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Jean Yeets Her Hawaiian Shirt into the Ocean

a short play by Greg Romero

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I had the pleasure of directing *Jean Yeets Her Hawaiian Shirt into the Ocean* by Greg Romero at the 2024 Mid America Theatre Conference. This was my first time encountering Romero's work and I was struck by the potency of this 10-minute play. From the striking characters (humans, animals, a monster?), to the lush stage directions, and the balance of humor and hurt, this is a piece that encourages deep listening and stays with you. Throughout the process we spoke of the unseen shifts below the surface that lead to new ground, the unexpected alliance between the two women, the image of Roger without his mask, Jean with her cookie, Abbie with her totally bad-ass wig. Romero truly makes the pine forest seem real and it was easy for us to imagine and hear the soundscape of the play: from the Owl's call, to the waves, to the crickets, to the elevator ding.

Greg is also such a collaborative playwright and leans into the strengths of the artists in the room. Originally, the name of the server in the play was Annie, but the actor who read the role at the conference's name was Abbie, which is what it has become in the script! The feedback at the Playwriting Symposium included the power of both the quirky and devastating 'reveals' in the story, the well-crafted beats, and the strong presence of the natural world. It is a play that moves the audience and leaves us with delicious questions. Since working on *Jean Yeets* at MATC I have introduced it to students in my classes at the University at Buffalo and it always leads to rich, robust discussion. I look forward to more people experiencing Greg Romero's work through this publication.

MATC 2024 Team:

Director: Lana Sugarman
Dramaturg: Merritt Popp
Jean: Emily K. Harrison
Roger: David Janowiak
Abbie: Abigail Labbé
Deer: Morgan Hicks

Jean Yeets Her Hawaiian Shirt into the Ocean

Characters:

JEAN (F). A schoolteacher.

ROGER (M). A marketing executive.

ABBIE (F). Works in a restaurant.

A DEER (F). A deer.

AN OWL (any gender). An owl. Off-stage voice/sound only.

Time and Place:

The Anthropocene. Hawaii. A pine forest that feels real.

Note:

Have fun using your imagination.

About Script Notation:

Breaks in speech are noted by a series of ellipses after the character designation. i.e.:

WOLF:
….

Each single dot represents one heartbeat.

This is space that the character uses to react to what was just said, or to hold back the thing they want to say, or both. These are not moments in which to relax or to rush through.

Jean Yeets Her Hawaiian Shirt into the Ocean

Lights up on JEAN and ROGER sitting at a touristy restaurant table together. They are wearing Hawaiian shirts.

Jean is looking intently at Roger.

Roger is looking intently at his menu.

ABBIE, a server who's rockin' a totally bad-ass wig, hovers over the table.

They are all looking for some time until:

JEAN

We should break up.

Roger puts down his menu and looks at Jean, kind of in disbelief.

ROGER

…

JEAN

I'm breaking up with you.

ROGER

…

JEAN

…

ABBIE

Uh?

They look at Abbie.

Abbie exits.

ROGER

Ok, what?

JEAN

I've booked you another room.

ROGER

What?

JEAN

At a different hotel.

ROGER

What?!

JEAN

…

ROGER

We're on vacation.

JEAN

I know.

ROGER

You know?

JEAN

Being away from everything – away from our regular lives – our stupid routines, our dumb shit – I can see things really clearly in a way I wasn't able to before. Like removing a bunch of mud and and and a bunch of puke from my eyes.

ROGER

…

JEAN

…

ROGER

Puke?

JEAN

…

ROGER

Ok, so that's it?

JEAN

…

ROGER

Wow.

JEAN

…

ROGER

I don’t know what I’ll do without you.

JEAN

…

ROGER

I need you.

JEAN

…

ROGER

I mean. I feel. I feel like…I mean. You don’t feel anything right now?

JEAN

Of course I do.

ROGER

Ok. Well?

JEAN

I’ve put you in a hotel nicer than this one, I think you’ll like it.

ROGER

Calm down.

JEAN

I want you to have a nice time while you’re out here.

ROGER

Jean—

JEAN

I’m going to get up before I get too emotional.

ROGER

Ok. Jean – look – I’m sorry if I—

As she gets up:

JEAN
I'm getting up. I already told them to put this meal on my bill, I heard the bisque is really good. And crab fries, get some crab fries if you want.

ROGER
Jean –
Jean – I'm sorry.
Could you just wait a minute?
Jean – it won't happen again!

She's gone.

He sits at the table alone for a long moment.

He's just sitting there.

We hear tectonic plates moving underground, just slightly, just enough.

He pulls his mask of a human man off his face, revealing a hideous, zombie-like monster, gaping holes in his flesh, teeth all over his face.

ROGER
Fucking shit!

Lights shift to a DEER, grazing in a pine forest.

It is nighttime, stars twinkle atop the tall pines, dancing to the music the crickets are making all around them.

The Deer is graceful, gentle.

An OWL calls from a distance.

The Deer listens, ears pointed forward to catch all the sound.

The Owl's call ends, the Deer continues listening.

The Deer exits toward the sound of the Owl.

Lights shift and Jean is on the beach, still in her Hawaiian shirt.

We hear the waves breaking on the shore.

Jean looks into the ocean, through all the waves, into the horizon line.

She reaches into her shirt pocket and pulls out a cookie.

She eats her cookie while staring into the waves.

The waves continue breaking, we hear a sea bird fly over.

As she eats her cookie, her body trembles, a whole-body-shaking-crying-heaving thing she is trying to control, one small cookie bite at a time.

Deep in the distance, way past the sea birds, past the waves, even past the horizon, we barely hear "Fucking Shit!" echoing.

She eats her cookie until the echoing has stopped and her body has become still.

The waves continue breaking, gently.

She takes off her Hawaiian shirt and yeets it into the ocean.

We see she has fresh bruises, purple fist prints.

Lights shift to Roger, still sitting at the table.

It begins to rain on him.

He sits in the rain for a long time, occasionally drinking from the glass of water on the table.

Finally, the rain ends and the sun emerges, shining brightly on him.

Abbie approaches the table.

ABBIE

Sir?

ROGER

…

ABBIE

Sir?

ROGER

Yeah?

ABBIE

Would you like to order something?

ROGER

…

ABBIE

A volcano is going to erupt soon. We're trying to get all our orders in.

ROGER

Crab fries.

ABBIE

…

ROGER

…

ABBIE

Anything el—

ROGER

FUCKING CRAB FRIES!

Abbie exits.

Lights shift and the Deer is walking through the pine forest. The stars are still shining brightly, the crickets still singing.

The moon has emerged.

Jean enters and she and the Deer look at each other.

Jean steps towards the Deer and the Deer takes a step back. They look at each other again, trying to read each other.

For a moment, we just listen to everything: a gentle night breeze passing through the pine trees, a coyote singing in the distance, the cricket song, condensation forming on the grass, mushrooms emerging from the soft ground, beetles at work on a fallen branch.

We hear an elevator ding and doors opening and closing.

And finally, the owl calls again, and the Deer turns and follows it.

Lights shift.

Jean is standing in front of the touristy hotel elevator, looking at her reflection in the elevator doors.

The doors open and just as Jean is about to step in:

ABBIE

Wait!

Jean stops.

Abbie enters, carrying a "to go" container.

ABBIE

Miss?

JEAN

Me?

ABBIE

Yes.

JEAN

…

ABBIE

…

The elevator doors begin to close, Jean holds them open.

ABBIE

Do you remember me? From the restaurant?

JEAN

Oh. Yes.

ABBIE

Ok, good.

JEAN

You're still in your work clothes.

ABBIE

Right, yeah.

JEAN

…

ABBIE

And you…

Abbie gestures to Jean, who is still without a shirt.

The elevator doors try to close, Jean holds them open.

JEAN

…

ABBIE

…

JEAN

Are you ok?

ABBIE

Yes. Yes, thank you for asking.

JEAN

…

ABBIE

Are you ok?

JEAN

Yes. Yes, I will be, thank you.

ABBIE

…

JEAN

Um—

Abbie offers Jean the to-go container.

ABBIE

I wanted you to have this.

Jean looks at the container for a moment.

ABBIE

It's the bisque. You said you heard it was good. It is really good. And I asked the kitchen to put a sprinkle of fresh ʻinamona on top. Brings out the flavor.

Jean takes the container.

JEAN

It's still warm.

ABBIE

Yeah.

JEAN

That's very kind of you.

ABBIE

That was soooo cool. What you did in the restaurant.

JEAN

Oh. Thank you. I guess so.

ABBIE

It got me thinking. You know?

JEAN

…

ABBIE

…

JEAN

I think I do.

ABBIE

…

JEAN

I'm sorry.

ABBIE

…

JEAN

…

Abbie removes her bad-ass wig, revealing her head: bruised, scratched, pieces of hair forcibly shaved and cut out.

ABBIE

…

JEAN

…

The elevator doors try to close, Jean holds them open.

JEAN

These doors are driving me crazy.

ABBIE *(begins to leave)*

I'll go—

JEAN

You want to come up to my room?

ABBIE

…

JEAN

As a friend.

ABBIE

…

JEAN

…

Abbie searches her pockets and server apron.

She finds an extra spoon and triumphantly holds it up.

JEAN

…

ABBIE

…

Jean and Abbie step into the elevator together. Jean pushes the button for her floor.

They ride the elevator together for as long as they need.

The Deer crosses through the hotel lobby, checking things out.

An owl calls in the distance.

The elevator continues ascending.

We hear the pine forest again, the breeze passing through the treetops, the crickets humming into the night, the distant coyote.

A tectonic plate continues to shift under the ground, and the forest sounds give way to the sounds of the earth, moving beneath everything.

The elevator continues ascending.

In the distance, magma rises from a volcano, lava spilling over and making new land, new ground to stand on.

The elevator finally reaches its destination, we hear the elevator ding, and the doors open. Without

looking at each other, Jean and Abbie somehow acknowledge each other, take a deep breath, and as they take a step forward—

Lights out.

END OF PLAY.