

THE COMMITTEE

TEN MINUTE PLAY

By Janice Fronczak

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SYNOPSIS: A group of professional women gather in a local hotel meeting room for yet another interminable “committee meeting.”

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 WOMEN)

SAMANTHA (f) The real leader, voice of reason

SUZANNE (f) Insecure, repeats things to feel important

BEATRICE (f) Easily intimidated, wants to stand for something.

JANET (f) Tries to be business-like and stay on task.

KAREN (f) Likes to think of herself as a moral and ethical person.

SETTING

Present day, hotel meeting room. Table set for small luncheon.

AT RISE:

A group of professional women gathered at a local hotel in a meeting room for yet another interminable “committee meeting.”

SAMANTHA: So, the first thing on the agenda is choosing our lunch menu. It all has to be the same, so let's not squabble.

JANET: Did she say squabble? I haven't heard that word for years.

BEATRICE: It'd better be vegetarian, that's all I can say.

SUZANNE: God, I hate vegetables. Let's order a great big chicken salad sandwich. They have the best sourdough bread in town.

BEATRICE: You're eating carbs?

KAREN: Let's just order. I'm starving.

SAMANTHA: Well, we'll take a vote. The choices are: chicken salad sandwich on sourdough bread, chef's salad, or baked halibut.

KAREN: I visited Alaska last summer and all the natives there told me that halibut has little white worms in them, so I think we can safely avoid the fish today. But who cares, I'm starving.

BEATRICE: I'll agree to anything. I guess I can pick the meat off the salad.

SAMANTHA: So! We're ordering chef salads. Grand. I'll get the waiter.

KAREN: This isn't working. Suzanne isn't happy.

SUZANNE: We could have a meeting about it. You know, to discuss lunch decision policies?

SAMANTHA: Don't be silly, Suzanne.

KAREN: When? We are so tied up in other meetings, there won't be time. Why, I have another meeting right after this one with the executive ad-hoc committee to decide when we should meet again.

SAMANTHA: It does look like we are at a standstill.

SUZANNE spots rolls on table.

SUZANNE: Umm, butter and they're warm!

She reaches for rolls. BEATRICE grabs two.

BEATRICE: Nobody touch my rolls!

She starts to butter one and eat it ravenously. Everyone stares at her.

SUZANNE: I thought you said - oh well, never mind. How about two weeks from last Monday, that makes it the 17th, yes...or would it be the 19th?

KAREN: Did anyone bring their calendars?

SAMANTHA: I'll have to email everyone about it. Do I have everyone's email address?

JANET: I emailed you that I couldn't find your phone number, so you should have my email. .

SUZANNE: I wonder if we should just text each other. Was that when my email was down?

SAMANTHA: Your email is always down.

KAREN: Was yours down, too? I don't have unlimited texts. That's a problem, and quite frankly, a hardship on me.

SUZANNE: Perhaps we should plan another time to get together to exchange emails?

SAMANTHA: But when? Oh God, I'm booked enough. When?

Cell phone goes off. All rustle around looking for their cell phones.

KAREN: That's my cell.

SAMANTHA: No, I think it's mine.

KAREN: No, you are mistaken, that's my ring.

BEATRICE: Well, if you're going to get technical about it, I had a cell phone before any of you, and I'm the one who told you about the ring options.

KAREN: I really hate options.

JANET: They just confuse me. I'm not an options person, either.

SAMANTHA: Even if we haven't eaten yet, I'm calling this meeting to come to order. Let's see, we've discussed items 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. We might as well get to the one item that no one wants to discuss.

JANET: It's our duty.

KAREN: We must.

JANET: Yes.

BEATRICE: Yes.

JANET: Yes.

SUZANNE: Yes.

SAMANTHA: So, a show of all hands on item #7. Changing our meeting time?

BEATRICE: I thought the ad-hoc was -

SAMANTHA: - that was to discuss the when, not the time.

BEATRICE: (*Beat*) Oh.

All nod in agreement.

JANET: I don't understand why we just can't leave everything the way it is.

SAMANTHA: Because, JANNN- ET, it's not working.

JANET: You did not just abuse my name.

BEATRICE: That was a little offensive, Sam.

SAMANTHA: You know I can't stand it when people call me Sam. It's a man's name.

KAREN: Well, do you see any MEN around here?

SAMANTHA: Men don't like this committee. They think we are too, too...

KAREN: Forceful - ?

JANET: Pushy?

SAMANTHA: Macho?

They all laugh.

JANET: I say we keep the meeting time at this time. I like lunchtime. It's convenient for me because then I can slip in a little shopping on the side before I go back to work.

SAMANTHA: This is your job. I wish you'd take it a little more seriously. (*Sighs and coughs.*) I also have to ask that no one wear perfume to these meetings anymore.

They look shocked.

SAMANTHA: I can't breathe. Simple as that. I can not tolerate the alcohol in the air.

SUZANNE: You have so many needs.

KAREN: (To SAM.) But you wear perfume.

BEATRICE: (To KAREN.) It's an oil.

SAMANTHA: I'm not allergic to oil. Speaking of...have you ever smelled that new art director? Like musk...

She smells the air.

SAMANTHA: He's divorced, you know.

SUZANNE: Hey! Wow, I mean, that's really personal.

KAREN: Why do we always have to talk about people? Ethics, people, ethics.

SAMANTHA: At least you're not the topic.

KAREN: But...I'm sure you have all talked about me - at some point when I was not here.

BEATRICE: No, no, we haven't. I don't recall that at all.

KAREN: So when Suzanne here told me that you were dishing on me because my son was expelled from high school last year, that was a lie?

SUZANNE: Karen!

BEATRICE: I - We were just concerned.

SAMANTHA: And very curious as to what was happening.

JANET: You really should trust us and not try to hide things.

BEATRICE shoots SUZANNE a nasty look.

BEATRICE: (To SUZANNE.) We'll have words after this meeting.

KAREN: What? I don't believe this!

SUZANNE: That's all I was trying to do.

JANET: Especially about things that could, quite frankly, affect all of our reputations on this committee.

KAREN'S mouth drops open.

SAMANTHA: That's enough, Janet.

JANET: Excuse me?

SAMANTHA: I said it pretty clearly. (*Laughs.*)

JANET: I am getting a little ruffled that this "committee" does not seem to get anything done, ever. I don't even remember why we get together, except to eat!

KAREN: Well, Janet, dear, we do have a mission statement, which clearly STATES our, uh...mission.

SUZANNE: I have a copy of it somewhere. Wasn't our focus about trying to see if we had too many committees?

BEATRICE: No, that was two committees ago. It was made up of completely different members. We actually worked on those committees. Who is the chair of this one anyway?

SUZANNE: We never -

JANET: Voted for one. We should.

SUZANNE: Yes.

BEATRICE: I concur.

KAREN: I'm in.

BEATRICE: Let's vote. Someone nominate me, I mean, somebody to chair this committee -

SAMANTHA: You? What's our name again?

BEATRICE: Name? We never gave it a name.

KAREN: We could text each other ideas and then call another meeting to name this committee.

BEATRICE: Should we vote on that?

KAREN: Show of hands?

SAMANTHA: Since when do you get to call "show of hands"?

BEATRICE: No need to jump all over her!

JANET: It's a matter of professional courtesy.

SUZANNE: Professional courtesy.

JANET: And not creating a hostile work environment.

SUZANNE: And not creating a hostile work environment.

All look at SUZANNE.

JANET: By intimidation.

All look at SUZANNE again to see if she'll repeat again, intimidating her.

KAREN: That's it!! That it! That was the reason we were meeting: to examine and explore possible situations where a hostile work environment leads to a waste of time.

BEATRICE: People waste sooo much time. I've got loads of work on my desk as we speak. Just waiting for me to attack.

KAREN: It's interesting to me that you used the word "attack."

JANET: Yes.

SAMANTHA: Yes.

SUZANNE: Yes.

BEATRICE: Now, wait just a minute here. You're all ganging up on me.

SAMANTHA: Nonsense.

JANET: You're so sensitive, Bee.

BEATRICE: It's Bea-TRICE. I would also like to point out that nobody else is called by a nickname - except for you, Sam. Anyway, I could call you Jan, Kare and Suz. But I try to be at the top of my game at all times.

She stuffs more rolls into her mouth.

BEATRICE: Because I am a professional. I am good at what I do, at my job. I really don't need to be on this so-called "committee," which is a poor cover to get together, bash people and gossip. Now I remember why this committee was formed - to protect people like me from ogres like you!!

She storms out.

JANET: We should look into this.

SAMANTHA: Say, next Tuesday around 11:00? I'm free.

KAREN: Oooo, not good for me. But 2:00 is good. I gotta go, the ad-hoc...when does the madness stop?

SAMANTHA: But what about the time? What time, Karen, what time?

KAREN: What about it? What about it?? E-mail me, fax me, Facebook me. I'm out of here.

She flies out.

SUZANNE: Me too. Except the Facebook thing. Neither one of you are one of my "friends."

She also flies out.

SAMANTHA: I'm not sure I liked how the two of them left this.

JANET: We really should talk about this. I'll call people. We'll start a new committee to explore how people leave committees.

SAMANTHA: It was questionable...I, for one, did not know I had been de-friended. That hurts. Anyway, we'll need to seriously, and I mean seriously, look into why people storm out of meetings...can never fully agree on anything...did she really use the word ogre?

JANET: At least the rolls were good.

SAMANTHA: And you DO know about rolls.

They both grab the last rolls and exit.

THE END