

Sorry, Darla
By: Susie Sample

Cast of Characters

LUCY, 20's - 30's, a woman at the end of her rope

DARLA, 50's - 60's, an overly cheerful demon that takes the form of Lucy's mother-in-law

Place

Hell; can be an empty black space or spruced up as much as desired

Time

The present

Setting: An empty space

At Rise: *LUCY is pacing around the space and is incredibly overheated. She's doing everything can to cool down including fanning herself, billowing her shirt, wiping her brow, etc. She continues to do this throughout the entire play. DARLA enters and LUCY barely glances at her before throwing her arms up.*

LUCY

Finally! A real person! God almighty. I have been DYING in here for what is now eleven minutes and thirty seven seconds of absolute HELL. I don't even know how I got here or what this place is, but I am SWEALTERING. There is no AC and whenever I try to leave in any direction, I just come back to where I was like I'm in some kind of freakish time loop. Can't you do anything? Who are you by the way? I have been waiting here-

Lucy finally throws a glance Darla's way, who's looking at her with a giant, cheery smile. Lucy startles at the sight of her.

LUCY

Oh, God! I'm sorry-I'm sorry it's....wow...you are like the spitting image of my mother-in-law.

DARLA

(Cheerily) They don't call it "Hell" for nothing!

LUCY

NO.

DARLA

YES!

LUCY

NO!

DARLA

Oh YES!

LUCY

(Laughs at her own misery and points her finger to the sky, looking up) Oh, very funny. VERY funny. That's a good one. That's good.

DARLA

Don't worry. This is only the first layer.

LUCY

I bet. (Pause, sighs) Dante just took all 9 and wrapped them up in (indicating Darla) *Darla*, my mother-in-law, didn't he?

Commented [A1]: Wonderful job with the formatting thus far! You have an incredibly engaging opening here where the audience can't help but be intrigued by the questions you raise: who, what, how, etc.

Commented [A2]: Great foreshadowing!

Commented [A3]: The character may need a little more time to adjust to this realization before speaking. I would recommend inputting a dramatic pause directly before this moment. This may coincidentally have a great comedic effect, as well.

DARLA

No, that was Satan and there's only two layers.

LUCY

How do you know all this? Darla....are you....(almost whispering) *Satan*? Because I always had a feeling that-

DARLA

Oh, no, no! I answer to the big man.

LUCY

There goes one of my theories.

DARLA

I'm a demon.

LUCY

Well now that you say that-

Commented [A4]: Very funny exchange here!

DARLA

And I'm not actually Darla, your mother-in-law. I'm a copy image.

LUCY

(Defeated) Oh. Never mind then.

DARLA

Lucy, do you know why you're here?

LUCY

I don't know...I....oh, God. Before I died...did I murder Darla? Is that why you're here? Because I've heard this thing where murderers like, BLACK OUT, right after they've murdered someone and can't remember anything and use that in court. And it's true! But I SWEAR...I've only *thought* about murdering Darla. I would never...at least I don't think I would ever-

DARLA

Relax! You didn't murder anyone!

LUCY

(Pressing her hand to her chest in relief) Thank God.

DARLA

Why? You're down here.

Commented [A5]: Great exchange where we get to know Darla and her wit a little more.

Darla cackles at this, while Lucy is not amused.

DARLA

(Wiping her eyes from laughing) Just a joke between us demons. (Pause as she recovers) No, Lucy, the real reason you're here *is* because of me...well Darla.

LUCY

Darla?! I've never done anything to her-you...whatever.

DARLA

You can't think of even one thing?

LUCY

Nope (Pause) You know what? I think there's been a mistake. I should be (she points upward) not (she points downward).

DARLA

There hasn't been a mistake in 32 years.

LUCY

Well surely there has to be some kind of mistake for me. I mean-(pause) 32 years? That's not a lot of time in the grand scheme of things.

DARLA

Ted Bundy.

LUCY

Really?

DARLA

Charmed his way to "up there," but the error was caught in just the nick of time! He got sent down here, failed the test, and now he's here permanently.

LUCY

Wait! Did you say test? Is there a test? If I pass the test can I get out of here?

DARLA

Of course!

LUCY

(Getting pumped) No freakin' way! That is FANTASTIC! I'm outta here! Fake Darla, give it to me! I'll pass it, no problem. Throw it at me! I'm going to the Artic after this, baby! What you got? C'mon I can take it! Let's go! Let me hear it (she holds her hand up to her ear).

DARLA

You have to apologize to your mother-in-law.

Lucy deflates.

Commented [A6]: This is a wonderful way of subtly reminding the audience that Darla is not really Darla. Nice work!

Commented [A7]: Nice segue!

LUCY

What was that?

DARLA

I think you heard me. You have to say sorry to Darla. You know...your mother-in-law.

Lucy tries cleaning out her ears.

LUCY

No, no I heard you. I just don't think I heard you correctly. You want *me*, Lucy Bankcroft, to apologize to *Darla Rottenscum*?

DARLA

A-ha! See!

LUCY

What?

DARLA

Her name is Darla Lottenscomb.

LUCY

I *know*. I don't call her that.

DARLA

And that's the problem! You need to say you're sorry for all of the terrible things you've said about her behind her back! And then you can pass.

LUCY

Terrible things I've said behind her back? What about all of the terrible things she's said To. My. Face? If you only knew-you know what? Forget it! If all I have to do to get out of this is say I'm sorry-

DARLA

To me.

LUCY

To you. Darla. Then, that's no problem. Fine. (Takes a deep breath) Darla, I'm sorry for everything. (Pause) You know? I feel a lot better. Which way to the exit?

DARLA

Not so fast! It needs to be a sincere apology.

LUCY

Oh, c'mon!

Commented [A8]: See comment directly below. It could be something like "You know...your mother-in-law....well me, to be specific."

Commented [A9]: This is an important clarifying point. I recommend inserting it slightly sooner, towards the top of this segment. My recommendation is above.

DARLA

I never said getting through Hell was going to be easy.

LUCY

I can believe that, but *this*....anything but THIS-

DARLA

That's the name of test! "Anything But This!" We gave it another name a long time ago, but EVERYONE kept saying that so we decided to keep it.

LUCY

Well, I can believe it! I mean it's almost unfair what you're asking!

DARLA

Unfair? You mean like you were to Darla?

LUCY

You keep saying that! Name one time I was unfair to that woman!

DARLA

May 11th last year. Mother's Day brunch.

LUCY

I only put laxative in her coffee that one time!

DARLA gives her a questioning look.

LUCY

Okay and the eye drops that Thanksgivingdinner! But she deserved it! She was constantly saying that I went to the bathroom too much during family meals. As if someone needs to explain why they need to take a crap at any specific moment. Well, I'll tell you why! During family meals that woman turned by bowels to water! With her passive-aggressive comments and wait for it....mothering tips! It's not like I asked for those nor would *want* them from Darla, of all people!

Commented [A10]: Space between "Thanksgiving" and "dinner" (no other instances of this found).

DARLA is trying not to laugh.

LUCY

You're having fun with this, aren't you?

DARLA

A little. (Creepy demonic voice) It's what we demons feed off of.

LUCY

Ew, really?

DARLA

(Cheerfully) No! Just kidding. You're fun to tease!

LUCY

God, you're just like her.

DARLA

We try our best.

LUCY

Always cheerful. Always smiling, even when she gives an insult right to your face.
(Impersonating Darla) "Oh, so you've decided to wear that scarf, with that hat? I guess we're being *adventurous* today."

DARLA

You know the more you complain about her, the farther you get from passing the test.

LUCY

Ugh, what am I apologizing for again?

DARLA

All the terrible things, you've said about her. All of the insults, everything.

LUCY

But that's what I told you! She was *terribler* (thinks about the word she just used) to me.

DARLA

Well, honey, just because someone hurts you doesn't mean you should hurt them in return.

LUCY

That's exactly what it means! Besides, doesn't some ancient text say that? Elbow for an elbow?
Or eyeball for an eyeball? Something like that?

DARLA

Hammurabi.

LUCY

Yeah, that guy!

DARLA

It doesn't really work like that here. Revenge isn't the answer.

LUCY

Oh it is 100% the answer. You would know that if you went to Earth. And it feels SO good.
Besides, revenge isn't a sin anyway!

DARLA

Commented [A11]: It's a bit surprising that Lucy knows Dante, but not Hammurabi. It's a small point and not too significant for the character. I just make the note here in case consistency is more important to you.

It's considered one down here.

LUCY

Wow. Dante really got it wrong, didn't he? Just my luck.

DARLA

Relax, I'm here to help you! Let's get you through this test together and then we can both be on our way. I've got a 9 o'clock waiting.

LUCY

Ugh, this stupid test. Is there any extra credit I can do instead?

DARLA

No.

LUCY

Oh, c'mon! What do you want? I can offer you...(guessing) fire to eat? Does that help? And if you let me through, we can just say it was an accident!

DARLA

Nope, this is the only way.

LUCY

Okay, fine. Can't we open up a window in here or something? (Through gritted teeth) So. I have to apologize to my mother-in-law. You. And then I can go up there?

DARLA

Yes!

LUCY

Or else?

DARLA

(Very cheerily) Spend eternity rotting in the fires of Hell.

LUCY

Right, okay. That does not sound pleasant. I'll...I'll do it.

DARLA

But you have to mean it.

LUCY

I know, I know! I'm...I'm gonna do it.

Commented [A12]: You've done a fantastic job of integrating different tactics so that way Lucy can *somehow* get out of her situation. The tactics are organic and interesting!

LUCY gears up to do it. She maybe shakes it off a little, cracks her knuckles, etc. LUCY then tries to “physically” get it out of her system, by rushing through the words, mumbling them, etc. In the process she sounds like a crazy person.

LUCY

How’s that?

DARLA

Not gonna work, but it’s nothing to lose your voice over. “Lucy, it’s okay honey. If I talked as much as you, I’d sound slightly constipated, too. It’s nothing to be ashamed of!”

LUCY

Whatever! I’m trying my-hey wait a minute! That’s what Darla said to me when I had laryngitis after the California trip! What was that woman’s obsession with feces?

DARLA

The test’s not meant to be easy remember?

LUCY

You weren’t lying.

DARLA

Okay, okay! I’ll ease up. “Lucy, I wouldn’t normally say this but I think it’s best if you stopped talking for a while with that kind of voice The neighbors are going to think you *get around*. ...” Was that better?

LUCY

No.

DARLA

Okay! Okay! Just breathe in and out. In ...and out.

LUCY tries her best to do this as DARLA is talking her through it. LUCY relaxes.

LUCY

Thank you.

DARLA

You know out of both her daughter-in-laws, you’re her favorite. Candy’s the runner up, not you.

LUCY

I find that hard to believe. She freakin’ loves Candy. Even if she does have the name of a stripper.

DARLA

There you did it again!

Commented [A13]: Darla’s wants are a little confusing here. Before she mentioned having another appointment and a rush to get done, but at the same time she’s making it hard for Lucy to pass. Make sure that her want is clear from the beginning and if it changes, let it be bold. I have more notes in my general feedback section regarding this at the end.

LUCY

Did what? I wasn't insulting Darla.

DARLA

But you were still insulting someone in your family! And you've done it your whole life! This is your opportunity to be *nice*.

LUCY

(Offended) But I am a nice person! I've been volunteering at the animal shelter for a solid month now.

DARLA gives her that questioning look.

LUCY

Okay, once again... you got me. It's been 10 days but it would have been a month if I hadn't gotten sent down here!

DARLA

You're missing the point. You are nice.

LUCY

Yes! Thank you!

DARLA

To everyone but your in-laws.

LUCY

As if. (Pause) Okay, maybe....

DARLA

See? This is good! Were getting somewhere!

Commented [A14]: Did you mean "We're" here?

LUCY

(Easing up a little) Yeah...okay...

DARLA

Hey! Why not instead of apologizing, you offer Darla a compliment?

LUCY

That's almost worse.

DARLA

Try it!

LUCY

Okay...I can do this. Darla,...(really struggling) your hair is brown.

DARLA

...That's...uh... something. Keep going!

LUCY

Uh..uh...you have blue eyes that can get really beady sometimes when-

DARLA shakes her head, discouraging her from keeping it up.

LUCY

Right-right-you have blue eyes that um...light up when-

DARLA shakes her head again.

LUCY

Less details. Got it. Um--um--

DARLA frantically makes a circular motion with her hand, indicating for Lucy to keep going! The energy of the room picks up.

LUCY

And...and...you have a nose that's not that big and-and-you give to others sometimes-um-and..and...your farts don't smell *that* bad...and-and-oh! You gave me Marty! You have the most wonderful son in the whole world and now I get to call him my husband!

DARLA

Good!

LUCY

(Realizing it/taking it in) You gave me Marty! My Marty! I love Marty and my children that I had *with* Marty! And that was all you...and so...I...I...

DARLA

You got this in the bag!

LUCY

I'm...I'm....(really struggling, but gets it out all at once, truly meaning it) SORRY!

DARLA

Yes!

LUCY

(Rushing out all at once) I'm sorry for all those things I said to you, and -and for putting the laxative in your drink twice that year and for not getting you anything for Christmas and saying that you should be a sheet ghost for Halloween so I didn't have to look at your face and

Commented [A15]: EXEMPLARY building up of action here as you close out your play!

recommending that hair stylist that I knew was horrible and for not jumping your car when you asked even though I knew how to do it and for slashing your tires on Columbus Day-

DARLA looks at her strangely.

LUCY

She didn't know that was me.

DARLA

Doesn't matter! You pass! You pass!

Both women squeal and hug each other. They celebrate!

DARLA

Now we're on to the second layer!

LUCY

(Abruptly stops) What was that?

DARLA

Don't you remember? I said there were only two layers. Dante got it wrong.

LUCY

And does this second layer have a test?

DARLA

Of course!

LUCY

(Groans) Fine. Can't be worse than the "anything but this" test.

DARLA

It's wonderful that you can think of it like that!

LUCY

Who am I apologizing to this time?

DARLA

Oh, well, you won't be apologizing per say.....so much as begging for forgiveness.

LUCY

To who?

DARLA

Your ex.

Commented [A16]: Center (no other instances of this found).

LUCY

NO.

Blackout. End of play.

Susie,

First of all, you have a superb, hilarious play on your hands here. The plot is such a unique spin on the classic monster-in-law cliché and your structure is both interesting and quite sound.

The true strength of your play lies with Lucy. Her character will be a joy to witness on stage. I cannot compliment you enough on Lucy's use of various tactics to get what she wants. From trying to guilt trip demon Darla to bargaining with fire, her attempts at getting what she wanted were always captivating, believable, and just downright funny. Lucy's desperation to get out of her situation was also omnipresent throughout the story, allowing for increased dramatic stakes.

Darla's character is also a blast. She's witty and clearly enjoys her job. I do have a comment regarding her own wants/needs in the play, which I also reference on page ten. An important question to ask your characters, especially in two-character plays such as this, is: what is each person fighting for? The most successful dramatic stories often have these desires at odds with the world, other characters, or even themselves. I say dramatic, but this also applies to comedic stories, such as yours. So, when considering what Darla is fighting for, I recommend the following:

1. *Does Darla want Lucy to pass the test or not?*
 - a. *What is at stake if Lucy does pass or does not for Darla?*
2. **What does Darla want most out of her life in general/what is her ultimate desire?*
 - a. **This does not have to be explicitly expressed in the play, but having this background information can be useful when crafting her character*

Once those questions are answered, make sure they manifest in your story. You'll add to the (already) energetic feel of the story and it will be even funnier when both characters are desperately seeking what they want. It's a win-win!

I hope you have found this feedback helpful. You're an extraordinary and creative writer. I look forward to reading more of what your imagination has in store.

Sincerely,

Nicole



Commented [A17]: A great ending with a nod back to the beginning of your play.