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This publication is dedicated to the memory of Richard O'Bryant.

May he know that he is remembered and missed.

Cast of Characters

MAN

WOMAN

SHARK IN THE BATHTUB

by Carla Hosein and Richard O'Bryant

(The MAN, a typical struggling artist, is sitting stiffly in the chair reading a newspaper. The WOMAN, a psychiatrist, sits comfortably on the couch, reading a book. Between the chair and couch is a small table. On it are a ceramic fish and a pair of glasses. In the background is an easel with a painting and art supplies – all on an old bed sheet. On the side of the couch opposite the table, there is a purse on the floor. Inside is an appointment book and a roll of Lifesavers.)

MAN. There's an art show in town.

WOMAN. What kind of art?

MAN. What do you mean?

WOMAN. *(Impatiently.)* What kind of art?

MAN. What kinds of art are there?

WOMAN. You tell me, you're the artist.

MAN. I don't know. Good and bad I suppose.

WOMAN. Is it Classical, Romantic, Modern, what?

MAN. All it says is that there's an art show in town.

WOMAN. That's what I was asking. Why don't you ever answer a question straight?

MAN. What do you mean?

WOMAN. You always answer a question with a question.

MAN. I do?

WOMAN. Yes, you do. Haven't you ever noticed?

MAN. Why? Should I have?

WOMAN. Yes, you should have.

(There is a pause. MAN goes back to reading the newspaper. WOMAN begins reading book.)

MAN. There's an art show in town.

WOMAN. You're repeating yourself.

MAN. Am I?

WOMAN. *(Slamming book closed:)* Stop it! You're driving me crazy!

MAN. That's a new one, a shrink going crazy.

WOMAN. That's not new. Psychiatrists have always gone crazy.

MAN. Must be the diet.

WOMAN. What would you expect from listening to people's problems all day? Except for you. You never talk at all.

MAN. You should enjoy the break.

WOMAN. But you drive me crazy silently, and that's worse.

MAN. *(Closing paper:)* Fine! Let's talk. What do you want to talk about?

WOMAN. I don't know. Let's talk about something crazy, like the weather, or where chocolate milk comes from, or purple grass.

MAN. Purple grass? What's so crazy about purple grass? I've seen purple grass.

WOMAN. Where? At Toyland? Oh, all right. We'll skip purple grass.

MAN. There's an art show in town.

WOMAN. Why do you want to go so much?

MAN. It's something to do.

WOMAN. Are you saying that there's nothing to do here?

MAN. No, all I'm saying is—

WOMAN. *(Interrupting:)* —is that you want to go.

MAN. I was simply stating the fact that there is an art show in town. Why do you have to read meaning into everything I say?

WOMAN. I'm a psychiatrist.

MAN. You should be a human being first!

WOMAN. What do you think I am, an alien?

MAN. Did I say you were an alien? There you go again.

WOMAN. I merely wanted to know what you were implying.

MAN. If you spent more time listening to what I say instead of trying to read my mind, you wouldn't have to ask such stupid questions.

WOMAN. There is no such thing as a stupid question.

MAN. Yes there is. The one you just asked.

WOMAN. (*MAN mouths along:*) The only stupid question is the one that isn't asked.

MAN. What is that? Out of a book or something?

WOMAN. Yes, actually. It is.

MAN. Would you talk to me for once, instead of quoting out of a stupid book?

WOMAN. What do you think I'm doing now?

MAN. Quoting. That's why I brought it up.

WOMAN. I'm sorry. It's just so much easier to quote with my patients.

MAN. (*Getting control of himself:*) I'm not one of your patients. Though you treat me like one.

WOMAN. Do I really? How do you feel about that?

(*MAN screams.*)

WOMAN. Don't yell at me.

MAN. I wasn't yelling at you, I was just...yelling.

WOMAN. Well, it sounded like you were yelling at me. (*Starting to babble:*) I don't like it when people yell at me. My mother yelled at me when I was a child. I think that has something to do with it. I wish I knew for certain. It would make things so much easier.

(*MAN screams again.*)

WOMAN. Why did you just scream?

MAN. It relieves tension.

WOMAN. Do you have a lot of tension? Tension is caused by stress. Did you know that?

MAN. No. I didn't know that.

WOMAN. Well, now you do.

MAN. Do you treat your patients like this?

WOMAN. Like what?

MAN. This. This.

WOMAN. What? What?

(*MAN seems about to scream.*)

WOMAN. Don't you dare yell at me again!

MAN. I wasn't yelling at you, I was yelling because of you.

WOMAN. What did I do?

MAN. What's your success rate?

WOMAN. Success rate?

MAN. For your patients.

WOMAN. I really don't know. You'll have to talk to my secretary about that.

MAN. Do I have to make an appointment to talk to you, too?

WOMAN. Of course not. You can talk to me anytime. Don't you know that by now?

MAN. But it seems like the only time we do talk, we argue.

WOMAN. That's not true.

MAN. What do you think we're doing now?

WOMAN. Well, it depends on how you look at it. We could be talking or arguing.

(MAN looks at WOMAN skeptically.)

WOMAN. Well, do you see my point?

MAN. No. I still call this arguing.

WOMAN. Fine. We'll argue. *(Pause.)* What do you want to argue about?

MAN. Purple grass?

WOMAN. Not another repetition!

MAN. Okay. You choose.

WOMAN. Do you know you snore?

MAN. Snore? I don't snore. Besides, even if I did snore, how would I know? I'm asleep while I'm snoring. At least I don't sing in the shower.

WOMAN. It's un-American not to sing in the shower.

MAN. But 'Puff the Magic Dragon'?

WOMAN. I like that song. It's a true favorite of everyone. I play it in the waiting room for my patients.

MAN. That explains a lot.

WOMAN. What do you mean by that?

MAN. It just irks me to no end that you, the epitome of perfection, can sit there and smugly tell me that I snore.

WOMAN. But you do. And you sound awful! Maybe we should see a doctor about your condition.

MAN. What condition? Mental or physical?

WOMAN. Your snoring. Snoring is the result of not breathing properly during sleep.

MAN. So what's your diagnosis, doctor? Cut off my nose? Never sleep again? Enlighten me, oh woman of wisdom!

WOMAN. I'm not sure. It's not my specialty.

MAN. No. Your specialty is driving me crazy!

WOMAN. How? You never associate with my patients.

MAN. Easily solved. Invite them over. We'll all go out to dinner, take in a movie, or... Hey! There's an art show in town!

WOMAN. (*Trying to remain in control:*) No. I'm not going to scream. I'm not going to scream. I won't lose control. Psychiatrists don't scream.

MAN. Doesn't talking to yourself mean you're crazy? Besides, maybe if you did scream, if you showed just a little emotion now and then, you wouldn't act like you had a chainsaw up your butt.

(*WOMAN begins to sing "Puff the Magic Dragon."*)

MAN. No. Stop. Please, I take it back!

(*WOMAN sings louder.*)

MAN. I'm melting! I'm melting!

WOMAN. No don't! I don't want a spot on my floor!

MAN. Thanks for the sympathy, shrink.

WOMAN. Don't call me that. I'm a psychiatrist.

MAN. You're crazier than your patients!

WOMAN. What makes you say that?

MAN. My ever-present wit? My all-encompassing charm?

WOMAN. Your non-existent modesty? Your delusions of grandeur?

MAN. What delusions? Are you implying that I need mental therapy?

WOMAN. Now whose reading meaning into things?

MAN. So we're picking up each other's bad habits. Just call me 'Dr. Von Strumm.' How do you feel about that?

(WOMAN feels MAN's forehead.)

WOMAN. Are you feeling okay?

MAN. Why? Aren't I acting normally? Do you think I should see a shrink?

WOMAN. Not unless you want to. I could recommend a good one.

MAN. Who? Dr. Ruth?

WOMAN. Dr. Ruth? I doubt you could get an appointment. I could fit you in for an appointment. Interested?

MAN. I thought you said I didn't need an appointment to talk to you.

WOMAN. *(Looking at appointment book:)* How's next Tuesday?

(MAN screams.)

WOMAN. Well, you're not talking to me now, so maybe an appointment would help you open up.

MAN. Let's get a dog.

WOMAN. What?

MAN. I said, 'Let's get a dog.'

WOMAN. Why a dog? Why not a cat? Cats are nice.

MAN. I'm allergic to cats. Besides, I want a dog.

WOMAN. Why do you want a pet anyway? Do you realize all the trouble a pet would be?

MAN. I'm at home all the time. I'll take care of it. Besides, I WANT A DOG!

WOMAN. A dog would just get under everyone's feet.

MAN. Whose feet? We never have company over because you always have your nose buried in those damn books!

WOMAN. Those books keep me company while you just ignore me.

MAN. Get a dog!

(WOMAN *screams.*)

MAN. I thought you said shrinks don't scream.

WOMAN. I'm not being a psychiatrist now; I'm being a human being. That's what you said you wanted.

MAN. Yeah, but you're so caught up in the job, you can't even say the word 'shrink.'

WOMAN. Yes I can.

MAN. Then say it. Say shrink. Come on. You can do it.

WOMAN. Thanks for the support.

MAN. You're stalling. (*He grabs the ceramic fish.*) Say it, or the fish flies.

WOMAN. NO! Not Sigmund! Please not Sigmund!

MAN. Say it!

WOMAN. (*Slowly at first, then with more feeling:*) S-s-sh-shrink. Shrink. SHRINK!

MAN. (*Gloating:*) You said it! You said it! (*Accidentally drops fish while childishly hopping around:*) Oops.

WOMAN. SIGGY! You murderer! You killed Sigmund!

MAN. It was an accident. Besides, it was an ugly fish.

WOMAN. (*Cleaning up:*) Nothing is an accident. We do everything subconsciously. How could you kill my fish?

MAN. Maybe we could glue it.

WOMAN. It's not the same!

MAN. What do you want to do, bury it?

WOMAN. That's a good idea. Where? The flower bed?

MAN. I was being sarcastic.

WOMAN. I don't think it would smell up the apartment.

MAN. We are not burying a ceramic fish in the flower bed. Just flush it down the toilet.

WOMAN. And then have to pay for a plumber to come and unclog the drain? It would be better to bury my poor, dead Siggy. We can make a little fish-size tombstone and everything. Go put on your suit, will you. We'll do it right now. Oh, and bring that little shovel.

MAN. You're not serious. You can't be serious. We can't have a funeral for a knick-knack. And I'm not dressing up for a fish!

WOMAN. You are! You killed him and you're going to bury him and ask him to forgive you.

MAN. You're sick.

WOMAN. You could even say a eulogy for him.

MAN. You're crazy.

WOMAN. Crazy, I was crazy once. They took me to a place called Sunny Land. I was born there. I was raised there. I died there. They buried me with worms. Ooooh, I hate worms. They make me crazy. (*Repeat.*)

MAN. You're driving me crazy!

WOMAN. Why? Because I'm upset you killed my fish?

MAN. Because you won't shut up. You won't shut up about the stupid fish.

WOMAN. Do you know who gave me that fish?

MAN. Um...Dr. Eugene Spritzer, Ph Dork.

WOMAN. How did you know? Did I ever tell you before?

MAN. Yeah. A lot.

WOMAN. How many times?

MAN. Oh, two, three, a hundred...

WOMAN. Well, I appreciated the gift.

MAN. Oh, please. The guy's a mail order shrink with a fancy name and a PO Box.

WOMAN. You're just jealous of his success. I don't believe you! First you kill my fish, then you insult my idol! *(Goes through purse.)* Want a Lifesaver?

MAN. Can I have a green one?

WOMAN. *(Breaking open roll:)* Why do you always pick green? Don't you know that they always put the green ones in the middle?

MAN. I like the green. The green are more tangy. Besides, some people say that the green ones bring you good luck.

WOMAN. That's M&M's.

MAN. You always contradict me.

WOMAN. No I don't.

MAN. You just did.

WOMAN. Did not.

MAN. Did too.

WOMAN. So what?

MAN. Grow up.

WOMAN. What do you think I am? A child?

MAN. You're acting like one.

WOMAN. Am not.

MAN. Are too.

WOMAN. Will you stop arguing with me?

(MAN makes a childish gesture.)

WOMAN. What am I supposed to say to that?

MAN. You tell me, you're the psychiatrist.

WOMAN. I told you I wasn't being a shrink now.

MAN. No, you're being annoying.

WOMAN. I'm hurt. How can you think I'm annoying?

MAN. I don't really. You're not around enough to be annoying.

WOMAN. Well, someone has to support the two of us.

MAN. *(Defensively:)* I've sold a lot of paintings. People like my work and they pay good money for it.

WOMAN. But it's not a steady income. What do you want me to do? Quit? So you can support us?

MAN. No. I know how much your work means to you. I just wish I knew how much I meant to you.

WOMAN. You don't know?

MAN. When's the last time you told me?

WOMAN. I told you just last... *(Realizing:)* oh. Well, how do you feel about me?

MAN. I asked you first.

WOMAN. (*Laughing slightly:*) Yes, you did, didn't you? Well, I feel a lot about you. You can be annoying at times.

MAN. You're obsessed with your work.

WOMAN. You pester me while I'm working.

MAN. You ignore me.

WOMAN. You never talk to me when I'm not working.

MAN. You never listen to what I say.

WOMAN. You have a great sense of humor.

MAN. You always care about what I think.

WOMAN. I love your eyes.

MAN. I love your smile.

WOMAN. You've become a big part of me.

MAN. You're the best thing that ever happened to me.

WOMAN. What?

MAN. Oh, nothing. Maybe if we started spending time together, like we used to.

WOMAN. Good idea. You remember our first date?

MAN. How could I forget? I invited you over for a home-cooked meal. I didn't expect you to bring your parents along.

WOMAN. What did you expect me to do? Leave them at the dorm? They had just come down to visit me. Where else could they go?

MAN. To hell for all I care! They ate *our* dinner! In *my* apartment!

WOMAN. The pizza wasn't that bad.

MAN. I still have nightmares about when we walked in on them... ugh! At least they had a romantic evening.

WOMAN. We had our share of romance.

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