

dessert mothers

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Long table set up far upstage right. Amy, Brenda, Andie, and Amit sit at the table, in chairs. In front of each of them is an empty place setting and an empty wine glass.

GO.

BRENDA. A toast!

AMY. To the dessert mothers!

AMIT. Desert mothers—

AMY. *(overlapping)* —Desert mothers. That's what I said.

ANDIE. Hear, hear.

They clink glasses and immediately put the glasses back down, since there's nothing to drink.

While this happens, Topher enters from stage left with plate of sugary food (candy, cookies, brownies, etc.).

AMY. No, thank you.

Topher exits the same way he came.

AMIT. The desert mothers—

BRENDA. —for those who don't know—

AMY. —were religious hermits who lived in the desert—

ANDIE. *(overlapping)* —desert—

AMY. —in the desert, — that's what I said. — as the name implies.

AMIT. *(overlapping)* —as the name implies.

BRENDA. Those who were widowed. Those escaping marriage. Those escaping men, while dressed as men.

ANDIE. It was the early 2000s.

AMY. The dessert—

AMIT. —desert—

AMY. —desert, that's what I said, was as good an option as any.

AMIT. Because there weren't many options.

BRENDA. They went to the desert and fasted, and sat, and fasted some more. And pilgrims visited them to hear their wisdom.

ANDIE. Their advice was collected in a book called Sayings of the Desert Fathers.

AMY. There were 3,000 of them, and they didn't even get their own book.

AMIT. Pft.

BRENDA. Rude.

Topher enters from stage left with same plate of snacks.

AMY. No, thank you.

Topher exits the same way he came.

AMY. *(Turning to the others at the table)* Here's an idea: Let's be hermits in the dessert—

AMIT. —desert—

AMY. —desert. That's what I said. We could be whatever we wanted.

BRENDA. Hell yeah. Of the earth. Meditating and chopping wood and all that shit.

ANDIE. Drying laundry on the hot rocks outside.

AMIT. Ministering to the people,

BRENDA. Catching snakes. Speaking in tongues,

AMY & AMIT. Purifying ourselves.

AMY, AMIT, & ANDIE. Becoming holy,

ALL: Our body. Our blood. Forever and ever. Amen.

Beat in silence. Amy turns back to the audience.

AMY. My maternal grandmother lived in the mountains, which wasn't a dessert—

BRENDA. —desert—

AMY. —desert, that's what I said. She was holy. She made a pact with God to save her sons from polio. She said she would fast every Friday for the rest of her life, so long as they came home safe. And they did, and she fasted every Friday until she died.

During this, Topher again enters from stage left with same plate of food.

AMY. No, thank you.

Topher exits the way he came.

AMY. So, I thought I might be holy, too. I made a pact with the moon. I promised to give up meat in exchange for the safety of my loved ones. Now it's over a year later and there's chicken in my fridge.

Beat in silence.

BRENDA. Let's go to the desert.

A sound cue of desert winds starts to play.

AMY. I want to, but,—

BRENDA & AMIT. —Let's go to the desert.

AMY. I'm just hungry.

BRENDA & AMIT & ANDIE. Let's go to the desert.

AMY. I'm just hungry all the time.

Topher enters with the same plate of food.

Amy looks at him and, a moment later, BLACKOUT.

All sit in the dark until the sound of the desert winds goes quiet.

CURTAIN.

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