

The Fair Foul

A 10-minute play

By Kym Fraher

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Characters

HEATHER -- once a grunge princess but now a corporate zombie, appreciates the irony of this though, resentful that this is where her choices have taken her

JEN -- a little less self-aware than Heather but in a similar boat, eager to prove that she can still effect change in the world

PAM -- Along for the ride with her friends but not as enthusiastic about making a strong point, but can still be influenced by peer pressure

MATT -- young man who expects great things from the world, brought up in a world that told him that those expectations were valid, has not had any experiences to refute that idea

A slightly untidy and unclean break room of a mid-sized company. HEATHER, JEN, and PAM are eating at a table. They are all Gen X'ers, and are beginning to experience the grey hair and extra pounds of middle age.

HEATHER

The worst isn't even the night sweats, which are horrendous, but it's the fact that when I walk down the street, I'm invisible.

PAM

How do you mean?

HEATHER

No one notices me. Women see me, of course, but absolutely no man acknowledges me.

JEN

But isn't it a relief to not have to deal with the cat calls?

HEATHER

It's not about verbal harassment--of course I don't miss that--I mean that literally, no man seems to know that I'm even corporal. Last week, I was walking on the right side of the sidewalk, and some guy, maybe in his 20's, late teens--I can't tell anymore--slammed right into me like he didn't see me coming.

JEN

Was he on his phone?

HEATHER

Yea, but he was still navigating around everybody else on the sidewalk. It was on Michigan Avenue for Christ's sake. There were a lot of other people everywhere.

PAM

I know what you mean. When my husband's buddies are over on Sundays to watch football, they get talking--it can get raunchy, y'know. But whenever my daughter walks into the room, they make an effort to tone it down--which is good cuz it's my house and you need to respect my daughter. But whenever I walk in the room, they don't stop. I don't think they think of me as female anymore.

JEN

And if you bring that up to them, they say, "Women's rights" like the only reason that feminism exists is so that men can be dickheads around women.

HEATHER

I just want to do something that confirms that we still exist, that we can still make change in the world.

JEN

I know what you mean.

They return to their lunches. MATT enters the break room. He eyes the snack machine, unsure if he has enough money for what he wants.

PAM

(loud whisper)

What about him?

JEN

What *about* him?

HEATHER

Isn't that Matt Carter? One of the hotshot interns from Northwestern?

PAM

Why is it that every intern we get around here is from Northwestern?

HEATHER

It's a pipeline. Obviously someone in HR is an alumnus.

JEN

Who's he working for?

HEATHER

Donaldson, in marketing teams. He really likes him. Says he's ambitious, going places.

PAM

So he's working directly with Donaldson?

HEATHER

Yea, they're thick as thieves, I hear. I wonder how much Mr. D confides in him about some of his famous rumored "discrepancies" with the books.

JEN

Why would he do that?

HEATHER

(shrugs)

Older men like to brag to younger men about what they can get away with. It's a show of power.

JEN

Isn't he supposed to be dating some famous influencer or something.

PAM

Mr. Donaldson is dating an influencer??

JEN

No, Matt is. Supposedly.

HEATHER

(rolls her eyes)

Ugh. Figures.

PAM

Hey, what if we help young Matt along?

HEATHER

What do you mean?

PAM

What if we encourage him, prod him along. We could, I don't know, plant some ideas into his head about what he can accomplish here, at the company, at our office.

JEN

Be agents for good? How boring.

HEATHER

Yea, I'm with Jen. Isn't that the trope of helpful older women setting up everyone else for success? Count me out. I've been a shit-stirrer all my life, and I've got no inclination to change that now.

PAM

Great, so let's encourage him.

JEN

Weren't you listening? We just said that we don't want to do that.

PAM

No, I mean we *encourage* him--build him up. Make him think he's entitled to the top spot without having to go up the usual rungs on the ladder.

Fill his head with grandiose thoughts that he alone *deserves* it. It's what every voice in our culture tells every young man anyway. We'll just echo it. Say the quiet parts out loud.

HEATHER

Stir the shit.

JEN

Stir the shit.

HEATHER

We need to get his trust, and I know just what to do. Mr. Donaldson was talking about hiring him for the west coast marketing team soon anyway.

HEATHER turns to address MATT, who is still pondering the vending machine.

HEATHER

Hey, you're Matt, right?

MATT

Yea!

HEATHER

I work for Mr. Donaldson, I'm part of the marketing team for the east coast. I'm Heather. And these are my colleagues, Pam and Jen. They work down the hall.

HEATHER extends her hand. MATT shakes it.

MATT

How you ladies doing?

JEN

We're good. Hey, I wanted to let you know that we have friends in HR and a little birdie told us that you are going to be offered a sweet deal soon. Congratulations!

MATT

I am? That's, that's great!

PAM

Yes, but you didn't hear it from us. Word is that Corporate is very impressed with the work you've been doing for Mr. Donaldson.

MATT

Yea, well, y'know, he's a good teacher.

JEN

(leans in conspiratorially)

Yes, but he's getting kind of old. And I know that Corporate really likes to keep things fresh for our clients.

MATT

They do? I mean, yea, I guess that makes sense.

HEATHER

And if you play your cards right, you just might end up in his seat someday.

MATT

Wow. That would be great, but unfortunately, jobs in this company seem pretty scarce. No one ever leaves.

PAM

Mmm. Mostly. But I'm sure you'll find a way.

SCENE 2

Same break room. Three months later. PAM and JEN are eating their packed lunches while HEATHER is doing needlework.

PAM

No.Way.

JEN

That's right. He ratted out Mr. D to Corporate. Donaldson's been removed pending an investigation into his "financial irregularities." Apparently you were right, Heather, Mr. D. did reveal everything to treacherous young Matt.

PAM

And he got stabbed in the back for it.

HEATHER

Sneaky bastard. Hey, what's in your soup? It smells great.

PAM

It's vegetable soup, but I add lot of weird stuff to it. Enhances the flavor. I'll bring you the recipe.

HEATHER

Great, thanks. Oww! Shit!

JEN

You alright?

HEATHER

Yea, I pricked the stupid needle on my thumb.

HEATHER sucks her injured thumb, as Pam stirs her soup thoughtfully, and JEN takes another bite of sandwich. MATT enters the break room and approaches the vending machine once again. Only this time, he easily has the cash ready to feed into the machine and moves with confidence.

JEN

Hey, look, it's our boy, the conqueror.

MATT senses that he is being addressed.

MATT

Hello ladies. How's it going?

HEATHER

It's going. We heard about your promotion. Hail to thee. Nice job.

PAM

That was quick.

MATT

Yea, well, Corporate appreciates when employees are honest, and I guess there was something, uh, I don't know, tainted, about what Mr. Donaldson was up to.

JEN

Wow.

MATT

(fake sincerity)

I know, right? Who would've suspected that about Mr. D, y'know? Jeez. I guess you never know about people.

HEATHER

I'd watch out if I were you.

MATT

What do you mean?

HEATHER

The Burnham office is our main competition, and they are always trying to out-do us with sales figures and client satisfaction surveys and such. So, if they get wind of anything...tricksy going on, here, in our location, they will *destroy* us.

MATT

That's precisely why it was so...*honorable* that someone reported Mr. D, about what he was doing with the books. We can't have that kind of...Honesty's a virtue, you know.

PAM

And so is ambition, amirite?

MATT

Totally.

JEN

There are other new hires, just as ambitious as you though.

MATT

I already know everyone in my intern class, and believe me, they aren't that ambitious.

HEATHER

Ahh, but watch out for other interns, not everyone's from your alma mater here. And some of them are just as qualified, maybe even more than you are.

MATT

(scoffs)

I don't think they even hire anyone who isn't Northwestern alumni around here, so what you're saying, it's not really a thing. Besides, this position, this job, fits me perfectly. I don't want to brag, but I totally deserve this. My girlfriend has been encouraging me to put myself out there since forever, then I did, and look at where I am! Listen, I gotta go. Lots of important things to get done! See you ladies later!

MATT leaves.

HEATHER

Ugh. We created a monster.

JEN

He thinks he's a king.

PAM

Tyrant, is more like it.

JEN

Whelp. That which we create, we can also destroy. What about that new hire from Team 2 in west coast marketing? What's her name--Susie, Sarah?

HEATHER

Do you mean Samantha Banks?

JEN

Yea, wasn't she the only intern we've had who wasn't from Northwestern? Where's she from, University of Illinois, or something like that?

PAM

I think that's right.

JEN

If I recall correctly, she's actually really good too and not as obnoxious as King Matt.

PAM

Exactly.

HEATHER

Well, ladies, We have a new plan.

SCENE 3

Two weeks later. In the break room, with HEATHER and JEN seated at the table. The break room is noticeably more tidy and clean than in the previous scenes. The women are also more neatly dressed. PAM approaches the table from the vending machine, soda can in hand.

PAM

When did you say--I couldn't hear you over the vending machine...

HEATHER

Kelly in HR said that they're scheduled to get here in about an hour.

JEN

We're ready for them in my office. And someone cleaned in here for once.

PAM

It always looks better when corporate comes to call. We scramble to tidy up before they visit, and then it all falls apart once they're gone again. What a waste of time.

HEATHER

You know what else Kelly told me? She said that the people from the Burnham branch are coming too.

JEN

You're kidding.

HEATHER

I am not.

JEN

Those shits. They've just been lying in wait for someone to screw up over here so they can take over.

PAM

And now they have us.

HEATHER

They're not coming for us.

As if conjured, MATT enters the room in a panic. The confidence and polish from Scene 2 is gone, replaced by a dirty shirt, messed hair and dark circles under his eyes. He's a mess.

MATT

Oh my god, here you are, you've got to help me.

HEATHER

Help you do what?

MATT

The books. I, I didn't know how to fill out the logs, so I just put them aside. I just shoved everything into a corner and took meetings--WHY ARE THERE SO MANY MEETINGS? WHY CAN'T EVERYBODY JUST SEND EMAILS?

JEN

You didn't fill out any logs at all? You've been on that job for two months!

MATT

I know, I know, and I thought I could do it. It seemed so easy. But then I was in charge, and it wasn't easy at all. Oh god, I totally messed everything up! Listen, you ladies have been around here for a long time/

PAM

/hey, watch it/

MATT

/and you know how stuff is run. So maybe you could look at the books/

JEN

/Look at the books? Boy, it's too late now.

MATT

But Corporate...

HEATHER

You know, the Burnham office is coming today too, along with Corporate. They're coming to look at the books, specifically.

MATT

Oh my god, I'm such a farce! My girlfriend just left me and now this! It's all been for nothing!

He sits down at the table in an empty chair and starts to cry.

PAM

Relax. It's not the end of the world.

HEATHER

Yea, that's right. There's always tomorrow.

MATT

(searching for hope)

Tomorrow?

JEN reaches out to take his hand.

JEN

Tomorrow.

END OF PLAY