

THREE SYLLABLES OF SHAME

A 10-minute play

by Rom Watson

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Character Breakdown:

Angela Doth, female, late 20's to late 30's
Charlie Doth, female, late 20's to late 30's

The location: Los Angeles.

The time: the present.

Pronunciation guides are placed in [brackets].

(CHARLIE and ANGELA sit.
Angela is enthusiastic;
Charlie is not.)

ANGELA

What are we going to name it?

CHARLIE

If we name it we'll become attached to it.

ANGELA

It's not a stray kitten. We'll be attached to it even
before we name it.

CHARLIE

How can you be so sure?

ANGELA

Charlie, you're going to grow to love it.

CHARLIE

That's what they said about eating vegetables.

ANGELA

How 'bout something with three syllables?

CHARLIE

Why three?

ANGELA

Our last name has one syllable; I think a three-syllable
first name will sound good with a one-syllable last name.
Like mine. Angela Doth. Any ideas?

CHARLIE

Sure . . .Albino . . .Carbuncle . . .Vicodin.

ANGELA

(Decides to play along.)

Okay . . .how about . . .Percocet? [PER-kuh-set]

CHARLIE

Listerine.

ANGELA

Disposable diapers, or cloth?

CHARLIE

Cloth. Better for the environment.

ANGELA

What theme should we do the nursery in? Winnie the Pooh?
Mickey and Minnie?

CHARLIE

Ball and chain.

(Angela gives Charlie a push. Slight pause.)

Black and white.

ANGELA

We're not decorating the nursery in black and white.

CHARLIE

That's what babies respond to. They've done studies.

(Slight pause. They resume their game.)

Fandango.

ANGELA

Mortimer.

CHARLIE

Marmaduke. If we want our kid to go to college, we better
start saving now. Or rob a bank.

(They resume their game.)

Felony.

ANGELA

Tyranny.

CHARLIE

Avarice.

(Short pause.)

That's actually kinda pretty.

ANGELA

We're not naming our baby after one of the seven deadly
sins.

CHARLIE

Better that than after one of the seven dwarfs. When do you
go on maternity leave?

ANGELA

Not soon enough. Goliath.

CHARLIE
Velveeta.

ANGELA
Volcano.

CHARLIE
When they're old enough to have a pet, what kind should we get?

ANGELA
Don't you think we'll have our hands full as it is?

CHARLIE
Our child will have an animal to care for. That's non-negotiable.

ANGELA
Because a pet brings out the child's nurturing side?

CHARLIE
No, because it dies.

ANGELA
You want to buy our child an animal whose sole purpose is to die?

CHARLIE
That's the whole point of giving a child a pet. So when it dies, the child learns how to deal with death.

ANGELA
Are you deliberately being cruel?

CHARLIE
I'm not being cruel, Angela. Death is a part of life, and I want our child to be prepared. I was nine when my mother died, and I was not prepared.

ANGELA
Okay. So tortoises and elephants are out.

CHARLIE
Yup. Chimps and parrots, too.

ANGELA
I'm allergic to cats, and it's too sad when a dog dies. What about a hamster?

CHARLIE

Yeah, they only live two or three years. So you're okay with it?

ANGELA

Well . . .I guess every child needs at least *one* pet. How else will they figure out their stripper name?

CHARLIE

Spatula.

ANGELA

Turducken. [Tur-DUCK-un]

CHARLIE

Levitra.

ANGELA

Name her that and she won't need a stripper name.

CHARLIE

Breast or bottle?

BOTH

Breast.

CHARLIE

Natural childbirth?

ANGELA

Epidural. There's a name: Lidocaine. [LIE-doh-kane]

CHARLIE

Placebo. [pluh-SEE-bo]

ANGELA

Cholera.

CHARLIE

Rubella.

ANGELA

Do you care if it's a boy or a girl?

CHARLIE

Yes, I want it to be one or the other.

ANGELA

Charlie, . . .

CHARLIE

No, you know me better than that. Gender doesn't matter.
No matter what, I know that I am . . .

(Charlie starts having a panic attack.)

I am . . .I am . . .going to be so freaked out!

ANGELA

What's wrong?

(Charlie continues to panic.)

CHARLIE

I'm not prepared!

ANGELA

For what?

CHARLIE

For this! Nothing in my life has prepared me to be a
parent! Oh God, if I screw up this kid, they could turn out
to be a serial killer! Or a paparazzo!

ANGELA

Breathe, Charlie. Inhale slowly, exhale slowly. Inhale,
exhale. Let's think of more names. What about ...Travesty?

CHARLIE

Hemorrhoid.

ANGELA

Barnacle.

CHARLIE

Lucifer.

ANGELA

Gorbachev. [GOR-buh-cheff]

CHARLIE

Gorbina. [gor-BEAN-uh]

ANGELA

Oh now you're just making up words.

CHARLIE

Maybe we should go with four syllables. Boutros Boutros.
[BOO—truss BOO—truss]

ANGELA

Boutros Boutros-Doth.

CHARLIE

Hmmm . . .that might be cumbersome.

ANGELA

We need to start thinking of some real names.

CHARLIE

You mean like Abigail, or Christopher? That's no fun. What about . . .Residue? Or . . .Murgatroyd? [MUR—guh—troyd]

ANGELA

Murgatroyd. Charlie, be serious. We are not giving our child a name they'll be ashamed of.

CHARLIE

Why not? As soon as they get to be a teenager they're going to hate us anyway.

ANGELA

I know, but the point is to enjoy the kid until they become a teenager.

CHARLIE

Before puberty turns them into a monster. Like Godzilla. Or Frankenstein. What if they turn out to be a Frankenstein creature? A composite of the worst parts of both of us?

ANGELA

What if they turn out to have the best of both of us? They might inherit your passion for books.

CHARLIE

(Excited.)

Ooh.

ANGELA

Oh now you're on board. What about a name from Shakespeare? Rosaline. [ROZ—uh—line]

CHARLIE

What makes me think I can prepare our child for life when I'm not even prepared for life?

ANGELA

You talk like it's a test you need to study for, but it's not a test; it's more like a game.

CHARLIE

I'm no good at games.

ANGELA

Yes you are.

CHARLIE

What game am I good at?

ANGELA

This one. You came up with way worse names than I did.

CHARLIE

Really?

ANGELA

You're gonna be fine.

CHARLIE

What makes you say that?

ANGELA

Nothing in your life prepared you for me, and we're turning out okay.

CHARLIE

Yeah, we are. Funny how things work out.

(They smile.)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

How about a name from "The Tempest?" Ariel, or Miranda.

ANGELA

Yes. Thank you, Charlie, that's . . . those are beautiful names. And if it's a boy?

CHARLIE

Hmmm . . .there's Orsino . . .and Valentine.

ANGELA

Lysander. [lie-SAN-der]

CHARLIE

No, kids would call him "Lice." Orlando? Lorenzo.

ANGELA

Lorenzo Doth. Not bad.

CHARLIE

What about a middle name?

ANGELA

I didn't even think of that.

CHARLIE

There's so much to consider when you bring a child into the world.

ANGELA

Yeah, like, how do I prevent my mother from babysitting?

CHARLIE

And what school do we send it to?

ANGELA

And do we let them believe in Santa Claus?

CHARLIE

Of course we do.

ANGELA

But I felt so hurt and disappointed when I found out.

CHARLIE

We have to make it believe in Santa Claus. And the Easter Bunny, and the Tooth Fairy.

ANGELA

Charlie, if we tell them Santa Claus is real, when they find out the truth, they'll feel betrayed. They won't trust us.

CHARLIE

Children need to believe in Santa Claus and then they need to realize that Santa Claus is a legend. A myth.

ANGELA

So we make our child believe a myth, let them discover it's not real, let them feel disillusioned and duped, and then convince the kid it's all for their own good?

CHARLIE

How else do you prepare a child for religion?

ANGELA

So Santa Claus is a . . . "starter myth."

CHARLIE

Yeah; you let 'em figure out Santa Claus and then you take 'em to church.

ANGELA

I don't know though, it's still lying to our child.

CHARLIE

Sometimes you have to lie in order to tell a bigger truth.

ANGELA

What bigger truth?

CHARLIE

You lie to them about Santa Claus to tell the bigger truth that it's good to give. You lie to them about religion to tell the bigger truth that life can be better if we all . . . treat others the way we would have them treat us.

ANGELA

See? You are prepared. You'll be a wonderful mother.

(She puts her hand on her belly.)

I think it's a boy.

(Charlie puts her hand on
Angela's belly.)

CHARLIE

Oliver.

ANGELA

Oliver.

(She takes a moment to ponder.)

Oliver Doth.

(They smile.)

ANGELA (CONT'D)

What are we going to name the pet?

CHARLIE

Boutros Boutros Hamster.

(End of play.)