

DRY SPELL

A 10-minute play

Characters

CLAY (20s), a young punk

LEROY (20s), a young punk with leadership potential

GRETA (20s), a young professional

RONALD (40s-50s), a businessman

MALE VOICE, indeterminate age, authoritative

FEMALE VOICE, indeterminate age, authoritative

Setting

A subway car with front and back entrances.

Time

Present.

Note

German pronunciation guide at <http://www.forvo.com/pronounce/>

DRY SPELL

RONALD and GRETA sit at right angles to each other in the front of a subway car, RONALD absentmindedly rubbing her stockinged foot while she reads a book.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

This is Kingsbridge Road.

SOUNDS doors sliding open, soft crowd noise. After a few beats, CLAY and LEROY enter at back. CLAY in a hooded sweatshirt; LEROY, a Yankees cap.

CLAY

...said it wasn't appropriate. Appropriate--shee-it!

LEROY

Talk about a sure thing. That Desiree was a three-and-oh hanging curve. Should've knocked her out of the park. And you struck out.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

The next stop is Hamilton Park.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Stand clear of the closing doors, please.

SOUNDS: a high-low bell, door sliding closed. Crowd noise off. CLAY and LEROY slump in rear seats.

CLAY

Sure thing, my ass. Girl was Frigidaire. Should've had yours instead--Al-uh-what, Alison?

LEROY

Alexa.

CLAY

I should've had Alexa, stuck you with stuck-up Desiree.

LEROY

Wouldn't have made any difference, my friend.

CLAY

Admit it, Leroy, you saw them first. You could tell which was the hot one.

LEROY

I saw two girls ripe for love. They saw one hot slugger swinging for extra bases and a loser with his useless bat in his hands. You're oh-fer...oh-fer what now?

CLAY

I don't know. A while.

LEROY

More than a while. I'm worried about you, pal.

CLAY

Just having a dry spell.

LEROY

And it stinks on you. You don't exercise your sex hormones, Clay, they go bad. Women can smell your sorry self a mile away. Like rotten onions--talk about not appropriate.

CLAY

Still say I should've had Alexa.

LEROY

(Ad libs a meandering melody.)

Alexa...Alexa, my sweet...I pried you open like an oyster and snatched your pearl...

CLAY

Fuck off.

LEROY

(Laughs, rubbing it in.)

You're right. I shouldn't be giving you a hard time, bro, I should be helping you out. Be your batting coach.

CLAY

Yeah, show me your perfect fuckin' swing.

LEROY

Happy to, my man.

CLAY indicates RONALD and GRETA with a nod of his head.

LEROY (CONT'D)

(Beat, peering.)

Yeah. But only if she's good-looking.

CLAY

Shouldn't make any difference to you, Slugger.

LEROY

I'm serious. She's a dog, we just grab their jewelry.

LEROY heads down the aisle toward with CLAY, the two moving with practiced, predatory ease. LEROY sits beside GRETA; CLAY next to RONALD.

Hel-lo, Sugar.
 LEROY (CONT'D)

GRETA looks up from her book, at all times calm and in control. After a beat, GRETA tilts her head at RONALD.

RONALD
(Apparently coming out of a daydream, then firmly, with a bogus British accent.)
 M'Lady's name is not Sugar.

LEROY
 Oh? And yours must be Dimwit-Fuckface-Don't-Know-I-Ain't-Talking-To-You.

RONALD
 I am Sir Ronald Arbuthnot, Marshal of the Diplomatic Corps in the Court of Saint James.

GRETA, bemused, looks for a reaction. CLAY and LEROY burst out laughing.

CLAY
 Well, I am Sir Ronald McDonald.

LEROY
 Yeah, from the Criminal Court of New York City.

While LEROY and CLAY congratulate each other on their wit, GRETA calmly wiggles her left foot. RONALD removes her left shoe and begins massaging.

RONALD
 Her Majesty--and I--are not be amused.

LEROY
 Her Majesty can speak for herself.

CLAY
 Yeah, and you can shut the fuck up.

LEROY
 'Cause we have arrived to take control.

GRETA
 What did you have in mind, whoever you are?

LEROY
(Big smile.)
 Leroy...Par-tay.

GRETA

Here? Please.

LEROY

No, no, this is just introductions. We got the whole night to party and the whole city to do it in.

RONALD

I think you gentlemen are being a bit presumptuous.

CLAY

Hey, watch your mouth.

RONALD

I think you young hooligans are jumping to conclusions. The young lady has other plans.

GRETA

Hush, Ronald. Let's hear what they have to say.

CLAY

Slugger here was just bragging how he was going to snatch your pearl.

GRETA

My...pearl.

LEROY shoots CLAY a murderous look, then ignites a big smile for GRETA.

LEROY

Don't pay no attention to Clay--he's strictly gutter.

GRETA

I see. And you?

LEROY

Sugar, I'm 100% flash... pure Goldschläger Schnapps in a beer world. I'm so lightning it's frightening. Razzle with dazzle, muscle with hustle. A franchise four-banger. I'm Babe Ruth versus the Little League. A must-see MVP--that's me.

GRETA

My, my. All that and Leroy too.

LEROY

Leroy's my cover. I'm a lover, which you'll discover, when we go under cover--

GRETA

--OK, first off the rhyiming's got to go.

LEROY

Whatever you say, Sugar.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

This is Hamilton Park.

RONALD

(To GRETA.)

Would m'Lady like me to escort Mr. Leroy and Mr. Clay off this conveyance?

CLAY

Hey, any escorting to be done, we'll do it, Pops.

SOUNDS: brakes, doors sliding open, soft crowd noise. LEROY and CLAY rise preparing for action.

LEROY

You know, I think it's time for you to leave, Sir Dumbfuck.

GRETA

What do you say, Ronald?

RONALD

(His eyes close for a beat. When they reopen, his voice is steely, his "British accent" replaced by an exaggerated John Wayne. To LEROY.)

Touch me and you're gonna lose some fingers.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

The next stop is Park Place.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Stand clear of the closing doors, please.

SOUNDS: a high-low bell, a door sliding closed. Crowd noise off.

LEROY

Say that again.

RONALD

I don't repeat warnings.

CLAY

We don't even give 'em.

GRETA withdraws her feet from RONALD's lap and leans back, unconcerned. RONALD, hands on thighs, is tense with readiness.

GRETA

Am I in your way?

LEROY

Don't be stupid, old man.

RONALD

I bury stupid.

CLAY

We're not kidding. You gotta go.

LEROY

(Quietly, intensely.)

Move.

RONALD's fists clench. LEROY slowly reaches out to CLAY, snapping his fingers. CLAY digs behind his back for something stuck in his belt.

GRETA

(Brightly.)

You know what? I think it's time for something else.

(Beat, looking from one to the other.)

Boys?

CLAY pulls his hand out--empty. He and LEROY sit, still on high alert. GRETA slips her shoes back on.

GRETA (CONT'D)

You two got on at Kingsbridge. I heard there was a nice Armenian restaurant there. Do you know it?

CLAY

We look Armenian to you?

LEROY

Listen, babe--

GRETA

--I had the most delicious borek in Chicago recently. I'd like to find some around here.

RONALD

(His John Wayne replaced by an over-the-top Tom Brokaw.)

Although considered Turkish in origin, the thin packets of pastry known as borek can be found in many Middle Eastern cuisines...

GRETA

That's nice, Ronald, but I'm wondering where's a good place to get some?

LEROY

Wait a minute, we got some shit to settle here.

GRETA

No, Leroy, we have changed the subject. You're not paying attention.

CLAY

We don't care about no fucking Turkish doughnuts.

RONALD

There are no less than 184 synonyms for "fuck" in the English language...

GRETA

Ronald, dear.

RONALD

The letter "p" is especially well represented--pump, poke, pork...

LEROY

Shut up!

GRETA

(Patting RONALD's knee.)

That's enough.

LEROY

Who is this moron?

GRETA

Ronald was just making a point about euphemisms.

LEROY

Yoof...?

GRETA

Euphemisms, polite word substitutions, very popular, you might call them social synonyms. At times even the crudest people use dainty language to express something offensive.

LEROY

I don't know. That ain't my thing.

GRETA

Oh, are you forgetting my--what was the word you used, my pearl?

LEROY

(Suddenly embarrassed.)

Clay said that.

CLAY

(Like a little boy.)

My Gramma Rose wore pearls. And baked pastry. She baked cookies and cakes and--

LEROY

--What the fuck?

RONALD

(Dreamily, in his own voice.)

Louise told me on our wedding night that she was a virgin. I was taken aback. I wasn't prepared for her forthrightness. And her inexperience didn't matter. It wasn't important to me, I loved her so much.

LEROY

Hey, do I look like I fucking care?

RONALD

But I had only a moment to think, so I told her she was the first for me, too, and I pretended I didn't know what I was doing. I don't regret that, even though it took nearly five years to get to the point with Louise that I'd enjoyed with those R and R girls in Thailand.

LEROY

I said, hey, I don't care about your shit.

RONALD

My marriage to Louise has been a wonderful exploration from the start.

LEROY gapes, thoroughly flummoxed.

GRETA

(Gently.)

Do you have a girlfriend, Leroy?

LEROY

Huh?

GRETA

You must have a girl, someone special.

LEROY

(Beat.)

I...

CLAY

My Gramma Rose was special. She used to let me sleep over when my Moms was gone. She made my favorite dinner, macaroni with real cheese, the kind that makes strings when you lift your fork.

LEROY

Come on, man, cut it out...

CLAY

And Gramma Rose used to read to me, too. On her lap first, then after I started getting dozy, she'd carry me to bed and sing. She had the sweetest voice. I can still hear it in my head when I'm all alone.

CLAY hums a lullaby softly before lapsing into silent reverie.

GRETA

(Beat.)

Tell me about your girl, Leroy.

LEROY

I...I don't have a girl. Not really.

GRETA

Come on, Slugger, that's nonsense--*unsinn*.

LEROY

No, really.

GRETA

There must be somebody you have your eye on.

LEROY

(Beat, beginning to zone out.)

I guess...

GRETA

What's her name?

LEROY

Teresa. She's...

(Indicates CLAY.)

...his sister. He doesn't know. She don't either, but I...I love her. She's beautiful, especially when she's quiet. She's got this look then, like she has plans, like she knows what her life is worth now and will be in the future.

(Thoroughly lost in thought.)

I could never tell her, but I can't stop thinking about being with her, in the future...With her.

GRETA

That's sweet, Leroy.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Dies ist Park Platz.

GRETA

Oops, got to run. *Auf Wiedersehen*, fellas.

GRETA rises, book and purse in hand. She steps over the feet of the three men as she makes her way to the door. SOUNDS: brakes, doors sliding open, soft crowd noise.

LEROY

Don't go. Please.

GRETA

I have to. And you'll forget all about me before you know it.
(Points to RONALD.)

Eins.

(To CLAY.)

Zwei.

(Beat, then to LEROY.)

Drei.

GRETA smiles and exits.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Der nächste und letzte Station ist Willoughby.

RONALD

I should take some time off. Take Louise back to that little beach house in St. Kitts we stayed at in '86.

LEROY

Theresa would like a trip like that.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Standplatz weg von den Schlusstüren, bitte.

SOUNDS: a high-low bell, a door sliding closed. Crowd noise off.

CLAY

(Eyes closed, his anguished voice just short of a sob.)

Grossmutter Rose?

LEROY and RONALD turn to CLAY. They don't understand what he says, but what he feels is a tuning fork for their souls.

THE END