

**AT THIS HOUR**

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**In Memory of the Actress Lynn Cohen  
1934 - 2020**

By Alice Jankell

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CHARACTERS:

JODY.....A Woman in her 40's

LYNN.....A Woman in her 80's

SETTING:

A book shop, closed for the duration.

TIME:

Winter of the quarantine, 2020

AT THIS HOUR

Silence.

Spotlight up on JODY (A woman in her 40's.)  
She is standing, in her coat, taking in the utter  
silence.

**A siren cracks through** the silence. JODY  
listens.

**The siren fades away.**

Silence.

That's it.

JODY

Lights open up on a book shop. Books line the  
walls. Cash register is in place, but the shop is  
empty of customers.

A small table is set for lunch for two, in the  
middle of the room, among the shelves.

JODY steps in.

Alright. Perfect.

JODY

JODY arranges her bag and coat, and sits at the  
table. She looks around. She waits.

LYNN (A woman in her 80's) enters from the  
restroom.

It's Lynny! Hello there!

LYNN

Lynn! You're here. I wasn't sure.

JODY

Nature called. My bladder's not what it used to be. I can't hug you, but I'm hugging you  
from here.

LYNN

JODY

Me too you.

They sit.

JODY

You look beautiful.

LYNN

Ah, well you know, it's early in the day for me!

JODY

I know. Our lunches are always your breakfasts.

LYNN

Except for my coffee. I have to have my morning cup of coffee. That shirt is glorious on you! What that color does for your eyes!

JODY

Thank you.

LYNN

Gorgeous.

JODY

I can't believe you set this all up. Look at this table!

LYNN

The flowers are from Ronny.

JODY

How did you get this space?

LYNN

This shop belongs to a friend of ours.

JODY

You guys have so many friends.

LYNN

When the restaurants were shuttered, I said to Ronny, "But Jody and I have one of our power lunches this Thursday! One of our all-important power lunches!"

JODY

Where we solve the problems of the American theater!

LYNN

And then some!

JODY

And then some!

LYNN

So my brilliant husband made a call. He said to our friend, a lovely young man, “Why let the store sit empty?” And you know that nobody can resist Ronny. So our friend, who is a vivid actor by the way, just lovely, but hated it so he changed careers and opened this shop--he turned the lights on. For us.

JODY

And for the American theater. He banished the dark.

LYNN

I love how you speak, Jody. And it filters into everything. I knew it that first time, remember that first little reading? And you came to my apartment to rehearse, and I just instantly knew I was in good, strong hands.

JODY reaches into her bag and pulls out a bottle of wine and a corkscrew.

Wine! Look at you!

JODY

Our pinot grigio. May I pour? We have no young waiters to flirt with.

LYNN

God yes, pour away. And I filled up this pitcher with good old tap water from the restroom back there. What New Yorker would pay for water when we have the best in the country?

JODY pours the wine and LYNN pours the water.

JODY

There we go. To lunch!

They toast.

LYNN reaches into her bag and pulls out two take-out containers.

LYNN

Take-out still works! Chicken Caesars. This one's yours, extra anchovies.

JODY

And yours, dressing on the side, no croutons.

LYNN

I'm an old lady. I have to watch it.

JODY pulls out a bag of rolls.

JODY

Tada!

LYNN

Rolls! You are a genius. And now...I've got the goods!

LYNN reaches into her bra and pulls out a tiny bottle of hand sanitizer.

JODY

Purell!

LYNN

Hold out your hand.

JODY

You know all the rules, even though you aren't--

LYNN

I'm rule-bound. Always have been.

LYNN squirts a tiny drop of hand sanitizer onto both of their hands. They rub.

I kind of like rules. They force you to be creative. There. Done. And now let's eat!

JODY

I'm starving

They serve, and dig in, under the following.

LYNN

You're a lifesaver, Jody. I don't have a clue how to use computers -- Thank God for Ronny! -- and I can only do so much reading.

JODY

You're not a sit-at-home gal.

LYNN

I'm not a sit-*anywhere* gal. I was about to leave for Seattle, if you can believe it, for a beautiful film. I'm not sure the director knows what he's doing, but the script is very good. Poignant. And 'Chekov at the Lake' is indefinitely postponed. That breaks my heart. We have to get you up there. And there was going to be a reading of a new, very funny play at MTC. I was so flattered to be involved. The writer is young and smart as a whip. Fresh out of school and *smart as a whip*. I need to introduce you to her. And The Actors Center, oh I love my class there.

**Loud sirens screech** outside. The women wait.

**The sirens fade.**

I do miss the cute waiters. Some flirting would do us good right now. And I miss my granddaughter.

JODY

We just need to wait this out.

LYNN

She told me on the phone that I am her BFF. I like the "Forever" part. I'll hold her to it!

JODY

You're the BFF to a lot of us. Oh, hold on-

JODY jumps up and coughs into her elbow.

Whew! That was just a *tickle*, I swear to you. My throat tickled. It's dusty in here. It was just a tickle.

LYNN

I know.

JODY

I'm not sick.

LYNN

I know. Sit down.

JODY sits back down.

There. And your beautiful kids! Are they going nuts? They're so creative. Like their mama!

JODY

Aw, stop don't stop! God, I wish they saw me even a little bit the way you do. I feel like I'm wearing a clown nose and big clown shoes whenever I talk to them.

LYNN

You have just animated how all moms feel sometimes.

JODY

You felt that way? You did?

LYNN

Of course. And the more you say, the bigger those shoes grow, and the more foolish you sound even to yourself.

JODY

I want them to understand that I'm not an idiot. That I know things. That I am passionate about my work and getting better at it all the time. I want them to recognize that. Hell, I want my peers to recognize that too. Maybe that's the problem.

LYNN

I recognize it. I see it in you all the time.

JODY

You do?

LYNN

Call me whenever you doubt it.

JODY

Where were you when I was younger? When I was coming up?

LYNN

In the Midwest, memorizing lines, raising my kids, and polishing my own clown nose.

JODY

I never had a woman mentor back then. Plenty of brilliant men taught me to direct and guided my career, but nobody, not one person, could tell me how to do this and have a family at the same time.

LYNN

Me neither. And certainly nobody told me we could work even more as we get older.

JODY

You're who I want to be when I grow up.



LYNN

Oh you're there. Just keep going.

JODY

This is the lunch I promised myself I would--

**Loud sirens** are suddenly heard from outside.  
**More sirens** join in. They get very loud.

My goodness!

JODY

So scary!

**The sirens** pass. It grows quiet again.

LYNN

Jody?

JODY

What?

LYNN

I need to ask you something. Jody, I need to ask you-- My agent is worried about me with this virus around. He doesn't want me working for a long, long time, but that's what I do. I work. I want to be working when they take me out in a box. Are you--should I be--are you worried? About me?

JODY

About you? Are you worried about you?

LYNN

I just wanted to run it by you.

JODY

Oh Lynn, I never worry about you. As soon as anyone starts working again, you tell you're agent you're ready. Or find another agent.

LYNN

Good. Because that movie in Seattle has my character doing the Tango. And I've been practicing.

JODY

You do the Tango?

I do now!

LYNN

LYNN stands up, picks a flower out of the vase on the table and sticks it in her hair. She gestures to JODY.

Come. I'll show you.

JODY rises uncertainly.

Now?

JODY

LYNN

Yep. Put a flower in your hair.

JODY takes a flower from the vase, puts it in her hair.

LYNN

I can't hold you, but I'm holding you from here.

LYNN puts up her arms.

Mirror me.

JODY

That's all I've ever wanted to do.

JODY puts up her arms too.

LYNN

Step forward, as I step back.

JODY steps forward and into the dance.

That's it.

The two women mirror each other and move as one, as Tango music slowly creeps in.

You're there. Just keep going.

The music continues and they dance.

JODY

Beautiful.

LYNN

Oh dear. I need that restroom again. Give me a moment.

LYNN starts off to the restroom.

JODY

Lynn?

LYNN stops, turns around.

I just didn't want to forget to ask you--

LYNN

Yes?

JODY

No, no, go. Go. I'll ask you later.

LYNN

Okey doke. Don't forget.

JODY

I won't. I won't forget.

LYNN

Ok, keep dancing. Practice without me.

JODY starts dancing again.

Wow, that shirt really does bring out your eyes!

LYNN walks off, and the lights fade with her.

A spotlight picks up JODY as she continues dancing alone.

The music begins to fade, but JODY keeps dancing in the spotlight.

The Music go out.

Silence.

JODY keeps dancing as the **lights go to black.**

END