY

What?

GINA

Do you have any last requests?

JERRY

I wanna get laid.

GINA

(Pause. She stares at him blankly. She checks her watch) Sorry, looks like your time is up.

JERRY

Shit.

(BOB and TERRY enter through window. BOB grabs a last few swigs of beer as he takes his coat off. TERRY puffs on her cigarette. No one is talking. She puts her cigarette out in BOB's beer. He puts it on top of the refrigerator)

TERRY

So. We gonna do this fuckin' thing or what?

GINA

Right. Okay, everyone line up in front of the couch.

ENDING: VERSION 1

(The lights go out and we hear a film reel start. Next, we hear the voices of the characters as if on film)

GINA

Okay folks, this is...

BOB

Bob.

JERRY

Jerry.

GINA

...and...

TERRY

Terry.

GINA

They believe that society has forgotten them. Well, here's their chance to be remembered. All right, who's first? *(pause)* The safety's on Jerry.

JERRY

Oh, right.

(We hear the gun cock and the audio stops)

END

ENDING: VERSION 2

JERRY

A'right, hang on a second!

GINA

What is it, Jerry? We need to get this filmed before you all lose your nerve.

JERRY

What about yer exposition?

GINA

Jerry, you don't even know what that means!

JERRY

That don't mean it ain't important. (*indicating the camera*) That still rollin'?

GINA

Might as well leave it on, now.

JERRY

I been thinkin' and I ain't sure I wanna die.

GINA

Jesus, this was your idea!

TERRY

Hey, what the fuck is this? I got two more Johns waitin' upstairs. If we're not gonna do this, I got work to do. (*TERRY exits*)

JERRY

I know it was my idea. And, I'm sorry for getting' everyone all lathered up, but I just can't do this. I keep thinkin' there might be somethin' more out there.

GINA

Out where?

JERRY

Out there in the world. I feel like if maybe I can just, ya know, survive a bit, I could make it. Ya know?

GINA

I don't. Jerry, are you going to do this or not?

JERRY

I'm sorry, Gina. Bob. I don't think I'm quite ready for this just yet.

GINA

Fine. (*GINA packs up her camera and belongings*)

BOB

Well, shit, I can't do it by myself.

GINA

Thanks, Jerry. Thanks a lot. Now I have to come up with a whole new project.

JERRY

Yeah, I'm real sorry about that.

GINA

Oh, don't be. You can be sorry about it the next time your dad tries to pin a rape charge on you.
(she storms out)

JERRY

Well, that was unnecessary.

BOB

What an uptight bitch. *(BOB returns to the refrigerator)* You want a beer.

JERRY

S'pose I better.

(BOB throws JERRY a beer, grabs one for himself and sits down on the couch next to JERRY. They sit in silence for a few moments. After a sufficiently awkward period of time, we start to hear noises from upstairs again. BOB should look mildly amused, but complacent. JERRY should begin to get a look of confusion. He looks at his beer, then at the blank wall in front of him, then upstairs. He takes a swig of his beer, all while maintaining the look of confusion. LIGHTS OUT)

The end