

SAMOSAS FOREVER

A short play

by

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SAMOSAS FOREVER

CHARACTERS

ERNEST
JOY, his wife
JIM, a healer

TIME
The present

SETTING
A living room

SAMOSAS FOREVER

A living room. ERNEST sits in a chair. He stares straight ahead with a frozen expression of inescapable terror on his face. We hear a series of overlapping voices from advertisements and news reports—part of an endless loop that is playing in ERNEST’s head.

VOICE ONE

(Overlapping)

A new study on the impact of climate change warns of mass starvation and the displacement of millions of people....

VOICE TWO

...Do not take Insolubull if you are pregnant, if you have a heart condition, or if you’re about be evicted from your house and/or declare bankruptcy. Insolubull can cause dizziness, fainting, chronic diarrhea, suicidal thoughts....

VOICE THREE

(Overlapping)

All fish from the state’s four hundred and thirty-two lakes have been declared unsafe for human consumption because of mercury poisoning....

VOICE FOUR

(Overlapping)

Degerminated yellow corn meal, calcium carbonate, tocopherols to help protect flavor, polydextrose, fractionated palm kernel oil....

JOY enters. ERNEST seems oblivious to her presence, as VOICE FOUR continues in is head.

...Hydrologized soy protein, oligofructose, maltitol....

JOY

(Overlapping)

Ernest?

VOICE FOUR

Artificial color, caramel color....

JOY

(Overlapping)
ERNEST!

VOICE FOUR

Red dye number five, yellow dye number three....

JOY claps her hands imploringly. VOICE FOUR stops. ERNEST registers this in his body language, but he remains mute and frozen by fear.

JOY

He's here, the guy. Jim. The healer.

JIM enters. He gives JOY an encouraging smile.

He seems very nice. He comes highly recommended. They say he's worked miracles for people who've got the same problem you have.

(Beat. ERNEST's face shows a flicker of unease.)

It's okay, he's been screened. The pathogen detection sensor is still making that weird whirring sound, but it came up all negatives, so I'm sure we're fine. And Jim was vigorous in his scrubbing, and he's wearing one hundred percent organic fair-trade cotton. Right, Jim?

JIM nods and smiles reassuringly. He approaches ERNEST, squats down in front of him, and shakes his hand.

JIM

Ernest, it's a pleasure to meet you. Joy's told me a lot about you, and it's not all bad!

(ERNEST does not react, keeps staring straight ahead.)

I know you've been having a tough time, but you will beat this, I promise you. I've helped a lot of people in your situation and I'm going to help you. Okay? First, though, I need to speak with Joy for a few minutes so she can bring me up to speed. Okay? Don't go away now!

His attempt at humor gets no reaction from ERNEST, who keeps staring ahead. JIM pulls JOY aside for a confidential conversation.

JOY

What's going on?

ERNEST

It's a little early to say.

JOY

But you said you knew—

ERNEST

Yes—

JOY

You've said you've seen a lot of this.

JIM

But every case is unique. Before I can make a firm diagnosis, I'm going to need a little more information.

JOY

I told you everything on the phone.

JIM

Let's recap, okay, just to be sure.

JOY

Okay. Well, like I told you, things really started to get bad last year. Before that he was fine, well not fine, but he was coping. And I was coping. The thing is, he's always been this very sweet kind compassionate person, even if he is kind of militant about not hurting people and animals and the earth blah-blah-blah. Well, anyway, we're locavores and vegetarian—Ernest is, he's vegan actually. I can't live without my barbecued chicken, that's my guilty contradiction, but it's always organically fed and humanely raised—

JIM

Yes, well, we all have our—

JOY

And we do all the other things religiously, I mean, we recycle like maniacs, and we have rain-barrels in the backyard, and solar hot water—although it's never gets that hot, and you've got all those cloudy days to deal with. Then there's the car. We fought about the car for months – he wanted to sell it, “one less car” all of that, but what was I supposed to do? I have a bad hip, I can't get around. But he wouldn't hear it, he wouldn't budge, so now he pulls me along in this little wagon attached to the back

JOY (CONT.)

of his bicycle, the kind that's made for kids, and there's no room in there for anything except me, and I'm squeezed in there with all the grocery bags piled on top of me. I feel like a circus freak.

JIM

So when did—?

JOY

The traps.

JIM

The traps?

JOY

The have-a-heart traps – the trap and release type. That's when things started to go seriously downhill. The squirrels were destroying our roof, so we got these have-a-heart-traps – which are really no different because by law they have to poison or drown the little bastards when they take them out of the traps anyway. Well, when he found that out, that was it. We have to leave the squirrels alone and let them do their thing. Come on in, guys, make yourself at home, build your nests, have your babies! And that was just the start. The next week it was mosquitoes. He refused to kill them. We're in the yard on a summer evening and the bugs are eating us alive, and he was like, no, it's their right, they have a right to feed on us, they have a right to life.

JIM

Well that's certainly one perspective—

JOY

And pollution and healthy food—I mean, that is a whole other messy, messy minefield. That Michael Pollan, I could kill him, I could. We can't eat anything in this house that isn't one hundred percent certified organic, toxic-free, cage-free, cruelty-free, free of everything that isn't "natural". Except the cost which is completely unnatural. You wouldn't believe what we spend on food! And the hours he spends researching all of this, it's a full-time job. Salary-free. Naturally. God, I remember once—

JIM

I think I get the picture—

JOY

Yes, but all this obsession, it built up to breaking point, and then –
BOOM! He shut down. Just like that. Like he'd blown all his circuits.

JIM

It's a pattern we see a lot.

JOY

You do?

JIM

Oh yes, it's quite common.

JOY

So he's not a complete freak. That's something, I suppose. But what is it?
What's going on?

JIM

You said he'd been sitting here for how long ?

JOY

Sixteen days.

JIM

In silence?

JOY

Won't speak, won't eat, won't sleep, won't shit.

JIM

Have you tried—?

JOY

I've tried everything, believe me, all his favorites. I've played him the Beatles and Nora Jones and Tchaikovsky's Serenade in C for Strings, and I've read him "War and Peace", two chapters a day. That and the National Inquirer. He's always liked contrast. And of course I've made him samosas every day.

JIM

Samosas?

JOY

(Becoming emotional)

He didn't touch them. Not one. That's when I knew that we were dealing with something truly monstrous and life-threatening, you know? I mean,

JOY (CONT)

the doctors—what the fuck do they know—they said he was clinically depressed, give him these pills, oh the blue ones don't work, try the red ones. He wouldn't take them anyway after he read the labels. But when he ...

(Fighting back tears)

When he totally ignored my samosas....

JIM

What exactly are samosas?

JOY

You don't know? Oh, you haven't lived. They're these Indian pastries filled with potatoes and peas and spices. Deep-fried. Ernest says I must have been a Bengali or a Punjabi or something in a previous life. He says—he used to say—that my samosas were better than sex. He'd eat three or four a day, sometimes more. I couldn't keep up, I was always cooking, and he always wanted more—and fresh, they had to be fresh out of the pan, re-heating didn't do it. And samosas are a pain in the arse to make, even Indians will tell you that. It was exhausting, but I loved it. His pleasure was my pleasure, too. I served them with this tamarind sauce called Big Bad Buddha. It's organic, hand-pulped in a monastery in Nepal. When he savored my samosas, dipped in Big Bad Buddha, he was in paradise.

(Beat.)

You know, don't you? You know why he's like this.

JIM

Yes.

JOY

What is it?

JIM

Fear.

JOY

Of me?

JIM

No, of life.

JOY

He's afraid of *life*?

JIM

Terrified. All that responsibility. He thinks that whatever he does or doesn't do every day will have catastrophic consequences. For him, for you, for his family, his community, his country, the entire planet.

JOY

And I thought I was the one who was afraid of screwing up.

JIM

Well, I think we all tend to take on—

JOY

It's over.

JIM

Joy—

JOY

(Distraught, anxious)

We're done. We're finished.

JIM

Joy, please, there is no need to panic—

JOY

(Panicking)

I'm not panicking!

ERNEST

Trust me, we will restore Ernest to full and vigorous health.

JOY

Oh, it's all going to go way, is it? War and pollution and greed and hunger will all disappear tomorrow, and he won't have any responsibility for anything!

JIM

We have a proven treatment plan.

JOY

Of course you do.

JIM

Get him to think about death.

(Beat.)

Death? JOY

Death. JIM

He's already suicidal. JOY

I understand. JIM

And you want him to focus on it even more? JOY

Yes, but in a different way— JIM

You people. What was I thinking? Well, I wasn't, I was just desperate. "The New War on Terror, Inc.". Talk about a weird name for a company. You probably wrote all those testimonials yourself. JOY

Please, Joy— JIM

Charlatans and thieves. This whole messed-up world is run by charlatans and thieves! JOY

I will make death such an unattractive option for Ernest that he will once again embrace life. JIM

And all for two ninety-nine ninety-nine? JOY

Actually, we have a special on right now. Twenty percent off. JIM

Get out. JOY

Joy— JIM

JOY

OUT! NOW!

JIM

Do you want your husband back?
(Beat. She wavers.)
Give me two minutes. That's all I need.

JOY

You can restore this poor broken man to perfect health in two minutes?

JIM

Yes.

JOY

Let me guess, you can walk on water, too.

JIM

What have you got to lose?
(Beat. She gestures, "fine, go ahead." JIM approaches ERNEST.)
Ernest, I want you to listen to me very carefully because I have something very important to tell you. It's about death—or more specifically, about what lies beyond death. Now, a lot of people—and this may include you—believe in an afterlife. You go to heaven, if you've been good, hell if you've been bad, and paradise if you've been heroically virtuous. Well, I'm here to tell you that it's all bullshit.

JOY

Hey, hang on—

JIM

(Overlapping, gesturing to her to keep quiet)
There is no big man—or big woman—in the sky, there's no heaven, no angels or devils, no celestial choirs, no indescribable beauty, no perfect peace, no life everlasting. There is, in fact, absolutely nothing.

JOY

No, no, Jim, don't listen to him—

JIM

(Again, shushing her)
When you draw your last breath, that's it, it's over. Oblivion. Although you'll be oblivious to oblivion, because you no longer exist. And that, of course, means that you will never see Joy again or feel the wind in your hair or smell wildflowers in the spring or, for that matter, taste... samosas.

ERNEST stirs, slowly gets to his feet.

(JIM repeats the word in a loud whisper, like a mantra)
Samosas....samosas...samosas....samosas...

ERNEST
(In a trance-like tone, savoring the word and the thought)
Samosas.

JOY
(Rushing to him)
Oh darling, you're back, you've come back!

ERNEST
(Almost salivating)
Samosas.

JOY
(To JIM)
Thank you!

JIM
My pleasure. Will that be cash or charge?

ERNEST
(Virtually drooling with desire)
Samosas...

JOY
Coming right up, my sweet.
(To JIM, handing him a wad of cash)
Here. Keep the change.

ERNEST
(Almost orgasmic)
Samosas...

JIM
(To JOY)
Thanks. Don't forget the Big Bad Buddha.

He exits.

ERNEST

(Still trance-like)
Big Bad Buddha...

JOY

(Hugging him)
Oh yes, my big bad Buddha!

Lights fade.

END OF PLAY