

A Cupboard FULL! Of



By

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WHY I LIKE IT: *Acting Drama Editor EZRA NEIGHBORS writes...Although twins skip a generation, they don't always skip an issue here at FOTD. Upon inspection of this edition, you may find similar situations set forth by Moving Day by Susan Surman and A Cupboard Full of Coffee Cups by Bridget Grace Sheaff. The given circumstances invoke deja vu for those lacking in scrutiny (I hear they recently discovered it's genetic, my dears); two couples separating. Easy. Well... Not exactly... "Easy Separation" could be quite the oxymoron if you really scrutinize it for a second... Oh. I digress.*

In A Cupboard Full of Coffee Cups, we find Donna and Michael faced with issue of a separation. Contrary to the uneasy unknowing of what's to come sprinkled in Moving Day, there is a sense of definitiveness author, whips up in A Cupboard Full of Coffee Cups that gives us the satisfaction we are craving. The satisfaction of your person standing up in the face of your own self-destructive tendencies. (Spacing is playwright's own.)

A CUPBOARD FULL OF COFFEE CUPS

A romantic dramedy

On the brink of separation, Donna and Michael are clearing out their kitchen, sorting through years worth of memories through their coffee cups.

DONNA: 30-something. Lost.

MICHAEL: 30-something. Tired.

DONNA and MICHAEL in the kitchen. Arguing. An old argument, around about as long as they have known each other and longer. One of those arguments all couples have. This one goes through the motions and stays in a realm of lightness, though. There is a pain underneath it that isn't being spoken. Boxes line the floor, "Donna's Kitchen" written in thick, unforgiving black Sharpie on the side. MICHAEL is examining a coffee cup that says "I HEART NY" on it. DONNA is on a step stool, going through the cupboards.

DONNA:

No, it was the second year. I'm positive.

MICHAEL:

Third.

DONNA:

The third year your parents came with us. The first year we were with Steph and Hillary. The *second year*, (counts on her fingers condescendingly) one, two, *second* year, we were alone.

MICHAEL:

No, it was the third year because it was right after the trip to Disney.

DONNA:

We went to Disney the second year!

MICHAEL:

(remembering) For our anniversary.

DONNA:

Right.

MICHAEL:

Fine. Fine. You win. So, do you want this one?

DONNA:

I have one that my sister gave me at work. I think it's pretty clear that I heart New York. I don't want to belabor the point. I might come off as desperate.

MICHAEL:

So. Back in the cupboard?

DONNA:

Can you set it on the counter so we don't get confused about which ones we have already gone through?

MICHAEL:

It's going back in the cupboard eventually anyway.

DONNA:

Yes, but I don't want to talk about it a second time when we have already spent 5 minutes on one coffee mug. We have like 30 more to go through, okay?

MICHAEL:

Yeesh, Donna, okay. Are you in a hurry?

DONNA:

I just don't want to spend my whole day sorting through coffee cups.

MICHAEL:

You have better things to do.

DONNA:

I do.

MICHAEL:

I'm glad I mean that much to you.

DONNA:

Stop.

MICHAEL:

(beat) Okay, okay, this section of the counter will be stuff that stays here with me and *this* section will be stuff that goes... in the boxes.

DONNA:

Why don't you just put the stuff that goes in the boxes into the boxes?

MICHAEL:

Don't you want to wrap them in newspaper or something so they don't break?

DONNA:

They are just going in the back of my car and then to the apartment. I'm not shipping them across the country.

Pause.

MICHAEL:

The apartment

DONNA:

What?

MICHAEL:

You don't call it "my apartment" or "I'm taking them home" or whatever. You say "the apartment."

DONNA:

Don't analyze my syntax, Michael.

MICHAEL.

I'm just saying.

DONNA:

I hate when you do this.

MICHAEL:

Is that why you are moving out?

DONNA:

Can we *not* for *one second*? Can we just not?

MICHAEL:

Fine. Sorry. Fine.

They work in silence, DONNA handing him mugs and MICHAEL placing them either on the counter or in one of the boxes. He places a mug with a kitten picture on the counter.

DONNA:

Oo-oo, I want that one.

MICHAEL:

It's mine.

DONNA:

It's one of my favorites.

MICHAEL:

Tough.

DONNA:

Are you kidding me?

MICHAEL:

You're going to have to sacrifice some things.

DONNA:

Stop being a child and give me the kitty mug.

MICHAEL:

Nope.

DONNA hops down from the step ladder and places the mug in one of her boxes. MICHAEL removes it when she goes back up the step ladder. Repeat. Repeat. It's suddenly a frenzy and DONNA doesn't even have time to climb up the ladder. They find it funny deep down, but on a surface level, it's a fight for their lives. DONNA throws the mug in the box and we hear something break.

DONNA:

Crap.

MICHAEL:

Hah!

DONNA:

Don't mock me.

MICHAEL:

This wouldn't happen if you wrapped them first.

DONNA:

(mimicking) "This wouldn't happen if you wrapped them first."

MICHAEL laughs at her a little. DONNA laughs at herself a little and shakes her head. MICHAEL kisses DONNA suddenly. A long kiss. Urgent. She's kissing him back and then pulling away.

DONNA:
Michael.

MICHAEL:
Don't leave.

DONNA:
I have to.

MICHAEL:
We've only been doing this for five years. We aren't marriage experts yet. We have so much to learn. You can't just quit while we are still figuring it out.

DONNA:
Don't, okay? We've talked about this.

MICHAEL:
(closing the cupboard, forcing her to pay attention) **You** talked about this. I had to listen as the woman I love told me I was so insufferable to live with she was abandoning everything we have created to go off and... and what, Donna?

DONNA:
I don't know, okay, I just... I have to do this.

MICHAEL:
It's hasty. It's not well thought-out. It's **insane**.

DONNA:
Don't you think I know that?

MICHAEL:
Do you?

DONNA:
Yes!

MICHAEL:

Then why are you doing it?

DONNA:

I don't know, exactly. I know that I have to and I'll figure the rest out later.

MICHAEL:

So this is, what, a tiny adventure you are taking yourself on? A vacation from responsibility?

DONNA:

Don't be glib.

MICHAEL:

I'll stop being glib when you stop being obtuse.

DONNA:

I'm not trying to be obtuse! If I knew the answer, I would tell you.

MICHAEL:

I don't think it should work like that. I don't think you can just make decisions without understanding the motivation.

DONNA:

Can we just keep packing?

MICHAEL:

How can you just pack up our whole lives like this? Look at us! Quibbling over the coffee mugs, trying to figure out who keeps what memory. Are you really so heartless that-

DONNA:

Do you think this is easy for me? Do you really?

MICHAEL:

You don't seem to be suffering at all.

DONNA:

That's right. I don't suffer. I don't cry myself to sleep. I don't miss you with a dull aching pain that never seems to go away. You know what's hard? Cooking for one person. Everyone says "just cook the same amount you normally do and save half for lunch" but they don't really

understand why it's hard. I don't care about what I eat in the same way. My cooking has no finesse. It's just... it's substance. It's barely nutrition. Because it's only me so there's no need to... put in any effort, or something. I'm eating because I have to to not die and then I'm watching mindless television on the couch without even paying attention to it and then going to bed alone, but none of it, not one single moment of it, makes me as unhappy as the suffocating reality of being married to someone who doesn't recognize you.

MICHAEL:

Doesn't recognize you?

DONNA:

I feel like you haven't looked at me in... years, maybe, even.

MICHAEL:

Donna, how can you think that?

DONNA:

I'm pretty good at it.

MICHAEL:

You have to tell me things like that. You can't just do a big gesture like moving out and just... It's not fair to anyone.

DONNA:

It's not a gesture, sweetheart. It's a real thing that I need right now.

MICHAEL:

Do you still love me?

DONNA:

So very, very badly.

MICHAEL

Then why are we clearing out cupboards? Shouldn't **that** be the only thing that matters?

DONNA:

Is it the only thing that matters to you?

MICHAEL:

Yes.

DONNA:

No, really think about it. No matter how much you love me, no matter how hard it is to see me go, would you ever really be happy knowing how close this was to ending and that it still could end any second?

MICHAEL:

I would at least try. Which is more than I can say about you.

DONNA:

And that's the difference, isn't it?

MICHAEL:

What is really going on? Is it someone else? Is it not enough, I dunno, free time? Attention? Am I not exciting to you anymore?

DONNA:

It's... I dunno, it's a lack of certainty.

MICHAEL:

In me?

DONNA:

No, in me.

MICHAEL:

I don't know what that means.

DONNA:

Me neither.

MICHAEL:

I'm certain of you.

DONNA:

How can that be?

MICHAEL:

I just am.

DONNA:
Well... bully for you.

MICHAEL:
You know, when you run out of steam in an argument, you start to sound like a carnival barker.

DONNA:
Shut up.

MICHAEL:
Don't go.

DONNA:
... Let's finish packing.

She climbs back up the step ladder and tries to hand him more mugs.

MICHAEL:
Just leave them in there.

DONNA:
These are mine.

MICHAEL:
And they are staying put.

DONNA:
What is this? Are you holding me and my coffee cups hostage?

MICHAEL:
If need be.

DONNA:
Mike.

MICHAEL:
I'm going to fight for you. Somewhere in your insane, gothic novel mind that has imagined too much and read too often, you want me to fight for you. I know you. I know that this is a temporary instinct, a push for, I dunno, a change of pace. We can do change of pace. Together. We can bike across the country. We can scuba dive. We can play hooky and go to the movies in

the a middle of a work day, for chrissakes. You are not leaving. The vow I took binds you to me just as much as it binds me to you. And so, I'm fighting for you, against you if necessary.

(pause)

DONNA:

I'm going to the apartment.

MICHAEL:

That's fine. Go to the apartment. But you are eventually coming home. Here. Our house. Your house.

DONNA:

I want a new kitty mug.

MICHAEL:

I will buy you 11 kitty mugs.

DONNA:

I'm not sure about any of this.

MICHAEL:

I am.

DONNA climbs down the step stool and glances at the boxes. She decides not to take them, but she does exit with her car keys, slowly, looking back at MICHAEL before she goes. MICHAEL pauses as she goes and then starts putting the mugs back in the cupboard. He pulls out the kitten mug, the handle broken off. He sets it aside to glue back together later.

END OF PLAY

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS: *I was heavily influenced by Thornton Wilder's An Amicable Parting, and also the story of a friend of mine where, of course, he and his ex had to sort through the coffee cups. I love exploring this Nora Ephron-esque world of romantic dramadies.*

AUTHOR BIO: PLAYWRITING: Walking Shadow Readers Theatre: *Halfway to the Middle*; Maples Repertory Theatre: *Tis the Season*; DBQ One Acts: *Lighted Fools* (winner); Carrollwood Players: *Exit Interview*; Crafton Hills New Works!: *And Maybe a River Will Come*; Ovate Highway 33: *The Next Table*;

Spooky Action Theater: *Welcome to Hell: An Orientation*; Playwrights' Round Table: *Filmed Before A Live Studio Audience*; Inkubator New Works: *Pilate's Wife*; The Fine Arts Association: *An Evening with Julia Maggiano*; Monumental Theatre: *Smarty Pants: A New Musical*; Ohlone College: *Exit Interview*; Gallery Players: *Art of Preservation*. Her play, *Killing Mockingbirds*, received an Honorable Mention in the 89th Writer's Digest Writing Competition. PUBLISHED: *Perfect, Forgive and Forget, A Chance of Rain, The Days of Peanut Butter and Honey Sandwiches, Kissing Lesson, It's Not About the Hair, Danny's How-to-Vlog, The Art of Preservation, The Next Table, At Her Door, The Man Who Tried to Reach Infinity, Everything Under the Sun, An Evening with Julia Maggiano, And Maybe a River will Come, and I Wish I Was Gregor Samsa*. She is the Director of Audience Services and Community Engagement at Maples Repertory Theatre and is a member of the Lincoln Center Directors Lab 2019. BA 2014 *summa cum laude*, The Catholic University of America. www.bridgetgracesheaff.com