

## The Answer to Your Question

A Play in One Act

By Jennifer Gritt

**Voice Over/Narrator:** On April 23, 1942, a little girl by the name of Alexandria Zuck was born. And upon seeing her blonde hair, blue eyes and sweet innocent face, Alexandria's mother decided right then and there that her little girl was going to be a star. When Alexandria was 5, her mother changed her name to Sandra Dee and began dragging her off to auditions. By the age of 12, Sandra was the television face of Coca-Cola and Coppertone. A few years later, she starred as the bubbly, wide-eyed, All-American teenager Gidget—a role that made her famous. At the tender age of 18, Sandra married popstar crooner Bobby Darrin and like most celebrity marriages, this one soon began to fall apart. But what was even more devastating for Sandra was that her star had begun to fade. And like most other celebrity has-beens of her time, Sandra spent the rest of her life battling anorexia, depression and alcoholism. On February 20, 2005, Sandra Dee died in a local hospital in Los Angeles from liver disease. *(pause)* Hunter S. Thompson. Most people remember Hunter S. Thompson as the out-of-control drug-addled journalist as depicted by Johnny Depp in the film *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Yes, Mr. Thompson did do a lot of drugs. Yes, Mr. Thompson did miss a lot of deadlines. But what some people might not realize is that Hunter Thompson lamented the drug culture of the 1970s and criticized the movement for its lack of intellectualism and political critique. Years passed and Hunter Thompson soon found himself unable to get out from under the caricature of his self-made legend. He continued to write columns and articles for *Sports Illustrated* and *Rolling Stone*. But for the most part, he retreated to his heavily fortified ranch in Aspen, Colorado. Then one day, at the ripe old age of 68, Hunter decided he had had enough. He sat down at his desk, put a sheet of paper in his typewriter, and among the words he wrote in what would become his suicide note, he typed "February 22, 2005" and beneath it in quotation marks, the word "counselor." It was February 20, 2005, however, and upon typing his last words, Hunter picked up a handgun that was lying on the desk and shot himself in the head. Ladies and gentleman, what you are about to see, just might have happened next.

*Narrator exits or curtain lifts.*

*Hunter enters from stage right. He looks around as if surprised to be there. He casually scratches his head and cautiously checks to see that the back of it is still there. He looks at the bench sitting in the middle of the stage and then walks around looking to see if there is anyone else around. He turns back to the bench, walks over to it and sits down in the middle. He looks around again and then crosses his arms nonchalantly.*

*Sandra enters from stage left. Hunter sees her right away and watches her. She peers cautiously into the stage area not seeing Hunter. Satisfied that no one is there, she steps out in full glory, marvelling at her hands, her arms, her dress—touching her face in pure happiness that she's young and beautiful again. She twirls around happily and suddenly*

*sees Hunter sitting there on the bench. She stops, startled, looks Hunter up and down, and turns away in disgust. Sandra walks to stage right peering out trying to find if anyone is there. Realizing that no one else is there, she turns reluctantly to Hunter.*

**Sandra:** Excuse me, do you know where we are? (*Hunter shrugs “I don’t know.”*) Well, do you know if anyone’s coming? *Hunter shrugs again. Sandra turns away impatiently.*

**Hunter:** Hey, I know you don’t I?

**Sandra:** (*looking quickly at him, offended*) I don’t think so.

**Hunter:** Are you sure? Damnit, you look really familiar. Were you a stewardess? (*Sandra glares at him at then looks away.*) Vegas!

**Sandra:** No, I did not work in Vegas!

**Hunter:** Hmmm, waitress maybe?

**Sandra:** Oh, please! If you must know, I was an actress.

**Hunter:** Really! Wow! An actress, huh. What—television? Movies?

**Sandra:** (*sighing*) I started out in television and then became a film star.

**Hunter:** (*amused*) A film star, huh. Wow. So what did you do in television?

**Sandra:** Are you serious? (*Hunter just stares at her.*) I did commercials for big companies like Coppertone and Coke.

**Hunter:** You did commercials? For coke? Now I should remember those. (*Sandra turns away, disgusted*) I swear, you look so familiar. So what films did you do?

**Sandra:** (*fondly remembering*) Well, if you must know, my first film was “Until They Sail” with Paul Newman and then I went on to star in other films such as “Imitation of Life” and “A Summer Place.” My name is Sandra Dee.

**Hunter:** Gidget! (*laughs*) Goddamint, I die and the first person I meet is Gidget! Well, I guess that sheds some light on where I am.

**Sandra:** My name is Sandra Dee! Not Gidget!

*Hunter laughs. Sandra glares at him angrily and moves to stage left. She stands there during a long, awkward moment. Sandra starts shifting back and forth uncomfortably. Hunter notices this.*

**Hunter:** Would you like to sit down.

**Sandra:** *(reluctantly)* Why yes, thank you. *(Sandra goes over the bench expecting Hunter to get up or at least slide down to give her more room. When he just sits there with his arms crossed looking up at her, her face turns to stone. She looks at the small space next to him then back at him. He looks at the space next to him then back at her. Disgusted she turns and slowly sits down next to him, trying to stay as far away from him as possible. They sit uncomfortably like that for a few moments.)*

**Hunter:** I'm Hunter Thompson by the way. *(Sandra jumps up and away from him—alarmed)* So I take it you've heard of me as well.

**Sandra:** Hunter Thompson? The writer who does all those drugs and then writes about it? What do they call it? Gorgo, Gargyle...

**Hunter:** Gonzo journalism.

**Sandra:** Gonzo! Whatever! You hang out with all those bums and hippies and gang members. *(She stares at him in disbelief)* Well this is just great!

**Hunter:** Isn't it though.

**Sandra:** Now I'm supposed to just sit here and wait—with you!

**Hunter:** Well, we don't have to just sit here.... *(he looks her up and down)*

**Sandra:** You're disgusting.

**Hunter:** *(laughing)* Disgusting! Now why am I disgusting? Seriously, I'd really like to know why you think I'm disgusting.

**Sandra:** Well, for starters, you don't have a shred of decency in you.

**Hunter:** Decency? Well, okay.

**Sandra:** You're rude. You're a notorious womanizer!

**Hunter:** I'm not THAT notorious.

**Sandra:** You're probably a sex fiend. *(He just smiles)* You do drugs. Drugs are illegal I might add! So that makes you a criminal. That's it, you're nothing but a sex fiend, drug-addicted criminal!

**Hunter:** Honey, I hate to break it to you, but it looks like you could use a few drugs.

**Sandra:** Well I never!

**Hunter:** *(eyeing her closely)* Yeah, that's what I'm saying, maybe you should have. I'll bet you've hit a bottle or two in your day though. *(Sandra locks jaw in silence, visibly showing that he has hit a nerve)* Yeah, I know the type. Bitter drunks, all hunched over their glasses, thinking the world has cheated them out of something. *(Sandra refuses to answer him—Hunter suddenly jumps up)* Bobby Darrin! *(Sandra is visibly shaken when she hears this)* That's right! I remember. You married Bobby Darrin—what—when you were like 12 years old?

**Sandra:** I was 18!

**Hunter:** *(slyly)* Oh yeah, I bet you were. So how'd it go? You saw him up onstage singing his heart out *(Hunter takes a step closer)*, he saw you from across the room and POOF! It was love at first sight. *(Hunter starts dancing around her singing "Somewhere Beyond the Sea" / Sandra gives him a dirty look and then turns back to audience)*

**Sandra:** Like someone as heartless as you could possibly understand.

**Hunter:** What's the matter, honey? The wedding night didn't go as expected? It wasn't all rose scented kisses and breathtaking passion? Bobby-boy like it a little a rough? A little up against the wall, hands around the neck....

**Sandra:** *(screaming)* Shut up!

**Hunter:** That's it, huh. Bobby wasn't the night in shining armor you thought he was. He obviously liked'em young. Must have been hard when you started packing on the years, eh?

**Sandra:** Go to hell! *(Sandra storms to stage right. Hunter watches her walk away and then looks around with a gesture "aren't I already there?"—Sandra softly to audience)* You know nothing about love.

**Hunter:** Love? Oh, I know plenty about love. I married two incredibly beautiful women.

**Sandra:** At the same time, I suppose.

**Hunter:** Unfortunately, no.... *(reflective)* They were beautiful women ... *(to the audience)* ... You know, for how different they were, they were also a lot alike. They were both fearless but in their own way. They both saw the world for what it was and they weren't afraid to get out there. To challenge life. *(turning back to Sandra)* And they were awesome in bed. *(Sandra rolls her eyes)* Talk about fearless. They definitely weren't afraid to grab the bull by the horns....

**Sandra:** *(interrupting him)* I get the point!... And they were beautiful you say? *(she asks while touching her own face)*

**Hunter:** (*quietly laughing at her*) Yeah, they were pretty all right, but not like you, not in the beauty queen Miss America way. No, they were beautiful ... (*searching for words*) they were beautiful because they were honest. They knew who they were and that is a whole different kind of beauty. And I loved them both.

**Sandra:** I see.

**Hunter:** What's the matter? Bobby-boy didn't feel the same way about you?

**Sandra:** (*sharply*) My marriage is none of your business.

**Hunter:** (*laughs*) You know, the ironic thing is my first wife was named Sandra. (*He looks her up and down again and she glares at him*)

**Sandra:** So if your first wife was so wonderful, why did you get a divorce?

**Hunter:** Oh, the same reason all relationships fall apart at some point. Time starts weighing in, things started to get habitual, automatic. I was doing more drugs and buying more guns—you know how it is. After awhile that creative, wild connection that brought us together started to fray. She started screaming more. And not in that good way.

**Sandra:** (*rolling her eyes*) Is that all you can think about—sex?

**Hunter:** Nope, I think about drugs and rock'n'roll as well.... So why don't you enlighten me Miss Sandra Dee. What else is there to think about? Hollywood careers? Being popular? Living in mansions and driving fancy cars?

**Sandra:** My life was more than that!

**Hunter:** Oh that's right. It was about tossing a few back as well. So let me ask you, did you wait until the sun went down so you could close all the curtains and open all those bottles quietly without drawing suspicion or did you just grab the bottle of gin and run naked in the streets? (*Sandra looks at him then looks away*) Come on! What does it matter now?

**Sandra:** (*quickly, almost under her breath*) I didn't drink that much.

**Hunter:** Yeah sure, maybe not in front of anyone. I hate to break it to you sweetheart, but everyone knew the truth. All those clink, clink, clinkings of small bottles as you opened your purse to tip the driver were not that hard to notice. And all those squeak, squeak, squeakings of the flask cap at the opera? Well, I'm pretty sure everyone heard those too. So what's the deal? (*Sandra looks at him then looks away*) Hey, you just got done condemning me for doing drugs. So exactly how is that different from you drinking yourself into an oblivian—not that I have anything against alcohol consumption.

**Sandra:** (*sharply*) It's nowhere near the same! You did drugs because you knew it was against the law to do so.

**Hunter:** I'm pretty sure that was the LAST reason why I did drugs.

**Sandra:** It was all part of your image. I knew men like you.

**Hunter:** Honey, if you really knew men like me we wouldn't be having this conversation.

**Sandra:** You just wanted to be the bad boy ... the tough guy ... so that every time you walked into a room everyone would back up and say "Oh dear, he comes the tough guy!"

**Hunter:** Oh dear?

**Sandra:** Laugh all you want. You think you were so cool and so smart. Living on the edge of society so you could make fun of everyone else. That's all you did, you know. Because that's what you had to do to be the BIG man ... the only way you could feel better about yourself and your lifestyle was to put everyone else down. It's easy to criticize something you know nothing about. It's easy to criticize people who are at least trying to do something. All you ever did was sit back and watch other people—hoping they'd fail so you'd have something to write about—to laugh about. You have no idea what it means to try and live an honest, decent life.

**Hunter:** (*following her*) Oh, I see, and you do? Honest! What was so fucking honest about your life? Your entire life was spent trying to prop up some Hollywood image of success and happiness. You were nothing more than a walking example of America's whitewashing of society—hell of the entire world. The pure and decent Miss Sandra Dee—you and everyone else in that WASPIAN world of yours trying so hard to sell yourselves as upstanding, pious people when in reality, you just as meanspirited and fucked up as everyone else.

**Sandra:** At least I could walk down a street and not have everyone gawk at me.

**Hunter:** What, you think they admired you? And was this before or after you started drinking?

**Sandra:** I was a respectable woman living a respectable life!

**Hunter:** And how'd that work out for you, huh? You married a man who was equally deluded and pathetic and when you tried to live that "perfect" life it blew up in your face, didn't it?

**Sandra:** You know nothing about my life! (*Sandra storms stage left*)

**Hunter:** (*following her*) Oh, I know everything there is to know. They only honest moment you ever had was when you started crawling into bottles. It's hard to be all fake and plastic—and oh so beautiful—with your head in the toilet, isn't it? Only you did everything you could to keep that part hidden, didn't you. You did everything you could to try to keep them from whispering behind your back at the Beverly Hills country club. And I betcha it didn't work did it. They knew anyway. So then what? You just crawled into a corner of your house and stayed there? ... Why? Why'd you drink? If your honest and decent life was so fulfilling why'd you dive into a bottle?

**Sandra:** I drank to ease my pain! (*runs away stage right*)

**Hunter:** Pain! (*laughing*) Are you kidding me? What the fuck do you know about pain? Honey, you are so fucking twisted. Pain! What pain?

**Sandra:** (*shaking*) You don't know what it's like. You don't know what it's like to have to be beautiful and pleasing—always beautiful, always pleasing! You don't have any idea what it's like to have everyone expecting something from you. (*more slowly, to audience*) And then you work so hard to be all those things for all those people and for awhile, everyone loves you. Everyone accepts you. (*slower*) And then suddenly it all goes away. Suddenly everyone is gone.

**Hunter:** I don't believe this. Your fantasyland finally gave way to reality and—what?—I'm supposed to feel sorry for you?... Did you ever think about anything? (*she just stares at him*) I mean beyond your Hollywood fucking Disneyland fairytale bullshit? Did you ever think about anything? How about the civil rights movement? Did you get involved? Or was that something a respectable lady would never do? I think I remember "Imitation of Life." Wasn't there a black maid in that? Did you ever think about her life? What it was like for her? Or did you just say "Outta my way, nigger! I'm a superstar!"?

**Sandra:** I did no such thing!

**Hunter:** (*ignoring her*) Yeah, "Imitation of Life" – there's an understatement. Poor little miss popular. Poor little miss beautiful superstar. She's sad because the reality of being a star didn't match up with her dream of being a star. Are you fucking kidding me? Did you ever think about anything important? Anything outside of yourself? (*Sandra looks at him then looks away*) How about Vietnam? All those boys being blown up so everyone in Washington could feel like they were doing something to stop the advancement of that godless communism. Or were you just hoping that by chance a few of them boys were carrying pictures of you in their pockets as they were sent off to their deaths. (*Sandra turns her back to him*) Ever think about politics? About America turning into a global rapist? No? Nukes, maybe? No I bet you were too busy hunkered down in the dark next to some minibar mourning the death of your stardom.

**Sandra:** (*turning on him*) Listen to me you horrible man!

**Hunter:** I'm listening. *(pause)* Come on, honey. Say something! The floor is yours. Dazzle me with that Sandra Dee charm. Talk about disgusting! At least I wasn't the hollowed-out American puppet that you were. Some puffed up Hollywood princess who spent most of her life feeling sorry for herself. *(Sandra tries to say something but she can't. Instead she begins to unravel and starts crying. Hunter backs away from her. Sandra shaken and stumbling goes over to the bench and sits down, trying to stop her tears. Hunter walks sheepishly to stage left—Hunter turns to her)* Look, all I'm saying....

**Sandra:** Please just stop.

*Hunter walks slowly over to the bench and slowly sits down next to her.*

**Hunter:** Look, all I'm saying is ...

*Hunter tries to search for the right thing to say while Sandra sits there sobbing. He makes a move to put his arm around her, hesitates, then instead just pats her a few times on the shoulder trying to comfort her. Sandra looks at him cautiously, searching for support. He looks at her for a long moment and finally lets his hand rest on her shoulder. Sandra appreciates the gesture and starts to calm down.*

**Sandra:** *(cautiously)* So you really hated me?

**Hunter:** *(cautiously)* Well, not really. Hate is a strong word and, well, I never really thought about you. *(Sandra beams; not hearing the last part of what Hunter said)*

**Sandra:** It's just, I had all these responsibilities. It's not like I could just throw caution to the wind. *(Hunter just nods—Sandra looks nervously at him)* You know, there's a part of me that really admires you. *(Hunter looks over at her with a mildly surprised expression)* I mean, you're a little rough around the edges, *(she laughs shyly)*, but there is something about you. A strength, I guess. *(Hunter smiles and gently puts his arm around her. Sandra puts her head on his shoulder and lets him rock her gently back and forth)* And I did love him.

**Hunter:** Who? *(she looks up at him)* Oh right, right. Bobby.

**Sandra:** And you were right. He did sweep me off of my feet. They all did. The movie executives. The directors. The fans—especially the fans. But then suddenly everything changed. Bobby used to just look at me for long moments, staring into my eyes. Then after awhile, he wouldn't look at me at all. It's like he completely dropped me from his gaze. *(Hunter is listening to her, but starts to look impatient as she continues to talk)* And then so did the movie execs and then the directors and then suddenly... suddenly no one seemed to love me anymore.

**Hunter:** So that's it?

**Sandra:** What do you mean?

**Hunter:** I mean, that's it? Everyone stopped worshipping you so you started drinking?

**Sandra:** (*jumping up and away from him*) How dare you!

**Hunter:** What? I'm just being honest. You know, one of those qualities you like. Oh wait no, that was decency.

**Sandra:** I just poured my heart out to you and you start making fun of me?

**Hunter:** Hey, I didn't ask you to do that, and after everything you just said, how could I NOT make fun of you. (*Sandra turns her back to him*) Jesus Christ! You know, you're right. There is something tragic about your life. Did you ever think about the amount of time you wasted trying to cling to something that wasn't even real in the first place?

**Sandra:** What, I'm supposed to feel bad because I wanted to be loved?

**Hunter:** What are you talking about? Love? Honey, you wanted fame. You loved the attention and when it went away, you fell apart. You accuse me of not knowing anything about love, I think the closest you ever came to it was gazing in your dressing room mirror. (*Sandra makes a move to say something, then stops*) Yeah, that's right. Look Miss Sandra Dee, you might think you had a hard and terrible life but the only one to blame for that is you. (*Sandra looks like she's about to cry again.*) Oh please....

*Hunter turns away from her and she gathers herself. Again, she turns and tries to say something, but stops and just stares at his back. After a moment she turns back and stares into the blackness around her moving to stage left. Hunter, too, starts milling around stage right, looking into the darkness. Sandra suddenly shivers and starts looking around anxiously.*

**Sandra:** So where do you think we are?

**Hunter:** I'm pretty sure I know where I am. And I guess that's to be expected with all my decadent ways, right? (*He laughs*) And I'm sure spending eternity with me is not your idea of heaven either.

**Sandra:** (*ironic laugh*) No, no it isn't. (*They mill about onstage uncomfortably. They both make a move to go sit on the bench, they stop, looking at each other. Hunter gestures for her to sit down. Sandra sits and Hunter sits down next to her. They both stare out into the audience.*) So do you think this is it?

**Hunter:** I don't know. I was surprised to find myself here in the first place.

**Sandra:** What do you mean?

**Hunter:** I mean, once I pulled that trigger, I thought that was going to be it.

**Sandra:** You killed yourself?

**Hunter:** Yep.

**Sandra:** But why? Weren't you afraid?

**Hunter:** Afraid? Hell no. I admit, I was surprised I lived as long as I did. But after awhile, I just didn't see the point anymore. I experienced what I wanted to experience and learned what there was to learn.

**Sandra:** So you didn't believe in God?

**Hunter:** *(laughing)* Honey, as far as I'm concerned, religion is just a colossal waste of time. All that ritual, all that Sunday morning polishing and chanting. All those rules. Nope, that wasn't for me. I always saw religion as something that kept people from truly understanding who they were, from really experiencing everything life had to offer. That and most religions had a tendency to frown upon drugs and guns and sex. *(Sandra laughs)* What about you? You believed in God and Jesus and all that stuff?

**Sandra:** I wanted to believe. But after awhile I just didn't think there was anything to believe in. So you don't regret anything?

**Hunter:** Meaning?

**Sandra:** You don't regret anything you did in life?

**Hunter:** *(sighing)* Not a thing. But then again, I never expected anything. I just wanted to live as hard and as fast as I could until it all came to an end.

**Sandra:** *(bowing her head)* You know, looking back, ... I mean, I think I see your point about not living life to the upmost. I guess I was just so worried about what everyone else thought.

**Hunter:** Yeah, that does have a way of taking the fun out of life. *(he gives her a long look)* You know, maybe that's why we're here. *(playfully)* Maybe I'm supposed to help you get a taste of what it was like to walk on the wild side, you know, be a bad girl for once.

**Sandra:** *(laughing and looking at him playfully)* Yeah, maybe. *(suddenly becoming nervous)* Mr. Thompson?

**Hunter:** Yes?

**Sandra:** I did try, you know. To live a good life, I mean.

**Hunter:** *(after a pause)* Maybe that's what went wrong.

**Sandra:** So what if this is it?

**Hunter:** Well, I guess we'll have long time to get to know each other better.

*Sandra laughs playfully at him. She looks deeply at him.*

**Sandra:** There has to be something else ... *(she leans closer to him as if to kiss him)* I mean something more than this.... *(They make a move like they are about to kiss when Hunter suddenly jerks his head toward stage right like he suddenly heard somebody calling him and starts searching for the voice. He waits, listening, hears it again and stands up.)* What? What is it?

**Hunter:** You didn't hear that?

**Sandra:** No, what? What did you hear?

**Hunter:** Someone just called my name. *(He peers out into the audience trying to see who it is that is calling him. Then he hears it again, only this time it's above him. He stares upward for a moment, listening. Then his head turns toward stage right as if following the voice. He starts moving slowly stage right.)* Well, what do you know.

**Sandra:** What do you mean? What's going on? *(Hunter just keeps taking slow steps. Sandra jumps up and tries to follow him but it's like she ran into a glass wall. She can't follow him.)* What does this mean! What's happening!

**Hunter:** *(stopping and looking back at her)* I'm sorry Miss Sandra Dee, *(she looks at him desperately)* but it looks like it's time for me to go.

**Sandra:** Go where?! You can't leave! Please don't leave me!

**Hunter:** *(looking back into the light and smiling)* Looks like I've found the answer to your question. *(Hunter slowly starts moving off stage as if following the voice that is guiding him. Sandra watches helplessly as he walks away from her.)* Good-bye, Miss Sandra Dee. *(he disappears off stage right)*

**Sandra:** Wait! What about me! *(no response)* What about me!