

# ***What 's So Wrong About Melvin?***

*by*

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Cast of Characters

BERNIE :

50's

LINDA :

50's

Place

Apartment

Time

Evening

Setting: The play takes place inside the home office of Bernie. The office is brownish with a touch of orange and yellow. Reminds one of the fall season. His desk sits center stage. There's a phone on top of it and paper notepads and pens. There are windows but the curtains are closed. A full length mirror is attached to a closet door.

At Rise: The play opens with Bernie sitting at his desk in his large leather chair, talking to his friend Burt over the telephone. It looks like it must be the weekend but even still Bernie wears a dress shirt and casual slacks with slippers.

*Bernie speaks on the phone.*

BERNIE: Don't get me started on it, Burt, please..he's a no good son of a bitch is what that clown is...A THIEF..A LIAR..A CROOK! Told you not to do business with that guy, fallin' for his charms! He gets you, doesn't he? Within two minutes you're ready to leave him alone with your wife. Worst thing you could do. Not that I would know but look at his track record. He's a waste and you got swindled. How much? *(beat)* How much he take you for? *(pause.)* Well, my, that's too bad...no, that's, that's really something..have you..I know. I know. You have to wait. He's runnin' for the hills, but he'll be back, sooner or later he'll come around looking for the next loaf of bread. When he does, you better believe, when he does..okay, okay. Bye, bye.

*(to himself)* Stupid son of a bitch.

*Linda's voice from the next room.*

LINDA: Bernie, who was that?

BERNIE: Burt got swindled.

LINDA: WHO?

BERNIE: Burt! *(Linda enters room)* Burt got ripped off!

LINDA: You're shouting.

BERNIE: *(acknowledging she's in the room)* Oh.

LINDA: By who?

BERNIE: What?

LINDA: Who did Burt get swindled by?

BERNIE: Melvin.

LINDA: Melvin?

BERNIE: Melvin. Don't look so shocked Linda. The guy is a first class thief.

LINDA: Melvin is the one we met at the Wilson's party last month?

BERNIE: You met him. I already knew all about him.

LINDA: I thought he was a nice, charming, kind man.

BERNIE: You did?

LINDA: How did he rip Burt off as you put it?

BERNIE: Thousands. Took him for thousands.

LINDA: How?

BERNIE: Told him not to invest. Some ridiculous start up, TECH, said to him, "If a business doesn't make sense to you, why bother putting a dime into it?". ESPECIALLY with a guy like Melvin. He didn't listen.

LINDA: But I don't understand, what's so wrong about Melvin?

BERNIE: What's so wrong about Melvin? That guy is the biggest sleeze you'll ever meet. He is so charming and endearing, the kind of person you feel good having around. He's got great humor, dresses well, well-spoken, intelligent, but it's all an act. He is one giant lie of a persona. Everything about who you think he is, is entirely made up. He plays a character. His true self is nothing of the sort. He's a conniving, sneaky, money hungry predator that prays on innocent minded people, decent people, just like our friends Burt and Rita. Thousands! He took them for thousands and he's GONE, vanished like a puff of smoke..but, he'll return. As we speak he's enjoying his feast, but he'll be back.

LINDA: My goodness.

BERNIE: I'm thankful I had sense enough not to trust him. Something about his cologne. You know when a person smells too good? He was too polished for my taste. Not a hair out of place, not a word ever misspoken. Controlled. Together. Calculating. Too perfect and that was the red flag, the fact that he seemed too good to be true. When he approached me about this investment scheme I knew right from the start it was bust. This guy was so full of himself, his eyes, you ever seen such eyes? All I saw was GOLD, his deep desire for money, money, money. No wife. No kids. Drives a Ferrari even. Either borrowed or rented, I'll tell ya. An entrepreneur that suddenly starts appearing at all our events and parties like we know the same people and *WHO THE HELL IS HE?*! These are people we've known for years and he's busy robbing them all blind.

LINDA: Who else has he robbed?

BERNIE: Who else?

LINDA: Yeah, who else has he robbed?

BERNIE: ...Not sure, actually, I mean if he took Burt to lunch, I'm sure he's made a fortune off others we know. He's gone missing. What does that tell you?

LINDA: And he seemed like such a sweet young man.

BERNIE: Young?

LINDA: Oh, yes. Young and well built.

BERNIE: He's my age.

LINDA: Is he?

BERNIE: In fact, he's two months older than me.

LINDA: Can't be.

BERNIE: Yes!

LINDA: Oh.

BERNIE: I'm not old -

LINDA: No, not at all, but...

BERNIE: What?

LINDA: Melvin appears younger than you.

BERNIE: You've established that Linda.

LINDA: I've often told you to go to the gym.

BERNIE: I play tennis.

LINDA: Well, not like you used to.

BERNIE: I've been working longer hours.

LINDA: Yes, but you should still make time for exercise.

BERNIE: We can't all be like -

LINDA: And your hair. Maybe a haircut, a new style, maybe a shade darker...your eyeglasses - I thought you said you were going to get laser surgery done?

BERNIE: Haven't had the time.

LINDA: I'll schedule you an appointment. There is no reason why you shouldn't have the procedure.

BERNIE: ...Alright. (*beat*) What's that smell?

LINDA: I'm baking us our favorite blueberry pie.

BERNIE: Really?

LINDA: It was going to be a surprise but the nose knows.

LINDA (*cont'd*): Should be ready shortly. I'll cut you a nice warm piece.

BERNIE: Amazing dear, thank you.

*Linda exits.*

*Bernie walks over to a full length mirror.  
He examines himself. Flexes.*

*The phone rings.*

BERNIE: Hello? Burt, what's up? (*pause.*) He what? Wait, slow down, you're talking too fast..he called you? Melvin called you? And? (*pause.*) (*Bernie slowly sinks into his leather chair*) Really. Tonight? ..But where the hell was he for the past two weeks? (*beat*) Okay. Okay. How much?! TRIPLE...really? Well, that's, I mean that's great news...but, he's gotta drop the money off to you first. Then we'll see. Right. Oh. Okay. That's nice. Do me a favor...could you call me tonight, however late you get home, after he's gone, yeah. Confirm with me that you received...right, I'd like to know you got your money back with interest..so he claims...right. Okay. Good news, Burt. Happy for you. Bye, bye.

(*to himself*) That son of a bitch.

*Enter Linda carrying a slice of cake  
on a plate for Bernie.*

LINDA: Here you go my love. Blueberry pie, nice and warm with whip cream on top.

BERNIE: Wow, that looks incredible, honey. Thank you.

*Linda sets the plate down before Bernie on  
his desk.*

LINDA: Eat up while it's warm.

BERNIE (*unmoving*): I will.

LINDA (*observing*): ...What's wrong?

BERNIE: Oh, no, no, nothing...turns out Melvin is dropping off Burt's initial investment and some.

LINDA: Really? How?

BERNIE: Melvin just came back from the mine, said they struck it big, wants to celebrate with Burt and his wife.

LINDA: How is that possible? I thought Melvin was a no good -

BERNIE: Well, we'll see tonight before we get our hopes up. Burt's going to phone me afterwards, to confirm.

LINDA: Melvin wouldn't have called Burt if it was all a scam, don't you think?

BERNIE: He asked me to invest. Burt was going on about a winning lottery ticket. You should have heard him. Never heard him so happy in all my life.

LINDA: You said it yourself, never invest in something you don't understand.

BERNIE: That's right. Who knew?

LINDA: Please, eat your blueberry pie.

*Bernie takes a fork full. Smiles.*

BERNIE: Delicious. How do you knock it out of the park each and every time?

LINDA: *(giggles)*

*Linda kisses Bernie on the forehead.*

BERNIE: *(nods)*

*Lights slowly fade.*

**END OF PLAY**