

**HURRY HARDER**

A comedy in one act  
by  
Bradley Hayward

**PREVIEW ONLY!**

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## **SYNOPSIS**

In the frosty house of a small town curling rink, two aging rivals trade insults while yelling at rocks sliding down the ice toward them. As they revisit an old feud involving a stolen girlfriend and a sabotaged shot at the national championship, the physical toll of the sport catches up to them in a series of hilarious mishaps. It's a comedy about bad backs, safety helmets, and the realization that their longest standing relationship is actually with each other.

## **CHARACTERS**

(2m)

**ED:** (Late 60s, m) A grouchy retired police officer whose bark is worse than his bite. He wears a faded track suit that struggles to contain his oversized belly and carries a delivery stick instead of a curling broom.

**BERNIE:** (Late 60s, m) A sensitive retired English teacher with a safety first approach to the ice. He wears a warm tweed suit and a bulky safety helmet. He carries a regular curling broom.

## **SETTING**

The “house” end of a sheet of ice in a community curling rink. Bright fluorescent lights illuminate the red and blue rings of the target painted into the floor.

## **RUNNING TIME**

10 minutes.

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(The lights rise on the “house” end of a sheet of ice in a community curling rink. ED, a bulky older man in a tight track suit, stands next to BERNIE, a trim older man in a warm tweed suit and a bulky safety helmet. BERNIE carries a curling broom and ED carries a delivery stick. They are the “skips” of the game. Occasionally, they hold their brooms in front of them, as though they are giving their unseen teammates a target to aim at. Between these moments, they yell at these unseen players to sweep imaginary rocks down the sheet of ice toward them.)

**ED:** (Loudly, to his sweepers) Hard, you lazy heart attack waiting to happen! HARDER!

**BERNIE:** (Calmly) You know, yelling at Glenn isn’t going to make his knees any younger. It just makes your face a very concerning shade of magenta.

**ED:** NEVER MIND! Leave it! It’s light!

(He turns to BERNIE.)

And don't you worry about my blood pressure. Worry about that salad bowl on your head. You look like an oversized turtle.

**BERNIE:** It’s a safety helmet. Concussions don't discriminate based on age, though they certainly seem to have a preference for the stubborn. My Colleen insists on it. She values my brain.

(He calls gently down the ice, toward his unseen teammates.)

Clean it, boys! That's it. Nice and gently into the four foot!

**ED:** Your brain is just a collection of “thees” and “thous” and synonyms for “I’m a sensitive soul.”

**BERNIE:** What do you know about being sensitive?

**ED:** I can be sensitive.

(He screams down the ice.)

SIT! SIT, YOU STUPID PIECE OF GRANITE!

(They watch an imaginary rock glide past them both and through the rings.)

**BERNIE:** Too much weight. Much like that second helping of poutine you had before the game.

**ED:** I’m a big boned man, Bern. I was a beat cop and I need the fuel. Besides, this stick requires more upper body torque than your dainty little slide.

**BERNIE:** It's a beautiful delivery aid, Ed.

**ED:** It helps with my center of gravity.

**BERNIE:** Your center of gravity is currently resting on your belt buckle.

**ED:** A lot of people throw with a stick these days.

**BERNIE:** It's just a shame it can't aim. Much like your moral compass back in 1978.

**ED:** (Freezes) Oh, here we go. It took you until the final end, but you just couldn't help yourself from dredging up the past.

**BERNIE:** I'm just saying, some things are heavy and some things are wide. You've always been both.

(He calls to his sweepers down the ice.)

Give it a little polish, boys! Just a tickle!

**ED:** You're still sour about Sandra. Admit it. You wear that helmet because you're afraid of the truth hitting you in the skull.

**BERNIE:** I'm not sour. I'm relieved. I should have sent you a thank you note and a bottle of scotch for taking her off my hands. It was the greatest service your precinct ever provided the public.

(ED screams to his sweepers down the ice.)

**ED:** WHOA! WHOA! DON'T TOUCH IT!

(He turns to BERNIE.)

She was a saint. A loud, demanding, slightly terrifying saint.

**BERNIE:** She was a category five hurricane in a floral dress. I wanted to read Keats and she wanted to see if she could make a grown man cry by criticizing his socks.

**ED:** She liked my socks.

**BERNIE:** Oh, she did, did she?

**ED:** Darn tootin'. And she liked a man who didn't use words like undulate.

(ED points at a rock headed his way.)

Look at that. It's drifting.

**BERNIE:** Just like your focus.

(He yells at his sweepers, a little louder than before.)

Hurry! Hurry hard! Bring it across!

**ED:** It's not coming back, Bern. It's staying out in the cold, just like you did at the Legion that night while I was buying her a gin fizz.

**BERNIE:** I wasn't in the cold. I was in the bathroom! I was gone for three minutes to wash my

hands. I know that's hard for you to understand, considering hygiene has never been your strong suit. But I came back, only to find my girlfriend being escorted into to your Monte Carlo.

**ED:** She looked bored. I provided a civic service.

**BERNIE:** You provided a kidnapping!

(ED screams down the ice.)

**ED:** FINISH IT! GET OVER, YOU UGLY LUMP OF ROCK!

**BERNIE:** It's finished, Ed. Didn't even make it over the hog line. Just like your apology at the funeral. "Sorry, Bern, but I got the best years." Truly, the Bard himself couldn't have been more poetic.

**ED:** I was grieving! And I was hungry! They only had those tiny salmon salad triangles. I'm a large man! I need substance!

**BERNIE:** You're sitting shot rock right now, so quit your whining.

(BERNIE adjusts his helmet strap with deliberate slowness.)

You may have hammer coming home, but I intend to be the one to nail this coffin shut.

**ED:** You haven't made a pressure draw in over a decade. And don't act like this is some grand showdown. It's the C Side of a Saturday afternoon bonspiel in a rink that smells like a sweaty crotch.

**BERNIE:** It's the first time we've shared a sheet of ice in five years. And I've enjoyed the peace. My blood pressure has been textbook. My zen has been unshakable. And then I see your name on the draw sheet and I get a tension headache that starts in my toes.

**ED:** You're just cranky because you have to look at me and remember I won. I'm the champion of the Sandra Open. Forty five years, Bern. Forty five years of –

(He falters for a moment.)

**BERNIE:** Of what, Ed?

**ED:** Bliss. Forty five years of bliss.

**BERNIE:** Is that what you called it when she rearranged your spice cabinet alphabetically?

**ED:** Alphabetical makes sense!

**BERNIE:** By their Latin names? I saw you at the Co-op. You were crying in the baking aisle because you couldn't find the crocus sativus.

**ED:** It's organized!

**BERNIE:** It's lunacy. She once broke up with me for two days because I folded a bath towel into a primitive rectangle instead of a sophisticated cylinder. The woman was a domestic dictator.

**ED:** She had standards! And she only did that because you were a slob. You treated your

apartment like a philosophical retreat. Books everywhere. No coasters. She saved you from a life of dusty literature and lukewarm tea.

**BERNIE:** She didn't save me. She emasculated me.

(He hollers down the ice, more intensely than before.)

**HURRY!** It's gotta be shot, boys! That's it! Right to the lid!

**ED:** I guess you're not all wrong. The no whistling rule was a bit much.

**BERNIE:** Oh, I remember that one. I haven't whistled in decades. It's a hard habit to reclaim.

(ED yells at a rock coming down the ice.)

**ED:** DIVE! DIVE, YOU STUPID OVERSIZED PEBBLE!

**BERNIE:** (Watches the rock) She's got the line. She's got the weight.

**ED:** (Panics) STRAIGHT! STRAIGHT!

**BERNIE:** (Snaps his fingers) She's got the guard.

**ED:** (Stomps his foot) She used to make me wear a bib when I ate spaghetti! A decorated cop, sitting in a lobster bib because she couldn't handle a stain!

**BERNIE:** (Smiles) She did love her bleach.

**ED:** (Softens a little) She sure did. The house always smelled like a swimming pool. I miss that smell. I wake up now and the house just smells like... me.

**BERNIE:** I'm sorry.

**ED:** You're not sorry. You're still shot. You lucky, son of a –

**BERNIE:** It's not luck, it's physics. And maybe a little bit of Sandra. She always did like to have the last word.

**ED:** (Grumbles) Yeah, well. I still have to go home to a quiet house.

**BERNIE:** (Softly) I'm sorry, Ed. About the quiet.

**ED:** (Snaps back) Don't you get sensitive on me! We've got four rocks left!

(BERNIE makes a T shape with his hands, to nobody in particular.)

**BERNIE:** Time out.

**ED:** What?

**BERNIE:** I'm calling a time out.

**ED:** This is a rec spiel. There are no time outs unless someone has to take a leak.

**BERNIE:** My boys always have to take a leak.

(He calls to his sweepers.)

Pee break, boys!

**ED:** Good lord, I'm surprised you don't have matching team Depends.

**BERNIE:** Now that it's just us, listen. Seeing you and Sandra every Friday night at mixed league was like watching a slow motion car crash.

**ED:** We were good. We had chemistry.

**BERNIE:** You were a loud mouthed drill sergeant and she was even worse. My doctor said my cortisol levels were high enough to preserve ham, so I switched clubs. I couldn't sit in that lounge and watch the two of you high five after a double takeout.

**ED:** All teams high five each other.

**BERNIE:** Not with their tongues!

**ED:** It's called team spirit!

**BERNIE:** It was practically a porno! And it wasn't just my ego you bruised. You cost us the purple heart. We were one game away from the Brier. One game! The biggest stage in the country, and you decided that the night before the final was the optimal time to stage a romantic coup at the Legion.

**ED:** I was inspired! I thought I'd play better if I was victorious in all aspects of my life.

**BERNIE:** Victorious? I walked onto that ice the next morning with the blank stare of a man who'd just seen his house burn down. I wasn't looking at your broom. I was looking at the back of your thick skull and betraying neck.

**ED:** You played like a man possessed. I've never seen so much takeout weight in my life.

**BERNIE:** I wasn't trying to make takeouts, I was trying to decapitate you! Every time I slid out of the hack, I wasn't thinking about the draw or the turn. I was picturing forty four pounds of granite connecting with your skull. I didn't care about the Brier. I wanted a crime scene.

**ED:** I remember. You nearly took the opposing skip's head off. The official had to ask if you'd been drinking.

**BERNIE:** I was drunk on unadulterated loathing! I was firing rocks at the house like they were heat seeking missiles. We lost by six points because I couldn't throw a draw to save my life. I was too busy trying to commit justifiable homicide on a curling sheet.

**ED:** (Smirks) Well, you missed. My reflexes were better back then.

**BERNIE:** Only because you knew I was hunting you. You were the only skip in history who called the game from behind the hack because you were too afraid to stand in the rings while I was throwing.

**ED:** Can you blame me? You had that look in your eye. Like a librarian who'd finally snapped.

**BERNIE:** I suppose it worked out. If we'd made the Brier, I might have stayed in this club. I might have stayed with Sandra.

**ED:** And I wouldn't have this chronic back pain from forty five years of domestic bliss.

**BERNIE:** In a way, I owe you. If I hadn't fled to the Highland Club to escape the sight of your Monte Carlo in the parking lot, I never would have met Colleen.

**ED:** (Snorts) Ah, yes. the woman who permitted the helmet.

**BERNIE:** Colleen is a treasure. She doesn't rearrange my spices. In fact, she doesn't care if I eat cereal for dinner, right out of the box. She's peaceful. When I come home, she's usually in the garden, or reading a book. And she listens. She doesn't just wait for me to stop talking so she can critique my syntax.

**ED:** Sounds boring. I bet she doesn't even know how to yell at a lead for sliding into the house.

**BERNIE:** She doesn't yell at all in the house. It's a novel concept. She thinks my safety helmet is endearing. We go bird watching on Sundays. I haven't seen a lobster bib in decades. I'm happy. Genuinely happy.

**ED:** So you're saying I did you a favour by kidnapping the hurricane?

**BERNIE:** (Nods) The greatest favour of my life. You took the storm, and left me with the sunset.

(ED is quiet for a beat, then suddenly explodes.)

**ED:** Well, don't get too comfortable in the sunset! Because the time out is over and I'm going to bury a rock so deep in the four foot you'll need a search party and a map to find it!

**BERNIE:** There he is. The drill sergeant is back.

**ED:** Shut up, Professor. My next shot is for the crocus sativus!

**BERNIE:** What does saffron have to do with anything?

**ED:** At least I was alive when Sandra was here! Colleen has you so sedated that you probably have to check your own pulse to see if you're still awake!

**BERNIE:** At least I'm not checking my pulse to see if I'm having a stroke every time I yell at my sweepers! Colleen treats me like a partner, not someone out on parole.

**ED:** She treats you like a house cat! Sandra was a weather event! She kept a man on his toes!

**BERNIE:** She kept you on your toes because she'd throw a cast iron skillet at your heels if you tracked mud in the door!

**ED:** THAT WAS FOR THE GOOD OF THE HOUSE!

**BERNIE:** Speaking of the good of the house, get out of mine. It's my shot!

**ED:** Don't let me stand in your way, Your Royal Highness!

(ED bows to BERNIE. He leans his entire upper body over his knees. Then suddenly, there's a loud crunch. ED freezes. His eyes bulge. He remains bent over, his torso parallel to the ice. Then he wails at the top of his lungs, in excruciating pain.)

Ahhhhhh oooooo ahhhhhh oooooo!

**BERNIE:** (Quietly) Ed?

**ED:** (Wheezing) Don't. Move.

**BERNIE:** Did you just make that noise? Or did the building settle?

**ED:** The building is fine. My L4 and L5 have just declared independence from my spine.

(BERNIE peers down at ED.)

**BERNIE:** You look like a half opened pocket knife.

**ED:** I'm stuck, Bern.

**BERNIE:** (Smirks) Well, at least you'll have a great view of the perfect shot I'm about to make.

**ED:** Very funny. Now, help me.

**BERNIE:** I don't know, Ed. I'm not sure my insurance covers assisting an old grump off the ice.

**ED:** BERNIE! My nose is getting cold!

**BERNIE:** From this angle, your bald spot looks remarkably like a little curling house on the top of your head. Shot rock is that mole right in the middle.

**ED:** I will kill you. As soon as I'm vertical, I will end you.

**BERNIE:** You're not going to be vertical until someone else scrapes you off ice. Unless, of course, you admit it.

**ED:** Admit what?!

**BERNIE:** Admit that Sandra was a nightmare and you only stayed with her out of spite so I couldn't have her back.

**ED:** (Grumbles) I love... I loved... I loved her butter tarts.

**BERNIE:** (Loudly) I can't hear you, Ed! Are you talking to the granite?

**ED:** I said I loved her!

**BERNIE:** You know, I've spent forty five years wondering why you did it. Was it the thrill of the chase? Or did you just see a man with a quiet life and think, "I'd like to set fire to that"?

**ED:** It was the gin fizzes, Bern! They go to a man's head! I've been off that stuff for years. Now pull me up before my vertebrae start migrating to my neck!

**BERNIE:** Not until I hear it. The A word. Not aggravating. Not arrogant. The big one.

**ED:** (Growls) Fine. I was... At fault.

**BERNIE:** Close. Try again, with feeling. Think about the butter tarts.

**ED:** (Eyes squeezed shut) Fine! I apologize! I'm sorry I stole your girlfriend and spent nearly five decades in a house that smelled like Clorox! I'm sorry I took the bullet for you!

**BERNIE:** (Beams) That was actually quite therapeutic. I feel a weight lifted. Now, let's get you upright, you old coot.

(He sets his broom aside and steps behind ED. He grabs him under the armpits.)

**BERNIE:** Alright, on three. One... two... three!

(He pulls with all his might. ED lets out a sound like a set of bagpipes as his spine uncurls.)

**ED:** AH! OH! Okay, I'm vertical. I'm –

(As he reaches full height, the sudden shift in weight sends BERNIE's feet flying forward. His legs shoot out like a cartoon character stepping on a banana peel. He falls backwards, hitting the ice hard. His head bounces off the ice and his helmet makes a loud clunk. He lies there, limbs spread out like he's making a snow angel. Unable to bend over, ED simply whispers.)

**ED:** Oh god. You still in there, Professor? Or did you just see the ghost of Keats?

(Dazed, BERNIE remains perfectly still and stares at the rafters.)

**BERNIE:** The rafters... they're very symmetrical. I think I see a bird. Is it a Nuthatch?

**ED:** (Genuinely shaken) That sounded like a gunshot.

(He gingerly nudges BERNIE's helmet with his foot.)

That that turtle shell of yours. It actually did something.

**BERNIE:** My brain, did it stay in the shell?

**ED:** It's all in there.

**BERNIE:** Colleen was right. As usual.

END OF PREVIEW

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