

# Peace and Quiet

*A Play in One Act*  
by  
Emmett Loverde

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**Cast of Characters**

Dr. Guerin T. Gales  
Nathan Small  
Shirley Strong  
The Woman  
Townspeople

**Place**

An open, arid place.

**Time**

The present.

# *Peace and Quiet*

by Emmett Loverde

*SCENE:* An open, arid place. The present.

*AT RISE:* DR. GUERIN T. GALES introduces himself to the audience and to a small group of TOWNSPEOPLE. Among the crowd lurk NATHAN SMALL and SHIRLEY STRONG. GALES is a fast talker.

**GALES.** Greetings ladies and gentlemen, pals and gals, well enough and bad enough. It is I, the one and only Dr. Guerin T. Gales, returning once more to tell you, yes you, ladies and gentlemen about a once-in-a-lifetime offer of a dramatic new home appliance that will not only improve your life drastically—guaranteed—but could quite possibly save it, yes, save it, ladies and gentlemen...

**TOWNIE #1.** Doctor of *what*?

**GALES.** I am indeed a doctor of wit, sir, and I thank you for recognizing it; that way I wasn't forced to point it out myself, you kept me modest, and modesty is a virtue, that's what it says in your Bible, folks, read your Bible every day and it will bring a little more quiet into your life, and Heaven knows we all could use more quiet, which is why I—

**TOWNIE #2.** He means what's your degree??

**GALES.** Afraid not, sir, for man may beg, but only God decrees, that's what it says in your Bible, folks, read your Bible every day and it will teach you to sacrifice, just as I am here today to ask you to sacrifice just a minuscule portion of your hard-earned income for the gift of quiet, the gift of solitude, the gift of health and longevity—

**TOWNIE #3.** Where did you *study*???

**GALES.** Steady—that's me, sir, steady and solid as a rock, a rock-solid foundation, and we should all do our part to be a foundation, that's what it says in your Bible, folks, read your Bible every day...

**NATHAN.** (*Stepping forward:*) What are you selling? Are you selling peace and quiet? I could sure use some...

**GALES.** Silence! (*Pause.*) That's what I'm selling, son, silence: quiet, solitude, privacy, seclusion, retreat, withdrawal, departure. Quiet.

**NATHAN.** How? I'd...I'd do anything for some quiet in my life! How much is it?

*(GALES whispers a figure into NATHAN'S ear. NATHAN'S face falls.)*

That much?

**GALES.** Tell me something, my boy...what's your name?

**NATHAN.** Nathan, sir.

**GALES.** Tell me, Nate, how much is it truly worth to you? How many sleepless nights have you spent worrying about other people, about your place in the world, about whether you were making a difference, about all those trivialities you find in Hallmark cards? The holidays are the worst! You could go crazy! And what I ask in exchange for alleviating all that guilt is a pittance, a few cents that you'll never even miss.

**NATHAN.** Well, I suppose it's not that much...

**GALES.** That's what I like to hear! Now... *(Glances at NATHAN'S pockets.)*

**NATHAN.** Oh! *(Pulls out money and hands it to GALES.)* There you go.

**GALES.** Sales tax?

*(NATHAN hands him more money.)*

Commission?

*(NATHAN hands him more money.)*

Overhead?

*(NATHAN hands him more money.)*

Gas and tolls?

*(NATHAN gives him a suspicious look.)*

Okay, skip gas and tolls. *(Pulls out a Hula Hoop with two shoulder straps attached.)* Here it is, your key to quiet: The Magic Ring!

*(NATHAN, unsure of what else to do, takes the hoop and puts it around his waist and tries to twirl it around himself.)*

It doesn't quite work that way. *(Hangs hoop upon NATHAN'S shoulders so the hoop orbits his waist.)* There. You're all set. Off you go! *(Looks around at CROWD.)* Any other takers? You, sir?

**NATHAN.** How does it work?

**GALES.** It's working. *(To CROWD:)* Did I see money waving? Madam?

**NATHAN.** How do I turn it on?

**GALES.** It's on. *(To CROWD:)* One at a time, please. No pushing, no shoving.

**NATHAN.** But nothing's happening.

**GALES.** Exactly. There's your quiet.

**NATHAN.** I can still hear.

**GALES.** Compare this: "Nate!" to this... *(Leaning very close to NATHAN'S ear:)* "NATE!!!" *(Resumes normal distance.)* Which was quieter?

**NATHAN.** The first one.

**GALES.** Exactly. *(To CROWD:)* Now then, I heard money...

**NATHAN.** I don't get it.

**GALES.** Precisely. With The Magic Ring on you don't get much of anything because other people can't get at you. And, with periodic recharges at intermittent intervals, probably biannually or triannually or whenever I need some folding money, The Magic Ring will never lose its power! Now if you'll excuse me I have a business to run. *(To CROWD:)* Ladies and gentlemen if you'll just follow me to my show room where you'll be delighted to find an amazing variety of sizes and colors from which to choose...

*(GALES starts to lead the CROWD off stage. Suddenly a TOWNIE runs in, breathless.)*

**TOWNIE #4.** A new King was just born!

**TOWNIE #1.** Where?

**TOWNIE #4.** In this big old barn outside of town! Come on—follow me!

*(The CROWD runs off stage in the other direction in search of the new King. SHIRLEY lags behind.)*

**SHIRLEY.** Nathan? Don't you want to see the new King?

**NATHAN.** What's that, Shirley? Can't hear you.

*(SHIRLEY steps closer to NATHAN until she bumps into The*

*Magic Ring.*)

**SHIRLEY.** I said, don't you want to see the new King? We better hurry—He may have to go do a press conference or something.

**NATHAN.** You know what? I can't hear you. (*Laughs.*) I can't hear you—isn't that fantastic?

**SHIRLEY.** I said...

**NATHAN.** And you know what? I don't *want* to hear you! Go...wherever you're going! I don't care! (*Laughs joyously.*) This is phenomenal! Quiet at last!

*(Lights down.)*

*(Lights up.)*

*(NATHAN sits off to one side of the stage tallying figures and mumbling to himself. The Magic Ring encircles him.)*

**NATHAN.** Forty-eight, forty-nine, fifty. Great—the rent's taken care of. Now to do my taxes... (*Scans list.*) Let's see...charitable contributions? None. Gifts to family and friends? None. Deduction for time spent doing community service? None. Long-distance calls to my mother? None. What a magnificent year: I haven't spent a dime or lifted a finger to help anybody—just minded my own business! (*Picks up a medical bill.*) Too bad I spent so much money getting treated for depression.

*(Suddenly the CROWD rushes past NATHAN, obviously on their way somewhere. TOWNIES come very close to stepping inside The Magic Ring.)*

**TOWNIE #1.** (*To TOWNIE #2:*) Where was the wedding?

**TOWNIE #2.** I don't know—outside of town. But the wine was out of this world.

**NATHAN.** Hey! Watch The Ring!

**TOWNIE #3.** (*To TOWNIE #4.*) Did you actually *see* him come out of the tomb?

**TOWNIE #4.** Absolutely. The King just said “Lazarus, come forth!” and the guy popped up like toast.

*(SHIRLEY dashes past. She trips over The Magic Ring and is sent sprawling.)*

**NATHAN.** Shirley! Are you all right?? (*Thinking this over:*) You know

what? I don't care if you're all right. I just want quiet.

*(SHIRLEY rubs her ankle. She is resting on top of The Magic Ring.)*

*(To SHIRLEY, cautious:)* Is it broken?

**SHIRLEY.** No, it'll be okay.

**NATHAN.** I meant my Magic Ring. Where's everybody going?

**SHIRLEY.** It's that new King—He just made a big splash at a wedding turning some jugs of water into wine. Now He's got a regular gig doing miracles.

**NATHAN.** Miracles?

**SHIRLEY.** You know: healing people, bringing back the dead, calming storms. He's a nice guy. You should talk to Him about your depression.

**NATHAN.** Could you get off my Ring?

**SHIRLEY.** This? Sure, Nathan. *(Stands, then is forced by the pain to sit again on The Ring.)* Owwww...

**NATHAN.** Still hurts?

**SHIRLEY.** Yeah. Hope it's not sprained.

**NATHAN.** Maybe I could... *(Shakes it off.)* No! I want peace and quiet! *(Pulls out cellular phone and dials.)* Hello! Dr. Gales?

*(GALES enters, speaking into his own cellular phone.)*

**GALES.** *(Into phone:)* Nate? That you? What's on your mind, kid?

**NATHAN.** *(Into phone:)* I need a recharge as soon as possible.

**GALES.** *(Into phone:)* Sure. I'm in the neighborhood. *(Approaches NATHAN.)* What's the problem?

**NATHAN.** *(Points at SHIRLEY.)* Her. I need peace and quiet.

**GALES.** Quiet, I can do. My fee, please.

*(NATHAN hands GALES some money. GALES stares at it, saying nothing.)*

*NATHAN obediently hands GALES more money. GALES shrugs as if to say "So far, so good."*

*NATHAN hands GALES even more money.)*

There we go. *(Pockets money.)* You ready for a recharge?

**NATHAN.** Absolutely.

**GALES.** Hold still... *(To SHIRLEY:)* Excuse me, honey.

*(SHIRLEY lifts up her foot—painfully—to allow GALES to remove The Magic Ring from under it. She sets her foot down with a little moan of pain as GALES shoves The Magic Ring over a few inches so that it's not touching her.)*

*(To NATHAN:)* You're all set. Nice doing business with you. *(Starts to exit.)*

**NATHAN.** Wait!

*(GALES stops.)*

*(Points at SHIRLEY.)* She's hurt.

**GALES.** Ignore her. Pretty soon you won't even know she's there.

**NATHAN.** But I can see her!

**GALES.** Don't look at her.

**NATHAN.** I can hear her!

**GALES.** Don't listen to her.

**NATHAN.** I paid good money for some peace and quiet—

**GALES.** All right, here's what you do... *(Picks up Magic Ring and guides it—and NATHAN—many feet away, then sets the ring down.)* There you go. Complete isolation.

**NATHAN.** I'm facing her.

*(GALES takes NATHAN'S head and points it away from SHIRLEY.)*

**GALES.** Fixed you right up. *(Exits.)*

*(The CROWD rushes past from one side of the stage to the other. Several TOWNIES trample right on The Magic Ring.)*

**TOWNIE #1.** *(To TOWNIE #2:)* Are you kidding? The trial was a joke.

**TOWNIE #2.** Will His lawyers appeal?

**TOWNIE #3.** What lawyers?

*(NATHAN moves The Ring out of the way but TOWNIES continue to step through it and on it, much to his annoyance.)*

**TOWNIE #4.** He couldn't afford one. Even His closest friends de

serted Him.

**NATHAN.** Who are you talking about?

**SHIRLEY.** The King. He just got a guilty verdict. They're ready to crucify Him.

**NATHAN.** What's He guilty of? I thought He was getting huge.

**SHIRLEY.** It must have been the media.

**TOWNIE #4.** (*Nods.*) They pretty much dug the guy's tomb.

**NATHAN.** That's unfair! (*Thinks:*) Oh no—now I'm getting all riled up. Stress is what put me in the hospital.

**SHIRLEY.** You sure it was stress?

**NATHAN.** (*Dials cell phone.*) Hello—Dr. Gales? It's me, Nathan Small. (*Listens.*) That's right...Small. Nathan. No—Nathan Small. That's right.

**GALES.** (*Enters speaking into cell phone.*) What can I do for you, Nathan Small?

*(A WOMAN enters, hurrying in the same direction the CROWD was. She, too, speaks into a cellular phone.)*

**WOMAN.** Yes...well, have you gotten anything to eat? (*Listens.*) Oh, that's terrible...

**NATHAN.** (*Into phone:*) I need another recharge.

**GALES.** (*Into phone:*) It's going to cost you.

**NATHAN.** (*Into phone:*) I don't care.

**WOMAN.** (*Into phone; nearing NATHAN:*) Are you warm enough?

**GALES.** (*Into phone:*) You tried everything I told you?

**NATHAN.** (*Into phone:*) Everything. *And they just keep coming!*

*(As he speaks, NATHAN flings his arms open wide and knocks over the WOMAN. She is sent sprawling and her cell phone is shattered.)*

Ow—my hand.

*(SHIRLEY crawls over to assist the WOMAN.)*

**SHIRLEY.** (*To WOMAN:*) Are you okay?

**WOMAN.** Where's my phone?

(*SHIRLEY retrieves the broken phone, which she shows to the WOMAN. GALES approaches NATHAN, who is massaging his hand.*)

**GALES.** Wait a minute—I don't do hands. You need a hand guy for that.

**NATHAN.** I need peace and quiet! You promised me peace and quiet!!

**WOMAN.** (*Tugging GALES' pant leg:*) Excuse me, do you have a phone?

**GALES.** Yeah but I can't lend it out, sorry. Corporate account.

(*The WOMAN nods sadly in understanding.*)

(*To NATHAN:*) Now what were you saying? You say I promised you peace *and* quiet?

**NATHAN.** Yeah, you promised—

**GALES.** Hold on, pally. I promised you *quiet*. I never said anything about *peace*.

**WOMAN.** (*Tugging NATHAN'S pant leg:*) Young man?

**NATHAN.** (*To WOMAN:*) Stow it a second, Grandma. (*To GALES:*) I bought peace and quiet!

**GALES.** I would never have sold you that.

**WOMAN.** (*To NATHAN:*) Young man, may I borrow your phone? I need to speak to my Son...

**SHIRLEY.** Nathan...

**NATHAN.** (*To WOMAN:*) Look, lady, it's not my problem. Anyway, this guy is ripping me off here.

**GALES.** I sold you quiet and that's what you got.

**SHIRLEY.** Nathan, it *is* your problem—you *broke* this woman's phone! Now let her use yours—she needs to call her Son!

**WOMAN.** I need to call my Son...

**NATHAN.** Fine.

(*NATHAN hands the WOMAN his cell phone, which she dials.*)

**WOMAN.** (*Into phone:*) Hello? Oh, thank goodness! How are you feeling?

**NATHAN.** (*To GALES; indicates Magic Ring:*) This thing doesn't

work! I have been a nervous wreck for I don't know how long, and...

**GALES.** I never promised you wouldn't be nervous.

**NATHAN.** My insomnia is worse than ever—I barely get a wink of sleep...

**GALES.** I never promised you sleep.

**WOMAN.** (*Into phone:*) Try to keep warm, honey...

**NATHAN.** Then what did I give you all that money for??

**GALES.** For *quiet*. Silence, solitude, privacy, seclusion, retreat, with drawal, and departure. I don't sell peace.

**WOMAN.** (*Into phone:*) Just a second, I'll ask him. (*To NATHAN:*) My Son wants to speak to you.

**NATHAN.** Can you take a message? (*To GALES:*) Then how do I get some peace?

**GALES.** You want peace?

**WOMAN.** (*To NATHAN:*) He says it's urgent.

**NATHAN.** Urgent? Where's He calling from?

**WOMAN.** Right now He's hanging from a cross.

**SHIRLEY.** Oh—that's the King everyone's talking about!

**GALES.** (*To NATHAN:*) You want *quiet*? Don't take that call. You want *peace*? See what He wants.

**NATHAN.** (*Into phone:*) Nathan here. (*Listens:*) You want to borrow my Magic Ring? Can't you buy one? (*Listens:*) Oh, I understand. I've been short of cash myself. Well what's up? (*Listens:*) Uh-huh...uh-huh...ooh—ouch. That's terrible.

**GALES.** What is it?

**NATHAN.** He's got a headache, a side ache, and a few other problems. Anything you can do for Him?

**GALES.** Forget about Him. Focus on you. Things will never get quiet if you keep fussing over other people. Do other people fuss over you? Didn't think so. And why should they? They've got enough to fuss about. My own fussbudget's already strained; if I were to go around sticking my nose where it wasn't wanted pretty soon my whole face would follow and then where would I be? Exactly—about as far away from my feet as a nose can get. Not that any nose *knows* anything

although next thing you know, anything goes, which goes to show you that those whose noses go too far from their toes is the foes of those who rose from below their toes to above their nose, or so I propose. Last time I posed in the snows I froze which shows that a froze nose is no zone to expose to the snows. Speaking of proposing to pose for posters when one has stuck one's nose where one knows one's nose is not known nor wanted it's better than posing for wanted posters. As history shows.

**WOMAN.** *(To NATHAN:)* Can I speak to Him?

*(NATHAN hands her the phone.)*

*(Into phone:)* Forgive him, honey. You're so good at that.

**NATHAN.** Things have been very quiet for a long time now and I'm still a stress case. Now I want peace.

**GALES.** You can't have peace *and* quiet. It's one or the other.

**NATHAN.** Well quiet isn't working for me. Let's try peace.

**WOMAN.** *(Into phone:)* I'll be there as soon as I can. *(Hangs up.)*

**SHIRLEY.** *(To Woman:)* Can you walk?

**WOMAN.** *(To NATHAN:)* May I call a cab? It's local.

**NATHAN.** *(Very put out:)* If you *must*.

*(The WOMAN dials.)*

**GALES.** You really want peace?

**NATHAN.** Absolutely.

**GALES.** Then take her to see her Son.

**NATHAN.** That's way out of my way!

**WOMAN.** *(Into phone:)* Do you have any drivers available? *(Listens:)* Okay, I'll try them. *(Hangs up and dials another number.)*

**GALES.** The road to peace is usually way out of your way.

**WOMAN.** *(Into phone:)* Hello? Okay, okay. Thanks anyway, *(Hangs up and dials another number.)*

**NATHAN.** *(To WOMAN:)* How much do you weigh, Madam?

**WOMAN.** That's a rather personal question.

**NATHAN.** *(To SHIRLEY:)* Can you take one arm and I'll get the other?

**SHIRLEY.** (*Taking WOMAN'S arm:*) Okay...

(*As NATHAN tries to help the WOMAN, his Magic Ring keeps getting in the way.*)

**WOMAN.** You'd better take that ring thing off or you're liable to choke me.

**NATHAN.** (*Hands Magic Ring to GALES.*) Any chance of getting a refund?

**GALES.** Refund?? You're lucky I don't charge you a restocking fee. I should charge you right now for this conversation! "Neither a borrower nor a lender be!" That's what it says in your Bible, folks! Read your Bible every day... (*Marches away carrying Magic Ring and pontificating to no one in particular.*)

(*SHIRLEY and NATHAN carry the WOMAN in the direction of the CROWD.*)

**WOMAN.** Are you sure this is no trouble?

**NATHAN.** It's a *lot* of trouble.

**WOMAN.** Oh, uh...

**NATHAN.** (*Smiles:*) And it feels wonderful. We'd better hurry.

(*As they exit the curtain falls.*)

*End of Play*

## *About the Author*

Mr. Loverde is a native of Chicago and received a degree in Theater, Film, and Television from UCLA. He has written extensively for stage, screen, television, and radio.

In 1996, Mr. Loverde's stage comedy *RSVP Regrets Only* was published by Oregon's Grimpemire Press. Also in 1996, he directed a production of his comedy *Mergers and Acquisitions* in Santa Monica, California. The following year, *Mergers and Acquisitions* was produced at the Coronet Theater in Los Angeles with a cast that included Scott Wolf of TV's "Party of Five" and Taylor Nichols of the films *Metropolitan*, *Barcelona*, *Boiler Room*, and TV's "The Mind of the Married Man".

In July, 1997, Mr. Loverde directed and appeared in a production of his comedy *The Maginot Line* in Santa Monica. The following November, Mr. Loverde directed a shortened version of his feature-length screenplay *Snacking* in Los Angeles. The short was featured in February 2000 at the New York International Independent Film and Video Festival and was invited to be shown again in April 2000 when the Festival came to Los Angeles. His short comedy *Cranky Call* is also currently making the film festival rounds. Both *Snacking* and *Cranky Call* can be viewed online via Mr. Loverde's Web site ([emmettloverde.com](http://emmettloverde.com)).

In 1998, Mr. Loverde's comedy *Good Business Sense* was part of the Ritz Theater Company of New Jersey's annual festival of one acts. Later that year, Mr. Loverde himself directed two productions of *Mergers and Acquisitions*, one in Santa Monica and the other at the Hudson Backstage Theatre in Hollywood. *The Maginot Line* was produced at the Bitter Truth Theatre in North Hollywood, California in Summer, 1998.

*A Timely Maneuver*, *Good Business Sense*, and *The Maginot Line* are published by Playscripts Inc. ([www.playscripts.com](http://www.playscripts.com)) and have had over forty productions worldwide. Mr. Loverde's radio adaptation of Edgar Rice Burroughs' *The Moon Maid*, for which he received a commission from The Hollywood Theatre of the Ear, was broadcast twice on National Public Radio and is available on Audible.com. It starred Richard Kind of TV's "Spin City" and the late, great Avery Schreiber.

Current projects include the film festival appearances of Mr. Loverde's feature film writing and directing debut *Santa's Letters*, a screenplay adaptation of *Mergers and Acquisitions* called *Sweet Nothings*, the completion of a children's picture book "Clawdette the Cat",

and the debut of two full-length stage comedies, *Beauty, Brains, and Personality* and *Till You Get To Baraboo*.

Mr. Loverde's Web address is [www.emmettloverde.com](http://www.emmettloverde.com).