

"A VIEW FROM THE BENCH"

Written by

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*(FOR A PLAY RUNNING TEN MINUTES, THIS PIECE IS POPULATED BY A LARGE NUMBER OF CHARACTERS. THE STRUCTURE, HOWEVER, ALLOWS FOR THE MEN AND WOMEN DEPICTED TO BE PLAYED BY A LIMITED SIZED CAST UTILIZING QUICK WARDROBE CHANGES.)*

*(WHEN THE LIGHTS COME UP WE FIND HARRY AND VERA, A MARRIED COUPLE, SITTING ON A PARK BENCH, DRINKING THEIR COFFEES, WATCHING THE PASSING PARADE OF ROMANTICALLY CHALLENGED MISCONNECTS.)*

*(RICHARD AND FRAN, THE FIRST OF THESE NEUROTICS, HURRY IN LOOKING AROUND NERVOUSLY)*

RICHARD

Are you sure this is a good idea?

FRAN

*(excited)*

I think this is a great idea. I think this is the best idea I have ever had.

*(Fran starts to hurry off.  
Richard stays put)*

RICHARD

*(reluctantly)*

What if Joanne finds out?

*(Fran returns to Richard)*

FRAN

You told me yourself she's working late.

RICHARD

That's true enough. She is working late  
*(MORE)*

RICHARD (cont'd)  
(annoyed and  
frustrated)  
Then again, she's always working late.

FRAN  
There you go.

RICHARD  
Sometimes I wonder if she really is working late.

FRAN  
Okay then, what are we waiting for?

*(She starts to go. Richard  
lays back)*

RICHARD  
But what about Bob?

FRAN  
(turns back)  
What about Bob?

RICHARD  
He's my partner. And this is inventory season.

FRAN  
I know. That's what makes this so perfect. We both know  
exactly where he is.

*(She starts to go again)*

RICHARD  
I've never had a partner I trusted as much as Bob.

*(She turns back. With each  
turn back she is getting more  
and more frustrated but does  
her best to sound  
understanding)*

FRAN  
Friends like you are hard to find in this world.

RICHARD  
You really think so?

FRAN  
Absolutely. And trust me, there is nothing a woman finds  
sexier than loyalty.

RICHARD  
Really?

FRAN  
Well, that and a nice set of shoulders.

*(She starts to go)*

RICHARD  
*(still laying back)*  
I don't know.

FRAN  
*(turns back)*  
I understand.

RICHARD  
You do?

FRAN  
Of course, I do. You don't want to hurt Joanne and the last thing I want to do is hurt Bob.

RICHARD  
You are such a caring person. Have I ever told you that? I don't think I've ever known anyone as caring as you.

FRAN  
*(genuinely moved)*  
You really feel that way?

RICHARD  
Yes. Yes I do.

FRAN  
*(practically melting)*  
It's my caring nature that attracted me to you?

RICHARD  
*(warmly)*  
Yes. Yes.  
*(suddenly macho)*  
That... and your legs.

*(He starts to go. Fran doesn't move. In some subtle way the tables have turned.)*

RICHARD  
You coming?

*(Fran slowly follows him off. Harry and Vera look to see as ELAINE ENTERS looking around. JIM ENTERS and crosses to her)*

Elaine?

JIM

Jim?

ELAINE

Nice to meet you.

JIM  
(extends his hand)

Nice to meet you, too.

ELAINE  
(shakes his hand)

I made us a lunch reservation. If that's okay?

ELAINE  
Sure... Of course... But before we go...

Yes?

JIM

Well, there's something I need to tell you.

ELAINE  
(hesitantly)

What is it?

JIM  
(concerned)

I'm in therapy.

ELAINE  
(with a sigh)

Therapy?

JIM

Therapy.

ELAINE

I know all about that.

JIM

You do?

ELAINE

Carpal tunnel syndrome. Drove me nuts. I couldn't hold a pencil.

JIM

No, not that kind of therapy. The other kind of therapy.

JIM

Oh, the other... I see.

ELAINE

I don't know if Rosemary mentioned that.

JIM

I don't remember it coming up. No.

ELAINE

I didn't think so. That's why I brought it up. I thought you should know.

JIM

So, this therapy thing... Now that you brought it up. Is it for something serious?

ELAINE

I'm learning to embrace rejection.

JIM

Rejection?

ELAINE

Rejection.

JIM

How's that working out for you?

ELAINE

We'll find out, won't we?

JIM

As long as we're being up front here...

ELAINE

Yes?

JIM

There's something you should know about me.

ELAINE

Oh?

JIM

I don't know if Rosemary said anything.

ELAINE

She just said we should meet. That we would get along.

JIM

It's not something I usually talk about on a first date.

ELAINE

Sounds serious.

JIM

It is. You see. It's... Well... I'm an accountant.

ELAINE

I can see why you wouldn't want to bring that up on a first date.

JIM

Disappointed?

ELAINE

If things don't work out, you could always balance my checkbook.

JIM

Can I ask, maybe, what you were expecting?

ELAINE

I don't know. An astronaut. A movie star. The quarterback for the Rams. What were you hoping for?

JIM

Nothing that exotic. Just you're average, run of the mill, everyday... nymphomaniac.

ELAINE

Well, at least one of us found what they were looking for.

*(She takes his arm. They start to exit)*

JIM

Remind me to send Rosemary a note.

*(Harry and Vera watch them exit then turn to see TOM and KARL enter)*

KARL

We missed you at poker last night.

TOM

Something came up.

KARL

Everything alright?

TOM

My ex.

KARL  
Your ex? What about your ex?

TOM  
We...uh... got together last night.

KARL  
When you say you got together, are you saying you..?

TOM  
(nodding)  
Got together.

KARL  
Why?

TOM  
It wasn't my idea.

KARL  
Whose idea was it?

TOM  
Who's left?

KARL  
Wait a minute. Back up here. Isn't your ex getting married next month?

TOM  
Six weeks to be exact.

KARL  
I'm confused. Your ex is getting married in six weeks and it was her idea the two of you...  
(Tom nods sheepishly)  
Once again... Why?

TOM  
Before she said her "I do's" she needed to be sure it was really over between us.

KARL  
She said that?

TOM  
She said that.

KARL  
And..? Is it..? Over..?

TOM  
She invited me to the wedding.



*(Harry and Vera watch them  
exit as GWEN and HELEN enter)*

GWEN

Where the hell are all these sensitive men I keeping reading about?

HELEN

Oh, come on Helen. You're exaggerating. What about Henry?

GWEN

What about Henry?

HELEN

You said Henry was sensitive. That he wasn't afraid to cry. Show his emotions.

GWEN

You're right. Henry was not afraid to cry. He also wasn't afraid to borrow money, never call and leave with my cuisinart.

HELEN

What about Peter?

GWEN

Peter is history.

HELEN

Already. You just started going out.

GWEN

I told him to take a hike.

HELEN

But you said yourself Peter was the first man you met who was supportive of your career.

GWEN

Peter loved it that I worked. Why not? He never did.

*(They exit. JOHN and PETER  
enter)*

JOHN

Oh come on Peter. You and Helen?

PETER

Over and done. Sent her packing.

JOHN

Why, because she insisted on keeping her career?

PETER

I have no problem with a woman who wants a career. I'm down with that.

JOHN

Oh, I get it. Your male ego couldn't handle she was a big shot architect and you...

PETER

(surprised)

Architect? Helen's an architect?

JOHN

Yes. Didn't you know? Helen is an architect.

PETER

Some architect. The woman couldn't recognize a kitchen if she was in one.

*(They exit. KATHY and ARCHIE enter.)*

KATHY

I cancelled the rest of my sessions.

ARCHIE

I was wondering when you were getting around to that.

KATHY

All that naval gazing.

ARCHIE

The incessant...

(mockingly)

"And, how do you feel about that?"

KATHY

(mockingly)

"Let's talk about it"

ARCHIE

"We'll pick this up at our next session"

KATHY

And the always popular.

ARCHIE

"You can leave your check with the receptionist."

KATHY

You pour all this energy...

And money. ARCHIE

Into trying to... KATHY

Figure out what's... ARCHIE

Wrong with you. KATHY

Only to realize... ARCHIE

There's nothing... KATHY

Wrong with you. ARCHIE

It's... KATHY

Her. ARCHIE

Him. KATHY

*(They exchange looks, surprised and dismayed at the other's response. They were on the same page up to that last exchange. They exit. ED and MARK ENTER.)*

ED  
Let me guess. She told you to kiss off.

MARK  
Not in those words exactly... but close.

ED  
I told you to knock off the alpha male, chest beating routine. Women hate that.

MARK  
They say they do, but trust me, they eat it up.

ED  
Apparently not.

MARK  
How did it go with..?

MARK  
Janice.

ED  
Janice.

MARK  
I took her to see The Seventh Seal.

ED  
(incredulous)  
You took a woman to a Bergman movie on the first date?

MARK  
She said she liked Bergman. How was I to know she was talking about Casablanca?

ED  
I have never scored after a Bergman movie. Never.

MARK  
(mournfully)  
Neither have I.

*(They exit. JUDY AND EVA enter.)*

JUDY  
He's the first man I've gone out with who didn't try to hustle me into bed.

EVA  
That's not a good sign.

*(They exit as JANE and MEG enter Stage Left.)*

JANE  
He wants me to move in with him.

MEG  
He said that? Move in with me?

JANE  
Not in so many words.

MEG  
In how many words exactly?

JANE

Exactly? None.

MEG

Then how do you know that's what he wants?

JANE

(with confidence)

It's that kind of relationship.

*(They exit. MARV and AL ENTER stage left)*

MARV

(unhappily)

She wants to move in with me.

AL

She said that? I want to move in with you.

MARV

No. Not in so many words.

AL

In how many words exactly?

MARV

None, exactly.

AL

Then how do you know she wants to move in?

MARV

(mournfully)

It's that kind of relationship.

AL

So? Are you going to let her, y'know, move in?

MARV

God no. It's not that kind of relationship.

*(They exit. PHIL and HARRY enter)*

PHIL

I don't get it. You're working your butt off trying to get to know them.

HARRY

You open yourself up.

PHIL  
Let it all pour out.

HARRY  
You tell her what you do.

PHIL  
What model BMW you drive.

HARRY  
How much money you make.

PHIL  
And what do they do?

HARRY  
Just sit there.

PHIL  
Not hearing a word you're saying.

HARRY  
Just waiting for you to take a breath...

PHIL  
So they can jump in...

HARRY  
And start talking...

PHIL/HARRY  
About themselves.

*(They exit. Harry and Vera  
watch KEN and LOUISE enter)*

KEN  
This is without a doubt the best relationship I have ever  
been in, bar none.

LOUISE  
You poor guy.

KEN  
No, I mean it. We have the perfect relationship.

LOUISE  
Frightening, isn't it?

KEN  
Two people meet. They're attracted to each other. No ties.

