Who's afraid of Donald Trump?

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Characters

NGUVU An Associate Professor of Linguistics at Columbia University, 30s

BRANDON Her husband, Australian, 30s

EMILY A M&A lawyer who works with Brandon, 30s

PHIL Emily's long term boyfriend, a broker, 30s

Date

Election night, Tuesday November 3, 2020

Setting

Nguvu and Brandon's apartment on the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

ACT 1 – FUN AND GAMES

In darkness we hear Ella Fitzgerald singing "*Manhattan*".

The lights come up on a spacious renovated two bedroom apartment in Nolita, on the Lower East Side, not far from Mott Street.

The room is dominated by an overlong wooden dining table, with polished wooden floor boards and large windows at the back looking down on the street below.

A few uncomfortable looking armchairs are arranged around the room and various African-style ornaments of differing sizes. One is a large wooden giraffe, taller than a man or woman, standing near the door to the hall on stage left.

There is one other entrance/exit – which leads to the kitchen/bedrooms – stage right.

It's already dark outside on this November evening.

As the audience joins the play we hear sounds coming from the kitchen – food being prepared.

We now hear Ella from the sound system in one corner.

The table is set for dinner for four. It's clear the hostess has gone to considerable trouble with African-themed flowers, elaborate serving dishes, candles, serviettes shaped like lions.

NGUVU: (OFF) Bring me the large serving dish.

BRANDON: (OFF) Where is it?

NGUVU: (OFF) On the table.

BRANDON: (OFF) I'm still getting dressed.

NGUVU: (OFF) Just do it.

BRANDON ENTERS, PULLING ON A SWEATER. HE LOOKS AT THE TABLE.

BRANDON: Which one?

NGUVU: (OFF) What?

BRANDON: Which one? There's about six of them.

NGUVU: (OFF) The big one.

THAT DOESN'T REALLY HELP AS THERE ARE THREE LARGE ONES, BUT **BRANDON** GRABS WHAT HE THINKS IS THE BIGGEST. HE TAKES IT BACK TO THE KITCHEN.

NGUVU: (OFF) Not that one.

BRANDON: (OFF) You said the big one.

NGUVU: (ENTERING) The other big one. You never listen.

NGUVU IS HALF DRESSED AS WELL. SHE DIDN'T WANT TO WEAR HER NICE CLOTHES WHILE COOKING.

SHE PLACES THE SERVING DISH DOWN AND PICKS UP ANOTHER ONE THAT LOOKS ALMOST IDENTICAL. SHE BEGINS TO EXAMINE THE TABLE, MINUTELY ADJUSTING THE SETTINGS.

BRANDON ENTERS, LEANING ON THE DOOR FRAME.

BRANDON: I'm doing something important.

NGUVU: And listening to me is not important

BRANDON: I am listening.

NGUVU: While doing something else.

BRANDON: Like helping you get ready for dinner.

NGUVU: Then help.

BRANDON: I am. (HE DOES NOT MOVE) So what were you saying that was so important?

NGUVU: You said you were listening.

BRANDON: I can't do both.

NGUVU: Clearly. I just want you to listen to me.

BRANDON: One hundred percent.

NGUVU: Yes. One hundred percent. You *never* listen to me.

BRANDON: So in all the time I have known you, through three years of dating and three years of marriage I have never once listened to you?

NGUVU: (THINKS, THEN) No. (EXITS)

BRANDON: Why do you always do that? Who's not listening now?

NO RESPONSE. **BRANDON** WANDERS OVER TO THE TABLE.

BRANDON: Don't you think you're going to a bit too much trouble.

NGUVU: (OFF) They are your friends.

BRANDON: I *work* with her. I've only met him a couple of times.

NGUVU: (OFF) What would you like me to prepare – *ugali* in wooden bowls?

BRANDON: That would be "*authentic*". Just didn't think it would be this much work.

NGUVU: (OFF) I want them to have a good impression.

BRANDON: Goo, they live upstairs.

NGUVU: (APPEARING) So?

BRANDON: They're just like us.

NGUVU: I don't even know what that means. (EXITS)

BRANDON: It means they're not expecting anything special.

NGUVU: (OFF) I don't know about you but they are guests in my home. That is special. How would you like me to treat them?

BRANDON: I don't mean that.

NGUVU: (OFF) Then what do you mean?

BRANDON: You're exhausting.

NGUVU: (ENTERING) Why?

BRANDON: You're so…

NGUVU: What?

BRANDON: Strong … couldn't you just be … weaker.

NGUVU: You're asking me to be weaker.

BRANDON: Yes.

THERE IS A LOUD RHYTHMIC KNOCK AT THE DOOR. THE WAY RONALD MCDONALD WOULD KNOCK ON A DOOR.

SILENCE. **NGUVU** QUIETLY CREEPS IN TO THE ROOM.

NGUVU: (WHISPERS) Who is that?

BRNDON: (SHRUGGING) Them.

NGUVU: What time did you tell them to come?

BRANDON: Eight-thirty.

NGUVU: What time is it?

BRANDON: (CHECKING WATCH) Eight thirty.

NGUVU: It's Manhatttan. Who arrives anywhere on time?

BRANDON: Apparently they do.

THE KNOCK AGAIN, LOUDER, MORE INSISTENT, EVEN MORE ANNOYING – IF POSSIBLE.

BRANDON: What do you want me to do?

NGUVU: We could hide.

BRANDON: We invited them for dinner.

NGUVU: *You* invited them for dinner.

BRANDON: I could send them away.

NGUVU: You can't send them away. (BEAT) You open the door. I'll finish dressing.

BRANDON: Good plan.

HE KISSES HER.

BRANDON: Don't worry. It will be great.

SHE EXITS.

BRANDON: (CALLS) Coming.

HE LOOKS AROUND THE ROOM, ADJUSTS SOMETHING ON THE DINING TABLE, SHIFTS THE GIRAFFE SLIGHTLY. HE SEEMS MORE NERVOUS THAN HE WAS MOMENTS BEFORE. FINALLY HE TAKES A DEEP BREATH AND OPENS THE DOOR.

PHIL ENTERS QUICKLY, STILL WEARING HIS WORK SUIT AND A BRIGHT RED "KEEP AMERICA GREAT" CAP.

PHIL: Four more years! Four more years!

BRANDON: Nice hat.

PHIL: Jealousy is a curse. I was just about to call CSI.

BRANDON: Why?

PHIL: Thought you were dead.

BRANDON: Thought or hoped?

PHIL: Got to get to know you first.

PHIL SHAKES **BRANDON**'S HAND.

PHIL: Phil.

BRANDON: Brandon.

EMILY TRAILS IN AFTER **PHIL**. SHE TOO LOOKS LIKE SHE HAS COME STRAIGHT FROM WORK, BUT HAS CLEARLY MADE AN EFFORT TO FRESHEN UP HER HAIR AND MAKE-UP.

PHIL: I know. We met at Emily's work… what was it?

EMILY: Retreat.

PHIL: Sounds like the Democratic convention.

PHIL LAUGHS AT HIS OWN BAD JOKE. HE OFTEN DOES THAT. **PHIL**'S BAD JOKES ARE ALMOST AS ANNOYING AS HIS DOOR KNOCK.

BRANDON: Goo is still getting ready.

PHIL: Goo?

BRANDON: My wife.

PHIL: Do we need to call the *Goo*-Busters?
EMILY: Nguvu.