

*“Just kidding around, you know, and then you mentioned it later,
and then it was this thing. In our heads. An idea.”*

PECULIARITIES

TAHOE

By Eric Samuelsen



CHARACTERS

KENDRA . . . BYU student, early twenties

TED . . . BYU student, early twenties

CAST

Peculiarities was first presented at the Villa Theatre, Springville, Utah, mid-October 2002.

It was directed by Tony Gunn. The original cast for the “Tahoe” portion was:

KENDRA . . . Sarah Ratliff

TED . . . Ben Sampson

AUTHOR’S NOTE

IN 2000, I wrote a play called *Peculiarities*, an attempt at theatrical naturalism and an attempt to explore what seemed to me uniquely Mormon sexual mores. The play lay on my desk for some time, and then, in 2002, a student, Tony Gunn, saw it and asked if he could direct it. Tony and I produced the play together at the Villa Theatre in Springville. Since that time, a number of friends, among them Richard Dutcher of Zion Films and James Holmes of Cue Media thought it might make an interesting and unique independent film.

In the last two years, I have begun a professional relationship with Jerry Rapiere, co-artistic director of Plan B Theatre Company in Salt Lake. After reading a draft of my screenplay edition of *Peculiarities*, Jerry directed a production of a truncated version of it in Salt Lake. Jerry and I have since had further conversations regarding it and have decided that, if we can raise the necessary funds, we would like to make this film.

The scene you are reading in this issue of *SUNSTONE* is one of six storylines that would interweave (crosscutting between them) in the finished film. We believe that this character-driven, dialogue-heavy independent film could be produced inexpensively, and could very well prove popular in festivals and art houses. We believe that we could make the entire film for about \$10,000.

Jerry, James, and I, along with cinematographer Mark Barr, have recently added the Sunstone Education Foundation as a partner in this endeavor to see the film made. To create interest in the project, which potentially could result in a financial payoff, *SUNSTONE* has agreed to publish five of the play’s six parts, one in this and each of the next four issues. The sixth part, a humorous thread about an LDS bishop and his wife trying to have a romantic evening while regularly being interrupted by ward business, wouldn’t work well in this format.

—ERIC SAMUELSEN

ERIC SAMUELSEN, Ph.D., is head of playwriting and screenwriting at BYU, where he has been on the faculty since 1992. This is his fourth play published in *SUNSTONE* (*Accommodations*, June 1994; *Gadianton*, July 2001; *Family*, March 2005). Sixteen of his plays have been produced professionally.

NOTE ON SCRIPT

A note about notation. In this play, a dash (—) indicates an interrupted line. An ellipsis (. . .) should suggest a pause, a line trailing off.

NOTE ON LOCATION

The play takes place in Ted's car while he and Kendra are traveling back to Utah from a weekend in Tahoe.

SCENE ONE

(Lights up on KENDRA and TED. Radio on. A very long pause.)

KENDRA: I hate that song. *(She turns down the radio.)*

TED: Oh.

KENDRA: *(She switches the station.)* Country. Country. Great, radio Elko, this sucks. *(She tries several stations.)*

TED: *(After a moment.)* We're in the middle of Nevada. There's not going to be a lot—.

KENDRA: I know where we are. Between Elko and Winnemucca. *(She snaps off the radio.)* Hub of northern Nevada.

TED: Still, I mean, some tunes . . . *(Glances over at her. Decides to keep going.)* Would be, you know . . . nice. . . if we could find a station that . . . *(He runs out of steam. They ride quietly a while longer.)* Did you turn the key back in?

KENDRA: The which?

TED: The room key. Did you turn it in?

KENDRA: We were supposed to leave it in the room.

TED: I think we were supposed to turn it in at the desk.

KENDRA: We were supposed to leave it in the room.

TED: When we checked out. I think—.

KENDRA: We did the quick check-out thing. We didn't make any phone calls and we didn't watch a movie.

TED: You're supposed to check out—.

KENDRA: They have your VISA number if there's a problem. All we had to do was leave the key in the room. On the, whatever, night table.

TED: If you say so. *(A longish pause.)*

KENDRA: They left that thing. The quick check-out form. On the floor by the *USA Today*.

TED: I didn't fill out any—.

KENDRA: I did, while you were in the bathroom. *(To herself.)* Fogging up the mirror.

TED: Did you . . . say—?

KENDRA: Never mind. *(A pause.)*

TED: Okay. *(Another pause. He taps his fingers nervously on the steering wheel.)*

KENDRA: Would you mind not doing that?

TED: What?

KENDRA: You're playing with the steering wheel.

TED: Sorry. *(He stops. Another pause.)*

KENDRA: I hate Nevada.

TED: Mmmm.

KENDRA: It's like this whole nuclear waste dump site.

TED: I think that's actually a little to the south of—.

KENDRA: The whole state. Really, it's like a state for mutants.

Sagebrush, that's got to be some kind of mutant radiation

. . . *(pause)* tumbleweed. . . All that. *(pause.)* . . . Who lives here? Mafia and cowboys. The whole state. And . . . like, space alien people. Area 51. Whatever. And gambling. I hate it.

TED: Hookers.

KENDRA: What?

TED: Nothing.

KENDRA: What did you—?

TED: Nothing. *(Long pause.)* You have the papers?

KENDRA: What?

TED: The papers? From the . . . you know, the . . .

KENDRA: I told you, we left them on the—.

TED: From the . . . the place, the—?

KENDRA: Oh.

TED: Those.

KENDRA: I know, I know what you—.

TED: Do you wanna. . . like, keep. . . ? *(Pause. Another try.)* Do you think we should. . . ? *(Pause. Another attempt.)* They're legal documents. I mean—.

KENDRA: I never want to see 'em again.

TED: No. But maybe we should. Keep 'em. Or somethi—.

KENDRA: *(Pause.)* Twenty years from now. Ten years from now, next year. Are you gonna wanna anyone to even know that—?

TED: No. I guess not.

KENDRA: Me neither.

TED: So. Okay. We're decided. . . . Okay. I'll just . . . get rid of them . . . or someth. . . . *(Pause. Big change of subject.)* I was gonna ask you. Since we're talking. . . . What'd you think of the floor show?

KENDRA: The what?

TED: The show? At the hotel?

KENDRA: What about it?

TED: I was gonna ask what you thought.

KENDRA: It was okay. *(Making an effort.)* I mean it was pretty good.

TED: I thought so. *(Pause.)* The singer. The black lady. Her voice was really—.

KENDRA: Yeah.

TED: Like, they can really sing sometimes. Big black women, you know what I—.

KENDRA: Yeah, I do.

TED: Well. African-American. I uh guess we're supposed to—.

KENDRA: Black. I hate that. Black.

TED: What?

KENDRA: All that political correctness. "People of color." All that.

TED: Well, whatever they—.

KENDRA: She's black.

TED: I mean, I just . . . whatever they want to be—.

KENDRA: I just want to call them one thing and let that be that. I don't want it to, like, change every five min—.

TED: Sure. All I'm saying is—.

KENDRA: Black. Black black black. Black singer, black entertainer, big black woman with a big black voice.

TED: Thing is—.

KENDRA: Drive you crazy, changing every five seconds.



We should have danced. . . . We never danced.

Changing the rules.

TED: Sure. All I'm—

KENDRA: They should just make a rule and then that's it.

TED: Absolutely. Okay? I agree with you.

KENDRA: Okay.

TED: What I was asking. Isn't she *someone*?

KENDRA: Who?

TED: The singer. Who we're talking about. Isn't she, like, a Supreme or something?

KENDRA: A Supreme.

TED: Didn't your parents have those records? Diana Ross and the Supremes, and—

KENDRA: That wasn't Diana Ross.

TED: No, I know, I was just saying she might have been a—

KENDRA: (*Scornfully.*) Diana Ross.

TED: No. But—

KENDRA: You're so gullible.

TED: No, I just—

KENDRA: We're at Tahoe, rinkydink hotel in Tahoe. Not Vegas or, whatever, Mark Taper Forum. They're not gonna have Diana flipping Ross singing in the hotel floor show.

TED: I was just thinking, another Supreme, though. Another one.

KENDRA: Another. . . .?

TED: I mean it was Diana Ross and the Supremes. And I mean who ever hears of the rest of them? I mean, one of them could be at Tahoe, right? Florence Nightengale, Cindy Birdsong, whoever. . . the rest of them—

KENDRA: Cindy Birdsong?

TED: That was one of their names. I think.

KENDRA: You know the names of the other Supremes?

TED: It stuck in my head.

KENDRA: Well, you just know everything there is to know, don't you? (*Pause.*)

TED: That that that. . . the whole . . . I'd never used a . . . it wasn't my fault.

KENDRA: No. To be fair, I guess it wasn't. (*Blackout.*)

SCENE TWO

(*KENDRA starts to cry quietly in the seat. TED looks over at her. Tries to figure out what to say. Can't. Drives on.*)

SCENE THREE

(*KENDRA'S really crying now. TED has no idea what to do. He keeps glancing over at her, hoping she'll quit. She doesn't. Finally.*)

TED: Is there anything I can. . . . (*A pause. She ignores him.*) Are you okay—?

KENDRA: I'm fine. (*He keeps driving. She keeps crying.*)

SCENE FOUR

KENDRA: (*Wiping her eyes with a tissue.*)

I'm sorry. I'm just . . . I just get all. . . .

TED: It's okay.

KENDRA: (*Blowing her nose.*) I just—

TED: It's fine. Do you need another one?

KENDRA: Thanks. (*He hands her a tissue.*)

TED: It wasn't all bad. (*She blows her nose again.*) I mean I didn't think it was all so awful.

KENDRA: Oh, no.

TED: The lake was really pretty.

KENDRA: Sure. It's beautiful.

TED: Horseback riding.

KENDRA: No, of course, that was great.

TED: And that one place, with the electronic darts.

KENDRA: I wish we could have taken one of those lake cruises.

TED: That did look nice.

KENDRA: I think . . . just cruising down the lake at night. . . . maybe dancing.

TED: Dancing slowly in the moonlight.

KENDRA: Yeah! Maybe like that.

TED: We never danced.

KENDRA: No. No, we didn't.

TED: We should have. Or maybe one of those hikes.

KENDRA: Backpacking. Take one of those trails, and picnic.

TED: Picnic by some little stream. You know. Maybe by a waterfall.

KENDRA: See, that's what we should have. . . . (*Pause.*) How did we . . .? Where did this come from?

TED: Goofing around. That one time, talking, you said, "Hey, have you heard of that thing where they go to Tahoe or Vegas?"

KENDRA: Yeah. I remember.

TED: And you said something like, maybe we should try that.

KENDRA: I was kidding.

TED: I knew that. Both of us . . . chortling.

KENDRA: Laughing. Just kidding around, you know, and then you mentioned it later, and then it was this thing. In our heads. An idea.

TED: Not a bad idea.

KENDRA: (*Dismissively.*) Yeah.



CHELSEA BUSH

What do we call ourselves? Exes? . . . It's sort of . . . true. It's exactly true. And . . . also sort of not.

TED: I mean, if we did this again, we'd be . . . inured to it.

KENDRA: (*Under her breath.*) Inured.

TED: Go during the winter, spend the day skiing, and then snuggle up by the fireplace, drink hot chocolate and warm up each other's hands.

KENDRA: That's so. . .

TED: We should have.

KENDRA: We should have danced.

TED: Watch the moonlight over Lake Tahoe, the ripple of the waves. And the band, a live band, playing something soft. And we'd hold each other on the dance floor, maybe not even actually moving our feet much, maybe just swaying a little with the music. (*Pause.*) And then . . . the boat would finish the cruise, and we'd hold hands, and walk slowly back to our hotel. And we'd go up to our room together, maybe not even talking much, just so glad to—.

KENDRA: (*Very pale.*) Could you pull over please? Please? (*He pulls over.*)

TED: Kendra?

KENDRA: Hurry.

TED: Are you okay?

KENDRA: I'm going to be sick, I think. (*Blackout.*)

SCENE FIVE

KENDRA: So what are we going to tell people?

TED: What do you mean? Who needs to know?

KENDRA: Your roommates, my roommates.

TED: I told my roommates I was going home to see my folks.

KENDRA: Nothing about me.

TED: No.

KENDRA: Okay. (*Pause.*) But my roommates saw you pick me up.

TED: You could tell them the same thing.

KENDRA: What?

TED: That I took you to meet my family.

KENDRA: They'll get the wrong ideas.

TED: What?

KENDRA: That we're really serious. Meeting your parents.

TED: We *are* serious. (*Pause.*) Aren't we?

KENDRA: I don't know.

TED: We've been dating for five months.

KENDRA: I know.

TED: They're probably half expecting it. Big announcement.

KENDRA: They're totally expecting it. You don't know girls' apartments.

TED: So. That's what we say. (*Pause.*) That we went to see my folks.

KENDRA: I don't know if I'm ready for that.

TED: Ready for. . . ?

KENDRA: To go through all that. Jumping up and down and . . . squealing. With delight.

TED: Okay. So. We don't tell them—.

KENDRA: I know what you're—.

TED: We don't make an announcement.

KENDRA: No. Still.

TED: We just say. Quietly, you know?

KENDRA: "Oh, we went to see Ted's parents. No big deal, it doesn't mean . . . anything. Just decided to drive down to San Jose."

TED: Sacramento.

KENDRA: I thought you were from San Jose.

TED: Sacramento. Actually Auburn, we were really close to my—.

KENDRA: Whatever. "Yeah, it was nice. They're nice folks. But no, Ted and I aren't that serious." You don't know girls. Roommates.

TED: My roommates wouldn't even care.

KENDRA: Yeah, well. Trust me, mine would.

TED: Well, would that be so bad?

KENDRA: What do you mean?

TED: I mean, we could. You know? Make a big announcement. Get enga—.

KENDRA: No!

TED: (*A pause. Hurt.*) Okay.

KENDRA: No. I'm sorry.

TED: We don't have to. (*Pause.*) It was just an idea.

KENDRA: If that's a proposal, it's a really lame one and the answer is no.

TED: Sorry. (*Pause.*)

KENDRA: Could we tell 'em you gave me a ride?

TED: What do you mean?

KENDRA: I had to go someplace, and I've been worried about my car, which is true, I have. And you offered to take me. As a friend.

TED: As a friend.

KENDRA: Yeah. You gave me a ride.

TED: Where?

KENDRA: Idaho.

TED: Why?

KENDRA: My sister. She's been going through some issues, and

you offered to take me.
 TED: So we went to meet *your* family.
 KENDRA: My sister. She's at Idaho State.
 TED: And she couldn't just call you on the phone?
 KENDRA: No, it was the kind of thing she had to see me personally.
 TED: What sorts of things would that be?
 KENDRA: I don't know. Sister things. A guy dumped her, or . . . where you have to cry and hug and all that. And . . . it was okay because you have an old companion at Idaho State, so you spent most of your time with him.
 TED: Okay.
 KENDRA: That'll be okay. We went to Idaho together. As friends.
 TED: If you say so.
 KENDRA: I'm sorry, Ted.
 TED: It's okay.
 KENDRA: I couldn't deal with the rest of it.
 TED: Like any suggestion that we actually have a relationship.
 KENDRA: You don't have to be a jerk about it. (*They ride in silence.*)

SCENE SIX

TED: So. I just wanted to. . . . (*Pause.*) We'd talked about going to Men's Chorus next weekend.
 KENDRA: Okay.
 TED: I got the tickets. It was hard. They sell out almost as soon as they go on sale.
 KENDRA: Sure.
 TED: I think they're really good.
 KENDRA: Wade's in it, right?
 TED: Yeah. He loves it.
 KENDRA: Friday?
 TED: Yeah. (*Pause.*) So, we'll plan on that.
 KENDRA: That's fine.
 TED: Did you also want to . . . there was that movie in town that we wanted to—?
 KENDRA: That'd be fine, too.
 TED: Okay.
 KENDRA: I've got a study group on Wednesday.
 TED: That's right.
 KENDRA: But any other night.
 TED: Good. (*Pause.*)
 KENDRA: It doesn't really matter.
 TED: What doesn't?
 KENDRA: Tuesday or Thursday. Either one's fine.
 TED: Oh. Sure.
 KENDRA: I've just been sitting here. Thinking about . . . what do we call ourselves?
 TED: What do you mean?
 KENDRA: What's the word for it?
 TED: Boyfriend, girlfriend?
 KENDRA: I guess. Seems a little inadequate.
 TED: Yeah.
 KENDRA: Lovers. Acquaintances. Friends. A couple.
 TED: We don't have to have a word for it.
 KENDRA: No. I guess not. It's just more comforting if we can.

TED: Exes?
 KENDRA: "This is Ted. My ex."
 TED: It's sort of . . . true.
 KENDRA: It's *exactly* true. And . . . also sort of not.
 TED: I know.
 KENDRA: If we weren't LDS, we'd just be dating.
 TED: Tahoe would be—.
 KENDRA: Right. Normal. We'd be two people seeing each other.
 TED: Good ol' law of chastity.
 KENDRA: Yeah. Makes us unique.
 TED: Not so unique. Lots of people do.
 KENDRA: Anymore? Like who? Amish? Hasidic Jews?
 TED: Lots of people. Friends from high school.
 KENDRA: Yeah, well, not many of my friends.
 TED: Most of mine. People don't just . . . routinely fall in the sack.
 KENDRA: Well, I think they do. That's why we all went to BYU, right, so we could be with people with the same standards.
 TED: Sure.
 KENDRA: And so there we are. You and me.
 TED: You and me.
 KENDRA: Letter of the law; we kept the law of chastity. We can honestly say we have not had sexual relations with anyone we weren't married. . . . (*Pause.*) I hated that place.
 TED: I wish we coulda found a nicer place. Elvis—.
 KENDRA: No, not the . . . Elvis. But nicer, you know? (*Pause.*) I mean, it just . . . some people actually, that's what they do. That's how they start their lives together.
 TED: I know.
 KENDRA: Not for me. I want to be pure.
 TED: In a way, aren't we?
 KENDRA: Go to the temple and. . . . (*Pause.*) I felt so clever. . . . (*TED looks at her. Looks away.*)

SCENE SEVEN

TED: So. You have the munchies?
 KENDRA: A bit.
 TED: Let's look for a place.
 KENDRA: If you want to.
 TED: Sure.
 KENDRA: We don't have to.
 TED: No, it's okay.
 KENDRA: It's really all right. I'm fine.
 TED: I'm actually rather peckish.
 KENDRA: (*A pause.*) Peckish.
 TED: Yeah.
 KENDRA: Why can't you just say hungry? Or . . . starved?
 TED: Well, I'm not starved. Just peckish.
 KENDRA: Why do you have to do that?
 TED: What?
 KENDRA: Use words like peckish.
 TED: I don't always—.
 KENDRA: I hate that; it drives me crazy. Peckish. And munchies, you said you had the munchies. I hate that.
 TED: Sorry.

KENDRA: No. Don't stop. I just want to get home.
 TED: Okay. *(Pause.)* Except I really am a bit—
 KENDRA: If you say peckish, I swear, I'm jumping out of the car.
 TED: Hungry. I'm hungry.
 KENDRA: Well I'm not.
 TED: All right. Except that I'm really quite . . . hungry. And I'd like to stop, find a Mickie D's or something.
 KENDRA: McDonald's! It's called McDonald's! It's not Mickie D's!
 TED: Well, whatever it's called, I want to stop at one and buy something because I'm hungry.
 KENDRA: And I want to get home.
 TED: Two minutes. It'll take two minutes out of your life to let me pull over.
 KENDRA: Do what you want to.
 TED: Fine.
 KENDRA: *(Pause. Fuming.)* Except I don't want to. I don't want to pull over. It'll slow us down.
 TED: There's an exit coming up, and I'm taking it.
 KENDRA: You count the amount of time it takes to slow down, find the place—
 TED: What, are you late for, tell me, a cabinet meeting? Your talk in General Conference? Or—
 KENDRA: More like fifteen minutes.
 TED: So live with it.
 KENDRA: I don't want to live with it. I want you to take me home.
 TED: I'm taking that exit.
 KENDRA: No you're not.
 TED: I'm driving.
 KENDRA: If you have even the tiniest consideration for my feelings—
 TED: One hamburger! That's all I'm asking!
 KENDRA: I want to go home!
 TED: You can't go home! Unless I take you!
 KENDRA: Let me drive then.
 TED: I am taking this exit!
 KENDRA: You are not!
 TED: I'm signalling.
 KENDRA: Turn off that signa—
 TED: I'm changing lanes.
 KENDRA: I'm not kidding.
 TED: I'm slowing down.
 KENDRA: No! I mean it Ted. You. Are. Not. Taking. This exit. I'm absolutely serious. I am totally NOT KIDDING. *(Pause. He looks at her. Drives on.)*
 TED: Okay. We missed it.
 KENDRA: Fine. *(They drive.)* You're going 80.
 TED: So?
 KENDRA: Speed limit's 65.
 TED: 75.
 KENDRA: You're speeding.
 TED: It'll get you home faster. *(Pause.)*
 KENDRA: Fine.

(FINAL BLACKOUT.)

★ **CONGRATULATIONS** ★

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CONTEST WINNERS



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\$400 PRIZE

"VOLUPTUOUS," by HELEN WALKER JONES, Salt Lake City, Utah
 The world of an extremely bright and driven LDS high school girl is thrown into turmoil as she faces apparent betrayal by a first-ever boyfriend plus her divorced mother's romance and impending marriage to of all men, a zit specialist with nose hair.

MOONSTONE AWARDS

\$300 PRIZE EACH

"CLOTHING ESTHER," by LISA C. DOWNING, Heath, Texas
 A woman about to dress her mother-in-law in temple clothes for burial reflects upon their relationship from the moment of teen-aged marriage through the last sixteen years of life in the same house.

"RESURRECTION OF THE BOBCAT," by LISA R. HARRIS, Orem, Utah
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HONORABLE MENTION

"A SPELL OF FOOLISHNESS," by RODELLO HUNTER (Hunter died this past October)
 A near-adult son who has always trusted his father faces evidence of the father's apparent moral lapse and foolhardiness in staking everything they own on trying to revitalize an old mine.

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30 JUNE 2006

