

WAITING FOR THE SUZUKI-GOULD

A Short Play

By

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CHARACTERS

PERSON 1 (any race, age, etc.): A friend of PERSON 2.

PERSON 2 (any race, age, etc.): A friend of PERSON 1.

SETTING

Bryant Park in New York City in the spring of 2020, during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ACT ONE

Scene One

(It's a sunny spring afternoon. PERSON 1, wearing a mask, walks in front of the Gertrude Stein statue in Bryant Park and sits on a bench. Just out of sight beside them is a ramp leading up to the park terrace.)

(PERSON 1 sees their friend, PERSON 2, also wearing a mask, and rises to meet them. PERSON 2 approaches and they awkwardly wave, unsure of how affectionately they should greet each other – it's a pandemic, after all.)

PERSON 1

It's so good to see you!

PERSON 2

I know! Can you believe this shit?

PERSON 1

I know!

(An ambulance SIREN sounds in the background as 2 takes a seat and 1 sits, too.)

(PERSON 1 notices a necklace on the ground. They pick it up, look at it, show PERSON 2, then pocket it. They both sit quietly for a moment.)

(PERSON 1 sanitizes their hands with a small bottle they carry with them. They offer it to 2 and they take some, too.)

(PERSON 1 goes to remove their mask then looks at 2 to make sure it's OK. They nod in agreement and they remove their masks, albeit tentatively.)

(Also, they reckon they're not quite six feet apart, so they move to the ends of their respective sides of the bench.)

(Out of sight of the audience but visible to both 1 and 2 is the arrival of a family, which has just come up the ramp onto the terrace before them. Together, 1 and 2 watch, transfixed.)

PERSON 2
(softly to 1)

Are you seeing this?

PERSON 1
(mesmerized)

Am I ever.

(They watch for a moment then their eyes follow along as the family exits the park.)

PERSON 2

What was that?

(Craning their necks to keep watching the departing family.)

PERSON 1
I don't know. But I want to see it again.

(BLACKOUT)

End scene.

SCENE TWO

(It's another day in the park. PERSON 1 sits on the bench. They wave to PERSON 2, who is walking toward them, and they greet each other in their usual spot by Gertrude Stein. Before taking their seat, however, 2 looks out over the ramp to see if their new friends might be on their way. PERSON 1, holding a paper bag, looks at them expectantly, but 2 shakes their head no and joins 1 on the bench.)

(That SIREN sounds again somewhere in the distance.)

(PERSON 1 takes a bagel from the paper bag and hands it to 2, then takes one for themselves. Before they begin eating, they sanitize their hands – a new ritual akin to saying grace. Then they shimmy to their respective sides of the bench and start eating.)

(A moment later the family arrives. PERSON 1 and PERSON 2's body language changes immediately as they watch the family in action – once again, they're mesmerized – and begin telling each other the family's story.)

PERSON 2

The father...

PERSON 1

John Ellis Bennington Gould, or *John E.B. Gould*...

PERSON 2

... is a successful art dealer. And his wife, Yuki Suzuki...

PERSON 1

... is his business partner. Their child...

PERSON 2

Terry Ellis?

PERSON 1

They are a germaphobe, and may be on the spectrum...

PERSON 2

They are most definitely on the spectrum.

PERSON 1

... and have gender-identity issues that have positively befuddled their father.

PERSON 2

Yes... and *Yuki Suzuki*?

PERSON 1

Lupus. She's having a hard time getting...

PERSON 1/PERSON 2

(in unison)

Hydroxychloroquine.

PERSON 2

And that...

PERSON 1

Yes?

PERSON 2

Coupled with John E.B. Gould's opium addiction...

PERSON 1

Which he picked up during those drug-fueled art-buying sprees with Dennis Hopper.

PERSON 2

Yes. There were a lot of drugs in those days...

PERSON 1

There sure were.

PERSON 2

John loves the opium.

PERSON 1

Chasing the dragon.

PERSON 2

You never know when that shit's gonna flare back up.

PERSON 1

No, you most certainly do not.

(PERSON 1 and PERSON 2 are quiet and then, just like that, it's clear they are following the family with their eyes as they walk out of the park. They wordlessly and sadly watch them go.)

(BLACKOUT)

End scene.

SCENE THREE

(Once more, on another day, 1 and 2 sit on the bench, awaiting the arrival of the Suzuki-Goulds. They wait and fret, nervously glancing over to the ramp to see if they're coming.)

PERSON 2

Maybe Terry Ellis' zoom piano lesson ran late?

PERSON 1

Yuki Suzuki's online gentle yoga class hasn't ended yet.

PERSON 2

That could be.

PERSON 1

She's just starting savasana.

PERSON 2

Yes, that's it. That has to be it!

(The faraway sound of PROTESTERS marching in the street grows louder.)

PERSON 2 — CON'T.

They'll come soon.

PERSON 1

But they're coming, right?

PERSON 2

Of course, they're coming. Why wouldn't they come?

(They look at each other, unsure and afraid.)

(BLACKOUT)

End scene.

SCENE FOUR

(It's yet another day. PERSON 1 and PERSON 2 sit anxiously on the bench, closer together now, but rising occasionally to take turns looking like sentinels over the ramp to watch for the Suzuki-Goulds. But they don't come. Still, they wait. Until, finally...)

PERSON 2

And if they don't come?

PERSON 1

We'll come back Saturday.

PERSON 2

And then the day after?

PERSON 1

Possibly.

PERSON 2

And so on?

(PERSON 1 withdraws the talisman from their pocket; the necklace 1 & 2 discovered on the day they first saw the Suzuki-Goulds – or *think* they saw them. PERSON 1 places it between them on the bench. They and PERSON 2 look at the necklace, then at each other. It's time to go.)

(SIRENS and PROTESTERS sound in the distance and make their way toward them. The sounds grow louder.)

PERSON 1

And so on...

(PERSON 1 and PERSON 2 rise and take one last glance at the ramp, then they put on their masks and slowly make their way out of the park, each going in a different direction.)

(BLACKOUT)

THE END