

A FRESH START

A short play

by

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A FRESH START

CHARACTERS

JULIE, a woman, late 20's to early 30's

JUSTIN, a man, late 20's to early 30's

TIME

The not-too-distant future

PLACE

The living room of the couple's upscale apartment

A FRESH START

The living room of a chic, upscale apartment. At rise, JUSTIN is seated, chugging an imported beer. A briefcase is at his side. He is pre-occupied, tense. JULIE enters hurriedly, carrying a shoulder bag, her keys and a water bottle. Both JUSTIN and JULIE are total fashionistas.

JULIE

(Sighing)
God, the traffic!

She drops the bag and tosses her keys on the table.

JUSTIN

It's the demonstrations.

JULIE

Again? What are they whining about this time?

JUSTIN

Water.

JULIE

Water?! Jesus.

She takes a swig of water and exits. A distant explosion. They act as if they haven't heard it. They're similarly oblivious to other explosions later on in the play.

(From offstage)

Guess who we had in the store today?

JUSTIN

I've no idea.

JULIE

(Offstage)

Guess!

JUSTIN
Lady Gaga.

JULIE
(Offstage, laughing)
Please! She must be eighty years old. Seriously, who?

JUSTIN
I don't know.

JULIE
(Offstage)
Come on, guess!

JUSTIN
Julie....

JULIE re-enters, carrying a gym bag and her water bottle. She is dressed in sexy workout gear.

JULIE
Cristiano Mendoza! God, he's hot. Ooooo...
(She gives a groan of sexual longing)
But you know what? He has absolutely no taste. Zilch! I show him this pendant—he's looking for something for his wife or his ex-wife or whatever, and I show him this piece by Sartori, I mean it's just, like, SO gorgeous and elegant—unusual, but, you know, in a very understated way—but no, no, he goes for this schlocky diamond and sapphire thing that is just...ugh! It was so disappointing, you know? God, I can't wait to SWEAT.

JUSTIN
We have to talk.

JULIE
When I get back.

JUSTIN
No, now.

JULIE
I have to get to the gym or I will DIE.

JUSTIN
I need to tell you something.

JULIE

(Impatiently)

What?

(Beat)

WHAT?

JUSTIN

I don't love you.

JULIE

(Unsurprised but puzzled)

So?

JUSTIN

It's more than that—

JULIE

Who is it? Who are you fucking?

JUSTIN

No one.

JULIE

(Curious, not jealous)

Do I know her? Tell me.

JUSTIN

Julie, I—

JULIE

Who is the bitch?

JUSTIN

There isn't anyone else.

JULIE

Really?

JUSTIN

I just can't do this any more.

JULIE

(With sardonic disbelief)

So what, you're leaving me?

JUSTIN
It's your breasts.

JULIE
What about them?

JUSTIN
I never loved *you*, I loved your breasts. Okay? I mean, it's not that—

JULIE
This is unbelievable. This is fucking unbelievable.

JUSTIN
I am so sorry.

JULIE
These tits are amazing.

JUSTIN
They were.

JULIE
What do you mean, were?!

JUSTIN
They're different now.

JULIE
You think they're saggy.

JUSTIN
No! They are not... saggy.

JULIE
What then?

JUSTIN
They're just, well, they're not as...

JULIE
What?

JUSTIN
Pert.

JULIE
Pert?

JUSTIN
Perky.

JULIE
What are you, twelve?

JUSTIN
Look, I—

JULIE
Which is it, pert or perky? Because there's a big difference, okay, there is a major fucking difference between pert and perky.

JUSTIN
It's a bit of both. I'm trying to be honest here.

JULIE
You said they were magnificent.

JUSTIN
They were.

JULIE
You worshipped them.

JUSTIN
I did—

JULIE
You said prayers about these tits, you wrote songs, you wrote that rap concerto thing with the multi-media installation, and you and Jerry worked on it for nine months before he fell off the scaffolding. Now there was someone who believed. He had faith, Jerry did. He knew what these tits were worth. And he made the ultimate sacrifice.

JUSTIN
Julie—

JULIE
He died for these tits.

JUSTIN
I'm not sure that—

JULIE

Grandeur. Mythological grandeur. That's what you said. Forget Cleopatra, forget Elizabeth Taylor, no other woman in the history of the world could hold a candle to these tits. That's what you said.

Another distant explosion.

JUSTIN

And I meant it, I did, every word. It's just that....there wasn't any more to it than that.

JULIE

(Laughing)

Thank God! I thought this was going to be complicated.

JUSTIN

What do you mean?

JULIE

Hell—oo? All men love me for my tits. I mean, I would. It's like me and teeth. The first time I saw you at the club—remember? Omigod. You came up to the bar, and you smiled. I mean, that was it, I was GONE. I couldn't keep my eyes off them. They were, like, SO, like...amazing. I knew right then. They were the ones.

JUSTIN

(Ruefully)

My precious pearly whites.

JULIE

I could come just looking at your toothbrush.

JUSTIN

So what?

JULIE

So great! Well, it was. Now, well...

JUSTIN

What?

JULIE

You have some, er...

JUSTIN
What?

JULIE
Yellow.

JUSTIN
I do? Where?

JULIE
Incisor. Top left.

Distant rattle of small arms fire, like a
dentist's drill.

JUSTIN
(Putting a finger in his mouth)
Here?

JULIE
No, it's more....
(He shifts his finger).
Yeah, there, that's it. Oh God, it is SO gross.

Another explosion, still distant but louder.

JUSTIN
I haven't noticed it.

JULIE
It is noticeable, believe me.
(Disgusted)
Oh God!

JUSTIN
(Suddenly passionate)
I want more! Okay? I want more than this. I want more than tits and teeth!

JULIE
Are you okay?

JUSTIN
I mean, there was a time, you know, when people talked. They talked
about...I don't know, things that were important to them, things they
cared about, in the world, in their lives. They read! They read books.
And....and...poetry.

JULIE
That is so fundamentalist.

JUSTIN
I'm serious!

JULIE
(Critically)
Yeah.

JUSTIN
No, no, listen to me, okay, I met this woman through work—

JULIE
Who you're fucking.

JUSTIN
NO! She's a designer, virtual vacations. Anyway, Astra—this woman—
gives me this book of poems.

JULIE
A book?

JUSTIN
Discreetly. It's all tattered and torn, like they all are, and she says to me:
you are so ripe.

JULIE
Ripe?

JUSTIN
And the way she said it... anyway, I lock myself in the bathroom, and I
read them, these poems. They're by someone called Myer or May-a
Angerlou. And I can't stop, I keep reading and....I mean, they blow me
away. They make me feel. *Feel*.

JULIE
Feel what?

JUSTIN
Things. You know...

JULIE
We'll fix them.

JUSTIN

(Taking a slim, dog-eared book from his briefcase and thrusting it at her)

I want you to read it.

JULIE

(Ignoring the book, as if she hasn't seen it)

You want more pert, we'll do more pert. Or perky or whatever.

JUSTIN

Please. Just read it.

JULIE

But this time I'm getting a woman doctor. That guy I had last year was soooo creepy, and he smelled. What do you think? Maybe a little fuller? The full look is back. That's what Susan told me. Oh, and you know what? Oh my God, this is perfect! She has a new teeth guy. She swears by him. He's done all these aging celebs, like Toby Maguire, Ellen Page. King William of England. He has a waiting list a mile long, but Susan can get you in, she's fucking him—not the king, the dentist. Although with Susan, you never know.

JUSTIN

(Holding out the book)

Julie. Please.

JULIE

(With disbelief and disdain)

You want me to *read*?

JUSTIN

Yes. I don't want new teeth, I don't want you to have new breasts—

JULIE

Leave then. Go on. Fuck off.

A slight pause. More explosions, the closest yet.

JUSTIN

Not until you read this.

JULIE

You loved my tits, and now you hate them, and I can't stand to look at you with that STAIN in your mouth. I think it's time.

(A slight pause. She sees his discomfort)

JULIE (CONT.)

What? Afraid are we? A little nervous about what's out there?

JUSTIN

I don't want this...this...I want...

JULIE

What? What do you want?

JUSTIN

A relationship.
(Beat)

JULIE

Is that what you got from that book?

JUSTIN

It isn't just the book—

JULIE

Jesus! Why are you doing this? You're putting me at risk, too, you know?
Give it to me, I'll burn it, I'll take care of it right now.

(Beat. He retreats)

Give it to me!

(He shakes his head.)

What is with you and this relationship shit? We have fun, we give each other space, we have everything we need.

JUSTIN

(Starting to leave)

I gotta go.

JULIE

You wanna end up like Tyrone, hacked apart and your implant chips ripped out of you? So he was stupid, he got out of his car to take a piss. But outside the Zone, shit happens. You know that. There is nowhere to go.

(He hesitates, beat)

The guards at the gate shot fifteen of them yesterday. Somehow they got over the walls AND the electric fence AND they beat the lasers. And there they were, in their filthy rags, drinking from Amelia and Dan's swimming pool. Can you believe it? All that chlorine! Ugh! I'm going to the gym. Can I have the Smith and Wesson?

JUSTIN

(Blankly)
Don't you have the Glock?

JULIE

I'll take both just in case. There's still a red alert.

He takes a handgun from his briefcase, gives it to JULIE. She starts to leave, then turns.

JULIE

Call.

JUSTIN

What?

JULIE

Call Susan, she'll get you that appointment. You'll be whiter than white again.

She flicks her tongue seductively and smiles a smile of desire. She exits.

END OF PLAY