

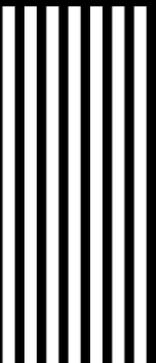


reasons to be happy

BY NEIL LABUTE



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



REASONS TO BE HAPPY
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REASONS TO BE HAPPY was presented by MCC Theater (Robert LuPone, Bernard Telsey, and William Cantler, Artistic Directors; Blake West, Executive Director) at the Lucille Lortel Theatre in New York City, opening on June 11, 2013. It was directed by Neil LaBute; the set design was by Neil Patel; the costume design was by Sarah J. Holden; the lighting design was by Ben Stanton; the sound design was by Robert Kaplowitz; and the production stage manager was Joel Rosen. The cast was as follows:

CARLY Leslie Bibb
STEPH Jenna Fischer
GREG Josh Hamilton
KENT Fred Weller

CHARACTERS

CARLY

STEPH

GREG

KENT

PLACE

At a store, at work, at school, at a restaurant, and at the ball field.

TIME

The present.

NOTE

A slash (/) indicates the point of interruption between the present line and the next speaker's line.

Just do what must be done.

—George Bernard Shaw

If you want to be happy, be.

—Leo Tolstoy

I once had a girl or, should I say, she once had me.

—John Lennon/Paul McCartney

reasons to be happy

The lights pop on. Bam. Just like that.

A parking lot. Two people — Greg and Stephanie — standing in front of a discount store. Both with bags of food in their arms. Smack in the middle of yet another fight.

GREG. ... no, no, no, no, no! / No ... uh-uh, no!

STEPH. Yes! / Don't lie, you fucker!

GREG. Steph, no! (*Beat.*) We are not gonna do this again, so just stop!

STEPH. So then explain it to me ... *liar.*

GREG. Look ... this is ... not *here*, alright? Not in the parking lot of *Trader Joe's* ... / I am not willing to do that. I don't have to so I won't. I'm not gonna. No.

STEPH. Fuck, that's so ... / Of course you won't. You won't because you *can't* is why, you won't because you don't have a fucking leg to stand on, that's how come, Greg. Not because you don't have time or that you don't need to, because you do. (*Greg is about to say something but stops. Glances around for the cavalry to arrive. Sorry. Not today.*)

GREG. I'm totally happy to go somewhere with you — not tonight, but sometime — and sit with you and discuss this. Discuss it like people do, over *coffee* or whatever, but not like two snarling dogs off in an empty lot ... that's ridiculous and, and ... frankly, it's just not cool ... so no.

STEPH. So, you *won't*, then? Right? You will not?

GREG. No, Steph, I won't. You can't make me.

STEPH. Oh *really*? / I can't? No? Yeah? You sure?

GREG. No ... / *No!* Stop! You always have that ... God, there's always like this sort of threatening tone in your voice when we fight ...

I haven't been around you for however long, years now — barely, anyway — and I get that same feeling in my stomach the second you start in like this again ... why is that?

STEPH. Maybe because you feel like shit, like a guilty fucking asshole, maybe that's why. (*Beat.*) I'm just *guessing*, but maybe.

GREG. That's not ... for *what*? What for?

STEPH. You tell me, Greg. You say it for once ... instead of me always dragging it out of you with a team of fucking Clydesdales!

GREG. Oh please! (*Beat.*) I've got ice cream sandwiches in here, by the way ... / just so you know.

STEPH. Fuck that, asshole! / Just be a man once!

GREG. This is ridiculous! It's ... *so* ...

STEPH. Yeah it is, Greg, the whole situation is ridiculous ... the fact that you guys have never said anything to me is ridiculous! It's pretty fucking amazing, when I even think about it for two seconds at a time!

GREG. What?! I just ... I mean ... *why*?!

STEPH. Because Carly's my friend, Greg, one of my very best friends from my life, or so I thought up until about two days ago ...

GREG. You're ... this doesn't have anything to do with that. / Seriously. It's ...

STEPH. Oh, really? / It doesn't?

GREG. No! Who says you can't be friends?!

STEPH. You! You sleeping in her bed at night ... / That puts a real fucking kink in the *arc* of our friendship, that's who says!

GREG. I am not *sleeping* in ... / We're just kinda ...

STEPH. Doesn't matter! / Does not!

GREG. Does too! / Yes, it *does*!

STEPH. No it doesn't!

GREG. Ahhh, yeah it does, Stephanie ... I'm not *living* with her, okay, so yes, that's a completely different thing there. Let's just be clear about that ... we're dating.

STEPH. ... You and your fucking *words* ...

GREG. I didn't do this to hurt you! Jesus, it's not like we, we, we ... *planned* it.

STEPH. She's not taking my calls, Greg. She lets them go to voice-mail and that's a first. First time in our lives since I've known her to not pick up her phone when I call and it's 'cause of you! Okay? YOU! (*Hits him.*) / I mean, fuck, I didn't see *this* one coming!

GREG. Owwww! / What's it matter, Steph ... I mean, really? Huh?! We *found* each other, long after you and Kent were ever in the picture and ...

STEPH. So what?!

GREG. So ... why is this a big deal?! You're ... *married* now! I just ... I mean, aren't you guys moving or something? That's what I heard ...

STEPH. Maybe! We're *maybe* moving ... or getting transferred we think, but so what? That's not the issue here ... *you're* the issue!

GREG. Why should you care who *I'm* with?!

STEPH. I don't! I don't give a fuck, Greg, who you're with ... as long as it's not one of my long-time girlfriends, because then I do care, then it starts to feel creepy and like ... when *cousins* marry and maybe that's just the way I was brought up but I'm not the only person from our lives that feels that way, trust me ...

GREG. ... then ... I don't care ...

STEPH. No shit, Greg, I'm completely aware of that simple fact, you don't care about very much at all ... about other people or the messes you make or ... the trail of shit you leave behind! / Fuck you, Greg, you fucking piece of ... / FUCK!

GREG. Steph, stop! / Please, just ... / Stop this! (*He reaches out and grabs her by the shoulders. She shakes him off like his hands are on fire.*)

STEPH. Don't you fucking touch me! Get off me! / You prick!

GREG. I'm not! / I am not *touching* you!

STEPH. Yes, you are! You put your fucking hands on my shoulders, what do you call *that*?!

GREG. I'm trying to ... / Just ...

STEPH. Stop it! / Get off me, fuckhead!

GREG. Steph, you stop it! Stop shouting!

STEPH. Then quit holding on to me!

GREG. I'm not! (*Greg lets go.*) See?! I am not anywhere near you, okay, so just stop! Stop the screaming thing!

STEPH. I'm *not* screaming!

GREG. Okay then!

STEPH. Shut the fuck up and back away from me! / Further! (*Greg backs away, holding up his hands in mock surrender.*)

GREG. ... Stephanie, just ... / Stop it. (*To some guy in the distance.*) No, we're good, man! We're good! (*Back to Steph.*) Shhhh!

STEPH. Fuck off, Greg, don't pull your shit with me. I have got *zero* tolerance toward you and your bullshit ways now, so just fuck right off. You hear me?

GREG. Yes, I hear you ...

STEPH. Yeah? Ya sure?

GREG. Ummmm, yes, Steph. I do ... *Helen Keller* could hear you, so I'm pretty sure that *I* can ...

STEPH. Who?!

GREG. Nothing. No one.

STEPH. You mean the little *blind* girl? Do you mean *that* Helen Keller?

GREG. ... yes ...

STEPH. Why the fuck would you bring her up now?! I really don't get you sometimes ...

GREG. Doesn't matter.

STEPH. It does to me. When you say stupid shit it bothers me, especially when you think it's *smart* stupid shit ... so go ahead and explain yourself. (*Beat.*) Go on. Make your point.

GREG. She was deaf. That's why.

STEPH. Helen Keller was *blind*, Greg.

GREG. Yeah, I know, but she was deaf, too. / And dumb ...

STEPH. ... No ... / *What?*

GREG. "Dumb." Her, not you ... meaning unable to speak ... (*Beat.*) That's what they used to call it, before people made other people change it, to, like ... They called it *dumb*. (*Stephanie looks at him, considering this. Still angry but now a little confused as well. Greg checks his groceries.*)

STEPH. Oh. (*Beat.*) Well, that's dumb ... I mean, stupid.

GREG. I know, but, that's what it was. / They did used to say that.

STEPH. Huh. / Fine. Whatever. You were still trying to say something mean. To me. / *About* me.

GREG. No, I wasn't ... / *uh-uh* ...

STEPH. Yeah, kinda. About me yelling so loud and all that shit ...

GREG. Well, I was just ... you know ...

STEPH. Yeah, I do know, and it was mean.

GREG. Okay, but ... I wasn't trying to ... nothing. I'm sorry.

STEPH. Doesn't matter. You're just deflecting us on a particular subject. Your usual shit. Your typical Greg shit.

GREG. No, that's ... not ...

STEPH. And you're the one who's done something, not me. Let's just be totally clear about that ... / You and Carly are the bad guys here so don't try to get out of it ...

GREG. Steph, stop. / We're not ... "bad" ...

STEPH. Well, you're not being nice, let's put it that way, okay? Friends don't do that type of shit to each other, so you can call it whatever you want ... but it's still pretty fucking shitty. Don't ya think?

GREG. It's ... no, I think it's ... what *I* think is happening here is more like ... ahhh ... it's a *misunderstanding*, Steph. That's all.

STEPH. *Really?*

GREG. Yeah. Kinda.

STEPH. And which part am I not understanding? I heard you were fucking one of my friends, one of my best childhood girlfriends, so explain to me which part of that I'm not good at understanding.

GREG. ... it just happened! This whole ... Carly and I are, you know, we're seeing if it can work out and so we just ... we hadn't told anybody yet. (*Beat.*) I think it's great, that we've ... when two people are ... trying to ... connect and ... trying to forge a ... you know. Yeah.

STEPH. Oh fuck.

GREG. What? / *What?*

STEPH. I hope you don't talk to her like that. / What a load of shit! I mean ...

GREG. ... Look, if you're just gonna be rude ...

STEPH. Your *usual* shit as well ... it's not even, like, *good* shit.

GREG. What the hell does that mean?

STEPH. It means this: Do you love her?

GREG. ... I'm not gonna get into ... no. / *No.*

STEPH. It's an easy question, Greg. / There's no in-between ... I mean, unless you're some wishy-washy motherfucker. Like yourself. (*Beat.*) Are you in love with Carly? / Tell me "yes" and I'll walk inside the store right now ... last you'll ever hear of me. Promise. (*Greg stops for a moment. Trying to decide what to say. He opens his mouth, stops. Regroups, then tries again.*)

GREG. I don't have to answer that. / The feelings I have for her are ... my own ... and I don't need to share them with anyone. Not even you, Steph, no matter how loud you scream or, or, like, push me on this ... (*Beat.*) I *know* this is hard for you ... I understand. I've been dreading this moment and I knew it was coming, that I was gonna run into you somewhere and we'd have this *huge* ... but you know what? Whatever. I can deal with it. I *am* dealing with it, right now.

STEPH. Oh yeah, you're doing a *great* job.

reasons to be happy

by Neil LaBute

2M, 2W

Three years after a contentious break-up, Steph and Greg are wondering if they can make a fresh go of it. Trouble is, she's married to someone else and he's just embarked on a relationship with Steph's best friend, Carly, a single mom whose jealous ex-husband, Kent, has trouble articulating his feelings. Navigating the rocky landscape of conflicting agendas and exploding emotions isn't going to be easy for any of them. REASONS TO BE HAPPY is a funny, surprising, and poignant play about the choices and sacrifices we are willing to make in the pursuit of that often elusive ideal: happiness.

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