

The Flood
A Play in One Act

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Un-Scripted Theater Company of San Francisco

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Topic idea by Paul Heller

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Cast

The Hosts:

Sylvia –

Michael, her husband and Jeff's brother –

Cathy, their daughter, a high school senior –

The Visitors:

Dora –

Jeff (Duke), her husband and Michael's brother –

Zeb (Jeff Junior), their son, seventeen –

Setting: A suburb in the Midwest.

Time: The present.

Scene 1

Michael and Sylvia's living room/dining room. The front door lead directly into the room which contains two couches piled with bedding. Off is a kitchen and bath. Stairs lead to a second floor.

Sylvia enters from the kitchen as Michael, Jeff and Dora enter through the front door, in mid conversation. Dora and Jeff's clothes are ill-fitting as they are donated. Each carries a hefty bag.

Dora – The water came up to the attic.

Michael – Welcome to chateau de living room.

Sylvia – It's good to see you, Dora, I wish it were under other circumstances.

Dora – I was telling Michael, we had to run up floor by floor until we reached the attic.

Michael – Jeff, Dora–

Dora – (interrupting) One minute. We were under water. The whole house. "Storm of the century". Something for the history books.

Jeff – Why don't you sit down, darling? Hello, Sylvia.

Sylvia – Jeffrey, welcome. Why don't you put your things back there.

Jeff – I'll just put them in front here.

Dora – We've brought almost nothing. It's not like we're going to take over – three bags that's all we have. I looked down the staircase and I saw my living room underwater, the furniture was floating like . . .

(Sylvia hugs Dora.)

Michael – Jeff, Dora --

Dora – (interrupting) The ottoman was bobbing along. Who knew it could float? I certainly didn't.

(beat)

Cathy – Where's Zeb?

Dora – He's safe, sweetheart.

Sylvia – What is a Zeb?

Cathy – Their son.

Sylvia – Zeb?

Jeff – He's in the car.

Sylvia – Jeff junior?

Cathy – He's Zeb now.

Sylvia – How do you know?

Cathy – Facebook. Keep up, Mother.

Dora – We crawled through the attic window into a row boat.

Jeff – It was Dora's idea. (to Dora) I wouldn't know what to do without you.

Dora – And that woman charged us our last dollar.

Jeff – So Christian-like. If this world were run the right way, she'd be stoned to death. I should have beat her over the head with her oars the minute she grabbed our things.

Michael – Ooo-kay. Jeff, Dora, this is your home now. You're welcome here. We want you to live with us as long as you need.

Jeff – And then thrown her body into the water.

Dora – This is so -

Michael – It's nothing.

Dora – It's everything.

Michael – We’re family. It’s what people have to do. We have to take in our own in this day and age. Our family blended with yours. This is how we’ll live: we thought we’d give you this room. This living room is yours.

Sylvia – We’ll share the kitchen.

Michael – That’s your bathroom through there, we had a shower put in, good thing, right?

Sylvia – Upstairs – that’s ours.

Dora – Of course, you need your privacy.

Sylvia – You know, what they say about good walls, so I think we should observe these . . . um . . . borders.

Dora – Oh, Cathy, I walked right by you. Oh, sweetheart, you’re so beautiful and so . . . you’ve got boobs!

Cathy – Aunty!

Dora – You grew them yourself. They’re beautiful. You must be so proud.

Cathy – Oh, everyday.

Dora – I’m sorry, I have no filter.

Sylvia – That’s all right, my best friend has no filter.

Dora – Oh, can I meet her? (to Cathy) And you’re beautiful and everything – our whole neighborhood is–

Jeff – Dora, are you okay? Sweetheart, come sit down.

(Jeff and Dora sit, holding hands.)

Sylvia – Do you need anything now?

Dora – Where to begin?

Sylvia – Here’s blankets, towels, some soap.

Dora – Nothing. We’re all safe.

Cathy – Why's Zeb in the car?

Michael – A little drama on the ride over, so he's not coming in now.

Cathy – But this is his home.

Dora – He'll come in his own time.

Jeff – Listen, you don't need to baby him, he's fine.

Michael – He's a little upset.

Jeff- He's not upset, he's just being dramatic.

(Cathy exits out front door.)

Jeff – Dad's place looks really nice. You keeping the place up? Painting every year? I want to take a look at the gutters for you.

Sylvia – We think of it as our place now.

Jeff – Sure, well Dad did give it to you.

Sylvia – Well, technically we bought it.

Jeff – Well, technically you only bought my half.

Michael – Yes, I – yes, but think of it as your home for now, too.

Jeff – I see the molding's coming loose up there. Where's your tools? I'll have it fixed in no time.

Dora – Duke can jerry-rig anything, Sylvia, you wouldn't believe he's not a general contractor. If you have anything, anything at all that needs a little jiggle or squirt of oil – he really wants to give back.

Sylvia – Tea?

Dora – Oh, tea! Please!

Sylvia – Lapsang souchong or Iron Buddha?

Dora – Oh. Um . . . Buddha sounds . . .

(Sylvia exits to kitchen)

Jeff – Mikey, do you mind if I put one thing up?

Michael – Wow, that’s a big crucifix.

Jeff – I unburied the Baptist inside of us and my life’s been blessed.

Michael – Why don’t we hold off on–

Jeff – Mikey, I’m sorry. I’m sorry. If you already have a crucifix on a wall somewhere, that would be fine.

Michael – Can’t say that we do.

Jeff – Then that solves that issue. Mikey, we were saved many, many times in the flood.

Dora – I haven’t slept a night without this hanging close.

Michael – Of course. How about over in the corner.

Jeff – How about here.

(Jeff takes down a portrait and puts up his crucifix.
Sylvia enters with tea.)

Sylvia – That’s grandma’s portrait. Jeff, I’d like you to put her back, please.

Jeff – I’m sorry, of course, if I can just get clarification on one point. I understood this to be our room.

(beat)

Sylvia – Can my grandmother not touch the floor, please?
Jeff, can you pick up Grandma, please.

Michael – Let me take her. (beat) Honey, where do you want–

Sylvia – (interrupting) Put her on the stairs.

Jeff – Sylvia, I’m sorry, I was saying, this crucifix was our strength. I believe a person can feel its power if you’ll just let yourself.

Michael – This is a change, Jeff.

Jeff – Been five years for me.

Dora – Took me a little longer. I’d love some tea, Sylvia, can I pour?

Sylvia – Not yet. When the timer goes, it’s ready. The leaves aren’t at all forgiving.

Dora – You’re quite interested in tea, aren’t you?

Sylvia – Yes. Are you hungry? We have chicken soup, Grandma’s chicken soup.

Michael – We can take some out to – um in the car.

Dora – Zeb. His name now is Zeb.

Jeff – Long story. Long, complex story. Of course.

(Timer goes off.)

Dora – (hopeful) Tea?

Sylvia – One more minute. Soup’s on.

Jeff – Great

(Sylvia and Michael exit to kitchen.)

Dora (whisper) – Are you sure he cleared it with them?

Jeff – I’m sure he did. Mickey’s not the strongest decision-maker in the world. This wouldn’t just be his decision.

Dora – She’s impossible. I’m getting my tea.

(Dora pours tea for herself quickly, drinks it and puts the cup back before Sylvia and Michael enter with two bowls of soup.)

Michael – It's still very hot.

Sylvia – Here's parmesan.

Jeff – Aren't you eating?

Michael – We ate before. We weren't sure when you were arriving.

Dora – Oh, sorry.

Michael – No, no, your house got destroyed in the flood.

Sylvia – And your car

Michael – --got destroyed in the flood. Everything got destroyed. All you own in life.

Sylvia – (to Michael, slight warning) Sweetheart. . .

Dora – Could we stop talking about destroyed in the flood.

Jeff – Regardless, families eat together.

Michael – Sure.

(CATHY enters.)

Cathy – He won't come in. He said he won't come in because we don't get him and we don't want him anyway.

Jeff – I don't know what he's talking about. You reached out, I took your hand. How is that 'not wanting him'? Blood is thicker than any water that comes over my head, I said that about a hundred times.

Dora – You did.

Jeff – He's just grouching.

Cathy – I think you need to listen to him.

Jeff – Oh, believe me, we’ve been listening.

Sylvia – Cathy, can you take some out to . . . Zeb?

Dora – Actually, he’s vegetarian.

Sylvia – Oh, really?

Jeff – (interrupting) Zeb doesn’t eat things. Just chop up some vegetables for him, he’ll be fine.

Michael – I was a vegetarian.

Sylvia – For thirty-six hours. (to Dora) He’s going to be cold out there.

Michael – Actually, the seats are leather, we can warm them up. He’ll be comfortable, sort of.

Jeff – Just tell him they’re leather, he’ll be right in. Won’t touch anything that moos or chews.

Jeff – We need more chairs.

Michael – We’ll just hover.

Jeff – No, no, we’ll gather around to say grace.

Michael – Oh, we don’t need to say grace.

Jeff – (Big laugh) – Please, allow me to say grace, you’ve given us so much.

Jeff – Take the hand of the person next to you.

Sylvia – Oh, we’re doing that?

Jeff – Dear Lord, for the clouds You have dispersed, for bringing us under this roof that was once our father’s, we thank You.

Michael – Okay. Thanks.

Jeff – And for all the storms that make us stronger. Amen.

Dora – Amen.

Michael – That was very meteorological.

Dora – Mmm. This is delicious, so much better than MRE's in a Red Cross tent.

Jeff – So tax dollars: waste of money. I wouldn't pay for the red cross to do anything. You couldn't get a decent cup of coffee or an extra blanket.

Sylvia – The secret's the parmesan and I pre-roast the vegetables.

Dora – Oh, Pre-roast

Michael – Mom's soup is famous.

Sylvia – It's really my grandma's soup, the lady on the stairs. Seconds?

Dora – No, thank you.

Jeff – I'm good.

Michael – Would anyone like a drink?

Jeff – I could use one.

Michael – Ok, some California red for everyone. A toast. To us. I have a, not a prayer, but a hope, a wish if you will, Jeffrey?

Jeff – Yes, Mikey?

Michael – Here's the thing –

Sylvia – Losing daylight, here, Sweetie.

Michael – Ok, I don't know your, well never mind that, it's, can, I'd like to offer you a – well, a way forward, a job, a kind of a you know back at the company. There. I hope you'll take it.

(Zeb enters.)

Michael – Are you all right?

Jeff – Oh, good God.

Sylvia – Sweetheart, are you cold? Hungry? Sick? Would you like some sandwiches?

Zeb – Zeb's good. I'm going to sleep in the garage, okay?

Dora – This is our room. That's your bedding.

Zeb – You good with this, Dad?

Jeff – I don't know another way, here, Jeff.

Zeb – Zeb.

Jeff – Whatever.

Zeb – How come we're not in some motel or something?

Dora – Sweetheart . . .

Jeff – I don't have . . . we don't have the um . . . I can't get my hands on cash just now.

Zeb – No, no, no, no. The government guy said we could go to a motel thirty days for free.

Dora – Stop punishing your father.

Michael – I know this is really, really hard, but this is your home now.

Cathy – Fascinating as all this is, I do have college essays.

(Cathy exits upstairs.)

Zeb – Can I sleep in the garage?

Michael – Do your parents say okay? Sure, sure you can. I'll just um.

(Michael picks up Zeb's bedding, but Zeb takes it from him and exits out the front door.)

Dora – Thank you, Michael.

Jeff – The Lord’s testing him.

Sylvia – (under her breath) And us.

Jeff – All right, Mickey, give us a tour of what you’ve done to Dad’s place.

Michael – Ooo, now?

Jeff – Sure, no time like the present.

Michael – (to Sylvia) Okay, honey, you going to be ok?

Sylvia – I’ll try my best.

Jeff – Maybe grab some tools.

(Michael and Jeff exit the front door.)

Jeff (off) Looks like some shingles coming loose. You still got Dad’s ladder?

(A Beat. Dora begins to clear plates.)

Sylvia – Don’t worry yourself.

Dora – All right. I could help make dinner.

Sylvia – All made.

Dora – Maybe heat the rolls.

Sylvia – I’m sure we’ll come to some arrangement.

Dora – That soup – every time I’m just so . . .

Sylvia – Grandma’s recipe. Except the parmesan – that’s me!

Dora – It’s a nice touch.

Sylvia – Um-hum.

(beat)

Dora – I've tried to make it. It just doesn't come out.

Sylvia – Um-hum.

(beat)

Dora – Could you, could I ask . . . You mustn't judge him too harshly, or at all . . . if possible. That's not possible, I believe, so . . . try to keep it . . . you know . . .

Sylvia – You'll barely hear me over the clash of the Titans.

Dora – Jeff's terrified.

Sylvia – And you?

Dora – Not yet. Someone has to tuck them in at night.

Sylvia – Isn't that Jesus' job?

Dora – Oh, Jesus!

Sylvia – You don't mind Jeff being with Jesus? I mean of course Jesus provides great comfort, especially in times of need.

Dora – Seriously?

Sylvia – I . . . well, I imagine.

Dora – He was either going to be with Jesus or the woman next door.

Sylvia – It's possible he could be with both.

Dora – A child loses a balloon. He cries. You distract him with another toy.

Sylvia – You helped --

Dora – Helped, shoved, forced, threatened.

Sylvia – Threatened?

Dora - It was either her or Jesus. I chose Jesus.

Sylvia - I'm sorry?

Dora - I thought of having an affair with the husband. He was almost as good looking.

Sylvia - As?

Dora - Jesus. But I decided to join Jeff instead.

Sylvia - And did that - um neighbor . . .

Dora - Her house was washed away, ours is still there. Luck?

(Pause.)

Sylvia - Dora.

Dora - Yes?

Sylvia - Could I . . . could I ask you something.

Dora - Please. Anything. Anything at all.

Sylvia - I'm sorry to pry, really sorry,

Dora - I'm sitting on your couch wearing someone's used clothing and my entire household is stuffed into a hefty bag. Pry away.

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