

This version of Meeting Murphy is for application to the Curated Programme in the 2024 South African National Arts Festival.  
This version includes ACT I only.

Meeting Murphy

by

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Cast

RICK - A man in his fifty's

DAVE - A man in his fifty's

The stage is dark. We hear the sound of someone crashing through undergrowth, interspersed by yelps and screams, ending in the thud of a body hitting the ground.

Lights come up to a scene of a clearing in a forest. In the nearby background we see the wall of a cliff face.

DAVE is lying on the ground writhing in agony. His backpack is lying a couple of meters away from him. He is wearing hiking trousers and blood is soaking through his left knee. He is groaning.

DAVE

Uuuuuuh.

(He tries to move)

Aaaaaaaggh!

Help.

Shit.

Somebody!

Uuuuh!

We hear someone scrambling through the bush.

RICK

Hello!

Rick comes crashing into the clearing.

RICK

You okay?

DAVE

Uuuuh.

RICK

That was quite a tumble you took.

DAVE

My knee.

RICK

Let me take a look.

DAVE

Help me up.

Rick holds out his arm. Dave takes it and tries to stand.

RICK

Here.

(Takes hold of Dave's arm)

DAVE

Aaaaaagh!

(Dave falls back to the ground)

RICK

Woah! Keep the weight on the other leg buddy.

DAVE

A am! My ankle ... Fuck!

RICK

Take it easy. Catch your breath.

DAVE

(Beat while Dave calms himself)

Thanks.

RICK

Bloody lucky I saw you take that fall.  
Nobody ever comes this far up here.

DAVE

(Grimacing)

It's not for sissies.

(He squints at Rick)

You climbed down from the ridge?

RICK

(Looking up at the ridge)

I guess I must have.

DAVE

That was quick.

RICK

(Chuckles)

I'm more agile than I look.

Let me take a look at that knee.

DAVE

You a doctor?

RICK

No.

DAVE

Oh. Uh-

RICK

Can you straighten it?

DAVE

I can try.

Ouch.

RICK

Okay never mind. Try the ankle.

DAVE

Try what?

RICK

I dunno. Can you rotate it or something.

DAVE

(Grimacing)

Shit.

RICK

Ok stop. Let's think. We need to get you comfortable.

RICK takes the sleeping mat off Dave's back pack and lays it against a rock. Then he helps Dave into a seated position with Dave grimacing all the way.

RICK

Easy does it. There you go.

DAVE

Uuuuh.

RICK

You okay?

DAVE

(nods)

RICK

Pain?

DAVE

It's fine if I don't move.

RICK takes a water bottle from the side of DAVE'S backpack

and gives him a sip.

RICK

(Looks up at the ridge)

There's no way you're making it back  
up there mate.

(They both ruminate on the  
implications of that)

We're gonna need help.

(RICK pats down his pockets)

Shit my I left my phone up there with  
my stuff.

DAVE

(Gesturing to his back pack)

Mine's in the side pocket.

RICK retrieves the phone from DAVE's backpack and looks at  
it distracted.

DAVE

Give here.

RICK

Huh? Oh right.

RICK hands the phone to DAVE.

DAVE

Fuck.

RICK

Nothing?

DAVE

Not even a bar.

(Shakes his head)

There's probably signal up on the  
ridge. Think you can make it back up  
there?

RICK

Sure. Let's get you settled first. You  
got any pain killers?

DAVE

Middle compartment.

RICK

Food?

DAVE

Green bag. There should be a space  
blanket with the meds. I'm probably  
going to need it.

Rick rummages around, pulling out the various things, putting  
them on the ground, but out of reach of Dave.

Dave holds out his hand.

DAVE

I'm Dave.

RICK

Rick.  
(They shake hands)

DAVE

Thanks Rick.  
(He hands his phone to Rick)  
You should probably take that.

RICK

Anyone you want me to call?

DAVE

My wife. She's in there under 'Andrea  
1'.

RICK

(Awkwardly)  
Sorry Dave. I'm gonna need your code.

DAVE

(Hesitates)  
Uh ... sure. Two Four Oh Seven

Rick taps it in

RICK

Two-four-oh-seven.  
(Pauses imperceptibly with a smile)  
Got it.

This your dog?

DAVE

Ja. That's Ulysses.

RICK

Handsome boy! What is he?

DAVE

Spaniel cross a border collie.

RICK

Nice.

(Looks at the phone for a moment  
then snaps back to the situation)

Okay. Think you can hang in there for  
a while?

DAVE

I'll be fine. You best get going. We  
don't have much daylight.

RICK

(Rick stands squinting up at the  
ridge.)

Sho...

(Rick still looking)

DAVE

Something wrong?

RICK

All good.

DAVE

You sure?

RICK

Just trying to figure out the best way  
to get back up there.

DAVE

(Craning his neck to see)

Which way did you come down?

RICK

I thought that gully on the right ...  
no ... Shit I don't remember.

DAVE

How can you not remember?

RICK

Adrenaline I guess. You gave me a  
bloody shock when I saw you fall ... I  
remember clinging on to some bushes on  
the way down ... so not along that  
rock face ...

DAVE

It's got to be easier going back up  
than coming down.

RICK

You'd think.

(RICK suddenly starts breathing  
heavily)

DAVE

You okay?

RICK

Ja fine.

(He sits down shakily on a rock)  
You got anything sweet in there?

DAVE

Uh ... granola bar in the green bag.

Rick stumbles over to the green bag and hastily unwraps the  
granola bar, then crams it in his mouth. He quickly regains  
his composure.

RICK

Blood sugar. Delayed reaction after I  
have an adrenaline rush.

DAVE

Best catch your breath before you try  
climbing back up there.

RICK

You're right. A cup of sweet tea  
normally does the trick.

(pause)

You wouldn't happen to have some would  
you?

DAVE

Tea?

RICK

Uh huh.

DAVE

I've got teabags ...

RICK

Mind if I make a quick cup?



DAVE

Uh...

RICK

It would help.

DAVE

Okay. We should watch the water though. That's my only bottle.

RICK

I'll top it up before I go. I can hear a stream somewhere.

DAVE

You can?

RICK gets up and squints at a section of the cliff face that Dave can't see.

RICK

There we go. There's a little waterfall over there.

Okay Tea! You got a stove?

(Rick goes over to Dave's back pack)

DAVE

You don't want to go check out that waterfall first?

RICK

Don't worry. That's water alright.

DAVE

Okay. If you're sure ... bottom compartment.

RICK

(Retrieving the camping stove)

Ah. A Trigvorgan! Talk about top of the range! I've always wanted one of these.

DAVE

You hike a lot?

RICK

Some. I'll bet you do.

DAVE

I come up here once a year for a few days.

RICK

(Marveling at his flashlight, pen knife, water filter)  
Well you've certainly got all the nice toys Dave.

How do I start this thing?

DAVE

There's an ignition button on the side.

Rick ignites the stove.

RICK

There we go. Okay.  
(looking around for water bottle)  
Water, water ...

DAVE

Behind you. Do you want to turn that off in the mean time?

RICK

Huh?

DAVE

Can you turn the stove off while you are not using it. Wastes the gas.

RICK

(Slightly miffed)  
Oh okay.

Rick turns it off then picks up the pot and the water bottle.

RICK

You having?

DAVE

Uh sure.

Rick lugs the water into the pot, some of it spills on to the ground.

DAVE

Sorry, would you mind just going a

little easy there.

RICK  
I'll fill it up now now.

DAVE  
You sure you can get to that  
waterfall?

RICK  
It's just over there.

DAVE  
The bush its pretty thick though eh?

RICK  
Ooookay.  
(Rick fills the mugs with  
exaggerated care)

So you been coming here a while hey?

DAVE  
Since I was a teenager. Went to  
boarding school down there in the  
foothills.

RICK  
The place at the arse end of the R46?

DAVE  
Yup. Milestone College. Middle of of  
bloody nowhere.

RICK  
I knew a guy who went there ... what  
was his name ...

DAVE  
When was he there?

RICK  
Had to be early 80s.

DAVE  
That's when I was there. Was he from  
around here?

RICK  
From Joburg I think. How did you like  
going to school there?

DAVE

Good times man. Did he play rugby or cricket?

RICK

No idea. I remember him complaining that there was fokol to do on the weekends, so probably not.

DAVE

It was miles away from the nearest town. We spent most of our free time getting up to mischief in these hills. Have you hiked much around here?

RICK

I came half way up the ridge with a school trip once.

DAVE

Never been to the top?

RICK

Nope.

DAVE

You'll enjoy the view.

RICK

Maybe next time. I first got to figure out what to do with you mate.

DAVE

Right. Sorry for the inconvenience.

RICK

Not at all. Glad to be of service. You always hike on your own?

DAVE

I used to bring Ulysses.

RICK

Ag shame, is he uh ...

DAVE

He disappeared. A month ago.

RICK

Disappeared?

DAVE

Yup. I came home after work and he  
wasn't there. Gate was closed. No way  
in hell he could climb over the walls.

RICK

Weird.

DAVE

Tell me about it.

Rick gets up to take the boiling water off the stove which is  
behind Dave.

RICK

Larry! ... Larry .... something with a  
D ... Daniels .... Davids ...  
something like that.

DAVE

Larry ... doesn't ring a bell.

Rick is standing behind Dave. He starts to pour the boiling  
water into a mug.

RICK

You must have known him. It wasn't a  
big school was it?

DAVE

No, but-

Rick moves closer, now facing the back of Dave's head, cup of  
hot tea and the pot in his hands.

RICK

Dawson. Larry Dawson.

DAVE

(Thinks for a moment)  
Can't place him.

Rick pauses for a moment, contemplating the back of Dave's  
head

RICK

Oooomph!

Rick deliberately throws the hot tea at the back of Dave's  
head then drops the pot and does a theatrical fake fall on to  
the ground, knocking over the water bottle. The last of the

water leaks to the ground. Dave screams, writhing in agony.

DAVE  
AAAAAAH! AAAAAAH! AAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!

RICK  
Oh my God. Sorry.

DAVE  
What the fuck! AAAAAAAAGH.

RICK  
Oh shit. I'm so sorry man.

DAVE  
You fucking idiot! AAAAAH!

RICK  
I tripped. Oh hell, Dave are you okay?

DAVE  
You gormless cunt!

RICK  
Well, that's a bit uncalled for don't you think?

DAVE  
(Writhing in agony)  
AAAAAH!

RICK  
Just trying to do you a favour man.

DAVE  
AAAAAAGH!

RICK  
Oh come on. It was tea. Not molten lava.

DAVE  
My knee you dipshit. AAAAH.

RICK  
Oh your knee. I'm sorry I thought you were hamming it up there for a minute.

DAVE  
Fuck. Fuck. Gnnnnn!

RICK

Right. Just try to stay calm okay.

DAVE

(Dave's screams calm down to a gasping whimper)

RICK

That's good. Just breath. Keep breathing. Breath through the pain.

DAVE

Shut up.

RICK

You gotta work with me here Dave.

DAVE

Fuck off.

RICK

Hey I get that you are upset with me right now and that's okay, but-

DAVE

NGGGGG! You-

RICK

No! Dave. Listen. Listen to me! We need to take a look at that knee and see what we are dealing with.

DAVE

What the fuck?

RICK

There's a lot of blood. We should get it cleaned up at least. Okay?

DAVE

(Nods)

Okay.

RICK

Okay.

Rick reaches gingerly to Dave's knee.

DAVE

Hey!

Rick backs off.

RICK

We are gonna have to cut those  
trousers. You got any scissors?

Rick get up to look in his backpack. Dave start undoing the  
zipper at the knee of his hiking pants.

RICK

What are you ... Oooh they unzip.  
That's clever.

DAVE

Uuuuuuh...

RICK

Remember to breathe.

Or not.

Whatever works for you.

(Dave's gets his breathing under  
control)

There you go.

DAVE

Please be quiet.

Dave gets the trouser leg unzipped then pauses. Gathering his  
strength for the next bit which is going to hurt.

DAVE

(Panting audibly)

RICK

You are doing well. Just need to pull  
it down a bit more. Here-

Rick moves to do it himself. Dave shoots him a murderous  
look.

RICK

You do it.

Dave clenches his teeth, suppressing the the pain, as he  
slowly peels the pants away, exposing the bloody knee.

RICK

Oh my God!

(Rick reels and stumbles away)

Ew Jesus. That is fucked up.

(Rick bends over as if to throw )



(up.)

I really didn't need to see that.

(Coming back for another look)

What have you got in there?

DAVE

It's dislocated you moron.

RICK

Fucking hell. It looks like a grapefruit.

DAVE

Hand me a swab.

Rick picks up the bag and rummages around then pauses at something he sees, looking up at Dave.

DAVE

The white square things. Hurry up.

Rick hands over a swab and Dave gingerly starts wiping away the blood. Rick takes out Dave's phone and leans in to take a photo.

We hear the camera go 'click'

DAVE

What you doing?

RICK

Your kids are going to want see this, believe me.

DAVE

What the fuck is wrong with you?

RICK

Jeez Dave. How about a little less negativity.

DAVE

How about a little *help*?

RICK

Excuse me! I just risked life and limb scrambling down that cliff to help you mate.

DAVE

Yes I know.

I'm sorry.

I'm just a little freaked out right now okay. Fuck me this hurts.

RICK  
Lets just sit tight for a couple of minutes.

DAVE  
Could you please get me some pain killers.

RICK  
Middle compartment right?

DAVE  
Right.

Rick starts getting up to get the pain killers. Then stops. Looks at the water bottle that he kicked over.

DAVE  
What?

RICK  
We are kind of out of water.

DAVE  
Best you go fill up the bottle at that stream then.

RICK  
Right.  
(Rick doesn't move)

DAVE  
Well?

RICK  
Um.

DAVE  
What's the problem?

RICK  
(Rick sits)  
It's a little further than I may have let on.

DAVE  
How far is it?

RICK

Well to be honest. Its not really ...  
there.

DAVE

You bullshitted me?!?

RICK

Just trying to give you hope man.

DAVE

(Dave puts his hands over his face  
and moans.)

RICK

Don't worry. I've got water in my  
backpack.

DAVE

Its going to be dark in less than an  
hour.

RICK

I better be off then.

RICK stands slowly and laboriously

You okay?

DAVE

As good as can be expected.

RICK

Excellent.

(Rick unzips his fly)

My goodness. What a day. Talk about  
coincidences.

Rick starts urinating uncomfortably close to Dave

DAVE

Excuse me. Could you-

RICK

Here we are in the middle of nowhere.  
You fall off a mountain path. By some  
miracle I see it happen. And then it  
turns out we know people in common-

DAVE

Who do we know in common?

RICK

Well ... Larry Dawson. You must have known him. Even if you don't remember him.

DAVE

I'm not good with names.

RICK

Me neither. How about events?

DAVE

What? Look could you stand a little further-

RICK

Most people remember significant events. Like if I were to suddenly piss on your head right now, you would remember that for the rest of your life right?

DAVE

Excuse me?

RICK

Hey, it's not the kind of thing I'm *personally* inclined to do.

Though I did actually know a bloke who ...

DAVE

Who what?

RICK

Ag, this sick fuck I went to school with ... he actually got a kick out of doing shit like ... well this ...

Rick aims his stream of urine at Dave's head

DAVE

What the fuck?

Aaaahh! AAAAAAAGH!

Dave tries to avoid the stream of urine but only causes

himself more pain as he writhes around. Rick takes his time finishing up while Dave writhes around in agony. Rick shakes himself off and unhurriedly zips up his pants. Rick sits on his haunches, close up to Dave, looking him in the eye.

RICK

That jog your memory Dave?

DAVE

(Terrified)

Who are you?

RICK

(Incredulous)

Seriously?

DAVE

You're ... Larry?

RICK

My God. How many people have you fucked over in the course your life?

No Dave, I'm not Larry.

DAVE

Then why-

RICK

Would it make a difference if I *was* Larry?

DAVE

Who the fuck is Larry!?!

RICK

You honestly don't know?

DAVE

I haven't a clue.

RICK

For real?

DAVE

You got the wrong guy Rick!

RICK

Well shit that would be awkward.

DAVE

Whatever you think I did to deserve  
this ... it wasn't me. Okay!

RICK

Anything's possible I guess.

DAVE

What makes you-

RICK

Dave **Murphy** right?

DAVE

Ja-

RICK

Went to Milestone College from 1980 to  
mid 1982?

DAVE

(Shrugs)

RICK

How many other Dave Murphy's were at  
Milestone at the time?

DAVE

Look I don't know what you've heard  
about me or who said it but-

RICK

Andy Lawrence and Simon Philips?

DAVE

They were my friends.

RICK

I think you mean *henchmen*.

DAVE

Okay just-

RICK

Do you *have* friends?

DAVE

Of course I have-

RICK

Real ones?

DAVE  
Can we please just cut the crap.

RICK  
Fair enough.  
(Rick sits)

DAVE  
(Beat)  
And?

RICK  
Hm?

DAVE  
Some sort of explanation would be nice.

RICK  
I think any reasonable human being would agree with that.

DAVE  
Well?

RICK  
Well what?

DAVE  
Are you going to tell me what this is about?

RICK  
Oh I'm sorry. Did I not make myself clear? That's your job Dave.

DAVE  
Jesus.

RICK  
No rush. I have all night.

DAVE  
Okay ... uh ... I take it we've met before?

RICK  
That's a good start.

DAVE  
And I once ... urinated on ...  
*someone's* head?

RICK  
Are you asking me?

DAVE  
Jeez ... Uh...  
(racking his brains)  
I uh ...

RICK  
You don't remember?

DAVE  
No.

RICK  
How the FUCK can you possibly forget  
something like that?

DAVE  
Listen-

RICK  
Oh I'm listening.

DAVE  
I ... may have pulled the odd stunt  
like that as kid.

RICK  
The "odd stunt" hey?

DAVE  
Twice that I can remember. Fucking  
hell it was like four decades ago.

So that would mean it was either  
Roger... uh ... Simpson? ...  
(RICK looks at him blankly)  
No that wasn't at Milestone ...  
So that would mean it was ... Look, if  
I did that to you then I'm sorry. But  
I really don't remember anyone called  
Rick.

RICK  
Who says his name was Rick?

DAVE  
(beat)  
Oh. I just assumed-



RICK

It's really quite simple. You pissed  
on *someone's* head. Who did the head  
belong to?

DAVE

A kid in my dormitory.

RICK

Which kid?

DAVE

The uh-

RICK

Go on.

DAVE

The little one.

RICK

The little one?

DAVE

Well he was short and...

RICK

And?

DAVE

A bit overweight. I think.

RICK

What was his name?

DAVE

I don't recall.

RICK

You must have called him something.

DAVE

Oh come on!

RICK

WHAT WAS HIS FUCKING NAME!

DAVE

(Resigned)

Gormf.

RICK  
(Aghast)  
Gormf?  
(Beat)  
Holy shit.

DAVE  
His nickname.

RICK  
How did he come by that?

DAVE  
It was short for 'gormless'. He was  
sort of awkward and uncoordinated.

RICK  
Why Gorm**F**?

DAVE  
Who knows.

RICK  
**You** should. You gave it to him.

DAVE  
(Beat)  
Gormless Fred.

RICK  
(Coming close to Dave's face)  
His name was Frede**RICK** May.  
  
It's been a while hey Dave?