

**WHERE WITH ALL**

A comedy in one act  
by  
Bradley Hayward

**PREVIEW ONLY!**

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## SYNOPSIS

When a skyscraper demolishes her history, a sharp tongued grandmother and her influencer grandson must infiltrate the construction site to reclaim a buried past. They find an unlikely ally in a small town welder with a can-do attitude who realizes that a city built only of glass and synergy has no soul. Together, they stage a quiet revolution to plant the seeds of the old world into the penthouse of the new, proving that true wherewithal is the ability to grow through the cracks.

## CHARACTERS

(1m, 2f)

**SHANNA:** (30s, f) A skilled welder from a rural town with a spirited can-do attitude. She wears a high visibility safety vest, hard hat, and a leather tool belt.

**BRADEN:** (20s, m) A young internet influencer who's out of place on a construction site. He wears a designer t-shirt, expensive joggers, and white sneakers.

**EVELYN:** (80s, m) Braden's feisty grandmother. She's dressed in a practical day dress, lightweight cardigan, and sensible shoes.

## SETTING

A high rise construction site, dominated by a massive steel girder and a deep hole center stage. Lengths of yellow caution tape attached to orange pylons cordon off the hole in the ground.

## RUNNING TIME

10 minutes.

## WHERE WITH ALL

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(The lights rise on a high rise construction site, dominated by a massive steel girder and a deep hole center stage. Lengths of yellow caution tape attached to orange pylons cordon off the hole in the ground.)

(SHANNA is on the ground, under the steel girder, her boots kicking at the air. A violent banging echoes out from under the girder as she bangs on it with a wrench. BRADEN enters and ducks under a strip of “Caution” tape. He looks like he’s walking on egg shells in a mine field. He holds an iPad like a shield.)

**BRADEN:** Uh, hello? Excuse me. Are you the, uh, the lead architectural implementation specialist?

(The clanging stops instantly. SHANNA slides out from under the steel beam, covered in grease. She stares up at him, a large wrench in hand.)

**SHANNA:** The what?

**BRADEN:** The...

(He checks his iPad)

...implementation specialist? I’m looking for the person in charge of the structural integrity for the south block.

(SHANNA stands up, wipes her hands on a rag that is dirtier than her clothes, and looks him up and down.)

**SHANNA:** You’re looking for a guy named Weston. He’s in a trailer three blocks away, eating a salad that costs twenty dollars and looking at a 3D model of his own ego.

**BRADEN:** Oh. So you're just –

**SHANNA:** “Just”?

**BRADEN:** I mean, no! I didn’t mean “just.” I meant, are you the one actually doing the thing? The building part?

**SHANNA:** I’m the one making sure this “Vertical Horizon” doesn't turn into a horizontal disaster. I’m Shanna. Lead welder and the only person on this site who knows how to use a wrench without an instruction manual. Why? You here to deliver a gluten free muffin?

**BRADEN:** I’m here with my grandmother.

(SHANNA looks behind him at the empty space.)

**SHANNA:** Did you lose her at the gate? Because if she fell in the concrete pour, she’s part of the lobby now.

**BRADEN:** She's behind the port-a-potties, checking the perimeter. She says the energy of her old kitchen is being suppressed by your industrial vibrations.

**SHANNA:** (Laughs) Energy? Kid, the only thing being suppressed here is my patience. This is a hard hat zone. If you don't have a permit, you're just a target for falling rivets.

**BRADEN:** (Looks up nervously) Are rivets currently falling?

**SHANNA:** Everything's falling, kid. Prices, standards, and probably that crane if I don't get back to work. Now, take your iPad and your implementation talk and move it before I weld your shoes to this girder.

(A sharp, commanding voice bellows from offstage.)

**EVELYN:** (O.S.) Braden! Tell the girl with the grease on her face to stop barking! I found the spot!

**SHANNA:** The spot?

**BRADEN:** (Winces) Yeah. The spot.

(EVELYN marches on stage, holding a rusted garden trowel like a bayonet.)

**EVELYN:** You're standing on my breakfast nook, young lady. And I've come to get what's mine. Windy day, be damned!

**SHANNA:** They told me the wind in the city was channelled by the architecture, but back home we just call this a draft that'll catch you a death of cold.

**BRADEN:** Gran, this lady has a very large wrench and an attitude. Maybe the time capsule is legally the property of the conglomerate now.

(EVELYN rips the "Caution" tape and tosses it in a wad to the side.)

**EVELYN:** The conglomerate didn't spend three hours in 1954 burying a Maxwell House coffee tin under a rosebush, Braden. I did. Move your feet or lose 'em.

(SHANNA waves the wrench in her face.)

**SHANNA:** Whoa, whoa. Hold it right there, Mother Nature. This is a hard hat zone, not a community garden. You're trespassing on forty floors of impending luxury.

**EVELYN:** (Unfazed) I'm not trespassing. I'm visiting my pantry. Or where it used to be, anyway. You're standing right about where I used to burn my toast every morning.

**SHANNA:** (Softens slightly) Well, your pantry is currently a structural load bearing nightmare. I'm Shanna. I'm the one they hired to make sure this whole glass ego trip doesn't tip over into the river.

**BRADEN:** I'm Braden. I'm just her Uber driver and moral support. And I think the plans for this building are very aesthetic.

**SHANNA:** Pfft! Don't use "aesthetic" on a job site or you'll get a hammer dropped on your toes.

(She turns to EVELYN.)

Ma'am, I get it. I'm from a town where we don't tear things down, we just slap another layer of paint on 'em until the wood turns to dust. But this block is gone.

**EVELYN:** Progress is a hungry Cocker Spaniel. It eats everything and leaves you the bill. But I'm not leaving without my tin. It's buried three feet down, right under where the linoleum had that burn mark from the fondue set.

**BRADEN:** Gran, the linoleum is gone. It's all gravel and synergy now. Look at the renderings on the fence! There's going to be a juice bar right where your recliner was. That's kind of cool, right? High speed fibre optics!

**EVELYN:** (To SHANNA) He likes things that glow. He thinks history is something you delete to make room for more photos of his avocado toast.

**SHANNA:** (Laughs) He's got new city fever. I see it every day. People want the shiny stuff because they think it's stronger. But shiny breaks. Shiny needs a technician from Germany to fly in when a circuit blows.

(She taps her wrench on the steel girder.)

Me? I like things I can fix with determination and a few choice cuss words.

**EVELYN:** (Approvingly) You've got the wherewithal. I can see it in your grip. You look like a woman who's had to jump start a tractor in a snowstorm.

**SHANNA:** Three times before breakfast, usually. Which is why you aren't digging a hole here. The ground is packed with industrial grade filler and you'll snap that trowel like a toothpick.

**EVELYN:** Then lend me something that won't snap. You're building the future so surely you can spare a tool to help me find the past.

(SHANNA looks around, then at EVELYN.)

**SHANNA:** If the foreman sees me helping a civilian dig for a coffee can, I'm back to fixing fences in Oxbow by Monday.

**BRADEN:** (Checking his iPad) Technically, the foreman is at a "Mindfulness Seminar" until 2:00PM.

**SHANNA:** Mindfulness? Lord help us.

(She picks up a heavy duty shovel and tosses it to BRADEN. The weight of it almost knocks him over.)

Alright, kid. You want new and shiny? Start digging. If we hit a gas line, we're all going to be aesthetic in a hurry.

(BRADEN hesitantly plunges the shovel into the dirt. It hits a piece of concrete with a loud thud.)

**BRADEN:** I think the ground is fighting back.

**SHANNA:** The ground always fights back, kid. Especially city ground. It's got layers. It's like a lasagna of bad decisions and old plumbing.

(EVELYN points her trowel toward the sky.)

**EVELYN:** And now they're putting a garnish of glass on top.

**BRADEN:** It's exciting to watch things grow.

**EVELYN:** When I was young, I had to cross the border to the State Fair for any excitement. Now they're building the Ferris Wheel on top of my bedroom. Who is it this time, Shanna? Some billionaire who wants to see the sunrise before anyone else?

**SHANNA:** The Metropolitan Group. Headed by a guy named Weston who wears suits that cost more than my first three trucks. He calls this tower "Vertical Horizon." Says it's about bringing people together by putting them in boxes a thousand feet in the air where they never have to talk to their neighbours.

**EVELYN:** What sort of life is that?

**BRADEN:** It's supposed to have a rooftop forest, Gran. Carbon neutral. They're even going to have a digital concierge that remembers your coffee order before you even wake up. It sounds very efficient!

**EVELYN:** Efficient.

(She spits, as if she's spitting out the pit of a sour cherry.)

You know what was efficient, Braden? Borrowing a cup of sugar from Mrs. Buchanan next door. Now that was a social network. It cost you ten minutes of gossip and a bit of dignity, but you didn't need a digital anything to tell you the weather. You just looked at Mrs. Buchanan's joints. If she was limping, it was gonna rain.

**SHANNA:** Weston doesn't care about Mrs. Buchanan's knees. He cares about optimization. He told the crew last week that we aren't just building a tower, we're building a "lifestyle solution." I told him I'm a welder, not a pharmacist. He didn't laugh.

**BRADEN:** But it's progress! If we don't build up, the city dies. Right? I mean, I love the old house, Gran, but the heater sounded like a dying ghost and the floorboards were basically suggestions.

**EVELYN:** Those floorboards had memory. They groaned in the exact spot your grandfather used to sneak in late from the bowling alley. This new place? It won't groan. It'll just beep at you.

**BRADEN:** (Struggles with the shovel) Progress, I tell you!

(SHANNA takes the shovel from BRADEN.)

**SHANNA:** Give me that before you dislocate a shoulder. You're digging like you're afraid of the dirt. In the country, if you want something to stand, you have to get your fingernails black. Weston and his architects? They design these things on tablets. They forget that at the end of the day, it's just a bunch of hicks like me actually holding the sky up with our bare hands.

**EVELYN:** Is that why you're here? To show them how it's done?

(SHANNA drives the shovel into the ground as she speaks.)

**SHANNA:** I'm here because my town ran out of things to build. People kept leavin' and the rest kept dyin'. So I picked up and brought the wherewithal with me. You can take the girl out of the sticks, but you can't take the sticks out of the girl. If I don't build it, some city slicker will skip a step, and the whole "Vertical Horizon" will end up in your lap. So if Weston's horizon needs a ground floor that "activates the streetscape," that's what I'm gonna do.

**BRADEN:** (Excited) Oh! I saw the floor plans online. Right where we're standing is going to be a Kinda Sub!

**SHANNA:** Kinda Sub?

**BRADEN:** It's a knockoff sandwich shop that's all the rage in Japan. Their slogan is "Close Enough to a Footlong." And next to that is a Green-N-Go.

**EVELYN:** What's that?

**BRADEN:** It's a convenience store that sells artisanal cannabis.

**EVELYN:** (Horrified) A pot shop? Right where my vanity was? I used to sit there and brush my hair a hundred times every night. Now people are going to be standing there getting stoned?

**SHANNA:** And don't forget the dry cleaners, Ma'am. The Steam Boutique. They don't just wash your shirts, they "realign their aura" with pressurized vapour.

**EVELYN:** A fake sandwich shop and a boutique for steam.

**BRADEN:** And the juice bar!

**EVELYN:** All that weight on top of us just to sell things nobody actually needs.

(She points to a patch of dirt.)

Mrs. Buchanan's porch was right there. We used to sit on those steps every July with a bowl of snap peas. We didn't "activate the streetscape." We just watched the neighbourhood happen.

**BRADEN:** I remember the snap peas, Gran. They were crunchy.

**EVELYN:** They were fresh. And if you walked ten feet that way, you'd hit Mr. McNabb's corner store. He didn't have artisanal anything. He had a jar of pickled eggs that ate through the jar and a stack of newspapers that smelled like firewood. If you were short a nickel, he'd just tell you to bring it next time.

**SHANNA:** Small towns don't have a monopoly on that, I guess. It's just easier to lose it in a place where the buildings keep getting taller.

**EVELYN:** Mr. McNabb knew my name. Mrs. Buchanan knew my business. Now, I'm going to be replaced by a Kinda Sub and a shop that sells weed. They call it going to pot, but they usually mean the people, not the zoning.

**SHANNA:** (Wipes her brow) That's why you gotta have guts. The city builds over top of you,

sure. It buries the porch and the snap peas under a layer of synergy and deli meat. But the dirt...

(She pours some dirt off the tip of her shovel.)

The dirt stays the same. You just have to know how to dig through the new stuff to find what's solid.

**BRADEN:** Maybe the new stuff isn't so great if it doesn't have a soul.

(SHANNA thrusts the shovel back into the earth.)

**SHANNA:** Soul doesn't come with the blueprints, kid. You have to bring it with you in your toolbox. Now, quit mourning Mr. McNabb and help me move this chunk of foundation. If your memory is as good as you say it is, we're about six inches away from a Maxwell House tin.

(BRADEN helps SHANNA move a jagged piece of concrete.)

**BRADEN:** How do you do it? You're like an alien from a planet where people actually do things. I spend all day moving data from one cloud to another. I don't even know where the cloud is. Some days it feels like I'm not even here.

**SHANNA:** You want to know why I'm a hick in a hard hat? It's because I like to know exactly where I stand. Back home, if the barn roof leaks, you don't call a consultant to "re-imagine the overhead experience." You climb a ladder with a hammer.

**EVELYN:** And you pray the ladder holds.

**SHANNA:** Exactly. See, the city tries to separate the where from the why. They want the "Vertical Horizon," the where, but they've forgotten the people, the why. I'm the bridge. I'm the one who has to make sure the math of the big city plays nice with the gravity of the mud.

(She walks to the edge of the pit and looks down into it.)

I've always loved the dirt, since I was a sprout. Because the dirt doesn't lie to you. You can't spin a structural weld. It either holds or it kills people. There's a peace in that kind of truth. When I build a high rise, I'm not building it for Weston and his Sub-Way-Ish. I'm building it so that fifty years from now, some other grandson can stand in a kitchen and feel safe enough to complain about the rent.

**BRADEN:** So the building is the bridge?

**SHANNA:** The work is the bridge. It's building the *where* for people to connect and having the *all* to make it happen. That's what brings people together. Not a rooftop forest or a digital concierge. It's the fact that someone, somewhere, sweated over a bolt so you could sleep soundly.

**EVELYN:** You talk like a builder, but you sound like a poet.

**SHANNA:** (Grins) Then I'm a very loud poet with a union card! And if we're gonna talk about where and think about all, we better find that coffee can before the foreman comes back all mindful and puts an end to our scavenger hunt.

**BRADEN:** Okay. I'm in. Where did you say that rosebush was, Gran?

**EVELYN:** (Points with a shaky finger) Four feet to the left of the weed shop.

**SHANNA:** Let's dig low before people get high.

(SHANNA and BRADEN continue digging, more determined than before.)

**EVELYN:** (Squints at SHANNA) You're a strange creature. You've got all the markings of a company woman and yet here you are, risking your paycheck to help an old woman dig for a ghost. Why go against the rules for a coffee tin?

**SHANNA:** Rules are just the shiny part of the job. They're the paint. But beneath the paint, you look for the frame. When I look at you, I see a woman who didn't just live in a house, she held it up. You turned a porch into a life, and you didn't need a blueprint to tell you how to love your neighbours.

**EVELYN:** It wasn't always easy. Most days it was just work.

**SHANNA:** That's the secret, isn't it? If I'm lucky, forty years from now, I'll be the one standing on a street corner, stubborn as a mule, telling some young welder how it used to be. You're not a trespasser to me. You're my future. If I can help you save your past, maybe there's hope that someone will save mine when the next Weston comes along to build over me.

(BRADEN stops digging for a moment and looks up.)

**BRADEN:** You know, I always thought I wanted to be up there. I thought ambition was about how far you could get away from the mud.

**EVELYN:** And now?

(BRADEN looks down into the hole.)

**BRADEN:** Now I'm thinking ambition might be about how deep you're willing to go.

(He turns to SHANNA.)

You aren't just playing in the dirt, you're making sure the world doesn't blow away.

**SHANNA:** Damn straight.

**BRADEN:** I spend my life making content that's relevant for fifteen seconds. I want to build something that needs a wrench, or at least something that doesn't disappear when the wi-fi goes out.

**SHANNA:** (Pats him on the shoulder) Careful, kid. You start thinking like that, people will start expecting you to actually fix things and you'll end up with callouses.

**BRADEN:** Good. I'm tired of being optimized. I'd rather be useful.

(He plunges the shovel back into the earth. A sharp, metallic sound rings out through the work site. Everyone freezes.)

**EVELYN:** (Breathless) That wasn't a brick.

(SHANNA drops to her knees, clearing the dirt away with her hands.)

**SHANNA:** No. That's the sound of the past fighting back. Hold your breath. This is the

moment where the “Vertical Horizon” meets the Maxwell House.

(She reaches down into the dirt.)

**BRADEN:** (Eyes wide) It’s actually there. It’s not just a story.

**EVELYN:** Careful. It’s been holding its breath longer than I have.

(SHANNA pulls a rusty red tin from the dirt. The plastic lid is cracked, but still clinging to the rim. She hands it to EVELYN like it's a sacred relic.)

**SHANNA:** Your where and your all, Ma’am.

END OF PREVIEW

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