

Requiem for a Donut Lover

by

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Setting

An alley behind a donut shop.

Time

Now and then.

Cast

EMMA - Woman in her 20s.

LUKE - Man in his 20s.

SPENCE - Man in his 20s.

Synopsis

Three friends gather to memorialize a recently deceased friend, who died in somewhat peculiar circumstances.

Bio

David is a playwright and screenwriter. He is a resident artist at The Purple Rose Theatre, where seven of his plays have been produced. His newest play, *Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Fallen Soufflé*, just opened the Purple Rose's 2019-2020 season. His plays have been performed from New York to Tasmania, and his work has been published by Dramatic Publishing, Playscripts, Smith & Kraus, Applause, and Heuer Publishing.

He adapted his dark comedy, *Vino Veritas*, for the silver screen, and it stars Carrie Preston (Emmy-winner for *The Good Wife*). Several of his short plays have also been adapted into films, and his screenplay *In the Land of Fire and Ice* was a 2016 Athena List Winner (best screenplays featuring female protagonists). He teaches writing at Wayne State University in Detroit and is inordinately fond of cheese and terriers.

(LUKE, EMMA, and SPENCE enter. EMMA carries some plastic flowers wired to a stand and LUKE carries more fake flowers and a teddy bear. They look around.)

LUKE

What do you think? Is this the right place?

EMMA

I think so. It's close...

LUKE

Are you sure?

EMMA

(pointing)

It might have been a little further that way.

LUKE

How much further?

EMMA

I don't know. The whole night is just a blur.

LUKE

No kidding.

(EMMA starts to cry.)

LUKE

Oh, Emma...

(embracing EMMA)

That's okay...that's okay. Let it all out.

SPENCE

Listen, can we just do this? Like, before the cops come?

LUKE

So what if the cops come?

SPENCE

I'm not sure this is completely legal.

EMMA

Of course it's legal! What are you saying? You don't want to leave a memorial for David?

LUKE

He was our best friend. He deserves to be remembered.

(EMMA sets the flowers down on the ground and starts to fuss with them.)

EMMA

I see these kinds of memorials all the time! You've seen them! On street corners, on freeways...

(LUKE adds his flowers and the teddy bear to the arrangement.)

LUKE

When a friend or loved one dies in a tragic accident, people have a right to put up a memorial. And it's not just our right, it's our duty.

EMMA

We want people to see this, Spence. We need people to see this. David needs to be remembered, and even if people passing by didn't know him, they'll see this memorial and pause for a moment to remember a loved one that they lost, to remember that life, every precious moment of life, is the most important thing in the world.

LUKE

Absolutely.

(LUKE and EMMA both stand back up.)

SPENCE

I'm not saying David shouldn't be remembered, all right? I'm just not sure this is the right place.

EMMA

You think it was a little further up?

SPENCE

No, I don't think it was further up. But this isn't exactly the side of a freeway or a busy intersection. We're in an alley behind a donut shop.

LUKE

Of course we're in an alley behind a donut shop! This is where he died!

SPENCE

I know that, but David didn't exactly die in a fiery crash or multi-car pile-up.

EMMA

He was in his car!

SPENCE

But he didn't die in an accident! He died choking on a donut. His third donut, I might add.

EMMA

What difference does it make what number donut it was?

SPENCE

I...nothing...

LUKE

What?

EMMA

Spence? Do you want to explain that last comment?

SPENCE

No...just...are you guys done? Can we go?

EMMA

We're not going anywhere until you explain yourself.

LUKE

Yeah. I'd like to hear this, Mr. Donut Counter.

SPENCE

If you die choking on your first donut, that is truly tragic, that's heartbreaking. And if you die choking on your second donut, that's still really, really sad. But if you die choking on your third donut...

EMMA

What? What are you saying?

LUKE

He's saying the level of tragedy decreases in direct proportion to the number of donuts consumed.

EMMA

Is that what you're saying?

SPENCE

That's what I'm saying.

EMMA

Oh my God!

LUKE

Seriously? What is wrong with you?

EMMA

Spence! I feel like I don't even know you!

SPENCE

Why? Because I'm not going along with this?

LUKE

Going along with what?

SPENCE

This! The whole memorial thing.

EMMA

You have a problem with a memorial for David?

SPENCE

The things you're talking about, the memorials by the side of the road, those are because of accidents. Somebody crossed the median or had a heart attack at the wheel or something. Choking on a donut--

LUKE

His third donut.

SPENCE

His third donut...that's kind of self-inflicted, don't you think?

(EMMA holds her face in her hands and shakes her head.)

EMMA

You're not making any sense! Is it me? Is it just me? Luke, do you understand what he's saying?

LUKE

Not really.

SPENCE

Don't you get it? One donut, fine! Two donuts, okay, you're pushing it, but people do that. Three donuts...that's crossing the line.

LUKE

Crossing the donut line.

SPENCE

Exactly!

LUKE

Okay, I see where you're coming from. You're talking... what's it called...natural selection!

SPENCE

Bingo.

EMMA

Will one of you please explain to me what you two are talking about?

LUKE

Spence is saying that what happened to David...it's like a musk ox in Africa who stays at the watering hole too long and gets nailed by a crocodile or some lions. He's asking for it.

EMMA

I've lost my mind. I hear the words you're saying, but they don't make any sense once they get inside my head.

SPENCE

There's a natural order to things. A pattern to the universe. If you stay within that pattern, you're pretty much okay. But when you push it, when you...

LUKE

Challenge the gods.

SPENCE

Right. When you challenge the gods, that's when bad things happen. Call it what you want, karma...

LUKE

Thinning the herd...

SPENCE

Sure. That too.

EMMA

You're saying...you're saying that David challenged the gods by eating three donuts?

SPENCE

Effectively.

LUKE

Honestly? When he went for that third donut, I thought, "Whoa. Three donuts?" But then it was too late.

EMMA

You know, they say that tragedy really reveals people's true character. And here I am, standing with what I thought were two of my best friends in the world...and you're monsters! Inhumane, unfeeling monsters!

SPENCE

I am not a monster!

EMMA

You are! You're horrible! You're a horrible human being!

SPENCE

No, you know what's horrible? You know what's going to happen here? I'll tell you what's going to happen. Some donut shop worker is going to come out in the alley for a smoke or something and they're going to see this memorial and they're not going to know what the hell it is, because who puts a memorial in an alley, and they're going to pick it up and throw it into that dumpster over there!

LUKE

That's probably true, yeah. I could see that happening. Especially after a few days, you know? The flowers start to get dirty, maybe they get tipped over, the teddy bear gets all matted and grungy--

EMMA

Stop it! Stop it, stop it, stop it, stop it!

(EMMA sweeps up the flowers and teddy bear, clutching them in her arms.)

EMMA

Then we won't leave anything! Ever! For anyone! Because what's the point? We're born and we die and a few people remember us and then they die and then nobody remembers us and everything that we ever were gets thrown into dumpsters or landfills and then the sun goes red giant and incinerates everything on earth anyway so what's the point of remembering or trying to remember when everything everywhere leads up to a big fat nothing for eternity? We're nothing! Everything is nothing! There is no point in anything, ever!

(EMMA flings the flowers and teddy bear as far away as she can.)

LUKE

Jesus, Emma. That's pretty grim...

EMMA

I just wanted to leave something for David...to say that we remembered him...that we miss him...that we're sorry he's not here...that's all I wanted...

LUKE

I know...

(SPENCE's face starts to quiver.)

EMMA

Spence? Are you okay?

(SPENCE bursts into tears.)

EMMA

Oh my God...Spencer!

(SPENCE's body is wracked with sobs.)

EMMA

Luke...do something!

LUKE

Spence? Jesus...come on, man...

(SPENCE drops to his knees, not just weeping, but keening, his grief pouring out of him as he rocks back and forth, wailing at the top of his lungs. LUKE and EMMA look at one another helplessly. They get to their knees on either side of SPENCE and hold him. They start rocking with him, all of them crying. The rocking slows and SPENCE looks upward. EMMA and LUKE follow his gaze.)

SPENCE

I don't want to leave plastic flowers in an alley...

EMMA

No...no, we're not doing that.

LUKE

No way...

SPENCE

I just want to miss him. I want to feel this ache inside me and know that's for David. That's our memorial...that's the only kind of memorial that matters...the pain we feel in our hearts because our friend is gone.

EMMA

That's beautiful, Spence. I'm sorry...the way you were talking, I didn't think you cared about David.

SPENCE

What was he thinking?

LUKE

He wasn't. He just...he loved donuts.

EMMA

To be honest, when he reached for that third donut...I wanted to say something. I don't know why I didn't.

SPENCE

Because you knew how much he loved donuts.

LUKE

He sure did.

EMMA

Nobody loved donuts more.

(They all get to their feet, brushing themselves off.)

LUKE

Not to be disrespectful or insensitive or anything, but does anybody want a donut?

EMMA

I wouldn't mind one...since we're here. I mean, you know, nothing fancy or with sprinkles. Just a cruller or something...Spence? Are you okay with a donut?

SPENCE

David would want us to have a donut.

EMMA

He would, wouldn't he?

LUKE

Damn straight he would.

SPENCE

But only one each! You hear me? One each.

LUKE

Two at the most.

SPENCE

Okay, two at the most.

EMMA

But not two apple fritters.

LUKE

Agreed.

SPENCE

That's just common sense.

(EMMA holds out her hands. SPENCE and LUKE each take a hand.)

EMMA

I love you guys.

LUKE

Yeah. Let's try to stick around for one another.

SPENCE

When it comes right down to it, that's all we can do.

(They start walking, arm in arm.)

EMMA

God, this place smells good.

LUKE

I hope Heaven smells like donuts.

SPENCE

If David's there, you know it does.

(Lights fade as they exit.)

END OF PLAY.