

DRINKING DOWN COOL

By Jerry Rabushka

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ISBN: 978-1-60003-812-9

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A Ten Minute Dramatic Monologue

By Jerry Rabushka

SYNOPSIS: What if you could find friendship, self-acceptance, and social advancement all by twisting open a soft drink? The FreeZola generation promises all that and more, and it works! For a while, “our hero” fends off opposition—medical experts, social activists, all of them telling him he’s soft-drinking a path to disaster. But this is too good to give up! He soon finds out the hard way that everyone is not on his side.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 male)

MALE MONOLOGUE (m)..... Teenager to mid-20’s.

AUTHOR NOTES

Though this is a dramatic monologue, the character should find humor in many of the situations.

MALE: *(As a voiceover in an ad.)* "It's not just a soft drink! It's a lifestyle! It's not just a lifestyle...it's life itself. The FreeZola life generation. All styles in one life, all life in one style!" [Note: the drink's name is obviously a pun on "Freeze-ola."] *(As himself.)* I was lonely, so I joined the lifestyle. It didn't mean much at first. You'd take a swig and you'd go "hooooooo!" and wash it down. A lot of flavors, that FreeZola. Sugar, water and some flavor. We were flying high and livin' the life—whatever that life was, we were flying high and livin' it.

I had a t-shirt that said I was "Livin' the Life Zola" and I lived in it until it died a holey threadbare death in the dryer. I saw the commercials showing people climbing mountains into the sunset with nothing but a backpack and a bottle of "Zo." Notice how the word gets shorter and shorter. The life was extreme—no one ever did theater with a bottle of "Zo." No one played piano with it. No one did homework with it. It was a world of mountains and streams and fountains and dreams. My Zola shirt and jeans felt "Zo good." My teeth not so much, but...Zo well. I had it all. I dressed Free-Zo from head to toe. I looked good. I was livin' the life, I was the generation, and I was the fashion plate you could eat off of and the spoon you could lick.

Oh, we had our haters. Took a look at me in my duds and couldn't take it. Couldn't make it, couldn't shake it, but boy they could fake it. Us Free-Zo folk, we rhymed a lot. *(As someone disdainful, speaker is mocking this person in his delivery.)* I can't believe the amount of money you forked into that stuff. Walkin' around all high and special. It's just a bunch of sugar water with a logo—*(Explains, officious as himself.)* No sir, it's a lifestyle in which I fly free, well over your head. *(As the spokesperson heard in the opening lines.)* "With FreeZola, I scale the mountain. I ford the river. I dive in the sky. I am the new generation no matter what generation I come from." *(Thinking out loud.)* Fine, but can you pass the math quiz? Something doesn't add up!

The backlash went national. (*Like a big name doctor and a poetry slam artist at the same time.*) "My name is Doctor Ethelene la Chatarra. I want to talk to you about the effects of FreeZola. The good feeling that turns bad. Turns into diabetes. Turns into poor health. Turns the 'Zo' generation into the no generation with no chance of re-generation. You might as well smoke and drink whiskey because this stuff is broke and risky." That didn't "Zo" over well with the rest of us. I'd already forked for the clothes. I forked for the dream. I was part of something national without having to carry around black and white political signs with block letters like everyone else I knew. I lived in ZoLand, and every life mattered. (*As a consumer, a little cult-ish. Pantomime holding up a bottle with eyes staring straight ahead.*) "I know FreeZola has no nutritional value. It's sugar, it's water, and it's a frozen wonderful flavor. But it makes me feel great. As long as I'm here, I'll belong."

Dr. la Chatarra was not convinced, and she tried to rhyme her way into our hearts and minds. "You might belong, but you won't be strong. Is that taste worth that kind of waste? It won't *be* long before you say...Zo Long." But...even if she told the truth, no one would listen. So she got someone more zo-lific to get the message across. (*Gets into the pose of a supermodel.*) "Hi! My name is Marteria Aguasucia. You've seen me in the FreeZola commercials. But now...I've switched to something healthy, natural, cold and refreshing. Pure, clear water. I feel great, I look great, and you will too. Enter our pure water sweepstakes for a chance to win a free trip to H-2-Oh-polis."

(*Defiant.*) I wasn't having it. I looked in the mirror, I was fine. I never looked better than in my Zo clothes. But...I wasn't completely Zo'd up. I had to Zo-go on a float trip like the folks in the commercial. Get the lift, get the life, get the raft, feel the draft! Float, fly, free, FreeZola! I didn't have a lot of friends. Not everybody does. Some people grow up largely ignored through no fault of their own and we're poisoned to the point that we don't think we deserve to belong. But now I was in the re-generation generation. I was stupid, you'll say. I was taken in. Well no I was not! I was loved. But I had to prove it to myself.

I still felt like an outsider wanting to be accepted for who I was, not like the “crowd” itself that was climbing mountains, running rapids, and driving fast cars...so I drove an hour or so out of town and rented a canoe. I had my phone, a lunch, and some FreeZola and I was going to float, fly and be free over the H-2-Oh-polis of the Current River. It wasn't rapids, but I had to start somewhere. Apparently, paddling a canoe down a river, by myself, was not the place. It takes some learning to paddle. It takes some balance and some consistency, and if you're not used to any of that, it's pretty precarious. One wrong move and you're tipped over. Sadly, the FreeZola didn't give me the ability implied in the ads.

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