

TEARJERKER

by DUSTIN GUZIOR AND AGATHA VALENTI

(Stephanie and Stewart are seated at a table)

Steph: So, Coach Bleeker told me to bring scripts.

Stew: Yeah, I brought a couple too. What've you got?

Steph: *Girl Interrupted*. I found the movie script on the Internet.

Stew: Oh. Yeah, well, we could try that.

Steph: My partner Jennifer and I were doing it earlier in the season. One judge described it as post-apocalyptic.

Stew: That's... nice. So, would I play a girl?

Steph: The Winona Ryder character, so something like that. If you're not a fan, I brought others.

Stew: Well..uh... My partner and I, we were doing this piece about a guy and a girl who meet at an AA meeting and fall in love, but then he can't give up alcohol and dies in a bar fight. In the end he speaks to her from beyond the grave as she gives birth to his child. It's touching.

Steph: Yeah. that won state – it's a real sleeper. How about something with punch?

Stew: Punch is good. What are you thinking?

Steph: Beaches. I'll be Bette Middler and you can be that woman with ovarian cancer.

Stew: Right... 'cause nothing says dramatic punch like gay camp.

Steph: You don't have to be a jerk.

Stew: What about something where I can play a boy?

Steph: Fried Green Tomatoes? *(he gives her a dirty look)* Lighten up! Come on, you were born to play Kathy Bates!

Stew: Look. Can you just drop the movies and be serious for a moment? We need to start working.

Steph: I am being serious, and you don't have to be so uptight.

Stew: I'm just... well I usually do scripts like *Angels in America*.

Steph: And I usually do scripts like *Anaconda* – you could play a male snake and I'll play a kick-ass Jennifer Lopez choppin' me up some anaconda.

Stew: Look. I just prefer intelligent scripts... works of dramatic literature that make you think... something with disease or sorrow or dead infants.

Steph: Fine, you pick the script. It really doesn't matter to me anyway. This really isn't a big deal.

Stew: What did you just say?

Steph: This dramatic duet competition... it's really not a big deal.

Stew: (*quiet at first. He builds to yelling*) Okay, I've been patient, but let me tell you something little miss ANACONDA. THIS is my LIFE. I have fought to be here for four years and this year I will make it to state or DIE. Do you understand? This duet is a VERY BIG DEAL TO ME. If Amanda didn't have that acne medicine disaster I would still have a great partner, but as is, I'm stuck with you.

Steph: Well if Jennifer hadn't quit, I wouldn't be stuck with an over-competitive JERK.

Stew: You might not like me, I might not like you, but we have no choice. We have three days to make this dramatic duet *perfection*. And it must make the audience feel like they could never possibly be happy again. It must be THAT good.

Steph: Okay. Whatever.

Time Passes

Stew: None of these scripts are going to work – we've combed through everything in the team file and the best thing we found is *Agnes of God*.

Steph: Is that the one about the French prostitute?

Stew: No, it's about a pregnant nun.

Steph: Sounds cute.

Stew: I don't think it's *right* for us. *There's nothing. Nothing in this file suitable for competition.*

Steph: Well... Now, I'm not sure if this is really allowed, but a friend of mine from this Catholic school, their coach let them write their own duet.

Stew: That's incredible. But can you really do that? I mean, is it allowed?

Steph: They did it.

Stew: I've studied dramatic duet for four years, we could write the most tragic, heart-wrenching, and startling piece ever.

Steph: Where would we start?

Stew: As far as I can tell, a dramatic duet needs one of five things to win. Quiet tension, disability or illness, loss, an explosive climax, or homosexuality. Now, most dramatic duets have just one of the five elements, but if we combine them all we'd have...

Steph: A super-DDA...

Stew: an uncontrollable sob fest! Do you think we can actually do this?

Steph: It's worth a shot, and it might be better than going home to Law and Order reruns.

Stew: Okay, let's do it. We'll start at the top of the list. QUIET TENSION. We need to establish a relationship; these people need to have something under their skin...

Steph: Like mice.

Stew: Um... yes. Give me a relationship- something like brother-sister.

Steph: *(She thinks for a moment)* Pet owner – pet.

Stew: What do you mean?

Steph: Like man and cat, or old woman and bird.

Stew: Okay, but what would the story be about?

Steph: I don't know. Molestation?

Stew: *(without a beat)* Let's try something easier.

Steph: Husband – wife?

Stew: Husband and wife... recently married and the tension comes from the fact that they...

Steph: Haven't done it!

Stew: Sure... they haven't done it.

Steph: Not even after the wedding.

Stew: YES... and then soon after they're married, the tension builds... quietly...

Steph: They haven't done it, but we don't know why... there's a secret. They are with a secret!

Stew: Wait, wait, rewind for a second. There isn't enough drama here. If we're going to sweep the competition there is one thing we absolutely NEED...

Steph: Talent?

Stew: A retarded character. It's dramatic gold. Can you do retarded?

Steph: What do you mean "do retarded"?

Stew: Have you been to a DI final? You basically twist your face and talk with your tongue out – it's like magic. Let me show you. "Don't you love me?" *(she shudders)*. Now you try.

Steph: "Don't you love me?"

Stew: More twist in the face. Let me pose you. *(he adjusts her hands and posture; this pose is absurd)* Now.

Steph: "Don't you love me?"

Stew: Perfect! So the wife is retarded and the husband won't do it with her. Not even after the wedding.

Steph: And then he's in a car accident

Stew: And after the car accident...

Steph: He's paralyzed from the waist down...

Stew: He has an excuse...

Steph: A reason he can't do it with her...

Stew: Yes! They spend long days at home together and her desire for him festers... quietly. Let's try that. Get in your pose. We're festering quietly. Go! (*they sit, quietly looking at each other*) Good!

Steph: So we have quiet tension and disability. What's next?

Stew: Loss.

Steph: The dog runs away!

Stew: What's with you and pets? (*She gives him a look*) Okay. Let's try to run the scene. This is my wheelchair. I'm seated at the breakfast table in the breakfast nook. We're sitting, festering in quiet tension, and then you get up to fetch the dog. Go!

Steph: Scruffy!? Oh Scruffy where are you?

Stew: Honey, can you bring me some more coffee please? (Remember, you're retarded...)

Steph: Noooo... honey, I can't find Scruffy...

Stew: What do you mean?

Steph: He's gone. He's gone forever.

Stew: What do you mean. That dog...

Steph: He should say something very dramatic like... that dog...that dog was the only thing I had left to live for.

Stew: that dog... that dog was the only thing I had left to live for!

Steph: What about me? Don't you love me?

Stew: GREAT! Now we need to give the audience the emotional sucker punch they need and crave... We want them to descend into darkness...

Steph: Darkness! But how do we do that? Wait! There was a secret...

Stew: Rewind. So they're at the breakfast table in the breakfast nook. They've lost the dog. She's retarded and he's in a wheelchair. They haven't done it, but we don't know why... there's a secret... you're right! They're festering in quiet tension and there's that secret ticking like a bomb... What ingredients are we missing?

Steph: Umm... an explosive climax and homosexuality.

Stew: I've got it! It's brilliant. Offensive-but brilliant.

Steph: What?

Stew: He was never in a car accident... it was a trick. He's not crippled... he's...

Steph: Lazy?

Stew: Better! A homosexual! It's a marriage of convenience so he can establish citizenship. He's fled his violent past in Northern Ireland seeking the safety of suburban America.

Steph: And this is the climax! She's lost the dog, she questions his love, and now ... now she's had ENOUGH.

Stew: What?

Steph: She's tired of playing the victim in his web of lies. She's ready to fight back. It's the last ingredient - don't you see Stew? She's inspiring.

Stew: I don't...

Steph: Just trust me. Let's try this.

Stew: So I'm in the breakfast nook in my wheelchair. I'm a homosexual posing as a cripple. We haven't done it and we're festering in quiet tension, and you can't find the dog.

Steph: Don't forget, you're Irish.

Stew: And I'm Irish.

Steph: and I ask you, "Don't you love me?"

Stew: *(jumps to his feet to go after the dog. He has a ridiculous Irish brogue)* I never loved ya Maggie!

Steph: How can you say that? And how are you walking?

Stew: I've had enough o' me own lies Maggie.

Steph: So then Maggie runs to the kitchen and pulls a revolver from the top drawer!

Stew: A revolver? Are you sure that...

Steph: YES! She grabs the revolver. She's festered to a boiling point. With frenzied desperation she points the gun at her one true love. And he says...

Stew: I'm not really crippled Maggie, I'm a homosexual. I've used you and I'm sorry.

Steph: Too late for sorry! I've had... ENOUGH *(glances coyly at the audience)*

Stew: *(breaking character)* It's not really necessary that you look at the audience Stephanie.

Steph: But I need to make a personal connection. That's the beauty. EVERYONE'S been in this situation. So she raises the gun and... *(Steph doesn't move her arm up)*

Stew: Keep track of your pantomime.

Steph: Oops, sorry. So she raises the gun *(Steph raises the gun)* and with festered frenzy she says 'I've had... enough' *(again, with a coy glance and wink)*. She fires two rounds into his heart and he falls to the earth. *(they pause)*

Stew: So how do we end this?

Steph: How DO we end this?

Stew: She cradles him. She cradles him as hard as she can and quietly, almost inaudibly she sings....

Steph: Would you like to swing on a star...

Stew: That doesn't make sense.

Steph: It's edgy.

Stew: Perfect.

Steph: Would you like to swing on a star... carry moon beams home in a jar...?

Stew: I would maggie. I would.

Steph: Heads down! And! The end!

Stew: So, we've got it. The beginning will write itself.

Steph: Yeah... but should we add something about disease... maybe a musical number about AIDS...

Stew: Like people would want to watch that. No, I think we're done. We're pretty much geniuses.

Steph: And now we practice. And hope.

Stew: There's always hope that we'll fight our way to the top, through the hearts and souls of our judges... one tear at a time.

Steph: Should we run the scene again?

Stew: Yeah, let's get in places. We're festering quietly. Got!