

You Should Have Been There

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You Should Have Been There

Characters:

FREDA	F, angst-ridden 30-something
WYATT	M, 30-something, believes he is easy to get along with
MEL	M, high-maintenance 30-something. Searching.

Setting: A rainy November Saturday afternoon in San Francisco.

Casting Note, (taken and adapted from Chuck Mee)

In this play, as in life itself, any female character can be played by a woman in a wheelchair. Any male character can be played by an Indian man. And that is not the subject of the play. There is not a single role in this play that must be played by a physically intact white person.

AT RISE: SOUNDS of visitors, including FREDA and WYATT walking up stairs in a remodeled, well maintained Victorian mansion.

LIGHTS UP on FREDA and WYATT in a large living room/parlor. SOUNDS of chit-chat from guests milling about. WYATT is wearing business casual clothing with old flip-flops. FREDA wears clothing that suggests a former nun which she is not. A few small platters of food and some bottled water grace a couple of tables.

FREDA

I'm glad we came. At a time like this, it's the right thing to do.

WYATT

Yeah like that rescue puppy.

FREDA

Herman? He's so cute! He's just for a couple of weeks. Someone will want him.

WYATT

And while we're here today, the garbage will be all over the kitchen, and pee will be on the floor, and my shoes...

FREDA

...I put the OED on top of the garbage pail. And no one will notice the flip flops.

WYATT

Did you post pictures?

FREDA

Not yet. I haven't had time.

WYATT

You could post some now, you have your phone.

FREDA

This isn't the place--

MEL enters, disheveled as usual, wearing a large messenger bag, but does not acknowledge WYATT or FREDA.

FREDA

(whispering) Oh jeez, it looks like he brought a big pile of them, in the bag.

WYATT

The CD? You heard it?

FREDA

It's catchy. And sad... I downloaded a couple of songs off the website...For free.

WYATT

Any of them hummable?

FREDA

Not exactly. (BEAT) more...dirge-y? (*FREDA hums a monotone*)

WYATT

So who's going to buy that --

MEL

Hello Freda, Wyatt. It's been quite some time, hasn't it. Although I've seen Freda at some alumni days, last fall wasn't it?

FREDA

Mel, Mel, we weren't sure if you'd make it.

MEL

He's my friend too.

WYATT

I wouldn't say FRIEND.

FREDA

LIKE a friend. He always made that awesome hummus.

WYATT

I think he just got it at Whole Foods.

FREDA

No it was homemade, he said so. He wouldn't have lied. Who lies about hummus?

WYATT

Guys do. (BEAT) Every frigging potluck, whatever the dudes bring it's always simple crap like hummus or potato salad. In takeout containers. Never a cooked dish like lasagna. Still think our dear friend made that hummus?

FREDA

How's it going, anyway, Mel?

MEL

OK, Not too much going on right now--

WYATT

A CD, isn't that kind of...outdated?

MEL

I think, in this technologically advanced age, people want a tangible realization of the art forms they choose to enjoy.

WYATT

Dude, get over yourself, nobody even has a CD player anymore--

FREDA

--I do! (BEAT) Sometimes I don't want to bother with a playlist.

WYATT

What's next Mel, your Myspace page?

FREDA

Wyatt don't be silly! Mel, you must be up to SOMETHING?

MEL

Well yes it's a project..A big project.

FREDA

Jeez, Mel, we heard, aren't you and Delphinia having a baby? Kind of SOON?

MEL

Producing a little cherub is a truly life-changing experience, but ...a...project too. A big project. Like the CD. (BEAT) A money pit.

WYATT

Dude I hear ya, you can say that again. MONEE-pit.

FREDA

You spend lots on those video games, a baby would be so much more fun!

MEL

We aren't worried about those tangible things. The universe is big and bold and will provide for us. We're much more concerned about creating the loving environment our offspring will manifest into.

FREDA

That explains the Kickstarter for a doula!

WYATT

I thought a doula was like, a French horn or something.

FREDA

Noooo, a doula is, someone who stays with someone who's pregnant, helps out, maybe does massage--

MEL

--A support person, someone with grace and light and energy to help Delphinia through the rough spots, counsel her and give advice. Be there for her.

WYATT

I thought that's what YOU were for, Mel?

MEL

No, Delphinia needs feminine energy that I'll not be able to provide at that crucial time.

WYATT

You did your part already, big guy, that's what you're saying, right?

FREDA

Wyatt, that's a bit...vulgar. A doula is like a wife, not a husband. Like a wife.

WYATT

Wives are overrated. Like, I don't know, craft beer?

FREDA

You shouldn't knock something you haven't tried.

WYATT

What, craft beer? Kidding, just kidding.

MEL

Delphinia and I haven't felt the need to legally juxtapose our lives, our material assets; our bond is through our mutual desire to ground ourselves together. And while Delphinia may have brought in the more concrete attributes of our relationship, I like to think that my zealous affection has counted for something.

FREDA

Of course. Emotional support can't be counted in dollars. You're so thoughtful, Mel.

WYATT

Counted for that proverbial bun in the oven yeah? Somebody around here needs a wife. Would have handled the food here better. (*talking with his mouth full*) These sandwiches are dry as fuck.

FREDA

They can't be that bad. (*takes a sandwich, bites*) They are dry.

WYATT

Who does that, stale sammies. I took off work, came all the way from Alameda. It's not like the family doesn't have the money--

FREDA

--Or doesn't care.

WYATT

That's a double negative. Doesn't have, doesn't care....

FREDA

I didn't say doesn't doesn't, I said, doesn't care.

MEL

I think the correct phrase is, "The family does care." Clearer. More accurate.

FREDA

Wyatt knows what I meant.

WYATT

Knew...Sorry, sorry.

FREDA

I can't believe you are arguing with me about grammar again. Didn't you learn anything from Burning Man?

MEL

We should have brought flowers.

FREDA

Flowers, where's the flowers I bought?

WYATT

I left them in the car. Are there any salads or anything? Or fruit? I thought there was going to be a wine bar kind of thing, a bartender. Not these boxes, jugs, whatever.

FREDA

Can you go get them?

WYATT

I'm parked all the fuck up the hill. All these people here I doubt anyone will miss them.

MEL

Flowers show concern. You should get them.

WYATT

Flowers. Sure. Maybe I'll do a sandwich run. You want anything? OK, fine.

WYATT exits.

FREDA

So how's Delphinia feeling?

MEL

Oh, ups and downs. I'm not sure she's ready for this new experience. I saw her marking the calendar already, "First day back to work" after the birth. That's not a good sign is it?

FREDA

Oh, Mel, she'll be thrilled once you're looking at an actual baby.

MEL

I hope so. I've been caught up in my music, keeps me steady, sane. Did I give you a CD?

FREDA

Oh that's fine, I downloa--OK, sure. I bet it's lovely. *(Takes CD)*

MEL

I've always been interested in the sound one perfect note can make. I don't think Delphinia liked it all that much. Said it was monotonic. It's who I am, can't she see that?

WYATT enters with wilted flowers.

WYATT

Maybe your doula can help.

FREDA

Wyatt! That's not what doulas are for!

MEL

It's all right, Freda. I believe my creative outlets will create a better world and make me a better role model for our progeny.

WYATT

Can you use Kickstarter for a funeral?

FREDA and MEL stare.

WYATT

What? Doola-hickies are OK but a good funeral isn't? If the family had done a Kickstarter we'd be eating croissants and sliced ham and roasted veggies and HUMMUS and shortcake, not this Safeway crap.

MEL

Think I could grab a few of these sandwiches for Delphinia? She's craving turkey lately and I can't stand buying meat.

FREDA

You are not. Going to do that. Seriously?

MEL

What...why? My partner needs sustenance! She's growing our child!

WYATT

Sounds like she's got a 3rd leg or something.

FREDA

Stop, both of you! A baby is a beautiful thing, something to cherish, to be proud, to long for--

WYATT

--To poop and cry all night long. To tie you down, take all the fun out of life.

FREDA

You've always told me, if the time was right, it, we'd...

WYATT

Cookies! There's just a plate of cookies. Not even Milanos. No dessert/

FREDA

/You said babies are little flowers, waiting for the right earth to grow in. You said I could be that earth!

WYATT

--Cake! There's cake!

WYATT stuffs cake in his mouth.

FREDA

How can you eat cake at a time like this?

MEL

Yes, Wyatt, our friend is in a better place. We should be celebrating his long and rewarding life.

WYATT

With cake! This cake is actually pretty good!

FREDA

I hope when I die you're not just shoving cake in your piehole.

WYATT

That would be cake-holes. If it was cake it'd--

FREDA

And maybe you are just an ass-hole!

MEL

You're not going to die for a long time yet, Freda. You're a young, vibrant womanly source of energy.

FREDA

Thank you, Mel!

WYATT

Sounds like you're a guy who's not getting any.

MEL

Delphinia is concerned about our child's well being, no undue pressure on her sternum or pelvis.

WYATT

And that's why God made ladies on top!

FREDA

Which you are never going to get!

WYATT

You have been on me all day. Not what I meant. I WISH you'd been ON me all day instead of dragging me to this stupid funeral.

FREDA

You! You have been so crass, at a time like this, we should care for each other like Mel cares for Delphinia, more kindness. But you've taken every turn to be crude, and instigating fights for no reason. Maybe you're right, maybe you shouldn't have come.

MEL

This is a horrible way to say goodbye to our friend Martin.

WYATT

His name was Mason.

MEL

Are you sure? I'm pretty certain it was Martin.

FREDA

His name was Peter and he wasn't our friend, he was our geology professor. For two semesters. 15 years ago.

WYATT

I came for the free food. See how that turned out. And I was hoping for some post-funeral sex, sadness sex, but that outfit...

FREDA

Ohhhhhh I can't even! I took pole dancing lessons, wear bras a size too small to push up my boobs, bought a FitBit, for what?

MEL

At times like this I believe music can create a healing space. It's why I made this CD, "Dangling Flourishes for Interesting Times."

MEL begins humming a monotone.

WYATT

That's enough. I'm gonna stop at Mickey D's, stuff myself with a Big Mac and Fries. Maybe a likeminded hookup.... (Hands FREDA the flowers) Tell the family, so sorry, gotta go, something came up.

WYATT exits.

FREDA

Oh. Wyatt. We're, he and I, it's, I'm ...he was my ride.

MEL

I can take you home.

FREDA

Don't you ride a bicycle?

MEL

Of sorts. It's motorized, seats two, I thought it's be good for Delphinia and I...Pricey but I'm making payments. (BEAT) Delphinia left me. Rode off in her Prius, with a man she met on Instagram. Looking at color palettes for the birthing room, she said.

Works at Twitter, owns a condo. Probably loves Justin Bieber and Katy Perry. The child wasn't mine. Never was.

FREDA

Mel, I'm so sorry. That sounded stupid, sorry is a tiny word for what's happened.

MEL

It's all right. I knew, somewhere I didn't want to believe.

FREDA

What are--

MEL

I'm working on a new ...not a CD, CD's are yesterday. A new song cycle. For my Spotify channel. Not Myspace.

MEL's phone rings.

MEL

The Kickstarter! My CD! I get a text whenever someone donates. Oh it's for the doula still... I'll have to--

FREDA

You might need a doula sometime.

MEL

Sometime. I can live with that.

FREDA

Maybe start with a puppy? He chews a lot...

MEL

I can live with that. We should go say something to the family, tell them we're so sorry about Martin....

FREDA

(whispers to MEL) ...Peter.

MEL

Peter. Of course. He used to make that awesome hummus.

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY