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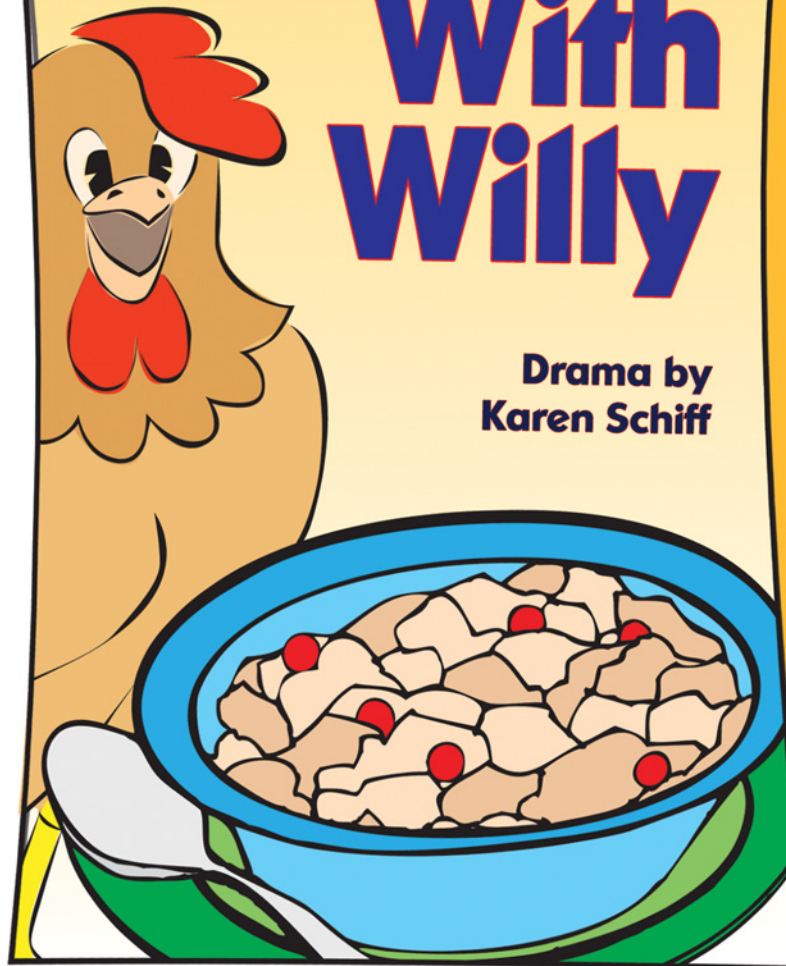
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Dramatic Publishing

Breakfast With Willy

**Drama by
Karen Schiff**



Breakfast With Willy

Drama. By Karen Schiff. Cast: 1 m., 1 w. Is too much choice just as detrimental to the human psyche as too little? With touches of both humor and pathos, *Breakfast With Willy* explores this timely question through the random collision of two worlds—youth versus maturity, privilege versus privation. Willy Winter is an elderly stock clerk in a Chicago grocery store. A one-time victim of Nazi efforts to "Germanize" Polish children, he has had few choices in life. One morning, before the store opens, Willy stumbles over Suzy Summer, a young graphic designer, lying on the floor of the cereal aisle. Suffering from the modern-day affliction of too much choice in life, Suzy had collapsed the night before while trying to select among the 143 different types of cereals. As Willy aids the confused and bruised Suzy, the unlikely pair share revelations that expose the stark contrast of riches and injustices in their lives—leaving each enraged, engrossed, and ultimately enriched. By the end of the play, the ever-pessimistic Willy finds new reasons to be hopeful, while the floundering Suzy discovers a deepened life purpose. What's more, she is finally able to choose a box of cereal and go home. *Simple int. set.* *Approximate running time: 40 minutes.*

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Breakfast With Willy

• Karen Schiff

• Dramatic Publishing



Breakfast With Willy

A Play in One Act

by

KAREN SCHIFF



Dramatic Publishing

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KAREN SCHIFF

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BREAKFAST WITH WILLY premiered at Pittsburgh New New Works Festival, September 2005. The production included the following artists:

CAST

Willy Winter Marcus Muzopappa
Suzy Summer. Jennifer Chervenick

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director. Clyde Adams
Producer. Jackie Nicoll
Stage Manager. Priscilla Laughlin

BREAKFAST WITH WILLY

A Play in One Act
For 1 Man and 1 Woman

CHARACTERS

WILLY WINTER late 60s. A stock boy.

SUZY SUMMER early 30s. A graphic designer.

TIME

A winter day, 2005.

PLACE

The cereal aisle of a large grocery store in Chicago.

Note

When one character starts speaking before the other has finished, the point of interruption is marked /

BREAKFAST WITH WILLY

SCENE ONE

(As the lights come up, SUZY stands in the cereal aisle of a large grocery store. She stares intently at one hundred forty-three different brands of cereal.)

ANNOUNCER *(offstage)*. Attention shoppers. The store will be closing in one minute. Please make your selections and proceed to the checkout immediately. Thank you for shopping at Eugene's and have a good night.

(SUZY continues to look over the boxes of cereal, unable to choose one. She collapses. Blackout.)

SCENE TWO

(Lights up. WILLY enters, looking up at the boxes and counting. He trips over SUZY who is lying in the aisle.)

WILLY *(in Polish)*. Kurwa mac! *(SUZY doesn't stir. WILLY kneels down and tries to wake her.)* Miss... Miss. Wake up.

(SUZY still doesn't move. WILLY thinks it over and then runs offstage. He returns with a bottle of Mr. Clean which he opens and puts under SUZY's nose. She stirs.)

SUZY. Ew...ew. Gross. What are you doing?

WILLY. I try to help you.

SUZY. Get that away. It stinks. *(WILLY closes the bottle. SUZY looks around.)* Oh my God... Oh my God. What happened?

WILLY. I fell for you.

SUZY. What?

WILLY. Over. I fell over you.

SUZY. I was just lying here?

WILLY. Yes.

SUZY. What time is it?

WILLY. Six o'clock.

SUZY. In the morning?

WILLY. Yes.

SUZY. God, no wonder you had to use Mr. Clean. I don't get up till like nine usually.

WILLY. So late.

SUZY. I freelance. It's one of the perks.

WILLY. What is this freelance?

SUZY. What are you? Like Russian or something?

WILLY. Polish.

SUZY. God, this floor is freezing. I can't believe I was here all night. How come nobody saw me? *(She slowly rises.)*

WILLY. I don't know. When did you come to the store?

SUZY. Last night at like eleven. Right at closing. I remember there was an announcement.

WILLY. There is new boy closing the store. He is supposed to check all the aisles. Maybe he didn't do good job. I tell my boss. He find out. You are okay, yes?

SUZY. I feel a little dizzy. (*She feels her head.*) I have a big bump.

WILLY. You stay. I get some chairs. We sit until your head gets better. You need food. Pick a box. Eat something.

(WILLY exits. SUZY looks at the cereal boxes. She holds her head and looks away. WILLY returns with two chairs.)

WILLY. Here. Sit. I stay. I make sure you don't fall again.

(WILLY and SUZY sit.)

SUZY. Where is everyone?

WILLY. They are not here yet. I come in early.

SUZY. What are you? Like, the manager?

WILLY. The stock boy. The head.

SUZY. The head stock boy?

WILLY. Ya.

SUZY. How long have you worked here? As head stock boy.

WILLY. One year.

SUZY. That's it?

WILLY. As head stock boy, yes. I was stock boy before that.

SUZY. Oh... How long did it take you to get promoted?

WILLY. Forty-nine years.

SUZY. Are you serious?

WILLY. Yes. I got promoted last year. They make big party for me. I do good job.

SUZY. The store's been around that long?

WILLY. No. Not this one. The first one open in 1950. They transfer me to here when they close that one. The neighborhood—it change. They always do. This store is so big I need map when I first get here.

SUZY. I don't know. Seems pretty standard.

WILLY. Every year, I have to come in earlier. There are more things I have to stock again before the store open.

SUZY. Well, you must be very good at it. After fifty years.

WILLY. Ya. I do good job. (*Pause.*) Today my last day.

SUZY. What?

WILLY. Today is my last day. I...

SUZY. What?

WILLY. I leave.

SUZY. You're retiring?

WILLY. Ya. That's the word. I retire.

SUZY. What do they do? Like, give you a gold shopping cart or something?

WILLY. Why make shopping cart in gold?

SUZY. Forget it. I was just kidding. (*SUZY rubs her head again.*)

WILLY. You should eat. Pick a box.

SUZY. I'm not hungry. You know, you don't have to stay here with me. I'll be fine. I just need to sit for a few minutes.

WILLY. This is my last aisle. I stock everything else. Just the cereal is left. Come on, you pick. Any one you want. This is my last day. It is my treat.

SUZY. I said I'm not hungry, all right?

(Pause. WILLY looks over SUZY and points to her pig-tails.)

WILLY. Why you wear your hair like that?

SUZY. Like what?

WILLY. Like little girl.

SUZY. It's just a style.

WILLY. You look like little girl. You are not so little.

How old are you?

SUZY. None of your business.

WILLY. More than thirty years, yes? Thirty-five?

SUZY. Stop it. *(She puts her head between her knees.)*

WILLY. You want me to call ambulance?

SUZY. No.

WILLY. You want to go / home?

SUZY *(picks her head back up)*. I'm thirty-two. And everyone tells me I look twenty-five. I still get carded, you know.

WILLY. It's the hair.

SUZY. Yeah, what are you. Like a hundred and two?

WILLY. Yes. But everyone tell me I look sixty-nine.

(SUZY groans and puts her head down again between her knees. They sit in silence for a moment.) So what do you do, when you do this freelunch?

SUZY. Freelance. I'm a graphic designer.

WILLY. A who?

SUZY. I make pictures. For companies.

WILLY. So you are artist.

SUZY. Yeah, sort of.

WILLY. What, sort of. You make pictures. They pay you?

SUZY. Of course.

WILLY. That is a good life, a very good life. You are lucky, little Miss...what?

SUZY. Suzy.

WILLY. Little Miss Suzy. (*Short pause.*)

SUZY. What's your name? (*WILLY points to his jacket.*)
Willy. Willy what?

WILLY. Winter.

SUZY (*sits back up*). You're kidding. Your last name is Winter?

WILLY. Ya. That is bad?

SUZY. No, it's just funny, that's all. Mine is Summer. You're Willy Winter and I'm Suzanne Summer. Yeah, yeah I know, I know. (*Singing.*) "Come and knock on our door. Three's company, too." Uch. All the boys were like, c'mon, Suzy, shake it like Chrissie. We want a jiggle show.

WILLY. I have no idea what you are saying.

SUZY. Suzanne Sommers. The sit-com star. On TV. I practically have the same name.

WILLY. Oh.

SUZY. You've never heard of her?

WILLY. No. That is not good?

SUZY. No, it's just weird, that's all. Like what were you doing in the seventies?

WILLY. I don't have television.

SUZY. What?

WILLY. I don't have TV.

SUZY. What do you do? At night. Do you listen to music?

WILLY. Sometimes.

SUZY. Do you read?

WILLY. No. (*He shakes his head and looks down.*)

SUZY. What?... What?... You can read, can't you?

WILLY. For sick girl you ask a lot of questions.

SUZY. You can't read? (*WILLY squirms.*) You can't read English? What about Polish? (*WILLY shakes his head.*) But that's like your native language? Isn't it? (*WILLY nods.*) So why didn't you learn to read?

WILLY (*gets up*). I get milk. You have some breakfast and tell me more about the jiggle lady. You got picture?

SUZY. No, no wait, if you can't read how can you be a stock boy? I mean, you need to be able to read the labels.

WILLY. Not in this country. They got the, what you say, the logos. The tiger go here, the bird go over there, the old guy go there.

SUZY. What old guy?

WILLY. The one with the funny hat.

SUZY. Quaker Oats?

WILLY. Ya. That one. You see? You don't need to learn English to get good job. God bless America. Now pick box. I come right back. You will be okay, yes?

(SUZY nods. WILLY exits. SUZY gets up slowly and looks at the boxes again. She falls to her knees. WILLY enters with milk, plastic bowl and spoon. He rushes to help her.)

SUZY. We had a fight. It was dumb. I started it. I felt bad. I wanted to make up for it, you know—make him breakfast in bed. But we didn't have anything.

WILLY. Who you make breakfast for?

SUZY. Ian.

WILLY. Who is this Ian?

SUZY. My boyfriend.

WILLY. Oh.

SUZY. I said I'd be right back. But I didn't tell him where

I was going. He's probably really worried.

WILLY. So pick something. Go home.

SUZY. I...

WILLY. What?... What?

SUZY. I can't.

WILLY. You can't what? Pick?

SUZY. No!

WILLY. Why not?

SUZY. Because...

WILLY. Because what?

SUZY. What if I pick the wrong one?

WILLY. How you pick wrong one? It is just cereal.

SUZY (*frantic*). No, no, no, it's not, it's not, it's not just cereal! I mean, like, what if I get home, and I take out the box and it's not the right kind. What if Ian likes it, but I don't? Or he doesn't like it and I do. That probably means something, right?

WILLY. I have no—

SUZY. I mean, like, maybe he's not the right one. If he's your soul mate, you should be able to agree on something basic like cereal, right?

WILLY. I really don't—

SUZY. The thing is, I don't even know if I believe in soul mates. I don't know if I believe in the whole marriage thing. I don't even know if I want kids. Do you have kids?

WILLY. No.

SUZY. Yeah, well, I may just want to focus on my career, you know. But I don't even know if this is the right career for me. I've been doing it for like, five years now,

and oh my God I'm so bored. It's just like one stupid job after the next. I mean, how many corporate logos can you design without going crazy? The money isn't bad, but it's just not challenging anymore, you know? At first I really liked working at home, it's great to make my own hours, but now I think I may need to be back in an office. Except I hated working in an office—it's so not me. It's so dehumanizing. I mean you wouldn't know about working in a company. You've worked in a grocery aisle for fifty years. God, how do you stand it? Don't you get bored?

WILLY. It's not so bad.

SUZY. But didn't you ever want to do something more, I don't know, meaningful? Like work with kids, or help the homeless. Something that'll, you know, make a difference. I don't know, I just need some time, you know, to find out who I am and what I really should be doing with my life. I'm thinking maybe I should stop working for a while and break up with Ian and just travel. Have you traveled at all? You know, been to any other countries?

WILLY. Germany.

SUZY. Oh. Germany. Yeah. Well, I hear Oktoberfest is kinda cool. But I was thinking more like Thailand or Nepal, maybe go trekking or climb Everest or something, so I have some time to just think. I mean maybe I should study Buddhism or something. This woman, Maya, she goes to my yoga class, she was in marketing. She said she got a private one-on-one with a monk over in Tibet. Totally changed her life. She quit her job, became a doggie doula. You know, a birthing coach. But like for dogs, not people. I know, I know. It's a little,

you know, out there but still, she's really into it... I mean, like Ian's great and everything, but it's not like he rocks my world every minute. He's super nice, and it would be so sad if we broke up, but he doesn't have any edge, you know. I need someone who's got some edge, some spark. I want someone who's going to challenge me. You know what I mean? Don't you want be challenged? (*WILLY just stares at her.*) Oh forget it. Just forget it. You wouldn't understand. (*She slumps back in her chair and rubs her head. Long pause.*)

WILLY. What you want for breakfast?

SUZY. Oh God. I don't know. I'm exhausted. You pick.

WILLY. You want that I should pick?

SUZY. Yes. Pick one for me. Please. I'll eat whatever you want.

WILLY (*looks over the cereals*). You like the raisins?

SUZY. No, not really. (*WILLY takes down a box of Raisin Bran.*) I just said I don't like raisins.

WILLY. You said I should pick.

SUZY. Yeah, but not something I don't like.

WILLY. Oh, you change the rules.

SUZY. No, I didn't.

WILLY. Ya. You say "I eat whatever you want." So I want you to eat the cereal with the raisin. (*He opens the box and pours it into the bowl.*)

SUZY. Why would you pick something you know I don't like?

WILLY. Because maybe I don't like you.

SUZY. What?

WILLY. Maybe I don't like you. (*He adds a little milk.*)

SUZY. I thought you just said you (*imitating his accent*) "fall for me."