

Which Way to The Beach

A Play By

Philip Middleton Williams

Contact:

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CHARACTERS:

ERIC: early thirties
GEORGE: middle-aged, 50's
MARJORIE: his wife, also 50's
RICK: late twenties
STEVE: early thirties

PLACE and TIME:

The lobby of a restored Art Deco hotel on South Beach. Present day.

Which Way to The Beach was first produced by the Miami 1-Acts Festival as a part of the Miami New Stages Festival on September 12, 2015, at the Main Street Theatre in Miami Lakes, Florida. It was directed by Steven A. Chambers with the following cast:

Eric.....Christian Vandepas
George.....Jerry K. Jensen
Marjorie.....Merry Jo Cortada
Rick.....Ernesto Gonzalez
Steve.....Michael Friedman

Which Way to The Beach

The scene is the lobby of a restored Art Deco hotel on South Beach. A front desk is Stage Right, and Stage Left is a couch, chairs, and end table with a phone, and a potted palm next to it to give it a tropical flair. Up center is the entrance to the lobby from the elevators and the rooms.

At rise ERIC is standing behind the front desk. He is in his early thirties, and he is wearing the uniform of a front desk clerk. He is on the phone.

ERIC: Front desk. Yes, breakfast is served until nine a.m. May I connect you to the dining room? *(Pause as he listens.)* Yes, there's still room on the bus for the tour of the Everglades. May I make a reservation for you? *(Another pause.)* Very good. You're welcome. *(Hangs up and goes back to work.)*

(GEORGE and MARJORIE enter from up center. They are a middle-aged couple. GEORGE is in casual business attire: sports coat, shirt with no tie, and loafers. MARJORIE is similarly attired.)

GEORGE: You go see if you can get a paper. I want to talk to the desk clerk.

MARJORIE: Ask him about the pillows.

GEORGE: I will. Go find a paper.

(MARJORIE crosses Left towards the newsstand off stage. GEORGE goes to the front desk.)

ERIC: Good morning, sir, how can I help you?

GEORGE: Good morning. George and Marjorie Engstrom, Room 242.

ERIC: Yes, sir, welcome to the Emerald Palms. We've been looking forward to your visit.

GEORGE: Oh really? Well, thank you. Lovely place you have here. *(He looks around the lobby.)* I remember this when it was a real dump, back before South Beach got all...

ERIC: Yes, sir, it went through quite a change back in the '90's.

GEORGE: I'll say. When I was in college, we came down here for spring break from Minnesota, Miami Beach was full of old people who were waiting in line for the early bird special at Wolfies or to get in to the Jackie Gleason show. We called it God's Waiting Room. Ended up going to Fort Lauderdale, y'know, 'cause that's where all the kids went. We spent so much time drinking and chasing skirts – and bikinis – I don't think we ever got down to the beach. We weren't even sure how to get there. *(Chuckles at the memories.)*

ERIC *(chuckling)*: Yes, sir.

GEORGE: Now it's all... fancy and ...

ERIC: Restored.

GEORGE: I guess that's one way to put it. Gotta say that when Steve – that's my son, Steve – said he got us a room at the Emerald Palms, I thought he was putting us in the old folks' home, y'know. But this is ... nice.

ERIC: I'm glad you like it.

GEORGE: Yes, it's a lot different than the old days. You'd never see that rainbow flag out front.

ERIC: Oh, yes, well, it is Pride Week.

GEORGE: Oh, so that's it? So this place isn't just for...?

ERIC: We welcome everyone.

GEORGE: Well, yes, of course. Otherwise you wouldn't have some old married straight couple from Minneapolis staying here, would you?

ERIC: We're very happy to have you with us, Mr. Engstrom.

GEORGE: Glad to be here. It's not like I have a problem with it or anything. I mean live and let live, y'know?

ERIC: Yes, sir. To each his own.

GEORGE: Birds of a feather. Now you take my son, Steve.

ERIC: Okay.

GEORGE: When he told us he was going to go to college in Miami, I kinda wondered what sort of place it would be for a kid from Minneapolis.... He was eighteen and he'd never really been out on his own... (*Catches himself telling family secrets to a perfect stranger, then looks around for MARJORIE.*) I wonder what's taking her so long to just buy a paper.

ERIC: Sir, is there something I may help you with?

GEORGE: Oh, yes. Is it possible to get different pillows?

ERIC: Certainly. I'll have Housekeeping take care of it.

GEORGE: Thanks. The ones we have are too big.

ERIC: Too big?

GEORGE: Yeah. We're used to flatter ones. These are too...poufy.

ERIC: I understand.

GEORGE: Good. (*Pause.*) Is it okay if we wait here?

ERIC: Oh, Housekeeping will take the pillows up to your room for you.

GEORGE: No, I don't mean that. I mean, is it okay for us to wait here in the lobby? Our son Steve and his friend are going to meet us here and take us out to breakfast. (*Looks at watch.*) Must be running a little late.

ERIC: Of course. May I get you some coffee?

GEORGE: Oh, no, I'm fine, thanks. And thanks for taking care of the pillows. (*Pulls a bill out, hands it to ERIC.*)

ERIC (*pockets bill*): My pleasure, sir.

(*MARJORIE reenters empty-handed.*)

MARJORIE: All they had left was *El Nuevo Herald*. That's the *Miami Herald* in Spanish, and seeing as how your Spanish is limited to the menu at Taco Bell, I decided to skip it.

GEORGE: Damn.

(*Phone at desk rings. ERIC takes the call, nods, then looks at GEORGE and MARJORIE.*)

ERIC: Excuse me, sir, you have a call.

GEORGE: For me?

ERIC: Yes, sir, you can take it on the house phone.

(*GEORGE picks up the phone on the end table.*)

GEORGE: Hello? Hello? Steve, is that you? You're breaking up. (*To MARJORIE.*) It's Steve on that stupid smart phone of his. (*Back to phone.*) What? Say that again? (*Pause.*) Okay. I said OKAY. We'll see you when we see you. (*Hangs up, turns to MARJORIE.*) He says he's "uck in affic on the auseway." Should be here in a few minutes. He said Rick is waiting to meet us.

MARJORIE: He is?

(*RICK, a man in his late twenties, enters from Stage Left. He is dressed nicely in slacks, a light summer sports coat with a rainbow flag lapel pin, and loafers without socks. He starts to cross to the front desk but GEORGE steps over to greet him.*)

GEORGE: Um, hello, you must be...

RICK: I'm Rick Sutton. You must be...

GEORGE: I'm George, and this is Marjorie.

MARJORIE: Nice to meet you.

RICK: Same here.

GEORGE: Shall we have a seat? (*They go to the couch and chairs.*) Let's talk a little before ...

MARJORIE: So tell me, Rick, are you from around here?

RICK: Yes, Coral Gables. I go to the university there and I...

MARJORIE: Jeb Bush lives there.

GEORGE: What's your field?

RICK: I'm finishing my masters in architecture.

MARJORIE: Oh, architecture, how wonderful! Steve studied engineering.

GEORGE: Mechanical engineering. Engines, ships, machinery.

MARJORIE: Yes, he was always good at drawing things. He used to design scenery for plays in high school and even in college. He was always drawing something. Of course, nowadays they use computers.

GEORGE: So, tell me, Rick, do you have a large family?

RICK: I have a brother and two sisters.

GEORGE: And your parents?

RICK: They're divorced. Mom and my stepmother Susan live in Seattle. Dad's still here.

MARJORIE: Oh, your mom and ... Susan live in Seattle? That's a nice town.

RICK: They like it. Mom's a landscape architect.

MARJORIE (*impressed*): Well!

GEORGE: So, I guess it runs in the family.

RICK: What does?

MARJORIE (*warning*): George...

GEORGE: Drawing. Artistic talent.

RICK: Yes, I guess so.

GEORGE: So, you must be busy here in Miami. We saw all the building cranes when we were coming in from the airport.

RICK: Actually, I'm an interior architect.

GEORGE: A what?

RICK: Interior architect. I design living space.

GEORGE: Oh.

The play is not over. To find out how it ends, contact the playwright at pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com.