

PHOEBE'S PHOBIA

A DRAMATIC ONE-ACT

by
Christian Kiley



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CHARACTERS

PHOEBE	A girl
VOICE 1	Vanity
VOICE 2	Humiliation
VOICE 3	Distain
VOICE 4	Anonymity
VOICE 5	Pride
VOICE 6	Immaturity
VOICE 7	Mania
VOICE 8	Guilt
VOICE 9	Rejection
VOICE 10	Social Isolation
VOICE 11	Instability
VOICE 12	Hysteria
VOICE 13	Betrayal
RUNNER	Ego
FRIEND 1	Self-acceptance
FRIEND 2	Peace
FRIEND 3	Determination
FRIEND 4	Compassion
FRIEND 5	Opportunity
FRIEND 6	Activism
FRIEND 7	Love

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PHOEBE covers the empty bird cage with a black sheet. SHE lowers her head for a moment. One of the FRIENDS sings a single note from the wings. PHOEBE has an identification tag around her wrist.

PHOEBE: Leave me alone. Leave me, leave me. Leave, leave.

VOICE 1: You don't want that.

VOICE 2: You don't.

VOICE 3: Isolation can create unstable conditions.

VOICE 4: For a mind like yours.

VOICE 5: A mind prone to hallucinations.

VOICE 6: And bouts of panic.

VOICE 7: "Attacks" your doctor calls them.

VOICE 8: Agoraphobia!

PHOEBE: That's an irrational fear, a phobia.

VOICE 9: But it is, we are, here.

VOICE 10: We are here.

PHOEBE: You are. Yes.

(VOICE 11 screams.)

Did you hear that?

VOICE 12: Hear what, dear?

PHOEBE: A scream. Someone is in trouble.

VOICE 13: Don't be ridiculous. That is on the outside.

VOICE 1: But you are safe, safe here, on the inside.

(PHOEBE crosses downstage to look out.)

PHOEBE: What is out there I wonder?

VOICE 2: Heartache and heartbreak and heartburn and heartless heathens!

PHOEBE: I saw a boy the other day.

VOICE 3: Really?

VOICE 4: What kind of boy?

PHOEBE: A jogger, runner, an athletic boy.

VOICE 5: No, no, no. A criminal.

VOICE 6: Criminals run from the law.

PHOEBE: Criminals aren't the only ones who run. In Pamplona, they run from bulls.

VOICE 7: Many of them get gored.

PHOEBE: More people died from killer bee stings last year.

(The VOICES start to buzz.)

VOICE 8: I hear buzzing.

PHOEBE: I don't hear it.

(The volume of the buzzing increases.)

Are they nearby? The bees, the bees! How many are there? They normally swarm. Are they swarming?

They can only sting once, but an entire hive could. . .

VOICE 9: Kill a person. Especially one with an immune disorder.

VOICE 10: Like you.

(VOICE 11 is making a faint but audible crying noise.)

PHOEBE: I hear crying. Like a child.

VOICE 12: Outside, outside.

VOICE 13: Probably a lost child.

VOICE 1: Children are constantly lost.

VOICE 2: And that is why you must stay inside.

VOICE 3: Here, inside.

PHOEBE: You are generalizing!

VOICE 4: Sorry, we have creative license when it comes to illogical behavior.

PHOEBE: You're not sorry.

VOICE 5: Correct. We're not sorry.

PHOEBE: I want to go out.

VOICE 6: No you don't.

VOICE 7: It is scary out there.

VOICE 8: The toxicity of the air.

VOICE 9: It's poison.

PHOEBE: That's not true. The air is constant. The composition is constant.

VOICE 10: You got a D in Life Science, how could you possibly know anything.

VOICE 11: Anything about life.

PHOEBE: Nitrogen, Oxygen, Argon, Carbon Dioxide, Neon, Helium, Methane, Krypton, Nitrogen Oxide, Hydrogen, Xenon, Ozone.

VOICE 12: How sweet.

VOICE 13: Like a tragic heroine's periodic table soliloquy.

VOICE 1: But a crazy one.

VOICE 2: One that can't even tie her own shoes.

PHOEBE: Actually, it is the laces. You tie the laces.

VOICE 3: Do you think runner boy knows?

VOICE 4: Your secret. You can't tie your shoe. . .laces.

PHOEBE: My fine motor skills are a little underdeveloped.

VOICE 5: A little?

VOICE 6: You butchered that worksheet.

VOICE 7: The one with the animals of the Arctic.

VOICE 8: Everyone laughed when you made the lemming's claws so big.

VOICE 9: Why did you do that?

PHOEBE: In the winter, the collared lemming needs the enlarged front claws to dig through the hard packed ice and snow. By spring, they get worn down to normal size.

VOICE 10: Like a manicure.

VOICE 11: There are many diseases that are carried under the fingernails.

VOICE 12: Entire tribes of parasites can live under your French manicure.

PHOEBE: That's an exaggeration.

VOICE 13: Cryptosporidiosis (KRIP-toe-spo-rid-ee-OH-sis).

PHOEBE: Where'd you learn about that?

VOICE 1: You, Phoebe. You taught us.

VOICE 2: Is that why you can only drink bottled water?

PHOEBE: Yes.

VOICE 3: But what if the water is not from some Artesian spring or isolated glacier?

VOICE 4: It could be from the tap.

VOICE 5: Or toilet. What if some sick bottler decided to do that?

VOICE 6: What if?

VOICE 7: There are people that would do that.

VOICE 8: Out there.

VOICE 9: You know this, Phoebe. It happened to you.

VOICE 10: And it could, it will, happen again.

VOICE 11: Unless you stay.

VOICE 12: The likelihood of an uneventful existence increases dramatically if you don't even leave the shadow of your front door.

VOICE 13: Don't do it, Phoebe.

PHOEBE: But the boy. He was cute, and he had a Yale sweatshirt on yesterday.

VOICE 1: So he aspires to be smart on Tuesdays.

VOICE 2: Monday his sweatshirt said "I'm the first member of the best fan club on earth. . ."

VOICE 3: "My own!"

VOICE 4: Egocentric jock!

VOICE 5: Double-talker.

VOICE 6: Hypocrite.

PHOEBE: Perhaps Monday's sweatshirt was a joke! It is a good time to have some false bravado. It is hard enough to get up in the morning much less run. He runs. And at a steady pace.

VOICE 7: You checked out his calves this morning.

VOICE 8: You did.

VOICE 9: Took a good, long look.

VOICE 10: Scanned him with your visual scanners.

VOICE 11: Beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep!

VOICE 12: You're turning red.

VOICE 13: You are.

VOICE 1: Is this a juvenile fascination. . .

VOICE 2: Or do you. . .

VOICE 3: What?

VOICE 4: Could it be?

VOICE 5: Make her say it.

VOICE 6: Yes, make her!

VOICE 7: Do you?

VOICE 8: La, la, la!

PHOEBE: Love. Yes, I love him.

VOICE 9: No you don't!

VOICE 10: What does love even mean?

VOICE 11: Define it.

(PHOEBE is silent.)

VOICE 12: This is one answer you can't look up.

VOICE 13: You have to look in.

VOICE 1: Inside.

VOICE 2: And what do you see when you look inside?

PHOEBE: I'm afraid.

(PHOEBE falls back into the VOICES.)

VOICE 3: Don't worry. We will take care of you.

VOICE 4: That is our job.

VOICE 5: We never sleep so that you. . .

(PHOEBE begins to nod off. She is held by the VOICES, who rock her softly.)

VOICE 6: Sweet dreams, Phoebe.

VOICE 7: Or better yet. . .

VOICE 8: Vivid nightmares.

(Quick blackout. In the darkness a bird is singing. You may elect to use prerecorded chirping, or singing, or even a musical instrument. Live singing by the FRIENDS is the best choice if the time and voices are available.)

PHOEBE: What is it?

(PHOEBE starts to rise.)

VOICE 9: Nothing, nothing. A rooster who is off his rocker.

VOICE 10: The wind whistling through the rain gutters.

VOICE 11: Someone should call the police.

VOICE 12: This is a respectable neighborhood.

(PHOEBE gets up and looks out. The singing increases in volume.)

PHOEBE: My bird! You told me she was dead.

VOICE 13: Was.

VOICE 1: Is.

VOICE 2: It's a rather permanent condition.

PHOEBE: But I can hear her singing.

VOICE 3: Clearly, you are overcome with grief.

VOICE 4: Dear, sweet child.

PHOEBE: No.

VOICE 5: Get her pills.

VOICE 6: Or maybe it is too late for that.

VOICE 7: The injection.

PHOEBE: No. No shots today.

VOICE 8: It will calm you.

(VOICE 8 pulls out a syringe and moves toward PHOEBE.)

PHOEBE: The eastern Phoebe was first documented in North America in the early eighteenth hundreds.

VOICE 9: Good night little song bird.

(VOICE 8 injects PHOEBE with the syringe.)

VOICE 10: Don't rely so much on facts.

VOICE 11: The adrenal gland has done its job since prehistoric times.

PHOEBE: The more I know, the less mystery can hide in the shadows.

VOICE 12: Wrong! The more you know, the more accurate your fears become.

VOICE 13: You confirm them.

PHOEBE: Shadows can't hurt me.

VOICE 1: But tranquilizers sure can.

(Quick blackout. The VOICES all exit in the darkness. PHOEBE is standing alone center stage. RUNNER enters and runs around in sweeping athletic crosses.)

PHOEBE: What's your name?

RUNNER: Yale.

PHOEBE: Your name is Yale.

RUNNER: It was the name of our Golden Retriever.

PHOEBE: You have the same name as your dog?

RUNNER: Did. He is Harvard now.

PHOEBE: You don't sweat.

RUNNER: I don't exert myself. Ever.

PHOEBE: Oh.

RUNNER: It sounds cocky, mostly because it is supposed to.

PHOEBE: How ridiculous.

RUNNER: Not at all. It is your infatuation, and therefore you are determining the facets of my personality.

PHOEBE: But I hate what I created.

RUNNER: Ah.

PHOEBE: Why did you say "ah" like that?

RUNNER: That's the way you wanted it.

(RUNNER starts to exit but slows down.)

I saw you looking.

PHOEBE: Looking. At what?

RUNNER: My calves. Don't worry, they're enhanced. Your imagination is better than steroids, calf raises, and implants. *(RUNNER checks out his own calves.)* Actually, you could have toned it down a little. I look like a sixth grade science project gone totally wrong.

PHOEBE: Will we ever, you know?

RUNNER: Get married? No. Date? Negative. Talk? Unlikely, unless I am lost or need the time. Be hidden soul mates in the deep recesses of your twisted subconscious? Now that's a possibility. You're pretty cute when you're not dosed up on low grade anti-psychotics. *(RUNNER exits.)*

PHOEBE: They're tranquilizers, Ivy-League-cute calves!

END OF FREE PREVIEW