

**FIREBIRD CANYON**

a play in one act

by

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## **CHARACTERS**

3 M, all in their teens:

**Al:** distracted, dreamy, open, "not focused enough"

**Will:** fiery, rebellious, eloquent, "disobedient"

**Wolfie:** silly, jokey, clowny, ADHD, "undisciplined"

1 F, mid-30s:

**Sandy:** mid 30's, strong, forceful, cheery. Speaks with a hard, midwestern accent.

## **SETTING**

The suggestion of American Western wilderness: dry, scrubby brush, rocks, a cactus or two. Centerstage is a huge, free-standing timber wall -- or something that looks like it.

*Bright lights up on Al, Will, and Wolfie dressed in rugged outdoor clothing, their backpacks on the ground. All three are seated with their backs against the wall. They are tired and dirty. Will pulls out a pack of cigarettes, lights one, inhales, offers his pack to the other two.*

WILL

A whiff of freedom?

WOLFIE

(taking one)

Where'd you get those?

WILL

Al?

(Al is lost in thought)

Al?

AL

Hm? Oh! No, thanks.

WILL

I have my ways, Wolf.

WOLFIE

(inhaling deeply; sings:)

"Ooh, baby, I love your ways."

(chuckles)

Watch this.

*Wolfie pulls the cigarette into his mouth with his tongue, enclosing it, then pushes it back out.*

WILL

Yet more evidence of thy wasted youth.

WOLFIE

Thank you.

AL

Pretty amateur.

WOLFIE

Really, Al. Bring it on!

AL

Well...

*Al takes the cigarette and performs a magic trick with it, making it disappear.*

Whoa!  
WILL

Aww, you schooled me--  
WOLFIE

Beneath that placid surface--  
WILL

Okay, guys, I smell smoke!  
SANDY (O.S.)

Damn!  
WOLFIE

*Al hurriedly buries the cigarette. Will keeps smoking, bemused. Sandy enters.*

Will, you know the rules. No mood modifiers.  
SANDY

He thought it was "no humidifiers."  
WOLFIE

Put it out, Will.  
SANDY

By my troth, all in good time, m'lady.  
WILL

Now, please.  
SANDY

*Will sighs heavily as he puts it out.*

And gimme the rest.  
SANDY (CONT'D)  
(continuing)

She's sunny and fair, like a clear fine day, yet cloudlike  
Sandy doth steal pleasure away.  
WILL  
(hands over the pack)

Okay! So, how we doin' here? I'm not seeing a lot of  
teamwork.  
SANDY  
(ignoring him; cheerily)

You just missed it, Sandy. Up and over and back already.  
Right, guys?  
WOLFIE

AL  
 Hmm? Oh, yeah...

WOLFIE  
 We're just hanging out. Resting.

WILL  
 On our laurels.

SANDY  
 Very funny, guys. What's the Firebird Canyon motto?

ALL  
 (half-hearted)  
 "Rise from the ashes to become...yourself."

SANDY  
 That's right. Nothing about hanging out, okay? Here. I've got yer meds.

*She takes out three vials and a bottle of water from a fannypack.*

WOLFIE  
 (singing)  
 "Just a spoonful of sugaar helps the ritalin go dowwwn..."

*Sandy hands out the pills.*

SANDY  
 Here ya go...

WILL  
 Come, sweet equipoise!

WOLFIE  
 Al, trade you a pink for a blue--

AL  
 Sounds good--

SANDY  
 Oh, cut it out. Go on. Knock 'em back.

*They all pop them in their mouths and make phony enjoyment sounds. They pass around the bottle of water and take swigs.*

SANDY (CONT'D)  
 (continuing)  
 Great. Now, listen up. I know the wall is tough, but trust me, you guys will be so pumped when you get over this thing. It's like, awesome.  
 (they nod)

I know it's been a tough first week at the Canyon. Albert, the Sharing Circle was a challenge for you. Wolfgang had a tough time with the 20-mile Purity Hike. And William, you really struggled with the Silent Retreat. But you all helped each other get through that stuff, and now yer gonna help each other get over this next hurdle, ya know?

(they nod)

You all came here from different places, for different reasons -- and now it's time to leave those reasons behind. Think of this wall like, the thing that's standing between you and like, who you really are. Okay?

(they nod vigorously)

Remember: "The wilderness doesn't punish or reward. Consequences come as a result of yer own choices and efforts." Right?

(they nod vigorously)

This wall is just a wall. You guys are a TEAM. Right?

(they nod wildly)

Any questions?

(they shake heads no)

Super! You can do it! Okay. I'm gonna to go check on the other teams, so you got ten minutes to plan. When I get back, yer gonna crush this thing, alright? Go team!

*They all continue nodding until she leaves, then immediately spit out their pills and make disgusted noises.*

WOLFIE

Damn that Barbell Barbie can talk.

WILL

On and on and on...

AL

Infinitely.

WILL

And yet she says naught.

*Pause, as Al examines the wall, and Wolfie hums (or whistles) a portion of Eine Kleine Nachtmusick.*

WILL (CONT'D)

(continuing)

I will not climb that godforsaken wall.

AL

It's just a game.

WILL

Fie on't! I won't play.

WOLFIE

Give it up, Will. Unless you want to stay in this charming program for all eternity? Isolated and medicated?

AL

Our parents wouldn't let that happen.

WILL

No? I commend thee for thy lucky birth. My "rents" -- so I affectionately call them -- could not care less. Wolf?

WOLFIE

Yeah?

WILL

Pray, what do you want?

WOLFIE

(sings)

"I...just wanna rock'n'roll all night, and party every day--"

WILL

Wolf.

WOLFIE

Yeah man.

WILL

In earnest.

WOLFIE

(sings)

"I wanna flyyy like an eagle... to the sea--"

WILL

'Tis no wonder thy father sent thee here.

WOLFIE

Yeah? Yeah? I'm gonna--  
(starts to fight)

WILL

Knave'ry becomes thee!  
(fights back; they wrestle)  
Thou wayward music-mangling joithead!

WOLFIE

All those goddamn words, Shakespeare-- this'll shut you up--

WILL

Where is thy song now, Mozart?

AL

Guys! Stop! What are you doing?

WILL  
What doth it look like, Einstein?

AL  
Come on, you two. Stop it--  
(pulls them apart)  
There.

WOLFIE  
He needs to apologize.

WILL  
Ha! When Hades itself doth freeze.

AL  
Hey! Enough! Enough wasted energy. Shake hands.

*They pause, staring at each other.*

WOLFIE  
Not unless he apologizes.

AL  
Will?

WILL  
And yet my blood boils.

AL  
Guys, come on. Will, just say you're sorry.

*Pause.*

WILL  
If guilty I be, then consider me sorry.

*The other two laugh.*

WOLFIE  
Was that an apology?

AL  
An atom of one. Now. Shake.

*They shake hands.*

AL (CONT'D)  
(continuing)  
Okay. The wall.

WILL  
(emitting an anguished moan  
at it)  
Aaarrrghh!



WOLFIE

Drama queen.

AL

Hey guys-- I don't want to be here. I don't want to do this. But I'll tell you what I want even less: to listen to Sandy for even one more nanosecond.

WOLFIE

No? Our Firebird Canyon cheerleader from Hell?

AL

Exactly. So let's just do this and *move on*. Okay?

WOLFIE

Smart guy, that Einstein. Will?

WILL

I concur.

AL

Fine. Now how do we do it.

WOLFIE

(sings)

"Up up and away in my beautiful, my beautiful ballooon..."

AL

(pause, he stares)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. You're a genius.

*Al picks up a stick, begins to draw in the dirt.*

WOLFIE

Shit! We're gonna fly over the wall?

AL

The Montgolfier brothers did it.

WILL

Who?

AL

Two guys in France. 1782. With burning straw and a linen balloon.

WOLFIE

Rock on! And we have...?

AL

Tents and isobutane canister stoves.

*Al makes one final mark, then rubs it all out with his foot.*

What. WOLFIE

Not enough lift. AL

Alas. WILL

Damn. Time to start climbing. WOLFIE

I suppose we must. WILL  
(groans again)

It's so... inelegant. AL

Then what graceful device shall liberate us from our loathsome fate? WILL

*Pause.*

We could... step through it. AL

Ooh, Einstein makes a joke! I like that! WOLFIE

He seems not mirthful. Al, dost thou jest? WILL

Well...the wall is made up primarily of empty space-- more than 99% is space, actually-- AL

Where are you going with this-- WOLFIE

All solids are illusory-- AL

Al, Al, Al. I'm not walking through a wall. WOLFIE

True. If that's what you believe. AL

Believe it not, and so it will not be. WILL

AL  
Who said that?

WOLFIE  
Shakespeare, duh.

*They pause, thinking again.*

WILL  
O wall, full often hast thou heard my moans.

AL  
There has got to be a way.

*Pause. Wolfie smiles at him.*

WOLFIE  
Oh yeah, baby.  
(sings and dances)  
"There. Has. Got. To. Be. A. Way... Burning down the house!"  
That's it!

AL  
No, Wolf.

WOLFIE  
Why not?

AL  
Talk about inelegant.

WOLFIE  
Whoa whoa whoa, excuse me. What's the goal here? To "get over" this thing that's supposedly between us and our "real selves," yeah? What's more elegant than stepping right over its ashes?

WILL  
He doth have a point.

AL  
Sandy'll kill us.

WOLFIE  
So? "The wilderness doesn't punish or reward."

WILL  
True. And did they not bid us to  
(in a Sandy-like accent)  
"Rise from the ashes to become yerself."

AL  
They'll kick us out.

WOLFIE

And then?

WILL

Ah, then. Then! No more shall conformity deaden our souls!  
No more sniveling fealty to rote! Our fledged minds shall  
cast off their shackles, to once again fly! That's a quote.

WOLFIE

Basically, no more meds. We'll be free to think again.  
Whaddya say, Al. You in?

*Pause.*

AL

Light me up.

WOLFIE

All right.

*They take out their canister stoves.*

WILL

(holds stove out)

To freedom!

AL AND WOLFIE

(clanking with Will's)

To freedom!

*They light their stoves, and direct them at the base  
of the wall.*

WOLFIE (CONT'D)

Sing with me! "We gotta get outta  
this place..."

*The lights begin to fade, as they sing:*

ALL

"if it's the last thing we ever do. We gotta get outta this  
place--"

SANDY (O.S.)

Hey! Hey! Do I smell smoke?

*They laugh. Blackout.*

END OF PLAY.