

# W A I T !

by Julie Jensen

## SCENE ONE

[We are in a theatre. Old stage paraphernalia is scattered about. Old flats. A wind machine. A pin rail. And an act curtain that rolls down.

The same space also serves as Wendy's house, her yard, multi-purposes, multi-places. At the point we join the action, WENDY is moving some gunny sacks full of seed.]

[Note: Lines that are underscored are meant to be addressed to the audience.]

WENDY

Anyways, I always wanted to have something to do with the arts. I just never thought it'd be the theatre. It was really my dad's idea. After I quit beauty school. He was real pissed about that.

DAD What the hell's the matter with you?

WENDY I don't know, Dad. I just can't hack it.

DAD

Beauty school. The opportunity of a lifetime, and what do you do with it?

WENDY

I been there a whole month, Dad, and I never says a word. Not to nobody.

I got the personality of wall board. That's what he usually says. But this time he don't.

Besides that, Dad, I think I'm allergic to the hair spray.

DAD

All right, you can move back in here for a couple of weeks.

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WENDY

That's when I get this job driving truck for the UPS. Which is a really good job. Except it makes my dad nuts when he has to tell people what I'm up to. "So what's Wendy up to?"

DAD

Driving truck.

WENDY

Makes him nuts.

I tell him, "You say I am a delivery agent. They'll think I'm a stewardess." But he can't say that many syllables in a row. Leastwise, not when he's drunk.

So anyways, all this is happening just about the time Lu gets this hair up his butt. He's an old friend from high school. We used to date each other cuz no one else would have us. He don't know what to do with hisself since Danton's death. So he decides he is gonna open up the old opera house.

LU

We will do only the classics in here. It will be my grief work.

WENDY

Hell, Lu, that place is full of bat guano and pigeon shit.

LU

Pull-eez! From now on, we speak only the language of dreams.

WENDY

Well, your dream has been empty since 1928. Storing seed corn for the church farm and old engine blocks from dead hot rods.

LU

We will raise her from the dust of her degradation. We will cause her to speak again!

WENDY

And so it's this thing, this theatre thing, that gets my dad going. And that's a surprise because him and

Lu are coyotes and cats. Can't stand each other. But anyways,  
I come out the house one day on my way down to the theatre. The old man is laying under the front end of a Chevy listening to a ball game.

DAD  
Wait up  
here.

WENDY  
Yeah?

DAD Well, I got  
this idea.

WENDY  
What's that,  
Dad?

DAD Why don't you do  
some acting?

WENDY  
Right, Dad. I just humor him along.

DAD  
That's what they gonna do down there, ain't it? Put  
on plays, act away.

WENDY Yep.  
That's it.

DAD  
So why don't you do some of it? Some of the acting, I  
mean.

WENDY Good idea, Dad.  
I'll do that.

DAD Help  
you talk.

WENDY  
Right.

DAD Cuz you never  
talk enough.

WENDY

WENDY

Nope.

DAD People could think  
you're a tard.

Right, Dad.

DAD Well, listen up. You wanna hear the  
real reason?

WENDY

I know the real reason, Dad. You'd a helluvah lot  
rather say I'm a actress than a truck driver.

DAD Cuz I'd a helluvah lot  
rather. Yeah.

WENDY

He's looking at me like he's sizing me up. Like I'm a  
'83 Chevy he's about to buy.

A few months goes by. Lu's out and about.

LU Speaking the language  
of dreams.

WENDY

And I'm hauling junk. That's always the way it was,  
he'd get the ideas. I'd do the heavy lifting. And  
so I forgot all about the acting thing.

But not my old man. He is fixed on it. Wants to know  
what plays they're doing. And what parts I'm trying  
out for.

They're doing "Gilbert the Twelfth," Dad. I'm making  
stuff up. I'm going out for the part of Tedelia. I  
make up a name.

DAD

Who's  
Tedelia?

WENDY It's a princess, Dad. She  
drives truck.

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DAD No, god damnit, I am serious here.

WENDY

She hangs around the kitchen, Dad, and bosses the cooking. Her old man's the king. He fights lotsa battles.

DAD What's she do besides that? She fall in love?

WENDY

Yeah Dad, she falls in love...with the guy that takes care of the silverware.

That really pleases him. You can tell by the way he tightens the nut.

DAD So what's the name of this guy?

WENDY

What guy, Dad?

DAD The guy that takes care of the silverware?

Wendy

Gordonion, I say. His name is Gordonion.

DAD Jesus, that sounds Italian!

WENDY No, Dad. It's Saxonian. He's the Thane of Saxony.

You can tell he thinks "Thane" is a faggoty word. But he don't say nothing. Because "Saxony" gets him. And he is experiencing a growing sense of pride in me.

DAD

Thane of Saxony. That is up there. I mean, this guy is a comer.

WENDY Yeah, Dad. He's on his way up.

DAD

WENDY

I'd like to meet him. What I mean is, I think I'd have some things to say to him. You know what I mean?

WENDY Real good, Dad, I'll bring him over.

DAD Sure. Bring him on over.

And so then after that, I start doing little shows for the old man. Acting out bits. Little bits. Makes it seem like I got things to say. Here Dad, here's a little show for you.

DAD

All right, all right, but make it quick, I'm on my way to the head.

WENDY

"Oh that this too, too solid flesh would melt, thaw and resolve itself into a dew."

DAD Huh. That's not bad. Is that what happens?

WENDY Yeah, Dad, that's what happens.

DAD His flesh melts?

WENDY Yeah, Dad, his flesh melts.

DAD Huh. That's one I wanna see.

WENDY

And he goes into the bathroom, closes the door. Then he's yelling at me from the other side of the door.

DAD

Hey, Wendy.

WENDY

Yeah, Dad.

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DAD Next time you should do one with dancing and singing.

WENDY Right, Dad. Dancing and singing.

[DAD opens the door. He's holding his pants up.]

DAD  
Because the dancing and the singing. That's the only reason people go to the thee-ater.

WENDY Yeah,  
I know, Dad.

DAD So you ought to do some of that.

WENDY  
Right.

DAD And here's something else.

WENDY  
Yeah.

DAD You ought to do something with bathing beauties in it.

WENDY That ain't a play, Dad. That's a strip show.

DAD  
The hell it is. It's naked bathing beauties. And that is art with a capital A.

WENDY  
Right, Dad.

DAD  
They got feather head dresses and sparkles all over their body. And that makes a classy show!

WENDY You know everything, don't you?

DAD I know plenty.

WENDY

WENDY And you learned it all at the Black Cat Lounge.

DAD

That's right.

[DAD goes back in the bathroom again.  
Door shuts.]

Well, life is going on pretty much as usual. My old man yelling at me from one side of the bathroom door. Me yelling at him from the other. And then one day the old man comes home with this new girlfriend, name of Modesto. She works in the slaughter house wrapping meat. And she's got these hands that look like steaks. Permanently red. Permanently swolled up.

With her it seems I always got something to say. But the two of us, me and her, we are fire and water.

MODESTO So Wendy, let's me and you go out to the beauty parlor.  
We'll get your hair done up.

WENDY

Gosh darn, Modesto, I just got back from the beauty parlor.

MODESTO You never seen the inside of no beauty parlor.

WENDY Once a week, regular as the rising sun.

MODESTO Which one you got to, Sheila or Red?

WENDY Neither one. I go out of town.

[MODESTO hisses and turns away.]

That ticks her off. She does a little hiss and turns away like she's a board-certified bob cat.  
Dad, you gotta watch out for her.

DAD What I gotta watch for?

WENDY She's got plans for you.

DAD Well, good for her.

WENDY No, Dad. Because she's got the soul of a cat-faced spider.

DAD O for god sake....

WENDY Just then she starts naming all the things she has shot.

MODESTO I have shot a gopher snake and a fork`ed horn lizard. I have shot two cradle foxes and a stampeding cave marmot. And when I shot the wilderness box chicken and her mother, I was only nine.

WENDY Dad, you got to be careful of her.

But he don't care. He's feeling the fire.

Dad, you got to make sure you don't set her off.

DAD The hell you talking about?

WENDY Do not tangle with her.

DAD I like to tangle with her.

WENDY You tangle with her, you'll lose a limb.

DAD Lose a few, gain a few. I'm a gambling man.

WENDY Yep, he's feeling the fire.

WENDY

Dad, you notice she's got a crucifix tattooed on one of her ears?

DAD Yeah. I noticed that.

WENDY What you think it means?

DAD It means...it means she is a god-fearing person.

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MODESTO Wendy, why don't me and you go out for a pedicure?

WENDY Go out for a what?

MODESTO  
A pedicure.

WENDY Thanks anyway. But mine's already cured.

MODESTO What I mean is. You need some refinery.

WENDY Maybe I got all I want.

MODESTO Well, it ain't enough.

[She lights a cigarette. Blows smoke.]

WENDY  
She's fired up like a pig iron furnace. Big red hair and big red hands, big red face and big red mouth.

MODESTO So tell me, Wendy. What you make driving that truck?

WENDY About what you make wrapping that meat.

MODESTO You don't make what I make.

WENDY How do you know I don't?

MODESTO The slaughter house is a union shop.

WENDY That don't mean wrapping meat is a union job.

MODESTO  
All the children think they all know all about everything.

WENDY Her face is big. Like a colored plate.

DAD  
Wendy.

WENDY  
Yeah, Dad.

DAD Well  
listen here.

WENDY  
Right, Dad.

DAD I want you to get along with her, you understand.

WENDY  
Right, Dad.

DAD Because  
she is....

WENDY  
Yeah, Dad.

DAD  
She is....

WENDY  
Yeah, Dad.

DAD  
She...is...

WENDY  
Yeah.

DAD ...A very  
beautiful person.

WENDY  
But the real reason the old man likes her is that she brings home a sack of meat from the slaughter house every night. She peels off a steak. She adds the tip of a roast. A couple of ribs. And she brings it all home in her snake skin purse at the end of the day. Then she sits at the kitchen table like she's at a casino. Her big red hands dealing out the meat.

MODESTO

This one's too close to the muscle. That's tough. Give it to the dog. This one's a rib. Make a good breakfast with eggs and some cheese. This one's a loin. Sometimes called tender loin. Fourteen fifty a pound in the store. When you can get it. Fry this one up with a few onions and a box of Tater Tots.

WENDY

I take them off, do what she says. While her and my dad is laid out on the couch, their feet propped up on two cases of 10-30 motor oil. They got the t.v. on cuz it's Barbara Stanwick week. She's threatening people with her long skirt and her tall boots. "Get outa my way, or I'll set fire to this whole spread." She's the woman of the spread.

DAD I'm in the process of buying a big spread, you know.

MODESTO

Are you now?

DAD Out on Buckhorn Flat.

MODESTO Out on the Buckhorn.

DAD

Two thousand five hundred acres of the finest wire grass meadow.

MODESTO Two thousand five hundred.

DAD Gonna raise me some Black Angus cattle.

MODESTO A man of vision, I see.

DAD Wave of the future. The Black Angus.

MODESTO

Maybe that's what we have in common. A vision of the future. Beef.

DAD You can't go wrong. Not with meat.

MODESTO There's meaning in meat.

WENDY

That there is a meeting of the minds. About then we sit down at the table. Suddenly everything's quiet. No one speaks. Not even Barbara Stanwick. We're eating and watching, like wild dogs with a kill. Modesto's sitting there, her arms propped up on the table, a bone slipping in and out of her fingers, in and out of her mouth. Could be a bone. Could be a crucifix. No one speaks. It's quiet as snow in here.

[Pause.]

Well, look here, maybe I'll do a little show for you.

"O, speak again, bright angel, for thou art as glorious to this night, being o'er my head, as a winged messenger of heaven."

MODESTO  
What's that?

WENDY A  
little show.

MODESTO  
What's she doing?

DAD That's acting. She's doing some acting.

MODESTO Acting? That ain't acting. That's nothing.

DAD No, that there is acting. That's what it is.

MODESTO  
Look here, I been around. I never seen nothing like that. Now Barbara Stanwick, that is acting.

"Get out of my way, or I'll wrap this bull whip around your head." That is acting.

DAD Acting is acting. She's working on her acting.

MODESTO  
The hell for?

DAD She's gonna be an actress. It's all in the works.  
She's gonna have a new career.

MODESTO She needs to get her hair done. That's what she needs.

Listen here. You have something to do with that Opera House?

WENDY  
I do.

MODESTO Well, I got something to say about that.

WENDY  
Oh yeah?

MODESTO  
Yeah. The place is full of nothing but shit. Bat shit, bird shit, bull shit.

WENDY We finish dinner in silence. The silence of the beef.

Then later that night Modesto comes up to me. She's holding my boots in her hand.

MODESTO  
Listen up.

WENDY  
Yeah.

MODESTO  
Well, it's time.

WENDY  
Time for what?

MODESTO  
Time to move on.

WENDY Right. Time to move on.

MODESTO Time for you to move on. Move on out. Because you're cramping my style.

WENDY I'm cramping your style.

MODESTO Because I think I can set your old man on fire.

WENDY That right?

MODESTO That's right. With my fancy foot work.

WENDY With your fancy foot work.

MODESTO And my fancy hand work. But I gotta have the place to myself.

WENDY She's fingering my boots with her steak-like hands.

MODESTO Yeah, I gotta have the place to myself.

WENDY Then she hands me my boots.

MODESTO So I think it's time you was on your way. Because in case you didn't know, I got time and meat enough. I can outlast you.

WENDY And I know she's right. She does have time and meat enough.

MODESTO Because I'm a woman of meat.

WENDY And she's right. She is a woman of meat.

That same night I have a chat with the old man. Remind him that I don't exactly have a place to go. But he don't say anything. And I know I've lost the battle.

So I back the truck up to the front door, load up my boxes, and move on into the UPS truck. You'd be surprised what a nice house you can set up in the back of a UPS truck. And that's where I do my practicing now. That's where I rehearse my audition pieces. Here's one of them.

"When I awoke this morning, I saw the sunshine streaming in. It touched the birches outside my window, and my heart leapt up. I felt a passionate longing to be back home again, in Moscow once again."

Well, what do you think? I got talent? Go ahead, be honest.

[Slight pause.]

I think the answer is yes.

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