

CHARACTERS

Peter Early 20s. Physically small white guy. Book-smart but dorky. The adopted brother of...

Chantel Late 20s. Attractive Asian-American woman. Confident. Sharp-tongued.

Lily Late 30s. A woman from Peter's past.

Larry Shopkeeper. Gruff. Proudly dirty from his work.

SETTING

A small taxidermy shop, though there are none of the usual dead animals or other tip-offs to make this clear to the audience. Stage left is a front desk with two chairs in front of it. On it is a bell, some papers, and a large photo album. Behind the desk is a door leading to the back chambers. The walls have testimonial letters posted on them.

TIME

The near future.

PLACE

The Mission District of San Francisco.

This play premiered in April, 2002, in the Unidentified One-Act Marathon. Aoise Stratford directed, with the following cast: W. Jay Moore as Peter; Alice Shikina as Chantel; Danielle Thys as Lily; and Mike Reynolds as Larry.

(At opening the shop is empty. Music comes from behind the closed door to the back room. PETER and

CHANTEL enter. She is obviously the one who wants to be here. He remains by the door.)

PETER

Okay, there's no one here.

CHANTEL

Just stop. We have an appointment.

PETER

Maybe he forgot.

CHANTEL

The front door was open.

(She crosses to the desk and rings the bell.)

PETER

Can we even trust this place? There aren't any samples of the work out on display.

CHANTEL

(ringing again) I think it's illegal to have public showrooms, actually.

PETER

That should tell you something.

CHANTEL

There's music coming from back there...

(She crosses behind the desk to the door.)

PETER

Chantel...

CHANTEL

Just relax. *(opening the door)* Hello?

LARRY

(off) Ahhh!

CHANTEL

(staring into the room) Uh, hello, we've got an appointment—

LARRY

(off) Shut the door!

CHANTEL

Sorry.

(She shuts the door. The music stops.)

LARRY

(off) I'll be out in a minute. There's a book of sample poses on the desk.

(PETER begins reading some of the testimonials.)

CHANTEL

(to LARRY) Okay. *(to PETER)* You wanted to see samples?

PETER

No.

CHANTEL

A second ago you were whining that there weren't any samples, now you won't even look.

PETER

I just said that it was weird that there weren't any, not that I wanted to see them. Listen to this: "Dear Larry, Everyone said that it would be creepy, but I'm so glad my husband and I came to you. You showed us that the absence of life from Simon's body didn't mean that he couldn't stay with us for the rest of our lives." Sick!

CHANTEL

I think it's beautiful.

PETER

Well, it's not. It's sick.

(LARRY enters, wearing bloody gloves. He smiles broadly.)

LARRY

Sorry if I sounded cross just now. I was in a zone.

PETER

(muttering) The dunk-master of taxidermy...

CHANTEL

Don't worry about it. Sorry to have barged in on you. We're just here to—

LARRY

Actually, I'm not done yet. I just wanted to make sure you didn't leave. It'll just be a couple more minutes, but I'm at a point where I can't quit or the whole thing will turn into a wrinkly mess.

CHANTEL

Oh, well...

(LARRY leaves.)

(sarcastically) It's not like we had an appointment or anything. That's just terrible business, making the customer wait.

PETER

We should protest by leaving.

CHANTEL

Shut up, Peter. He's the best. He's worth the wait. I'm just saying that we shouldn't have to.

PETER

It's not too late to cremate, Chantel. Keeping dead things around one's home is disgusting.

CHANTEL

Peter, we're here.

(She sits and begins looking at the photo album.)

PETER

Did I ever tell you about the girl I went out with in college who had dead animals all over her dorm room.

CHANTEL

You dated in college? I had no idea.

PETER

I should have known it'd be a disaster from the moment I walked in... they'd evidently been passed down by her family. Things they'd hunted and killed. It was a bad omen for the way things were going to go with us.

CHANTEL

Why?

PETER

Because people who want to be surrounded by death have something **WRONG WITH THEM!**

CHANTEL

Come look at these.

PETER

(crossing to her) I can't believe we're even considering this, frankly.

(They begin looking at the book. They flip through it.)

CHANTEL

(overlapping) Wow! He's a big one. Where would they put something that big? And they should look happy.

PETER

(overlapping) Oh, that is so disgusting... nasty! Why would they put them in that position?

(PETER slams the book shut.)

What do you think? *(posing like an angry bear)* Like this, next to the television?

CHANTEL

Please... I think it has to be seated.

PETER

Just because he's dead doesn't make him an it.

CHANTEL

Let's just agree to disagree on that, okay?

(LILY enters and begins looking at the letters. The other two watch her discreetly, speaking in hushed tones.)

PETER

Oh God, I can't believe there're other people here, this is so embarrassing!

CHANTEL

I wonder what she's having stuffed.

PETER

Probably her boyfriend.

CHANTEL

No need to be crass, Peter.

PETER

(hissing) Holy shit, I don't believe it... I KNOW HER!

CHANTEL

What?

PETER

I'm seeing someone I know. Oh please, please, please can we get out of here now?

CHANTEL

No. Where do you know her from?

PETER

We... used to date a little. Back when I was in college.

CHANTEL

Another one? (*checking LILY out*) She's a little old for you, isn't she?

PETER

Look, it's actually—

(*LARRY enters.*)

LARRY

Sorry to keep you folks waiting. Picked out a pose yet?

CHANTEL

Well, I'm not sure. It needs to be something unobtrusive...

LARRY

Right.

CHANTEL

...but strong and cute...

LARRY

Right.

CHANTEL

And I don't know if I saw that look in the book

LARRY

Keep thinking it over. (*indicating the room*) This is taking a little longer than I thought it would.

CHANTEL

Wait just a minute—

LILY

Peter?!