

The Way of Things
A play by Jake Lewis
First draft 10/8/23

Characters

Andrew (M)- 30s, heterosexual, well-dressed, naive
Robyn (F identifying) - 20s, lesbian, casually-dressed, patient
Doctor - any age/gender identification - institutional in nature

Setting

A hospital waiting room
Present Day
The American South or Midwest

Content Warning

This play involves a discussion about rape and its legal after-effects in some states that have banned abortions and discriminate against people who are LGBTQA+ .

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Lights rise on:

A hospital waiting room.

ANDREW is pacing. ROBYN is sitting, occasionally looking up at him, a mix of amusement and annoyance on her face.

ROBYN: First time?

ANDREW: Huh?

ROBYN: You. Pacing. I figured this is your first baby.

ANDREW: Oh! Yes! This is my first. Well, if you don't count my other son.

ROBYN: Ummm...do *you* count your other son?

ANDREW: Do I...? Oof, that sounded bad, didn't it?

ROBYN: Just a wee bit.

ANDREW: Yes, of course, I count the other one. Jimmy, I mean. He's just not my biological child.

ROBYN: Adopted?

ANDREW: In a way. My first wife, Delia, was married before me and Jimmy was from that marriage. We didn't have any fruit of our loins together...but I adopted him. Now I don't see him much since the divorce and my getting remarried to Ginny. But...it's kinda' different knowing that a kid came from your own sperm, you know?

ROBYN: No, not really.

ANDREW: Right. Duh.

ROBYN: But I *do* understand not feeling like the baby is your own. You could say I'm kind of living right now what you went through with Jimmy.

ANDREW: But if you're here in the waiting room...?

ROBYN: Let's see you try to figure this out. This will be fun.

ANDREW: Well, only women give birth...

ROBYN: Good job! You get a gold sticker for middle school health class! Keep going!

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ANDREW: And you're not currently about to give birth...

ROBYN: Wouldn't that be a surprise?

ANDREW: Then you must be here for a friend or a sister!

ROBYN: Must I?

ANDREW: Well, then I give up. How could you know what I experienced if there's not a woman in there you're waiting on to give birth?

ROBYN smiles and nods.

ANDREW: Oh no! I cannot believe how that made me look! I feel so stupid!

ROBYN: Stupid, but in a cute Homer Simpson sort of way. And acceptance is the first step to recovery.

ANDREW: By the way, I have no problem with gay people. Trust me. Or do you prefer to be called lesbians?

ROBYN: I prefer to be called Robyn.

ANDREW: Jeez, I didn't think this hole I dug myself into could go any deeper.

ROBYN: Then let me help you out of it. *(She extends her hand to shake.)*

(They shake.)

ANDREW: I'm Andrew. Nice to meet you, Robyn.

ROBYN: I'll get back to you if it's nice for me to meet you.

ANDREW: That's fair.

ROBYN: To be honest, I'm just as freaked out as you are.

ANDREW: Doesn't look that way. You're sitting there reading *The New Yorker* while I can hardly focus on an issue of *Ranger Rick*!

ROBYN: In your defense, that magazine does not have good sentence structure.

They chuckle.

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ROBYN: I guess we just show it in different ways. My wife, Delaney, is about to give birth to our daughter.

ANDREW: That's awesome!

ROBYN: Yeah, sure. I just, I dunno, am not feeling it. Does that make me a terrible person?

ANDREW: In the pregnancy classes that Ginny and I took, the teacher said having a baby isn't like in the movies where people are euphoric the whole time. In fact, it's mostly existential dread from now until the day you die.

ROBYN: You had Lars for an instructor, too, huh?

ANDREW: Good ol' Lars!

ROBYN: See, she's not having *my* baby.

ANDREW: Well, I mean...I may be Homer Simpson-adorable-dumb, but I know how babies are made.

ROBYN: That's good because otherwise, it would have been a very awkward conversation.

ANDREW: Did you want to have the baby instead of her?

ROBYN: God no! Believe it or not, there are plenty of women who have no desire to go through any of that.

ANDREW: I'm learning a lot today.

ROBYN: I'm glad I enlighten you. The fact I might shit when it's born was enough of a scare tactic. No, I didn't want to have a baby myself, but I still wanted to have a baby. At some time. See my conundrum?

ANDREW: So if it's not too personal—

ROBYN: Oh God. This is going to be very personal, isn't it?

ANDREW: I'm just curious – how'd you two...you know? Was it like in that movie where you find the hottest guy you can to help you out and you pay him a million dollars?

ROBYN: Does it look like I have a million dollars on me?

ANDREW: Well, I mean...maybe it was like that other movie where you get to pick your donor out of this catalog and—

ROBYN: Remember Lars' pearl of wisdom – nothing in this is like the movies.

ANDREW: Well, it's none of my business. I'm sorry you feel that way.

ROBYN is silent. The room feels awkward suddenly. ANDREW sits down.

ROBYN: Delaney and I were at a party, and I wasn't feeling well, so I went home early. She was there another few hours, then called an Uber. She had been drinking, and I guess the driver saw a pretty, drunk girl in the backseat, and...

ANDREW: Oh my God.

ROBYN: God had nothing to do with this.

ANDREW: Did he get caught?

ROBYN: Yeah. He's in jail now for the next two years. Less for good behavior.

ANDREW: "Good behavior" after what he did. I'm so sorry. Men are scum.

ROBYN: Some are, definitely. Especially the ones up in the Capitol who ruled that we have to have this child. They're the scummiest, you could say.

ANDREW: But can't you...couldn't you go to another state? Or...I don't know.

ROBYN: I am a manager at Claire's in the mall. Delaney is a teacher in one of the poorest states in the country. Do you think we have the money to just travel somewhere and pay for an abortion out of pocket?

ANDREW: I suppose not.

ROBYN: You suppose correct. And even if we did, the assault is on record. Did you know that Delaney and I, and even a doctor in another state, could be fined or go to jail if it was discovered we did that?

ANDREW: I read about that a few months ago, but...

ROBYN: But you didn't worry about it, because you're male, heterosexual, and, judging by your clothes, do pretty well for yourself?

ANDREW: Look, I didn't vote for that law–

ROBYN: I know. It's not your fault. It's just...not how I thought having a baby would go. It's just the way of things.

The DOCTOR enters.

DOCTOR: Robyn Nelson?

ROBYN turns to him.

DOCTOR: Your roommate, Delaney, pulled through marvelously. She's recovering now, but I wanted to let you know that the baby girl is beautiful and healthy. We'll let you know when it's OK to visit them. We like to let immediate family in first.

They look around the empty waiting room.

ANDREW: But she is –

ROBYN: That's fine, Doctor. Thank you.

The DOCTOR exits.

ROBYN: There's your textbook case of adding insult to injury.

ROBYN returns to her seat.

There are several moments of silence as ANDREW stares dumbstruck at the retreating doctor.

ANDREW: But that's not right.

ROBYN: Nope. Does it surprise you, though?

ANDREW: Let me go and talk to him.

ROBYN: No thanks! I don't need a Great Male Savior to make things better.

ANDREW: I just thought that maybe–

ROBYN: You could convince the doctor to bend the law? It's not his fault. He's just following orders. You know, I think you men sometimes talk too goddamned much.

ANDREW, deservingly chastised, returns to his seat.

After a few moments, the DOCTOR re-enters.

DOCTOR: Mr. Worthing?

ANDREW: Yeah, that's me.

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DOCTOR: You can come with me to meet your son.

ANDREW: Really? Wow! Is he OK? How's Ginny?

DOCTOR: Everyone's doing great! Right this way, please.

DOCTOR exits.

SFX of a crying newborn.

ANDREW looks back at ROBYN, who looks over at him and smiles. She is happy for him.

ROBYN: Congratulations.

ANDREW begins to speak.

ROBIN: No. It's OK. Go get 'em, Dad.

ANDREW nods and exits.

ROBYN puts her head in her hands.

Lights slowly fade to black.

The End