

Final Touches

By: Stacey Garbarski

(she/her/hers)

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Stacey is an actor, writer and performer residing in the midwest with her 2 dogs (Connie and Big Dan) and 2 rabbits (Brownie and Withnail.) She is a 2016 graduate from Edgewood College with her degree in Theatre Performance. She has worked with many wonderful theatres in Wisconsin as well as the New York Fringe Festival, which lead to a wonderful review of her performance in the New York Times. She is currently an ensemble member for the Madison based theatre company *Are We Delicious?* She was the first student from Edgewood College to advance to finals and win an award at the Kennedy Center Theatre Festival; Irene Ryan Competition (2015) for *Best Performance in a New Play or Musical*. She recently won a Bartell Theatre Award for *Best Lead Actress in a Comedy* for her performance as Berenger (*Rhinoceros*.) Recent credits include *Expecting Isabel* (ensemble-closed early due to COVID-19) and *The Guest Book* (Sam-opening tbd.) By day she works in the veterinary field.

-Publishing is fine!

-I am inspired by my family, friends and the odd behaviour of strangers.

-Ingredients: An empty store/stadium/theatre. A bottle of hand sanitizer. A virtual dance or duet. A moment of mass panic. A light in the dark. Extra Credit; a flower or flour.

-*Author's note; I leave the music and style of dancing up to the director.

CAST:

VOICE- not gender or age specific.

EX- a younger person in their 20s-30s.

WHY- a younger person in their 20s-30s.

(A dark, barren, quiet theatre space. A moment passes. Lights up-which is just a Ghost Light center stage. A loud public service announcement beep is blasted over the speaker system. We hear a VOICE)

VOICE

Thank you everyone for your continued patience as we continue mandatory isolation. During this time we ask you to remain calm. We have had 20 new cases confirmed today; all of which have shown symptoms of diarrhea, vomiting, lethargy and coughing. The plan is to continue isolation for another 2 weeks. Stay inside at all costs. We are hoping to have a better way to communicate in the next few days but for now we have this dystopian speaker system. For continuity we ask you to please refrain from attempting to use your cellphones. And so long as we all are well by April 25th we will go forward with our first annual bake off. Stay safe. Wash those hands. *(EX enters and has a seat. They are doing some sort of mantra/calming technique. WHY enters with a bag of items. They are both anxious and on the verge of a breakdown.)*

EX

That took a long time.

WHY

Here. Catch *(tosses a grocery bag. It's heavy.)*

EX

What the fuck?

WHY

I said catch. Do you listen?

EX

Jesus Christ

(begins to go through the bag.) You didn't get what I asked.

WHY

You said flower.

EX

Yes. One could surmise that I meant a baking item. Do *you* listen?

WHY

The closest spot was Trader Joes.

EX

And?

WHY

They have excellent flowers.

EX

I'm sorry, I just don't understand-

WHY

Well you should have explained better-

EX

Well you should have listened-

WHY

I was trying to do something nice-

EX

Oh that's a lovely change of pace-

WHY

How are you going to bake anyway? Is there a kitchen in the theatre that I don't know about?

EX

(EX clearly has not thought that through. Lying through their teeth-) I was going to make playdough.

WHY

For?

EX

For **fun**.

WHY

Or you could be working.

EX

I was going to practice for the bake off!

WHY

Yes the first annual bake off that is going to be cancelled. Why don't you do actual work instead?

EX

Changing the subject to work while chastising me, that's original. *(Rifles through the rest of the grocery bag. Pulls out essentials; a box of wine, wipes and hand sanitizer.)* Lavender?

WHY

Yes.

EX

Not my first choice but ok.

WHY

...Are you being picky during a pandemic?

EX

Just because we're all shitting our brains out until we die doesn't mean I don't have standards.

WHY

-And here comes a dig at me-

EX

Present company excluded.

WHY

(Seething. Avoiding saying something stupid.) Right
*(forcefully grabs the box of wine, removes it from the box, slaps the bag and takes a huge gulp.
Offers the bag to EX.)*

EX

We're not supposed to touch.

(A moment. Grabs the sanitizer and douses the nozzle on the bag. EX slaps and bag and takes a gulp)

WHY

That's disgusting.

EX

Think of it as more alcohol.

WHY

Give me a second to vomit and let's get started.

EX

(Enjoying another gulp) I don't see the point in trying to work.

WHY

I know. But I think it could help.

EX

Ok. Fine.

(They have a moment of soft-calmness. WHY exits and returns with a projector on wheels That is attached to a laptop. WHY is continuing to set up. They get a screen to descend from the ceiling.)

WHY

We've been stuck here for 2 weeks and haven't rehearsed once. I'm starting to feel atrophied.

EX

I was looking forward to the break, honestly.

WHY

Well that's what happens when you overcommit.

EX

I know.

WHY

You should have taken a hiatus months ago.

EX

Yes I'm aware.

*(WHY finishes up on the projector. A video pops on the screen. We see on the video VIRTUAL WHY is standing, smiling. *Music begins. VIRTUAL WHY bows.)*

VIRTUAL WHY

You're up.

EX

Do they mean me?

WHY

Oh my god. *(EX bows. VIRTUAL WHY and EX begin dancing in time with one another. They are both excellent.)*

EX

(While dancing) I will give you credit; this is pretty creative.

WHY

(Enjoying the art being created) Now you know what I was doing all last week. No touch shouldn't mean no rehearsal.

EX

It's ok I was too drunk to notice you were busy.

WHY

That's nothing new.

EX

Ha ha.

(Continues dancing but tries to include the bag of wine so she can drink and practice.)

WHY

Tap out. *(EX has a seat and drinks wine. VIRTUAL WHY and WHY are dancing. EX is cheering on this display.)* This is a lot harder with an audience.

EX

Alright. I'm tapping back in. I'm less judgemental onstage.

WHY

That's not true.

EX

Ok whatever just let me in.

WHY

Are you sure?

EX

We're all going to die anyway, right? (*bows to WHY.*) Fuck it. (*Both VIRTUAL WHY and WHY reciprocate the bow. Right has EX and WHY touch the power goes out and there are red lights flashing and a horrible screeching alarm. Mass panic is heard from outside; screaming, etc. The recording of the VOICE heard in the beginning comes on over the speaker system but the sound is distorted and repetitive. The video of VIRTUAL WHY shuts off. Both EX and WHY look at each other. EX is now in full panic mode. EX sits on the floor, sobbing. Possibly saying inaudible phrases like "what's happening, oh my god" etc. The only thing that WHY can think to do is sit and comfort EX because this is all horribly overwhelming. A few beats pass. The red flashing simmers down, the VOICE gets quieter, less noise from the outside. At this point the Ghost Light is the only light onstage. All is silent.*)

EX

I'm so sorry.

WHY

I know (*a moment. Grabs the wine.*) Take a sip. And let's start again. (*EX takes a huge swig.*)

EX

It's easier if we touch (*they do. A moment of an embrace/kiss. They begin dancing. No music. Black out.*)