

RECONSTRUCTING JULIE

by:
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Players:

JULIE, a neurotic twenty-something.

ADAM, her therapist.

AT RISE: *Stage is bare, save for a potted plant and two Barcelona chairs, in which Julie and Adam are seated, facing each other.*

A back wall scrim hosts a Warhol-esque portrait of Sigmund Freud.

JULIE

My stomach hurts. My hair is a mess. My fingernails are all chipped. I don't sleep well and my cat is allergic to me... Altogether, I'm not satisfied with my state of affairs.

ADAM

And how has this impacted your life?

JULIE

Negatively.

ADAM

I see.

JULIE

Mother says I'm too sensitive.

ADAM
Does she?

JULIE
Yes, she says I'm morose and self-absorbed, which doesn't help one bit. I mean, what kind of mother kicks you when you're down? What kind of mother belittles your problems?

ADAM
You want something different from your mother?

JULIE
Wouldn't you?

Listen. I'm not asking for the great mother goddess descended from a'high, baking all things Betty Crocker and wrapped in apron strings of gold... Truly, I'm not...

I would just like a little compassion. A little understanding...

ADAM
Which she withholds.

JULIE
If you met her, you'd understand.

ADAM
I see.

JULIE
You see what?

ADAM
I see what you're trying to say.

JULIE
No. No you don't, but that's okay. I didn't expect that you would.

ADAM
Maybe we should try another approach. Tell me about your childhood.

JULIE
There's not much to tell, really.

ADAM
I find that hard to believe.

JULIE

No. Really. It was horrible and dull... I remember being young—younger. I remember a Christmas here, a birthday there, but nothing exciting or joyous. Just bits and pieces, here and there.

My bedroom was painted pink. I collected stuffed animals. I liked to go crawdad fishing down at the pond. I had a tricycle, a Barbie dream house, a skateboard, an E-Z Bake oven...

Really, the whole thing is a dull, boring, lifeless blur.

ADAM

A blur?

JULIE

Nothing ever happened.

ADAM

What was supposed to happen?

JULIE

I don't know... Something.

ADAM

Like?

JULIE

Something memorable.

ADAM

Could you be more specific?

JULIE

No.

ADAM

Okay. When you think of your childhood, what words come to mind?

JULIE

Dull.

ADAM

And?

JULIE

Duller.

ADAM

Okay. And your mother?

JULIE

Cold. Uncaring. Vindictive. Stifling. Imperious. Callous. Patronizing. Sanctimonious—

ADAM

Okay, okay. I think—

JULIE

Poisonous. Venomous. Calculating. Scheming—

ADAM

Julie, I think I get it—

JULIE

Ruthless. Savage. Conniving. Devious—

ADAM

Julie—

JULIE

A bitch.

ADAM

My goodness.

JULIE

What?

ADAM

You're a walking thesaurus, aren't you?

JULIE

You know... I don't think this is going anywhere.

ADAM

How so?

JULIE

Aren't you supposed to be telling me how to get my life back on track? Aren't you supposed to be giving me advice and counseling or something?

ADAM

And what would that advice sound like?

JULIE

I don't know. Maybe you should tell me to ignore my mother. Maybe you should tell me she's no good for me. Maybe I should move to New York, buy a new cat, get my hair and nails done. I don't know... anything.

ADAM

Would any of that make you happy?

JULIE

That's what I'm here to find out.

ADAM

From me?

JULIE

No, from the translucent oracle that hovers above your potted plant. Of course, from you. I want to hear it from you. That's why I'm paying you.

You know, if you can't grasp the fact that people pay you to provide advice, to help them feel better, maybe you're in the wrong profession.

ADAM

What's your profession?

JULIE

I'm a writer.

ADAM

Of what?

JULIE

Nothing... It's not important.

ADAM

Try me.

JULIE

I'm a calligrapher. I write menus, wedding invitations, certificates—stuff like that.

ADAM

Do you like what you do?

JULIE

Should I?

ADAM

Only you could know.

JULIE

Then, no. I'm not particularly fond of writing up the details of other people's accomplishments. Their precious weddings and bar mitzvahs, their celebrations and happenings... It makes me feel like an outsider.

ADAM

I see.

JULIE

You see what?

ADAM

I see what you mean.

JULIE

No. No you don't. But, I didn't expect that you would.

ADAM

Are you married?

JULIE

No.

ADAM

Do you have any hobbies?

JULIE

No.

ADAM

Do you entertain?

JULIE

Entertain?

ADAM

Friends?

JULIE

No.

ADAM

Do you drink?

JULIE

No.

ADAM

Smoke? Dance? Sing?

JULIE

No. No. No.

ADAM

Julie—

JULIE

Yes?

ADAM

I don't think I can help you.

JULIE

Why?

ADAM

Because you don't exist.

JULIE

What?

ADAM

You're not really here.

JULIE

I don't understand. Are you saying I'm not alive? I don't have flesh, blood, organs, tissue?

ADAM

No. You have all of those things.

JULIE

Then, I exist.

ADAM

No. You occupy.

JULIE

What?

ADAM

Space. You occupy space. Nothing more.

JULIE

O! I think you're being very unkind.

ADAM

Am I?

JULIE

Isn't it obvious? You just consigned me to nonexistence. You just made my life disappear.

ADAM

Did I?

JULIE

Didn't you?

ADAM

Didn't you?

JULIE

Now, you're mocking me.

ADAM

No. There's nothing here to mock.

JULIE

That's right. I don't exist and therefore I can't be mocked. Right?

ADAM

What do you want me to say?

JULIE

I want you to look me in the eye and tell me I exist. I want you to acknowledge my pain. I want you to listen to me and tell me what to do. Don't you understand? I want you to affirm—

ADAM

Affirm what?

JULIE

That I exist!

ADAM
Do you?

JULIE
Why, yes! I'm sitting right here.

ADAM
Doing what?

JULIE
Pouring my heart out. Begging to be heard!

ADAM
Then, say something.

JULIE
About what?

ADAM
Anything. Tell me anything about why you exist.

JULIE
I hate my mother.

ADAM
Therefore, your mother exists... And you?

JULIE
My hair is a mess. My nails are chipped. My cat is allergic to me.

ADAM
Therefore, they exist... And you?

JULIE
I had a horrible, boring childhood.

ADAM
It existed.

JULIE
I've done nothing with my life.

ADAM
And, therefore, it does not exist.

JULIE

But, it does! It does exist! I exist! My life is real!

ADAM

Prove it.

JULIE

How? How can I prove it if you won't acknowledge that I exist? If you can't see my pain? My suffering.

ADAM

I do see your pain. I do see your suffering. They exist.

JULIE

Then, so do I!

ADAM

No. They exist. You don't.

JULIE

Christ!

ADAM

He existed.

JULIE

My God!

ADAM

God exists, but that he's your God alone is debatable.

JULIE

Damn it. I exist.

ADAM

No you don't.

JULIE

I do.

ADAM

Don't.

JULIE

Look at my hand. It's trembling.

ADAM

And so, your hand exists.

JULIE

My hand is me! Therefore, I exist!

ADAM

No.

JULIE

If my hand is not me, who is it?

ADAM

It's just a hand.

JULIE

Look. I have no idea what you're trying to prove here. I have no idea where you're going, but we better get somewhere soon, or I'll—I'll—

ADAM

You'll what?

JULIE

I'll do something drastic!

ADAM

Like what?

JULIE

I'll take steps. Don't make me take steps!

ADAM

What kinds of steps?

JULIE

I don't know. Steps away from here. I'll get out of here. I'll find some other way to deal with my problems. I'll do whatever I want.

ADAM

And that would be a bad thing?

JULIE

I don't know. What do you think?

ADAM

You disappeared again. Where did you go?

JULIE
What? I'm right here.

ADAM
No you aren't.

JULIE
Yes. I am!

ADAM
Who said that?

JULIE
I did.

ADAM
Are you sure? Are you taking steps?

JULIE
Steps? What steps?

ADAM
Drastic steps.

JULIE
What drastic steps? What do you mean?

ADAM
What do you mean? You're the one who said you might be forced to take drastic steps.
What are they?

JULIE
I don't know... I was bluffing.

ADAM
Were you?

JULIE
Yes.

ADAM
Too bad.

JULIE
Yes...

ADAM

You know what? I was wrong. You exist. You're a carburetor.

JULIE

A what?

ADAM

A carburetor. You blend air and fuel to supply engines with power to move forward.

JULIE

That makes no sense.

ADAM

Nonsense, huh?

JULIE

Yes.

ADAM

You're a calligrapher?

JULIE

Yes.

ADAM

You combine elegant lines and curves with words to enrich other people's lives.

JULIE

I guess you could say that.

ADAM

You hate your mother?

JULIE

Yes.

ADAM

Therefore, you provide fuel for her derision?

JULIE

I suppose.

ADAM

You care about your hair and your nails?

JULIE

Yes.

ADAM

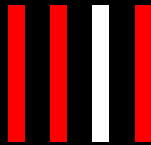
Providing the world something beautiful to look at, kind of like my potted plant.

JULIE

I don't like where this is going.

ADAM

Yes, you do exist after all.



**FIND OUT HOW
THIS PLAY ENDS.**

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