

A FRESH START

A short play

by

Peter Snoad

Peter Snoad
50 Dunster Road #2
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
U.S.A.
(617) 650-2325 (cell)
psnoad@yahoo.com
www.petersnoad.com

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A FRESH START

CHARACTERS

JULIE, a woman, late 20's to early 30's

JUSTIN, a man, late 20's to early 30's

TIME

The not-too-distant future

PLACE

The living room of the couple's upscale city apartment

A FRESH START

The living room of a chic, upscale apartment. Early evening. At rise, JUSTIN is chugging an imported beer. A briefcase is at his side. He is pre-occupied, tense. JULIE enters, carrying a shoulder bag, her keys and a water bottle. Both JUSTIN and JULIE are total fashionistas.

JULIE

God, the traffic!

She drops the bag and tosses her keys on the table.

JUSTIN

It's the demonstrations.

JULIE

What are they whining about this time?

JUSTIN

Water.

JULIE

Again?

She takes a swig of from her water bottle and exits to the bedroom to change. A distant explosion. They act as if they haven't heard it. They're similarly indifferent to other explosions later in the play.

(From offstage)

Guess who we had in the store today?

JUSTIN

I've no idea.

JULIE

(Off)

Guess!

JUSTIN

Lady Gaga.

JULIE

(Off, laughing)

She's ninety-seven and blind! Seriously, who?

JUSTIN

I don't know.

JULIE enters carrying a gym bag and her water bottle. She is dressed in sexy workout gear.

JULIE

Cristiano Mendoza! Omigod, he is SO hot. But you know what? He has absolutely no taste. Zilch! I show him this pendant—for his wife or his girlfriend or whatever, it's by Sartori, I mean it's just like SO gorgeous and elegant—unusual, but, you know, understated—but no, no, no, he goes for this schlocky diamond and sapphire thing that is just...ugh! It was so disappointing. God, I can't wait to SWEAT.

JUSTIN

We have to talk.

JULIE

Later.

JUSTIN

Now.

JULIE

Honey, I have to get to the gym or I will DIE.

JUSTIN

I need to tell you something.

JULIE

Who are you fucking?

JUSTIN

No one, it's not—

JULIE

Bullshit. Who is she? Tell me.

JUSTIN

Julie—

JULIE
Who is the bitch? Not that I care.

JUSTIN
There isn't anyone else.

JULIE
Really?

JUSTIN
You know that.

JULIE
So what is it?

JUSTIN
I can't do this anymore.

JULIE
Because you're—

JUSTIN
No!

JULIE
Why then?

JUSTIN
It's your breasts.

JULIE
What about them?

JUSTIN
I'm not in love with them anymore.

JULIE
Excuse me?

JUSTIN
But it's not just that—

JULIE
These tits are amazing.

Well, they were. JUSTIN

Were? JULIE

They're different now. JUSTIN

You mean saggy. JULIE

No, they're just not as... JUSTIN

What? JULIE

Pert. JUSTIN

Pert? JULIE

Or perky. JUSTIN

What are you, twelve? JULIE

Anyway— JUSTIN

JULIE
Which is it, pert or perky? Because there's a big difference, okay, there is a major fucking difference between pert and perky.

JUSTIN
It's a bit of both. I guess.

JULIE
You are a fucking moron, you know that.

JUSTIN
Okay, but just let me—

JULIE

You worshipped them.

JUSTIN

Yes, I did—

JULIE

You said prayers about these tits, you wrote songs, and the whole rap extravaganza thing that you and Jerry put together before he fell off the scaffolding. Jerry had faith. Jerry was a true believer.

(Beat. She holds back tears.)

Jerry wanted to immortalize these tits. And he made the ultimate sacrifice.

JUSTIN

Julie—

JULIE

He died for these tits!

JUSTIN

It wasn't just that.

JULIE

They were mythical. Eternal. No woman in history could hold a candle to these tits. That's what you said.

JUSTIN

I've never loved you.

Another distant explosion. Beat.

JULIE

(Laughing)

Oh that is beautiful! And I thought this was going to be complicated!

JUSTIN

What do you mean?

JULIE

Oh come on. Men just love me for my tits. I would. It's like me and teeth. The first time I saw you at the club—remember? Omigod. You came up to the bar, and you smiled, and that was it, I was like totally gone, I was toast. Couldn't keep my eyes off them. They were like so amazing, so perfect. I knew it right then. They were the ones.

JUSTIN

Yeah.

JULIE

Those scumptious pearly whites. I could come just touching your toothbrush. Not anymore, of course.

JUSTIN

Why not?

JULIE

You have some yellow.

JUSTIN

I do? Where?

JULIE

Top left.

Distant rattle of small arms fire, like a dentist's drill.

JUSTIN

(Putting a finger in his mouth)

Here?

JULIE

(Indicating)

No, it's more....

He shifts his finger.

Oh God, it is SO gross.

Another explosion, still distant but louder.

JUSTIN

I had no idea.

JULIE

We'll do something about it.

JUSTIN

(Suddenly passionate)

I want more!

JULIE

More of what?

JUSTIN

More than tits and teeth!

JULIE

Are you okay?

JUSTIN

I mean, there was a time, you know, before implants and AI and bliss programming, when people talked. You know? They talked about things, things they cared about, in the world, in their lives. And they read. They read stuff.

JULIE

That is so revisionist.

JUSTIN

I'm serious!

JULIE

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JUSTIN

No, listen to me, okay, I met this woman through work—

JULIE

Who you are fucking.

JUSTIN

NO! She's a designer, virtual vacations. Anyway, Astra—this woman—gives me this book.

JULIE

And you took it?

JUSTIN

Discreetly.

JULIE

Justin! Are you nuts?

JUSTIN

It's poetry. The poems are....I mean, I really, really like them, and I tell Astra how excited I am and she says to me: you are ripe.

JULIE

And you're not fucking her.

JUSTIN

She didn't mean it like that. Anyway, they were written by someone called Maya Angelou, and I kept reading them, and something kind of wonderful and scary happened.

JULIE

What?

JUSTIN

I had....feelings. Emotions.

JULIE

Oh God.

JUSTIN

I know it sounds—

JULIE

We'll fix them.

JUSTIN takes a slim, dog-eared book from his briefcase and thrusts it at her.

JUSTIN

I want you to read it.

JULIE

(Ignoring the book)

You want more pert, we'll do more pert. Or perky. Whatever.

JUSTIN

You have to read this.

JULIE

But this time I'm getting a woman doctor. That guy I had last year, he was so creepy. What do you think? Maybe a little fuller? The full look is back. That's what Susan told me. Oh, and you know what? Oh my God, this is perfect! She has a new teeth guy. She swears by him. He's done all these doddering old celebs, like Beyonce and Tom Brady. King William of England. He has a waiting list a mile long, but Susan'll get you in, she's fucking him—not the king, the dentist. Maybe the king, too, who knows.

JUSTIN

(Holding out the book)

Julie. Please.

JULIE

You want me to read?

JUSTIN

Yes.

JULIE

You need help.

JUSTIN

No, I—

JULIE

Call the Bliss Center. Make an appointment.

JUSTIN

I don't want new teeth, I don't want you to have new breasts—

JULIE

Well then fuck off.

A slight pause. More distant explosions, the closest yet.

JUSTIN

Not until you read this.

JULIE

You loved my tits, and now you hate them, and I can't stand to look at you with that disgusting stain in your mouth. Get the fuck out of here.

(Beat.)

What? Afraid are we? A little nervous about what's out there?

JUSTIN

I don't want this...I want...

JULIE

What, Justin? What exactly do you want?

JUSTIN

I want a relationship.

JULIE

This is why we don't have books. Give it to me.

He retreats.

Give it to me!

He shakes his head.

I'll report you.

JUSTIN

Fine, go ahead.

JULIE

What is with you and this relationship shit? We have fun, we give each other space. We have everything we need.

JULIE snatches the book from him and flings it across the room. He retrieves it and inspects it for damage.

JUSTIN

Everything. Is that right?

JULIE

You wanna end up like Tyrone? Huh? Is that what you want? Hacked apart, your implants ripped out of you? So he was stupid, he got out of his car to take a piss. But outside the Zone, shit happens. You know that.

JUSTIN

Julie—

JULIE

There is nowhere else to go.

(Beat)

The guards shot fifteen of them yesterday. Somehow they got past the electric fences *and* the laser system. And there they were, in their filthy rags, drinking from Amelia and Dan's swimming pool. Can you believe it? All that chlorine! Ugh!

(Beat.)

Well, I'm off. Can I have the Ruger?

JUSTIN

Don't you have the Glock?

JULIE

I'll take both just in case. There's still a red alert.

He takes a handgun from his briefcase, gives it to JULIE. She starts to leave.

Call.

JUSTIN

What?

JULIE

Call Susan for that appointment. I can't wait to see you whiter than white again.

She flicks her tongue seductively and smiles. She exits. He caresses the book, opens it and starts to read.

END OF PLAY