

The Friend Shop

by Terrie Todd

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GENRE: Comedy

SYNOPSIS: Carol is shopping for a new friend and finds the selection too narrow to suit her.

TIME: 5 minutes

CAST BREAKDOWN: 2F, 1M or F, 5 or more extras

THEME: Friendship, Women

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Proverbs 17:17; Galatians 5:22

CHURCH YEAR SEASON: Any

SUGGESTED USE: Seeker Service, Women's Event

CHARACTERS:

CAROL—the shopper

TERRY—the salesperson (male or female)

SUSAN—the second shopper

5 or more friend “models” who pose like mannequins and fit the descriptions in script

PROPS: Feather duster, two business cards, pet rock

COSTUMES: Modern day, each one suited to description suggested in script

SOUND: Three wireless microphones

LIGHTING: General stage

SETTING: A store

The Friend Shop

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Model behavior

The writer has allowed plenty of room for flexibility with the 'models' included in the scene—their 'dates' can be changed to whatever is most appropriate for the actors and audience.

Keeping it real

A lot of the comedy of the scene hinges on the tone set by Carol and Terry. It's vitally important that they both carry on this conversation as if this is perfectly normal, even mundane, as if shopping for a pair of shoes or any other common household item. If the actors play it at all tongue-in-cheek or over-the-top, it will risk deflating the humor of the scene and falling a bit flat.

This isn't easy. It's tricky to turn off the part of the brain that's really aware of how funny and ludicrous the scenario is, but it really makes a huge difference, so keep a close eye on their performances and nudge them repeatedly back to the realm of the real if they start to stray. This isn't to say the actors can't make big choices and show strong emotion—they absolutely can—but the emotion should be proportionate to the kind of thing we'd actually see at the mall or experience in real life. The material should provide all of the silliness; let the actors play it straight.

Here's a perky little model...

Always bear in mind that we're not performing drama in a vacuum. Even though a script is often written by a total stranger and these are just jokes on a page, when we start asking real people to say them (or have them said about them) in front of an audience, we can get into some real feelings. It's been my experience that most actors in drama ministry tend to have a pretty good sense of humor about themselves and the world in general, but be sensitive.

One of the great points of *The Friend Shop* is that Carol is rejecting real friendship for so many superficial reasons. This is of course funny not only

because we can relate to it, but also because she's making such blatantly caustic appraisals while these friend 'candidates' are standing in front of her. Jokes about height and size and appearance can be shaky ground, so be very careful to only cast people in these roles that genuinely have a sense of humor about the quality in question. We all carry around insecurities—often about things that no one would ever even notice—and having that quality mentioned on stage while our peers laugh may be a sacrifice some actors aren't comfortable making. The point of the scene is Carol's shallowness, not the physical qualities of the actresses, so proceed with caution and make sure the real moral comes through loud and clear.