**Like a Blueberry Goldfish**

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**Cast:**

JESS – Mid 20s

CHLOE – A bit younger than Jess

GERARD – any age from 50-90

**Location:**

A park bench

**Synopsis:**

Jess and Chloe are taking a break from their jobs in the perfume department of a major store. They head to their favourite park bench and talk about their lives and loves until they are interrupted by Gerard, who objects to their language. The woman deploy a sure-fire technique they’ve learned with difficult customers and, before you can say ‘like’, Gerard has been won over. He probably never stood a chance.

Dedicated to TH

*Like a Blueberry Goldfish* premiered at the Port Hope Arts Festival, August 2024. The cast was Jean Parker (Jess), Alison Beckwith (Chloe) and Wyatt Lamoureux (Gerard). Anne Page directed.

The play was subsequently remounted at the Northumberland Festival of the Arts, Cobourg, in Sept 2024, with the same cast and crew.

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*A park bench. GERARD is sitting at one end, reading his newspaper or something equally analog, and minding his own business. JESS and CHLOE are on their break and enter, with coffees or teas, and sit on the bench. GERARD begins eavesdropping. Both because of proximity makes it inevitable, and maybe he’s just a curious guy.*

JESS: ...He’s, like, a goldfish.

CHLOE: Yeah?

JESS: How’d he ever get to be, like, the manager?

CHLOE: I know.

JESS: Total goldfish.

*(Pause.)*

CHLOE: When you say he’s a ‘goldfish’, what do you mean?

JESS: OK, you’ve got your goldfish, you’ve got your aquarium. Some coral, a plant maybe. In the middle, you’ve got a castle. Goldfish swims all day. He swims around the castle, says “Look, it’s like a castle.” Goldfish swims around it again, says, “Look, it’s like a castle.” *(Swizzles her finger.)* The whole day. Because the goldfish has no brain? It’s groundhog day all day 24/7 no brain, around, around, around “Look, it’s like a castle.” That’s the manager of our department. A goldfish.

CHLOE: Do you think it’s from the perfume?

JESS: Well, that’s my worry. Add it up. He’s managed the perfume department for twenty years. If he spritzed customers like twenty times an hour times for the sake of argument 250 days a year times 20 years that’s breathing in crap OK I’m calculating this

*(GERRARD is clearly listening in and probably working the math out in his own head. JESS of course is working it out on her phone.)*

20 X 250 X 20 no wait I forgot 8 hours a day times that first twenty I’m actually good at mental arithmetic, don’t, OK like that’s 800,000 times. The manager has spritzed 800,000 times. No - 8 MILLION! Oh my God! No brains. Goldfish. I should know. I’ve got a disability of my own from the perfume.

CHLOE: Anosmia. You told me. It’s tragic.

JESS: Four years I’ve been there. It’s killed my sense of smell.

CHLOE: I’ve only worked there six months and I’m already showing symptoms.

JESS: Anosmia. And I’m going to like spritz my brains away too, I’m this close to being a goldfish. This far. One circle of the old castle. And his smell. Can we talk about that? Like, did they make him manager because he is a man of 1000 fragrances?

CHLOE: They’re going to have to cremate him, he smells so bad. And then they can use his ashes for potpourri.

JESS: And what about us? I found a dress I wore three years ago, it was in a bag and it still reeked of Madonna.

CHLOE: You wore Madonna!

JESS: I was young and reckless.

CHLOE: Rick took me to an Indian restaurant last weekend and I had something with curry and it tasted like Old Spice.

JESS: Did he pay?

CHLOE: Cash. Rick always pays cash. His wife checks his VISA.

JESS: At least he pays.

CHLOE: For how long? My Dad says, “Chloe, you can be pretty or you can be funny. Everyone will love you if you’re funny but if you try to be pretty and you aren’t, they’ll eat you alive.”

JESS: That’s deep. Lucky, you’re actually pretty.

CHLOE: But for how long? I’m not like you. You’re like classically beautiful, you’ll be beautiful even five years from now.

*(JESS has pulled a yoghurt out of her bag.)*

JESS: You don’t mind if I eat do you?

CHLOE: Is that like blueberry.

GERARD: *(Aloud.)* That IS blueberry. That IS blueberry.

*(Pause.)*

CHLOE: Is he talking to us?

JESS: Who.

CHLOE: The old guy beside me. Don’t look/

GERARD: I said, that IS blueberry.

CHLOE: He IS talking to us.

JESS: She wasn’t asking you.

GERARD: She wasn’t asking you about your yoghurt either. She was making a rhetorical question, “Is that like blueberry” and I’m saying, ‘NO it IS blueberry.’ It’s not LIKE blueberry. A blackberry is like blueberry. Only it’s black and it’s tart. A greenberry is like a blueberry only it’s green not blue. Can you still distinguish colour or did you spritz that part of your brain away too? You you you goldfish.

*(Pause.)*

CHLOE: Wow.

JESS: Yeah.

CHLOE: He’s like ninety.

JESS: You’re like ninety. And like somewhat angry?

GERARD: Like whatever?

JESS: So what is my takeaway from this. You don’t like like when it’s like - but you like like when it’s like just like.

GERARD: Every day I sit on this bench hoping to just once finish my coffee without hearing the linguistic horrors that spew out of the mouths of you and your - ilk. I have come to thank God for smartphones because at least they shut two thirds of you up. You play your angry birds or tweet and mercifully you are silent. Except the silence makes you talking people seem all the louder.

CHLOE: You do understand that she has like a disability. Anosmia.

JESS: Advanced anosmia.

GERARD: She can’t smell. Like sooooooo what.

*(Pause.)*

CHLOE: Do you give it to him or do I.

JESS: I will this time. Here goes. *(Turns to GERARD).* You’re very handsome.

GERARD: I beg your pardon.

JESS: Actually, you’re hot.

CHLOE: Like hot hot. I mean, not ‘like hot’ which would be ‘really warm’ - but hot.

JESS: Hot.

*(Long pause.)*

Handsome hot. And I get your rage. I really do. It’s very attractive in old men.

*(Long pause.)*

GERARD: *(Sigh.)* I’m sorry for barking like that.

CHLOE: Unfortunately, it’s how people like us talk.

GERARD: I know.

JESS: And not to worry: in ten years people will talk in like some totally different way.

CHLOE: My kid sister only speaks in abbreviations.

GERARD: LOL?

*(Long pause. During this, he gets up to exit.)*

And I’m sad about your manager. I’ve never thought about describing someone as a goldfish but it makes total sense. Maybe we’re all goldfish in a way. Sitting here, cheek by jowl, day after day on our pathetically short breaks… And I’m not handsome. I know I’m not and I don’t know why you said it. I was rude and you could have said I was ugly and old and that would have been closer to the truth.

JESS: It’s called ‘blindsiding the customer’. When everything else fails you like totally take them by surprise.

CHLOE: She didn’t mean either ‘like’ or ‘totally’. They just slipped out.

GERARD: I have to get back to my – castle. I’m sorry I was crabby. I’ve – like – enjoyed our conversation. *(Moving off.)* And, for what it’s worth, you both smell - divine. That’s not a blindside.

*(GERARD exits. Pause.)*

CHLOE: *(Calling.)* Bye. *(to JESS)* You’re such a pro.

JESS: I’ve made some of my best sales after blindsiding someone.

CHLOE: I wonder if it would work on Rick.

JESS: Most boyfriends catch on. Sometimes it takes seven or eight blindsides but they eventually figure it out. Except with sex. Men will believe anything about sex.

CHLOE: “Oh Rick, you can go like go all night.”

JESS: But we keep on circling, don’t we.

CHLOE: “Look it’s another man not using his credit cards. I’ll pretend not to notice.”

*(They are getting up to leave.)*

JESS: Face it, Chloe, we’re goldfish.

CHLOE: Like goldfish.

JESS: Yeah.

CHLOE: But that’s not the same as actually being one, okay.

JESS: Yeah.

CHLOE: *(Moving off)* So next afternoon break instead of coming here, let’s run into the bar across the street and have a real drink. Like a stiff one.

JESS: Only it’s actually stiff, right.

CHLOE: Literally.

JESS: Literally.

*(They exit, arm and arm.)*

**The End.**