

CHAIRS

A short thriller by
Scott Mullen

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I
J

VOICE, any age, sex or race.

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I and J are teens who may be of any race or gender.

SETTING

An empty stage, with nine chairs in the center, their backs together, the seats facing various directions in a tight circle. Though two doors are referred to, they don't need to be seen.

NOTES

The characters leaving the stage will be propelling themselves, acting as if they are being yanked offstage by a supernatural force. This should be handled in scary, shocking fashion, rather than silly or campy. The same applies to their screams.

(The stage is dark. The lights come up, revealing ten teens lying on the stage – A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I and J. Cluster of nine chairs in the middle of the stage. A chilling VOICE rings out over a speaker, from an unseen person.)

VOICE: Wake up!

(The teens stir, and start getting up slowly, confused.)

We're going to play a game.

(The teens look around.)

As you may be noticing, you are trapped in a room, with no windows, and a door on each side.

(The teens look stage right and left.)

The doors are locked. You are not to try and leave by those doors.

(H and I immediately run left, while and J runs right. They bang on the "doors".)

I: Help!

H: Let us out!

VOICE: Silence! Move away from the doors, or there will be a penalty!

(H and I stop yelling and return to the others. J stops before reaching the group and looks around.)

We're going to play a simple game of musical chairs. If you win, you survive. If you lose, you don't. I assume you know the rules.

J: We're not playing any game!

VOICE: Walk around the chairs clockwise, while the music is playing. When the music stops, sit down. Whoever doesn't get a chair, loses. The door will open. If you aren't the loser, you are advised to stay away from the door.

J: Did you hear me? We aren't playing any game!

VOICE: Cheating will be punished. We'll keep going until there is only one person left. Now I need someone to volunteer, someone who will remove a chair at the end of each round.

(The teens all look at each other.)

J: Screw you. It's not happening.

(G finally raises a hand.)

VOICE: Good. We have a volunteer.

(J turns around and looks.)

J: No. Don't go along with this!

(Music starts playing. Something tinny that's going to become annoying after a while, like "Pop Goes the Weasel." A few teens start circling the chairs clockwise. More join them. Soon everyone but J is circling the chairs. J just laughs.)

You think we're children? It's going to be a pretty stupid game, when you have the same number of people as chairs, isn't it?

(The music keeps playing. The teens keep circling.)

Isn't it?

(The music stops. The teens who were circling each sit in a chair.)

See? Dumb.

(There is the CREEEEEEEEAAK of a door opening. Everyone looks to the right.)

And now the door's open. That was easy. Let's get out of here—hey!

(J's body suddenly jerks. J stumbles along, trying to fight being pulled to the door, but J loses the battle. J has time to let loose one

horrifying scream, and then the door slams. The remaining teens freak out. C starts sobbing; F consoles C.)

E: Oh my God!

I: That wasn't real! That couldn't have been real!

B: That was some sort of...force, some sort of entity —

D: That's crazy!

I: He was in on it, right? He was faking that! That was fake, right?

F: What are we going to do?

(G takes a chair over to the corner.)

D: *(To G:)* What do you know? Are you in on it?

(The music starts playing again. C sobs louder. Everyone starts to circle.)

I: It's just a joke. You're all playing a joke on me. Tell me it's a joke.

D: Quiet!

I: No! You be quiet. You —

(The music stops. Everyone grabs a chair. I is left standing.)

I: No. Wait. Wait —

(CREEEEAAAK. And then I is yanked toward the closest door. I tries to fight it, and A jumps up, grabbing I's hand. Both are pulled toward the door, but then I is yanked away and disappears, then screams. A backs up, staring at something in horror, and then the door slams. C continues to sob, as a shaken A stumbles toward the group.)

C: What's happening? What's happening? How is it doing that? Did you see that?

(F consoles C again. G quietly picks up a chair. Moves it into the corner, next to the other one.)

F: *(To A:)* What did you see?

A: It was darkness. But it was moving. It was alive, and it was hungry. And it just...ate [him/her].

(C sobs again. B falls to his/her knees, silently praying.)

D: Does anyone have a cell phone? Anything we can use?

(They all check their pockets. Nothing. And then the music starts playing again. They all circle.)

B: I knew I was going to die someday.

D: Shut up!

B: We all die someday. But I thought I had more time.

D: Be quiet!

B: I'm not ready to die yet.

H: This isn't real. Tell me you're all not messing with me.

D: If anyone's being messed with, it's me.

(E looks up.)

E: Listen. I shouldn't be here. My parents have money. They'll be glad to pay for me.

H: Shut up.

E: They'll pay a lot.

H: You think you're better than us? You get to live when others are dying?

F: Easy. We don't know people are dying.

H: You think they sounded happy leaving this room? I've never made a noise like that in my life. I'm never going to make a noise like that in my life. So I hope your parents have a

lot of money, because the only deal you're making is for all of us!

C: Why is it taking so long for the music to stop!

H: Tell him! All of us!

E: My parents will pay to release all of us!

(The music keeps playing. They keep moving.)

H: Again!

E: My parents will pay to release all of us!

(The music stops. Everyone else sits. E sits in the last chair, but then H shoves E, who falls to the floor, and claims the chair.)

H: Loser! Now get them to take your deal.

(The CREEEEEEAK comes.)

Arghhhh!

(And H is pulled out the closest door. H's scream is somehow worse than the ones that have come before. SLAM.)

VOICE: No cheating.

(F holds the sobbing C again. G reaches for a chair.)

D: You need to stop removing the chairs so fast. The music doesn't start until after you do.

(G moves a chair to the corner.)

Are you listening to me? Why don't you speak? You're in on it, aren't you?

B: Stop.

D: I want [him/her] to speak.

A: Leave [him/her] alone.

D: Speak!

G: *(Softly:)* It seems like it's the loudmouths who keep losing.

(D shoves G. A gets between them.)

A: Enough.

D: This loudmouth isn't going anywhere.

B: *(Quiet:)* Maybe next time the door opens, we should all run for it.

D: Maybe we should.

F: Maybe we shouldn't make him angry.

D: It's killing us, you idiot.

F: You don't know that.

D: So what, we should just keep circling the chairs, following the rules, until we all die?

A: I don't think we have a choice.

D: We always have a choice.

A: You didn't see what I saw.

B: *(Quiet:)* I'm going to do it. The more of us, the better.

(The music starts up again. A, B, C, D, E, F and G circle the six remaining chairs. D is behind G, and keeps pushing G.)

D: Faster. Move faster.

(The music keeps playing. They circle, tense, slowing down and speeding up, trying to keep chairs near them. The music stops, and they all sit. E is left without a seat.)

E: No!

(The CREEEEEEAK comes.)

I have money. Stop!

(E is pulled toward the closest door.)

B: Now!

(B runs to the door. C jumps up after B, but then stops after a few steps. Everyone else stays in their seats. E screams, and a beat later, B screams too. Something flies onto the stage [could be a bloody piece of clothing – or even a severed hand]. SLAM. C sees the item, and screams. Moves away from it. F joins C.)

D: Now do you believe?

C: We're all going to die. We're all going to die.

F: It's going to be okay.

C: No. It isn't.

(G grabs one chair, then another. D stalks G.)

D: You're enjoying this, aren't you? You're a little ghoul. Moving chairs around. You don't think I know what's going on? Seems like the voice is turning the music off whenever you're right near a chair. So his little helper will survive. And all of us die. *(To A:)* You've seen it, right?

A: I don't know.

(G moves back, and rearranges the four chairs in a square. Two facing the audience, two facing away.)

D: *(To G, bullying, aggressive:)* Is punching you in the face cheating? Is breaking your leg cheating?

G: Yes!

D: Lucky for you.

G: I'm just moving chairs. I don't know what's going on. I'm just scared. Like you. Like all of us.

D: I'm not scared. I'm pissed. Pissed that you're a liar.

G: I'm not lying.

D: Do us a favor. Lose.

(The music starts up again. D again follows G. F trails C protectively; C continues to sob silently as they move.)

D: Faster.

G: Stop it.

D: Faster! Stop cheating!

G: I'm not cheating.

(The music stops. G, D and A all sit in chairs. F and C find themselves standing next to the same empty chair.)

F: Take it.

C: I can't.

F: Take it.

(F pushes down C into the chair.)

Be strong.

(CREEEEEEAK. F is pulled through the closest door, and screams. C sobs and starts to pursue, but is grabbed by A. SLAM.)

D: No grabbing people. If they want to die, let them.

A: Quiet.

D: It's everyone for themselves here.

(G removes one of the chairs facing the back. Puts it in the corner.)

You saw it that time, right? Soon as our volunteer was in perfect position next to a chair, the music stopped. Is that right, cheater, is the fix in? Because I'm going to unfix it.

(G is shaking.)

G: Leave me alone.

D: Every round you stay in this game, you're killing someone.

G: Stop.

D: Every round. Death.

A: Knock it off.

D: Truth hurts.

C: We're in Hell. We're in Hell, this is Hell, we're never getting out of here.

(D slaps C. A pushes D.)

A: Don't.

D: This isn't Hell. In Hell you don't have physical bodies. Just a soul in torment.

G: You don't know that.

D: Are you a terrible person? Should you be in Hell?

G: No.

C: I'm not perfect.

D: It's not Hell.

(The music starts again. A, C, D and G start walking around the chairs, D behind G. C is wrecked, stumbling along. A keeps an eye on C.)

D: I'm going to be watching. Looking for the time you're in position. And when the music stops, I'm going to take the seat.

G: I'm not cheating.

D: No. It's worse. The dude in the other room is cheating for you.

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