
Lobsters and Lifers

By Jacob Juntunen

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For Meghann

CHARACTERS

BRIDGET: A white woman in her early twenties with purple hair.

ART: A white man in his early twenties.

LISA: A white woman in her late twenties.

EVELYN: An Asian-American woman in her thirties, not that much older than Art, Bridget or Lobsters and Lifers Lisa, but seems a whole different generation.

JAN: A black woman in her mid-forties.

JOANNE: A white woman in her mid-forties.

MIKE: A white man in his twenties.

MICHELLE: A white woman in her mid-thirties.

Author's Note: Bridget, Art, Lisa and Michelle need not be white, but that's how I imagined it. The others I think should probably be cast as specified, but I'd be open to suggestions. I am deeply indebted to Chicago Dramatists for a staged reading of the first draft, Infamous Commonwealth Theatre for Lobsters and Lifers a later Lobsters and Lifers staged reading, Dan Smith for work during both staged readings and dramaturgy extraordinaire, Rob Koon for insightful comments, and Steep Theatre, Laura Forbes, and Jen Hines for their particular help during the second staged reading.

SETTING

Lobsters and Lifers

The early 21st century in an over-priced deli of a Saveway grocery store outside Portland, Oregon. There are crazy animatronics, puppets, machines, and everything should be loud and exaggerated; nothing should seem real in the least. Scenes should flow into one another with a vocabulary of movement and visuals to suggest retail food service work without anyone ever actually making a sandwich onstage.

We went down swinging

Like Benny Goodman.

—Tom Petty

Act I

Pre-Show

(A live band plays grungy, instrumental rock as the audience enters. A projection or placard on an easel reads, "Pre-Show." Each scene throughout the play should be similarly labeled. The cast, in costume but out of character, greets spectators as they sit. Ideally beer and wine should be allowed inside. As the pre-show ends, the band stops and lights fade to black)

Training

(In the darkness, we hear the sound of a huge saw, and a spot light fades up on a huge, round, spinning blade with teeth, like those used to cut tree trunks Lobsters and Lifers into lumber. The rest of the lights fade up to reveal ART wearing black pants and a tan "SAVEWAY" polo shirt. BRIDGET and LISA are onstage with him also wearing black pants and tan "SAVEWAY" polo shirts. ART has a metal gauntlet on his hand. He's holding a sponge and cleaning a giant round blade that is spinning ominously. EVELYN is onstage in the same "SAVEWAY" clothes, but with a green, financial eye-shade. She's at a cash register slowly counting the bills out loud.)

EVELYN
One, two, three...

(EVELYN counts throughout the scene except where indicated.)

ART

So you take off the safety guard, spray it down and then turn it on and run the sponge along it. Lobsters and Lifers But you Lobsters and Lifers have to wear the glove.

BRIDGET

Why?

ART

The blade's sharp.

BRIDGET

The glove stinks. I can smell it from here.

ART

Well, it's metal. There's all this meat and cheese on the blade and it gets stuck in Lobsters and Lifers the glove's joints. We run it through the dishwasher every now and then.

BRIDGET

I'm not wearing that.

ART

It's not safe otherwise.

BRIDGET

What do you care?

ART

I've got seniority so it's my fault if you get hurt.

BRIDGET

You've worked here a Lobsters and Lifers month.

ART

Still.

BRIDGET

Smell the glove.

LISA

No!

ART

Look, they just made me night shift supervisor but if Evelyn sees you not wearing the glove she'll turn is in.

BRIDGET

Maybe I should just never clean the slicer.

EVELYN

Fifty-seven ones. Let's see... (moving to the calculator) Fifty-seven times one is... Fifty-seven.

(EVELYN writes that Lobsters and Lifers down on a sheet of paper and begins slowly counting the fives out loud.)

BRIDGET
Is she always like this?

ART
She's very... thorough.

(They watch EVELYN.)

EVELYN
... five, six, seven...

ART
So then you take a clean rag and wipe it down.

(As ART is wiping down the blade, sheet music tattooed on his arm is noticeable)

BRIDGET
Is the sheet music tattoo supposed to impress us with your artsiness?

ART
It's supposed to remind me how fucked up women are.

BRIDGET
The brightly-colored hair should remind you I'm poisonous.

LISA
What do you play?

ART
Guitar. And I sing.

LISA
Are you in a band?

ART
I was.

LISA
Do you still play?

ART
For myself.

Lobsters And Lifers

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