

THE MO...VE...MEN . . T

By Stanley Toledo

WHY I LIKE IT: *Drama Editor JANET EHRLICH COLSON writes... The Movement by Stanley Toledo is a cunning living room drama with more than enough bizarre twists for a miniseries. Toledo sets the genre on its head by playing with our expectations in a stylish play that is neither farce nor typical family drama. Toledo's exceptional script exploits a familiar premise of dinner with the boss, starting with wine and formalities (after a setup that's practically subliminal), and then quickly moves into something more scintillating – and far more sinister.*

AL

There is a special reason for your being here tonight.

KEITH

I wondered if there was.

AL

Keith, what do we do in the office?

KEITH

We serve the public.

AL

Exactly. We serve the public. And you do that very well. But I need you for something else.

The, beat changes are seamless, the characters complex, and the stakes are ever so high as Keith tries to make a good impression and his boss promises undying support. There's a catch of course, but I'm not giving it away. You'll want to read it again.

Five stars.

(Spacing and format are playwright's own. Eds.)

THE MOVEMENT

A ten-minute play

By Stanley Toledo

Characters

Keith - 20s, employee

Al - 40s, boss

Chris - 30s, boss's wife

Synopsis

A young employee dines at the home of his boss. The only invited guest, he endeavors to make a good impression. Then the evening takes an unexpected turn.

At rise: with a wine glass in hand, CHRIS sits in the living room. She is dressed in an evening dress. AL enters, carrying two glasses of wine. He crosses to the coffee table, sets down the wine glasses. He sits. He is well dressed in an expensive suit. The living room is beautifully appointed but may be staged in an impressionistic manner.

AL

Where is our guest?

CHRIS

Bathroom.

AL

What is your impression of Keith?

CHRIS

He would be a good soldier.

AL

But will he make the right choice?

CHRIS

I think so. Our movement is growing like crazy.

AL

We will know in few minutes.

(Beat. KEITH enters, sits. He is dressed for the occasion, although he is unsure of what the occasion is)

AL

I poured you another glass of wine.

KEITH

Thank you, Al.

CHRIS

You seem to like this wine as much as we do.

KEITH

It is delicious.

AL

I will send a case of it to your house.

KEITH

No. Please.

AL

I respect a man who knows how to enjoy fine wine.

KEITH

But it must be awfully expensive.

AL

Not when you know the right people.

CHRIS

Excuse me, gentlemen. Don't get up.

(CHRIS stands, exits)

KEITH

Your home is beautiful.

AL

Someday you will have one just like it.

KEITH

You think so?

AL

A person who makes wise decisions in life will attain all he desires. Remember that.

KEITH

I shall. I thought dinner was excellent. Never had frog legs before.

AL

Chris works magic in the kitchen.

KEITH

Al, you have been my supervisor for a year now, and I am very thankful. Not many bosses are as civil as you.

AL

Civility is important on and off the clock.

KEITH

Please know you can count on my total support in whatever direction the office goes.

AL

I appreciate your vote of confidence. Excuse me.

(AL stands, exits. As he exits, CHRIS inters. She wears only a bra and panties. She sits; KEITH looks at her, trying not to react)

CHRIS

Al is impressed with you. He feels you are trustworthy.

KEITH

I like your husband. He is a great boss.

CHRIS

Where are you from?

KEITH

Kansas City.

CHRIS

The City of Fountains.

KEITH

Have you visited Kansas City?

CHRIS

No. But you can't get any more middle America than Kansas City, right?

KEITH

I guess so. Yeah.

CHRIS

I hope to get there some day.

KEITH

Uh, do you feel warm?

CHRIS
Not particularly. Do you?

KEITH
I am comfortable, thanks.

CHRIS
I heard you talking in the hallway on your way to the bathroom. You must have run into our daughter.

KEITH
We talked briefly. I introduced myself.

CHRIS
She is beautiful, isn't she?

KEITH
She is lovely. High school?

CHRIS
In her junior year. Excuse me. Don't get up.

(She exits as AL enters. He sits)

AL
There is a special reason for your being here tonight.

KEITH
I wondered if there was.

AL
Keith, what do we do in the office?

KEITH
We serve the public.

AL
Exactly. We serve the public. And you do that very well. But I need you for something else.

KEITH
Something else?

AL
Yes. Oh, you did not tell me if you like my wife.

KEITH
She is nice.

AL
Attractive?

KEITH
Extremely so.

AL
You can have her for the night whenever you want. You can take her home tonight.

KEITH
(Off balance)
I, I, I live with my uncle. I mean he lives with me. I take care of him.

AL
Did you meet our daughter?

KEITH
Very briefly.

AL
If you are interested, you can have her. That is okay too.

KEITH
Thanks, but this is not a good time.

AL
Maybe another day.

KEITH
Maybe.

AL
You can also have Chris and our daughter at the same time.

KEITH
Like I said I am taking care of my uncle. He needs constant care.

AL
Just know those options are available.

KEITH

Al, you said something about needing me for something else.

AL

We want you to join our team.

KEITH

To do what?

AL

Would it matter?

KEITH

I am unsure.

AL

JR is on the team.

KEITH

JR in our office?

AL

Yes.

KEITH

Wow. That guy is flush with brains and good looks.

AL

You can take him home.

KEITH

You mean -

AL

I do.

KEITH

Thanks, but that is not my style.

AL

He is not your type, you mean.

KEITH

No. Yes. I mean my uncle.

AL

JR is going far. You want to go far too, right?

KEITH

Sure, I do.

AL

You can take me home. But not this week. I am busy with public matters.

KEITH

I understand.

AL

Being on the team is different than being on the office team but just as important.

KEITH

Different how?

AL

The hours are different. Sometimes you must be accessible at midnight, sometimes at 5 a.m. in the morning.

KEITH

Those are bad hours at our house. That is when my uncle needs me most.

AL

Keith, I thought you want to go far.

KEITH

I do, of course.

AL

A change of allegiance is essential in order to realize a brave new world.

KEITH

What's your daughter's name?

AL

You want her? That can happen tonight.

KEITH

No. No. I am sorry. I don't know why I asked.

AL

Then you are turning down this opportunity to join the team?

KEITH

Can't I think about it?

AL

I only ask once. You only have one chance to make the right choice.

KEITH

See, my uncle -

AL

The hell with your uncle.

KEITH

He has always been good to me.

AL

You are allergic to bee stings.

KEITH

How do you know that?

AL

I know what I need to know.

KEITH

(Nervously)

I grew out of that allergy. My reaction to bee stings is normal now.

AL

Are you lying to me?

KEITH

That is the truth.

AL

We will see. Chris! Bring it in!

(CHRIS enters. She wears a bee protection suit, which includes a helmet/hat with a veil and gloves, carrying a white wooden beehive box. KEITH sees her, feeling immediately threatened. Note: CHRIS can wear helmet/hat with veil and gloves along her bra and patties instead of a bee suit)

AL

I forgot to tell you Chris and I are beekeepers by hobby.

(CHRIS crosses to the coffee table, sets down the bee box. KEITH looks at it with fear)

AL

If you are wondering if that bee box is full of bees, it is.

CHRIS

Keith, come closer and look at our beautiful bees.

AL

We love every one of them.

(He turns and looks at AL, seeing that he is now wearing a bee helmet/hat with a veil)

KEITH

I am going home.

AL

You are staying right here.

KEITH

(Not hearing AL)

Thanks for dinner.

CHRIS

Keith, here is a nice one. Try to catch it.

(CHRIS picks up a bee and pitches it at him. KEITH reacts with alarm)

KEITH

No! I hate bees!

CHRIS
(Pitching another)
Here is another.

KEITH
Please, don't do that!

AL
What a big scaredy cat you are.

CHRIS
How about one more for the road? Oh, perfect. This is one of my favorites.

(She happily pitches it)

KEITH
(Flailing his arms)
Stop! Stop! Oh! My neck! My God! It stung me! It stung me! Wait! Wait! I cannot breathe. I can't. Help me, please. Call 911.

(KEITH falls to the floor, gasping for air.
AL and CHRIS watch unemotionally. KEITH goes into shock, then stops breathing. Beat)

AL
(Taking off his bee helmet/hat)
He's finished.

CHRIS
(Taking off her bee helmet/hat)
Yeah.

AL
How about some dessert?

END

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS:

The Movement comes out of a crazy dream I had about an alien creed that invades people's minds in this country. The creed dictates that there are no truth/lies, no honor/dishonor,

no fairness/unfairness, no morality/immorality. Oh, they exist; they just don't matter. Like how you dress for dinner doesn't matter. All that matters is winning or losing.

Why I had such a dream I am unsure. Maybe it was something I ate.

I like to think I wrote *The Movement* after reading another Harold Pinter play. But it has been a while.

AUTHOR'S BIO:

Stanley Toledo's short plays are performed in theatres in the U.S. and abroad. His work has been published in Ponder Review, Santa Ana River Review and The Martian Chronicle. He lives in the California delta.