

Leaning Out The Window

by

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Cast of Characters

HARLA :

50's

JEAN :

30's

Place

Rooming House

Time

3PM

2.

Setting: The play takes place inside a small rooming house. The place is cramped and filthy. Empty wine bottles cram the place and give off a rancid scent. There's a small unmade cot in one corner with newspapers being used as a blanket. A large window with no curtain is the only source for light. Empty soup cans and other old food items are scattered around the room.

At Rise: The play opens up with Harla being let in the room by Jean.

JEAN: Ello, ello, come in, come...

HARLA: How are you Jean?

JEAN: Fine, fine, you know...

HARLA: You don't look very well.

JEAN: No?

HARLA: You look gaunt, if you don't mind my sayin'.

JEAN: Gaunt, what is gaunt...don't worry.

HARLA: There's a heaviness in the air.

JEAN: Sit down, please, sit...

HARLA sits.

HARLA: When I noticed you leanin' out your window, at first I thought you were tryin' to see somethin', but then I realized you were sleepin' and could quite have possibly fallen out. It's why I came up here, didn't you hear me callin' your name? I was so afraid you'd fall out that window.

JEAN: I am fine, doin' grand Harla. Just a little tired.

HARLA: But isn't that unusual?

JEAN: Unusual?

HARLA: Jean...tell me the truth...I can see right through a man's eyes when he's hidin' somethin'. Come on now, what's wrong?

JEAN: Oh no, I wouldn't want to trouble you with any of my troubles...

HARLA: You haven't been eatin' well, I can see it Jean, I've two lads of me own and you haven't had a good meal in ya!

JEAN: But here now, Harla, it's nothin' to be worried about. Times have just been a little hard around here but they'll be back to good in a few days....

HARLA: What is it? Not enough money?

JEAN: No, well I saved up some, I saved up quite some money, I do have money, but the money I saved is for my rent, this way I am one month ahead and better off for it, not to have the stress get at me any further. It weren't doing me any good. Each time I am late, the landlord charges me a penalty fee and this has been, how do you say, been buildin' up and makin' me fall behind in my payments, so...

JEAN (cont'd): I decided it'll do me some good not to eat for a while, just for another few days or so, so I can get back on the saddle and pay that rent on time. It's a terrible thing to have on one's back, I'll be good as new in a few days time, a missed meal here or there can't do much harm in the short term. I've grown used to them dizzy spells, but that's nothin' a cup a water or a tippie can't fix for the time being. (he laughs) Listen to me, I really sound like a poor bastard. Never in me life, Harla. (smiles) I spoke too much...not my tendency, must be my mind taking flight again...excuse my words...last thing I want is to ever be looked at as a fool, even if I happen to be one. Yeah? Besides, a little fasting never does one too much harm!

HARLA: Don't they pay you enough at the restaurant?

JEAN: Well, I'm, right now I'm the dishwasher.

HARLA: And it isn't enough to settle your bills?

JEAN: Ha, ha, no I cannot say that is true, Harla...perhaps it's partly my fault because I like a drink here and there, nothin' too strong, you know, just a bit of wine to let the heart rest at night.

HARLA: Well it isn't a crime to have a bit of wine.

JEAN: Ah, for me, especially on a cold evenin' like this, it's the gateway to heaven.

HARLA: Well as long as you ain't drownin' in the stuff Jean...it can become a fortune if we don't keep an eye on it and a meal would do you better, a doctor even, if you don't mind me sayin'.

JEAN: Ah perhaps, perhaps you're right Harla. Easier said than done, I can just about go without anythin' but a drink in the evenings. It gets harder to sleep without it.

HARLA: You would rather starve yourself?

JEAN: It isn't the first time I have gone hungry.

HARLA: My goodness Jean, you mean to tell me that you've only been drinkin'? No food at all, only wine?

JEAN: Come on now, it's just been a few days...

HARLA: How many days exactly has it been?

JEAN: Not even a week. And I've reached my final bottle today so I've no choice but to take another, to get me through for another day or so.

HARLA: Take? You don't mean to tell me you've been stealing the wine?

JEAN: I wouldn't call it stealin'! (he laughs)

HARLA: Jean!

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JEAN: Don't worry Harla, it's not hurting any, we get bottles leftover from the tables and it only goes down the sink if it isn't taken.

HARLA: And what if you get caught?

JEAN: I have it all worked out.

HARLA: But what happens if you get caught?

JEAN: Who knows, perhaps I'll lose my job, get into trouble, I don't know.

HARLA: Jean...would you like to come to my place for dinner...I don't have much, but I have soup and bread and there is some wine left that I only take out for special occasions.

JEAN: I cannot.

HARLA: Why not?

JEAN: I won't impose.

HARLA: You are my friend.

JEAN: Yeah?

HARLA: Yes.

JEAN: ...I don't want you to feel bad for me, Harla.

HARLA: I wouldn't say I feel bad for you, Jean...just that I am lendin' you a hand for the time bein', to help you get through a difficult time...I wish to see you through, but I will say this, I cannot take you in unless you promise me that you will not steal anymore wine from your work.

I know Mr. Totum and he'll have you fired in a minute, he's no heart that man, oh but he doesn't show it, always actin' extremely kind to the community but he's had more people fired from than one is ever to know. And I think you've potential Jean, I think you have what it takes to make somethin' great of yourself, it's all in you, your heart, stamina, you only need someone to care enough to bring some order to your life, if you'll let me...come over to mine tonight but you must promise me first...do you promise me, Jean?

JEAN: I promise you all that I can. It isn't that I wanted to ever

take anything from Mr. Totum...it's just been difficult for me...always fallin' behind and never allowed to live life the way that I wish.

HARLA: You're strong enough to make the changes necessary to give yourself a decent way of livin' and you will.

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HARLA (cont'd): You cannot live here forever. You cannot avoid bathing forever---

JEAN: I bathe---

HARLA: You cannot wear clothes that are tattered, or avoid shaving your stubs of facial hair or even combing that thick mane of hair you have on your head, why is it always full of knots?

JEAN: Is it full of knots?

HARLA: Jean, you can do so much more, no?

JEAN: But I am happy.

HARLA: Happy?! Like THIS?!

JEAN: I am comfortable. There is so much anxiety when one is in the pursuit of things...can't I remain as is and be happy?

HARLA: You're drinking yourself into exhaustion! You like washin' dirty dishes for a livin'? Is that your full potential, a man of your age and strength?

JEAN: Why must I work harder than I have to?

HARLA: Oh, I get it now, you lack ambition.

JEAN: Harla now, will you stop worryin' now? You're almost like my mother was. My only ambition now is to live a comfortable life without anxiety.

HARLA: And you believe by not asking for too much of yourself that you will be satisfied?

JEAN: Why not?

HARLA: You call starving yourself bliss?

JEAN: It is temporary.

HARLA: You call risking your livelihood to steal wine an easygoing affair?

JEAN: It has it's perks.

HARLA: Don't you ever imagine having more?

JEAN: I have all that I could ever want.

HARLA: Love...what about being in love, having children, a home of your own?

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JEAN: The mere thought of such problems gives me a headache.

HARLA: Problems?

JEAN: Harla, I have loved once.

HARLA: You have?

JEAN: It taught me what I didn't wish to have.

HARLA: Don't you want to love again?

JEAN: Ha, ha...only a fool would make the same mistake twice.

HARLA: You've resolved yourself to living in the pit.

JEAN: My pit is my pleasure.

HARLA: Hmm. Somehow I don't truly believe you. I think you are just scared.

JEAN: HA! Scared?

HARLA: That's right. Scared. A man afraid of life. Afraid to venture out into the real world and taste the richness of it.

JEAN: I have seen it all.

HARLA: No, you haven't.

JEAN: It is good. Good because I am protected from the mess that goes on out there. All I need is my tiny corner, a bottle of wine, and I can go wherever my imagination wishes to go, without cause of injury to anyone.

HARLA: You are afraid of gettin' hurt again, aren't you?

JEAN: I think we've said enough, don't you think?

HARLA: I didn't mean to upset you.

JEAN: It isn't you.

HARLA: Okay...will you be coming over for dinner this evening, let us say six?

JEAN: Well If I am not to be criticized further, I would love

nothing more than to join you.

HARLA: Okay, Jean, it's only because...oh, (sighs)...

JEAN: I will see you at six.

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HARLA stands up.

HARLA: Yes. Six.

THEY exchange warm smiles.

JEAN escorts HARLA to the front door.

HARLA exits.

JEAN walks back to his window, looking out.

END OF PLAY