

*The Porch Room presents*

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# *Don't Touch the Table*

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A Play in One Act

By

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AT RISE:

AN INTERROGATION ROOM

MAN, plain and unassuming, sits in a metal chair at a metal desk. He taps a single finger on the desk - not out of boredom, but out of curiosity. Nothing happens. The sound of a door opening gets his attention. He looks up just as two official looking office types, JK and FENSTER enter.

JK

Were you just touching the table?

MAN

I, uh...

JK

I told you not to touch the table.

MAN

It's a table. Nothing happened.

JK

Because I turned it off. Because I knew you were going to touch it.

MAN

How do you turn off a table?

JK

I knew he was going to touch it.

FENSTER

Nothing happened.

JK

It could have.

FENSTER

(To Man) Are you alright? Do you need anything?

MAN

I sort of have to pee.

JK

Pee?

FENSTER

You want peas?

MAN

Urinate. I have to go to the bathroom.

JK

Oh dear. I told you he was going to make things difficult.

FENSTER

You can't blame him, JK. He's only human. (To man) Do you think it can wait for a bit, son?

MAN

I guess.

FENSTER

Good. We just need to ask you a few questions.

MAN

Yeah, I sort of suspected.

JK

Good. Let's begin. Now, can you tell me today's date?

MAN

July 19, 2012

JK

July?

MAN

Nineteenth.

JK

What's he talking about?

FENSTER

No, no, it's alright. He's on the old system.

Fenster taps a finger to his right temple. His eyes dart about, scanning the air.

FENSTER

July. July. July. Gregorian. Ah. Cappa Two.

He taps his finger to his temple again and turns to JK.

FENSTER

Cappa Two.

JK

I heard you the first time. (To man) I suppose then, it would surprise you to learn that is not Jooo-lie nineteenth. It is Beta One...

FENSTER

April 4, 2063.. (To JK) I looked it up.

MAN

Looked it up in what?

FENSTER

Wikipedia

MAN

It's 2063?

FENSTER

Yes.

MAN

And I got here...how?

JK

We believe you were exposed to a quantum singularity.

MAN

And I can't touch the table...why?

JK

It's very sophisticated. You might break it.

MAN

Am I dead?

FENSTER

Gosh, I hope not.

JK

Though, scientifically, that would be fascinating.

MAN

Why don't I remember getting here?

JK

What do you remember?

MAN

I was having a very bad day. It was very hot. I had thought that I was going to get a big promotion at work, but I didn't. The HR director told me my situation had been improperly handled., which was of absolutely no comfort. So I decided to quit. There was a girl that I loved in Piscataway and I decided to go find her...and then I was here.

JK

And at no point during that day did you stand at ground zero of an atomic detonation or come into contact with particles accelerating past the speed of light?

MAN

Well, I did stop for coffee at the large Hadron collider just outside of town.

FENSTER

Well. That'll do it.

JK

He's joking. Are you joking?

MAN

Yes. Can I go now? I really do have to pee.

FENSTER

I don't think it's a good idea.

MAN

Seriously, guys, do you not pee?

JK

Not in polite company.

MAN

I wasn't asking you to come with me.

He gets up to go.

JK

Fenster, what is he doing?

FENSTER

He's standing up.

MAN

I can see the education system hasn't improved much. I don't suppose a Bush is president?

JK

Sentient plants can not hold office. They are for decorative use only.

MAN

He's joking. Are you joking?

JK

Most assuredly not.

FENSTER

He's not. He's got a talking shrub in the office. Drives me bonkers. It tells you the time every half hour whether you want to hear it or not and at random intervals it sings soothing songs.

JK

It's Brahmas. You have no appreciation for music.

FENSTER

You could at least put the headphones on.

MAN

Guys. I'm going to pee right here, if you don't let me go.

FENSTER

(Laughs) Go right ahead.

JK

Not near the table!

MAN

One...

FENSTER

Be my guest.

MAN

Two.

JK

Seriously, step back from the table.

The man sighs and does so.

MAN

Three.

JK and Fenster still block the door.

MAN

Fine.

The man shuts his eyes and lets out a long, relieved sigh, which he holds for a moment. Then he opens his eyes and looks at this pants - they are totally dry.

MAN

What the...?

Pretty cool, right?

FENSTER

That was disgusting.

JK

But, I felt myself go.

MAN

It could have got on the table.

JK

I went to the bathroom. But I didn't go to the bathroom?

MAN

Oh, you went alright. But this puppy took care of the mess.

FENSTER

Fenster taps the table.

MAN

The table....

MAN

Yup.

FENSTER

The table beamed up my pee.

MAN

Yup.

FENSTER

The man puts his hands on the table lovingly.

MAN

Where were you when I was in college?

JK

Please. Please. Hands off the table. It is very sensitive.

MAN

You can beam things! You can beam things! Star Trek was right.

FENSTER

Oh no no no...don't mention Star Trek. A Klingon killed his parents.

MAN

Klingons are real?

JK

As real as you and I.

MAN

That means less than it did this morning.

FENSTER

We only call them Klingons. Their real name is probably unpronounceable. They just sort of snarl and growl a lot.

JK

And kill.

FENSTER

And kill. Right. Mankind sort of lives in abject terror of them. They're invisible, they can burrow underground, they thrive in the water and they can smell humans from seemingly impossible distances. Other than that, though, I think you'll find the future really great. As you can see, the sanitary improvements since your time have been outstanding.

JK

It was sort of needed, what with the Klingons leaving masses of torn up human flesh everywhere.

FENSTER

We sort of had a fly problem for a while. But man, not since I was a kid. The current generation, boy they don't know how good they have it. Especially since we've worked out this thing where we cull the weak ones and throw them to the Klingons to keep them happy.

MAN

You feed your children to the Klingons?

JK

Just the weak ones.

MAN

How did you survive, pudgy?

FENSTER

His family has money.

JK

Fenster, I will take away your table privileges.

MAN

What is with the table? I mean, other than being a pee beamer?

JK

It does not BEAM. It atomizes. Your disgusting liquid waste was not transported anywhere.

MAN

You mean?

JK points both of his hands up in the air and spins them around, indicating "it's in the air."

FENSTER

Don't breathe in too deep.

MAN

Oookay. I'd like to go now. This has been a lovely trip to the future, but I would like to go back to 2012 now. Maybe, you know, warn people about the Klingon invasion.

FENSTER

That would be a really big help, actually.

MAN

Oh. So you can send me home?

FENSTER

Oh. No. Sorry, I thought maybe you knew how to get there.

MAN

I don't know how I got HERE!

He bangs his fist on the table.

JK

Oh no.

The table starts to hum.

FENSTER

I thought you said you turned it off.

JK

It autostarted when he couldn't hold his bladder for two seconds.

MAN

What's happening?

The hum grows louder.

JK

Well, you're either about to be sent back to your own time or we're all going to be atomized.

MAN

The table is a time machine?

JK

I told you not to touch it!

MAN

You BROUGHT me here?

FENSTER

It's sort of his hobby. Bored rich guy, you know?

The humming is extremely loud. White light begins to fill the room. JK and Fenster have to shout to be heard.

JK

If you make it back, remember....the Klingons!

FENSTER

It's really bad. Tell everyone you know. Assuming we're not breathing you in in a second.

JK

YOU ARE THE CHOSEN ONE!

MAN

What? Oh Jesus....

The lights go to full white out. The humming stops. When the light normalizes, the man is gone. Leaving only JK and Fenster. They look around the room, confirming he's gone. A beat. They break into hysterical laughter.

FENSTER

You are the chosen one? Where did you get that?

JK

Some old holonovel.

FENSTER

That was too rich. You need to say that to all of them.

JK

We have to stop pulling these rubes from the 21st century. They always go to Star Trek right out of the gate. Klingons. Let's try for early 20th century this time. They're always fun.

FENSTER

Maybe next week. I gotta go home. We're feeding the youngest to the flesh rippers on Saturday. Gotta spend some quality time with the family yadda yadda yadda.

JK

Oh right. So sorry we can't come over for that. Michelle's parents are coming in from 1856 France. They're going to want us to sit through the whole slide show routine.

FENSTER

I hear ya. Well. Take care.

JK

Better get a move on. Those flesh rippers have been swarming around here after dark.

Right-o.

FENSTER

Fenster exits.

JK pats the table affectionately. He chuckles.

JK

Klingons. Absurd.