

OCCUPIED

by David Misch

ACT ONE

SCENE 1 (Monday, April 27, 1970)

A speaker's platform on a college football field; students TED, LOU, EVERETT, RUSS and TINA are talking.

IZZY enters; older, mid-30's, in cut-offs and a t-shirt which says "I AM NOT WHAT I SEEM". He looks at the theater audience, baffled then disgusted.

IZZY

What the fuck is this?! Look at you sitting on your fat asses! Sorry, no offense, when I say "fat asses" I only mean you have gigantic buttocks. And you're waiting around like it's my job to entertain you! You saw the flyer -- Vietnam rally, Marshall Field, Rosner College, April 27 1970.

(to audience member)

How's that for exposition?

(to all)

If you're here to stop the war, cool. If you're here to get drunk or stoned or laid, there are the exits. Unless you're a chick who thinks I'm sexy. Wait, what am I saying, I'm Izzy Roth, I'm famous, obviously I'm sexy.

(sees something)

Is that a beeper? Turn it off, unless you're selling drugs.

("realizes")

Oh, you are selling drugs. My apologies, who am I to stifle free-market capitalism. I mean, I'm a Marxist, but I really like drugs. Does that make me a hypocrite? Hey, I contain multitudes.

(to audience member)

That's Walt Whitman. Read a book.

(to "beeper" person)

Do you have any drugs? I mean on you, I know you do at home.

(then)

Which reminds me, I'm not here now -- I'm at a draft-card burning at UCLA. But I'll be here soon and I look forward to meeting all of you, and having sex with many of you, then.

(then)

But, sadly, this isn't about me. It's about

(to Ted)

you.

TED

Hello?

IZZY
Ted Gershing, right?

TED
Yeah...

IZZY
It's about you and a girl.

TED
What girl?

IZZY
She's not here yet.

TED
Oh-kay.

IZZY
And it's about love at first sight.

TED
I don't think so. I'm helping organize a protest rally, I don't know anything about a girl and I don't believe in love at ---

(EDITH enters: no make-up, self-possessed for 17. TED is stricken.)

TED (cont'd)
Holy shit.

IZZY
And my work here is done.

(IZZY exits; EDITH looks at TED, who smiles... past him at LOU, who waves. EDITH goes over while TED stares; she glances at him as she passes, he looks somewhere else then, as soon as she's past, at her.)

LOU
Edith! I didn't know you were coming.

EDITH
I was up in the seats, surrounded by a sea of nobody. I guess you're the only ones against the war?

LOU
So young, so innocent. The rally was supposed to start ten minutes ago so no one'll be here for twenty minutes.

EDITH
Then can I ask about my article?

LOU

Mm...

(LOU sticks a rubber dinosaur in his mouth and chomps the tail like a cigar.)

EDITH

(amused)

What is that?

LOU

Triceratops, want one?

EDITH

Thanks but I'm trying to cut down. So, my writing sucks.

LOU

Sucks?! It's dynamite, honey -- journalistic nitroglycerine!

EDITH

Are you gonna print it?

LOU

Well, the current issue is, y'know, chock-full of, uh...

EDITH

Lou, you edit a college newspaper, you'll print anything with a subject and a predicate. Plus I'm a girl so you'd print it just to get me in the sack.

LOU

I don't want you in a sack, I couldn't even see you.

EDITH

Lou...

LOU

What's the title again?

EDITH

"The Economic Indices of a Military Economy."

LOU

Yeeaahh. Edith -- it's too dry. It's really dry. It needs to be less dry.

EDITH

But... the economic indices are counterintuitive!

LOU

(stares)

Look, you're obviously brilliant. You should send this to, like, an economics journal.

EDITH

I did. They said it was too dry. But Nixon and Agnew call us unpatriotic and ignorant so I thought if I wrote something that proved how stupid the war is, they'd...

LOU

Stop it?

EDITH

Naive?

LOU

Yeah, 'cause I'm stopping the war with five teenagers on a football field.

EDITH

You can write. I read your editorial -- a hundred Vietnamese civilians dying every day, at least that many soldiers wounded, mutilated... I wanta do something.

LOU

Join us. RAW -- Rosner Against The War.

EDITH

Yeah, it's just, y'know... organizations.

LOU

Are you accusing me of being organized? I promise you, I'm the only one here who knows what he's doing and I have no idea what I'm doing.

EDITH

Cool. So do I sign something? You need fingerprints, blood test?

LOU

Urine test but it's not for security -- I collect pee.

(EVERETT approaches; the classic stoner hippie -- pony-tail, big sloppy moustache, tie-dye shirt, sandals -- but surprisingly smart and involved.)

EVERETT

Lou -- I was stoked, now I'm not.

LOU

Oh man, Everett's coming un-stoked, we better start.

(looks around, frustrated)

Okay, now there should be people. In fact, the place should be fucking filled!

(RUSS is a surfer dude gone paranoid, always poised to battle... something.)

RUSS

Maybe "Mod Squad"'s on.

EVERETT

Yeah, and it's totally bogus people would watch that instead of protesting the war. Unless it's one where Julie goes undercover as a mud wrestler in which case I'm outta here.

RUSS

Plus this demo is lame.

LOU

What?!

EVERETT

If I may paraphrase the provocative thought of my taciturn yet darkly virile associate, we're doing a shit job motivating these jagoffs to stop the country from going boogers.

(TINA is pretty and perky.)

TINA

Is that an actual expression, "going boogers"?

TED

Tina, boogers are really gross, right? They should be inside your nose, not dropping napalm on Vietnamese children.

EVERETT

Well played, sir.

LOU

This rally will be incredibly not lame because we'll get people involved by having them come up with concrete plans for action.

TED

Which'll never happen, so we need to think of 'em now.

LOU

Exactly.

EVERETT

Boycott classes!

(others GIGGLE/SNICKER)

What?

TINA

You already do, Everett.

TED

Especially your eight o'clocks.

RUSS

Bring the war home.

LOU

Right, but specifically...

RUSS

Kidnap a nun.

(Various eye-rolls.)

RUSS (cont'd)

I mean it -- we need to kidnap a nun, wire her with explosives and throw her on the highway. Then when the cars hit her, she'll explode and everyone'll die. That'll stop the war.

EDITH

What?! You would actually ---

(ignores TED's "cool it")

--- you would actually endanger people's lives?! I'm horrified!

LOU

Ohhh-kay, interesting ideas. Here's a thought -- let's write all our ideas on a piece of paper!

(LOU tears paper and hands pieces around. As EVERYONE writes, TED leans to EDITH.)

TED

Don't worry, that's just Russ.

EDITH

"Just Russ"?! He wants to kill a nun!

TED

Yeah, but he always says that. Whatever the issue is, kidnap a nun is the answer. First time we were supposed to hold her for ransom from the Vatican. Then we were supposed to put her on trial. Then there was something about injecting her with LSD and drowning her in the reservoir.

EDITH

So if he's insane, why is he here?

(LOU's made his way over.)

LOU

'Cause he's the crazy you need, the kind that keeps you on your toes. Nothing happens when everyone's on the same page. People like Russ keep you honest.

(TED indicates RUSS coming; gives LOU his paper.)

LOU (cont'd)

I dunno -- if we set the nun on fire, she could burn, y'know, forests.

TED

And rivers.

(EDITH stares at them, astonished.)

RUSS

Shit, you're right.

LOU

(to group)

Other ideas?

TINA

What about Dr. Medfield?

EVERETT

Bringing in the college president doesn't really flow with my boycotting classes plan.

RUSS

Fuck Medfield. Hey -- we could do it in a fireproof room! Then she couldn't burn anything!

TED

C'mon, Medfield's cool.

TINA

He's been against the war for like two years!

LOU

But we don't want to involve him, this is our fight.

RUSS

Wait, if she's in a fireproof room no one'd see her. We better re-think.

LOU

(looks out)

Okay, now people are coming, but where's Izzy?

TINA

Izzy Roth?

LOU

He said he'd be here. But Izzy's got a... relaxed attitude towards commitments. Still, the man's unbelievable -- half political organizer, half free-form rabble-rouser, half sex-crazed court jester.

EVERETT

He's one-and-a-half people?

LOU

The qualities overlap.

RUSS

I got it -- outdoors, but we use a flame-thrower. They're really safe.

LOU

(ignores RUSS)

But Izzy's our star -- if he doesn't come, we're doomed.

EVERETT

Lou, don't exaggerate -- you're doomed.

(LOU shakes his head and moves off; EVERETT sees TED grinning at EDITH and pulls him aside.)

EVERETT (cont'd)

Roomie, what the hell -- you look like a "Have A Nice Day" button.

TED

I see her and my underwear melts.

EVERETT

Yeah but don't stare. After the rally, ask to see her room -- if there's a Joni Mitchell album, you're in.

RUSS

While we wait for Izzy to never come, let's chant.

EVERETT

Gregorian or Aramaic?

TED

And the Music History seminar pays off.
(high-fives EVERETT)

RUSS

"Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh -- NLF is gonna win!"

EVERETT

I can't do that, I keep thinking it's NFL and we're mad about football.

RUSS

"Hey hey LBJ -- how many kids did you kill today!"

TINA

That's so mean.

LOU

You want us to protest nicely?

TINA

Yes! "Peace Now!" "Draft beer not boys!"

RUSS

I think we should kidnap a nun, cover her body with spikes, throw her on the airport runway, then when the planes land, they'll hit her and crash and everyone'll die. That'll stop the war.

(ALL stare; then:)

LOU/EVERETT/TINA

Draft beer not boys! Draft
beer not boys!

RUSS

Nun! Nun! Nun! Nun!

(They shout each other offstage as TED sees EDITH do some cheerleading moves and goes over.)

TED

Lemme guess -- you're demonstrating the economic indices of ironic cheerleading.

EDITH

Lou showed you my article.

TED

Yeah, but I skipped the parts I didn't understand so it only took a minute to read.

EDITH

If you skipped the pretentious parts you didn't read anything.

TED

We haven't actually met -- Ted Gershing.

EDITH

Edith Royce.

(re: others)

You're not a big fan of chanting.

TED

I don't trust political philosophies that rhyme.

(grabs sign, "TROOPS OUT NOW")

I feel this captures the essence of a responsible foreign policy while retaining the dynamic vernacular of proletarian speech.

EDITH

And it's easy to chant.

TED

Ouch. So you want to be a writer?

EDITH

Not anymore. Maybe I'll major in Philosophy.

TED

That's good. After graduation, you can open a little Philosophy shop.

EDITH

You're funny.

TED

And Jewish. Yet somehow born in Indiana.

EDITH

So what are you doing with your life?

TED

I know, but I won't tell you.

EDITH

So you don't know.

TED

Architecture? I like figuring out how things work.

EDITH

How do things work?

TED

Counter-weights.

EDITH

Who knew.

TED

Architects.

(TINA comes over.)

TINA

Excuse me -- Edith, right? Can I borrow your bra?

EDITH

Um...

TINA

It's for President Nixon.

EDITH

I'll repeat: um.

TED

You're kicking the dummies again?

TINA

It's political satire!

EDITH

You're in luck, I buy all my lingerie in Dick Nixon's size.

TINA

Can you bring it up later? We're on after the Socialist Workers Glee Club.

(A burst of SOUSA MARCH MUSIC; the OTHERS enter and look at the audience.)

IZZY (O.S.)

Ladies and gentlemen, once in a great while a man appears on the American scene with qualities impossible to ignore -- brains, beauty, charisma, overwhelming physical strength. Such a man... is Spiro Agnew. But right now, here's Isaiah Benjamin Roth!

(IZZY appears at the back of the theater, waving his arms while making "V" signs like Nixon. He's followed by JONES, in a dark suit, hat and shades. A portable cassette player blaring "Stars and Stripes Forever" is strapped around IZZY's chest. Oh, and he has "FUCK" in Magic Marker on his forehead.)

IZZY walks down the aisle shaking hands.)

IZZY (cont'd)

Hello, howdy, bienvenuto, das vedanya, Spanish stuff, Balkan obscenity, twenty-three Eskimo words for snow.

(to woman)

Toldja I'd be back -- ooo, you're lovely.

(to man)

Ooo, you're lovely.

(to man)

Ooo, you're... here, aren'tcha! Glad ya came.

(to audience)

Something I hope we'll all do later.

(to man; feels suit/shirt)

Corduroy, interesting choice.

(to back of theater)

This man brought peanuts -- confiscate 'em and put 'em in my cubby.

(to someone)

Wouldn't life be better if everyone had cubbies? That was rhetorical -- you have no line.

(to woman)

Whoa, great breasts, how do you do that, mine are so tiny.

(to man)

I've run out of quips. And rows.

(to someone in first row)

(MORE)

IZZY (cont'd)

Thank you for paying more. It's suckers like you that keep the arts alive.

(IZZY reaches the stage, stops the SOUSA, sees LOU.)

IZZY (cont'd)

Don't tell me -- I'm lousy with names and faces but I never forget a pit.

(lifts LOU's arm, sniffs)

Lou Tersini!

LOU

You're more disgusting than I am.

IZZY

("modest")

Oh that's not true...

LOU

What's with...

(indicates "FUCK")

IZZY

Tired of seeing my picture in the paper. But enough of this gay banter -- show me the fire, I got the gas. I mean that literally, I had beans for lunch.

(stops LOU before he can speak)

Yes I know, I'm late. Rental car died. They probably recognized me; "It's Roth, take out the transmission." Meet Mr. Jones, he gave me a lift.

(LOU goes to shake but JONES retreats.)

LOU

You a friend of Izzy's?

IZZY

He's FBI.

LOU

(laughs)

Right on.

IZZY

I'm not joking.

(to Jones)

Give him an example of your FBI glare.

(nothing)

Now look sad.

(nothing)

Play dead.

(nothing; to Lou)

He'll do anything I ask.