

NOT WHO, WHAT

Written by

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*LIGHTS UP*

*(ALAN, mid to late thirties is sitting with his head in his hands. He's a troubled man. LAURA, also in her mid to late thirties, enters and sits down next to Alan. There are two things you should know about Laura. One, she is Alan's ex-wife and, more importantly, she is a figment of his imagination.)*

ALAN  
(surprise)

You?

LAURA

Me.

ALAN

What are you doing here?

LAURA

You tell me.

ALAN

I have no idea.

LAURA

Really? You're the one that conjured me up from the dark recesses of that cluttered attic you call a mind. Just like you do every time you have a problem with what laughably passes as your love life. So, what is it this time?

ALAN  
(defensively)

It's nothing, really. It's nothing.

Well, that was easy.

LAURA

*(Laura starts to leave)*

No. No. Stay.

ALAN

*(They sit without saying a word)*

Are you going to tell me what's wrong or do I have to torture it out of you? Which, may I remind you, I am very good at.

LAURA

Okay... Yes... There was a problem.

ALAN

*(hesitantly)*

With Susan?

LAURA

No. Susan's fine.

ALAN

Who then?

LAURA

Not who.

ALAN

*(very reluctant)*

What.

What?

LAURA

What.

ALAN

Ohhhhh, that what.

LAURA

*(the light goes on)*

Yeah. That what.

ALAN

*(embarrassed)*

The big one.

LAURA

The big one.

ALAN

LAURA

You never had that problem with me.

ALAN

I didn't dare.

LAURA

Alan, you know as well as I do, that in most cases of, let's just call it... I don't know... failure to launch? It's a symptom of something much deeper.

ALAN

Well, I have been under a some stress lately. A little rest and should...

*(searches for the right words)*

LAURA

Up and around?

ALAN

You don't sound convinced.

LAURA

If I don't sound convinced...it means that you're not convinced.

ALAN

And what the hell does that mean?

LAURA

I'm just a figment of your warped imagination. I have no opinion one way or the other.

ALAN

My imagination is not warped.

LAURA

Does a normal man conjure up his ex wife to talk about his..?

ALAN

*(cutting her off)*

Okay... Okay... As long as you're here.

LAURA

As long as I'm here... what?

ALAN

Can I ask you something?

LAURA

Do I have a choice?

ALAN

Why did you divorce me?

LAURA

Now, after all this time? Now, you're asking why I divorced you.

ALAN

Why did you divorce me? You never really said

LAURA

I left you three type written pages... single spaced.

ALAN

I don't remember that.

LAURA

You only remember what you want to remember.

ALAN

That's not true.

LAURA

Who won super bowl forty five?

ALAN

The Packers over the Steelers, thirty one to twenty five. Aaron Rodgers threw for three touchdowns.

LAURA

What's my birthday?

(Alan can't remember)

Your honor, the defense rests.

ALAN

I remember the day I asked you to marry me. It was a Tuesday.

LAURA

You never asked me to marry you and it was a Wednesday.

ALAN

If I didn't ask you to marry me, why do I still have alimony payments?

LAURA

Because I divorced you.

ALAN

Okay, then.

LAURA

Okay then, what?

ALAN  
My point.

LAURA  
What point?

ALAN  
That for you to ask for a divorce, ipso facto, we had to be married.

LAURA  
You never asked me to marry you, Alan. You left out a ring where I would find it. And when I asked you if you were asking me to marry you...

ALAN  
Yeah?

LAURA  
You asked me what I would say if you were asking me to marry you. Ipso facto, you never asked, you just tested the waters.

ALAN  
I suppose "whatshisname" did the whole candles and music and one knee bit.

LAURA  
Is that what you think?

ALAN  
I was simply asking.

LAURA  
You're asking a delusion how her second husband proposed to her?

ALAN  
I'm not delusional.

LAURA  
Have you thought about seeing a doctor?

ALAN  
I am a doctor.

LAURA  
No, you're not. You're a dentist.

ALAN  
(defensively)  
We have medical training.

LAURA  
Then why are you asking me about your emotional problems?  
Make an appointment with your dentist.

ALAN  
I hate my dentist.

LAURA  
Who doesn't?

ALAN  
And I'm not having emotional problems.

LAURA  
What do you call them?

ALAN  
Doubts. I'm having doubts.

LAURA  
About marrying Susan?

ALAN  
(reluctantly)  
Yes... About marrying Susan.

LAURA  
Why?

ALAN  
Because I don't want to screw it up a second time.

LAURA  
At least you know what not to do.

ALAN  
It's not the same thing as knowing what to do. That's a  
whole different ballgame.

LAURA  
It's a start.

ALAN  
But is it enough?

LAURA  
What do you think?

ALAN  
What do you think?

LAURA  
I think what you think.

ALAN

You really think that?

LAURA

(frustrated)

I'm a reflection Alan. That's all I am. A reflection. This is all some kind of weird inner dialogue you're having with yourself. And why you conjured up the the woman you were once married to is one of the great mysteries of the twenty first century. Psychologists are going to be writing books about you.

ALAN

I recognize I have a few shortcomings.

LAURA

A few? A few?? You're an almanac of shortcomings. A catalogue. You come with an index. Are we having fun yet? Do you really enjoy beating yourself up like like this?

ALAN

No... No... Of course not. I may be many things, but I'm not a masochist.

LAURA

Are you sure?

ALAN

Why are you so resistant to help me?

LAURA

I'm not. You are.

ALAN

I'm just trying to figure things out.

ALAN

Then figure them out. Stop playing one man ping pong.

LAURA

I was depending on you to help.

ALAN

I'm not your shrink. At best I'm an echo. I tell you what you want to hear. If you wanted me to tell you the moon and stars rose over your shoulder I would.

ALAN

Did you ever think that maybe we'd get back together?

LAURA

Is that what you're thinking now?



ALAN  
I was just raising the question.

LAURA  
The answer is no.

ALAN  
No? Just like that... no?

LAURA  
Yes. Just like that. You knew the answer before you asked. You're so self contained you can only hold arguments with yourself.

ALAN  
Maybe I'm not cut out for marriage.

LAURA  
You want an iron clad guarantee?

ALAN  
That's exactly what I want.

LAURA  
It's not gonna happen.

ALAN  
I know. I know.

LAURA  
So what are you going to do?

ALAN  
If you were me, what would you do?

LAURA  
I am you and I don't have a clue.

ALAN  
I guess I could broach the subject with Susan.

LAURA  
You mean leave a ring out where she could find it and then ask you if you were asking her to marry you and you could ask her what she would say if you were asking her to marry you.

ALAN  
Bad idea, huh?

LAURA  
Do you love her?

ALAN  
Yes. Yes I do. But I loved you.

LAURA  
Then marry the girl.

ALAN  
I'm worried I'll disappoint her.

LAURA  
Then don't marry the girl.

ALAN  
I can't see living without her.

LAURA  
Then marry her.

ALAN  
I don't want to hurt her?

LAURA  
Then don't marry her.

ALAN  
I suppose I could tell her what I'm feeling?

LAURA  
Wow, the new Alan. Emotionally available. I'm impressed.

ALAN  
You are?

LAURA  
If I am you must be.

ALAN  
Think that could work?

LAURA  
You could take that chance.

ALAN  
I guess I could.

LAURA  
Alright.

ALAN  
Alright.

LAURA  
Looks like my work here is done.

ALAN  
What if she says no?

LAURA  
What if she says yes?

ALAN  
That's what frightens me.

LAURA  
There's only one way to find out.

ALAN  
Call her?

LAURA  
Call her. We both know that's what you want to do,

*(Alan nods. He takes out his  
phone and stares at it for a  
few moments.)*

LAURA  
Alan.

*(Alan looks up)*

ALAN  
Yes?

LAURA  
Good luck.

ALAN  
Thanks.

LAURA  
Oh... And one more thing. Next time you have one of these...  
uh... situations?

ALAN  
Yes?

LAURA  
Call your dentist.  
*(She exits and Alan  
dials)*

THE END