

THE MIDAS TOUCH

a short play

By Sarah Rasey

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Cast of Characters

JOHN DOE: Somewhat dull, your average Joe. Male 20-30.

HAROLD: Immensely charming gentleman. The boss. Male 30-50.

CARLA: An office worker. Might or might not have a crush. Female 20-30.

Place

An average American office, split into two parts: the main office and Harold's office

Time

Mid-day, Modern day.

1.

(Setting SR: An office with a classically neutral color palette, with no particular person or item standing out.)

(Setting SL: A zany office with an otherworldly air, much like a circus tent. outfitted with various gold accents.)

(At rise: JOHN DOE and CARLA sit at their respective desks and work on something incredibly mundane. On SL, HAROLD's office is currently empty.)

(The workers hold a silence for a measurable amount of time, keeping themselves busy with their work. CARLA takes a loud slurp of coffee; the noise sticks to the walls and fills the room. After it has returned to silence for a moment, CARLA walks up to JOHN's desk.)

CARLA

Hey, John. Are you busy?

JOHN

Only as much as usual. Do you need anything?

CARLA

Well, it's nothing major. I was just wondering if you wanted to try that new sandwich shop up the road for lunch?

JOHN

That place is kind of out of the way. We probably wouldn't make it back to work on time. Don't want the boss to...

CARLA

Oh, well, yeah...*(nervously laughs)* I guess I hadn't thought about that. Sorry. *(beat.)* Maybe some other time then?

JOHN

(flustered, blushing.) Sure, Carla. Anything else?

CARLA

No, I guess not. Well, if you wanna chat, I'll be over there. Haha. Ha. *(points to her desk.)*

JOHN

Yeah. *(beat.)* Well, talk to you later. Carla.

(CARLA begins to walk back to her desk, but on her way, she drops a newspaper out of her bag. JOHN takes notice of the man on the cover, and turns green with envy.)

JOHN

Hey, you read Gold Sun Weekly?

CARLA

Um...sort of. I like to read the comics.

JOHN

You recognize that guy on the cover? He is the youngest business mogul of this decade. God, I've always wondered how people like that make it. Makes you think that maybe you could make it too, you know?

CARLA

I've never thought of that. *(beat.)* I've just never considered we're the kind of people who could "make it".

JOHN

"We"?

CARLA

Oh jeez, I didn't mean it like that, John.

JOHN

Are you done looking at the pictures, cause I'd really like to read that. *(beat.)*

CARLA

Yeah, I'm done. I'm sorry if I said something wrong. I'm looking forward to that lunch.

(beat. A puff of smoke and/or glitter and a wacky sound effect.) Sounds like the boss is here.
(beat.) See you around.

(HAROLD enters the office with a burst of smoke and/or glitter. He is carrying a golden briefcase, and his attire is adorned with various golden accessories. He almost appears as a ringmaster in the circus. He embraces the attention directed towards him with a jolly grin. None of the members of the office react at the absurdity, except for JOHN.)

HAROLD

Morning, team. Sorry for the late arrival, I'll be in my office. *(beat.)* John, can I speak with you?

JOHN

Oh...ok. Be right there.

(JOHN follows HAROLD into his office. He sits down in a drab chair in the corner of the room, and HAROLD sits down in his nice, more comfortable desk chair.)

JOHN

So, why have you called me in today?

HAROLD

I heard your little comment in the lobby. About the Golden Sun.

JOHN

Okay. Is there something you needed?

HAROLD

Think bigger. If you could wish for one thing, what would it be?

JOHN

I would probably wish for more money. It would make my life a lot easier.

HAROLD

So you want to climb up the ladder?

JOHN

I'd like to live a bit larger, yes.

HAROLD

Come on, be honest with me. "A bit"? Think bigger.

JOHN

Okay. If I'm being honest, I want to be like those men on the Golden Sun. Their lives are everything I've ever wanted to have. I want to live free of the burdens of finances, to travel the world, to get out of this office. I've been here for 10 years. All I want in the world is freedom. Those men are free. And freedom is expensive.

HAROLD

Well, I might be able to help you out with that!

JOHN

Um...ok. I don't quite understand. Fine, I'll humor this. Yeah.

HAROLD

That's what I love to hear! Let's make you rich!

JOHN

Oh, ok. Wow. So, where do we start?

HAROLD

We start with the paperwork.

JOHN

There's paperwork to becoming rich? It can't possibly be that easy.

HAROLD

That's part of it, yes.

(HAROLD pulls out a large binder with many tabs. It seems to be very old and worn.)

JOHN

Oh my god, it's huge.

HAROLD

You are a man. Are you planning to stay that way?

JOHN

That's not appropriate... Yes, I'm a man.

HAROLD

Then we only need this back part.

(HAROLD flips to the very last pages of the binder.)

JOHN

Okay...

HAROLD

Only a few questions left. What gender are you attracted to?

JOHN

Women.

HAROLD

Excellent answer. One more question for you. *(searches down the paper.)* Are you either white, or considered "white enough" by your Caucasian colleagues?

JOHN

Yes, I guess I am.

HAROLD

Wonderful. You made that so much easier for me. *(he puts the binder away.)* Now for a field exam. Let's play a game.

JOHN

Okay. What is it?

HAROLD

Oh, it's simple. Pick the weakest worker here, and bring them into my office.

JOHN

What does that mean?

HAROLD

I don't know, someone who has the worst body odor, someone who chews too loud, someone who doesn't understand personal space, anyone you feel doesn't deserve to play. Someone who doesn't understand how special you are.

JOHN

This seems kind of mean.

HAROLD

And? How do you think people get in Golden Sun Weekly? By being a good Samaritan? You might as well live for yourself while you can.

JOHN

But...I care about people. Their lives. I don't want to take from good people.

HAROLD

Who are these good people? Why do you have the right to decide who is "good"? Wouldn't it be so freeing to just give up on all that moralistic shit? Take advantage of this opportunity, like the big business leeches that you admire so much have taken advantage of you.

(Silence. JOHN desperately tries to come to a decision. He does. JOHN walks out of the door and back into the main office, and takes a look around. He maneuvers around the desks and carefully eyes up his coworkers. Eventually, his eyes fixate on CARLA. She takes a large, long sip of her coffee. It is grotesque.)

JOHN

Hey Carla, could you come back to the boss's office with me?

CARLA

(beat.) Why?

JOHN

He...said he wanted to talk to you. To us. About a new project.

CARLA

The boss said we could work together?

JOHN

Yeah. He said we would be...compatible. You're good with me, Carla.

CARLA

(flustered.) You think so?

JOHN

Yeah. Yeah, I really do. *(beat.)* Oh god, I can't do this.

CARLA

What's wrong? Have you changed your mind? You said we were compatible.

JOHN

(interrupting.) I did, I did. I'm just not sure... *(thinks it through.)* You really wanna do this?

CARLA

You're being so dramatic. *(giggles. Partially to herself:)* It's cute. Of course I do. It's just a project, John.

(She awkwardly tries to elbow JOHN in a teasing way, but completely whiffs. He grins anyways. They walk into HAROLD's office.)

HAROLD

Good choice, John.

JOHN

Alright, let's just get this over with. What's the next step?

CARLA

Next step? I don't understand.

HAROLD

(laughs.) The final step is my personal favorite. It's a fun little game I like to call, "Do You Have What It Takes?"

CARLA

(CARLA and JOHN laugh.) That doesn't sound too hard.

JOHN

I mean, I'm great at Monopoly. What are the rules?

HAROLD

Let me get it out.

(HAROLD reaches under his desk and pulls out his golden briefcase and places it on his desk. The lights change, and glitter and/or smoke fill the room. HAROLD opens the briefcase slowly, revealing a golden handgun.)

HAROLD

Go on, pick it up, John.

JOHN

What is this, a toy? It looks real. This isn't loaded, is it?

HAROLD

Go ahead and get comfortable with it. It isn't gonna hurt you. (*JOHN follows his orders. beat.*)
Now here's the name of the game. Point it at her.

(JOHN does as HAROLD says. CARLA is noticeably bothered.)

JOHN

Is this some kind of sick joke?

CARLA

What is this, John?

HAROLD

Now fire.

(CARLA goes into a full panic, banging on the door and trying to open the door.)

HAROLD

Don't bother, it locks on its own.

JOHN

What the fuck?

HAROLD

Oh, you can give it back. And you can go sit back at your desk for another 10 years.

CARLA

John, you aren't going to shoot. You can't. You'll go straight to jail. Your life will be over.

HAROLD

Not if you're rich.

CARLA

You know me. I've been sitting next to you for six years. You went to my father's funeral. I thought...we're COMPATIBLE. I like you, John! (*sobs.*) I like you. I want you. I know you want me too. Put the gun down. Please.

JOHN

I can't do this, Harold.

HAROLD

Oh yes you can. Don't think about her, just think about you. I thought we agreed, no Samaritans here. What do *you* want?

(JOHN shakes, and then his face goes white. He finds his grip on the gun, and then refocuses himself.)

JOHN

I want...

CARLA

I have a family! A mother to take care of! You're just gonna use me as some step to riches? That's blood money! Your hands are RED, John. RED...

(Before she is able to finish, JOHN lets a bullet from the gun's chamber, and into CARLA's chest. The lights shift, and everything goes silent. A long pause. Time feels as though it has stopped. After a while, HAROLD slowly walks up to JOHN and puts his hand on his shoulder.)

HAROLD

Good. Now. You know what to do.

(JOHN nods vacantly. He walks to HAROLD's desk, and grabs a golden apple off of it. He walks over to CARLA's body, and dips the apple in blood. He takes a big bite. HAROLD beams. All of a sudden, JOHN snaps into place and appears refreshed.)

HAROLD

Welcome, John. Congratulations. Would you like to greet your new office?

JOHN

Absolutely, Harold.

(When JOHN reenters the main office, he tears through the desks and lays the office to waste in a fit of rage. After he does this, he experiences a burst of euphoria, like a spiritual orgasm. He floats back into HAROLD's office, but HAROLD is gone. He grabs the apple again, and then dips it in CARLA's blood. He walks to his new chair and sits down, then takes another large bite of the apple. Lights down. End of play.)