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# **Decisions**

## **A Short Comedy**

**By J.C. Svec**

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# Decisions

by J.C. Svec

## Cast of Characters

### DECISIONS

**DEREK;** *a young man with serious commitment issues*

**SUSIE;** *his long-time girlfriend*

**TARA;** *the waitress*

### Setting

*A round table and two simple chairs. The table is covered with a kitchen tablecloth. Country tableware is pushed to one edge of the table. A small card and a pen sit isolated on the table.*

## DECISIONS

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*SCENE: A round table and two simple chairs. The table is covered with a kitchen tablecloth. Country tableware is pushed to one edge of the table. A small card and a pen sit isolated on the table.*

*AT RISE: A young man, DEREK, paces back and forth and around the table. His girlfriend, SUSIE, annoyingly taps her fingers on the card. She looks at her watch, an action which further upsets DEREK.*

SUSIE

We've been at this for almost forty-five minutes.

DEREK

So.

SUSIE

So?

DEREK

I'm sorry, if I don't take the decision making process as lightly as you do.

SUSIE

All I'm saying is that it shouldn't take this long to make this simple decision.

DEREK

Well, thinking about my answers is a routine for me, and that routine takes time, no matter how perturbing it may be to you.

SUSIE

*(Confused)* All I said was—

DEREK

All you said was, in fact, an attack on my decision making process which I take very seriously.

SUSIE

Oh, my God.

*SUSIE slams down the pen.*

SUSIE, *Continued*

*(Yells)* Make up your mind. Now!

DEREK

*(Yells)* Don't bully me.

SUSIE

*(Shifts tone)* Please. I'm begging you.

*DEREK stands incredulous.*

SUSIE, *Continued*

I mean it. Enough. Decide... now! Or else.

DEREK

Now you're threatening me?

SUSIE

*(Calm)* No. No threat. *(Placid)* C'mon... just sit down. Read it. *(Pause)* Just check a box!

*(SUSIE waits patiently for a moment. When that moment passes, SUSIE slaps the table.)*

SUSIE, *Continued*

*(Screams)* Just check a box.

*DEREK jumps, grabs the pen and sits. He thinks, puts pen to paper but can't bring himself to act.)*

DEREK

*(Breaks)* I'm sorry, I need more time.

*SUSIE throws her hands up in disgust.*

SUSIE

You decided your vote for the president in less time.

DEREK

I just can't do this right now. I need more time.

SUSIE

*(Mocks)* 'I need more time, I can't do this.' *(Explodes)* You've had weeks. We need to respond before it's too late.

DEREK  
So, send it back.

SUSIE  
It's incomplete.

DEREK  
So what?

SUSIE  
So... it doesn't work that way.

DEREK  
Says who?

SUSIE  
*(Thinks)* Society. Our society says so. Our culture says so. Books are written on this very subject that explain the hows and whys and the dos and don'ts.

DEREK  
And our descendants, our forefathers, our ancestors built this nation, forged a democracy and created a new country by opposing the stringent rules and codes of what... a society that no longer worked for its people.

SUSIE  
What the hell are you talking about? We're not talking about parting ways with the fatherland or seceding from the Union. And in case you forgot, your ancestors grew up in Short Hills, New Jersey and were never oppressed by anyone or anything.

DEREK  
I was just trying to make a point.

SUSIE  
Why don't you make a point with that pen in that box.

DEREK  
Just answer me something. What's the big deal if I don't give them my answer? If I don't put that little ol' check in the box, months ahead of time, when my emotional and physical condition will, in all probability, negate what and how I feel and what I do here today.

SUSIE  
You're an idiot.

DEREK  
Tell me, will governments tumble? Will organized religions around the world suddenly collapse? Will "American Idol" be canceled? Tell me what will happen if I don't follow the

DEREK, *Continued*

demands of some arcane cultural regulation, dreamed up by some old biddy in a button up dress and spats a hundred up-teen years ago. Tell me, tell me, tell me? (*Beat*) What horrific, devastating, ramifications will there be? Huh?

SUSIE

There may not be any food for you and you'll be hungry and embarrassed.

*SUSIE'S comment stills DEREK.*

SUSIE, *Continued*

(*Emphatic*) Check the prime rib. Check the prime rib and be done with it.

*DEREK picks up the pen.*

SUSIE, *Continued*

Thank you. Stuff it, seal it and send it. (*Starts to exit; turns back to DEREK*) Today.

(*SUSIE exits. DEREK stares at the card.*)

DEREK

Or... chicken.

*Unable to check a box, DEREK collapses at the table. Tormented, he drops his head and bangs his fist on the table.*

**BLACKOUT.**

**LIGHTS UP.**

*SCENE: A round table and two simple chairs. On the table: a paper place mat, utensils rolled into a paper napkin, condiments and a closed menu.*

*AT RISE: DEREK sits at the table. He fidgets with a mug of beer. Across from him a young woman, TARA, sits, her arms folded across her chest. She leans back in her chair. Silence.*

DEREK

Thanks for letting me explain myself.

I just don't have a lot of time.

TARA

I understand. I'll try to be as brief as I can.

DEREK

Please.

TARA

I have... commitment issues.

DEREK

You think admitting to that makes my life easier?

TARA

No, not at all, but I think it explains why I act the way I do.

DEREK

The way you act has gotten me into a lot of trouble.

TARA

I'm sorry. I'm really, really sorry.

DEREK

*(Looks at her watch)* Can we get on with his?

TARA

Right. Get on with it.

DEREK

*DEREK takes a sip of beer.*

Why am I sitting here?

TARA

I'm hoping to help you understand who I am and how I can help you... I don't know; work with me on my situation.

DEREK

Work with you? How about I let you work on your situation. Or, better yet, why don't you and your wife work on you situation. I neither have the time nor do I care.

TARA

My... what?

DEREK

TARA

*(Thinks)* Your wife. The woman you've been coming in here with every Friday night for, I don't know, five years.

*Silence.*

DEREK

*(Shaken)* No. No. No wife. Not my wife. Not the wife. She's only the girlfriend. We're not even engaged.

TARA

Only the girlfriend. Nice.

DEREK

I didn't exactly mean it the way you're making it sound.

TARA

Like I said, talk to her, not me.

DEREK

She doesn't understand me.

TARA

There's a shocker.

DEREK

No, she doesn't.

TARA

Listen slick, that's what they all say.

DEREK

But in my case it's true. She's changed over the years. She won't even try to understand me, let alone help me.

TARA

Maybe it's up to you then.

DEREK

What do you mean?

TARA

You need to help yourself. You have to do the work. Stop relying on everyone else to do it for you. Stop making excuses. Do something.

DEREK

Like what?

TARA

Knowing you, live up to your responsibilities. That'd be a good start.

DEREK

Live up to my responsibilities, huh?

TARA

You can call it whatever you want. You can do whatever you want. It's your problem and as of here and now, I'm not dealing with it anymore and, as a matter of fact, I'm not dealing with you anymore.

DEREK

You can't do that.

TARA

Excuse me?

DEREK

You can't do that and you can't treat me that way.

TARA

Oh, I can't?

DEREK

No, you can't. That's what you get paid for. Why I tip you the way I do. Admit it, I tip you very well.

TARA

You're right, I get paid to provide a service... and not to tell you what you want.  
(*DEREK sits in shame.*)

DEREK

(*Sullen*) What do you expect me to do?

*TARA stands. She reveals herself as DEREK'S waitress.*

TARA

I don't know why I feel sorry for you. This is the last time, understand?

DEREK

Thank you.

*DEREK takes the wedding response card from his pocket. He places it on top of the menu for TARA to see. TARA takes a quick look.*

You're kidding. TARA

I'm afraid not. DEREK

Pick one. Prime rib or chicken. Check a box, stuff it, seal it and send it. TARA

*DEREK stares at the card.*

That's what my girlfriend told me. DEREK

Now, how about ordering something before I lose my job. TARA

*DEREK picks up the menu and peruses it.*

What do you recommend? DEREK

*TARA snaps her head back in disgust.*

**BLACKOUT.**

**LIGHTS UP.**

*SCENE: A round table and two simple chairs. The table is set for a wedding reception. A floral arrangement sits in the center, surrounded by an array of filled and unfilled glasses of champagne.*

*AT RISE: DEREK and SUSIE enter. SUSIE juggles a glass of wine, napkin and a plate piled with hors d'oeuvres.*

SUSIE  
(*To DEREK*) Did you try the spinach quiche? It's to die for.

*SUSIE gobbles down the appetizer.*

SUSIE, *Continued*  
Did you hear me?

DEREK  
Spinach quiche, to die for. Yes, I heard you.

SUSIE  
What is wrong with you?

DEREK  
Nothing.

SUSIE  
C'mon, Derek. Free food.

*SUSIE holds up her glass.*

SUSIE, *Continued*  
And drink.

*DEREK pats his suit jacket.*

DEREK  
I have a check for two hundred dollars that says the food and the drink are, in fact, not free.

*SUSIE downs the remainder of her wine.*

SUSIE  
(*Sings*) Every party has a pooper, that's why we invited you – party pooper!

DEREK  
Have another drink, why don't you?

SUSIE  
Thanks, I think I will.

*SUSIE sits at the table. She selects a glass of champagne and quickly empties the glass.*

SUSIE, *Continued*

Mmm... Alcohol good.

DEREK

You're drunk.

SUSIE

Not yet, but I'm getting there.

*DEREK sits. He stares at SUSIE'S plate of hors d'oeuvres.*

SUSIE, *Continued*

*(Tempt)* Want one?

*DEREK becomes anxious.*

DEREK

No.

SUSIE

You can get yourself a plate.

DEREK

I'm not that hungry.

SUSIE

I know you want one.

DEREK

*(Annoyed)* No, I don't.

*SUSIE methodically selects and places an hors d'oeuvres in her mouth. She chews deliberately and enjoys every morsel.*

DEREK, *Continued*

Why are you doing that?

SUSIE  
Just enjoying how good it is.

DEREK  
*(Leans in)* Fine, I'll take one.

SUSIE  
*(Teases)* I changed my mind.

DEREK  
You offered.

SUSIE  
I think I'll just keep these for myself.

DEREK  
Whatever. I was just trying to shut you up.

*SUSIE watches DEREK  
watch her food.*

SUSIE  
You've still got time to get some. Oh, watch for those bacon wrapped scallops.

DEREK  
We'll be going in for dinner soon.

SUSIE  
I guess that's a 'no' on the scallops.

DEREK  
I guess.

*SUSIE enjoys several more  
delights.*

SUSIE  
Still not hungry?

DEREK  
I'll wait for dinner.

*SUSIE downs another glass  
of champagne.*

SUSIE

You couldn't pick, could you?

*DEREK makes a disapproving, negating sound. He knows she's right.*

*SUSIE, Continued*

You couldn't.

*Silence. SUSIE slides her plate with the remaining hors d'oeuvres in front of DEREK. He stares at the food. SUSIE watches as he tries to take one, but can't decide. SUSIE reaches for her third glass of champagne while DEREK settles back into his chair.*

*SUSIE, Continued*

Pathetic.

*SUSIE downs the drink. She selects an hors d'oeuvres and places it on a napkin. SUSIE hands the napkin to DEREK.*

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