

RECONSTRUCTING JULIE

A Comedy Duet

by
Aaron Adair



Brooklyn Publishers, LLC

Toll-Free 888-473-8521

Fax 319-368-8011

Web www.brookpub.com

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PLAYERS:

JULIE: A neurotic twenty-something.

ADAM: Her therapist.

AT RISE: The stage is bare, save for a potted plant and two Barcelona chairs, in which JULIE and ADAM are seated, facing each other. A back wall scrim hosts a Warhol-esque portrait of Sigmund Freud.

JULIE: My stomach hurts. My hair is a mess. My fingernails are chipped. I don't sleep well and my cat is allergic to me... Altogether, I'm not satisfied with my state of affairs.

ADAM: And how has this impacted your life?

JULIE: Negatively.

ADAM: I see.

JULIE: Mother says I'm too sensitive.

ADAM: Does she?

JULIE: She says I'm morose and self-absorbed, which doesn't help one bit. I mean, what kind of mother kicks you when you're down? What kind of mother belittles your problems?

ADAM: You want something different from your mother?

JULIE: Wouldn't you? Listen. I'm not asking for the great mother goddess descended from a'high, baking all things Betty Crocker and wrapped in apron strings of gold... Truly, I'm not... I would just like a little compassion. A little understanding.

ADAM: Which she withholds.

JULIE: If you met her, you'd understand.

ADAM: I see.

JULIE: You see what?

ADAM: I see what you're trying to say.

JULIE: No. No you don't, but that's okay. I didn't expect that you would.

ADAM: Maybe we should try another approach. Tell me about your childhood.

JULIE: There's not much to tell, really.

ADAM: I find that hard to believe.

JULIE: No. Seriously. It was horrible and dull... I remember being young—*younger*. I remember a Christmas here, a birthday there, but nothing exciting or joyous. My bedroom was painted pink. I collected stuffed animals. I liked to go crawdad fishing down at the pond. I had a tricycle, a Barbie dream house, an E-Z Bake oven... The whole thing is a dull, boring, lifeless blur.

ADAM: A blur?

JULIE: Nothing ever happened.

ADAM: What was supposed to happen?

JULIE: I don't know... Something.

ADAM: Like?

JULIE: Something memorable.

ADAM: Could you be more specific?

JULIE: No.

ADAM: Okay. When you think of your childhood, what words come to mind?

JULIE: Dull.

ADAM: And?

JULIE: Duller.

ADAM: And your mother?

JULIE: Cold. Uncaring. Vindictive. Imperious. Sanctimonious—

ADAM: Okay. I think—

JULIE: Poisonous. Venomous—

ADAM: Julie—

JULIE: Ruthless—

ADAM: Julie, I get it.

JULIE: A witch.

ADAM: Julie!

JULIE: What? I said witch.

ADAM: You're a walking thesaurus, aren't you?

JULIE: You know, I don't think this is going anywhere.

ADAM: How so?

JULIE: Aren't you supposed to be telling me how to get my life back on track? Aren't you supposed to be giving me advice and counseling or something?

ADAM: And what would that advice sound like?

JULIE: I don't know. Maybe you should tell me to ignore my mother. Maybe you should tell me she's no good for me. Maybe I should move to New York, buy a new cat, get my hair and nails done. I don't know... anything.

ADAM: Would any of that make you happy?

JULIE: That's what I'm here to find out.

ADAM: From me?

JULIE: No, from your potted plant. Of course, from you. I want to hear it from you. That's why I'm paying you. (*beat*) You know, if you can't grasp the fact that people pay you to provide advice, to help them feel better, maybe you're in the wrong profession.

ADAM: What's your profession?

JULIE: I'm a writer.

ADAM: Of what?

JULIE: Nothing... It's not important.

ADAM: Try me.

JULIE: I'm a calligrapher. I write menus, wedding invitations, certificates—stuff like that.

ADAM: Do you like what you do?

JULIE: Should I?

ADAM: Only you could know.

JULIE: Then, no. I'm not particularly fond of writing up the details of other people's accomplishments. Their precious weddings and bar mitzvahs, their celebrations and happenings... It makes me feel like an outsider.

ADAM: Are you married?

JULIE: No.

ADAM: Do you have any hobbies?

JULIE: No.

ADAM: Do you entertain?

JULIE: Entertain?

ADAM: Friends.

JULIE: No.

ADAM: Do you drink?

JULIE: No.

ADAM: Dance? Sing? Jump for joy?

JULIE: No, no and are you kidding me?

ADAM: Julie—

JULIE: What?

ADAM: I don't think I can help you.

JULIE: Why?

ADAM: Because you don't exist.

JULIE: What!?

ADAM: You're not really here.

JULIE: I don't understand. Are you saying I'm not alive? I don't have flesh, blood, organs, tissue?

ADAM: No. You have all of those things.

JULIE: Then, I exist.

ADAM: No. You occupy.

JULIE: What?

ADAM: Space. You occupy space. Nothing more.

JULIE: Oh! I think you're being very unkind.

ADAM: Am I?

JULIE: Isn't it obvious? You just consigned me to nonexistence. You just made my life disappear.

ADAM: Did I?

JULIE: Didn't you?

ADAM: Didn't you?

JULIE: Now, you're mocking me.

ADAM: No. There's nothing here to mock.

JULIE: That's right. I don't exist and therefore I can't be mocked. Right?

ADAM: What do you want me to say?

JULIE: I want you to look me in the eye and tell me I exist. I want you to acknowledge my pain. I want you to listen to me and tell me what to do. Don't you understand? I want you to affirm—

ADAM: Affirm what?

JULIE: That I exist!

ADAM: Do you?

JULIE: Why, yes! I'm sitting right here.

ADAM: Doing what?

JULIE: Pouring my heart out. Begging to be heard!

ADAM: Then, say something.

JULIE: About what?

ADAM: Anything. Tell me anything about why you exist.

JULIE: I hate my mother.

ADAM: Therefore, your mother exists. And you?

JULIE: My hair is a mess. My nails are chipped. My cat is allergic to me.

ADAM: Therefore, they exist. And you?

JULIE: I had a horrible, boring childhood.

ADAM: It existed.

JULIE: I've done nothing with my life.

ADAM: And, therefore, it does not exist.

JULIE: But, it does! It does exist! I exist! My life is real!

ADAM: Prove it.

JULIE: How? How can I prove it if you won't acknowledge that I exist? If you can't see my pain? My suffering.

ADAM: I do see your pain. I do see your suffering. They exist.

JULIE: Then, so do I!

ADAM: No. They exist. You don't.

JULIE: Christ!

ADAM: He existed.

JULIE: My God!

ADAM: God exists, but that he's your God alone is debatable.

JULIE: For crying out loud, I exist!

ADAM: No. You don't.

JULIE: Yes. I do.

ADAM: Don't.

JULIE: Do.

ADAM: Don't.

JULIE: Do!

ADAM: This is getting repetitive.

JULIE: Look at my hand. It's trembling.

ADAM: And so, your hand exists.

JULIE: My hand is me. Therefore, I exist.

ADAM: Nope.

JULIE: If my hand is not me, who is it?

ADAM: It's just a hand.

JULIE: Listen. I have no idea what you're trying to prove here. I have no idea where you're going, but we better get somewhere soon, or I'll—I'll—

ADAM: You'll what?

JULIE: I'll do something drastic!

ADAM: Like what?

JULIE: I'll take steps. Don't make me take steps.

ADAM: What kinds of steps?

JULIE: I don't know. Steps away from here. I'll get out of here. I'll find some other way to deal with my problems. I'll do whatever I want.

ADAM: And that would be a bad thing?

JULIE: I don't know. What do you think?

ADAM: You disappeared again. Where did you go?

JULIE: What? I'm right here.

ADAM: No you aren't.

JULIE: Yes, I am.

ADAM: Who said that?

JULIE: I did!

ADAM: Are you sure? Are you taking steps?

JULIE: Steps? What steps?

ADAM: Drastic steps.

JULIE: What drastic steps? What do you mean?

ADAM: What do you mean? You're the one who said you might be forced to take drastic steps. What are they?

JULIE: I don't know... I was bluffing.

ADAM: Were you?

JULIE: Yes.

ADAM: Too bad.

JULIE: Yes...

ADAM: You know what? I was wrong. You do exist. You're a carburetor.

JULIE: A what?

ADAM: A carburetor. You blend air and fuel to supply engines with power to move forward.

JULIE: That makes no sense.

ADAM: Nonsense, huh?

JULIE: Yes.

ADAM: You're a calligrapher?

JULIE: Yes.

ADAM: You combine elegant lines and curves with words to enrich other people's lives.

JULIE: I guess you could say that.

ADAM: You hate your mother?

JULIE: Yes.

ADAM: Therefore, you provide fuel for her derision?

JULIE: I suppose.

ADAM: You care about your hair and your nails?

JULIE: Yes.

ADAM: Providing the world something beautiful to look at, kind of like my potted plant.

JULIE: I don't like where this is going.

ADAM: Yes, you do exist after all. You're a carburetor, or maybe a potted plant.

JULIE: But, carburetors aren't alive. Potted plants don't do anything. They aren't really living.

ADAM: Exactly, but they do exist. Isn't that all you wanted to hear? That you exist? That you have a function?

JULIE: But—

ADAM: Haven't I earned my fee?

JULIE: But, I don't like your opinion. I think you're wrong.

ADAM: Prove it. Do something to prove me wrong.

END OF FREE PREVIEW