

SIMPLE PLEASURES

A short play

by

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SIMPLE PLEASURES

CHARACTERS

REBECCA, 20's-30's

BILL, 20's-30's

DELIVERY PERSON

JERRY, a neighbor

SETTING

REBECCA's and BILL's apartment

TIME

The present

SIMPLE PLEASURES

The living room of REBECCA's and BILL's apartment. A desk, a small table, and a chair. Mid-afternoon. REBECCA sits at the desk working on her laptop. Her cell phone and assorted papers and folders are beside her. Her eyes are riveted on the computer screen. She's harried – she's chasing a deadline – but still focused and in control. She stops typing and takes a sip from her Starbucks latte. Her eyes never leave the screen. She puts down the latte, checks her watch, sighs, and resumes typing rapidly. She stops. She gets up from her chair and crosses to the table on which there's a bagel with cream cheese in a paper bag. REBECCA removes the wrapping. As she prepares to take a bite, her cell phone rings. She puts down the bagel and hurries back to her desk. She glances at the caller ID and picks up the phone.

REBECCA

Hi Liz....Good, good. I had a little trouble with that first section but...Yeah, no, I'm close...Liz...Liz...You'll have it by five, I promise. Bye.

REBECCA ends the call. She studies the computer screen, types rapidly for a few seconds, flips through a document from the pile next to her, looks back at the screen. She gets up and heads to the table for her bagel. Her cell phone rings again. She checks the caller ID and takes the call. It's her Mom, who is hard of hearing. REBECCA talks loudly. During the conversation, REBECCA makes a couple of forays towards her bagel but to no avail: she's diverted by her Mom and her fixation with the report she's writing.

Hi Mom, how's it going?...Mom, a starvation diet is not a good idea....Who?...Who is trying to poison you?... Aliens. Okay. Have you seen these aliens or spoken to them....?... The whole staff, really...So they're all Martians in disguise except for Doctor Aguilar and he's from

REBECCA (CONT.)

Pluto...Originally. Got it. Yeah, well, wherever they're from, Mom, they're obviously very friendly aliens. Listen, you can't not eat, okay, you have to eat, and I will bring food over for you later, I just can't do it right this second....An energy bar. Great, that'll keep you going...Well, just check the wrapping to make sure it hasn't been tampered with....Mom, I really do have to go, okay?...I will....I'll talk to you later, love you, bye.

REBECCA ends the call and again makes a beeline for her bagel. This time she's interrupted by the doorbell. She hesitates, then goes to the front door and opens it. A uniformed DELIVERY PERSON stands there with a hand-trolley and two very large, tall boxes.

Oh hi.

DELIVERY PERSON

Where do you want them?

REBECCA

Okay, let's see, er....

Her cell phone rings again. She glances at the caller ID. It's her daughter, Annabelle.

I'm sorry, I have to take this.

She turns her back on the DELIVERY PERSON, and talks to her daughter.

Hi sweetie.

DELIVERY PERSON

Excuse me?

REBECCA gestures vaguely towards the area of the room where the table stands. As she talks on the phone, the DELIVERY PERSON wheels in the two big boxes, unloads them in front of and beside the table, and exits. The table is now completely hemmed in by the boxes.

REBECCA

(On the phone)

You finished it? Really?! That's fantastic! Annabelle, sweetie, I am so proud of you, I can't wait to see it.... You what? Okay, so licking paint is not good for you...I love purple, too, but not on your tongue, okay?...We will, we'll make some purple cookies....Soon...Listen, I gotta....Your Dad's not there? Well, I'm sure – actually, sweetie, can you put Rosie on the phone?...I'll see you soon, love you lots. Rosie, hi, I'm sorry about this, Bill must be stuck in traffic and... would you? Thanks so much... oh, I'm sure she'd love a snack...A bagel? A bagel would be perfect. You're a lifesaver. Thank you. Bye.

REBECCA ends the call and turns to get her bagel. She can't believe that the boxes are now in the way. She tries to reach around or over them to grab the bagel, but she can't stretch that far.

NO!

She tries to move one box, then the other, but they're too heavy. She slaps and kicks at the boxes in frustration. BILL sees her doing this as he enters. He's cheerful, jaunty, and carries a briefcase.

BILL

The new exercise equipment! Got you all fired up, eh?!

REBECCA

What are you doing here?

BILL

What do you mean?

REBECCA

It's Tuesday. Annabelle's after-school program?

BILL

Oh shit! I'm sorry, I –

He turns to exit.

REBECCA

Wait! Help me shift these boxes.

What?

BILL

REBECCA

My bagel. It's trapped in there. It'll take two seconds.

They strain together to move the boxes. In vain.

Pull from the top.

REBECCA

I'm not sure that's—

BILL

REBECCA pulls hard from the top of one of the boxes to try and topple it. She succeeds – but the box falls on top of her, pinning her legs to the floor.

Aaaaargh!

REBECCA

Oh God, are you okay?

BILL

Fine. Just a broken leg.

REBECCA

No, really?

BILL

Get me my bagel.

REBECCA

Stay still. I'll be gentle.

BILL

He tries and fails to lift the box off her.

Ow!

REBECCA

BILL

(Rising to his feet and pulling out his cell phone)  
I'm calling an ambulance.

REBECCA

No, no, I was joking! It's just bruised.

BILL

We can't take any chances.

REBECCA

Give me my bagel and go and get Annabelle.

BILL

(On the phone)  
Yes, hi, there's been—

REBECCA

Bill! It's okay, really. Go!

BILL

I'm sorry, false alarm.

BILL ends the call and exits before  
REBECCA can remind him.

REBECCA

Wait! My bagel!

REBECCA's cell phone rings. She contorts  
herself to reach and answer it.

Hi Mom. You're eating. That's terrific... Well, I'm sure that some aliens  
are very good cooks... Black Hole Quiche, yum... Do they have bagels on  
Mars? I don't have a clue Mom, to be honest, and I'm chasing a deadline  
so... I will I'll call you later, bye... bye Mom, love you.

JERRY enters. He's eccentric, unkempt, and  
he has the manic energy and relentless  
certainty of Kramer in "Seinfeld." He's  
barefoot, dressed in a flour-blotched chef's  
apron, and he brandishes a rolling pin as a  
weapon. He sees REBECCA sprawled on  
the floor and pinned beneath the box.

JERRY  
I knew it!

REBECCA  
Hi Jerry.

JERRY  
Are you okay?

REBECCA  
Peachy.

JERRY  
(Wielding the rolling pin, and glancing around menacingly)  
Where are they?

REBECCA  
Who?

JERRY  
The aliens.

REBECCA  
You mean the Martians and the doctor from Pluto.

JERRY  
Who else.

REBECCA  
You've been visiting my mother again. Jerry, you can not just --

JERRY  
They've got you pinned down.

REBECCA  
Not for long. I told them how much I hated their cooking.

He puts down the rolling pin and takes hold  
of the box to lift it off REBECCA.

JERRY  
(As he struggles in vain to shift the box)  
Good thinking. Jesus, what the hell is in here?

REBECCA  
Exercise equipment. Jerry—



JERRY

Oh, dangerous stuff, very dangerous. The weight of vanity is crushing you. It's crushing all of us.

REBECCA

It's okay, really, it's OKAY!

JERRY

Okay.

REBECCA

Right now what I want more than anything else in the world is for you to go over there and pick up my bagel and hand it to me. You are already a wonderful neighbor, but if you do that, you will be my friend for life.

JERRY

And what are friends for?

JERRY goes to the table and picks up the bagel.

Wait a minute. How long has this been here?

REBECCA

Too long.

JERRY

(Sniffing the cream cheese)

You're right.

REBECCA

No, I didn't mean—

JERRY

Bad cream cheese can be fatal, and the pain is worse than rabies.

REBECCA

GIVE ME THE FRIGGIN' BAGEL ALREADY! Please.

JERRY

No way. Friends don't give friends bad bagels. See, this is how they get you, with something mundane and innocent that you'd never suspect.

JERRY tosses the bagel into the trash can.

REBECCA

Nooooo!

JERRY

Don't worry. I have the perfect alternative. Jerry's very own organic vegan gluten-free Irish soda bread fresh from the oven. It's better than sex.

Her cell phone rings again. She takes the call.

REBECCA

Hi Liz. No. Fine. Go fuck yourself.

JERRY

Who was that?

REBECCA

My client. I blew a deadline, she fired me. I just want a bagel.

BILL enters.

BILL

Hi Jerry.

(To REBECCA)

Oh sweetie, I can't believe you're still...I got Katie to pick up Annabelle.

REBECCA

Jerry's here to defend us against the aliens.

BILL

Right. Well. Perfect timing.

They lift the box off REBECCA. She gets to her feet.

How's it feel?

REBECCA

Deprived.

BILL

Your leg feels deprived?

REBECCA

All I want is a bagel.

BILL

I thought you had one.

JERRY

I tossed it. The aliens were trying to poison her.

REBECCA

And my mother.

BILL

What?

REBECCA

Never mind.

BILL

I'll tell you what. I'll go get and get you one from the coffee shop.

REBECCA

Oh would you, really? Sesame, toasted, extra cream cheese.

BILL

I'll be right back.

(Glancing at his watch)

Oh wait a minute. They're closed.

Blackout.

END OF PLAY