

DRINKING UP HOT

By Jerry Rabushka

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A Dramatic Monologue

by Jerry Rabushka

SYNOPSIS: Fed up with the destructive culture of cold, sugary drinks, our speaker takes solace in the next best thing: a cup of hot tea marketed to give a lonely young man a sense of community. But along making him feel like he belongs to the “T-Zola generation,” this backfired marketing makes him a bigger target for bullying and exclusion. When threatened by a group of aggressive classmates, he’s forced into making a quick, and perhaps wrongheaded, decision.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 male)

SPEAKER (m)..... Young man.

TIME: Present day.

SETTING: A courtroom, or other space where speaker is addressing a judge.

SET: Can be performed on a bare stage.

COSTUMES

SPEAKER – Dressed for court, e.g. shirt and tie, or also wear an upscale logo t-shirt.

PROPS

- ☐ Tea Bag (optional)
- ☐ Mug (optional)

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Regarding the beginning, it's real! The author took an acting workshop with Jade Esteban Estrada, an international performance artist known for monologues and characterization, and our speaker is using some advice from that workshop. As the piece progresses, we see how this instruction fits in with the rest of the story. This is a piece of small surprises and a slow drip of information. The speaker is relatively confident but doesn't really want to let on about the situation he's in; the bigger effect the ending has on him the more effective this piece can be for his audience. Look for some humor in interpreting the secondary characters.

SPEAKER: What to do what you forget what you're going to say? It's important to have a way out when you're giving a speech, or just when... (*Forgets.*) you forget what you're going to say. I took an acting class once with this guy Jade...Jade Esteban Estrada...I wanted to be an actor and my mom says "then learn something about it..." so he said it's important to know your message so if you forget all your lines, you can still be in the moment, and at least you're moving the story forward.

(*As acting instructor.*) What do you have to say, and why do you have to say it right now?

Right now, yeah. That's a good question. Why do I have to say it at all? Because I want someone to know. Drinking up hot.

Sometimes you want to be an actor because – and this isn't news to anyone – you can be someone other than you for a while. You work and study and learn and listen so you can be perceived as someone other than you. You're confident and even a bit sexy up on stage, then when the lights go down, you're just... (*Disappointed.*) you.

So...drinking up hot. Hot hot hot. You might remember this stuff called FreeZola; it was a cold drink and it was all about making people feel part of a group simply by putting a bottle to your lips. They took the sad, the trodden, the lonely and they sold us this drink and some really cool outfits, and for a while we all belonged to a brand. I still have a t-shirt hanging in the closet. It's still awesome.

So why do I want to tell you this story right now? Because it eats and eats until you're all digested and I just need to throw the poison back up. Even if I forget...

See, we were lonely and outcast, some of us – every society will have that, because ...well our society says you can be whatever you want...but...not that, don't be that. We were lonely – we are lonely – and they want to keep us that way so they can sell us what we think makes us fit, until finally everyone realizes that those of us

who buy into it were at one time outcast, and we get pushed back, but this time even farther over the edge.

When the FreeZola generation grew up and got itself a life, the Zola Company changed its tune.

(As company executive.) Sure, we can sell self-esteem in a cold drink, but can we do it with something hot? Tea, coffee, chocolate, steaming brandy over a poached egg, just something hot.

Tea. It came in a tea bag, and it was kind of sweet and unique. Like cinnamon and ginger and some secret mix. T-Zola it was called, and of course once it came out, everyone else took to the internet to claim we were being taken advantage of.

And oh, I remember now...I remember why I need to tell the story right now. It's because I'm in a lot of trouble and this is my only chance to explain. And if I don't get the message across, prepared words or off the top of my head, I'll get put away.

It was a congressman, an old entrenched established whatnot who knew better than all of us – or had a financial interest in a rival company.

(As politician, stumping.) The youth of today are not simply a marketing demographic. The youth of today know better than to find solace in a tea bag. The youth of today can't be manipulated or intimidated by...

(Interrupting.) Shut up and if you say "the youth of today" one more time I'm going to give you a whole speech about "old people of last year."

(As congressman.) That is uncalled for, because the youth of today are insolent, indolent, and disobedient. Oh, and vote for me this November.

After that, everyone started talking about "Old People of Last Year."

With various inflections, to mimic other speakers.

(Over the top angry speaker.) Old people of last year want to steal our tea bags and replace them with trash bags.

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