

MENAGERIE

by  
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(Valentine's Day. Lights up on an urban apartment's kitchen area. A little table has several bills on it. On the counter, a blender and other assorted cooking implements. TABITHA, mid-20s, is on her hands and knees urgently wiping up some kind of brownish liquid mess with a sponge. From outside, STREET NOISE. Sound of the DOOR LOCK being worked. She finishes her cleaning and sits at the kitchen table just before SAM, same age, enters carrying a jewelry box.)

SAM

Where's Jerry?

TABITHA

Happy Valentine's Day, Tabitha.

SAM

Happy Valentine's Day.

TABITHA

Is that for me?

SAM

Where's Jerry?

TABITHA

Do I look like Jerry's keeper?

SAM

He's always waiting at the top of the stairs when I come home.

TABITHA

He's allowed to take a day off. Isn't he allowed to take a day off?

SAM

Why would he take a day off? He loves meeting me at the top of the stairs. It's our thing.

TABITHA

Maybe he's got a new thing.

SAM

(beat)

Do you know something I don't?

TABITHA

Know something how?

SAM  
 Know something about Jerry.  
 (beat)  
 There's something else, isn't there.

TABITHA  
 I didn't say that.

SAM  
 "Maybe he's got a new thing." What's that?

TABITHA  
 Nothing.

SAM  
 Why would you say "maybe he's got a new thing" unless he had  
 a new thing?

TABITHA  
 I bought these chocolates--

SAM  
 Why is there milkshake all over the floor?

TABITHA  
 That's not milkshake.

(Sam gets on his hands and knees and  
 sniffs the floor.)

SAM  
 It's coffee milkshake.

TABITHA  
 Accidents happen.

SAM  
 I'm getting a vibe.

TABITHA  
 You and your vibes.

SAM  
 That kid. That pimply teenager--the one who takes college  
 classes but still lives with his parents in 32-C.

TABITHA  
 The one-bedroom?

SAM  
 One and a half baths.

TABITHA  
 What about him?

SAM  
 Last week--that pat on the head--

TABITHA  
 Him and Jerry?

SAM  
 That pat was not innocent. That pimply--

(Sam starts for the door. Tabitha  
 leaps up after him.)

TABITHA  
 Wait wait wait--

SAM  
 I'm going over there--

TABITHA  
 You can't just go over there.

SAM  
 He's our prime suspect.

TABITHA  
 Because of a pat?

SAM  
 A line was crossed, and now it's time for a little heart to  
 heart.

TABITHA  
 You're not fighting Tomas over Jerry.

SAM  
 You know his name? How do you know his name?

TABITHA  
 He lives two doors down.

SAM  
 Has he been in here? Did he come to see Jerry here?

TABITHA  
 I talked to his mother. I hear this loud thud and then some  
 rolling sounds--like a ball is rolling--and it turns out her  
 groceries have ripped through the bag, and this orange rolls  
 all the way down the stairs as I come out and watch it with  
 her.

SAM

No doubt pilfered by that budding juvenile delinquent in 8-A.

TABITHA

Little monster was at the bottom of the stairwell waiting for it. It didn't even make it all the way down.

SAM

Nothing's safe since he got cut from tee ball.

Want to read the rest of the play? Hit back on your browser if necessary and follow the instructions for ordering a perusal copy.