

Freedom From Thought

By David Meyers

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CHARACTERS

ASHLEY, 21, a sorority sister - nice

ELIZABETH, 21, a sorority sister - bitchy

CASEY, 21, a sorority sister - spacey

ROBIN, 21, a sorority sister - thoughtful

SETTING

The living room of the Sigma Pi Alpha sorority house. Present day.

NOTE: A slash (/) indicates where the next line of dialogue begins.

SYNOPSIS: Pi Sigma Alpha erupts into chaos when one sorority sister becomes aware of the realities of the world.

FREEDOM FROM THOUGHT

The living room of the Sigma Pi Alpha sorority house.

Two perky sorority sisters - ELIZABETH and CASEY - crowd around ASHLEY, who is reading an e-mail on her iPhone.

CASEY

Shut up!

ASHLEY

(reading from her iPhone)

“Sigma Pi Alpha will pay all Spring Break expenses for the chapter that chooses the most creative and educational Spring Break destination.”

CASEY

Oh my god.

ELIZABETH

That would be amazing.

Ashley has an idea.

ASHLEY

What about Mexico?

ELIZABETH

That’s not creative - everyone goes there.

CASEY

Let’s wait for Robin. She’ll have-

ASHLEY

The Bahamas!

ELIZABETH

We went there last year.

ASHLEY

So?

ELIZABETH

How can it be original if we already did it?

ASHLEY

I don't know. What about ... New Orleans? We could do Hurricane Katrina stuff-

ELIZABETH

That was 10 years ago, Ashley.

ASHLEY

Fine. ... So where *should* we go?

Pause.

ELIZABETH

I don't know. Someplace different.

ASHLEY

Like where?

ELIZABETH

I don't know. Like ... Mozambique?

Pause.

ASHLEY

Do you even know where that is?

ELIZABETH

Africa.

ASHLEY

I am not going to Africa.

ELIZABETH

Why not?

ASHLEY

Umm ... malaria!

ELIZABETH

They give you shots-

Casey almost jumps up with excitement.

CASEY

Australia!!!

(slight pause)

No one ever goes on Spring Break to Australia!

A beat. They all turn and stare at her.

CASEY

What?

ELIZABETH

Australia's in the Southern Hemisphere.

CASEY

So?

ELIZABETH

When it's Spring here, it's Winter there.

CASEY

... Oh. (pause) I guess that's why no one ever goes...

An awkward pause.

ASHLEY

Let's just wait for Robin...

CASEY

Yeah....

Ashley gets another e-mail, checks her phone.

ASHLEY

Oh my god.

ELIZABETH

What?

ASHLEY

Co-Eds for Christ are protesting Greek Week.

CASEY

Why?

ASHLEY

(reading from her phone)

Because Greek Week “perpetuates the immorality and promiscuity that are undermining the very bedrock of our country...”

ELIZABETH

What is wrong with them? I mean, of all the things to protest. ... Talk about no perspective.

CASEY

Seriously. (pause) Promiscuity is what *makes* our beds rock.

A beat.

They all just look at Casey, shake their heads.

The door opens and ROBIN enters. But she’s not perky - actually, she’s kind of depressed.

ASHLEY

Hey Rob! Guess what-

ROBIN

I can’t talk now.

Robin keeps walking towards her room.

ASHLEY

Is something wrong?

ROBIN

No. I’m fine. I just-

Ashley touches her shoulder, concerned.

CASEY

Are you sure? You look a little pale.

ROBIN

Yeah. I just need to go to lie / down-

ELIZABETH

Rob - the national chapter of Sigma Pi Alpha’s gonna pay for our Spring Break!

ROBIN

(disinterested)

OK.

ASHLEY

We just have to come up with a creative place to go. You always have the best ideas for trips / and stuff-

Robin tries to go to her room again.

ROBIN

Look, I just-

ELIZABETH

This is really important, Rob.

ROBIN

I know, but-

ELIZABETH

-If we get Spring Break for free, I can buy those Gucci shoes I-

ROBIN

Jesus, can you just shut the fuck up?!

Pause.

A long beat.

ELIZABETH

Um ... what the hell was that?

ROBIN

Do you even know what's going on out there?

ELIZABETH

Out where?

Robin gestures to the front door.

ROBIN

There! The world!

ASHLEY

Oh - Greek Week. Yeah - that's total / bullshit-

ROBIN

Look, not everything's about us - or college, or getting drunk and going on Spring Break.

ASHLEY

No one said-

ROBIN

There are horrible things going on in the world.

ELIZABETH

We know that.

ROBIN

You do?

CASEY

Yeah. We're not stupid.

ROBIN

Then why aren't you - why aren't *we* - doing anything about it?

Ashley steps in to defend them.

ASHLEY

We are. I mean, we volunteer-

ROBIN

We go to a soup kitchen - twice a year.

CASEY

We gave our clothes to Good Will.

ROBIN

And that's it!

ELIZABETH

So?

ROBIN

That's nothing.

ASHLEY

We're in college. What are we supposed to do?

Robin starts taking out her laptop computer.

ROBIN

I just came from my World Affairs class - and we were talking about Syria.

A lightbulb goes off in Elizabeth's brain.

ELIZABETH

The Middle East!

ROBIN

What?

ELIZABETH

That's like the most original Spring Break ever! And it's warm, they have beaches...

Robin turns to her, venom in her eyes.

ROBIN

Are you fucking serious?

ASHLEY

What is going on with / you, Robin?

ROBIN

Do you even know what's happening there? The Middle East?

ASHLEY

Yeah - the Arab Spring

ELIZABETH

See - it's perfect!

Robin shows them something on her computer.

ROBIN

This is what's happening there! This is the Arab Spring!

The girls are horrified by what they see.

ASHLEY

Rob, come on.

CASEY

That's gross.

Robin shoves her computer in their faces.

ROBIN

Look.

ELIZABETH

No one wants to see that-

ROBIN

You're right. No one wants to see it. But it's happening, no matter how much we ignore it. I mean, I always just sat there in class thinking he was exaggerating. He'd say like 100,000 people were killed, and I was like, whatever - I mean, who can even comprehend that?

She gestures to the computer.

ROBIN

And then he showed us these pictures and I just finally got it. That people are being murdered. Every day. People just like us - for saying what they think. They're being slaughtered in the streets. 100,000 people - do you even know how many that is? It's like if you took a family - put them on their lawns, shot them, and then did it 25,000 times.

ASHLEY

(trying to get her to stop)

Robin-

ROBIN

I mean, imagine your family being shot, and then it happening 25,000 times. Think how long it takes just to count to 25,000. And that's one place - Syria. This stuff is happening all over the world. Every day. And we just sit here talking about boys, and graduating, and jobs, and Spring Break. I mean, Jesus Christ!

Pause.

ASHLEY

Well - what are we supposed to do?

ROBIN

Something!

ELIZABETH

Like what?

ROBIN

I don't know. Like make our government stop it.

CASEY

How?

ROBIN

I don't know - like tell their government to stop.

CASEY

We can't.

ROBIN

Yes we can. If-

CASEY

If Assad stops killing people, he loses power. And no matter how much pressure we put on him - he won't do that. So unless we use force, nothing's gonna work.

(a slight pause)

And then we could get dragged into the war. And if we intervened there, people would want us to intervene everywhere. And the American people don't care - so there's no way they'd ever support it anyway.

A pause as everyone looks at Casey.

CASEY

My best friend's Syrian.

A beat.

ROBIN

I don't know. I mean, even if we protest or something - like at least we're trying to do something. We're not just letting it happen.

ELIZABETH

And what about problems here? I'm mean, there's so many people who are struggling-

ROBIN

It's not the same. They're not being killed by their own / government.

ASHLEY

Look - it's great that you're thinking about these things. And what's happening there *is* horrible,. But, I mean, we're in college. We're not even in the world yet. It's not our job to do this kind of thing-

ROBIN

No. That's just an excuse / so we don't-

ELIZABETH

We're college students, Rob. Our job is to go to class, to get good grades - and yes, to go on Spring Break - so we can turn into mature adults who, one day, can change the things we don't like in the world.

ROBIN

That's just a cop out. If we really wanted to do something-

ASHLEY

Sometimes doing something doesn't work.

(explaining)

Like, one of my women's studies professors used to be anti-prostitution and tried to get all these sex workers off the streets. But then she found out that a lot of them *wanted* to do it. They weren't drug addicts or anything - they did it to make money. They felt like they were taking advantage of the men.

ROBIN

Well, no one in Syria wants to be killed-

ASHLEY

I know, I was just saying-

ROBIN

You know what? You guys can live in a pink, Barbie doll mansion if you want to. But I'm not gonna be blind anymore. I'm not just gonna go around pretending everything's fine and all these horrible things aren't happening.

(packing up her computer)

I'm sorry. I know you're not bad people. But I just... I just can't do this anymore.

She storms out of the room.

A long beat as they stand there in silence.

ELIZABETH

I guess sometimes you can have too much perspective....

CASEY

Yeah.

ASHLEY

I don't know. Maybe she's right. Maybe there is more we can do...

A beat.

ELIZABETH

So (pause) ... is it tacky if we go to Syria now?

Blackout.

END OF PLAY