

“PASS THE SALT, PLEASE.”

TEN MINUTE PLAY

By Jeffrey James Ircink

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SYNOPSIS: What would happen if the dinner conversation of a married couple in their 50s resembled the script pages of a scene in a pornographic film? As a man and woman catch up on the day’s events, their banter morphs from “ho-hum” to “whoop-eee!” - - without missing a “bite.” The scene reflects the state of sex in the America of the feminine mystique, as viewed by feminist Betty Friedan.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 MAN, 1 WOMAN, 1 EITHER)

ANNOUNCER (m/f) Open.

MAN (m) 45-60.

WOMAN (f)..... 45-60.

AUTHOR’S NOTE

The ANNOUNCER “introduction” at the beginning of the play is to be used at the director’s discretion - - largely determined by the venue and circumstance in which the play is performed.

The MAN and WOMAN are relatively the same age (ideal age would be mid 50’s to early 60’s). MAN is dressed in jeans, tee shirt and casual dress shirt; WOMAN is dressed in jeans or pants and top. There is no “look” for this couple, nor should they have to look like they’re a “couple” (I’d actually prefer it if they weren’t “pretty”). This play is shorter than 10 minutes if you read it straight through, so the actors need to adhere to the beats and pauses - - intentionally placed to drag out the dinner table conversation. The more gaps and holes in the dialogue, the better.

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SETTING

Tuesday evening. A dining room in a home.

The set consists of a small dining room table, white linen tablecloth, two chairs, and place settings for two, two glasses of wine and a jug of water. It is essential that real food be used. When this was first staged, food consisted of a rotisserie chicken split in half, cottage cheese, potato salad and fresh fruit.

TIME: The present.

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AT RISE:

As the following quote is read by the director or another appropriate representative, LIGHTS FADE UP on scene.

ANNOUNCER: *“Instead of fulfilling the promise of infinite orgasmic bliss, sex in the America of the feminine mystique is becoming a strangely joyless national compulsion, if not a contemptuous mockery.” Betty Friedan. U.S. feminist. (Beat.) Ladies and gentlemen: “Pass the Salt, Please.”*

Tuesday evening. A MAN and WOMAN are at either end of a medium-sized table eating dinner. They are quiet. The tone throughout the entire scene is sedate - - monotone, expressionless - - as if the couple is bored, but not necessarily with each other. They are fazed by nothing each other says - - everything spoken is matter-of-fact. There is a long pause while they eat before the WOMAN speaks. NOTE: pauses = 5 seconds, but the final discretion is up to the director.

WOMAN: Anything exciting happen at work today?

MAN: Not really. Same old, same old. Why?

WOMAN: No reason.

Pause.

MAN: Pfeiffer got fired.

WOMAN: What's that?

MAN: Pfeiffer got fired. You asked me if anything exciting happened at work today. Pfeiffer got fired.

WOMAN: Who's Pfeiffer?

MAN: I don't know - - some guy in accounting. Could you pass the salt?

She passes the salt. Pause.

WOMAN: So - - Pfeiffer got fired.

MAN: Yep.

WOMAN: What did he do?

MAN: I told you - - he worked in accounting.

WOMAN: I meant what did he do to get fired.

MAN: I'm not sure. I didn't know him that well. Just heard about it.

WOMAN: Then why'd you bring him up?

MAN: You brought him up.

WOMAN: How did I bring him up? I don't know who Pfeiffer is. Why would I bring up a guy I don't even know? Could I have the salt, please? (*He passes the salt.*) Thank you.

MAN: You asked me if anything exciting happened at work today. Pfeiffer getting fired was exciting.

WOMAN: How do you figure?

MAN: Well, what do you consider “exciting”?

WOMAN: (*A moment.*) A winning lottery ticket. (*Beat.*) A new refrigerator would be exciting.

MAN: Okay.

WOMAN: (*Overlapping.*) Traveling - - anywhere.

MAN: (*Overlapping.*) I got it. What about - -

WOMAN: (*Overlapping.*) Getting fired is not “exciting.”

MAN: What about the guys who were waiting for the Hindenburg to land in New Jersey . . . the ones who caught the guide ropes the crew threw out?

WOMAN: The linesmen?

MAN: Yeah, the linesman. Ya suppose at dinner later that night when the linesman's wife asked him, “*Did anything exciting happen at work today, dear?*” he said, “*No?*” (*Beat.*) What he said was, “*Yeah, the goddamn Hindenburg crashed and burned while I was holding onto one of the guide ropes.*” (*Beat.*) That's “exciting.”

WOMAN: That's a tragedy.

MAN: It's still exciting.

WOMAN: So I should be excited about people burning to death.

MAN: I'm not saying you should revel in someone else's tragedy. Excitement can mean “the state of being emotionally worked up.” (*Beat.*) I'm simply saying there's a level of excitement to everything - - however dreadful it may be.

WOMAN: Whatever.

MAN: Whatever. Can I have the salt? (*She passes the salt. Beat.*) What are you doing tonight?

WOMAN: I may finish that book you gave me for my birthday - - the one on cats.

MAN: It's a picture book.

WOMAN: (*Aside.*) Yeah.

Pause.

MAN: I bought two boxes of paperwhite candles from Sheila. She - -

WOMAN: Who's Sheila?

MAN: My boss' secretary. You've met her. She hosted one of those house parties where women buy jewelry and Tupperware and - - stuff.

WOMAN: I didn't know they still made Tupperware.

MAN: Yep.

WOMAN: I don't remember being at a party with any "Sheila."

MAN: You met her at work, not the party.

WOMAN: When were you at her house?

MAN: I wasn't at the party either. She brought 'em with her to the office.

WOMAN: Men purchase stuff from house parties too, you know.

MAN: I know. I bought candles.

WOMAN: I love the smell of paperwhites.

MAN: Yeah - - well I thought maybe we could light a few - - later on . . . in the bathtub. Listen to some music . . . glass of wine - - you know.

WOMAN: You wanna put candles in the bathtub?

MAN: No - - you and I would be in the tub. The candles would be - -

WOMAN: Oh. Right. *(Beat.)* We'll see . . . maybe. *(Beat.)* Candles and music, huh?

MAN: It's a "touch." *(He salts his food. Pause.)* Do we have any honey?

WOMAN: I don't think so.

MAN: Would you look for me?

WOMAN: Why do you want honey?

MAN: I like a full complement of condiments at my disposal when I'm eating. Is there anything wrong with that?

WOMAN: Why don't you look yourself?

MAN: I don't know where you keep it.

WOMAN: I think we're out of honey anyway.

MAN: Forget it. *(Pause.)* If I had some honey right now I'd take it and - - *(Beat.)* - - squirt it on your chest.

WOMAN: Excuse me?

MAN: Then I'd lick the honey off your tits.

WOMAN: You're such a pig. *(Beat.)* How would you like it if I took some honey and squirt it on . . . your . . . dick?

MAN: *(Beat.)* So-o . . . what’s your point?

WOMAN: Nothing. Nothing is my point.

Pause.

MAN: Well are you just gonna leave it there?

WOMAN: What?

MAN: The honey.

WOMAN: Maybe. *(Beat.)* Maybe . . . I’d . . . suck it off. *(The MAN begins to interject but is cut off.)* Maybe. *(Beat.)* Suck on your balls, too. Salt, please.

He passes the salt. Beat.

MAN: Never pictured you as the ball-sucking type.

WOMAN: You never asked.

MAN: *(Beat.)* Not that I mind you fondling my balls, but what are you planning to do with my cock when you’re done sucking it?

WOMAN: What do you want me to do with it?

MAN: Well, I guess - -

WOMAN: You wanna stick it in my pussy, don’t you?

MAN: Yeah. I wanna fuck you.

WOMAN: Go ahead then - - fuck my pussy.

MAN: I will.

WOMAN: How ya gonna fuck me?

MAN: Hard.

He reaches for the salt.

WOMAN: How does my pussy feel?

MAN: Like a pussy. *(Beat.)* Warm - - and wet . . . like a tropical rain forest. Makes me feel . . . contented. *(Beat.)* I like the timbre in your voice at that exact moment I stick my cock in you.

WOMAN: Keep fucking me the way you are and I’ll say anything you want me to say.

MAN: Tell me my cock’s the best cock you’ve ever had.

WOMAN: It’s the best cock I’ve ever had. *(Beat.)* Tell me I’m the best fuck you’ve ever had.

She reaches for the salt.

MAN: You’re the best fuck I’ve ever had. Tell me I’m - -

WOMAN: The best . . . fuck - - ever. Cum every time.

MAN: Really?

WOMAN: No. *(Beat.)* Close though. *(Beat.)* You know what I’d like?

MAN: What’s that?

WOMAN: I’d like you to do me in the ass.

MAN: Okay.

WOMAN: Really?

MAN: Sure. Why not?

WOMAN: *(Beat.)* Pig.

MAN: That’s me.

WOMAN: Fuck me in the ass, pig-man.

They both reach for the salt, but he grabs it first.

MAN: You’re a dirty little girl, aren’t you?

WOMAN: That’s right. I’m your dirty, nasty, little bitch, so you go right ahead and fuck me in the ass.

MAN: Beg me.

WOMAN: Please?

MAN: Beg me some more.

WOMAN: I only beg once. *(Beat.)* And you’ll do it exactly the way I tell you to do it.

MAN: Yes, ma’am.

She reaches for the salt.

WOMAN: ‘Cause I’m the boss of you, pig-man.

MAN: Yes, you are.

WOMAN: “Yes, you are” what?

MAN: Yes, you are, ma’am.

WOMAN: That’s better, asshole.

MAN: I love how you make me feel - - so . . . like a - -

WOMAN: A pig?

MAN: Um - -

WOMAN: That’s because you’re my pig, and all my pigs do what I tell them.

MAN: *(Beat.)* You have more than one pig?

WOMAN: No - - it's an expression. (*Beat. The MAN subtly emits an oink or two like a pig.*) What are you doing?

MAN: Being your little pig.

WOMAN: Don't do that.

Pause.

MAN: I wonder how you'd look with one of those balls in your mouth - - when you discipline me. You know the ones with the straps that go around your head.

WOMAN: I know. (*Beat.*) No.

MAN: No ball?

WOMAN: No ball.

MAN: Why?

WOMAN: You wear the ball. I'm the one doing the disciplining, remember? I say when we do it, what we do and what we wear. Not you.

MAN: We could each wear a ball.

He gestures for the salt, which she hands him.

WOMAN: Fine.

Pause.

MAN: I can't wait to fuck you in the ass.

WOMAN: You said that already.

MAN: I know, it's just that - -

WOMAN: Fuck me somewhere else.

MAN: Where else am I supposed to fuck you? I've already - -

WOMAN: I don't know. Figure it out yourself.

Beat - - not a pause - - a beat.

MAN: So-o-o . . . what are we doing after dinner?

WOMAN: I already told you.

MAN: The cat book?

WOMAN: Uh-huh. (*Beat.*) I'm a little tired actually. I may read and go to bed early. Why?

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MAN: I was just thinking we could . . . *(Beat. He stops eating and gets a very subtle “let’s have sex” look on his face.)* You know.

WOMAN: What? Oh. Um . . . I’m not sure. *(Beat.)* I just . . . I don’t think so. Thanks for asking, though. Some other time. *(Pause.)* I love you.

MAN: I love you, too.

Pause.

WOMAN: Pass the salt, please.

MAN passes the salt. They continue to eat in silence. LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.

THE END