

PATRES FAMILIAS

by

Matthew S. Hinton

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PATRES FAMILIAS**Copyright© 2022 Matthew S. Hinton****CAST OF CHARACTERS***RICH, a father with grown children**WILLIE, his neighbor***SETTING**

A back porch. It is summer. A door upstage leads into a house. Stairs descend to a concrete patio. Somewhere beyond is grass, and lining the side of the house are various poetic elements of a family yard: A hose is sloppily coiled and waiting, bundles of wood rest near the fire pit, a plastic garden gnome smiles plastically, and maybe a stray reindeer decoration has survived until July (*but is now missing a few antlers).

Lights up. To one side of the stage, a hammock swings lazily, it's owner, RICH, dozing with a soft "honk-shoo ... honk-shoo ... honk shoo ...". On the ground beneath RICH rests a small cooler. The lights continue to rise until they are uncomfortably bright, and RICH rocks slowly, sunning himself as the distant sounds of summer pass over him with the warm wind – sounds that didn't seem to be there a moment earlier: Kids in a pool one block over, the rattle and click of cicadas, maybe roofers working on a roof down the street. The lights back off a bit, and soon, even the audience feels sleepy with heat. Just before they fall asleep, WILLIE enters through a gate. He is wearing dirty shorts, loafers as old as a New England surname (no socks), and a crusty shirt (the sleeves cut off decades ago). WILLIE is a corpulent man, mid-to-late 40's, comfortable in his own skin. He pauses to survey the scene, and proceeds to scratch himself in various places, a beatific smile on his face, then smell his fingers. He rests his hands on his belly, lifts his shirt and grins at his mountainous mass. With both hands, he gently caresses his gut in the warm sunlight. At any other time, he would end this gesture with a firm slap of his palms upon this great bombast of a middle. Instead, WILLIE finds a lawn chair that looks too weak to hold him, and places it center stage. He sits, produces a tube of sun lotion (from where?!), unstops it, and paints his stomach with great care, covering every inch and zincing his nose. He relaxes. A beat in the sunlight. He eyes the cooler and the snoozing, pendulous RICH. WILLIE quietly moves the cooler until it is just in front of him, then uses it as a footrest. Beat. WILLIE opens an eye again, then checks the cooler, produces any icy beer, and cracks it open. RICH wakes with start.

RICH: - Drake?! - Dad?!

WILLIE: Guess again, neighbor.

RICH: Oh. Hi Willie.

WILLIE: Some siesta you were having. Wanna talk about it?

RICH: No

WILLIE: Wanna beer?

RICH: I did go through the trouble of bringing them out here.

WILLIE: (*Pitching it underhand*) Think fast!

(RICH catches the can, cracks it. With each of the following toasts, RICH and WILLIE raise their drinks in salute, then bring the cans to their lips each time as if ready to sip, but do not drink until the end. This is something of a routine of theirs.)

RICH: Your health!

WILLIE: Salut!

RICH: Sliante!

WILLIE: Cheers!

RICH: Proost!

WILLIE: Prost!

RICH: Na zdrowie!

WILLIE: Yamas!

RICH: Gesundheit!

WILLIE: Bottoms up!

(They finally clink cans and drink, downing their respective brews in one go. They simultaneously crush the empties, moan in boozy delight, and belch a few sour notes of songs that only they know. WILLIE produces two fresh cans, which are cracked simultaneously, but this time sipped.)

WILLIE: So, I was goin'ta wait another week to tell you, but what the heck. The rabbit died.

RICH: What?

WILLIE: The rabbit died, man. We're expecting.

RICH: Hm?

WILLIE: I say "we're expecting".

RICH: Expecting who?

WILLIE: Whom.

RICH: Hm?

WILLIE: Expecting whom.

RICH: Oh, right. Whom are you expecting?

WILLIE: A little ... you know ... a tiny ...

RICH: Yes?-

WILLIE: -baby. We're expecting a baby.

RICH: Oh?! Congratulations, Willie! Oh wow. You tell Lucy that if she wants, we've got boxes of baby stuff. I mean boxes. Mumu's –

WILLIE: -No-

RICH: -and special toilet seat covers-

WILLIE: -Nossir-

RICH: -and like ten breast-pumps with all the bottles and everything –

WILLIE: -Thank ye', but-

RICH: -they're just mismatched, and some have parts missing, but they're all in a garbage bag somewhere in there. Carol knows where they are, we can root around and find them. Oh, and we have a library of books, for you, for Luce, for the child, but most of those are just colorful -

WILLIE: -Rich-

RICH: -like big rubbery pages with that crinkly paper inside-

WILLIE: -Richie-

RICH: Good in a bathtub-

WILLIE: No THANK YOU. She doesn't need any of it.

RICH: C'mon, Willie. You don't have any children, and I know you're both getting up there a bit, but we live in the age of modern medicine, and Lucy seems pretty healthy. Besides, this is what happens when you are expecting. You get all the boxes and bags of baby shit from all the people who have grown kids. It's how it gets circulated out of one family's house. It's like candy corn at Halloween. It doesn't sell, no one buys it – it can only be *passed on*. And fifteen years from now someone you know will be expecting and you'll get to call them over to your house, or you surprise-deliver the shit-pile yourself so they can't tell you "No thanks", and just dump it off on them. Sunrise, sunset.

WILLIE: I know all that, and thank you for the offer, but–

RICH: (*Beer in hand, as if reciting a classic verse*) "Turn around and they are young, turn around and they have grown; turn around and they have babies with baby-shit of their own."

WILLIE: But Lucy–

RICH: Oh god. I spoke too soon. I'm jinxing it.

WILLIE: No no no. No. Nothing like that. It's just ...

RICH: What?

WILLIE: Well, Lucy ain't pregnant.

RICH: You just said "We're expecting". (Beat) Are you cheating on your wife?

WILLIE: HELL NO!

RICH: Lucy either *is* or *isn't* pregnant, right? I mean, you can't be "kinda pregnant".

WILLIE: *She* isn't. It's me! I am pregnant.

RICH: Oh, well that makes a lot more sense.

WILLIE: It does?

RICH: Of course not! You're not pregnant.

WILLIE: Am so.

RICH: Why? How?

WILLIE: Time.

RICH: Time?

WILLIE: It was time. Lucy and I weren't ready before, but we've been talkin and, well, we're ready now.

RICH: No, Willie I mean, why *you*? And *HOW* – that’s the more important question. *How* you?

WILLIE: Are you familiar with the works of early 20th century author Aleister Crowley?

RICH: I’m afraid not.

WILLIE: Well Mr. Crowley – Al - was a poet, a novelist, an occultist–

(RICH reacts to the word “occultist” but WILLIE fails to see him.)

WILLIE: -and he wrote a lot about the concept of sex magick.

RICH: I’m sorry, Sex-?

WILLIE: -Magick. Sex magick. With a “k” at the end of it and everything.

RICH: Sex Magick? With a “k”?

WILLIE: -At end of it, yussir. Sex magick. He was in this group called the “Ordo Templi Orientis”, and they believed that if you visualized something, and you saw it clear enough, and then poured all of your sexual arousal into that vision, your orgasms and such – well then you could make your vision a reality. Sexuality is an extremely potent force, Richard.

RICH: ... with a “k” at the end of it?

WILLIE: This is serious stuff.

RICH: Willie. You’re not pregnant. You’re glowing, sure, and you could stand to lose a few pounds, maybe, but pregnant? No sir.

WILLIE: Well, I am fat, I’ll give you that. But I’m a little *extra* bloated on account of the water in my womb.

RICH: If you’re preggo-not-ragu, then why are you drinking? You can’t have beer for two.

WILLIE: I don’t see what that has to do with anything.

RICH: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Willie. You think Al Crowley ever envisioned that?

WILLIE: My father drank plenty of beer when he was pregnant with me, and I turned out just fine. Besides, I envisioned a healthy baby when I, you know...

RICH: Oh boy.

WILLIE: (*Revealing his secret excitement*) Or girl – Lucy and I wanna be surprised!

RICH: You have come over here and told some whoppers in your day, but that is some grade-A, first class, 21-gun salute horseshit.

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