

SIMPLE PLEASURES

A short play

by

Peter Snoad

Peter Snoad
50 Dunster Road
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
(617) 522-4219
(617) 650-2325 (cell)
psnoad@yahoo.com
www.petersnoad.com

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SIMPLE PLEASURES

CHARACTERS

BLANCA, 20's-30's

BILL, 20's-30's

DELIVERY MAN*

JERRY, a neighbor*

*Can be played by the same actor

SETTING

BLANCA's and Bill's apartment

TIME

The present

SIMPLE PLEASURES

The living room of BLANCA's and BILL's apartment. A desk, a small table, and a chair. Mid-afternoon. BLANCA sits at the desk working on her laptop. Her cell phone and assorted papers and folders are beside her. Her eyes are riveted to 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 take-out 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 paper bag containing a bagel with cream cheese. BLANCA removes the bagel. As she prepares to take a bite, her cell phone rings. She places the bagel on the bag and hurries back to her desk. She glances at the caller ID and picks up the phone.

BLANCA

Hi....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.

BLANCA 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. BLANCA talks loudly. During the conversation, BLANCA 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....Mom, a starvation diet is not a good idea....They're trying to poison you. Really. Why do you think...?....Who exactly is...? Aliens. I see. Have you met any of these aliens?... They're in disguise. Of course they are, but in that case how do you know who they...?...Doctor Singh. Really...And the nurses... And the kitchen staff, too. Huh. And they're all

BLANCA (CONT)

from Mars... Oh, Doctor Singh is from Pluto and the others are from Mars. Mom... Mom... listen to me for a moment. Whatever planet they're from, they're obviously friendly aliens because they're always very kind to you, and I'm sure they wouldn't... Wow... Really... Wow... You know, Mom, to be honest, I don't buy it. I mean, would you travel by spaceship to an assisted living facility forty million miles away to poison someone *and* do research on sexual deviance in cockroaches?... You would, of course you would. Mom, listen to me. I'm going to bring over food for you because you have to eat, okay? The thing is I can't do it right this minute... A granola bar. Great. That will definitely keep you going... Is it? Well, not to worry, a little bit of strychnine is good for the digestion. Mom, I gotta go... Mom... I'll talk to you later, love you, bye.

BLANCA 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 MAN stands there with a hand-trolley and two very large, tall boxes.

Oh hi.

DELIVERY MAN

Where do you want them?

BLANCA

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 MAN, and starts to talk to her daughter.

Hi sweetie, how you doing?

DELIVERY MAN

Ma'am?

BLANCA gestures vaguely towards the area of the room where the table stands. As she talks on the phone, the DELIVERY MAN wheels in the two big boxes and unloads them in front of and beside the table. When he's done, the table is completely hemmed in by the boxes.

BLANCA

(On the phone)

You finished it? Wow! That's fantastic! Annabelle, I am so proud of you, you paint such beautiful pictures, I can't wait to see it. Where are you right now? ...Really, okay, well I'm sure your Dad'll be there any minute. Annabelle, honey, is Rosie there?...Great. Can I speak to her? Thanks, sweetie, I'll see you real soon, okay, can't wait...Hi Rosie, I'm sorry about this, Bill's probably stuck in traffic, he'll be right there...Oh, that would be great, that's so kind of you, thank you...Sure, I think she'd love a snack...A bagel. Perfect. Thanks again, you're a lifesaver. Bye now.

BLANCA 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 and 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 and a bag of groceries.

BILL

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

BLANCA

What are you doing here?

BILL

Excuse me?

BLANCA

Annabelle! You were meant to pick her up from the gym.

BILL
The gym?

BLANCA
Her after-school program?

BILL
Oh right, it's Tuesday. God, I'm sorry. Too many things going on.

BLANCA
Rosie's staying with her until you get there.

BILL
I'm on my way.

He turns to exit.

BLANCA
Wait! Help me shift these boxes.

BILL
When I get back.

BLANCA
NOW! My bagel is trapped in there.

BILL
Your bagel is....?

BLANCA
Don't ask, just help me.

They strain together to move the boxes. In vain.

Shit!

BILL
It's good exercise! Look, I should really—

BLANCA
Pull from the top.

BILL
I'm not sure that's a good idea—

Fueled by her anger and frustration,
BLANCA 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.

BLANCA

Aaaaargh!

BILL

Oh my God, are you okay?

BLANCA

Fine. I broke both my legs and I can't move.

BILL

(Leaning over her)

No! Really?

BLANCA

It hurts like hell anyway. Get me my bagel.

BILL

Hold on, hold on. I'll try to be gentle.

He tries and fails to lift the box off her.

Damn! What the hell is in here?

BLANCA

Weights. My bagel? Please?

BILL

(Rising to his feet and pulling out his cell phone)

I'm calling nine-one-one right now.

BLANCA

Bill!

BILL

What?

BLANCA

It's right there.

BLANCA is interrupted by her cell phone. She contorts herself to reach and answer it, as BILL punches in 911 on his phone.

BILL

(On the phone)

Hi, there's been an accident, my wife has broken her legs. At least we think she has... We're at home. The address? Oh yes, it's... Hello? Hello?! Damn!

BLANCA

(On the phone, loudly and overlapping)

Hi Mom. Yes, I'm still here.

BILL has been cut off. He exits to another room to call the emergency services again.

You're eating! That's great, congratulations... I'm sure that some aliens are very good cooks... huh, huh... Intergalactic Gourmet Cuisine... no, I can't say I have but it sounds ... Black Hole Quiche, yum... What? Do they have bagels on Mars? I don't have a clue Mom, to be honest, but you know what, this is actually not a great time for me... that's right, I have a deadline... I'll call you first thing in the morning, okay?... Bye... bye... bye Mom, love you.

She puts down the phone, and yells.

BILL!

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. He sees BLANCA sprawled on the floor and pinned beneath the box.

JERRY

I knew it!

BLANCA

Jerry.

JERRY

I heard the crash and I knew the attack had begun.

BLANCA

Attack?

JERRY

(Wielding the rolling pin, and glancing around menacingly)
Have they gone?

BLANCA

Who? Oh, you mean the aliens. Yes.

JERRY

Don't worry, you're safe now. I'll protect you. How bad is it?

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

BLANCA

Just some bad bruising I think—

JERRY

God, what have you got in here?

BLANCA

Weights. Exercise equipment. Jerry—

JERRY

Dangerous stuff. Cripple you for life.

BLANCA

Bill's phoning for an ambulance. Jerry—

JERRY

(Still struggling to shift the box)
The weight of vanity is crushing you, it's crushing all of us.

BLANCA

Jerry—

JERRY

This is hopeless.

BLANCA

Could you do me a big favor? Could you hand me that bagel?

JERRY

Sure.

JERRY goes to the table and picks up the bagel.

Wait a minute. How long has this been here?

BLANCA

It doesn't matter.

JERRY

An hour? Two hours?

BLANCA

Just give it to me.

JERRY

(Sniffing the cream cheese)

Are you kidding me?

BLANCA

It's fine, really.

JERRY

Bad cream cheese can be fatal. Don't you know that? And the pain! Worse than rabies.

BLANCA

Give me the fucking bagel! Please?

JERRY

No way. I would never forgive myself. See, this is how they get you, with the sneaky stuff, like a bad bagel. We have to be vigilant. Never let your guard down. How about some organic gluten-free Irish soda bread fresh from the oven? It's better than sex. Or it will be in forty-five minutes.

JERRY tosses the bagel into the rubbish bin.

BLANCA

(Moaning with despair at her lost bagel)

Nooooo!

Her cell phone rings again. She takes the call.

BLANCA

Hi. No... Yes... Fine. Go fuck yourself.

(To JERRY)

That was Liz, my boss. I blew a deadline. She fired me.

JERRY

Freedom!

BLANCA

I just want a bagel.

BILL enters.

BILL

Oh hi Jerry.

BLANCA

Jerry's here to defend us against the aliens.

BILL

Perfect timing.

(Indicating the box)

Take the other side would you. It weighs a ton.

JERRY

No shit.

BILL

(To BLANCA, as they move the box)

The ambulance is on its way, and Rosie's going to keep Annabelle until we've got you taken care of.

BLANCA is released. She gets to her feet.

How are the legs?

BLANCA

Hungry.

BILL

Your legs are hungry?

BLANCA

All I want is a bagel.

BILL

Oh, you know what? I bought some at the store.

BLANCA's face lights up.

Blackout.

END OF PLAY.