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War and Cake

by
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A one act play for teenagers

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Overview

War and cake is a one act comedy for a teenage cast of eight, though two of the roles could be played by older cast if desired.

It is written to be staged as simply as possible and requires only a single set consisting of two tables and a few chairs.

Synopsis

In an attempt to change his behaviour for the better, Venus, goddess of human relationship resources, wagers Ares, god of war, that he is incapable of doing her job. The unwitting subjects of this bet are a group of young teenagers that rapidly become embroiled in Ares's ever more outlandish and desperate attempts to win.

Cast

ARES	God of war. As arrogant and blindingly stupid as only war could be.
VENUS	Goddess of Love. Now restyled "Human relationship resources". She uses her guile and knowledge to try to change Ares's outlook of life.
GWEN	Teenage girl. She yearns for Michael but is too unsure of herself and wrapped up in a romantic fantasy world to take any effective action.
HELEN	Gwen's friend. Although more experienced and confident she is frustrated by Gwen's inability to live in the world as she sees it.
JEMMA	Carefree and easy going. She is everything that Gwen is not and is the imagined rival of Gwen for the affections of Michael.
MICHAEL	A pleasant, perfectly clueless teenage boy who is terrified of being rejected.
COLIN	Michael's friend. He tries to mentor Michael in the ways of the world even though he has no more experience or insight.
ALEXANDER	The avatar of Ares. Pompous, handsome, vain and arrogant. He neither knows or cares anything about people.

SCENE 1

ARES AND VENUS SIT AT A REFECTORY
TABLE FINISHING THEIR LUNCH.

GWEN SITS ALONE AT ANOTHER TABLE,
EATING A YOGHURT, OBLIVIOUS TO THEIR
PRESENCE.

VENUS I can't believe you actually ate that.

ARES It is food. What is there of belief?

VENUS We are Gods. You are a God. We can span all
time and space within the human domain and yet
you choose this, a lowly refectory in an
undistinguished place of learning.

ARES You forget yourself sister. I am not merely a
god, I am the god.

VENUS Of war.

ARES Of battles, of strife, of conquest. Of blood,
glory, war and thunder. And this, this is food
as it ought to be, food fit for a warrior;
simple, plain, perfunctory-

VENUS And challenging?

ARES There is a certain sense of triumph in its
consumption certainly.

VENUS Victory over a pizza. You make me so proud.

ARES You underestimate the enemy. The topping was
considerably tougher than it looked.

VENUS Not everything has to be a challenge you know,
for instance, have you ever tried eating cake?

ARES No. Never. Should I have?

VENUS Absolutely, everyone should. Especially you.

ARES Then this cake of which you speak; it is a
resolute and stern opponent?

VENUS No you moron. It's not an adversary, it's a
friend, a delicious, soft, spongy friend, kind
to the mouth and a delight to the senses, who's

simple existence and proximity brings happiness and contentment.

ARES Then I shall never know it. Such insignificant trifles interest me not at all.

VENUS Insignificant? Excuse me? Since when is happiness insignificant?

ARES Do not misunderstand me Sister, I do not say this to denigrate you in any way. You are the goddess of love-

VENUS Human relationship resources if you don't mind. I like to move with the times.

ARES As you will it changes nothing. Compared to the glory and power of conflict such trivial emotions as happiness are as nothing. This is a simple fact.

VENUS You really have never eaten cake have you?

ARES No. And I shall make it my business to ensure that I never do.

VENUS That is such a shame you know, eating a bit of cake could really improve you. Open up your eyes to a world of human experience and emotion. Maybe then you'd realise that there are greater challenges and more rewarding trials than just fighting.

ARES Such as "relationship resources" I suppose.

VENUS It would be one example certainly.

ARES You speak nonsense Sister. The forces that draw together men and women are scarcely a mystery and I am well aware of these much vaunted "relationships" that you constantly propound upon.

VENUS Really? Care to bet on that?

ARES By all means. Though it is hardly a wager, my victory is certain. As it always is.

VENUS Indulge me.

ARES Name your field of trial and I shall meet it.

VENUS Very well.

VENUS LOOKS OVER AT GWEN, SITTING
ALONE STIRRING A SMALL POT OF
YOGHURT.

Her.

ARES The girl? That would be a short combat indeed.

VENUS I'm not proposing you fight her you idiot.

ARES Oh. Really? Then what?

VENUS Make her fall in love.

ARES That is your trial?

VENUS That is my trial.

ARES You wish me to simply ensure that this girl
find happiness with a mate.

VENUS Yes.

ARES It is scarcely a trial.

VENUS So you accept?

ARES Why would I not?

VENUS There would be no brute force here. We play by
the ancient rules. No coercion. No revealing
yourself or use of power.

ARES I am aware of the rules.

VENUS So you accept?

ARES LOOKS OVER AT GWEN, HESITATING.

Scared?

ARES Do not be ridiculous. I fear nothing. Your
challenge is accepted.

VENUS Then let us begin.

ARES AND VENUS LEAVE THEIR TABLE.

ARES The heart of a female. This will be simple.

VENUS That's the spirit.

ARES AND VENUS EXIT.

HELEN ENTERS AND SITS AT GWEN'S TABLE
OPPOSITE HER. GWEN CARRIES ON
STIRRING THE YOGHURT AND APPEARS NOT
TO NOTICE.

HELEN Hi.

GWEN Yeah.

HELEN You okay?

GWEN Yeah.

HELEN Okay.

HELEN PUTS HER LUNCH DOWN ON THE
TABLE.

You sure you're okay? You seem a bit, sort of..

GWEN (STOPS STIRRING) What?

HELEN Nothing.

GWEN STARES AT HER YOGHURT, STIRRING
IT SLOWLY AGAIN. SHE TAKES THE SPOON
OUT OVERLOADED WITH YOGHURT AND IS
ABOUT TO EAT.

This isn't about Michael again is it?

GWEN (STOPS SPOON IN MIDAIR, YOGHURT FALLS ON THE
TABLE BY GWEN) No.

HELEN Oh. Right.

GWEN It isn't.

HELEN Fine. Good.

GWEN Why would it be?

HELEN Absolutely no reason at all.

GWEN GOES BACK TO EATING HER YOGHURT,
TRYING TO GET THE LAST SPOONFUL OUT.

GWEN It's just that...

HELEN What?

GWEN TIPS HER HEAD BACK AND UPENDS
THE YOGHURT POT, SCRAPING THE LAST
FEW BITS DIRECTLY INTO HER MOUTH.

GWEN (STILL EATING) Why do people have to be so
gross?

HELEN I don't know. It's a mystery.

GWEN FINISHES EATING AND PUTS DOWN
THE EMPTY YOGHURT POT.

GWEN I mean, take Michael, as you bring him up, just
as an example.

HELEN What's he done?

GWEN Did you see him in the labs?

HELEN Should I have?

GWEN Oh god it was pathetic, he was just all over
Jemma.

HELEN Really? He was?

GWEN Duh! It was all-

JEMMA AND MICHAEL ENTER FROM OPPOSITE
SIDES WEARING LAB COATS AND SAFETY
GOOGLES. THEY MEET IN THE CENTRE.

MICHAEL No one can crystallise sulphates like you
Jemma.

JEMMA (TAKING OFF HER GOGGLES AND SHAKING HER HAIR
LOOSE) It's all about heat.

MICHAEL There is a fire. A flame that burns between us.

JEMMA Yes. I must modulate my bunsen burner.

JEMMA AND MICHAEL EXIT.

HELEN I don't think it was like that at all.

GWEN You don't?

HELEN Not really. It was a bit less...and a bit more...

JEMMA AND MICHAEL ENTER FROM OPPOSITE SIDES WEARING LAB COATS AND SAFETY GOOGLES. THEY MEET IN THE CENTRE.

MICHAEL Turn it down.

JEMMA Shut up.

JEMMA AND MICHAEL EXIT.

GWEN Oh. Well what about all the other stuff?

HELEN What other stuff?

GWEN You know. All the smouldering looks stuff.

HELEN Smouldering looks?

JEMMA AND MICHAEL ENTER FROM OPPOSITE SIDES. THEY CROSS STARING "PASSIONATELY" AT EACH OTHER AND EXIT.

GWEN He does it every time he looks at her.

HELEN Can't say I've really noticed too much of that going on.

GWEN Well what about the other day?

HELEN What about it?

JEMMA AND MICHAEL ENTER FROM OPPOSITE SIDES. THEY MEET IN THE MIDDLE AND MICHAEL OFFERS A CRISP.

MICHAEL Crisp?

JEMMA TAKES THE CRISP AND BITES INTO IT.

JEMMA Cheese and onion. How did you know?

MICHAEL Perhaps it is fate.

JEMMA Please! You mustn't say such things.

MICHAEL No! I must! Jemma, you must allow me to tell you how ardently and passionately I really like you and everything.

JEMMA Please! You mustn't!

MICHAEL I must. I can wait no longer.

JEMMA At least, At least until lunch.

MICHAEL Very well, until then. Then.

JEMMA Yes. Until then. Then. Then.

JEMMA AND MICHAEL EXIT.

HELEN Riiiiiight....Are you sure?

GWEN Yes.

HELEN Really?

GWEN Yes. Why?

HELEN Well.....

GWEN I'm not imagining all this you know.

HELEN Of course not.

GWEN I mean, he looks at her all the time.

HELEN All the time?

GWEN Uh-huh.

HELEN Constantly?

GWEN I think so.

HELEN Okay.

GWEN You don't think it's just me do you?

HELEN NO! No. No. Absolutely definitely not.

GWEN Oh god you do. I'm such an idiot!

GWEN DROPS HER HEAD TO THE TABLE, HER NOSE GOES INTO A BLOB OF YOGHURT.

HELEN Look, you're not an idiot okay? You just need to imagine things a bit less you know? Live in the real world a bit more, be cool, be yourself. I bet he'd really like you if he knew you.

GWEN If he ever stops looking at Jemma long enough.

HELEN Just try not to be too weird around him or anything.

GWEN LIFTS UP HER HEAD. SHE HAS YOGHURT ON HER NOSE.

GWEN Right right. I hear you. Cool. Not weird.

MICHAEL WALKS PAST. HE IS STARING AT THE YOGHURT ON GWEN'S NOSE. GWEN SMILES AT HIM.

Hi Michael.

MICHAEL WALKS PAST WITHOUT SAYING ANYTHING. GWEN TURNS BACK TO HELEN.

I have yoghurt on my nose don't I.

HELEN INDICATES THERE MIGHT BE A LITTLE BIT. GWEN GETS UP AND MAKES TO LEAVE. HELEN FOLLOWS. GWEN EXITS.

HELEN Ah, Gwen, come on, it's not that bad...

HELEN STOPS AND GOES BACK TO THE DESK, WIPING IT CLEAN BEFORE EXITING.

SCENE 2

ENTER ARES AND VENUS.

VENUS Still think this is going to be easy?

ARES Of course. The task will be simplicity itself. All I need do is encompass a minor change to the behaviour of the Michael and the wager is mine.

VENUS Really? That's all?

ARES It is obvious.

VENUS You understand that you cannot simply command them to your will or reveal your power or identity.

ARES Minor problems, easily overcome. Watch and you will see how a warrior orders those beneath him.

VENUS I can hardly wait.

EXIT ARES AND VENUS.

MICHAEL ENTERS AND SITS AT A TABLE WITH A LUNCH TRAY BEARING A SANDWICH AND A BAG OF CRISPS. HE LIFTS THE BREAD OFF THE TOP OF THE SANDWICH TO INSPECT ITS CONTENTS.

MICHAEL Bananas, check.

MICHAEL OPENS THE BAG OF CRISPS AND POURS THEM OVER THE FILLING.

Extra barbecue sauce potato style, check.

MICHAEL REBUILDS THE SANDWICH AND IS ABOUT TO EAT.

ARES (OFFSTAGE) Wait, Before you eat we must talk. I have much to impart.

MICHAEL Errr.....Aren't you a sandwich?

ARES (OFFSTAGE) If you believe me to be so.

MICHAEL Right. Okay. So...you're talking to me, and you're a sandwich.

ARES (OFFSTAGE) It is temporary I assure you.

MICHAEL Oh. Okay. So, what was it you wanted to say?

ARES (OFFSTAGE) Put me to your ear, what I wish to tell you must be heard by you and you alone.

MICHAEL Ear. Right. Got it.

MICHAEL LIFTS THE SANDWICH TO HIS EAR AND LISTENS INTENTLY.

ENTER COLIN. HE SITS AT THE TABLE WITH MICHAEL.

COLIN You know, most people just eat with their teeth. I'm not saying earlobes are completely out here but you've got to admit, there's bound to be problems. You're never going to get a toothbrush down there for starters.

MICHAEL Shhh, It's talking to me.

COLIN What? Your lunch?

MICHAEL PUTS DOWN THE SANDWICH.

MICHAEL This crisp and banana sandwich.

COLIN A crisp and banana sandwich, talking to you?

MICHAEL Yeah. I think it's God.

COLIN Your sandwich is God?

MICHAEL He told me it was just temporary.

COLIN You can see how it would have to be.

MICHAEL I know.

COLIN So, what did he say?

MICHAEL He told me to stop looking at girls.

COLIN You're kidding.