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Cast of Characters

WOMAN (Angela), any age, any woman

WAITER (or WAITRESS), trying very hard

JUDITH, an assertive, independent woman who'd rather open her own doors

VICTORIA, prim and proper Victorian woman

POPPY, epitome of pop culture; centered on, no, *obsessed* with fashion and image

SUSIE, the cute little innocent you wish you could be forever; she is pure emotion, instinct (the id, if you'd like to go Freudian)

MAN (Joel), an okay kinda guy

EDWARD, prim and proper Victorian man

AL, dumb jock

VINCE, suave 'n' sexy

JIMMY, the cute little innocent you wish you could be forever...if you happen to be male

Acknowledgements

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The play was first professionally produced by The Blank Theatre Company in The Blank Theatre Company Young Playwrights Festival (Los Angeles) in June, 2002. It was directed by Stuart Ross, with the following cast:

WOMAN	Bronwen Booth
WAITER.....	Sean Warner
JUDITH.....	Joen Nielson Lewis
VICTORIA.....	Jean Gilpin
POPPY.....	Irene Piccininni
SUSIE.....	Emily Ware
MAN.....	Larry Raben
EDWARD	Brian Carpenter
AL.....	Marc Cahill
VINCE.....	Sean Foley
JIMMY	Aaron Fors

The playwright would like to thank the cast and director, as well as Young Playwrights mentor Robert L. Freedman, for their aid in developing the current edition.

RESERVATIONS

by Lisa Rand

(Lights come up on a small restaurant. There are several tables, perhaps with tablecloths, flowers, and maybe one of those candleholders with an etched glass lamp. A WOMAN sits at one table. At an adjacent table sits a conference of four women: VICTORIA, POPPY, SUSIE, and JUDITH. VICTORIA is sitting primly, back straight, with a closed fan in hand. POPPY is fixing her makeup in a compact, meticulously overdoing her face and nervously looking about her. JUDITH is sprawled haphazardly, with a careless manner. SUSIE is in a pleasant state of innocent anticipation. She sits in a childlike manner, with her knees drawn to her chin, rocking gently. She constantly watches the others with keen interest. Throughout the play, WOMAN's motions should somehow reflect the conflict at the table next to her. JUDITH grabs for a roll in her table's basket; VICTORIA slaps her hand and gives her a severe look. JUDITH drops the roll, scowling. This action is reflected in WOMAN, who reaches for a roll, then catches her hand back as if changing her mind. WAITER approaches table and assumes his/her most convincing cheesy French accent.)

WAITER. *(To WOMAN:)* Welcome to Cabane d'Amour. Our special this evening is calamari sauteed in a white wine sauce with—

WOMAN. Um. Hi. It's still me.

WAITER. *(Dropping accent:)* Oh. Sorry. I'm usually much better at remembering faces.

(Beat. WAITER indicates empty chair at WOMAN's table.)

Not here yet?

(WOMAN shakes her head.)

Oh.

(Beat.)

Look, can I at least get you something to drink while you wait?

JUDITH. What have you got on tap?

(VICTORIA interrupts with a severe look, and JUDITH is silent.)

WOMAN. No thank you, I'll need a minute.

(WAITER nods and exits. VICTORIA sits back, smug.)

JUDITH. What was THAT for?

VICTORIA. *(Retains prim and proper attitude:)* We will wait until he arrives. Let us not conduct ourselves like savages. We do not want to make a ruinous first impression.

(JUDITH slumps back into her chair. POPPY puts the finishing touches on her makeup, fluffs her hair, and closes her compact.)

POPPY. How do I look?

JUDITH. Full of the beauty and subtlety of a train wreck on a midsummer's eve.

(VICTORIA slaps JUDITH's hand.)

JUDITH. *Ow!*

SUSIE. I think it's pretty.

VICTORIA. Hush, child.

(A moment of silent anticipation.)

JUDITH. Okay, would somebody please remind me again why we're here? I've suddenly forgotten why sitting in a cheesy French restaurant waiting for some random man is more important than staying home and watching *Buffy*?

POPPY. Omigod, we did remember to tape *Buffy*, right?

(A MAN walks in, looks around uncertainly as if searching for somebody. VICTORIA pulls out her fan and performs the classic demure routine. POPPY goes through frantic primping, and SUSIE examines MAN with genuine interest. JUDITH looks at the other three, scratches herself, grabs for a roll, and again is slapped away by VICTORIA.)

SUSIE. *(Giggling:)* That's him, that's him!

VICTORIA. *(Hiding behind fan:)* Hush, child.

(The four continue to observe as MAN walks over to WOMAN. The two share an awkward moment of recognition.)

MAN. H—hi, I’m Joel. You must be—

WOMAN. Angela. Angela Collins.

(MAN sits, and the two interact sporadically in typical blind date nervousness.)

POPPY. What was THAT?! “Angela. Angela Collins.” Ugh.

VICTORIA. *(Fanning with vigor:)* NO, this simply will not do.

POPPY. Where was the emotion? Where was the raw, sensual thrill of a first introduction?

VICTORIA. Much too bold.

POPPY. We’ve definitely gotta work on that.

(POPPY continues to practice saying “Angela Collins” quietly, trying to reach the premium level of attractiveness.)

VICTORIA. The man should have been allowed to finish his statement,

POPPY. “Angela Collins...”

VICTORIA. —and the woman did not hold her tongue. The evening is ruined, simply ruined.

JUDITH. Yeah, yeah, it’s ruined. When’s the food coming?

SUSIE. I like him. He has pretty hair.

POPPY. *(Finishing her elaborate sequence of repetitions:)* “Anjjelah Cahllinssss...”

(The other table members stare at her. She coughs and straightens.)

MAN. Belinda wasn’t lying...you’re very pretty.

POPPY. *(A la Elvis, or a glamour-girl:)* Thank you, thankyouvery-much.

(SUSIE cheers and claps as POPPY continues to bask in her achievement.)

VICTORIA. That was suitable. A compliment on the fairer qualities, and no verbal riposte this time. Perchance he may yet be a possibility for a husband.

JUDITH. More like a possibility for a base hit.

(JUDITH and POPPY laugh and give each other five. SUSIE laughs along, not knowing what she is laughing about. VICTORIA begins to fan reproachfully. WAITER returns to WOMAN's table, cautiously, then pointing to MAN. WOMAN somewhat embarrassedly acknowledges that yes, this is the MAN for whom she was waiting.)

WAITER. Are you ready to place your drink order now, ma'am?

POPPY. I am SO getting a margarita. It drives men wild. Seriously, I read it in *Cosmo*.

JUDITH. A margarita?! That just screams "Look at me! I'm fair game, big boy." Forget it. Give me a Bud.

(SUSIE, unnoticed by the other women, gets up and moves toward WOMAN, obviously pushing her choice of beverage.)

VICTORIA. We shall have water.

JUDITH. Okay, fine. Bud Light.

VICTORIA. *(Severely:)* Water.

WOMAN. Apple juice, please.

(VICTORIA, POPPY, and JUDITH turn and look at SUSIE, who giggles and waves at them.)

MAN. That's unusual...and kind of nice. *(To WAITER:)* I'll have the same.

(WAITER nods, writing.)

JUDITH. I swear, if graham crackers come into the equation...

WAITER. And would you like any appetizers to start?

(JUDITH and VICTORIA attempt to stifle SUSIE.)

WOMAN. No thanks. I'm on a diet.

(JUDITH and VICTORIA, still in the action of quieting SUSIE, halt and look at POPPY, who is grinning slightly. MAN and WOMAN silently place their orders under the following.)

POPPY. (Noticing their scrutiny:) What?

JUDITH. (Sick of it all:) Check, please!

(She signals for the WAITER. VICTORIA grabs JUDITH's wrist, pulling it back down with a look that could wilt violets.)

VICTORIA. Sit still. I shall accept no more of this childish behavior. The only fare we shall consume from this point onward will be a suitably dainty arrangement of herbs.

JUDITH. But he got a hamburger! I heard him!

VICTORIA. That is a proper repast for a man. We shall remain dainty and gracious, as our status and propriety require.

JUDITH. But I'm hungry!

VICTORIA. (Interrupting:) Dainty and gracious. And remember, the man is always correct. It is a burden we must bear, but we bear it with dignity and poise.

MAN. Anyway...I'm sorry I was late. I know we'd agreed to meet at eight thirty, but I got stuck in traffic.

WOMAN. That's okay. I don't mind waiting.

JUDITH. (Noticing VICTORIA's intent gaze:) What are you doing? It's nine fifteen!

WOMAN. It's no problem, I like having time to absorb my surroundings. They're pretty creative at this place; I mean, listen to this muzak. Who is this supposed to be, Nirvana?

MAN. Metallica.

WOMAN. Oh. Right.

MAN. Aren't they great?

WOMAN. My favorite.

SUSIE. What's Metalycah?

VICTORIA. Hush child. It doesn't matter, now, does it? We shan't make any sort of lasting effect without conceding to some of his ideals.

MAN. I saw them in concert once, when I lived in Pittsburgh.

WOMAN. Wow, Pittsburgh! That must have been a nice place to live.

JUDITH. *What?*

MAN. It was fantastic.

WOMAN. I can imagine. I have a cousin who lives in Pittsburgh. We used to visit her during the holidays.

MAN. Yeah?

JUDITH. *(To VICTORIA:) Pittsburgh?!*

WOMAN. Sure! I love that city. Great...big... *(Searching for something to say. SUSIE helps her out:)* ...buildings.

POPPY. Have we ever been to Pittsburgh?

JUDITH. I don't think we've ever even seen any pictures of Pittsburgh.

SUSIE. We went once. I remember playing on the swingset in Aunt Arlene's backyard.

MAN. Yeah? Hey, that's great! Belinda didn't tell me you had family in Pittsburgh. You a Steelers fan?

WOMAN. Huge Steelers fan.

JUDITH. But we like the Packers!

MAN. Wow, me too! Who's your favorite player?

WOMAN. That big guy, the one with the... *(Abstract motions denoting a vague physical property.)*

MAN. Jerome Bettis?

WOMAN. That's him.

MAN. Mine too! This is great!

JUDITH. We just bought cheesehead earrings! She's forgetting the cheesehead earrings!

SUSIE. (*Getting antsy:*) Can't we talk about something else? I'm confused!

(WAITER brings two glasses of apple juice to the table. He also delivers a plate of food to MAN, and a tiny, one-leaf/one-tomato salad to WOMAN. She picks at it gingerly throughout ensuing dialogue.)

MAN. So. What do you like to do in your spare time?

(SUSIE, POPPY, and JUDITH breathe sighs of relief. VICTORIA scowls.)

WOMAN. Well, I like to paint.

MAN. I like painting, too. Well, I'm not very good at it myself, but I like looking at other people's work.

WOMAN. Oh? Did you go to the new exhibit at the museum yet?

MAN. Yeah, of course! The one with the paintings by...

(Snaps fingers, searching for a name that is obviously not up there.)

The one with the...different people...

WOMAN. Rembrandt?

MAN. Yeah, that's the one. Art's great. Wish I could paint.

WOMAN. It's not all that hard.

MAN. What else do you do?

WOMAN. Well, I also really enjoy sewing and the domestic arts. You know, a lot of people think that such things are old fashioned, but I've always been a fan of tradition.

MAN. That's nice.

WOMAN. But that's really only on certain occasions. I usually spend most of my time shopping. There's nothing like buying a new outfit that really looks good, makes heads turn, you know? I like to stand out.

MAN. It's always good to be an individual.

WOMAN. I have to say, though, there are times when nothing is better than curling up in front of the fire with a good book and a mug of hot cocoa. Sometimes I wish it were winter all of the time just so I could enjoy more of those moments. How about you?

(MAN mimes conversation about his hobbies. Meanwhile, VICTORIA, POPPY, and SUSIE have faced off. They have begun to stand and stare each other down.)

JUDITH. That's it. I've had it.

(JUDITH grabs her table's basket, reaching for a roll.)

POPPY. NO!

(POPPY grabs the basket from JUDITH, eventually winning the short tug o' war, while WOMAN, in a failed attempt to be nonchalant, simultaneously reaches into her basket, upsetting it. MAN stands.)

MAN. Whoa, let me help you with that.

(He picks up the rolls and returns them to the basket.)

WOMAN. *(Embarrassed:)* I—I'm sorry. I guess it's hard to keep a diet when eating is one of your favorite hobbies.

(VICTORIA and POPPY look embarrassed.)

MAN. That's okay, eating's one of my favorite hobbies, too.

JUDITH. Okay, now I *like* this guy.

POPPY. What?! Are you crazy? You just completely destroyed our chances with this one.

JUDITH. Ah, no I didn't. A little piece of bread never hurt anyone. Nobody gets dumped for something as stupid as eating.

POPPY. Um, aren't we forgetting somebody? Maybe a certain Tom?

SUSIE. Tom...

VICTORIA. Must we bring up the subject? This is *not* the appropriate time, *nor* the appropriate place to be discussing—

JUDITH. Tom was a self-centered creep. He wasn't worth the cheap imitation Calvin Klein he drenched himself with.

SUSIE. Tom was so beautiful. He had such deep, brown eyes.

POPPY. Right on, kid. And remember the little things he used to buy every so often? The forget-me-nots before the business trips, the teddy bear for Valentine's?

JUDITH. It seems you forget the minor detail that the bear was delivered by UPS on February 16th. *Not only* was it two days late, but you can't convince me that there's anything even remotely romantic about a taped-up cardboard box. Who cares about Tom? I would give him up for a burger any day. At least I'd have some control over a hamburger.

SUSIE. And remember how he used to smile? I just loved it when he smiled. It made me feel all tingly inside.

POPPY. (*Slyly:*) Me too.

VICTORIA. Really, I must protest—

POPPY. The point still stands. Remember why Tom left?

JUDITH. He said he needed space. I say more power to him.

POPPY. I distinctly remember everything going fine until you got involved. I was in complete control. I ran this operation like a well-oiled machine; I didn't have any weaknesses or limitations, especially not for *hamburgers...* or any other food, for that matter.

JUDITH. You don't think that just because I snuck a pint of ice cream...

POPPY. And the Snickers. And the chocolate chip cookie. And the sour cream and onion chips...

JUDITH. (*Growing more and more uncomfortable:*) But they were low fat!

POPPY. Do you think that expanding waistlines care about whether or not chips are low fat? Do you think Tom cared about whether or not the chips were low fat?

JUDITH. Look, Tom left because he wasn't ready to make a commitment. That's it.

POPPY. Fine.

JUDITH. Fine.

(WAITER delivers two cups of coffee to the couple's table and a slice of cheesecake to MAN, unnoticed by any of the four women.)

POPPY. Suit yourself. I only hope that it's not too late for this one.

(Pulls out a nail file and proceeds to use it. JUDITH looks down at her stomach, a glint of self-consciousness in her demeanor. This is reflected in WOMAN, who politely declines a proffered fork from MAN.)

MAN. What, no dessert? Not very dedicated to your hobby, are you? C'mon, try some of this. I think it'd be safe to say that this place makes the best cheesecake in town. I mean, it's not *Pittsburgh* cheesecake, but it'll do.

(WOMAN awkwardly acknowledges this statement. As she hesitates, JUDITH suddenly sits back up, regaining her confidence once again.)

WOMAN. Ah, well, um...sure.

(MAN moves closer and slowly feeds WOMAN a forkful of cake. POPPY looks with wonder at the couple, then at JUDITH.)

POPPY. Wow, I'm impressed.

(JUDITH basks in her achievement.)

VICTORIA. *(Fanning:)* Oh my...aren't we becoming a trifle hasty?

POPPY. Problem?

VICTORIA. It seems rather early in the courting process for the gentleman to make such an intimate action.

JUDITH. "Courting process"? You can't be serious.

VICTORIA. I am quite serious.

(VICTORIA watches WOMAN feed MAN a forkful of cheesecake. She fans harder.)

VICTORIA. *Quite serious.*

JUDITH. Okay, new goal for the evening: let's pull out of last century, if that's at all possible. It's a new era, *dahling*, and in this new age women don't endure seven years of dating until they are sure they are ready enough to hold hands.

SUSIE. Could we please—

VICTORIA. Hush, child. It isn't a matter of waiting for long periods of time, it's a matter of being appropriate. We know very little about this man, except that he enjoys (*With a slight touch of distaste:*) Metallica, and doesn't seem to know who Rembrandt is.

SUSIE. Listen to me, I—

VICTORIA. Hush! And furthermore, it is a matter of social importance. What if influential members of the town come to call and see an unfamiliar man moving so close and holding himself in such a personal pose?

SUSIE. Look!

(They all become silent as they notice WOMAN and MAN, who have since ceased their conversation, engaged in a kiss. WOMAN breaks kiss.)

WOMAN. It's getting kind of late. I probably should be going.

JUDITH. (*Looking at VICTORIA:*) All right, seriously, that's enough. I was actually starting to like this one.

VICTORIA. This is not *my* doing.

MAN. I'd really like to see you again.

WOMAN. I don't know if that's a good idea.

JUDITH. (*Turning to POPPY:*) What, are his eyes the wrong shade for you? Afraid they won't match your shoes?

POPPY. I didn't do it!

MAN. Is something wrong?

WOMAN. (*Hesitating:*) I'm sorry, it's just...it's been a long time since I've opened up to anybody. I'm not so sure that...that...

JUDITH. *(Starting to become unsettled:)* Okay, what is going on here? What are we doing? What is *she* doing?

(VICTORIA, SUSIE, JUDITH, and POPPY argue in whispers, now concerned that their presence and influence are unstable.)

MAN. I'm sorry. I suppose I did get a little hasty there. I didn't mean to upset you.

(The WOMEN at the next table have become a bit more frantic, perhaps getting up to pace, have side arguments, etc.)

WOMAN. I'm sorry. It's not you. I guess I...I thought I was ready to move on, but...now I'm not so sure.

VICTORIA. Oh my...I believe we may have a slight problem on our hands.

POPPY. *(To JUDITH:)* I told you that eating was a bad idea!

MAN. *(Quietly:)* Who was he? Would you like to tell me?

WOMAN. *(Thinking a moment:)* Yes.

(Reaction of panic and disbelief from the WOMEN at the other table.)

WOMAN. *(Changing her mind:)* No.

(Reaction of relief from the WOMEN at the other table.)

WOMAN. *(Finally:)* His name was Tom.

(Reaction of panic from the WOMEN. WOMAN proceeds to recount the instances surrounding her failure with Tom. Instead of the tenseness that was present throughout the rest of the rendezvous, the two become more comfortable with one another, eventually smiling and/or chuckling.)

WOMAN. I probably should have known better. But he had these incredible brown eyes.

(The WOMEN look at SUSIE, assuming she is in charge.)

JUDITH. Oh! There! That's the kid! We're okay. False alarm, ladies.

MAN. Were you in love with him?

VICTORIA, POPPY, SUSIE, and JUDITH. YES!

WOMAN. (*Dawning:*) No.

VICTORIA. Oh dear...we mustn't lose ourselves. How should one conduct oneself in such a trying situation?

JUDITH. (*Wildly:*) What is there to conduct? There's nothing left.

(Grabs a roll and stuffs it into her mouth. WOMAN does not react.)

JUDITH. (*Speaking with her mouth full:*) See?!

WOMAN. I guess maybe I thought that was my last chance.

JUDITH. Oh, I think that's fairly certain now.

MAN. Seriously? Wow. I can't imagine what he could have done to make you feel that way.

VICTORIA. Spinsterhood is such a tragedy.

(SUSIE pinches POPPY.)

POPPY. OW! What'd you do that for?

SUSIE. I thought maybe this was a bad dream...

(Starts to whimper. VICTORIA moves closer to SUSIE in a comforting yet nervous manner as the other two continue to frantically grasp for their lost control.)

WOMAN. No, see, that's the point. It wasn't him, really. It has to do more with me. I felt like I couldn't focus on what was important. I mean, even tonight, here we are, in this cheesy restaurant talking about Pittsburgh and football, and all I can think about is how I should act and how I should respond. Sometimes it feels like there are these voices in my head, telling me what I'm doing is wrong, or what I'm doing isn't good enough. It's hard to decide which one to listen to sometimes...and sometimes I think it might be nice to just go free, uninhibited, you know?

VICTORIA. Now, now, hush. I'm sure there's a reasonable explanation for all of this.

POPPY. There had better be, or I'm leaving.

VICTORIA. That's impossible, you can't leave!

POPPY. Watch me.

JUDITH. Sit down!

WOMAN. I know, it sounds crazy.

MAN. That doesn't sound crazy at all.

WOMAN. Really?

MAN. Really.

(They are interrupted by a commotion from offstage. EDWARD, AL, VINCE, and JIMMY stumble on; they are breathless and disoriented. They search the restaurant, before locating MAN and rushing over to him.)

EDWARD, AL, and VINCE. *(Ad lib to MAN, for example:)* Oh man, sorry we're late. We got stuck in traffic. The drapes caught on fire and we couldn't find the extinguisher. There were 5 seconds left in the game and man, talk about clutch free throws! Jimmy lost his blanket. *(etc.)*

(The MEN silence when they notice MAN and WOMAN's relative comfort with one another. The two chat easily, with direct eye contact during the following.)

VINCE. What are you *doing*, man?

AL. What's it look like he's doing? He's actually TALKING to this chick.

EDWARD. Good lord!

AL. Oh man. Don't you remember what happened last time?

VINCE. Looks like we're headed for friend mode again.

(JIMMY, noticing the WOMEN, tugs on VINCE's sleeve, trying to get his attention.)

EDWARD. Direct eye contact! This is most extraordinary.

AL. Whatever, man. May as well give it up and head back to the apartment. I think we can still catch the end of WWF Raw. *(Consults his watch.)* WHOA! Is today the sixteenth? We are missing the *game!*

(JIMMY continues his attempts to grab the attention of the other men. Finally, as the other men are preparing to leave in frustration, he points towards the women.)

JIMMY. *(Whispering:)* Look over there!

(The MEN look to see the astonished WOMEN.)

EDWARD. Gentlemen, perchance we should extend our stay.

(AL and VINCE acknowledge that their exact matches are sitting across the room.)

EDWARD. *(Trying to hail the WAITER:)* Garçon!

VINCE. What are you doing?

EDWARD. Propriety requires us to secure a table at a proper distance, thus assuring appropriate—

AL. I think propriety's sending you some signals right now.

(VICTORIA is gazing wistfully at EDWARD. Upon his turning to meet her gaze, she quickly hides behind her fan. She purposely drops her handkerchief in front of her, in a weak attempt to appear as if it were an accident. EDWARD approaches, retrieves the handkerchief, and presents it to her.)

EDWARD. *(To VICTORIA:)* Madam, would you allow me the privilege of escorting you outside?

VICTORIA. *(Regaining her composure:)* My dear sir, the pleasure is mine.

(EDWARD offers VICTORIA his arm, and they exit together. VINCE sidles over to POPPY. He grabs a flower out of the vase on the table, puts it behind his back, then presents it to her.)

VINCE. Nice legs. Wanna dance?

POPPY. Um. *(Giggles.)* Okay!

(VINCE brings his hand to the side of POPPY's face, their eyes locked. POPPY grabs the flower with her teeth. VINCE dips her (or vice versa) and they tango offstage.)

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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