

BOOK CLUB

A Play in One Act

By

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CAST

IRENE: A resident of Cedar Meadows Retirement Home. She is enthusiastic and looking for opportunities to be involved in life. She has submitted poems to the Retirement Home poetry book and has joined the Ukulele club. She can be counted on to support just about any activity.

GISELLE: A good friend of Irene. She is looking for a challenge beyond the arts and crafts that seem to be the norm at Cedar Meadows. A bit of a snob, but a caring person at heart.

Place

A garden at the Cedar Meadows Retirement Home

Time

The present. Late in summer.

Setting: A bench in a garden area at the Cedar Meadows Retirement Home. It is a warm sunny day and occasional bird sounds might be heard. There is a table close to the bench and a hand-published poetry book and cup of coffee sit on the table.

At Rise: Irene is sitting on the bench. She is relaxing in the morning sun enjoying her morning coffee. She is strumming her ukulele between sips of coffee. Giselle enters, full of purpose and sits beside her. Irene looks at Giselle expectantly, but Giselle says nothing. She is waiting to be asked.

IRENE: Morning.

GISELLE: Morning.

IRENE: What's up?

GISELLE: I'm going to start a book club. I think that's just what this place needs.

IRENE: Great idea. I would join a book club for sure.

GISELLE: I was hoping you would. I thought you could be the communications co-ordinator.

IRENE: That sounds like fun. What would I do?

GISELLE: Make sure that the members know time and place, what book we are discussing---that sort of thing.

IRENE: I'd enjoy that.

GISELLE: I thought you would.

IRENE: When do you want to get started?

GISELLE: It seems to me that the sooner the better---how about next Monday...one Week today. Monday afternoon at 1:00.

IRENE: Monday won't work for me. *(holds up instrument)* Monday is ukulele.

GISELLE: Seriously? You joined the Ukulele club? *(shakes her head)* Tuesday then.

IRENE: Great...No...not Tuesday. Betty's doing that rock art thing Tuesdays and Thursdays and I said I would help. Some of our residents need assistance getting back to the seawall from the beach when they are carrying their rocks.

GISELLE: My god....is that still happening? I thought it was supposed to be a one-time thing.

IRENE: That was the plan, but everybody really enjoys it. It's only going to continue until the cold weather comes. And Betty got the center to agree to put a big worktable in the atrium. We're going to create a display.

GISELLE: *(beat...she is obviously annoyed)* So when did Betty get to be an art expert?

IRENE: *(laughing)* She's not an art expert. She just thought it would be interesting to collect some of those colorful beach rocks and create something---kind of a representation of how we feel—how we see the world---so we call it Rock Art. It's fun!

GISELLE: Irene. Art is not fun! Art is a serious creative activity that requires years of training and dedication. What you are doing is crafts—not art.

IRENE: Hey...sorry. But you have to admit that Rock Crafts doesn't have the same zing as Rock Art. You should come and join us.

GISELLE: I don't do crafts!

IRENE: Fine...

GISELLE: That's the problem with people today. Everybody thinks that anything they slap together is art. *(There is a pause as the two sip their coffee. Irene strums the occasional chord)*

IRENE: O.....kay.

GISELLE: Like that poetry collection that what's-her-name put together.

IRENE: Sandra.

GISELLE: What?

IRENE: Sandra. Her name is Sandra. The woman from 304. She put together the poetry collection. (*holds up book*) She even found a way to give everyone a free copy. Have you read any of the poems?

GISELLE: No. And I don't intend to.

IRENE: I submitted two poems. Well, it wasn't really submitting. She included anything we gave her so nobody got left out. It was interesting. I remember writing poems when I was in high school. I haven't done anything like that since. It felt...I don't know...kind of made me feel like a kid again. (*beat*) So how about Wednesday?

GISELLE: What about it?

IRENE: For the book club.

GISELLE: There's no point having a book club. I was going to have it in the atrium but it has obviously been requisitioned by you and the Rock Club.

IRENE: It's not a rock club, and it's not me. It's a whole bunch of us. And it's only a table in the corner of the atrium.

GISELLE: Well....

IRENE: Come on...a book club would be fun.

GISELLE: Okay...here's the list. (*takes sheet from file folder*)

IRENE: Of books?

GISELLE: No, of people, to contact to invite to join the club.

IRENE: Why don't we just make a poster and put it in the weekly bulletin. Everybody sees that.

GISELLE: Exactly! No, just ask the people on the list.

IRENE: Isn't this for anybody? For everybody?

GISELLE: No. That would be like...like doing crafts. This is going to be a serious Book club where people actually read the books and discuss literature. We will examine plot and theme and character development. We will actively discuss the art of writing.

IRENE: Wow! You are really into this.

GISELLE: Yes, I am. (*picks up book*) I look at this poetry book that...

IRENE: Sandra...

GISELLE:that Sandra put together...that can't be poetry, it can only be the rambling memories of a bunch of...(*shakes her head*)

IRENE: ...of old people.

GISELLE: Of old people! There! You said it! I am happy that Sandra created a colony of new poets and I am happy that Betty has a group of rock collectors but I know I am capable of so much more creativity. I want to challenge myself and I want to find other people who want to challenge themselves and (*beat*) ...and I refuse to challenge myself by learning to play the goddam ukulele!

IRENE: It's fun.

GISELLE: I don't care if it's fun. I don't care if it brings joy to every other person in the universe. It's not what I want!

IRENE: You want to discuss literature seriously.

GISELLE: Yes!

IRENE: With other people who want to discuss literature seriously.

GISELLE: Yes!

IRENE: And you don't think that the people here who would come to the book club would do that for you.

GISELLE: Is that a serious question. Look around you.

IRENE: Giselle, why don't you sign up for a college course or join an on-line book club. Find a group of people with a common interest. I am willing to put up posters to see if anyone is interested in a Cedar Meadows book club but I refuse to leave anyone out.

GISELLE: But people wouldn't focus on the discussion of the books. They would probably wander over to look at the rocks. (*pointing*) Look at Alwin. Just sits there. Every afternoon. Can you imagine Alwin at a book club. You know how hard it is to keep *these people* focussed.

IRENE: (*beat*) These *people* are us.

GISELLE: You know what I mean. Some of us are still able to function independently....that's why I thought of a book club and inviting the people who seemed....coherent. That way the only people who would come would be people capable of reading and understanding.

IRENE: (*reading from poetry book*)

Rain falls from
an overleaded sky
bleak and drear,
the draw in the far hills fades into obscurity
the field of heavy snow edged by
a black line of fir and spruce and pine.
My dog revels and leaps and returns
the thrown stick
with a joyous abandon
calling for more and still more.
His sodden coat will be greeted with
"stinky dog" for the rest of the day.
But my spirits are lifted
and my heart moves beyond gloom.
And in my mind I am young again.

And vital.
I need a dog.

We all need a dog

GISELLE: Okay. So there's one good poem in the book. Actually, that's very good. Makes me think of our dog. Shepherd we called him. Good name because he would always bring the kids home before dark. My husband David would bring Shep home in the winter covered in mud and there would be a mess all over the house...but we loved it. Especially after the kids were gone. *(laughing)* "Stinky dog" is an understatement. I think that dog kept us young. Is that one of your poems?

IRENE: Are you kidding? I can't write like that. The author of this poem is Alwin. *(Giselle looks at Alwin)* Yes...that Alwin. I think he sits there every day going through a lifetime of memories. This poetry book gave him the opportunity to share a couple of them.

GISELLE: Really. Well. I'm so sorry. Don't I sound stupid. *(pause. Giselle stands)* Let's get busy and make some book club posters.

IRENE: *(stands)* I'm with you on that one.

GISELLE: *(as they exit)* I'm going to hate myself for this, but what time is ukulele practice? *(they exit laughing)*

THE END