

LOVELY CHAOS

**COMEDY, CRACK AND CONSCIOUSNESS
MY LIFE IN 1980'S NEW YORK**

**BY
JOE MONTAPERTO**

www.JoeMontaperto.com

Copyright © 2016 Joe Montaperto
All rights reserved.

ISBN-13: 978-1533397461

ISBN-10:1533397465

www.JoeMontaperto.com

Joe Montaperto, a native of Brooklyn and Roselle, NJ, studied acting and improv in New York, graduating to stage and screen work before embarking on the comedy circuit in the edgy, crack-riddled New York City of the 1980's. He later applied his training to his one man show, **Four Degrees of Disconnection**, performing in and around theaters in the city between 1999 – 2001, before burning out and heading to the Ecuadorian Amazon jungle for some serious soul searching. An avid traveler and spiritual seeker, Joe also prides himself on having lived in some of the worst places in the world, and still thoroughly enjoys making prank phone calls. *Lovely Chaos* is the sequel to his first memoir, *The Edge of Whiteness*, in a planned trilogy.

Dedicated to my dear Mother

CHAPTER 1

Those boots.

Those boots. They scare me. Make me anxious. Yet, at the same time, I find them to be *overwhelmingly* sexy. Confusion and fear reign in my mind. Why do the boots do this to me? I mean, there must be some kind of significance to this. These boots are attached to the girls sitting around the room, as I survey my surroundings. All look like they're pretty much in there twenties. Yeah, early to late twenties. Definitely hipsters. New Yorkers. Gorgeous. At least most of them. Knit scarves, wool sweaters, the sleeves pulled mostly over their slender white hands, only their fingers protruding. Dark long skirts. And the boots. Short boots, long boots. I shudder as the drowning feeling of intimidation courses through my body. This plummeting sense that I will *never* belong. I do my best to adopt a solitary hard guy pose, but at 5'6, 130 pounds, and a face splattered with acne - *cystic acne at that* - it's not very convincing. I wasn't scaring anybody. Who knows if anyone even noticed me at all?

CLANG! CLANK! CLANK!

LOVELY CHAOS

The heat, struggling to funnel its way up to the antiquated radiator snaps me out of my self-induced calculations. The thermometer seems to be dropping by the *minute*,

“The *hawk* be out tonight, brotha...thass how January be.” That’s what they would be saying in my neighborhood in Jersey right now.

Only this isn’t New Jersey, man, this is New York *Fuckin’* City! It’s 1980, I’m nineteen years old going on twenty, and I’m sitting in a room on the second floor of a church building. Maybe it’s Episcopalian, maybe it’s Baptist, I don’t know. I just know it’s definitely not Catholic. It’s not at all church-like either. In fact, it’s a rented room on Fifty Seventh Street and Ninth Avenue, right at the edge of the ghastly neighborhood known as *‘Hell’s Kitchen.’*

In my best nonchalant attitude, I take a peek again at the strangers huddled ‘round together on one side of the room. I sit off to the side. Everybody’s sitting in these kinds of cold, beige metal folding chairs - beat up chairs at that.

From the looks of these chairs, they’ve supported a lot of fat asses in their time. A lot of *drunk* fat asses too, which is confirmed by the large block lettering on the back of the seats. OA and AA - Overeaters Anonymous and Alcoholic Anonymous.

I glance up at battered clock hanging precariously on the wall.

Ten to seven.

Suddenly, the door swings open. A *commanding* presence enters the room. All chatter immediately ceases. The steaming take-out cups of coffee and tea the girls are sipping are quickly placed on the floor next to them. Books thump shut and bodies straighten up. Complete silence.

“Good evening class, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the Sonia Moore Studio of the Theater.”

The distinctive voice, rather heavily tinged with a Russian accent, belongs to none other than *Sonia Moore* herself. The *foremost* authority on the final

LOVELY CHAOS

conclusion of the great Constantine Stanislavski, the legendary Russian director, actor and teacher. And she, herself, was the author of several books on the subject. Fairly ancient (she must be around 85), she still presents a *thoroughly* intimidating presence. At least to me.

“My fervent hope for every one of you present here tonight, is that you will all persevere to complete the four years of study required to truly learn and assimilate *The Stanislavski System*. And with that development, you shall enter and usher in a new and profound era in American theater.

I must warn you, however, that work on The Stanislavski System is not all fun. Acting is a profession. Stanislavski believed that actors were the heart of the theater - and therefore imposed *tremendous* demands on them.

But if you truly want to become professional actors who will contribute to our theater - this is the only way. The only way.”

The only way?! Holy shit! The *only* way? What if I can't do it?! What if I'm a total failure? My frantic thoughts are unleashed at full fury.

“The System is as important to you as the technique and theory of music are to musicians. And since the System is based on natural laws of human behavior, it is the same for old and young actors, for classic and contemporary plays, for conventional and unconventional productions, for all nationalities, and in all times.

“We cannot make any of you another Laurence Olivier or Eleanora Duse, but we can teach you the laws, which, when assimilated, can help talented actors to be as good. How much you succeed will depend on how dedicated you are, how much talent you have, and how diligently you work.”

After a few improvisations and demonstrations, the class is over. But Sonia Moore's words echo through my mind like an evil, deranged parrot, as I'm hauling ass down Ninth Avenue in a desperate race against certain frostbite

LOVELY CHAOS

Oh my God! The *entire state* of the American theater will depend on us! Our class - mastering the Stanislavski System! We must answer the call! Usher in a whole new era in theater!!

Jeez...what a massive responsibility...the pressure...*what* have I gotten myself into?! Maybe-maybe - if I leave right now - maybe I can get my money back! Yeah! Yeah - no! No! I have to do this. I must! Whatever it takes...even if I have to read crazy Russian plays...I'll do it! The world is counting on me! I *have* to be famous!

My incessant inner diatribe is quickly interrupted, as the raging wind blows over a garbage pail. Various McDonalds wrappers, papers, and even *mustard*, pelt my face. I curse loudly, fighting off the flying debris, until my attention turns to the long row of cardboard refrigerator boxes lined up outside the walls of the creepy abandoned buildings on Forty Third Street. People are inside of them. Homeless people. Wrapped up, ensconced inside these cardboard boxes, attempting to forge a night's sleep in this frigid nightmare. I feel bad for the homeless people. A heavy gloom settles over me, replacing my vaunted aspirations. I don't understand...what could possibly motivate them to *stay* here? How do they *live*? *Why* do they even keep on living? I mean, why didn't they just hop a *Greyhound* to Florida, or somewhere? It's better than *freezing* to death! I'd just kill myself, man. Really. I mean, it's like being a slave. Why would you even want to go on if you were a *slave*?! You just work till you die. You can't even dream about a vacation - or a day off, for that matter. Jeez.

Finally, I enter *Port Authority*. Ahh, it's *warm* here. I breathe a little, shake off the bitter cold...in 10 minutes I'll be on the #115 bus, back to the warmth of my parent's house in Roselle.