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The Lowering Wilderness

A short comedy by

Jon Jory

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The Lowering Wilderness
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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 18th century.

HAZE
The 18th 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.
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 50th 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.

Like who?

SOFIA
Aquaman.

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.
SOFIA Wrestling?

HAZE Rustling. As in bushes rustling.

CHLOE Where?

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

SOFIA What?

HAZE Maybe five feet to the left.

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

CHLOE What?

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

HAZE Uh-huh.

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

CHLOE Look behind the rock.

HAZE What?

CHLOE Look behind the rock.

HAZE It’s the mama.

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