

the beginning of

ME AND MY SHADOW (from **FEMALE PERSUASION**)

a comedy by Rich Orloff

adapted from the short play
"Overtones" by Alice Gerstenberg

Time: Mid-afternoon
Place: An upscale restaurant in downtown Chicago
Characters: SUSANNE, early 40's, a wife and mother
SUSIE, her inner self
JACQUELINE, early 40's, a successful career woman
JACQUIE, her inner self
ANDREA, 20's – 60's, a waitress
ANDI, her inner self

Mid-afternoon. A fancy restaurant in downtown Chicago, the type of place where you dine if you have an expense account or if you're so wealthy you don't need one. At one table sits SUSANNE and SUSIE. Susanne, in her early 40's, wears her nicest outfit she owns that's appropriate for meeting a worldly friend. (She probably doesn't have too many such outfits to choose from.) Susie is dressed very similarly to Susanne, but a bit more ethereal.

Susanne looks at her watch. Someone is late.

The waitress, ANDREA, enters, followed by ANDI. Andi is dressed very similarly to Andrea, but a bit more ethereal. Andrea carries two menus. She is a very pleasant, agreeable, friendly person. Andi's another story.

ANDREA
(to Susanne:)
Hi, I'm Andrea. I'll be your server today. Are you expecting someone, or are you by yourself?

SUSANNE
(a bit nervous)
I'm, I'm meeting a friend.

ANDREA
That's nice.

SUSANNE
Well, not really a friend; we *were* friends, in high school, at least I think we were friends. I'm not even sure she'll show up.

ANDREA

Well, here's our menu.

SUSANNE

No, no, I had lunch. At lunchtime. We're just meeting for coffee. Or maybe dessert. I guess we'll see. *If she shows up.*

ANDREA

Our desserts are on the last page. Can I get you anything while you wait?

SUSANNE

No, I'm fine. Well, not that fine. Sometimes it's hard to know when you're fine and not fine, you know what I mean?

ANDREA

If you want anything, just let me know.

Andrea and Andi start to go, but before Andi turns away, she tells Susanne:

ANDI

Like I care!

(*Note:* Andi should be as unrestrained as Andrea is polite.)

Andrea and Andi exit.

SUSI

How many times have I told you not to spill your guts out to everyone.

SUSANNE

I'm nervous.

SUSIE

Well, stop being nervous.

SUSANNE

Being told not to be nervous has never made *anyone* less nervous.

SUSIE

Well, as long as you're nervous, I'm going to say it. After all, what's a superego for?

SUSANNE

How do I look?

SUSIE

Do you want me to be complimentary or honest?

SUSANNE

God, I wish I could turn you off.

SUSIE

Now if you want to make a good impression –

SUSANNE

Well –

SUSIE

You want her to help you out?

SUSANNE

Yes.

SUSIE

You want to be stuck at home with your husband and in-laws and –

SUSANNE

No.

SUSIE

Then don't blow this.

SUSANNE

(sarcastic)

Thanks for your support.

SUSIE

And sit up straight.

Susanne sits up *very* straight.

SUSIE (cont'd)

Don't be stiff. Relax.

Susanne relaxes.

SUSIE (cont'd)

Don't slouch. Look confident.

Susanne tries to look confident.

SUSIE (cont'd)

But don't push it. Look relaxed, confident and natural.

Susanne tries to look simultaneously relaxed, confident and natural. She has no idea how to do this.

SUSIE (cont'd)

Here she comes. For God's sake, don't be yourself!

SUSANNE

Who should I be?

SUSIE

Just do everything I tell you, and you'll do fine.

SUSANNE

But everything you tell me is so filled with contradictions that I never know which part of everything you tell me to listen to.

SUSIE

Stop worrying. You have the potential for *greatness*... which is why you're always a disappointment.

JACQUELINE enters, in a chic business outfit. Following her is JACQUIE, who is dressed very similarly, but a bit more ethereal. As they enter, Susie moves so that Susanne and Jacqueline can sit across from each other.

JACQUELINE

Hi, hi.

SUSANNE

Hi, Jacqueline.

Jacqueline and Susanne hug, a bit perfunctorily. (Jackie and Susie have no awareness of each other.)

JACQUELINE

Sorry I'm late, Susanne, but I was so busy –

JACQUIE

Lllllloving myself.

Jacque kisses herself (her arms, etc.) enthusiastically.

JACQUIE (cont'd)

I love being an id.

SUSIE

Put her at ease.

SUSANNE

Well, I understand. You *do* have a magazine to run.

JACQUELINE

I do love escaping here in mid-afternoon. You have to try one of their desserts. Our food critic says they have the best desserts in Chicago.

SUSANNE

Actually, I'm sort of on a –

SUSIE

Get on her good side.

SUSANNE

On second thought, life's short. And it's not like I normally eat at places this fancy.

SUSIE

Don't spill.

JACQUIE

(with glee:)

Oh, she's just *waiting* to be humiliated. Yes!

SUSIE

Flatter her outfit.

SUSANNE

You look fabulous.

JACQUELINE

Thank you.

JACQUIE

(suspicious)

What's her angle?

SUSIE

Great. Now flatter her again.

SUSANNE

Um –

SUSIE

Quick, so it doesn't look forced.

SUSANNE

That blouse sure makes you look flatter.

JACQUELINE

What?

SUSANNE

I meant, that blouse flatters you.

JACQUELINE

Thanks. I think you look great, too.

JACQUIE

Considering you're *uhhgggggly!!!*

SUSANNE

Hard to believe it's been 25 years since high school, isn't it?

JACQUELINE

Given the way most people at the reunion looked, it seems like *at least* 25 years.

SUSANNE

Are you glad you went?

JACQUELINE

Definitely. It was tremendously rewarding.

JACQUIE

In a room of losers, we look even better.

JACQUELINE

Were you glad *you* went?

SUSANNE

Of course. Now that Jim and I and the kids are back in Chicago –

SUSIE

(firmly)

Don't spill.

SUSANNE

– it was great to reconnect with old friends.

SUSIE

Now start working on her.

SUSANNE

And it was especially great to reconnect with you.

JACQUELINE

Well, there was always something special about our relationship.

JACQUIE

We could talk you into doing anything we wanted.

SUSANNE

When I think back on high school –

SUSIE

You had the self-esteem of an underachieving amoeba.

SUSANNE

Well, I wasn't sure you'd remember me.

JACQUELINE

Of course I did.

JACQUIE

You stole our boyfriend.

SUSANNE

I mean, it's been so long.

JACQUIE

We remember every slight we ever got!

JACQUELINE

I'm glad we could have a chance to catch up.

JACQUIE

We've waited decades to get back at you for what you did, you stinking little piece of –

JACQUELINE

(coming in instantly)

Cake here is excellent. Shall we order?

SUSANNE

Sure.

JACQUELINE

(calling off-stage)

Oh, Andrea!

Andrea and Andi enter.

ANDREA

Oh, hi, Ms. Armstrong. How are things at *Chicago Style*?

JACQUELINE

Fine. And how are *you* doing?

JACQUIE

We *love* patronizing the little people.

ANDREA

Fine. So what would you two like?

Jacqueline gestures for Susanne to go first.

SUSANNE

Oh, I don't know.

SUSIE

Show her you're decisive.

SUSANNE

I'll have the chocolate cake.

ANDREA

Chocolate –

SUSIE

Too fattening.

SUSANNE

On second thought, just a bran muffin.

ANDREA

Bran –

SUSIE

Too boring.

SUSANNE

Um, um I think I'll have the cheesecake.

ANDREA

Cheese –

SUSIE

You're lactose-intolerant!

SUSANNE

Sorry. I'll... I'll just have the chocolate cake.

ANDREA

Chocolate...
(pauses, expecting to be corrected:)
cake.

SUSIE

There goes the diet.

SUSANNE

A *thin* slice. And coffee.

ANDREA

(to Jacqueline:)

And for you?

JACQUIE

Chocolate cake! Chocolate cake! Chocolate cake!
Please, please, please, please, please, please,
please, please, *pleeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeze!*

JACQUELINE

I'm watching my weight. Just coffee.

SUSIE

Why did you have to order dessert?!

ANDREA

That's two coffees and one *thin* slice
of chocolate cake. Coming right up.

SUSANNE

I'm sorry I kept changing my mind.

ANDREA

That's totally okay.

ANDI

Bitch!

Andrea and Andi exit.