

“SURPRISE!”

a play in ten minutes

by
Michael Perlmutter

CHARACTERS

TED a young man in the middle of his dating years

CINDY a young woman, Ted's female counterpart

ACTOR/CAMERA OPERATOR(S) - cast as fitting the scenario chosen

THE SETTING

The stage on which the play is presented

THE TIME

The immediate present

A NOTE REGARDING TECHNICAL OPTIONS TO THIS PIECE:

This play may be enacted with differing levels of technical bravado. The more elaborate of which would include a live action screen in where what is filmed through camera(s) onstage is immediately replayed to the audience on a screen behind TED and CINDY. *Those parts of the text and stage directions devoted to the live action filming will be presented in this script in Bold Italic type (like you are reading now).*

The play is also presentable scaled down to no filming, no screen—in a more traditional live theatre format. All of which will become clearer as you read on. So . . . read on.

(The stage is bare.

Stage directions & Dialogue in BOLD/ITALIC font [such as these] are to be considered optimal yet optional—as they will require the use of projector screen and one (or two) live cameras . . . as well as actor(s)/camera-people to operate the cameras . [More on this later but let’s get on with the story, shall we?]

At the back of the stage hangs a large projection screen or scrim (which we’ll call screen from here on in). Projected on the screen is the one word, “SURPRISE!”.

Silence.

One [or two] actors set up a table and two chairs center onstage—with table cloth, plates, silver ware, a bottle of wine and two wine glasses, and then depart. They [he/she] return[s], [each] carrying a hand held camera or phone set in record mode. Followed by:

TED, a young man in the middle of his dating years, who escorts a blindfolded CINDY, his female counterpart onto the stage to one of the chairs. TED recognizes the audience as they both enter but firmly places a finger to his lips indicating to the audience to remain quiet. As TED helps CINDY to the table and to her seat he also silently tries to tell the audience with gestures and whatever words he can clearly mouth: “When I remove her blindfold—we all yell ‘SURPRISE’—OK?; but, not until then.” Simultaneously the couple are engaged in the following dialogue [*and through this all the camera-person{s} continue filming: the same pictures also being edited and projected on screen {“SURPRISE” remains superimposed over the picture until indicated later}]]:*

CINDY

What are you doing?

TED

I told you . . . trust me.

CINDY

Last time a man told me to trust him—

TED

This'll be nothing like that, I promise.

CINDY

I don't know about this.

(She feels around the table to find:)

TED

Are you ready?

CINDY

Oh, well, there's a drink, that's something at least.

(CINDY pours herself a glass of wine as TED removes the blindfold; and leads the audience in yelling out:)

TED

SURPRISE.

(Pause: CINDY is now silent. She looks around to see where she is, who's here, who's not, *who's filming*, and whatever else she can surmise without giving any of her reaction away. *The word "SURPRISE" fades off of the screen—the camera feed however continues throughout.*)

TED

Well?

CINDY

(Takes a drink. Very calmly:)

What's going on here?

TED

I thought you'd like it.

CINDY

Like what?

TED

(Sits down in the second chair:)

This.

CINDY

What *is* this?

TED

It's a one act festival. For you. Isn't it perfect?

(No reply. He stumbles for the right words:)

I know how you love the theatre. I know you love the limelight and everything that goes with it.

CINDY

Are my parents out there?

TED

No. No, they couldn't come. But they'll be seeing this on Youtube.

CINDY

We're not live, are we?

TED

No, no. Not . . . yet. There's a delay. We're live here, though. In front of these people.

CINDY

Do I know any of these people?

TED

(Getting down on one knee:)

Cindy—

CINDY

Ted . . .

TED

I didn't know how to say this—

CINDY

(Finding the words:)

. . . I . . . can't.

TED

Can't what?

CINDY

We've only known each other for . . . a few months.

TED

The longest few months of my life.

CINDY

Mine too. But I . . . can't . . . marry you.

TED

Oh my God, no. That's not . . .

CINDY

Then what are you doing on your knee?

TED

I would say I was going to tie my shoe but I was just going for the added effect—I had to be sure.

CINDY

Be sure of what?

TED

It isn't working out . . . between us.

(Silence.)

CINDY

Are you breaking up with me?

TED

. . . Kind of . . . Yeah.

(Long silence.)

CINDY

And this? This is how you do it?

TED

I know how you love theatre—

CINDY

This is-- . . . This is NOT how you break up with a person.

TED

To be honest you can be a little volatile and I needed the cushion of support.

(In an attempt to avoid being volatile—and thereby proving Ted right--CINDY pours herself another drink. TED follows suit and does the same.)