

RAW PROVOCATIVE HUMANE PLAYS

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Frohliche Weihnachten

a very short holiday play by Cavan Hallman

A sparse shoebox of an apartment. A mattress on the floor with one pillow and a blanket. There are three small stacks of plays and acting books. There is a door to the bathroom and a door to the outside. An ACTOR, late 20's, stares at himself in a large floor-length mirror. He is shirtless. He grins in approval, then clownishly exaggerates his smile, like a horse baring its teeth. The Actor goes into "space-work." He mimes brushing his teeth in front of the mirror. His movements natural, an attempt to re-create a private moment. He "spits" and "rinses his toothbrush," miming every step -- turning off the water, wiping his face... There is a knock at the outside door. The Actor freezes and examines himself once more in the mirror, then goes to answer a second knock. He is still shirtless. He opens the door to reveal the DIRECTOR, a strange man in a funny hat.

Director Merry Christmas!

Man *(off-stage)* Frohliche Weihnachten!

Actor What's going on!?!

Director Get out of the way! I have a present for you.

The Director throws a MAN in the apartment. The man falls to the floor. He is bound at the wrists and draped in a hood.

Director *(cont'd)* Here.

Actor Whoa! Jesus!

Director No. It's just a man, I'm afraid. A German man, I think. I found him at the International Arrivals terminal. Merry Christmas.

German Frohliche Weihnachten.

Actor Who is this?

Director He's my gift to you.

Actor You are weird, man. What is some German dude doing in this apartment?

Director The better question is, “What are you doing in this apartment?” The lighting is dreadful. It does you no favors. What’s your rent like? I’m sure you’re overpaying for location—

Actor You’re always evadi... Okay. Okay. Just, I’m gonna just breathe a second.

The Actor moves to the mirror and breathes three times slowly as he watches himself.

Actor *(cont’d)* Better.

Director Good.

Actor Please. Please explain why this dude is on my floor.

Director Because he’s too tired to stand, I think.

Actor Stop playing.

Director Because you need practice. Did you think there was a chance in hell I’d let you go up there on the day and try to do this for the very first time? You’re going to have to get your reps in. Your abs are telling me that you understand the analogy. Or did they just wink? I think I’m blushing.

Actor My reps?

German Wird jemand löse mich, bitte?

Director Shut up. *(to Actor)* You think you don’t need to practice? Your craft has been perfected? Okay. Here’s a person. Be him. *(beat)* Do it. Now.

Actor I... whoa! Whoa. I can’t do that. You can’t just... put me on the spot or something. I have to prepare.

Director “I have to prepare.” He has to prepare.

Actor And what am I gonna do with... this? I can’t take care of a guy. Someone else. He definitely can’t stay here.

Director Well he’s going to.

Actor No. I can’t... I can’t feed him. I don’t have any food.

Director You’ll figure something out. Or he’ll die. Either way it’ll be fine.

Actor It won't be fine. You gotta get him outta here. And I can't accept gifts from you. I have a contract. I have an agent. If you're giving this to me, a gift, as some sort of compensation for... How am I supposed to give my agent 10% of a dude?

Director A German guy.

Actor That too. Man... a man. And did you just kidnap him? Or something? Isn't that dangerous?

Director Certainly. That's why I have this.

The Director pulls a long heavy Dirty Harry-style pistol out of his pants.

Actor This is too much, man! I'm not ready for this!

The Actor storms into the bathroom, slamming the door shut.

Director It's a terrible habit you have, running off to the loo. I can't even guarantee we'll have one on the day.

Actor *(off-stage)* I'm gonna have to go a whole day without a bathroom?

Director Or longer. Have you ever tried literally tying a knot in it? It's time intensive but there are some incredible side-effects.

There is a knock at the door.

Director Phooey! I thought a few cops might've followed. Good thing I brought the gun.

The Actor opens the bathroom door.

Actor Police?

Director Well yes, dear. Hostage situations are often taken quite seriously. Especially at airports.

The Director opens the door to reveal a TEENAGE DELIVERY BOY. They all stand frozen and mute, the Director his giant gun poised high in the air, the German still bound and hooded. After 10 seconds of silence...

German *(voice incredibly calm, logical)* Wer ist da? Hat jemand gekommen, um mir zu helfen? Ich habe Familie in Chicago. Ich wollte gar nicht nach Amerika zu

kommen, aber ich bin jetzt hier, denke ich. Ich bin hier, weil meine Familie gebeten, meine Familie aus Chicago. *(beat)* Haben Sie etwas zu sagen? *(beat)* Wenn Sie nicht, das ist okay. Ich weiß wirklich nicht die Schuld dieses auf niemanden außer meiner Familie, die Leute wieder in Chicago.

Pause.

Director Did you order pizza?

Actor I did.

The delivery boy slowly drops the pizza box then backs away.

Director It's incredible how much free stuff I've been getting lately. The Christmas spirit must be extra contagious. I know I have several suspicious rashes at the moment. And you have food. For you and your homework.

The Actor stares at the German, who is motionless.

Actor Homework.

Director Again, I'll say "Merry Christmas."

German Frohliche Weihnachten.

Director And you should say "thank you."

Actor *(beat)* Thank you...

Director I never said it was going to be easy. In fact, if you had bothered to ask I would have told you that your task is quite difficult.

As he grows more animated, the Director uses the gun in his hand to gesture with increasing abandon.

Director *(cont'd)* But a dozen or so other men would DIE for the chance to be the first actor to BECOME a different person. Not a character, but a human being. The actor's greatest task. And after you do it, everyone will know. Everyone. Even people who have no idea. Just like a crossword gets easier the day after it's published because now people know: there is a solution. You will be—

Actor Okay. I'll... take him.

Director Of course you will.

Actor Can you please stop waving that gun around?

Director This old thing?

Actor Yeah.

Director Fine. “So serious.” Your sense of humor has disappeared completely – THERE IT IS! – you’re practically a German already. I’ll leave you.

The Director walks to exit.

Actor Am I good enough? For our project?

Director Not yet. No.

Pause.

Actor How many of... (*re:the German*)... these are there going to be?

Director Until you *are* good enough. And then some more. Until I’m satisfied.

Actor Sounds like it could take a long time.

Director Then I guess you better get your sweet little cheeks started.

The Director exits. The Actor pulls the German up on his feet and sits him on a milk crate. The improvement is only slight, as the stranger is still tied and cloaked.

German Das fühlt sich nicht sehr gut.

Actor Yeah, yeah, good, good. It’s better to sit.

The Actor paces, anxious, stealing glances at his faceless guest.

Actor (*cont’d*) aMan... “Merry Christmas.”

German Frohliche Weihnachten.

A beat.

Actor Merry Christmas.

German Frohliche Weihnachten.

Actor Frohliche Weihnachten.

German *(slower)* Frohliche Weihnachten.

Actor I can do this. Frohliche Weihnachten. Frohliche Weihnachten. *(Beat.)* Yeah. I can do this.

The lights fade to black.

END OF PLAY.