

PICK AN APPLE

A one-act comedy

Written by

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World premiere: Los Angeles Theater Center
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PICK AN APPLE

At rise: It is Monday morning in the living room of the Blank family's new, low-rent apartment, peppered with cardboard boxes, sparse furnishings, a small TV and a dingy kitchenette visible through a doorway.

Housewife APRICOT exercises - stretching, straining, moaning. Her mechanic husband BOB, in coveralls, fiddles with the newspaper, glancing up to ogle her backside.

Their pre-teen daughter, CERVENKA colors with a box of 64 crayons.

BOB

I'm gonna get really greasy today.
A fleet of Macks are coming in with
busted axles.

APRICOT

(deep stretch)
Oww!

BOB

Careful, Apricot. Don't strain your
assets. 'Cause you got a fine "ass"-
et.

CERVENKA

Daddy.

BOB

What? She does.
(swats Apricot's butt with
his newspaper)
Welp, I better hit it.

He rises. Kisses his wife.

BOB (CONT'D)

Think of me.

APRICOT

Come home to me.

CERVENKA

Think of me. Come home to me.

APRICOT

Bob, wait! I forgot.

BOB

(turns back)
What?

APRICOT

You need to get Cervenka an iPhone after work. The kids at school laugh at her old flip.

BOB

We can't afford that. I sold the couch to get you the microwave since you
(mocking)
"couldn't face menopause without it."

APRICOT

(lower)

She hasn't taken much interest in boys, and I think her phone has something to do with it.

BOB

That's ridiculous. You like boys don'tcha, Cervenka?

CERVENKA

Yes.

BOB

See.

Bob grabs his lunch pail.

CERVENKA

I like girls, too.

APRICOT

Told ya.

BOB

Crimony, Apricot. She doesn't mean funny stuff.

CERVENKA

I saw girls doing funny naked stuff in this magazine on the bus. It was pretty interesting.

BOB

Good God!

APRICOT

I didn't know about that.

BOB
Do you socialize with boys,
Cervenka?

APRICOT
"Chill with" Bob, the kids say
"Chill with" now.

BOB
(to Cervenka)
You like to "Chill with" boys?

CERVENKA
I'd like to chill with a man...
maybe a cab driver from another
country. They don't know our
language, but they know every
street in the city, it's amazing.

BOB
Boys, Cervenka. Do you like any
boys?!

Cervenka shrugs.

BOB (CONT'D)
Do the boys at your new school like
you?

CERVENKA
Not at first. Then some kid called
me "hottie" while he was staring at
my boobies. I went around poking
them out the rest of the day to see
if anyone else noticed.

BOB
Did they?

CERVENKA
Yeah.

APRICOT
That's your asset.

BOB
That's her asset.

CERVENKA
Yesterday I went on a hike with
Bryan after school.

BOB
Good.

CERVENKA

He took me to the canyon where girls go hiking with boys.

BOB

Uh huh.

CERVENKA

He told me I was sweet and special, so I kissed him.

APRICOT

Aw...

BOB

Atta girl.

CERVENKA (CONT'D)

Then he pushed me down and tried to lie on me. I said "No!" He told me I was cold. "I thought you said I was sweet and special, Brian?"

(à la boy voice)

"That's before I knew you had a cold side."

(her voice)

He left me there.

APRICOT

Try to like that stuff, dear. You know about birth control, there's nothing to worry about.

CERVENKA

It's cool to go to the canyon, I was glad I got invited, but some girls called me a "ho" when I got back. You're cool if you go and a "ho".

BOB

Do you want to go lay in the canyon with a -- girl?

CERVENKA

Maybe.

BOB

(tosses lunch pail)

I am going to be very late to work.

CERVENKA

I get goosebumps when I stand next to Becky.

BOB

No you don't!

CERVENKA

And I get goosebumps when I stand next to Josh.

BOB

They evicted a tenant in this very building for being ambiguous. That's enough sometimes. The landlord couldn't put a finger on him.

APRICOT

Remember when Henry the Eighth was wishy-washy about his wife, he chopped her head off.

CERVENKA

No, he blamed her for not having a male heir, but it turns out men actually determine the-

BOB

Don't talk back to me!

APRICOT

Maybe we should let this go, Bob.

CERVENKA

(rising)

Okay, I'll get dressed for school.

BOB

Sit down. You are not leaving my house a wanderer. Clean lines equal a clear mind. Do you stand for peace or war, Cervenka? It can't be both.

(re her crayons)

Lookit, red is red and blue is blue, if blue could also be pink, where the hell would we be?

CERVENKA

(extracts crayon)

Here's a Blue-Green, Red-Violet, Yellow-Orange. There are lotsa combinations. Even one called "Thistle" which seems to be a mixture of many colors.

BOB

(spins on heels)

This is all your fault, Apricot.

(MORE)

BOB (CONT'D)

You talked to her in the womb. You said "How's Mommy's little boy?"

APRICOT

(to Cervenka)

I was positive you were a boy.

BOB

Every day for nine months you asked, "How's Mommy's little boy?"

(taps Apricot's belly)

Tap. Tap. Tap.

APRICOT

(to Cervenka)

I asked God for a boy, but later I decided to trust His will and you came out a girl.

CERVENKA

But you were thinking of me as a boy?

APRICOT

Yes, well-

CERVENKA

Wishing I was a boy for nine months?

APRICOT

Eight months. I told God I accepted His will at eight months. This is ridiculous. You couldn't hear in the womb.

CERVENKA

Babies hear in the womb. Even embryos receive messages. I learned that at school.

BOB

I want a boy, boy, boy, over and over -- now look!

APRICOT

Stop bringing that up, Bob. Who would've known she was listening?

BOB

Dammit, Apricot. I want to join the Elk's Lodge. They don't accept weirdos!

APRICOT

I'm calling Best Buy. They sell iPhones, they have deferred payment.

CERVENKA

Well, I feel-

APRICOT

Feelings are not reality, dear.

BOB

What the Hell kind of school teaches embryos hear in the womb?

CERVENKA

That was my last school. Maybe this new one teaches something else.

BOB

It's too late. You already got the information.

APRICOT

(scanning Bob's newspaper)
Having a man and children will give your life meaning.

CERVENKA

I don't know if I want-

BOB

You're not in this world to care for yourself.

APRICOT

It's better now than when I was your age, consider yourself lucky.

CERVENKA

Oh yes:
(à la radio announcer:)
"Rape is down 50% because communication is up."

BOB

They teach rape in school, too?

CERVENKA

No, I heard that on the radio.
(à la radio announcer:)
"But when it comes right down to it, folks, boys want apples and girls want oranges."

APRICOT
 (re newspaper ad)
 Best Buy's having a blow-out sale
 and we are going!

BOB
 (grabs Cervenka's crayons)
 You're too old to play with
 crayons. They're screwing your
 development. You'll end up like
 your mother's brother.

APRICOT
 Uncle Chuck?

CERVENKA
 Uncle Chuck?

BOB (CONT'D)
 Forty years old making ceramics.

APRICOT
 His figurines are precious.

BOB
 He wears an apron and gloves!

APRICOT
 (pointed)
 Some men prefer nice clean hands.

BOB
 Women don't want a pansy with girly
 hands! Cervenka, listen to me.
 You're shy, feminine, men like
 that. Who cares if they want apples
 or Fig fricking Newton's. Love is
 not a math problem. You're making
 things too complicated.

CERVENKA
 Apples and oranges.

BOB
 Not in this house!
 (grabs lunch pail)
 You better snap her out of this,
 Apricot and quick. My mind should
 be on busted axles!

Bob grabs his keys and exits in a huff.

A beat. Apricot checks to make sure he's gone, then:

APRICOT

I want to share a secret, Cervenka.
I gave you a unique name because I
wanted you to stand out, to be an
adventurer, like Uncle Chuck.

CERVENKA

Uncle Chuck?

APRICOT

Your dad wanted to call you "Cathy"
-- never forget that. I can't talk
like this in front of him, or he'll
call me a ball buster, but I am
behind you. I'm a modern woman. I
have the best microwave. You'll
feel better when you have an
iPhone. The comfort that comes with
nice things... When I'm unhappy, or
I can't get through to your dad, I
make something new in the
microwave. Like last week, when he
forgot our anniversary, I made
calzone. Chin up, you'll see.

(kisses her cheek)

Now how about some breakfast?

CERVENKA

Sure.

Apricot disappears to the kitchenette, humming.

APRICOT (O.S.)

(singsong)

"Cut a slit, preheat, let stand,
cool, flip, and serve."

Apricot returns waving a microwaveable food package.

APRICOT (CONT'D)

Meaty Cheese Egg Pocket. Sound
good?

CERVENKA

Uh huh.

APRICOT

Oops gotta get my carb and calorie
counter.

Apricot dashes back out.

Cervenka chews her nails, rocking.

CERVENKA
Apples or oranges... apples and
oranges?

Then she spots something on the ground. She picks it up. It's
a crayon Bob missed.

CERVENKA (CONT'D)
(reads the label)
"Blue-Green". Daddy forgot the blue-
green...
(beat, then)
It's a sign!

Cervenka presses the crayon to her chest as the lights fade
out...

END OF PLAY