

A short One Act Play

On the back wall of the stage a video is projected of cars passing to the left and right on a fairly busy downhill drive. At center stage sits the shell of a car from the front seat back so that the driver and passenger are both completely visible to the audience. On the drivers' side a steering wheel is situated in front of STACY, a very pretty, if-disheveled 30-ish young woman. On the passenger's side sits JEFFRY, an older man in casual clothes.

JEFFRY

The curtain opens to the two staring straight into the audience. After a few seconds he turns toward STACY.

“Why'd you turn out here?”

STACY

“You brought your laptop, right?”

He glances down to his lap where he holds a laptop.

“It's pretty here don't you think?”

He looks as though down over a hill.

JEFFRY

“Yeah.” He hesitates. “I thought you had a class to teach at ten and then we were going to go over some stuff at your office.”

STACY

“This is where you had your protagonists drive off the cliff, right?”

JEFFRY

His head jerks toward her now with some concern. “A place something like this I suppose, yeah.”

STACY

“It was here, wasn't it?” She hesitates and then pointing off in front of them and to their right, adds: “Right over there – between those two madrona trees, right?”

JEFFRY

“One adapts familiar settings in fiction. It's what one does.” Agitated he adds, “But what about your class?”

STACY

“You sat here and thought about the situation and felt all the emotions they were feeling.” She hesitated again. “And then you just let them drive off over the cliff?”

JEFFRY

“Is there a point to any this? You have a classroom full of students waiting to learn what you have to say about the Bohr atom and you're obsessing about fictional suicide?”

STACY

“Did Lenore send you a photo of herself after that class you sat in on last week waiting for me?”

JEFFRY

“What?” He looked over at her again. “Yeah. So what?”

STACY

“Was she dressed?”

JEFFRY

He seems exasperated, “What the hell?”

STACY

“Was she?”

JEFFRY

“Look, I hadn’t even opened her email till this morning. I knew she had sent me something, but I didn’t care enough about it to even open it. That was over a week ago, wasn’t it? I’ve got other things to do than look at some photo of Lenore. I had thought we’d be getting together to continue collaborating our book and I was preparing for that, but you didn’t call or text or anything else till this morning.” Then, louder, “You have a class, Stacy!”

STACY

Very slowly and deliberately she asks, “Was she dressed?”

JEFFRY

“Yes.”

STACY

“Did she want you to do a portrait of her?”

JEFFRY

“Yes.”

STACY

“Will you?”

JEFFRY

“No! Now you’d better get us back on the road so you can teach your class.”

STACY

“I had Lenore teach the class today; she can handle the Bohr atom.”

JEFFRY

They both sit for nearly a minute clearly irritated with each other. Finally he speaks:

“Why didn’t you get back with me sooner? Is your other research keeping you busy or is it the other classes you’re teaching? I know you have a lot going, but I was afraid you must have lost interest in our collaboration. I was very happy with the progress we had made. Weren’t you? I thought our Baryonic Universe book was going well.”

STACY

“It is.”

Prolonged silence after which she added, “I heard back from McGregor.”

JEFFRY

“Oh.”

More silence.

“And?”

STACY

“They want to publish your ‘What’s It Matter’ book.”

JEFFRY

“Book four?”

STACY

“Yes. Dr. Emerson thinks it’s the best of the four.”

JEFFRY

“But it’s a sequel.”

STACY

“He knows that. He thinks it should be edited to stand alone.”

JEFFRY

“Oh, God!”

STACY

“He asked for us to come back there for a week to work with a team he has set up. They have some ideas.”

JEFFRY

“I’ll bet. When did you hear back?”

STACY

“Saturday.”

JEFFRY

“Saturday? This is Thursday. Why didn’t you tell me?”

STACY

“Well, we’ve been doing physics – not fiction – and I’d never read that particular one of your ‘literary masterpieces’, so I thought I maybe ought to read it if I’m going to go to New York with you.” She did a sort of half laugh. “I can go with you can’t I?”

JEFFRY

“Oh. Sure.”

They both sit silently again for a bit.

“You’re a slow reader?”

STACY

“No. I’m a thorough reader.”

JEFFRY

Smiling now, he says, “And you didn’t like what you read concerning the joint suicide.”

STACY

“I loved those characters in the three previous books.” She paused. “And that’s the way you started this god damned last book in the series? Killing them off?”

JEFFRY

Still smiling, “Sorry. I didn’t know you cared.”

STACY

“Didn’t know? Jesus. Who starts a book out with the joint suicide of the protagonists?”

JEFFRY

“Dr. Emerson I guess?” He laughed again.

STACY

“Are you kidding? He’ll probably want to scrap it and it’s the best writing you’ve ever done.”

JEFFRY

“I think our Baryonic Universe is the best writing either of us has ever done. Doesn’t Emerson want to look at what we’ve got?”

STACY

“No. He’s the wrong guy. I just sent the proposal to him because Professor James thought he was the right person to contact, but James was just a contributor to a book of essays, not a physics book. Emerson looked you up and saw that you had written some fiction and took it on himself to see if

it was worth publishing.” She paused and then started laughing as she said, “I’m surprised he doesn’t want to do a coffee table book of some of your drawings.”

JEFFRY

He was laughing now, “You mean the ones of Lenore?”

STACY

The sound of an engine starting.

“Yeah, those,” she said sarcastically as she began turning the wheel.

The background video changes to receding roadway behind the car. The two are facing forward and smiling.

JEFFRY

“So, back to the Baryonic Universe?”

STACY

“Unless you’d rather draw my portrait.”

JEFFRY

“Fully dressed?”