

BOUNCING OFF THE WALLS

a short play by

Caitlin Cieri



MEMBER  
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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

BROOKE: Female, twenties and up, any race. The stage manager and lead technician of *Spiderman: Turn Off the Dark*. Has one chance to make this show a success.

MICHAEL: Male, fifties and up, any race. The producer of *Spiderman: Turn Off the Dark*, who cameos as Uncle Ben. Has one chance to actually be an actor.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

This play was written as a staged reading, therefore the stage directions are simultaneously performed and treated as their own lines.

The *Spider-Man* franchise is the intellectual property of Disney and Marvel Comics. *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark* and its songs “Boy Falls From the Sky” and “Bouncing Off the Walls” are the intellectual property of The Edge, Bono, Julie Taymor, Glen Berger, Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa, David Campbell, and Marvel Comics. Please support the official productions.

ACT 1, SCENE 1

SETTING: SALT Performing Arts Theatre, evening.  
The opening night of *Spiderman: Turn Off the Dark*.  
There is a ladder or a stepstool stage right.

AT RISE: BROOKE comes dancing onstage, singing  
“Boy Falls From the Sky.” She holds a bag of tools in  
one hand and a Spiderman flash drive in the other.

BROOKE

YOU WILL ALWAYS BE IN FRONT OF ME  
EVEN AS I DISAPPEAR FROM VIEW  
FOR I HAVE DONE NOT A SINGLE THING  
WITHOUT THE THOUGHT OF YOU

BUT NO, NOT HERE, NOT NOW, NO WAY  
I'M NOT READY TO GIVE UP THE FIGHT  
IF I CAN USE A SINGLE THREAD TO CROSS THE SKY  
THEN WHY IS THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE  
STILL YOUR HEART TONIGHT

SEE HOW THE BOY FALLS FROM THE SKY.

(BROOKE holds Spiderman up to the sky in reverence.)

BROOKE

Julie Taymor...Glen Berger...Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa...Steve Ditko...Stan Lee...Tobey  
Maguire, too, probably...I swear to you that we will honor your hard work and sacrifices,  
your blood, sweat and tears, through this; the SALT Performing Arts' first-ever  
production of *Spiderman: Turn Off the Dark*. Our lines are memorized, our scenes  
blocked, our fights choreographed, and our seven layers of rigging triple-checked. We  
have put everything into making this show a success, so please lend us your finesse, and  
bless us with a good show tonight...without any trips to the emergency room.

(BROOKE places Spiderman at the very edge of the stage.)

BROOKE

There. It's like our friendly neighborhood Spiderman's watching over our show.

(BROOKE sets her tool bag down by the ladder and walks around  
the stage, looking up at the rigging. MICHAEL walks onstage in an  
antihistamine-fuelled stupor. He tries, and sort of succeeds, at  
walking in a straight line towards BROOKE.)

MICHAEL

Hey Brooke.

BROOKE

Michael, thank God you're here. Felicia's been asking where you were for the past hour. She needs you in make up right now.

MICHAEL

Can you believe that? Little ol' Michael Hajek, small-town theatre producer, finally getting his big break as Spiderman... 's Uncle Ben.

BROOKE

Yeah. It's a big show for all of us.

MICHAEL

It sure is. But before I let Felicia cake me up...do you know where Spiderman's understudy is?

BROOKE

Greg's in the hospital with a ruptured appendix.

MICHAEL

Okay. And what about his understudy's understudy?

BROOKE

Donovan dropped out of the show. Apparently, he finally got on Cutthroat Kitchen.

MICHAEL

And what about Spidey's understudy's understudy's understudy?

BROOKE

Chiam's sitting shiva. Michael, did something happen to the person who's supposed to be Spiderman?

MICHAEL

No, no. Carl's fine. He's in perfect health. But maybe he shouldn't be doing any of that swinging tonight.

BROOKE

Michael, what are you talking about? Spiderman swings from webs. The swinging is an essential part of this play. Why would you even joke about that?

MICHAEL

It's not a joke, Brooke. It's a suggestion. Maybe instead of all those lawsuits waiting to happen, we make it a script-in-hand production.

(MICHAEL gestures to the person reading the stage directions.)

MICHAEL (cont.)

Get this guy to read out the stunts.

(The person reading the stage directions makes themselves known to the audience by reading this line aloud. BROOKE ignores him.)

BROOKE

What happened to Carl?

MICHAEL

Nothing, he's fine. He said he'll be good as new in a week.

BROOKE

Carl was "good as new," this morning. What happened to him?

MICHAEL

Well, Carl and I finally got that desk for Peter Parker's school. And we were about to start cleaning it when Carl said he felt something. So he rolls up his sleeve and he has the ugliest brown recluse spider bites I'd ever seen, which he says he got last week when he first found that desk. So I'm about to take him to a hospital, but suddenly I feel a bite myself.

(MICHAEL holds up his hand, covered in spider guts.)

By the way, there was a brown recluse spider in the desk. I got rid of it.

BROOKE

Why are you still here then? Get Carl to the hospital before he dies.

MICHAEL

That's why I was asking for understudies.

BROOKE

There are no understudies! We're going on in five minutes! We're going to have to close this show on opening night because the actor playing Peter Parker got bit by a spider!

MICHAEL

No, Brooke. Don't close the show! This is your baby. My baby. Everyone in Chester Springs got together and had one big theatre baby.

BROOKE

How are we supposed to do *Spiderman: Turn Off the Dark* without Spiderman?

MICHAEL

We already thought of that. Carl can hang out onstage and sing, and I can do his stunts.

BROOKE

Are you high?

MICHAEL

No...but I did take eight Benadryls. For the spider bite.

BROOKE

Why?

MICHAEL

Because that's what I need for my height and weight. Carl's smaller so he only took five.

BROOKE

Mike, you cannot play Spiderman on Benadryl. You can't play anyone on Benadryl.

MICHAEL

Why not? We've got that patented seven-layer pulley system. It could throw a baby across the stage and it'd come out fine.

BROOKE

Can you even do stunts in your state?

MICHAEL

Can I even do stunts? Watch this.

(MICHAEL attempts to do a donkey-kick, but is very slow and uncoordinated.)

BROOKE

You should sit down.

MICHAEL

I'm not sitting down on opening night. Now hook me up to this pantsy-fants seven-layer pulley system of yours.

(MICHAEL walks over to the ladder to fasten himself into the pulley. BROOKE runs over to block MICHAEL.)

BROOKE

No!

MICHAEL

No? What's wrong?

BROOKE

Well, some of the rigging got tangled a few weeks ago during one of the dress rehearsals, and I had to cobble two of the lines together. So, I guess it's technically a six-layer pulley system now. Ha ha.

(MICHAEL pauses, considering this. He shrugs his shoulders.)

MICHAEL

What's one layer of pulleys?

(BROOKE blocks MICHAEL again.)

BROOKE

Those pulleys and wires worked because they were built for Carl, and I had to tie two layers together last week. If you're even one micron heavier than him, then the lines will snap, you'll hit the stage and die. And then you'll never be Uncle Ben, or Spiderman or anyone ever again.

MICHAEL

Are you saying I'm too heavy?

BROOKE

Only by one micron. All muscle, by the way.

(The wires shake menacingly.)

BROOKE

Hold that thought.

(BROOKE grabs a tool, climbs up the ladder and leans back to fix the wires affixed to the ceiling. MICHAEL looks up in awe, stumbling occasionally. Satisfied with her work, BROOKE climbs down the ladder, puts the tool back in the bag, and cartwheels. MICHAEL watches her and applauds.)

MICHAEL

I didn't know you could cartwheel.

BROOKE

It's my little theatre superstition. I only do a cartwheel when I know I've fixed everything that needs fixing. And then five minutes later, something else breaks, so I do a lot of cartwheels.

MICHAEL

Your balance must be amazing.

BROOKE

It has to be when you work with rigging.

(MICHAEL points a shaking finger at BROOKE.)





MICHAEL (cont.)

We'll call you Patty Parker, give the show a new and exciting queer angle! With webslinging!

BROOKE

But, I need to be down here. I need to be on the ground in case anything happens.

MICHAEL

Well, who else is going to do those seven-layer dips? The stage-directions guy?

(Absolutely not!)

MICHAEL

You have an incredible talent for memorizing lines and song lyrics, Brooke. And with great power comes great responsibility. That spider that bit me and Carl may not have given us superpowers, but it gave you the power to make your dreams come true. Your heart knows you were meant to be Spiderman.

BROOKE

Is this the Benadryl talking?

MICHAEL

Maybe.

BROOKE

If I play Spiderman tonight, you and Carl go to the hospital right now. That means no Uncle Ben for you until you've healed up.

MICHAEL

So, who's going to play him instead?

(The person reading the stage directions volunteers their services.)

MICHAEL

Great. Now, go find Felicia and get your makeup ready. I need to dial 911.

(The person reading the stage directions leaves. BROOKE climbs the ladder again. MICHAEL turns to leave.)

BROOKE

Michael?

(MICHAEL stops.)

BROOKE

Thank you. For giving me this.

MICHAEL

I always believed in you, Brooke. Now go get 'em, tiger!

BROOKE

Wrong character, Mike!

(MICHAEL leaves, and BROOK grabs a harness from above. She climbs down the ladder and puts it on while dancing and singing "Bouncing Off the Walls.")

BROOKE

SOMEONE ELSE HAS WOKEN UP INSIDE OF ME  
SOMETHING HAS JUST TURNED ON A LIGHT IN ME  
I FEEL A FORCE FLOW TROUGH EVERY ARTERY NOW

AND I FEEL IT IN MY VEINS  
IT'S A FEELING I CAN'T TAME  
CAN ANYONE PLEASE EXPLAIN  
WHY, WHY, WHY

WHY I'M BOUNCING OFF THE WALLS  
BOUNCING OFF THE WALLS  
BOUNCING OFF THE WALLS  
BOUNCING OFF THE WALLS.

(BLACKOUT)