

THE WHY ARE YOU HERE PEOPLE

A Comedy/Drama In Ten Pages

By William A. Smith

CAST OF CHARACTERS

BOB 30-35-ish. A veteran of the fighting in Iraq.

BETTY 30-40-ish. A mother of two.

SYNOPSIS

Bob is an Iraq war vet who, like so many, has brought much of the war home with him. By his own admission he's not a nice person. Betty is a soccer mom whom Bob calls a busybody. Their meeting in a doctor's office sets them on a course toward conflict, humor, and ultimately understanding.

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William A. Smith

1811 B.L. Pyle Rd
Marshall, TX 75672
(903) 407-9654
bill@thesmithboys.com

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SETTING: Doctor's office waiting room. Bare stage except for chairs arranged in an "U" configuration; the upstage row parallel with the proscenium and the other rows perpendicular on stage left and Right. One end table in the center of each leg of the "U", each with a table lamp and magazines.

TIME: Afternoon

AT RISE: BOB wears fairly dirty jeans and shoes with a non-descript shirt untucked. His overall appearance suggests he just got out of bed. He sits in the upstage row of chairs with a newspaper spread wide, nothing but his legs visible.

(BETTY enters stage right with a bulky purse, an umbrella, packages, shopping bags; more than she can carry... she repeatedly drops things and turns to pick them up again as she enters and crosses SL. She sighs with exasperation as she drops her things into a chair on the SL row and plops down in the chair next to it. She fidgets with her outfit, hair, etc. to make herself presentable.

BOB ignores BETTY and turns the page. BETTY barely notices him. She turns her attention to the table next to her and picks up a magazine, thumbs through it. Silence for a moment.

BOB

(Giggles. BETTY gives him a glance then back to her magazine. Silence for a moment. Bob giggles a bit louder and longer. BETTY gives him a glance and a smile then back to her magazine. This continues until they are both laughing.

BETTY

That must be one funny story!

BOB

(Stops laughing and lowers his paper. He wears dark sunglasses)

Say what?

BETTY

Oh, nothing, I just said that must be a funny story you were reading.

BOB

(With a straight face)

What story?

BETTY

(Confused)

Uh... you were reading the paper and laughing just then and I wondered...

BOB

Oh, you mean just now. No, I wasn't reading

BETTY

But you were just looking at the paper and laughing...

BOB

I was laughing, yes but I wasn't reading.

BETTY

You weren't reading?

BOB

I just said that.

BETTY

Nevermind.

(Uncomfortable silence. Then BETTY rises and crosses to table SR and picks up another magazine then returns to her seat. Meanwhile, BOB folds his paper and lays it on the table next to him. He sits facing straight ahead.)

BOB

You know, this is usually the point where some people get nervous because they really want to know why the other person is here but they are afraid to ask.

BETTY

Well, I'm not sure I want to share that information with a total stranger.

BOB

I didn't ask you to.

BETTY

What...?

BOB

I did not ask why you are here. I simply said some people really want to know. We haven't established whether either of us might be one of those people.

(Awkward silence then she rises and steps toward BOB, extending her hand)

BETTY

My name is Betty

BOB

I'm Bob.

(He ignores her handshake gesture. She appears a bit offended then reaches toward the newspaper on the table)

BETTY

Do you mind?

BOB

Mind what?

BETTY

The newspaper... do you mind if I...

BOB

Read it? Suit yourself.

(She flips through the paper trying to find the funny article. No luck. She folds the paper and throws it on the table.)

BETTY

Nothing funny in there. What was so funny?

BOB

You tell me, you were laughing too.

BETTY

I was laughing because you were laughing.

(She's aggravated that BOB isn't looking her way as they speak. She squirms in her seat trying to catch his gaze)

BOB

And I was laughing because you were laughing.

BETTY

You started it!

BOB

Well, that's an awfully juvenile response. If that's the direction this conversation is going, count me out.

BETTY

What? Bob, you literally started all this... the laughing, the "juvenile" answers, all of it.

BOB

See what I mean? You might as well have said "I know you are but what am I?"

BETTY

I don't think I want to talk to you anymore.

(She again notices Bob seeming to look everywhere but at her and resumes trying to catch his gaze. Suddenly it dawns on her...)

BETTY

You are blind!

BOB

And you are quick!

BETTY

There is no way you were reading that paper.

BOB

That's what I said. You don't listen well, do you?

BETTY

You didn't tell me you were blind.

BOB

And you didn't tell me you were "challenged." I could have been speaking slower all this time.

BETTY

You don't have to be rude.

BOB

Me rude? I've told you three times that I was not reading that newspaper but you just can't let it go. Why does it matter?

BETTY

Because you were holding the newspaper and laughing like a crazy... nevermind. Fine. I'll let it go. (Awkward silence) I'm here to see the doctor.

BOB

Oh, it's a doctor's office?... I came to renew my drivers license.

BETTY

Nevermind. That's what I get for trying to be nice.