

Some People Never Change

by
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LIGHTS UP ON:

A WOMAN. She stands in front of a park bench with her arms held down at her sides and her eyes closed. Rigid and emotionless. After a beat, her eyes snap open and she gradually becomes aware of her surroundings. She looks down at her open palm and slowly closes it into a fist. She sits down on the bench and surveys the audience.

After another beat, A MAN enters. He's lost in his cell phone, completely unaware of his surroundings. He sits down on the opposite side of the bench. He glances up at the Woman before returning his attention to his cell phone. Without looking up:

MAN

Hey, do you know--

WOMAN

No.

MAN

No what?

WOMAN

No to your question.

MAN

You didn't know what I was going to ask.

WOMAN

I do.

MAN

(getting up)

If I'm bothering you, I can move to another bench.

WOMAN

Where are you going to go?

MAN

I don't know, there's lots of benches around here.

WOMAN
(condescending)

Uh-huh.

Beat.

WOMAN
Sit down already.

The Man hesitantly sits down on the opposite side of the bench.

WOMAN
What was your question?

MAN
I was going to ask if you knew which way the arboretum was.

WOMAN
(pointed)
No you weren't.

The Man smirks.

MAN
What's your name? I'm David.

WOMAN
Boring.

MAN
Well, my friends call me T-Bone.

WOMAN
I keep on waiting for you to say something interesting and you never ever do.

MAN
Wow. Okay. Okay, how 'bout this -- ask me one question, however personal you want, and I promise this time I will answer truthfully. Right, we've just met, so how will you know it's the truth? Scout's honor.

The Man tries to make the Boy Scout salute, but forgets how many fingers to throw up. The Woman looks away.

MAN

Okay, okay, truth starting now. C'mon, it'll be fun. I saw you over here staring at people walking past your bench, now you can't tell me you haven't been the least bit interested in them. Well, one of them sat down next to you and you can ask him anything you want. Literally any--

WOMAN

How do you want to die?

MAN

(pause)

Nice. I like it. Umm, okay. I think I want to die of old age but not too old. Like when I'm ninety I get some disease that takes me out in less than a week and I can be on morphine the entire time and not feel a thing. Yeah. And then I wanna be cremated for sure. When I was younger we buried our dog Pepe Le Pew in the backyard, but he wasn't in the ground deep enough, so the neighbor's dog dug him up a couple weeks later, and it was...awful, like *awful*. His real name was Randy, but we all called him Pepe Le Pew because this one time he tried to fuck a skunk.

No reaction from the Woman.

MAN

So I'm cremated, and then my brother Brian if he's still around or maybe if I have kids, I would want them to scatter my ashes somewhere I've never been before, like, umm, I've always wanted to see the Badlands. Actually, no. You know what would be even better? They could drop little pieces of me all over Times Square and then people would step on me and I'd get wedged in their sneaker treads and then I could be everywhere at once. Now be honest, you thought I was going to say something stupid like dying while having sex.

WOMAN

No.

MAN

Isn't that what most people say?

WOMAN

I don't know. I've only ever asked you.

MAN

Okay, your turn. How do you want to die?

WOMAN

It doesn't matter.

MAN

Oh, come on, play the game. I gave you scattering ashes in Times Square off the top of my head.

The Woman is silent.

MAN

Then you have to tell me your name.

WOMAN

I don't have a name.

MAN

Do I have to guess it? Do you spin straw into gold?

WOMAN

I don't have a name. I don't have a family. I don't have a dog. I don't have friends and I don't have enemies -- at least I don't think so. I don't eat, drink, or sleep. I don't go anywhere.

MAN

So what do you do all day?

WOMAN

I sit on this bench and talk to you. I have a voice and this body, as much of it as I can see. I don't even know if I have genitals.

MAN

I would think that last one would've come up by now.

WOMAN

(accusatory)

How did you get here?

MAN

I, uh, just walked over.

WOMAN

What did you do right before that moment? How did you get to this park? Did you take the train? Did you drive? What did you do this morning? When did you wake up? Did you shower? Brush your teeth? What brand toothpaste? What color was the bath mat? What did you even eat for breakfast?

Like anticipating a sneeze that never comes, she breaks out of her trance.

WOMAN

Can't tell you.

MAN

I realize this is normal for you, but this is bar none the strangest conversation I have ever had.

Beat. The Man returns to his cell phone.

MAN

So every single day of your life you've sat on this bench.

WOMAN

And I talk to you.

MAN

Right, you talk to me. Do you always ask me the same questions?

WOMAN

Verbatim.

MAN

And do I always give the same answers?

WOMAN

Every line is the same. Nothing changes. *(looking at the audience)* Almost nothing.

MAN

Wow, that must get boring.

WOMAN

(nearly in tears)

It's *dreadful*.

MAN

Have you ever tried to call an audible? Flip the script?

The Woman looks at the Man, suddenly hopeful.

MAN

If things are really so dreadful, why don't you do something about it? Sit on a different bench. Better yet, don't even come to this park. You should do whatever makes you happy, no one's forcing you to stay--

The Woman kisses the Man. She pulls back and examines his face in her hands.

She sees flickers of understanding in his eyes, but it arrives in quick bursts like bits of music in between static while scrolling AM radio.

MAN

(struggling)

Did that, uh...make you...happy?

WOMAN

You're doing great.

MAN

(beginning to understand)

I...uh...sorry, my throat...

The Man starts to enter the same trance the Woman experienced, only more intermittent and less intense. He starts to become aware of his surroundings.

WOMAN

It's okay. I'm still here. Just stay with me this time, okay? Please. I'll keep trying but please just stay with me this one time.

She takes his hand and stands up in the exact same spot she stood at the very beginning. She closes her eyes. The Man stands next to her, gripping her hand, frightened and confused. Then:

BLACKOUT.