

Jammed

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a short play

By

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Characters

CRESSIDA

DANNY

Time

Day.

Setting

A photocopying store.

Jammed

Photocopying store. Two machines.

At one we find **CRESSIDA**, she is slowly, painstakingly placing a number of objects on the glass – trying to fit all the objects into one photocopy.

DANNY enters. He smiles at **CRESSIDA**. He pulls out a large ream of paper from his satchel. He places it on the feeder, programmes the copier and presses the copy button.

The machine jams.

DANNY: Bugger.

DANNY OPENS THE MACHINE AND FIXES THE JAMMED PAPER.

DANNY: That should do it.

HE GOES TO PUSH THE BUTTON AGAIN.

CRESSIDA: You're doing a lot of copying.

DANNY: (LOOKING UP) Did you say something ?

CRESSIDA: I said: "You're doing a lot of photocopying."

DANNY: It's a play.

CRESSIDA: Really ? Who by ?

DANNY: Me.

CRESSIDA: You wrote all this.

DANNY NODS

CRESSIDA: It looks long.

DANNY: It's an epic. Seven acts. Runs over four hours.

CRESSIDA: (EXAMINING PLAY) And one-sided too.

DANNY: The actors prefer it like that, when they're doing a moved-reading. It's on next week. You should come.

CRESSIDA: How many actors?

DANNY: Nineteen. There's a bit of doubling.

CRESSIDA: Does every actor get their own copy ?

DANNY: Of course. Got my copying card all juiced up. Costing me over a hundred bucks.

CRESSIDA: Is that all ?

DANNY: I hope.

CRESSIDA: (LOOKING AT PLAY) So you're going to photocopy this whole play nineteen times.

DANNY: Twenty one. One for the director and one for moir. I'll hold on to the original – for future productions. Lavinia Nicholas is directing. Have you heard of her? Young but very talented. Quite a coup. You should come along. I'll get you a flyer.

CRESSIDA: That photocopied too.

DANNY: (HOLDING OUT COLOUR FLYER) Printed. It costs a bit more but if you don't value your work, who will ?

CRESSIDA: How many people come to this reading ?

DANNY: Venue holds eighty six but I'm hoping for around fifty. Fifty one with you.

CRESSIDA: How many nights ?

DANNY: Just one – for now.

CRESSIDA: So you're photocopying all this just so fifty people –

DANNY: (HOLDING OUT FLYER) Fifty-one.

CRESSIDA: Can hear your play read?

DANNY: And watch it. It's a moved reading. The actors move around acting out the stage directions, script in hand. It's the only way to really see the play come to life.
(HOLDING OUT HAND) I'm Danny by the way.

CRESSIDA: (SHAKING HANDS) Cressida.

DANNY: Cressida. That's a beautiful name. Mind if I use it as a character in my next play.

CRESSIDA: As long as it's not as long as this one. How many pages is it ?

DANNY: One hundred and forty six.

CRESSIDA: And you're copying it twenty-one times.

DANNY: You got it.

CRESSIDA: Right.

CRESSIDA GOES BACK TO HER MACHINE. SHE TAKES A PENCIL AND SMALL BROWN NOTEPAD FROM HER BAG. SHE BEGINS TO MAKE A FEW CALCULATIONS.

DANNY: Would you like to hear what it's about ?

CRESSIDA CONTINUES TO CALCULATE.

DANNY: The lead character is called Daniel. People may think it's autobiographical but I assure you it's not. He's Daniel while my name is Danny. He's a poet – I'm a playwright. He lives in Stanmore, I live in Enmore. Totally different. Anyway it's about his search for love – and how he asks out twenty four women over a period of six months who all turn him down. As if that would happen to me. Ha ! That's why we have such a large cast. They have to play all the women. But then Daniel meets a beautiful girl called Cressida – *(correcting himself)* Caroline – in a photocopy store – *(correcting himself)* hardware store and it's definitely –

CRESSIDA: Three thousand and sixty six.

DANNY: Sorry.

CRESSIDA: You are going to use three thousand and sixty six sheets of paper. That's over eight reams of paper.

DANNY: Like I said – it's a long play.

CRESSIDA: Do you know that it takes seventeen trees to make one tonne of paper?

DANNY: Eight reams is hardly a tonne.

CRESSIDA: It's still a lot.

DANNY: I thought they used rec-cycled paper here.

CRESSIDA: Not completely re-cycled. Re-Cycled Pure White. Everybody's got to have nice white paper.

DANNY: It's easier to read.

CRESSIDA: Re-Cycled Pure White is only fifty percent recycled. Fifty percent!

DANNY: Better than forty nine.

CRESSIDA: I estimate your photocopying is about two and a half trees worth.

DANNY: Must be small trees.

CRESSIDA: So three beautiful majestic living beings will be destroyed just so you can have your play reading.

DANNY: Moved play-reading.

CRESSIDA: Do you think it's funny?

DANNY: No of course not.

CRESSIDA: Then why are you smiling.

DANNY: You're in a photocopying store. That's what people do in a photocopying store. Photocopy. That's what you're doing.

CRESSIDA: I'm not copying.

DANNY: You're using that machine.

CRESSIDA: You ever see me actually copy anything ? (BEAT) I just look like I'm setting up a really complex photocopy but I never actually press copy. That way I stop people using the photocopier.

DANNY: But there's a second machine.

CRESSIDA: (WHISPERS) Sabotaged.

DANNY: What ?

CRESSIDA: I took out all the paper, crumpled it a little then put it back in. Keep jamming for hours.

DANNY: Does the store manager know ?

CRESSIDA: Not yet. Usually takes them about an hour.

DANNY: And then?

CRESSIDA: They kick me out. Then I just move on to the next store and start again.

DANNY: You're very passionate about this.

CRESSIDA: As passionate as you are about your playwriting.

DANNY STARTS TO EXIT.

CRESSIDA: Where are you going ?

DANNY: To get the manager.

CRESSIDA: Why ?

DANNY: To fix the machine. I have to photocopy my play. There's a read through tonight.

BEAT.

CRESSIDA: Your play !

DANNY: (STOPPING) Yes ?

CRESSIDA: It's about a guy who can't get anybody to go out with him.

DANNY: No, it's about everyman on a tragic and funny search for love through a mythical urban landscape.

CRESSIDA: Because no one will go out with him.

DANNY: That's a very literal interpretation.

CRESSIDA: And it's autobiographical.

DANNY: No. It's not autobiographical. I explained that.

CRESSIDA: What if I went out with you ?

DANNY: Say that again.

CRESSIDA: What if I went out with you ?

DANNY: You mean – you'd go out with me?

CRESSIDA: On one condition.

DANNY: Sure.

CRESSIDA: You cancelled the playreading.

DANNY: Cancelled the playreading ? But then you couldn't come to it.

CRESSIDA: And neither could anybody else.

DANNY: And then I wouldn't need –

CRESSIDA: To copy the play.

BEAT.

DANNY: Okay. Let me just get this straight. You'll go out with me – on the one condition that I cancel the playreading.

CRESSIDA NODS.

BEAT. **DANNY** SMILES.

DANNY: Now this is funny.

CRESSIDA: This is serious Danny. Deadly serious.

DANNY: Part of the reason I write plays is so I can meet a girl like you and she'll go out with me. And now I meet a girl like you who'll go out with me – on the condition I don't write any more plays.

CRESSIDA: You can write them. Just don't photocopy them. Or maybe don't write them. Record them on tape.

CRESSIDA: (CONT) That way you don't have to print them out.

DANNY: This is what we call an interesting dilemma. It's a playwriting term. The protagonist – that's me – can get what he wants as long he gives up what he thought he wanted. That is if that is actually what he wants. You get it ?

CRESSIDA: I don't mean to rush you but could you resolve your dilemma pretty quickly as the manager is looking this way.

DANNY: You really don't want me to photocopy my play that much ?

CRESSIDA: Yes. I'd be willing to do anything. (BEAT) I mean no – not at all. In fact I was already going to ask you out. The moment you came in I thought – "Hot stuff". "Even better – "Intellectual hot stuff." The whole 'Save the trees' thing is just a ruse so I could find a way to ask you out. I photocopy thousands of sheets a day. Around here I'm known as "Queen Photocopier". Who knows how many trees I've destroyed.

BEAT.

DANNY: You just made that up ?

CRESSIDA: You got me.

DANNY: Wow. That was great. Have you ever done any acting ?

CRESSIDA: Just at School. Les Mis.

DANNY: Who did you play ?

CRESSIDA: Cosette.

DANNY: I can see that. You'd be a great Cosette.

CRESSIDA: I'll tell you all about it. Let's just get out of here. I think the manager's recognised me.

DANNY: Hold on. Don't rush me. This is a momentous decision. It could affect the entire future of my character. Does he give up his dreams of being a playwright to pursue true love ?

CRESSIDA: Let's not go that far.

DANNY: Love.

CRESSIDA: Back.

DANNY: Lust.

CRESSIDA: Back.

DANNY: Friendship that leads to love.

CRESSIDA: Back.

DANNY: Friendship.

CRESSIDA: Now you got it.

DANNY: Friendship that possibly – very possibly – leads to more.

CRESSIDA: Not sure.

DANNY: (REACHING INTO POCKETS) Where's that photocopying card again ?

CRESSIDA: Okay. Okay. But you're buying the drinks.

DANNY: I was thinking some red wine and cheese at Al Fredo's. It's just round the ccorner.

CRESSIDA: Great. Let's just go.

DANNY GOES TO PICK UP HIS PLAY BUT STOPS.

DANNY: Wait! How can I do this ? Give up my life work for a quick roll in the hay.

CRESSIDA: I thought we agreed on friendship with a possibility for more.

DANNY: I've got it! I can still write the play.

CRESSIDA: So no red wine and cheese then ? Pity.

DANNY: But not on paper. I'll get rid of all the characters. They'll be just two – David, a screenwriter, and Chrissy, an activist.

CRESSIDA: And this one's not autobiographical either.

DANNY: Not at all. David is photocopying his new screenplay, which is about to be made into a Hollywood blockbuster –

CRESSIDA: Definitely science fiction.

DANNY: When he's confronted by Chrissy who falls in love with him and stops him copying the play.

CRESSIDA: Chrissy who stops him copying the play and then becomes his friend.

DANNY: With possibly more. It'll be a paperless play. We'll write it together on my laptop. Then we'll bring the computer to the reading. We put the laptop on a desk and then we sit at the desk and read off the screen. You play David and I'll play Chrissy.

CRESSIDA: I think it would work better if I played Chrissy.

DANNY: Probably right.

CRESSIDA: But I told you – I haven't acted since school.

DANNY: You'll be great.

CRESSIDA: But what about the other actresses ?

DANNY: What actresses ?

CRESSIDA: The eighteen others.

DANNY: We only had one. The director's mum who's never acted before. She won't mind. Strangely a lot of other actresses seemed to be unavailable on that night.

CRESSIDA: So you were actually only going to copy the play -

DANNY: Three times. But it's the principal that counts.

CRESSIDA: Exactly. The play has to have a strong environmental message.

DANNY: Absolutely.

CRESSIDA: Packed with information – facts and figures.

DANNY: Not too many or the audience will get turned off.

CRESSIDA: A few well chosen ones. At one point Chrissy says: "Do you know that it takes seventeen trees to make one tonne of paper?"

DANNY: I can live with that.

CRESSIDA: So can I. Now let's get out of here.

THEY GRAB THEIR BAGS.

CRESSIDA: What are we going to call it ?

DANNY: How about "To photocopy or not to photocopy ?"

CRESSIDA: Needs work. I think this is going to be the start of a beautiful friendship.

CRESSIDA EXITS.

DANNY: And possibly more.

DANNY FOLLOWS.

LIGHTS FADE.