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Product Code A0564.1

# The Lowering Wilderness

*A short comedy by*

**Jon Jory**

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# The Lowering Wilderness

by Jon Jory

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

3 W

CHLOE; *about 18, recently graduated from high school*

HAZE; *her friend, about 18*

SOFIA; *another friend, similar age*

## **SETTING**

*A camping trip before heading to college*

## **RUNNING TIME**

*About 12 Minutes*

## The Lowering Wilderness

by Jon Jory

AT RISE: *Three girls camping. They have sleeping bags.*

CHLOE

Where's the big dipper?

HAZE

Who knows?

SOFIA

Who cares?

CHLOE

Why would I go camping if I can't see the big dipper? I mean, what else is out here?

HAZE

Peace and quiet.

CHLOE

I'm done with peace and quiet. High school was nothing but peace and quiet.

SOFIA

That's because you were a committed goody-goody.

CHLOE

Okay Sofia, right, you have a point – I'll grant the point. I was. I bought into the idea that I should be the valedictorian...

HAZE

You weren't the valedictorian, Chloe.

CHLOE

I came close, there were only nine people in front of me.

HAZE

I stand corrected.

CHLOE

Anyway, I thought grades were the deal and that I should have a murderously churchy boyfriend. I did that.

SOFIA

Warren the boring.

CHLOE

He was respectful. Possibly to the point of insanity.

HAZE

Did he ever touch you?

CHLOE

After we would hang out, he would always shake hands.

SOFIA

*(Shaking her head)*

Way worse than I thought.

CHLOE

I respected my mother.

HAZE

And how did she repay that?

CHLOE

She ran off with a guy who was polling for Bernie Sanders. I had a part-time job selling weed until they legalized it. I did everything right... and it was not only gobsmackingly boring but it made entirely the wrong resume for an Ivy League college.

SOFIA

None of us got into an Ivy League school, Chloe.

CHLOE

Well...

SOFIA & HAZE

You had to remind us!!

*They fall back on their sleeping bags.*

CHLOE

But luckily I'm going to the University of Tampa which has a really bad reputation as an unforgivable party school and I am going to be so bad, so wild and heedless that Egon Schiele will paint me.

SOFIA

Who's Egon Schiele?

CHLOE

He's the wickedest, dirtiest painter who ever lived.

*A pause.*

HAZE

Well, that sounds entertaining.

*Silence.*

SOFIA

I'm scared.

HAZE

Of what, Sofia?

SOFIA

Of everything. High school was just my speed. It was like... manageable. At these colleges they want to know what you're going to major in before you show up on campus. I'm supposed to know this week what I'm supposed to do for the rest of my life? From what I can see from my parents and their friends, life is really depressing.

HAZE

Like how?

SOFIA

Okay, it's repetitious. It's all about money and buying crap. You get to look forward to loveless marriages and raising children in a world of rising seas, unlivable heat and tribal rivalries, and dying of something you weren't vaccinated for.

CHLOE

Well, when you put it that way.

SOFIA

And you have to go into tech. If you don't go into tech you have no entre to the future but you can't go into tech because the whole industry hates women.

CHLOE

Well yeah, but it's become obvious that men have failed and women are going to take over the earth. That's a given, right?

HAZE

It's pretty clear.

SOFIA

Yeah, but it's going to take fifty years and we'll be little warlike grandmas driving armored Subarus in a failed state.

CHLOE

Yeah, but on the other hand I'm going to the University of Tampa which is already like a failed state, so I'll get plenty of practice.

*A pause.*

SOFIA

But I won't have you guys. You're my safety net. What will happen to me?

CHLOE

The whole, utter, complete point of college is that you don't know what will happen to you. What will happen in those four years is the biggest surprise you ever get short of Publisher's Clearing House giving you \$5,000 a week.

HAZE

Yeah, my sister went in aiming for med school and came out an unemployable actress.

CHLOE

I didn't say it was just good surprises.

SOFIA

What if I find out I'm nothing but Pavlovian responses to television ads?

HAZE

Then you have to marry money.

SOFIA

How do you marry money?

HAZE

You stand by really expensive cars in parking lots until someone marries you.

SOFIA

That's so 18<sup>th</sup> century.

HAZE

The 18<sup>th</sup> century lives.

*A pause.*

SOFIA

Is it still fixable?

CHLOE

What?

SOFIA

The earth?

HAZE

We have no choice but to play it as if it is.

*A pause.*

CHLOE

Ten days 'til we go.

SOFIA

We'll still be best friends though, right?

HAZE

Probably not.

CHLOE

Doesn't really work that way.

HAZE

We'll meet again as crones at the 50<sup>th</sup> reunion and push the quarterback around in his wheelchair.

SOFIA

That's so sad.

CHLOE

Hey, we'll live a life.

HAZE

Less than we hoped, but more than we expected.

*A pause.*

SOFIA

You guys so suck! I can't believe you! This was supposed to be send-off not a cremation. We're smart, we're energetic, we're killer workers, some of us are even attractive.

CHLOE

Which ones?

SOFIA

I'm not telling, but one of them's me. Come on! This is a launch, we ought to break a bottle of Hawaiian volcano water over our prow or whatever it is.

HAZE

You said you were scared and that got us scared and now you're giving us a pep talk?

SOFIA

Well I am scared, but I'm trying to claw my way out by indulging in false optimism.

CHLOE

But it's so obviously false optimism.

SOFIA

Yeah, okay, but if we all agree to be falsely optimistic we can get through this. My sister was a mess in high school so she didn't apply and she spent a year being a hotel room maid, which was beyond depressing. So my whole family – uncles, aunts, cousins, did an intervention based on false optimism and right away she went to college!

CHLOE

How'd she do?

SOFIA

After six weeks she emigrated to Australia.

HAZE

Oh good.

SOFIA

She loves it! She works on an ostrich farm in the outback.

HAZE

I don't want to live on an ostrich farm, Sofia.

SOFIA

You don't know that.

HAZE

I do know that Sofia, now stop it!

*SOFIA turns upstage facing away from them. CHLOE goes downstage and hunkers down looking over our heads.*

SOFIA

*(After a pause)*

Well, I'm sorry I'm ruining everything. *(A pause)* Am I ruining everything?

HAZE & CHLOE

Yes!

SOFIA

But we're still friends, right?

HAZE & CHLOE

Yes!

HAZE

Just be quiet. We can be friends who don't talk to each other because we piss each other off.

*A pause.*

SOFIA

*(Quietly)*

We might meet somebody.

CHLOE

Like who?

SOFIA

Aquaman.

CHLOE

I'm not going to respond to that.

HAZE

Well, let's not dismiss that idea without at least a cursory examination. I mean that dude is seriously ripped.

SOFIA

He is. I'm not saying he doesn't have problems.

CHLOE

He does. Plus you would have to live underwater.

HAZE

All men have problems and we are their Tylenol.

SOFIA

But if Vulko, the royal counselor will help him, Aquaman can retrieve the legendary trident of Atlan and embrace his destiny as protector of the deep.

HAZE

Works for me.

CHLOE

I think there's a distinct possibility we're not ready for college.

HAZE

*(Stands up quickly)*

Something's out there.

SOFIA

Out where?

HAZE

*(Pointing out to the audience)*

Out there. I heard rustling.

Wrestling? SOFIA

Rustling. As in bushes rustling. HAZE

Where? CHLOE

HAZE  
*(Pointing at a specific spot out front)*  
There. Shhh. Hear that? *(The other two nod.)* Oh no. No, no, no, no, no.

What? SOFIA

Maybe five feet to the left. HAZE

Oh, that is so cute. Isn't that cute? SOFIA

What? CHLOE

In front of the rock. It's a bear cub. SOFIA

Uh-huh. HAZE

That is so cute. Isn't that adorable? SOFIA

Look behind the rock. CHLOE

What? HAZE

Look behind the rock. CHLOE

It's the mama. HAZE

SOFIA  
She is very big. Very, very, very, very big. She is standing up and she is looking at us.

CHLOE  
And that look is not approbation.

SOFIA  
She'll kill us.

HAZE  
Let's split and run on three.

CHLOE  
No, no, no. Kinda speak calmly, stay together so we look bigger. Look the bear in the eye.

HAZE  
I'm looking the bear in the eye.

CHLOE  
Now, on three, yell, "Get out of here."

SOFIA  
You're kidding?

CHLOE  
After that we start backing up slowly.

SOFIA  
Those that are left.

CHLOE  
*(Calmly)*  
Do what I tell you. Ready.

**This is Not the End of the Play**  
**Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes**