

Andrew

Hello everyone. This is Andrew Pond, Artistic director of Eclectic FULL Contact Theatre. Welcome to Season 3 of The Half Hour Audio Hour. Every month, we'll be featuring a different playwright, allowing you to not only hear their work, but to find out a little more about them and their process. If you enjoy what you hear, please remember to like, follow, and subscribe to our podcast. And feel free to leave a review! You can help us out in continuing this work by heading over to [redcircle.com/shows/half-hour-audio-hour](http://redcircle.com/shows/half-hour-audio-hour), where you can sponsor us through a onetime or recurring donation and become our partner in highlighting the voices and stories of women, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ artists.

This month's production is "The Grand Experiment", written by Kris Thompson, directed by Joel Willison, and starring Sophie Hernando Kofman, Angelo Martinez, Rashaad Bond, and Crystal Park

Before we start, we'd like to briefly introduce you to Kris Thompson. After the production, stay tuned for an interview with Kris for more insight into the play and this process.

Kris Thompson joined the playwriting community in 2014 but admits to a life-long love affair with writing. She has enjoyed full length, one act, radio, and monologue production by theatre groups across the United States, winning a few awards along the way. Her first radio play, Birth of a Hero, was originally produced in 2019 and she's enjoyed writing many others since then. Kris' first full length play, Bad Medicine, is being published this year by Next Stage Press and she will also check "write a novel" off her bucket list this year. She is a proud member of the Dramatists Guild of America and the National New Play Network. Her plays are available for reading on [www.kristhompsonplaywright.com](http://www.kristhompsonplaywright.com).

And now, The Grand Experiment

MINISTER (overly dramatic)  
(far away) -but it will not be the end of his story. No, his memory will live on through the family he loved so completely. Marge, his beloved wife, his adoring children Andrew and Cassie, his brother Harold and sister Maggie.

MARGE  
(up close, whisper) He should have at least mentioned the mistresses. They're kind of like family.

CASSIE (shocked)  
(up close, whisper) Mom!

MINISTER (overly dramatic)  
(far away) Edward Townson was more than a great family man. He was also a respected attorney who devoted his life to the law.

MARGE (sarcastic)  
(up close, whisper) The law? Please. He was a divorce attorney!

ANDREW  
(up close, whisper) Mom! Shhh...

MINISTER (overly dramatic)  
(far away) In conclusion, I think everyone who knew him would agree... The only thing Edward loved more than his family, and his clients, was (dramatic pause) his God.

MARGE  
(Laughs out loud.)

CASSIE (embarrassed)  
(up close, whisper) Mom! You realize that was out loud?

MARGE  
(up close, whisper) Cassey, there are more of your Dad's mistresses here than family or clients. I'm pretty sure he loved them more than (sarcastic) "his God".

ANDREW  
(up close, whisper) Mom. Hush!

MINISTER  
(far away) Father, we ask You to send Your peace, during a moment of silence, to those persons who are mourning.

FX: WOMEN CRYING, SNIFFING CONTINUES UNDER DIALOGUE UNTIL ORGAN

MARGE  
(up close, whisper) Do you hear that?

CASSIE  
(up close, whisper) What?

MARGE  
(up close, whisper) That's the mistresses.

CASSIE  
(up close, whisper) Wow. That's a bunch.

ANDREW  
(up close, whisper) Will you two please be quiet!

MINISTER

(far away) The family wishes to invite you to join them at Woodlawn for a short burial service, immediately followed by a gathering at their home in Crestwood.

FX: CHURCH ORGAN MUSIC

MARGE

OK kids. Let's make this quick. I've got lots of plans to make. Is it absolutely necessary for me to go to the burial?

ANDREW (scolding)

Yes, we all have to go. Come on Mom...Sis. The car is waiting.

FX: CHURCH MUSIC AND CRYING FADE INTO LOW HUM OF A CROWD OF MANY PEOPLE TALKING UNDER DIALOGUE

FX: SWINGING DOOR

MARGE

Yoo-Hoo Harold! Over here!

FX: FOOTSTEPS

HAROLD

Oh good. I was looking for you Marge. I'm about to take off.

MARGE

I was in the kitchen with my neighbor Rose. Such a sweet woman.

HAROLD

It was a nice service. Nicer than my brother deserved.

MARGE

True. But, no point in dwelling on the past. Kids are in the study if you want to say goodbye. Thanks for flying up, Harold. Oh! There's Edith. Wow. She looks awesome. Yoo-Hoo! Edith!

FX" FOOTSTEPS RUNNING OFF

FX: FOOTSTEPS UP STAIRS, DOOR OPENING

UNCLE HAROLD

Cassie. Andrew.

CASSIE

Hey Uncle Harold.

FX: DOOR CLOSING AND CROWD NOISE ENDS

UNCLE HAROLD

Your Mom said I'd find you in here. Hiding out?

ANDREW

It's where the bourbon is. Want one?

FX: ICE IN GLASS< LIQUID POURING

UNCLE HAROLD

No. I'm heading out. Wanted to say goodbye. (pause) You know your Dad loved you both. And he was proud of you both too.

ANDREW

Proud? I graduated his alma mater and he wasn't proud. Finished law school and he wasn't proud. I was so determined to make him proud that I sat for the bar six times before I gave up. Now I work at The Bar. Like, I serve drinks at a bar named "The Bar".

CASSIE (compassionate)

Oh Andrew. You're too hard on yourself.

ANDREW

Dad said I'd never amount to anything. Maybe he was proud that I proved him correct. Wouldn't know. Haven't spoken in years.

CASSIE

Dad was an ass to everyone. When I moved in with my boyfriend and became an improv actress, Dad disowned me.

ANDREW

Didn't help that the boyfriend was an artist. Dad hated artists.

CASSIE

He's also a musician! He's been working on incorporating his music, his painting, and his culinary skills into this performance art dessert experience? There are white rabbits and a chocolate fountain. It's hard to describe.

UNCLE HAROLD

Well, that sounds...Intriguing? But you're right. There's just no denying he was an ass. I couldn't even get your Aunt Maggie to make an appearance although she would love to see your mother. I'm sorry you had to put up with him all these years. OH! I've got to run. My plane leaves at eight. Take care of your mother.

FX: DOOR OPENING, CROWD NOISE BEGINS, DOOR CLOSING, NOISE STOPS

ANDREW

Wait. Why isn't Aunt Maggie here. You'd think she would come to her own brother's funeral.

CASSIE

Are you kidding? Aunt Maggie knows what an ass Dad is...was. She was always telling Mom to leave him and live with her.

ANDREW

I wonder why she never left him. He gave her every reason.

CASSIE

Would you divorce a divorce attorney? Especially one like Dad?

FX: DOOR OPENING, CROWD NOISE BEGINS, CONTINUES UNDER DIALOGUE

MARGE

There you two are.

FX: DOOR CLOSING AND CROWD NOISE STOPS

MARGE

Why aren't you out there visiting? People are starting to leave.

ANDREW

I'm just pouring another drink.

FX: ICE TINKLING IN GLASS AND LIQUID POURING

MARGE

Drink fast. The sooner everyone leaves, the sooner I can talk to you about some ideas. I'm making some big life changes. Big!

CASSIE

Like?

MARGE

Well, I'm sure it comes as no surprise to you both that I've been in a loveless marriage for a long time. I'm not getting any younger and I have lost time to make up for. I need to start dating ASAP.

CASSIE

O...K...

MARGE

Did you know your father and I haven't had sex for five years?

ANDREW (uncomfortable)

Oh God.

MARGE

That's right. Five years. Nada. I've had to make do with this...device... your Aunt Maggie bought me at a party she attended.

CASSIE

Oh wow. I think Aunt Maggie is a bit of a bad influence, Mom. Do you remember that family reunion when you and Aunt Maggie got drunk and ended up naked together in the lake? And

MARGE

Best reunion ever.

CASSIE

-now she's buying you sex toys?

ANDREW

Lalalalala. Stop talking. I really don't want to hear this!

MARGE

Grow up Andrew. What? You think old folks shouldn't...get it on?

CASSIE (laughing)

Get. it. on? Oh no. No, Mom. If you're going to be out there dating again, which I'm totally in support of, I think we should tweak your sexual vernacular.

ANDREW

Jesus. Could we not? We just buried Dad hours ago.

MARGE

Right. Sorry. In my defense he's been dead to me for years.

FX: DOOR OPENING, CROWD NOISE BEGINS, CONTINUES UNDER DIALOGUE

ROSE

Oh...sorry. I don't want to interrupt.

MARGE

Rose! You're not interrupting at all. Come in dear.

FX: DOOR CLOSING AND CROWD NOISE STOPS

ROSE

I just wanted to say goodbye before I head out. Kids, I'm so sorry about your Dad. My George has been gone...what? Seven years now? It will get better. Time really is the great healer.

ANDREW

Thank you, Mrs. Lawrence.

ROSE

Marge, you're going to be ok. You call me if you need anything.

MARGE

I will. Thanks Rose.

ROSE

Let me give you a little hug and I'll get out of your hair.

FX: KISS

CASSIE

Oh wow.

FX: REQUIRED BREAKING GLASS

ROSE (flustered)

Oh. Oh, my. What's...Wait! Where am I? Um...Oh, lookie there! Your son dropped his glass and, well, I need to feed my cats so I...I'd better get going! (nervous laughter)

FX: DOOR OPENING, CROWD NOISE BEGINS, CONTINUES UNDER DIALOGUE

MARGE

I'd love to see those cats sometime, Rose. Call me!

FX: DOOR CLOSING AND CROWD NOISE STOPS

ANDREW (mortified)

Good God Mom! You made me drop my glass! What were you thinking?

CASSIE (giggling)

Mom! You kissed Mrs. Lawrence...on the lips!

MARGE (analytical)

I don't know exactly what happened. I went to give her a peck on the cheek. She turned her head. I didn't want to be rude. Plus, her lips were so soft. I wonder if my lips feel soft like that.

ANDREW (embarrassed)

Geeze Mom.

CASSIE (chuckling)

That went on a bit longer than an accidental lip slip.

MARGE (lightbulb moment)

Did it? Well then. (pleased with herself) I guess I was right.

CASSIE

Right about what?

MARGE

About being gay.

ANDREW

Mrs. Lawrence is gay?

MARGE

No. Well, I don't know if Rose is gay. Maybe? How can one tell?

FX: DOOR OPENING, CROWD NOISE BEGINS, CONTINUES UNDER DIALOGUE

MARGE (CON'T)

Rose! You're back?

ROSE

I forgot mention that I left you a pan of my veggie lasagna. You said you were swearing off meat. And if you run out of things to eat, I can come over and whip you up something lickety-split.

MARGE

Aren't you sweet Rose. Anticipating my every need! Thank you.

FX: DOOR CLOSING AND CROWD NOISE STOPS

CASSIE

Mom. Are you trying to tell us that you're gay?

MARGE

Yes. Or at least that I'd like to give it a whirl.

ANDREW

Mom, you can't just give begin gay a whirl.

MARGE

Why not? You gave it a whirl in college.

CASSIE

Wait. What? I never heard about this!

ANDREW

It was a one-time thing. During my experimental phase!

MARGE

OK. So, now I'm in my experimental phase.

ANDREW

You can't have an experimental phase at your age!

MARGE

Well pardon me for missing out on my opportunity to experiment because I was busy getting married and raising children!



CASSIE

Why can't Mom experiment? I think it's a grand idea! But don't hang out at Mrs. Lawrence's house. Remember, your cat allergies!

MARGE

Truthfully, I'm not allergic. I love pussy cats but your Dad

ANDREW (annoyed)

Mom. Just say "cats".

MARGE

-wouldn't hear of pets in the house. I fibbed to protect you.

ANDREW

This is ridiculous. Dad just died and you two are going on about Mom having sex with Mrs. Lawrence? It's disrespectful.

MARGE (quick anger)

You have no idea how much disrespect I've endured in this marriage. Years of infidelity. Complete emotional and physical neglect. Don't you dare tell me about disrespect.

ANDREW

(pause) You're right Mom. I don't know why I'm defending him. He's always been an ass. You've always been a saint. I'm sorry.

CASSIE (matter of fact)

You're still seeking his approval. It's a father-son thing. See...my time at college wasn't a complete waste after all.

MARGE

Andrew, someday you'll realize you're ten times the man your father ever was. And besides, I don't know why you were so upset anyhow...I didn't say anything about having the gay sex with ROSE.

ANDREW

My God.

CASSIE (chuckling)

Mooooom. No. You can't be gay and say, "having the gay sex".

MARGE

No? Why ever not?

CASSIE

Just say "having sex".

ANDREW

Or how 'bout you just don't say anything at all?

FX: PHONE RINGING AND CONTINUES UNDER DIALOGUE

ANDREW (CON'T)

Mom. Why do you still have the landline? I thought we agreed you didn't need it anymore. You have a cell phone.

MARGE

Yes, but your Aunt Maggie doesn't have a cell phone and I still need to be able to talk to her.

FX: PHONE RINGING STOPS

CASSIE

Hello. (pause) Yes.

ANDREW

Mom. Aunt Maggie can still use her landline to call your cell phone. (pause) Landlines and cell phones can talk to each other.

CASSIE (tickled)

Sure. Hold on. Mom, the phone. It's Mrs. Lawrence.

ANDREW

Oh Lord.

MARGE

Hello Rose! No. You're not interrupting. Why yes, I'd love to come to see your cats on Tuesday! Tea at three? Sounds perfect!

CASSIE

And so, dear brother, Mom's grand experiment begins.

Andrew

Thank you for listening to The Grand Experiment, here on The Half Hour Audio Hour. Next up is a brief interview we conducted with Kris Thompson after the recording of this show.

ANDREW

So, Kris, it's so great to have you on this episode. My first question to you is how long have you been writing?

KRIS

I've always loved writing, even when I was a kid, but I started writing scripts about ten years ago when my youngest daughter, Alex, was in theater in school, and then she started doing community theater. And then, of course, if you have a kid in community theater, then you're driving to rehearsals every day of the week, and then

suddenly you've been recruited to help build set on the weekends, and then somehow, months later, I'm stage managing not her show, but other shows, and that's, you know, just what happens with community theater. Anyway, when I was stage managing, that's where I got the inkling to write a play of my own. So I'm backstage, stage managing, listening to actors deliver their lines, and I'm thinking, that's a terrible line, or that line makes no sense at all. And finally, I very arrogantly thought I could write a better play than that. of books on how to write plays. And then I wrote a full-length play and entered it into a contest and was lucky enough to win the contest. And then they produced the play. And once I heard actors delivering lines that I wrote, then I was definitely hooked. So I've written scripts ever since then.

ANDREW

That's awesome. So my next question is what inspired the grand experiment?

KRIS

During the pandemic, a theater company I worked with before, Cone Man Running Productions, was looking for ways to keep theater makers making theater and keep theater goers engaged. bracketed audio play competition which they then podcast called War of the Words and I wrote a number of audio dramas for that program including the Grand Experiment. The Grand Experiment itself was inspired just by thinking women of my mother's generation and the generations before her, the women who followed society's script, get married, have children, devote your lives to your families, and often putting their own desires on the way back burner, never to be seen again in many instances. And a lot of these women who basically waited until their husbands died before they even really started living their own chosen life. That was not my mother's story. Although a thread of that runs through many women's lives. And I like to take serious subjects and write funny scripts about them. So that's what the grand experiment was.

ANDREW

Well, mission accomplished, I can tell you that, because it is a very, very funny script. And since you said that you had written several audio plays for that competition, what is it that you enjoy about writing for audio versus perhaps the stage?

KRIS

Oh, writing for audio in my experience is absolutely freeing. Your play can be set anywhere. You can have any number of sets, any number of locations. You don't have to worry about set pieces. You don't have to worry about what kind of stage it's on or how big the theater is. You can have any kind of characters, any number of characters, you can have them face any kind of obstacles you can possibly think of. Sky's the limit. I still love writing for the stage, and I will continue to

write for the stage, but there are practical matters to consider that I sort of, you know, I feel like when you're writing for audio, you're not tethered to these practical matters, and it's very freeing.

ANDREW

Absolutely, I mean that's one of the things that we've discovered in doing this podcast for three seasons now is the wide, wide variety and diversity of subject matter, settings, all that that audio allows and I do think that's one of the really great things about it. So tell me, do you have any upcoming projects you'd like to promote?

KRIS

Well, there's always irons in the fire, that's for sure. But what I'm most excited about right now is that my first full-length play, *Bad Medicine*, is gonna be published by Next Stage Press out of Colorado. It's the first of my plays to be published. And it's my first full-length play that I wrote years ago, and so it's a super big deal for me. So, hooray!

ANDREW

Well, excellent. Congratulations. That's amazing. This of course leads to the most important question of the entire interview, which is, of course, what is something you've always wanted to try but haven't yet? Oh man, I've got a couple of things on my writing bucket list. The first one is to write a novel. I'm sure everybody in the world has that on their writing bucket list. So I started toward the end of last year, and I'm almost done with my first draft. I'm at 95,000 words. So I really need to figure out how pretty quick I'm going to end this story. Um, second thing is when I finish, uh, the book um Next thing I want to do is, uh, write a tv pilot. I've always wanted to write a tv pilot. I have many ideas for tv pilots Uh, so says I'm sure all the writers in the world, but anyway, I don't know if either of those endeavors will end up being fruitful but I know that I will finish them and I will check them off my list and Then we'll see what happens.

ANDREW

Well, that's really amazing. I mean just getting either of those finished Regardless of anything else is quite an accomplishment. So we will all keep everything crossed for you. Kris, I just want to say thank you so much for being part of this and for allowing us to be part of your show, *The Grand Experiment*. It really was wonderful. It's a great script and I know everybody who listens is really going to enjoy it. So thank you very much on behalf of me and everyone here at Eclectic Full Contact Theater.

Andrew

We hope you enjoyed *The Grand Experiment* Next month, we will be presenting *Lost In Tea*, written by Jo Cattell. And don't forget to head over to

eclectic-theatre.com to find out about Crashbox an International Festival of New Short Length Audio Plays, performed live with live Foley and music November 16-19th., as well as all our other shows and projects.

On behalf of myself and everyone here at EFCT, thanks for listening