

Woman Studies

by

Chris Leyva

1666 Weldon Ave.
Columbus, OH 43224
319-430-6781

chrisleyva@gmail.com
www.chrisleyva.com

Woman Studies

a play

CHARACTERS

VICTORIA, Latina, an opera singer, adjunct professor, 30's

FRANCESCA, Latina, Victoria's sister, late 20's

BRIAN, adjunct professor of Political Science, musician, early 40's

KAREN, stay at home mom, musician, early 40's

ROB, Iowa state senator, early 40's

ADAM, junior college student, 20

SETTING

Multiple locations, mainly a small, liberal arts college in an Iowa town. The college only has about 1,000 students. We move to and from multiple locations, each only suggested by light and sound and perhaps a set piece or two.

TIME

2012

1.

Dark, shadows. The rustle of sheets in the darkness. A woman's voice mutters, "Oh shit!" We hear scurrying, clumsy movements.

Spotlight.

Victoria is putting herself together quickly. She wears a skirt that she has just pulled on and hasn't not finished buttoning or snapping; she furiously buttons up a blouse.

She tucks the blouse into her skirt and throws her fingers through her hair. Is she looking in a mirror or is she assuming that her hair looks good enough to leave the house? Once she's satisfied with her state of dress, (not 100% satisfied, but at least 70%. Definitely not 80% put together, but she decides she doesn't have time) she turns to look behind her.

VICTORIA

Well. Thanks. It was. Fun.

Lights shift to reveal a kitchen counter. Maybe a breakfast nook with bar stools. Francesca is carelessly slapping peanut butter on bread.

VICTORIA(CONT'D)

(Offstage)

If she says it again, I say you hit her.

FRANCESCA

She won't say it again, I made it clear.

VICTORIA

(Offstage)

That you'd smack her.

FRANCESCA

That she'd regret it.

Victoria enters, more put together than before, but in the same outfit. She's drying her hair with a small towel.

VICTORIA

Running her fucking mouth.

FRANCESCA

I don't want that language spoke about Grandma.

VICTORIA

She's being a bitch.

FRANCESCA

Tori.

VICTORIA

She's talking bad about you to your own kid.

FRANCESCA

You don't know that.

VICTORIA

You just said.

FRANCESCA

You don't know—

VICTORIA

Seriously, you just told me, Franny.

FRANCESCA

You don't know.

VICTORIA

Grandma can call you a slut to your own son, and I can't call the old bitch a bitch?

FRANCESCA

I deserved it.

VICTORIA

I know you deserve it.

FRANCESCA

But it's over.

VICTORIA

Again.

FRANCESCA
For good.

VICTORIA
For real?

FRANCESCA
Why would I see him?

VICTORIA
That's what I've been asking you for two years. Beso isn't worth it.

FRANCESCA
He's loving.

VICTORIA
More loving than Cardo?

FRANCESCA
A shit ton more than Cardo.

VICTORIA
Then marry Beso.

FRANCESCA
You don't marry Beso.

VICTORIA
You don't marry Cardo.

FRANCESCA
Cardo has things together. Beso is out of control.

VICTORIA
So, Beso's gone.

FRANCESCA
For good.

VICTORIA
Now you have to get rid of Cardo.

FRANCESCA
I can't leave Cardo.

VICTORIA

Because of Jason.

FRANCESCA

I can't be a single mother with two kids.

VICTORIA

Grandma will help, and I can always help with money here and there, if... Two kids?

FRANCESCA

Shit.

VICTORIA

You slut.

FRANCESCA

Not talking about it.

VICTORIA

It's Beso's.

FRANCESCA

It's Cardo's.

VICTORIA

That's why there's no more Beso. That how Cardo found out?

FRANCESCA

Cardo doesn't know.

VICTORIA

You're not keeping it.

FRANCESCA

Why wouldn't I?

VICTORIA

You can barely take care of Jason.

FRANCESCA

Grandma is there. And you said you'd help.

VICTORIA

With Jason. Not with two kids.

FRANCESCA

You too good now, Miss college professor?

VICTORIA

I'm an adjunct.

FRANCESCA

What does that mean?

VICTORIA

It means I do twice as much work for less than half pay. It means I can only help a little. With Jason. One kid. Not two.

FRANCESCA

So you helping me is all talk.

VICTORIA

No, it's—

FRANCESCA

You offer to help—

VICTORIA

I help, but I'm not going to enable. It's called birth control, Franny.

FRANCESCA

Stop being a bitch.

VICTORIA

Stop being a slut.

FRANCESCA

You're one to talk. You get a new one last night?

VICTORIA

Met him last week. Grabbing my Starbucks.

FRANCESCA

You seeing him again?

Francesca lights a cigarette.

VICTORIA

You trying to give it brain damage?

Francesca crushes the cigarette, making a show of it.

VICTORIA(CONT'D)

I don't think so. We didn't click.

FRANCESCA

He was that bad in bed?

VICTORIA

He was fine in bed. Good even. Came twice.

FRANCESCA

Jesus, Tori.

VICTORIA

Conversation was the problem. Don't look at me like that. It's not all about sex. I have to get to work. First day of school.

FRANCESCA

(Suddenly remembering, shouting)

Jason! You better be up and brushing your teeth!

Victoria grabs the sack lunch, looks inside, decides it's good enough, and heads for the door.

FRANCESCA(CONT'D)

That's Jason's.

VICTORIA

You have more bread.

(Moving to leave)

You know it's Beso's.

FRANCESCA

It's Cardo's.

VICTORIA

You're sure?

FRANCESCA

Get out.

Victoria leaves. Francesca lights up a cigarette.

2.

Spotlight.

A small table in a classroom that can fit, at most, about 20 people. There aren't 20 students there, more like 8. We don't see them.

Brian, nice shirt, wrinkled khakis, sits on the table, his legs dangling.

BRIAN

You all have a copy of the syllabus? Susan. You have one? Okay. If you take the time to read through it, and, please do read through it, completely, you'll see a few things that I want to specifically point out. Page 3. The required texts. There are 15 of them. You're probably saying, "But there are 15 weeks in the semester, Professor Nance! We can't read a book a week!" You aren't required to read all of them. There are 10 core texts, then you pick one of the last 5 to write your final paper. And be prepared, there is a lot of writing in this class. You actually have a paper due at our next class. Wednesday. Don't panic, don't panic. I know it's the first week of classes. It's a short paper. Two pages. Look in the syllabus for the formatting rules. I only want to see one inch margins. And trust me, I can tell if it's not one inch. I can also tell the difference between 12 point and 13 point font. Don't try it. You're all responsible adults, right? This is college. This paper, I want to know what you want to get out of this class. Why did you sign up? Why is this class important to you? That's the first page. Easy. Second page. I want you to expand your scope. I want you to provide me a definition of "Women's Studies." What does that mean? What does it mean in our society? But don't start there. Start with what it means here on campus, then branch out to society. I want to know where you are with the material, then we can track your progress through to the end of the semester. But hopefully, your growth won't stop there. You should carry over what you learn here into the rest of your life, your future office spaces, your relationships. We're going to be asking a lot of questions here. What is gender? What does it mean to be female? What is male privilege? And how does it influence our culture? What is the heterosexual male gaze? What are the power structures of our society that allow for women's success? Do they allow for women's success? What can we do? Is it the government? Laws? How do political decisions influence women today? Google Rush Limbaugh and contraception. Google Legitimate Rape. This is bigger than Roe v. Wade. Big questions. But start with those two pages for Wednesday. Questions for me? About the class? About the syll-- Adam? Heterosexual male gaze. G-A-Z-E. Ok? Any others? No? Great. So, ladies. And Adam. We'll get this show on the road. Patriarchy.

(He stands)

Let's dissect it.

3.1

The sounds of college, late August, afternoon of the first day of class is ending. A busy quad, students shuffling around. The smell of grass.

A young man's voice yells across the quad, "Lindsay! Lindsay! Wait up! Lindsay!"

The library's clock tower dings the quarter hour.

Brian enters, carrying a messenger bag over his shoulder, a few books in his arms, walking with purpose, glad to be done with the day.

Victoria enters from the other direction, wearing the skirt and blouse from earlier, some music scores in her arms.

She and Brian walk past each other; she is oblivious to him. But Brian stops. He turns, looks at her as she walks away, tilts his head as his gaze wanders ever lower. He watches for a while, even after she has left the pool of light. He blows a breath of air out of his mouth in amazement and shakes himself out of his reverie. He continues back on his path.

3.2

Two days later.

The sounds of the quad, maybe busier today.

The same male voice cries out, "Lindsay! You have class later? Lindsay! Meet me in the caf'. In the-- Lindsay! Meet me after class!"

The clock tower dings the quarter hour.

Brian enters, messenger bag across his shoulder. His clothes and look are a little more put together today. His pants are ironed.

Victoria enters, a different skirt, arms full of music.

As they walk past each other, Brian decides to acknowledge her with a quick smile and a nod to say, "Hello." Victoria doesn't notice.

As she is past him, Brian starts to turn to look, but decides against it and continues on his way. Victoria is out of the pool of light.

Brian stops. He turns. He stares. His glance moves downward. Maybe he gets caught looking by a group of students. Maybe they taunt him lightly. In any case, he quickly gathers his composure and jogs off on his way.

3.3

Two weeks later.

The quad sounds. The same male voice calls out, "Lindsay! You coming? You coming tonight?"

We finally hear Lindsay's voice, "Yeah! I'm coming!"

Male voice, excited now, "It's at nine!"

Lindsay: "I'm coming!"

Male: "Cool! Lindsay! I'll see you tonight! It's at nine! I'll see you there!"

The clock tower dings the quarter hour; the pool of light returns.

Brian enters, wearing a sports coat. He's not used to it. He walks through the pool of light, reaches the end and stops. No Victoria. He looks around the quad. No sign of her. He looks at his watch. He waits. He looks around. He waits. He looks at his watch and gives up. He leaves.

After a moment, Victoria stomps her way in; she's on her phone.

On another part of the stage, Francesca is on her phone.

VICTORIA

I don't get paid for another two weeks.

FRANCESCA

I just need a little. Tide me over. The disability doesn't come 'til next month.

VICTORIA

What about Cardo's job?

FRANCESCA

What job?

VICTORIA

The job he had last week.

FRANCESCA

Laid off.

Beat.

VICTORIA

How much do you need?

FRANCESCA

Just a little. Sixty? Seventy?

VICTORIA

Sixty?

FRANCESCA

Just to tide us over. Groceries.

VICTORIA

I could do thirty.

FRANCESCA

You gotta help us out. I'm desperate. We gotta eat.

VICTORIA

How much?

FRANCESCA

Fifty.

VICTORIA

I can't do fifty.