

FUTURES EXCHANGE

By

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Cast of Characters

GERRY: Female, 70s

ALEXA: Female, 40 - 45

DARREN: Male, 40 - 45

SAL: Female, 20 - 25

NAOMI: Female, 20 - 25

TAMSIN: Female, 17

SHANTI: Female, late 30's, retreat leader

REY: Any gender, assists on retreat

ACT I

Scene 1

The acting space is dominated by an obstacle course. One of those with climbing frames and rope nets and tunnels and planks you crawl across. This represents some kind of challenging terrain. The lighting should suggest a hot sunny day. There is one main upper platform, spacious enough to accommodate the whole cast. Two young women in their mid-20s appear on this from the back, having climbed up a hidden set of stairs. These are SAL and NAOMI who are bowed down by backpacks. They throw these down and collapse onto the ground.

NAOMI

Oh. My. God. My thigh muscles are screaming.

SAL

Any water left?

NAOMI

Yeah, side pocket of my pack. I don't think I can move right now.

SAL crawls over to the pack and finds the water bottle. It is almost empty. She takes a swig and then passes it over to NAOMI who raises her head, drains it, and then collapses back again.

NAOMI

I've had *nicer* Christmas presents.

SAL

You were given this for Christmas?

NAOMI

Yeah. I'd been moaning to Rob that he never made any efforts to come up with something original. So he gave me the worst Experience he could think of. Must have been because he knew he was about to split up with me.

SAL

"The bastard".

NAOMI

What?

SAL

That's how you usually finish any sentence which refers to your ex.

(CONTINUED)

NAOMI

Really?

SAL

Yes. I haven't known you long, but I've known you long enough to notice that.

NAOMI

Maybe I'm getting over him?

SAL

Ha ha.

NAOMI throws the empty bottle at SAL, it bounces off her and rolls away.

SAL

That's littering the landscape.

NAOMI

I'll get it in a sec

Two other people have now appeared, GERRY a woman in her mid 70's, and TAMSIN, a girl of about 17.

GERRY

Where did you two go striding off to?

SAL

We thought we'd get to the end of the ridge so we'd be the first to see the view.

GERRY

Shanti was a bit anxious when she realised you were no longer in sight.

NAOMI

Shanti is a bit of a control freak, isn't she?

GERRY

(Reasonably) Well, the organisation will be liable if anything happens to us.

SAL

Nah, we signed disclaimers didn't we? So we can't sue them no matter what happens to us.

TAMSIN goes and sits over by herself, staring into space. GERRY looks in her direction and shrugs.

NAOMI

Not the chattiest of types, is she?

GERRY

Not really, no.

NAOMI

Did you get a word out of her on the walk up?

GERRY

No.

The three women all look at TAMSIN who affects not to notice them.

SAL

How are your legs holding up, Gerry?

GERRY

Not too bad. I'm looking forward to yoga later, a chance to stretch out a bit.

NAOMI

You're fitter than any of us, I don't know how you do it! Personally, I'm looking forward to a massive glass of wine.

GERRY

I think it's an alcohol-free cleansing day today.

NAOMI

You're kidding? Oh, the bastard.

NAOMI lies back again, frustrated. SHANTI (female, late 30's) and DARREN (male, 40s) now appear, also carrying backpacks.

SHANTI

Ah, great, I was getting worried. Please try not to leave the group again, ladies. This ridge is very narrow, and potentially dangerous as I told you all at the beginning of the hike. We are meant to be working together, forging a strong team.

NAOMI

We just thought we'd do something independently.

SHANTI always speaks very calmly even when she is being pithy.

SHANTI

Well, we do offer solo retreats for people who are particularly independently minded. But that's not what this is! This is a team building backpacking and yoga retreat, on which you all work together over the course of the week to reach your goals.

NAOMI

Oh yes, I was forgetting!

SAL

Sorry Shanti.

NAOMI

(privately, to SAL) Don't let her intimidate you!

SAL

I'm not, I just don't want to be rude that's all.

NAOMI raises an eyebrow and lies back down, stretching out her arms in the sun. SHANTI sees the discarded water bottle and picks it up, looking unimpressed.

SHANTI

Still a couple missing..we're just waiting for Alexa now I think.

As if on cue, ALEXA appears, a professional woman in her mid-40s. Unlike the others, she is not carrying a backpack. REY follows her, REY is carrying two backpacks which they place down on the ground.

ALEXA

I think I might have twisted my ankle..

ALEXA hops over to DARREN who has been standing over to the side, and places a hand on his shoulder for balance. DARREN looks up, startled and holds onto ALEXA instinctively.

ALEXA

Oh, thank you so much Darren.

DARREN

No problem.

ALEXA

I looked for you when I tripped, but you'd gone on ahead.

DARREN

I was talking to Shanti.

ALEXA

Oh, I thought we'd been having such a nice conversation. I was hoping we could continue with it..

SHANTI

Alexa!

ALEXA

Yes, Shanti?

SHANTI

It wasn't really fair to expect Rey to carry your pack. We are all responsible for our own portage on the retreat, it's one of the fundamental conditions you all sign up to.

ALEXA

But Shanti, didn't you hear what I said? I've twisted my ankle! I can barely walk, to be honest.

SHANTI

Well, we can leave you here with a few bottles of water and a blanket and get help sent up to you when we get back down to the yurt.

ALEXA

You'd leave me up here?

SHANTI

You'd be perfectly safe, Alexa. We are only a few hours from civilisation. I have to look after the needs of the whole group.

ALEXA looks mutinous and puts her foot to the ground with exaggerated intakes of breath and experimental wiggings. After a few moments..

ALEXA

I think it might be feeling a bit better now.

SHANTI

Excellent. Rey can let you have a strap from the medical kit, if you bind it up nice and tight, it should do until we get down.

ALEXA

Maybe Darren could do it...?

DARREN

Me?

ALEXA

Don't firemen get medical training..?

SHANTI

Rey is a fully qualified first aider.

(CONTINUED)

REY is now attending to ALEXA who takes her hiking boot off and is making much of her injury.

NAOMI

(to SAL) She doesn't hang about, does she?

SAL

She's had her eye on Darren since the first night. I don't blame her, though. He is quite tasty.

NAOMI

What are you talking about, he's old!

SAL

Not that old...

SAL looks over at DARREN who seems relaxed now he is relieved of the responsibility of ALEXA. He has sat down and starting unpacking things from his pack. GERRY joins him. SHANTI claps her hands.

SHANTI

Right, before we put our meal together, we are going to do a 15 minute outdoor practice. Mainly centred on breathing, the yogic breath.

NAOMI

Oh God.

SAL

I'd better join in.

NAOMI

Your work aren't going to know if you are doing breathing exercises on the top of Ben Lugh or not.

SAL

You don't understand. I'm not doing it for my work. I like the breathing exercises. They make me feel a lot calmer.

NAOMI

Well you don't want to get better too quickly or you'll be back in your office before you know it.

SAL

But that's why I'm here. To get well enough to go back to work.

SHANTI

Come on, sitting in a circle, lotus position if you can do that, cross-legged if not. Don't challenge yourself unduly, listen to your bodies.

(CONTINUED)

The group meander into a circle. SAL and GERRY are limber, DARREN is clumsy, NAOMI is resistant and ALEXA is trying to look extremely proficient and graceful. SHANTI observes TAMSIN is still sitting apart.

SHANTI

Tamsin! Come and join the others please.

TAMSIN has her head down. SHANTI signs to REY to start leading the breathwork, and SHANTI approaches TAMSIN.

SHANTI

Come on, dear. Isolating yourself isn't going to help you know.

TAMSIN shrugs. SHANTI bends and becomes more confiding.

SHANTI

You know I have to provide a written report on your progress to the bereavement service? They don't ask for much for funding your place here, but that's something I do have to be truthful about. So make it easy for me, Tamsin. Just join the others and see how it goes.

TAMSIN gets up in silence and goes to join the others in the circle. REY has already started a calm and smooth breath, doing a count.

REY

In...two...three...four...

Out...two...three...four...

In...two...three...four...

Lighting fades...

Scene 2

Lights up, on the group starting to pack up their things. The light has changed, it's a lot darker. In the distance, a rumble of thunder. No-one has noticed that TAMSIN is the only one absent from the group.

ALEXA

I don't believe it! Now it's going to rain on top of everything else.