

ENTITLED

A short play

by

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ENTITLED

CHARACTERS

DOBBIN, a young woman in her late twenties
MR. GROSS, a middle-aged man

TIME

The present

PLACE

A remote Pacific island

ENTITLED

An empty stage. DOBBIN enters carrying a cooler and a small beach bag. She is barefoot and wears shorts and T-shirt; casual but hip. She casts a critical eye over her surroundings, then takes a small leather-bound notebook from the beach bag and browses the contents.

DOBBIN

(Calling to offstage)

Mr. Gross!

After a moment, GROSS enters. He looks prosperous but seedy. He wears summer pants, golf shirt, sandals; a gold watch; some ostentatious jewelry.

Did you sleep well? This is it. Made to order. Pristine beach, the lagoon, and then nothing but wide blue ocean as far as the eye can see. Totally uninhabited, not another human being within five hundred miles. The island in the middle of nowhere.

A slight pause. GROSS looks around.

GROSS

What about planes?

DOBBIN

No problem. Fiji has some traffic but they don't come this way.

GROSS

Boats?

DOBBIN

Too remote for cruise ships, nothing to visit. And the tanker lanes are way to the east.

GROSS

Animals? Birds?

DOBBIN

No. This is basically a big hunk of volcanic rock, doesn't support much of anything. A few lizards and crabs, that's about it.

GROSS
What about that tree?

DOBBIN
The wind always blows that way—towards it.

GROSS
What kind of tree is it?

DOBBIN
Coconut.

GROSS
Coconut!

DOBBIN
Don't worry, Mr. Gross, we've removed all the fruit. So what do you think?

GROSS surveys the scene again. It's clear he's not totally convinced.

I tell you what. Why don't we run a test?

GROSS nods, then lies down and closes his eyes.

(Checking her watch)
One minute, starting...Now.

Silence. DOBBIN stands stock still, looking at her watch. After a few moments, GROSS jumps to his feet. He is very agitated.

GROSS
Goddam it!

DOBBIN
What's the matter?

GROSS
The waves!

DOBBIN
You heard the waves?

GROSS

What are you, deaf? Jesus! I mean, isn't that kind of elementary? We are on an island, for Chrissakes! Didn't it occur to you? Didn't it enter your pea-size brain?

DOBBIN

Sir, I can assure you, we did take into account....

GROSS

How much am I paying you? Huh?

DOBBIN

You're paying us very well.

GROSS

Damn right I am! And I'm paying you to get things right. I don't want any fuck-ups. I told you that, didn't I? Didn't I tell you, specifically, repeatedly, I will not tolerate any fuck-ups? Did I not say that?

DOBBIN

Yes, sir, you did.

GROSS

So what you call this? Huh? What is this? I CAN HEAR THE WAVES.

DOBBIN

We did plan for the waves.

GROSS

Did you? Did you really? Well, it hasn't worked, has it? I can hear them. Do you hear me? I CAN HEAR THEM. Just like I could hear the planes from La Guardia every three minutes, and the police sirens, and the fire trucks, and the phones in my office, and the cabs—always hitting their fucking horns as if it's going to get them there any faster—and those goddam leafblowers, useless goddam things, all over the neighborhood in the fall, and then, when winter comes, wonderful, we have the snowblowers. What's wrong with rakes? What's wrong with shovels? You can hire teenagers, for Chrissakes, keep 'em off the streets, keep 'em out of trouble. I'd tell my wife that but she never listened to me. Never. In twenty years, she never listened to a goddam word I said. Too busy yelling at the kids, yelling at the grandkids, yelling at her stupid sister on the phone. Years of yelling at maximum volume, like I was fucking deaf, which I wish to hell I had been so I wouldn't have had to put up with all her fucking NOISE!

(Beat)

I hired you to help me. I told you what I wanted. And you said fine, no problem Mr. Gross. Buy this, you said. Buy this little island, this priceless little gem in the Pacific, and we'll take care of the rest. That's what you said. And what did I say?

GROSS (CONT.)

I was very specific. I want absolute quiet. Silence. Silencio. Nothing more, nothing less. We put it in the contract. You gave me a guarantee. In the contract.

DOBBIN

And we won't let you down, Mr. Gross, you have my word.

GROSS

Just fix it.

DOBBIN

Sir, it isn't easy to fix waves, but...

GROSS

Listen, doofus—

DOBBIN

Dobbin.

GROSS

If I've learned one thing in my life, Dobbin, is that the only thing you can't change is human nature. Any other kind of nature—all it takes is a little ingenuity and a whole lotta persistence.

DOBBIN

What I was trying to say, sir, is that the wave problem should be gone in...

(She consults her watch)

...two minutes.

GROSS

It better be.

DOBBIN

The wind'll shift and things will calm down. No more waves. I promise. Can I get you anything?

GROSS

Give me the Ben and Jerry's.

DOBBIN

Sure.

DOBBIN takes a pint of New York Super Fudge Chunk ice cream and a silver spoon from the cooler and hands them to GROSS. He starts eating.

GROSS

I wish my cardiologist could see me now. And my wife. You know, I wonder what He chose.

DOBBIN

Who?

GROSS

Jesus. I wonder what He chose for the Last Supper.

DOBBIN

You mean the menu?

GROSS

Yeah.

DOBBIN

I think he had other things on his mind.

GROSS

Of course, yeah. But if he'd had the time, you know, and a decent chef....

DOBBIN

I guess he could have had anything he wanted.

GROSS

Yeah. Water into wine.
(Beat.)

DOBBIN

Are you nervous?

GROSS

Kind of.

DOBBIN

It'll be very quick.

GROSS

No distractions. Total silence. That's all I need.

DOBBIN

Guaranteed.

I can't eat any more.

GROSS

Go on, finish it, what have you got to lose!

DOBBIN

No, I'm done.

GROSS

GROSS gives the ice-cream carton and spoon to DOBBIN, who returns them to the cooler.

So. Are you ready?

DOBBIN

What about the waves?

GROSS

Gone. Listen.

DOBBIN

GROSS closes his eyes and listens.

You're right.
(Beat.)

GROSS

(Indicating the bound notebook)
You want me to read something first? The Robert Frost piece? The twenty-third psalm?

DOBBIN

No. It seems kind of...hokey.

GROSS

Hokey?

DOBBIN

I dunno. Out of place.

GROSS

A slight pause. He closes his eyes. The silence is broken by the loud splashing of water.

GROSS (CONT.)

Goddamit! What the fuck was that?

DOBBIN

Dolphins.

GROSS

Dolphins?

DOBBIN

Just beyond the lagoon. Look.

GROSS

Oh, great. Fucking dolphins! Wonderful. And you planned for this, too, right? You people—you're hopeless, you know that, you're a bunch of fucking amateurs!

DOBBIN

Dolphins are tricky, they have a big range, basically, the entire ocean.

GROSS

I pay you to take care of business. I pay a fortune—and goddam sales tax!—for the most private of private moments. And what do I get? An invasion of fucking dolphins! How you going to take care of this? Huh? Got a plan, have you? A dolphin eviction plan? A dolphin liquidation plan? Because if you haven't, that's it, I'm outta here.

DOBBIN

They've gone.

GROSS

They have?

DOBBIN

Yep. See.

GROSS

Maybe they're underwater.

DOBBIN

No, they were just passing through.

GROSS

They could be back.

No way. DOBBIN

Really? GROSS

Trust me. DOBBIN

Yeah, right. GROSS

Stake my life on it. DOBBIN
(GROSS gives her a look)
Sorry.

Well, there's gonna be some other goddam interruption. GROSS

We've covered all the bases. DOBBIN

Oh, sure. Like the dolphins. You were really on the ball there. GROSS

Don't worry, sir, really. DOBBIN

What about parakeets? Squawking parakeets? GROSS

Not on this island. DOBBIN

Seagulls! They're everywhere. Seagulls are fucking everywhere. GROSS

Not here. DOBBIN

No? GROSS

No. DOBBIN

GROSS

There's gonna be something. I know it. Your cellphone! You turn it off?

DOBBIN

There's no service here.

(Slight pause.)

You want to try again?

GROSS

The moment of truth.

DOBBIN

It's what you came for.

GROSS

Yes. Yes, it is.

(Slight pause. He stares out to sea.)

Let's do it.

DOBBIN takes a silver goblet from the cooler and hands it to GROSS.

DOBBIN

Fresh mango juice. To hide the taste.

GROSS

God, I love mangos.

DOBBIN

Me too.

Slight pause. He looks at the liquid.

GROSS

I saw a funny bumpersticker the other day. Procrastinate later.

DOBBIN

That is funny.

GROSS

What's your first name?

DOBBIN

Amelia.

GROSS

Amelia. Well, I'm glad to have met you, Amelia. I'm sorry if I've been a bit, you know...

DOBBIN

You're entitled.

(Slight pause. GROSS looks at his watch, a gold Rolex.)

GROSS

God, look at me! Habit. Habit of a lifetime.

(Beat.)

Here.

(He takes off the watch, and offers it to DOBBIN, who declines with a gesture.)

No, no, go on, take it.

DOBBIN

No, really, I...

GROSS

Rolex only made three of these. Daniel Craig has one, Prince William of England, and me.

(DOBBIN still holds up her hand.)

Hey, who's calling the shots here? Take it, for Chrissakes, it's worth something. Please.

DOBBIN

(Smiling, gracious)

Thank you.

Slowly, almost lovingly, GROSS places the watch on her wrist, looks at her for a moment and turns away, casting his eyes out to sea, scanning the horizon. A pause.

GROSS

You know it's weird.

DOBBIN

What?

GROSS

I have this strange feeling I'm being watched.

DOBBIN

Really?

GROSS

Maybe I'm being watched over.

DOBBIN

You'll know soon enough.

GROSS

Yes.

(Slight pause, he looks out to sea)

Goodbye. Good luck. I hope to see you again.

He drinks, then closes his eyes. Silence. He slumps over. He is dead. DOBBIN looks at him for a moment.

DOBBIN

(Calling to the back of the auditorium)

Okay, that's a wrap. The dolphin splash was a little over the top, otherwise nice work everyone. Now listen up. We're moving to Studio C for Mrs. Johansen and her papal blessing in Notre Dame. That's at three-thirty. Linda, can you check on the choir, make sure they're ready? Then we're back here at six for what's-his-face, the Saudi prince and his twenty virgins at the gates of paradise. Let's go!

She turns and exits. The body of GROSS is alone on the stage. A moment of silence. The lights fade.

END OF PLAY