WAITING FOR THE MATINEE

A Short Play

By

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WAITING FOR THE MATINEE

CHARACTERS:

ESTELLE, a woman tired of waiting.
VIVIAN, a woman skilled at waiting.

TIME:
Now.

PLACE:
A Theatre.
WAITING FOR THE MATINEE

(Two women, ESTELLE and VIVIAN, sit in the audience of a theatre. The actual audience will sit behind them looking at the auditorium and stage)

(The women read their programs a few more moments. Estelle looks around)

ESTELLE

Nothing to be done.

VIVIAN

Did you read the program?

ESTELLE

I read the program.

VIVIAN

Is it the same as mine?

ESTELLE

Of course it’s the same as yours! They only make one program.

VIVIAN

They who.

ESTELLE

The program printers. The theatre. The graphic people. They.

VIVIAN

Can I see your program?

ESTELLE

You’ve got one.

VIVIAN

I want to see yours.

ESTELLE

You’ve got one!

VIVIAN

Yours may be different.

ESTELLE

They’re not different! Every program for every play is the same.

(MORE)
VIVIAN

Can I see yours?

ESTELLE

You’ve got one!

VIVIAN

Yours may be different. There may be an insert.

ESTELLE

There’s no insert.

VIVIAN

No understudies going on?

ESTELLE

No understudies.

(Pause)

ESTELLE (CONT’D)

Let’s go.

VIVIAN

We can’t.

ESTELLE

Why not?

VIVIAN

We’re waiting for the matinee!

ESTELLE

Ah!

(Pause)

You’re sure there is?

VIVIAN

What.

ESTELLE

A matinee.
The flyer said at two.

(Estelle looks at her watch)

VIVIAN (CONT’D)

Is it two yet?

ESTELLE

Past. If my watch is right.

VIVIAN

Is it right?

ESTELLE

Should be. Is it Daylight Savings?

VIVIAN

I don’t know.

ESTELLE

They shouldn’t have performances on Daylight Savings day. People just show up late or early and get mad.

VIVIAN

Are we late?

ESTELLE

I’d guess early.

VIVIAN

But they gave us tickets.

ESTELLE

They did give us tickets.

VIVIAN

Should we leave?

ESTELLE

The show could start any minute!

(Vivian looks around)

VIVIAN

Not much of a house.

ESTELLE

Maybe we’re early.

VIVIAN

Or late. Maybe it’s over.
ESTELLE

Maybe no one’s coming.

VIVIAN

It is a “classic”.

ESTELLE

Everyone’s seen it.

VIVIAN

No need to sit through that again.

ESTELLE

Or everyone thinks they’ve seen it.

VIVIAN

Read it in college.

ESTELLE

Heard about it from a friend.

VIVIAN

Read the review.

ESTELLE

Learn just enough to have an opinion, to sound knowledgeable at parties, to say “Oh, I heard that was good! I’m so sorry I missed that!”

VIVIAN

But only spend five minutes reading the review.

ESTELLE

Not two-and-a-half hours in the theatre.

VIVIAN

Exactly. Why don’t we do that?

We’re loyal.

ESTELLE

We’re conscientious.

VIVIAN

We’re theatre buffs!

ESTELLE

We’re subscribers!

VIVIAN AND ESTELLE

(Pause.)
ESTELLE
We’re dopes.

VIVIAN
We’re dupes.

ESTELLE
We’re matinee-challenged.

VIVIAN
We have lousy seats.

ESTELLE
I wonder if today’s a Monday. Do they even do shows on Monday?

VIVIAN
Maybe the show closed.

(Pause.)

Maybe it got poor notices and closed.

(Pause.)

Maybe it got poor notices and the lead actor hung himself from the curtain puller rope and he’s dead and it closed.

(Pause)

Maybe—

ESTELLE
Maybe you should read your program again.

(Pause. They flip through their programs. Pause.)

ESTELLE (CONT’D)
(Holds up a candy)
Do you want a throat lozenge?

VIVIAN
What?

ESTELLE
A throat lozenge. To keep your cough under control.

VIVIAN
I don’t have a cough.

ESTELLE
You might develop one. You might start hacking in the middle of a crucial quiet scene of great depth. Then what would your fellow theatre patrons think?

VIVIAN
I’ll open my candy then.
ESTELLE
My god, woman! Have you been deaf these past five years!? Open your candy NOW! BEFORE the show starts! Haven’t you been paying ANY attention?!

VIVIAN
I must have been talking on my cell phone.

ESTELLE
EEEP!!

VIVIAN
It’s set to ring very loudly-

ESTELLE
Vivian!!

VIVIAN
As is my pager.

ESTELLE
VIVIAN!!

VIVIAN
(Holds up a camera)
And I have my photographic equipment!

(Estelle covers Vivian’s mouth)

ESTELLE
Oh. My. God.

VIVIAN
Mmph.

ESTELLE
Do you realize what you just said??

VIVIAN
Mmph-mmph.

ESTELLE
(Looking around, yelling out, desperate)
She didn’t mean it!

VIVIAN
Mm-mph?

ESTELLE
(Calling out)
Ha Ha! A little joke! Ha ha Ha Ha!
(Pause. Estelle collapses in her seat, head in hands)

VIVIAN
What?

ESTELLE
You see what you’ve done? They’ll never start the show now! Never! Never! There’s an usher coming to take us away even as we speak! We’re doomed!

(Pause. They wait.)

(Vivian attempts a little clap. Pause. Vivian claps harder.)

ESTELLE (CONT’D)
What are you doing now?

VIVIAN
Showing we’re a good audience. The kind of enthusiastic appreciative audience they want.
(Claps harder)
Bravo! Encore!

(Estelle joins in the clapping. The cheer -- leap to their feet, laughing, crying, wiping tears and clapping... Then they sit down expectantly)

ESTELLE
(Quietly)
Do you think it worked?

VIVIAN
I don’t see any ushers.
(Looks at the stage)
I don’t see any actors either.

ESTELLE
What if this is the wrong theater?

What?

VIVIAN
What?

ESTELLE
What if this is the wrong theater? What if, on the very next stage in the very next auditorium, the audience is convulsing with laughter at the antics of some lovable yet touching characters we can all relate to?

(Pause. They listen)
VIVIAN
I don’t hear anything.

ESTELLE
Maybe it’s a quiet moving part. Maybe you can hear a pin drop waiting for the next line.

(Pause. They listen)

VIVIAN
I think this is definitely the right theater.

How do you know?

ESTELLE

VIVIAN
I recognize the room. This is where we saw that really wonderful play.

Which one?

ESTELLE

VIVIAN
The funny one! The one that made us laugh and laugh and we fell in love with the characters and then we realized they were facing some hard truths. And we cried. But they were good tears. Cathartic tears of hope and recognition. Remember? One of the best experiences of my life. Two-and-a-half hours I’ll treasure forever.

ESTELLE
That was here?

VIVIAN
I remember the theater! The chairs were here. We sat here. The actors were on the stage over there. There were walls -- the lights hung from the ceiling! Remember! The aisles and the cushioned chairs all facing the stage! Remember?

ESTELLE
You’re sure that was this theater?

VIVIAN
What other theater could it have been? Show me another theater like that!

(Pause)

ESTELLE
I thought this was where we saw that very bad play.

VIVIAN
What play?
ESTELLE
The one with the horrible exposition and the stilted dialogue with the characters that made no sense and that ugly set -- I don’t even know what that set meant -- we left at intermission. Or we would have if there had been an intermission. It was awful. Worst experience of my life. Two-and-a-half hours I’ll never get back.

VIVIAN
That was here?

ESTELLE
I remember the theater. It was hell.

VIVIAN
What if this play is bad too? Maybe we should leave now.

ESTELLE
But... what if it’s brilliant?

VIVIAN
We won’t know ’til we’ve seen it.

ESTELLE
That’s a very big gamble.

VIVIAN
Very big. Safer to watch T.V.

ESTELLE
Remote control.

VIVIAN
Not going well, abandon ship!

ESTELLE
Something good must be on.

VIVIAN
Somewhere.

VIVIAN AND ESTELLE
Let’s go home and watch television!

(They stand)

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Ladies and Gentlemen. Today’s performance of “Waiting for Godot” will commence momentarily. Thank you for your patience. Enjoy the show.

(Pause. Estelle and Vivian sit back down)
VIVIAN

That’s comforting.

ESTELLE

At least we know we’re in the right theater.

VIVIAN

They kept us waiting long enough.

ESTELLE

Well, that’s our job.

(Pause.)

Isn’t it?

VIVIAN

What.

ESTELLE

We’re the audience. This is what we do. We show up. We wait in line, we wait for the lights to go down, we wait for the curtain to go up, the actors to enter, to speak, wait to see what happens next, how it will end, wait in line to leave the theatre, wait to leave the parking lot. And then we wait for the next play.

VIVIAN

There’s something noble in that.

ESTELLE

It is a great responsibility. To do it well. To be always ready. To keep an open mind.

VIVIAN

Waiting for a peak experience.

ESTELLE

An epiphany.

(Pause)

VIVIAN

Still, this does seem to be pushing it.

Well, shall we go?

ESTELLE

VIVIAN

Yes. Let’s go.

(They do not move)

END OF PLAY