



BOVARY

BY

JOSEPH ZARRELLA

WHY I LIKE IT: *Drama Editor EZRA NEIGHBORS writes...* Bovary by Joe Zarrella is a play deftly held up by its intricate subtext. While Madam Bovary's inspirational hand offers her support with dreamy, flippant, playful banter to our biblically named main characters of Sam and Delilah, what lies underneath are two people with desires and wishes which they are painstakingly extracting from each other. Set as two "friends" meeting again at a school reunion, both characters of Sam and Delilah hide behind their witty quips and dismissive jokes refusing to reveal their true intentions, past history, or future aspirations. Underneath the bubbling dialogue, moments of truth and candor surface at a sensational pace. With Joe Zarrella stirring the pot, this stew is a decadent, 10-minute treat. (Spacing is playwright's own.)

Bovary

By Joe Zarrella

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AT RISE: A bar room early evening. DELILAH and SAM both in their mid twenties arrive at a bar room table.

DELILAH

Sam! I've missed you... We can't leave our meetups to school reunions only!

SAM

Delilah--There you are! [SAM and DELILAH hug] ...dressed in your trademark black even on an occasion like this? Fit for a funeral.

DELILAH

Ha! Picking up from where we left off. It's been quite a while hasn't it? How long has it been?

SAM

Feels like years...

DELILAH

Does it?

SAM

Oh who knows?

DELILAH

A clock maybe...

SAM

As would your uterus I suppose. Still no ring I see?

DELILAH

Starting already are we? Mother nature, what a beast. The ticking crocodile never sleeps.

SAM

(turning his cheek with a smirk)

Well, how about a kiss then Wendy?

DELILAH

Stay in Neverland Peter, only real men get to enter here (circling herself with her fingers)

SAM

Good god woman it was a children's book!

DELILAH

Grow up Peter.

SAM

We are in public!

DELILAH

Oh I'm sorry, on your best behavior because of the Mrs.?

SAM

(awkwardly)

Well...I haven't seen you in so long, and I've been meaning to tell you about it. Things didn't work out all that well.

DELILAH

Oh Sam, I'm so sorry! I didn't know.

SAM

It's alright. There are worse things.

DELILAH

Yes but worse things are relative. Thought this one might go the distance.

SAM

I thought so too but it turns out the engine wasn't built to last. Another lemon.

DELILAH

What happened Sam?

SAM

(looking down)

You know...the old shield and spear saying...

DELILAH

What?

SAM

Irreconcilable differences

DELILAH

Over what?

SAM

(Raises his gaze slowly and directly at Delilah)

(Slow and Directly) Differences...that could not be reconciled...Delilah.

[there is a pause]

SAM

(collecting himself)

I'm sorry I don't mean to be short...It's just...sensitive is all ya know?

DELILAH

You be as short as you need to be...little guy! (Ruffling the hair of Sam). I'm sorry to hear that that happened is all.

SAM

Much appreciated (returning the patronizing tone). Anyways how are things with *your...situation?*

DELILAH

We are much from a muchness my little Sam.

SAM

Oh yea? What happened to that...good ole boy?

DELILAH

You know, the old shield and spear saying.

SAM

Is that so?

DELILAH

So as it can go.

SAM

Well you know the saying, there's plenty of fish in the sea.

DELILAH

(doubting)

Yes but you know what they also say...the odds are good, but the goods are odd.

SAM

Right, but...they also say...love will find a way.

DELILAH

(pointed)

Mhmm but as the saying goes...You have a face only a mother could love.

SAM

Right, but...wait what?

DELILAH

I got you a drink. You've favorite...whiskey neat. .

[The WAITRESS exits stage]

SAM

And you're having...an appletini.

DELILAH

You know what they say...

SAM

What *do* they say?

DELILAH

An apple a day keeps the doctor away.

SAM

Is that how it goes?

DELILAH

Something like that. Anyways...you were saying?

SAM

Well then...cheers! It's good to see you, it's far been too long. To the good ole days!

DELILAH

(sheepishly)

...the old days...

[SAM and DELILAH click glasses and sip]

DELILAH

Sometimes on the first sip I'll see my reflection in the glass. Our gazes will meet for a moment. And then she disappears...alas.

SAM

Is she available?

DELILAH

You're simply deplorable. By the way I can't let your bad influence ruin us both and let another night slip away just drinking.

SAM

Pardon?

DELILAH

I say this only to offer fair warning!

SAM

The audacity!

DELILAH

Well...it goes without saying...your reputation behooves you!

SAM

What about your reflection? Can she stay out?

DELILAH

I don't know...you didn't seem to have the courage to ask anyone out in school, you expect me to believe you have it in you now?

SAM

The black widow strikes again...

DELILAH

(Pausing...glares at SAM)

SAM

I'm only teasing. But how am I supposed to carry on this evening without you? That appetini may have your eye, but you are the apple of mine.

DELILAH

(Turned off, but reluctantly giving in)

...I'm sure you'll manage quite alright.

SAM

(Exaggerating his tone and movements)

Ah perhaps, but no one else is quite as awe-inspiring as THE Delilah. Incomparable, inimitable...she's a leg above the rest

DELILAH

Jesus Christ Sam you haven't even had a sip yet.

SAM

No liquor is needed when it comes from the heart. Just sweet, flowing adoration and wonder...

DELILAH

Well can we put that back just a bit? How do we plug up this flow ofwhatever...

SAM

Well that's incredibly rude

DELILAH

Well you're incredibly simple

SAM

How dare you!

DELILAH

Okay, can we just settle down a moment?

SAM

Alright fine.

DELILAH

Thank you.

SAM

But I'm having a sip now so buckle up (Sipping from the glass)

DELILAH

On everything that is holy

SAM

Kidding! Kidding...anyway...moving on. So really, tell me what happened with this last guy...are you ok?

DELILAH

I am...it's just...we were in different spots.

SAM

Like in a parking lot?

DELILAH

No, life Sam, life. It became quite evident.

SAM

Whose spot was where?

DELILAH

Well he was there, and I was here (pointing at Sam's seat and then her own)

SAM

That's not very far if you ask me?

DELILAH

Maybe you're right, but without a way to know the distance, we could never close the gap

SAM

I'm here and you're there...simple enough

DELILAH

Yes, it depends on how you measure it

SAM

Measure?

DELILAH

Well we aren't in love, so it doesn't really matter how you and I measure

SAM

Alright, then how would we measure our friendship?

DELILAH

Do we really want to do this?

SAM

There are no units to measure these things

DELILAH

Of course you can measure them

SAM

How can you measure something that is unitless?

DELILAH

By giving it units!...Obviously!

SAM

You just decide! Friend, or no friend...

DELILAH

A decision, created by chemicals in the brain, with actions that follow, therefore measurable by science

SAM

There is no science that can measure faith

DELILAH

Well that's fine because we aren't measuring that are we?!

SAM

They are synonymous with one another

DELILAH

I don't need faith to know that we are apart

SAM

But you do need it if you want to be together

DELILAH

(pausing) You're Catholic?

SAM

Lapsed...

DELILAH

Were you an altar boy?

SAM

Got kicked out...kept secretly eating all the chip things (pantomiming eating eucharist)

DELILAH

(shaking her head)

Jesus Christ Sam

SAM

Didn't even taste like 'em. Or anything really.

DELILAH

My god...

SAM

You'd think his son would be better tasting!

DELILAH

A last supper if I've ever heard of one!

SAM

You don't strike me as the religious type.

DELILAH

And what gives you that impression?

SAM

Well for starters [pause] you'd never let a man tell you what to do...

DELILAH

Got that straight (satisfied)....

SAM

And you could never be quiet enough to make it through an hour-long mass...

DELILAH

Hey! Who's being the rude one now?

SAM

You! To the big guy upstairs...obviously!

DELILAH

Right yes of course (faking a serious tone, holding her hands in prayer)

SAM

Shall we measure our friendship then?

DELILAH

We shall. Okay, first we must pick the qualities that we are measuring...[DELILAH begins measuring the table with her hands and making motions across each end]

...and then from there we can measure how to measure those qualities through activities...

SAM

Wait a second...

[SAM interrupts with the start of a statement and grabs DELILAH'S hands while she's measuring. SAM'S hands remain on hers for a brief moment, the two meet eyes, and SAM releases the hands. A brief silence follows]

DELILAH

(sheepishly)

Right. So like I was saying... You are wrong and I am right.

SAM

That's...comical. You don't know the first thing about...love.

DELILAH

Love? We weren't talking about love...

SAM

Oh right of course....

DELILAH

Boy, liquor hitting you hard already there huh champ? (DELILAH slugs Sam in the arm)

SAM

Yea...hah.

DELILAH

Oh my god! Don't look now (whispering in close)

SAM

What?! (Desperate to change the topic)

DELILAH

Speaking of love...that couple over there...

SAM

Who?

DELILAH

Those two. The man in the brown shirt and his wife with the puckered face. Tragic if you ask me.

SAM

What about them? They seem fine.

DELILAH

Fine?

SAM

That's what I said...fine.

DELILAH

And what gives you that impression...That they're..."*fine*"?

SAM

Well, they seem to be having a nice night out amongst themselves.

DELILAH

And that gives you the impression that they are *fine*?

SAM

Yes the definition of "fine" couldn't be more straightforward in this case so yea, I'd say they're fine.

DELILAH

Well in that case, what is the definition of fine?

SAM

Exactly what they are doing.

[There is a pause]

DELILAH

Sitting in silence, staring off...that gives you the impression they are *fine*?

[There is another pause]

DELILAH

[Gives SAM a look]

SAM

As opposed to him bickering with a petty, arguably obnoxious woman, yes, I'd say that's spot on.

DELILAH

I can only imagine what other aspects of life you would categorize as “fine”? I, on the other hand, think it's heartbreaking to see.

SAM

What exactly are we seeing then?

DELILAH

Settling. A most deadly disease of the heart.

SAM

Settling?

DELILAH

Yes...Settling.

SAM

And how would you define this disease?

DELILAH

It couldn't be more straightforward in this case.

SAM

I can only imagine what other aspects of your life you define as “settling” but maybe it's not settling.

DELILAH

I don't know what else it possibly could be.

SAM

It could be...OR...maybe it just appears that way...some other type of choice camouflaged under the guise of settling.

DELILAH

Two people shackled to each other through no other alternative is not camouflage...it's a uniform... fit for a prison sentence.

SAM

Okay let's say it's a uniform...but what if its less indicative of restriction but symbolic of something else.

DELILAH

What could that possibly be symbolizing other than the fact that they chose not to do any better?

SAM

That's there's still a choice in settling, yea?

DELILAH

It's not really a choice if someone makes it for you.

SAM

Of course there is, you could choose not to do it.

DELILAH

You know what I'm saying. There's no romance to it, it's just...it's just there...like some misfit toy... or a stray animal.

SAM

Choosing to stay is a still choice.

DELILAH

Says a Stockholm victim!

SAM

Yet here they are. Enjoying themselves knowing they couldn't do any better. All I'm saying is maybe there is something...something noble about it.

DELILAH

Noble? This isn't Henry and Anne Boleyn tearing down the Vatican Sam, it's Bob and Karen at the goddamn Ninety-Nine...

SAM

I was thinking more along the lines of Scarlett and Rhett from Gone With the Wind?

DELILAH

Well frankly my Sam, I don't give a damn...

[There is silence]

DELILAH

Ehh?

[More silence]

DELILAH
(visibly bothered)

Are you kidding me!?

[Another pause]

On c'mon. You're spouting nonsense over there and I make a topical joke with utter precision that you could only dream of and *I'm* the strange one?

SAM

Tomorrow is another day dear Delilah.

DELILAH

Kindly, shove it.

SAM

You don't know the first thing about any of this. You try to bust out a science fair experiment earlier and think you have it down pat.

DELILAH

And you do? This is truly hilarious. First of all you have food stains on your jeans and now you think you're qualified to give a lecture.

SAM

In fact, I am.

DELILAH

Wonderful then Sam, please bestow upon us the hidden secrets of life scholars have been searching for since the dawn of mankind.

SAM

Well I mean everyone knows the rule of three's?

DELILAH

The rule of what?

SAM

Three's. Love comes in three's.

DELILAH

Like the trinity?

SAM

(Shaking his head)

Three actual people.

DELILAH

Like the Roman triumvirate?

SAM

(Gesticulates that the response is slightly more on point)

Less blood, same outcome.

Deaths comes in threes which of course means life has to be balanced by three great loves.

DELILAH

Seems too elementary.

SAM

Equilibri-y you mean. Everything equal.

DELILAH

There can only be one true love.

SAM

Just one?

DELILAH

There's someone for everyone.

SAM

Why just one? There can't be just one.

DELILAH

If every person is unique, no two can fit together quite the same, some have to fit better than others. Therefore, no two loves are alike.

SAM

Different doesn't mean better or worse.

DELILAH

The definition of different is literally not like the others. How can that not insinuate value?

SAM

How do you know it's the one?

DELILAH

You don't.

SAM

Don't what?

DELILAH

Don't know...

SAM

I'm asking?

DELILAH

I'm telling.

SAM

That's impossible.

DELILAH

Why?

SAM

Because I've already found the one, or so I thought, and it didn't work. So it can't be the rule of one. Because that means I'm already done.

DELILAH

Done?

SAM

Done!

DELILAH

Then she wasn't the one.

SAM

Well how do you know?

DELILAH

It's obvious.

SAM

Obvious?

DELILAH
(Stopping to look)

Is that an echo?

SAM
(Clearly frustrated)

Obvious?!

DELILAH

Why it appears there is!

SAM

7 billion people on this spinning rock and you say it's *obvious*?

DELILAH

Now, I didn't say it was *easy*...just...very apparent...WHEN and IF it happens.

SAM

But why doesn't it happen more often then?

DELILAH

Because there's 7 billion people on this spinning rock, isn't *that* obvious?

SAM

That doesn't sound right. I don't have a good argument for why that's the case as the whiskey is taking effect but, I... I don't believe you.

DELILAH

Behold...the power of science!

SAM

I need another drink.

[there is a brief pause]

DELILAH

Do you remember the last time we saw each other after graduation?

SAM

Hmmm....

DELILAH

Are you serious?

SAM

It's a bit hazy...

DELILAH

Sam...

SAM

Of course I do

DELILAH

Do you remember what I said to you?

SAM

You said many things to me

DELILAH

But the most IMPORTANT thing I said to you

SAM

I think I can recall

DELILAH

What did you make of it afterwards?

Nothing I went home (smirking)

SAM

Lies [smacking SAM on the arm]

DELILAH

I swear!

SAM

Tell me! [hitting SAM more]

DELILAH

It's all a bit fuzzy now I can't really remember

SAM

So help me God

DELILAH

Alright! Alright! (pausing)
I walked home after we met in the park
I dreamt about you in the library
I envisioned your face
You smiled
...and then I woke up at my door

SAM

...go on

DELILAH

That's it

SAM

But...I don't understand

DELILAH

What don't you understand?

SAM

That's it?

DELILAH

SAM

That's it!

DELILAH

Well..Wh..what about your question? The...the one you said you were going to ask me that night.

SAM

I've forgotten it.

DELILAH

Such dramatics! You can't do that to someone!

SAM

Am I not allowed to forget?

DELILAH

Impossible after so much time thinking about it... A year!?

[there is a pause]

DELILAH

I've remembered my answer! No.

SAM

What?

DELILAH

The answer...to your question. It's no!

SAM

But you...that's not fair!

DELILAH

Deal with it!

Fine, maybe I will!

SAM

Fine!

DELILAH

Fine!!

SAM

[there is a pause]

Another round?

SAM

Fine.

DELILAH

[curtain]

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS: *As someone new to playwrighting, I was grateful that FOTD's submission opportunity was focused on new writers and sought out a diversity of topics and genres.*

My writing is an amalgamation of views on conformity, freedom, authenticity, and what it means to be human. Bovary was heavily influenced by the writings of Camus and Fromm, who each respectively held deeply different views on the meaning of love.

To some, relationships may seem cheapened due to the transactional nature that has occurred with the rise of technology and consumerism, yet true depth to human connection will never be satisfied by such things.

AUTHOR BIO: Joe Zarrella is a novice playwright who took up writing to pass the time while in the midst of the pandemic during quarantine in Brookline, MA. His one act play Bovary was the result of a needed creative expression while enrolled in an introductory level playwrighting

course while obtaining his master's degree. He received his B.A. from Bridgewater State University in Political Science and Master's in Public Health from Harvard University.