

BREAD HANDS

CHARACTERS

DAVE

Male, late 20s

AUDREY

Female, early 20s

SETTING

A grocery store

TIME

Afternoon

(Lights. DAVE and AUDREY stand on opposite sides of the stage.)

AUDREY

This is Dave.

DAVE

Hello.

(Beat)

This is Audrey.

AUDREY

Hi.

(Beat)

Dave works at a supermarket.

DAVE

It's all I've ever done.

I've been in college for seven years. I keep taking classes and changing my major. I fail almost everything. I can't seem to find anything I'm passionate about.

AUDREY

So he continues to work at the supermarket.

DAVE

It's all I've ever done.

(Beat)

I really love sweeping the onions. It's exhilarating! The skins twirl around and around in the wind I've created. I've never experienced anything like it. And when I'm out working on the floor conversations with strangers are much more pleasant than when I'm handling their cash. Sometimes people ask me where certain items are or ask me how my day is going. No one yells at me for not remembering that honey bears are fifty cents off this week.

Audrey recently lost her father.

AUDREY

It will be three weeks ago tomorrow. He died of emphysema.

I think it's the worst way to die. I essentially watched my father suffocate. He died with his mouth

open and turned yellow quicker than I thought he would...

My mother is already dating someone new.

DAVE

Audrey hasn't gone to work since the funeral.

AUDREY

Work was shit, anyway.

I worked for a search-engine website. A really tiny one. No one even uses it.

I studied Russian literature at University.

DAVE

Before Audrey's father got sick he owned a bakery.

AUDREY

It wasn't long until I came home from school to help run the store. He sold it when he got so bad he needed to wheel two oxygen tanks around.

DAVE

Audrey and her father had a somewhat troubled relationship.

AUDREY

(Kneeling at her father's grave)

It startles me how much I loved him when I hardly knew him at all.

DAVE

When Audrey was younger she memorized all the types of bread her father sold in his shop.

AUDREY

I did it to impress him, I guess.

(Quickly, like a child, but then caught by the sadness of the situation)

Wonder, white, whole-wheat, whole-grain, 12-grain, pumpernickel, rye. It was just one of those stupid things kids tend to do.

DAVE AND AUDREY

It was a Sunday when we met.

AUDREY

I had just come from my father's grave. There was a plastic bag on the corner of it. In the wind it looked like a jellyfish moving through the water.

DAVE

I was placing people's groceries in the same kind of bag. A woman had just yelled at me for placing spinach on top of her bread.

AUDREY

The smiley face and "have a nice day" printed on the side made me want to scream.

DAVE

When Audrey walked into the grocery store, she sniffled as she passed by.

A few minutes after I saw her, my manager came over and said, "There's a woman meditating in the bread aisle." She told me she was shaking and crying. I hoped it was Audrey. I thought she was beautiful, but at the same time... I didn't want to imagine her so sad.

AUDREY

Wonder, white, whole-wheat, whole-grain, twelve grain, raisin, pumpernickel rye.

DAVE

I approached her very quietly.

AUDREY

Wonder, white, whole-wheat, whole-grain, twelve grain, raisin, pumpernickel, rye.

DAVE

I tried to make small talk.

(To AUDREY)

Raisin is my favorite.

(After a small pause, to audience)

I didn't know what else to say.

(To AUDREY)

I like your shirt.

AUDREY

Thanks.

It was my Dad's.

DAVE

What kind of bread is your favorite?

AUDREY

Pumpernickel.

DAVE

(Kneeling beside her)

That's a good choice. My mom used to make me grilled cheese with pumpernickel when I was younger.

(Awkward pause)

Are you okay? What's your name?

AUDREY

Audrey. Yours?

(Dave cheesily points to his supermarket nametag)

AUDREY

Nice to meet you?

(DAVE outstretches his hand. AUDREY stares at it for a moment, then reluctantly slides her hand into his)

Dave's hand swallowed mine up and his hand was soft. Warm. Fluffy. Like bread.

At the moment I felt his pulse inside his hand..

I decided I wanted them all over me. I imagined his bread hands trailing up and down my body. I tried to remember the last time I touched another person... but I couldn't.

DAVE

I was shocked a pretty girl acknowledged me, let alone held my hand.

(DAVE is getting turned on)

So I said nothing.

(AUDREY kisses DAVE'S hands slowly and then more passionately. AUDREY continues to look sad throughout. DAVE is frozen)

AUDREY

(Excited)

Come with me.

DAVE

(A bit dazed, still)

What?

AUDREY

Come with me. Let's go somewhere.

DAVE

(Laughs)

Where?

(Beat)

I'm working.

AUDREY

I don't care! Quit.

DAVE

Quit?

(To the audience)

What would I do if I left? I guess I could go to Europe. I have so much money saved. But would I be fired? I like it here.

I've worked in *this* grocery store since I was fourteen. And now... I'm being seduced in the bread aisle.

(AUDREY kisses his palm and presses his hand hard against her stomach and begins to slowly inch it up her shirt)

AUDREY

Please. Let's go.

(To audience again)

We flew by the chips and frozen food and alcohol. But all Dave could think was--

DAVE

I'm doing what my manager wanted. I'm getting this woman to leave the store.

Then Audrey bumped into an old lady.

AUDREY

And she called me a bitch. But I didn't care.

DAVE

This embarrassed me.

(To AUDREY)

Why did you do that?

AUDREY

Do what?

DAVE

Audrey didn't want to be indoors anymore. For the first time since her father died she wanted to be out. In the sun.

AUDREY

I had quarantined myself in my apartment for too long. I broke up with my boyfriend. I had my cell phone turned off for days. This implied potential for intimacy was all I had.

DAVE

Bump into that lady.

AUDREY

And he was messing it up.

(To DAVE)

I don't know, I didn't mean to.

(To audience)

I was annoyed, but felt the warmth radiating from his hands and forgave him instantaneously.

DAVE

You should have apologized.

AUDREY

I looked into his eyes and found they were flat. They were a lovely blue, but not bottomless like an ocean you read about in bad poetry. They were shallow like a child's plastic pool. I considered telling him about my father, but chose against it. I didn't want anyone's pity.

(To DAVE)

Yes, Dave. You're absolutely right.

DAVE

I didn't know what was wrong with her. I don't know why she wanted *me* to be her knight. I've never even had a girlfriend before.

I've read books where women use sex as a weapon, but I don't think she was doing that. I've read other books where women use sex as a kind of... coping mechanism.

Every time I looked at her my mind went blank. Was I just an instrument for her suffering?

AUDREY

We reached the door and I ran outside but Dave..

DAVE

I couldn't move past the tile of the supermarket.

AUDREY

I *need* someone.

Don't you know what it's like to need someone?

DAVE

(To the audience)

I didn't, really. My life had been relatively easy thus far.

(DAVE touches his nametag. AUDREY takes DAVE's hand and nestles her face against it like a cat against a sofa)

DAVE

Then over the intercom we heard--

AUDREY AND DAVE

If there is an owner of a black Jeep Cherokee with the license plate 263MWI in the store: your lights are on.

DAVE

I have to go. I have to work.

(Beat. As if saying "I'm sorry")

Have a nice day.

AUDREY

And then the sliding door closed between us.

(DAVE exits SR. AUDREY waits a moment and exits SL.)

(END OF PLAY.)