

MRS. SCHRAMM'S SEATING EMPORIUM

by Jane Lindstrom

Written for the Plays Every Week project.

Prompt: Write a play that uses ALL THE CHAIRS!

CHARACTERS

MRS. SCHRAMM

of the seating emporium

JULIET

Mrs. Schramm's summer intern

HAROLD VANTINI

SETTING: The emporium's front room.

TIME: Early Summer.



Juliet sits behind the front desk of the Emporium. She's in overalls, or she has a bandana or something. She's probably an english major, she probably loves plants and Jane Austen novels. She either wears glasses or lots of bracelets, probably not both though. She's not on her phone, as there's a clearly placed sign that states NO PHONES IN THE EMPORIUM. NO PHOTOS. NO CALLS. NO TEXTING. NO PHONES IN THE EMPORIUM. So Juliet sits at the front desk counting paper clips, or rearranging the trinkets, or MAYBE hiding a book beneath the table, but that's not super allowed. This is only the front room of the Emporium, it should seem like it goes on and on for many more rooms, floors, etc. But there are still SO. MANY. CHAIRS in sight. Chairs are stacked in towers, hanging on the walls, and dangling from the ceiling. THERE ARE SO MANY CHAIRS!!!!!!

HAROLD enters.

JULIET

Good afternoon, sir, welcome to the Emporium. Are you looking for anything in particular today?

HAROLD

I'm looking for a chair.

JULIET

Well, I ****think**** we might have a few in stock for you to take a look at.

Harold doesn't laugh. Juliet's like yiiiike ok, tough crowd.

JULIET

Any particular type of chair I can help you find?

HAROLD

I'm looking for a one of a kind.

JULIET

We have a lot of really unique pieces here at the Emporium. I'd be happy to direct you towards our special collections.

HAROLD

Is Mrs. Schramm here?

JULIET

She is sadly not available to assist clientele today. But I've been thoroughly trained on the ins and outs of the Emporium and can very well assist you with your chair-hunt.

HAROLD

Will she be in tomorrow?

JULIET

Unfortunately, Mrs. Schramm is on leave from the Emporium until further notice.

HAROLD

Is she ill?

JULIET

I'm sorry, are you a friend of Mrs. Schramm? If you'd like, I can pass on a message for you.

HAROLD

So she is ill.

JULIET

No-- um. Mrs. Schramm's health is fine, sir. She just needed some time off. She is planning on returning to the shop as soon as she can.

HAROLD

Hm.

Harold begins to walk around the displays, inspecting the chairs. He's checking beneath the seat of each one.

JULIET

Are you sure I can't take a message for you? I can get it to Mrs. Schramm today.

HAROLD

No. That's fine. I can find the chair myself. That will be all.

JULIET

Okay, well I'll be here if you need anything.

Juliet sits and watches Harold check every chair. She glances at the clock.

JULIET

Sir, we do close in about 15 minutes, and we have quite a lot more in stock on our 2nd and 3rd floors, as well as the back rooms, and the lower level.

HAROLD

That's fine, dear.

JULIET

You seem to be looking for a very particular chair, so if you have any sort of descriptor, I really may be able to help you narrow the search.

Harold ignores her.

JULIET

Sir, we have over 1,000 chairs in our stock.

He continues.

JULIET

Um, okay then... I'll be ringing the bell at 5 minutes to closing.

He disappears back into the next room.

JULIET

Shit.

Juliet pulls out an old style rotary phone from beneath the counter. She leans over the counter to double check Harold is out of sight. She dials. In the distance we can hear a phone ringing, very faintly.

JULIET (in a hushed voice)

Hi Mrs. Schramm. Yes, I'm so sorry to disturb you. Of course, of course. I wouldn't be calling if it weren't. Yes, right, okay. A man just came into the shop, he was very evasive to my usual questions, he said he was looking for something one of a kind, and he especially asked for you and then he started checking beneath the seats of every chair, and-- oh. Oh. What? Oh god. I'm sorry. I-- I didn't know. No, I know, I know. I just didn't expect him to be so-- Ok. Right. Right. Ok. I'll do my best to get him out--

Suddenly Harold is back in the front room.

OH YES MA'AM WE WILL GET THAT ORDER SENT OUT FOR DELIVERY BY THE END OF THE WORKING DAY TOMORROW. HAVE A NICE DAY!!

She hangs up.

HAROLD

I wasn't aware you had delivery.

JULIET

Yes, it's a new service. We're still working it out, kind of like a trial on a case-by-case basis.

He doesn't break eye contact with her.

JULIET

It's been in high demand, so... We... I mean, Mrs. Schramm thought it was worth a try.

A door slams. Harold looks in that direction. He wordlessly rushes off.

JULIET

OH SIR, PLEASE, WE WILL BE CLOSING SOON--

Juliet is stumbling out from behind the counter. Then, there's shouting.

MRS. SCHRAMM (off)

Harold! How dare you // come onto my property! You are not welcome here!

HAROLD (off)

Margaret, I need that chair! It's been in my family // for generations!

MRS. SCHRAMM (off)

No No No! I will not allow you to SWINDLE me agAIN! That chair // does not belong to you

They burst into the front room, crashing into Juliet.

HAROLD

It was my FATHER'S!

MRS. SCHRAMM

It was GIVEN to ME and so // it BELONGS to ME.

HAROLD

Oh GROW UP, Mag. This isn't finders keepers, okay, we're // not 15 anymore

MRS. SCHRAMM

I didn't FIND IT, Harold, your father GAVE IT TO ME. // IT WAS A GIFT.

HAROLD

I don't give a FUCKING SHIT if it was a gift, my great-grandfather BUILT that chair from the tree my great-GREAT-grandfather PLANTED when he was a CHILD. It has HISTORY.

HAROLD (Continued)

It has history for ME and for MY FAMILY. It shouldn't just be another little ODDITY in your CURIO SHOP.

MRS. SCHRAMM

This is a highly respected establishment, not some junk store. This is my life's work.

HAROLD

That chair is more than my life. That chair is my LINEAGE. You have over 1,000 chairs, this little pipsqueak told me // herself

MRS. SCHRAMM

Do not bring Juliet into this. She's my intern.

HAROLD

Intern??? You're not even PAYING her?

JULIET

Oh, it's okay, I just need the experience--

MRS. SCHRAMM

THAT CHAIR IS MY MOST PRIZED POSSESSION AND YOU WILL NOT STEAL IT FROM ME TO MAKE A QUICK BUCK HAROLD. YOU DON'T GIVE A SHIT ABOUT FAMILY HISTORY AND YOU KNOW IT. THIS HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT MONEY TO YOU. AND I WON'T STAND FOR IT. THIS IS MY PASSION. I AM NOT IN THE CHAIR BUSINESS FOR THE MONEY. NOW GET OFF MY PROPERTY OR I WILL HAVE YOU CHARGED FOR BREAKING AND ENTERING.

And on that, Mrs. Schramm throws a chair offstage and we hear glass breaking.

HAROLD

Have you lost your damn mind?? What is WRONG with you?

MRS. SCHRAMM

GET OUT GET OUT GET OUT GET OUT GET OUT GET OUT GET OUT
GET OUT GET OUT GET OUT GET OUT GET OUT GET OUT GET OUT

Mrs. Schramm drives Harold out of the shop. Juliet is in shock.

HAROLD (off)

You're a fucking psycho Maggie! I hope you rot in hell right next to your cunt of a mother!

Mrs. Schramm walks back into the shop calmly. Nods to Juliet.

MRS. SCHRAMM

I'll have that window fixed in the morning. Thanks for your work today, Juliet. I'll see you tomorrow.

And she exits where she came from. Juliet cautiously goes to get the thrown chair. She puts it back. Then she grabs her bag, turns off the lights, and leaves the shop in a hurry.

END OF PLAY.