

MYSTERY SPOT

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980 Middlefield Road • Berkeley • CA • 94708
510-704-8855 • salyons@playcafe.org

Characters:

Dingo: 19 - 21 yo male

Liz: 20 - 23 yo female

Shirley: 65 yo. female

Sylvia Plath: 30 yo female

Ensemble: Five actors, male and female of various ages. Characters include tourists at the Mystery Spot and the critic.

For reading: Ensemble can be reduced to two actors.

Set:

The set is white blocks upon which geometric lines are projected, suggesting the Santa Cruz Mystery Spot. The geometric lines produce optical illusions, similar to those at the Mystery Spot. The Ponzo Illusion in particular can be utilized. The set and lighting designer should read *The Mystery Spot Illusion and Its Relation to Other Visual Illusions* by Shimamura and Prinzmetal, *Psychological Science*, vol. 10, no. 6, November 1999.

American Psychological Society. Available here:

<http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~wprinz/>

The set and lighting designer should also spend time understanding the "optical illusion room" at the San Francisco Exploratorium as well as visiting the Santa Cruz Mystery Spot.

Props and set pieces:

Ariel by Sylvia Plath, UC Santa Cruz course catalogue, Ikea catalogue, four foot long level, bowling ball, table, a few chairs.

On rise: All cast on stage. Instrumental music plays, appropriate for leaning. After a few bars of music, cast slowly leans. Lights down, then back up. Cast in new formation. Cast slowly leans. Lights down, then back up. Cast in new formation, facing audience head on. Cast slowly leans.

Lights down. Cast exits except for Dingo. Music off. Lights up.

Scene 1

DINGO

I was born and raised in Oroville, California.

I don't live there no more.

Me and all my homies went to Oroville High School. We....

Well look, they weren't really my homies. We would talk like that but we knew to be homies you need to live in a neighborhood with sidewalks. We don't have sidewalks in Oroville. Deep down, we knew we were just posers. Growing up isn't easy.

In high school, I wanted girls so bad I felt like I was gonna explode. It's bad to want. Makes you vulnerable. Makes you act stupid.

By the time I graduated, I was in full flower and ready to pollinate. Mr. Anderson, my history teacher, encouraged me to go to college. Chico State was close by but I was afraid my same jive-ass high school tricks would work on the college girls in Chico. I wanted a challenge. That's what Mr. Anderson said. Don't go for the easy. You'll never grow. Mr. Anderson is, like, the best teacher of all time. He encouraged me to apply to the University of California at Santa Cruz. So I did. And I got in.

My parents were real proud of me.

Santa Cruz. Saint Cruz. Saint Cruisin'. A place where if you get really good at cruisin', they canonize you.

You meet girls in the dorms. But my room mate warned me that that could get, you know, awkward.

Excuse me, not girls, "women." Boy that took some getting use to. Here they are, like, my age, but I have to call them women. But they don't call males my age "men." We're "guys." It's okay. I'm cruisin'.

So I try different methods to meet these Santa Cruz women. I quickly hit upon a system that works beautifully, involving a cup of cappuccino, Sylvia Plath and the Ikea catalogue.

I get myself a table out on the quad, see. I have my cappuccino and a bottle of water. I don't like cappuccinos. Maybe I don't totally

understand cappuccinos. Anyway I drink the water and have the cappuccino there as a table ornament.

So, I set the Ikea catalogue out on the table, away from me, so it is clear that I'm not using it. But still close enough so it is understood that it is mine. Then I open up this Sylvia Plath book.

This combination is so deadly, it's not even fair.

Now, I'd never heard of Sylvia Plath before. She's apparently a local author? She's like this chick who managed to make a career out of feeling sad.

So, the Ikea catalogue is like blood in the water. It gets 'em circling. Then one of them wants to know if they can look at it. Sure, I say. Then my bait, Sylvia Plath. "Oh, is that Sylvia Plath?" they invariably ask. I reply, "Yeah, it's really intense."

Now, I've learned to never ask "Have you read it?" because no one has, including me. It just gets things off on the wrong foot.

So now they're nibblin' the bait. I just gotta set the hook, which is me.

I'm still working on the hook.

Enter LIZ. She pauses at table.
DINGO watches her. LIZ picks up the Ikea catalogue.

Excuse me. I gotta customer.

DINGO takes his place at a table.
Picks up Sylvia Plath book. Looks at it intently.
Moment.

LIZ

Hi.

DINGO

Oh. Hi. Didn't see you there. I must have been totally absorbed in--

LIZ

Oh my God. You're reading *Ariel*?

DINGO

(to audience)

Like shootin' fish in a barrel.

(to Liz)

Yeah. It's really--

LIZ

Intense. Yeah. I must have read that five times.

DINGO

(to audience)

Oh shit.

LIZ

Do you have a favorite?

DINGO

Favorite?

(looks to audience, "help me out here" look)

Ah. Just, ah, the whole thing really.

LIZ

The whole thing?

DINGO

Yeah. You know. The whole story.

LIZ

Story? Really?

DINGO

Yeah. A favorite part is, you know, hard to say.

LIZ

Wow, so you see it as a story?

DINGO

Yeah... ah... it's a great story.

LIZ

Whoa. I never looked at it that way. You know, I just read them as individual poems.

DINGO

(to audience)

Poems?! I thought they were just really short chapters.

LIZ

But you see it as telling a story, a complete story.

DINGO

Yeah.

LIZ

Wow. Yeah. I should revisit it with that in mind.

Thanks.

DINGO

Yeah. Sure.

LIZ

Ariel is on the reading list for one of my classes.

DINGO

Really?

LIZ

Yeah.

DINGO

Huh.

LIZ

Well, see you around.

DINGO

Sure. See you.

LIZ begins to walk away.

DINGO

What class?

LIZ

What?

DINGO

Sylvia Plath. What class is she on the reading list for?

LIZ

Oh. Introduction to Feminisms.

DINGO

Feminisms?

LIZ

You think it should be "Introduction to Feminism," right?

DINGO

Um ...

LIZ

Like there is only one Feminism, right?

DINGO

Well, I --

LIZ

That is like, so ... imperialist.

DINGO

No, you're absolutely--

LIZ

(shakes head)

Men.

Well, bye.

DINGO

Bye.

Exit Liz

Scene 2

DINGO

(walking over to a rack with a bunch of UC Santa Cruz course catalogues.)

I decide to find out where this "Introduction to Feminisms" is held and just happen by when class gets out. Maybe I can try again with her. I don't even know her name.

(grabbing course catalogue, turning to index)

Introduction to art ... to calculus ... to electronic circuits ... to ... here we go. Page 267.

(turns to page 267)

Introduction to Feminisms in the department of ...

You're shittin' me.

Women's Studies. You can take classes in 'em?

(frantically searching for start of Women's Studies section in catalogue)

I just never made it this far back in the catalogue before. I usually lost interest somewhere around "H." Look at this.

YOU CAN MAJOR IN 'EM!

I can't believe this. A class in "Women's culture."

(turning pages of catalogue)

Advanced Topics in Chicana Feminism. Man oh man. Look. Women in Modern China. Psychoanalysis and Women. You gotta know this stuff. African Women. Baby.

(turns page of catalogue. Stops.)

No.

No, come on.

"Independent Field Studies of Women."

I mean, I practically got a degree in this shit already.

UNDECLARED NO MORE!

I'm a Women's Studies Major!

(pause)

And everyone said college was gonna be hard.

Black out

Scene 3

Lights come back up. DINGO is in a different position. He is carrying some books.

DINGO

Man oh man. So I go to my first Introduction to Feminisms class. I expect the class to be full of guys like me. No. The class is like, all women. And they're sorta checkin' me out. I smile and wave.

Have I hit a gold mine or what?

LIZ comes dashing onto stage from opposite direction, also carrying books.

She pauses when she sees Dingo. She circles him, like a shark, not sure what to make of him. He counters her circling.

LIZ

I saw you in class.

DINGO

Yeah.

LIZ

Why didn't you tell me you were taking Introduction to Feminisms?

DINGO

I wasn't. After talking to you I decided to check it out.

LIZ

They say you're a Women's Studies major.

DINGO

Yeah. I just declared.

LIZ

I just declared too.

DINGO

Well. We have something in common.

LIZ

What kind of feminist are you?

DINGO

Uh ...

LIZ

You into Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem?

DINGO

Oh yeah, they're great!

LIZ

Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem are liberal feminists who don't know shit.

DINGO

Well ...

LIZ

You wanna be in the Women's Studies Department, I got some advice for you.

DINGO

Okay.

LIZ and DINGO stop circling.

LIZ

First, this Woman's Studies Department exists within the context of a capitalist and patriarchal educational system. Indeed many of us are here because of male privilege and you must understand that dichotomy.

Second, everything you have read in Betty Friedan you must forget. Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* is the most man-junkie crap ever written. Liberal feminists like Friedan have always focussed on men, and how the women's movement would free men, paying no attention to what they have done to women. What bullshit.

DINGO

(to audience)

I think she likes me.

LIZ

Most of the women in the Women's Studies Department are radical feminists. We know that reforms and legal changes, while ameliorating the condition of women and an essential part of the process of emancipating them, will not basically change patriarchy. Such reforms need to be integrated within a vast cultural revolution in order to transform patriarchy and thus abolish it.

DINGO

(to audience)

And she's real easy to talk to.

LIZ

Oh, and please. Don't even mention Gloria Steinem around here, you'll be totally trashed. Steinem's masculinist propensity to categorize -- to "fix" things with conceptual formaldehyde and pin

them to the wall, properly labeled, of course-- is an age-old male paradigm of control.

And also, frankly, I find her polemic.

Well, see you in class. Bye Dingo.

Exit LIZ

DINGO

(to audience)

Okay, it's clear.

If I'm going to get anywhere with these gals I gotta have money. I need to find a job.

Blackout