

BOISE, IDAHO

by Sean Michael Welch

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NARRATOR

OLSTON

CHASTITY

WAITER

Production notes

Boise, Idaho was first performed at Show World in New York, NY as part of an evening of one-acts entitled *Worldly Acts*, produced by Urban Empire in conjunction with Francis Ford Coppola's *Zoetrope: All Story* magazine, with the following cast:

- THE NARRATOR Glenn Kessler
- OLSTON Peter Jacobson
- CHASTITY Jennifer Dundas
- THE WAITER Daniel Baker
- Director Lizzie Gottlieb
- Creative Director Jack Merrill

Boise, Idaho was originally published in Francis Ford Coppola's *Zoetrope: All-Story* magazine, Winter 2000 edition.

(A café. A table with two chairs sits center stage. Another table sits downstage left, also with two chairs. Enter the NARRATOR. He smiles at the audience as he takes a seat at the downstage left table. He addresses the audience, not as an aside.)

NARRATOR. The day was happy to be alive. The clouds crawled slowly across the blue blue sky like fat fairies. And here at this small café in the heart of Paris, France, the tables and chairs quietly waited for the next story to happen along.

(Enter OLSTON. He takes a seat at the center stage table and reads his newspaper.)

NARRATOR. And there was Olston Riggs, finding himself at this French café once again, reading the same copy of *The New York Times* that had been keeping him company for the last month of his visit to France. It gave him comfort to think of his home country, and the place of his birth, Boise, Idaho. Day after day, he would reread his paper as if clinging to a mother made entirely of paper. Understand, he lived for his wanderings abroad, so to him this merely served as a way for him to appreciate his homeland.

(Enter CHASTITY. She joins OLSTON at his table.)

NARRATOR. And there was his companion. The lovely, vivacious Chastity. The one woman in this crazy madcap world that truly knew his heart...even more than his wife.

CHASTITY. How are you feeling today?

NARRATOR. She asked.

OLSTON. Fine.

NARRATOR. He responded flatly. He didn't intentionally mean to sound so apathetic, but his mind weighed heavily on this day.

CHASTITY. I see.

NARRATOR. Chastity sensed Olston's mood. A million thoughts raced through her head. The first thought, as per usual, was, *What if he is thinking of leaving me for his wife? A wife he hasn't seen in six months? A wife in Boise, Idaho?* She shuddered at the thought.

CHASTITY. Are you hungry?

OLSTON. Starving.

NARRATOR. *But for what?* she wondered. Theirs was a love that had only been given life some four months ago. It was too soon to be extinguished, yes? She silently prayed for it to survive, while Olston read quietly, attempting to quell his thoughts of disillusionment. His life had become too complicated. How he once more wished for the simple pleasures of Boise, Idaho.

(Enter WAITER.)

WAITER. May I take your order?

OLSTON. Soup and salad.

CHASTITY. You always have soup and salad. Wouldn't you like to try something different?

OLSTON. Not today.

CHASTITY. I'll have the same.

WAITER. Very good.

(WAITER exits.)

NARRATOR. Chastity didn't want to bring it up. She couldn't. She knew the waiter. Intimately. One night of hunger. Passion. Lust and loneliness. She thought herself justified. After all, Olston was married. But she dared not tell him. That would ruin everything.

OLSTON. I have something to tell you.

NARRATOR. Was this it? The tension mounted. Was the end near? She couldn't stand the waiting. Not like this. Not here at their little French café.

CHASTITY. What is it?

OLSTON. Harvey's dead.

NARRATOR. She hadn't expected that. Harvey, their longtime companion, dead? It didn't seem possible.

CHASTITY. How did it happen?

NARRATOR. She asked, her voice beginning to break. She must remain strong, she thought. Be strong. Harvey would have wanted her to be strong.

OLSTON. I'm not sure. He was fine when you left. A few hours later, I found him there. Not moving.

NARRATOR. This was more than she could take. Harvey, so happy and gay, so full of life. But full of life no more. Was this an omen?

CHASTITY. What did you do with him?

OLSTON. I put him in a plastic bag and threw him into the dumpster.
(Pause.)

NARRATOR. She couldn't believe it. Thoughts began to rush through her head. What was the truth behind Harvey's death?

CHASTITY. That's a bit cold, don't you think?

NARRATOR. Chastity didn't want to let on that she thought bad things about her lover. But with his clear amount of apathy toward something so tragic, what else could she think?

OLSTON. What would you have me do? It's not like you can flush him down the toilet like a goldfish.

(Pause.)

NARRATOR. This was a side of Olston that Chastity had never seen before. *Was Olston really this harsh and cruel?* she wondered. Could this be the man she loved, finally unsheathed?

CHASTITY. Are you sure he was dead?

OLSTON. I came into the room, and there he was on his little hamster wheel, not moving.

(Pause.)

NARRATOR. Harvey. Their little hamster. Dead. Harvey...their longtime companion hamster, Harvey. To never again run on his little hamster wheel. But still, the question lingered, did Olston have something to do with it? Was this how he intended to end the affair?

CHASTITY. He was a good gerbil.

(Pause.)

NARRATOR. Harvey was a hamster. Chastity didn't know why she had just referred to him as a gerbil. Maybe it was to bait Olston further. What games the subconscious plays with those in love.

OLSTON. I've told you, Harvey wasn't a gerbil. He was a mouse.

(Pause.)

NARRATOR. What game was Olston playing with Chastity? What cruelty lay behind it? To reduce the memory of Harvey the Hamster to that of a common mouse? How could she not have seen this streak of cruelty before? Had being away from Boise, Idaho, for so long finally begun to take its toll on him?

(CHASTITY starts taking notice of the NARRATOR.)

OLSTON. Where's that salad? I'm starving.

NARRATOR. Olston stated, growing more and more agitated as the moments passed.

CHASTITY. Do you see that man over there?

NARRATOR. She asked, spotting a strange man walking his dog.

OLSTON. What man?

CHASTITY. That man over—oh, put down the paper, Stanley.

(OLSTON puts down the paper.)

NARRATOR. She had called him Stanley. Stanley was the name of the waiter. She hoped to play it off. Maybe he didn't notice. Maybe he didn't care. Who could tell?

OLSTON. What about him?

CHASTITY. I think he's talking about us.

NARRATOR. But how could this strange man walking a strange dog be talking about them? Did they know him? Did he know them? Did he know Olston? Or did he know Chastity?

CHASTITY. Excuse me. Sir?

(The NARRATOR peers over his shoulder at them, then lifts his menu to cover his face.)

CHASTITY. Sir? Sir?

OLSTON. Don't bother him, Stacy. Can't you see he's looking at his menu?

NARRATOR. *(Quietly.)* Chastity was so wrapped up in this stranger's presence that she neglected to hear Olston refer to her as Stacy, Olston's wife back in Boise, Idaho.

CHASTITY. Sir? *(Stands.)* Sir?

OLSTON. Don't cause a scene, now.

NARRATOR. He said, feeling that she should just sit down and enjoy a quiet meal. Oh, how Olston hated being embarrassed in public.

(CHASTITY walks over to the NARRATOR's table.)

CHASTITY. Sir? Are you talking about us?

NARRATOR. What?

CHASTITY. Are you talking about us?

NARRATOR. *(Pause.)* It was then that I realized she was talking to me. Me, a wanderer with no ties to her whatsoever.

CHASTITY. What are you doing?

NARRATOR. "I'm waiting to order," I said, hoping she would go back to her beloved.

CHASTITY. He's talking about us, Stanley.

NARRATOR. Olston. "No, I'm not," I responded.

OLSTON. Do you know him?

NARRATOR. He asked.

CHASTITY. No.

NARRATOR. She explained.

CHASTITY. Who are you talking to?

NARRATOR. Months of uncertainty were taking their toll on her. She began hallucinating. "No one," I said, trying to break this strange reality she was creating.

CHASTITY. I think he's telling a story.

NARRATOR. Yet, I wasn't. I just sat there in silence, reading the menu.

CHASTITY. Sir? Are you narrating?

NARRATOR. "I am only reading my menu," I responded, not wanting to involve myself in her twisted game.

CHASTITY. You are. He is, Stanley.

NARRATOR. Olston.

CHASTITY. What?

NARRATOR. "Nothing."

OLSTON. Are you sure, Stacy?

NARRATOR. Chastity.

CHASTITY. What?

NARRATOR. "I wasn't talking to you."

CHASTITY. Then who are you talking to?

NARRATOR. *(Pause.)* I wasn't talking.

CHASTITY. I think he's making us into a story.

OLSTON. That's silly. Who would do such a thing?

NARRATOR. And Olston was right in his thinking. What kind of person would do such a thing? The answer? No one. Because that wasn't what was happening. I urged her to take her seat. Chastity humbly apologized and went back to the table.

CHASTITY. No, I didn't.

NARRATOR. Yes, she did.

CHASTITY. I did not.

NARRATOR. A trick. A cruel trick it was. Before she could embarrass herself further, Olston came up behind her, grabbed her arms, whipped her around, and said, "Darling, please! Remember what the doctor said about your condition!"

CHASTITY. What condition?

OLSTON. (*To NARRATOR.*) Do you want me to grab her?

CHASTITY. Don't grab me, Stanley.

NARRATOR. Olston.

CHASTITY. Stop it.

NARRATOR. Stanley was the name of the waiter.

OLSTON. What a coincidence!

NARRATOR. Olston said for no apparent reason.

OLSTON. No, I mean, if the waiter's name is Stanley, it is a coincidence because my name is Stanley as well.

NARRATOR. Olston.

CHASTITY. Apparently your name is Olston, Stanley.

OLSTON. No, it isn't.

NARRATOR. But it was.

CHASTITY. And my name is...?

NARRATOR. Chastity.

(*OLSTON laughs. He catches CHASTITY's look.*)

OLSTON. Sorry.

CHASTITY. I don't know if I like this.

OLSTON. Leave him be. He's entertaining himself. No harm done.

CHASTITY. Are you liking this?

OLSTON. Of course not. (*Pause.*) But it is rather curious, don't you think? Someone telling a story about us? Like we're characters in a novel. Or a play.

CHASTITY. I hate the theater.

OLSTON. But you like books.

CHASTITY. Yes, I suppose so.

OLSTON. Well then?

(*Long pause.*)

CHASTITY. All right. I'm game.

(*CHASTITY and OLSTON take their seats. The NARRATOR breathes a sigh of relief.*)

CHASTITY. This better be good.

NARRATOR. After a brief lapse of reality, Chastity rejoined her lover and waited patiently for her food. There they sat, looking for answers, finding only questions. Where was their love heading? What about Harvey? What were the circumstances surrounding his death?

OLSTON. He was a bit old. Natural causes.

NARRATOR. Olston said, for no apparent reason.

OLSTON. (*Pause, looking at NARRATOR.*) Oh. Yes. I see. He's not here.

NARRATOR. Olston said, also for no apparent reason.

OLSTON. Sorry.

NARRATOR. Olston apologized, to no one.

CHASTITY. I don't know what we're supposed to do.

NARRATOR. Chastity said. Clearly the situation perplexed her. Was their love to survive? Or was it to end in Paris?

OLSTON. Are we in Paris?

CHASTITY. I suppose so.

NARRATOR. Finally, a clue into Olston's psyche, Chastity thought. Olston didn't know where he was. By consequence, he didn't know who he was. It seems he had left his identity in Boise, Idaho.

OLSTON. We're not in Boise, then?

CHASTITY. No.

NARRATOR. His delusion was great. His reality, small.

OLSTON. What...?

CHASTITY. Pay no attention to him. That's the point.

OLSTON. Oh, I see.

NARRATOR. Chastity grew as cold as the forceful winter of February. She hoped her indifference would shake her aching lover back into reality, away from his wife in Boise, Idaho.

OLSTON. We're not married?

CHASTITY. No.

NARRATOR. How much indifference could an affair such as this stand?

OLSTON. (*Confused.*) Do I know you?

CHASTITY. Yes.

NARRATOR. But did he really know who she was? Did she really know who he was? Did anyone know who Harvey was? Did it matter? At this point, did it truly matter? A silence spoke between them.

OLSTON. I...

CHASTITY. Shhh.

NARRATOR. A silence that spoke to Chastity. Would the preference of silence be their ultimate undoing? The answer lived only in the mind of Olston. Eventually the silence became too much. Waiting for their food became too much. Chastity had to break this seemingly endless quiet.

CHASTITY. (*Pause.*)

NARRATOR. She just had to.

CHASTITY. Uh...(*Pause.*)

NARRATOR. She was compelled.

CHASTITY. Uh...so what about this wife in Boise, Idaho?

OLSTON. What?

CHASTITY. Your wife. In Boise, Idaho. The one you think about a lot.

NARRATOR. Chastity's sudden directness struck Olston. He didn't expect such a confrontation.

OLSTON. Oh, I see. (*Pause.*) I love her.

NARRATOR. The truth. Finally, the truth.

CHASTITY. Why?

OLSTON. Because she is my wife?

NARRATOR. Olston asked rhetorically. Oh, how his flippancy raked at her heart. His utter disregard surprised her.

CHASTITY. So, you won't leave her?

OLSTON. No. I love her.

CHASTITY. You love me.

OLSTON. Do I?

CHASTITY. Yes.

NARRATOR. Reminding him was all it took. Somehow all the promises exploded like a huge water balloon. Pained by this, she threw her glass of water in his face.

(*CHASTITY throws her water in OLSTON's face.*)

OLSTON. Hey!

CHASTITY. You BASTARD! To think of all the times we shared! You used me!

OLSTON. No, I didn't!

CHASTITY. Yes, you did! You BASTARD!

OLSTON. You threw water at me! People are staring!

CHASTITY. There's no one here! There's no one in this world except you and me!

NARRATOR. (*Impressed.*) This was a new backbone for Chastity. She felt enraged. Empowered. As if suddenly everything made sense. To signify the transformation, she slapped Olston's face.

(*CHASTITY slaps OLSTON.*)

CHASTITY. You never loved me! You BASTARD!

OLSTON. You hit me.

CHASTITY. Yes! And I'd do it again!

NARRATOR. And she did.

(*CHASTITY slaps OLSTON again.*)

OLSTON. Hey!

CHASTITY. I can't help that you love your wife, but that doesn't mean you have to take me down with you!

(*Pause.*)

NARRATOR. Chastity felt the need to explain this statement.

CHASTITY. What I mean to say is...I won't suffer because of your wife, who isn't even here in Paris, France, but is, in fact, in Boise, Idaho!

OLSTON. (*Suddenly possessed.*) Chastity! Get a hold of yourself! I love you! I will continue to love you! Provided you don't throw your water at me or slap my face any longer!

CHASTITY. You BASTARD!

NARRATOR. They stared at each other. Long and hard. Eyes filled with enough voltage to kill small animals. Suddenly, all the passion that they shared came rushing back. They exploded into a furious kiss.

(*CHASTITY leaps on OLSTON and the two kiss with violent passion.*)

NARRATOR. They cared not that they were in public. All that mattered was the passion that spewed forth from them. The sudden burst of desperation. The longing lips of love that tangled together. But how could Chastity have known that, as their lips grappled, Olston was still envisioning his wife?

(*CHASTITY breaks the kiss and slaps OLSTON.*)

CHASTITY. You BASTARD!

OLSTON. You can't tell what I'm thinking!

NARRATOR. And it was true. But Olston had never kissed Chastity like that before, so she assumed...

CHASTITY. You've never kissed me like that before, I could only assume you were thinking of your wife in Boise, Idaho. I deserve more than that, Olston. I deserve magic. I deserve the truth. I deserve love! LOVE, LOVE, LOVE!

OLSTON. Love is like a fat accordion player, Chastity! You never know which one to squeeze!

(*Pause.*)

NARRATOR. Analogies were never Olston's strong suit. At this, Chastity could only laugh.

CHASTITY. HA!

NARRATOR. Genuinely.

CHASTITY. (*Laughs.*) Oh, Olston. I can never resist your bad analogies. I love you. Say you love me.

OLSTON. I do.

CHASTITY. Say you love me.

OLSTON. I love you, Chastity.

(*Enter WAITER with a tray of food. OLSTON and CHASTITY sit.*)

OLSTON. Ah. Wonderful. I'm very hungry. For food.

NARRATOR. And so much more.

OLSTON. Garçon? (*Snaps fingers.*) More food.

NARRATOR. Chastity's illusions shattered as the young waiter, Stanley, walked in. Her heart skipped a beat. Her eyes gazed at his strong thighs, his tight protruding hips, his delicate encompassing eyes. Should she tell him? Could she tell him? Would she tell him? Was this turbulent moment in time the right time to conjure such honesty between them?

(*Exit WAITER.*)

OLSTON. You look like you have something to tell me.

CHASTITY. Do I? I'm not sure. (*Looks at NARRATOR.*)

NARRATOR. Was there any way to tell him? She thought not. How could she bring this wonderful moment to an end? This new peace was a blessing, one errant word from her and all could come crashing down around her.

OLSTON. I'm curious as to what you're thinking right now.

CHASTITY. So am I.

NARRATOR. She thought it best to keep her awful secret from him. For his sake, she would not say a word.

OLSTON. I feel as if you have an awful secret.

CHASTITY. Really? Why's that?

OLSTON. Call it a hunch.

NARRATOR. Oh, how well he knew her. Could he read the tension in her face? Could he sense her change in breath when Stanley entered the room? Could he feel her temperature rise as her misbegotten lover snuck her a glance?

OLSTON. YOU SLEPT WITH THE WAITER!?

CHASTITY. What? No. Don't be ridiculous.

OLSTON. You...BASTARD!

CHASTITY. Olston, really. I didn't...

OLSTON. LIAR!

(*OLSTON throws his water at her.*)

CHASTITY. You threw your water at me.

OLSTON. LIAR!

CHASTITY. No, you really did.

OLSTON. TRAMP!

(OLSTON *throws his salad at her.*)

CHASTITY. Okay. That's a bit much.

OLSTON. You! YOU!

CHASTITY. Please don't throw your soup at me.

OLSTON. Waiter!

CHASTITY. Stanley...

NARRATOR. Once again Chastity referred to Olston as Stanley. A mistake she would soon regret.

CHASTITY. I don't want to play this game anymore.

NARRATOR. But was it a game? Who could say?

OLSTON. WAITER!

(*Enter WAITER.*)

WAITER. Yes, sir?

OLSTON. Don't give me that! You KNOW what you did!

(*The WAITER notices the salad on CHASTITY.*)

WAITER. Was the salad not to your liking, sir?

OLSTON. Don't play dumb!

CHASTITY. Stanley...

OLSTON. Stanley! Yes, Stanley! Do you know what you did, Stanley!?!

WAITER. My name is Mark, sir.

OLSTON. LIAR!

WAITER. Stanley's good. I can be Stanley.

OLSTON. You slept with my lover!

CHASTITY. (*To OLSTON:*) Stanley...

OLSTON. Yes! Say his name! I like it when you say his name!

CHASTITY. This isn't funny anymore!

OLSTON. You slept with her!

WAITER. I don't even know her.

OLSTON. Lies, lies, lies! The world is made up of lies!

CHASTITY. No, it isn't. Just this one.

OLSTON. You slept with her!

WAITER. Sir, I can assure you that I never did.

OLSTON. Oh, how many tangles we have in this web of deception when we deceive someone! I should kill you here and now, Stanley!

WAITER. I can get a manager if there's a problem, sir.

CHASTITY. (*To NARRATOR:*) Do something.

NARRATOR. (*Appearing worried:*) Olston's fury was great. Filled with unrighteous jealousy that he knew in the dark corners of his brain was very, very wrong.

OLSTON. Get out of here! You sicken me!

WAITER. Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

(*The WAITER exits.*)

CHASTITY. I think this has gone far enough.

OLSTON. Yes. It has. You trollop.

CHASTITY. Okay. What about your wife in Boise, Idaho?

OLSTON. There is no Boise, Idaho!

CHASTITY. Aha!

OLSTON. There is only here and now in Paris, France!

CHASTITY. Stanley...

OLSTON. Olston!

CHASTITY. Stanley.

OLSTON. OLSTON!

CHASTITY. (*To NARRATOR:*) Do something.

NARRATOR. The...uh, the...the moment was too much for Olston. He found no justifiable release in the endeavor. Whatever this feeling was that he felt, it was wrong.

OLSTON. You. This is your doing. You betrayed me.

CHASTITY. Be realistic Stan—Olston.

OLSTON. You can't even say my name anymore. Who are you? Who am I?

(OLSTON gets closer to CHASTITY.)

CHASTITY. It's not real, Olston.

OLSTON. Liar.

CHASTITY. You're scaring me.

OLSTON. YOU BETRAYED ME!

(OLSTON grabs CHASTITY around the neck and starts choking her.)

OLSTON. You went too far. YOU WENT TOO FAR!

CHASTITY. (*Choking, to NARRATOR:*) Help me!

NARRATOR. Olston gripped Chastity's delicate throat in his vengeful hands. He felt enough rage to suddenly discharge this woman. And no one could hear her cries of help.

CHASTITY. (*Choking, to NARRATOR:*) Help... help...

NARRATOR. Maybe a stranger would come to her aid. Maybe some kind soul would rescue her from Olston's wrath. And what of the mystery surrounding Harvey the Hamster's death?

(CHASTITY dies. OLSTON stands for a moment, looking at what he has done. He runs off, never looking at the NARRATOR. The NARRATOR stares at CHASTITY. He gets closer to her, wanting to touch her. A moment. He turns to the audience. The NARRATOR leaves. A moment. CHASTITY lifts up her head and looks around. She stands up smiling. She now assumes the guise of the NARRATOR.)

CHASTITY. Chastity made sure Olston was completely gone before she made a move. She walked out of that café in Paris, France, reborn, ready to start over, to pursue life as it should be. Free to write her own story. Free from Olston's grip. Free from constant reminders of Boise, Idaho.

(CHASTITY exits. Lights fade to black.)

End of Play