SIDEWALK PEOPLE

A Play in One Act

by

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THE PEOPLE

JOEY MULLECK: a fifty-two-year-old bus driver

CARLA RIVERS: a thirty-four-year-old dental hygienist

MARTY THURSTON: a twenty-two-year-old breakfast food promotionist

YOUNG MAN: a young man

SETTINGS: THE STAGE is bare except for a sidewalk which nearly crosses the length of the stage. There is a bench along the sidewalk facing the road. The audience is where the other side of the road would be.

JOEY is seated on the bench. He is diligently working on a newspaper crossword puzzle with very little success. CARLA enters in a hurry. She is dressed casually but neatly and carries a shopping bag in which is her uniform. Enter MARTY. He is out of breath from running. He slicks his floppy hair back.

MARTY

(Catches his breath. Pause.)

I heard that Harold crossed the street yesterday.

 (JOEY grunts a chuckle, and

 without lifting his head,

 shrugs his shoulder in disbelief.

 CARLA glances at MARTY, pauses,

 and turns back.)

JOEY

I need a five-letter word for “mislead”.

CARLA

What letter does it begin with?

MARTY

He did, you know…cross the street.

JOEY

I don’t know what it starts with, but the last letter is definitely “T”.

CARLA

You sure?

JOEY

Sure, I’m sure, cause “to jump” in French is “sauter”. You know, like an onion in a frying pan.

CARLA

Really? Where’d you learn that?

MARTY

He didn’t learn it, I told him! He’s been working on that damn thing since yesterday. You think he’d know French?

JOEY

Wait a minute…

MARTY

Damn fool. He can’t even communicate with people in the English language, the Goddam American-English language for that matter! What makes you think he’d be able to speak French?

(Conversation subsides.)

CARLA

Ends with “T” huh?

MARTY

What time is it?

JOEY

I don’t know. My watch is broken.

MARTY

What time is it, Carla?

CARLA

I think the bus will be here soon.

MARTY

Maybe we missed it. Shit, maybe we missed it.

JOEY

We didn’t. It ain’t come yet.

MARTY

You sure?

JOEY

Sure, I’m sure.

CARLA

I hope we didn’t miss it.

JOEY

We didn’t.

(MARTY spots CARLA’s bag.)

MARTY

What’s in the bag? Hey, Carla, what’s in the bag?

CARLA

My uniform.

MARTY

Really? My mother wore a uniform…Hey, why haven’t you got it on? Joey’s got his on.

CARLA

I didn’t have time this morning. I was running late.

(JOEY, coming out of his

crossword.)

JOEY

Yeah, Carla, why ain’t ya got it on?

CARLA

I told you.

JOEY

You should be proud to wear a uniform.

MARTY

My mother was proud.

CARLA

I am.

JOEY

Then how come ya ain’t got it on? I got mine on. I’m proud. Not everyone gets to wear a uniform, ya know.

MARTY

Yeah, Carla. You should count yourself lucky. After all, not everyone gets to wear the same thing, day in and day out, year after year for the rest of their non-retired lives.

(To JOEY)

By the way, I guess your day is coming pretty soon, huh, Sport? What are you now, fifty-two? Fifty-three? Well, I guess you got a good twelve, thirteen years left in you before ol’ Uncle Sam says it’s curtains time, huh?

JOEY

At least I worked in my life. You do nothin’ but sell damn breakfast tarts and “Pansy Puff” cereal to help some kid’s teeth rot out!

MARTY

Look, no little kid ever lost an incisor eating *my* cereal!

CARLA

(didactically)

Actually, Marty, it’s the molars that drop out first. I’ve seen them – decaying away – all that yucky plaque!

MARTY

Oh, just go Waterpik somebody’s mouth, would ya, Carla!

JOEY

Drop it, Marty. Just drop it.

(Marty chuckles).

You think it’s funny. You really think it’s funny, don’t you?

(Marty calms down a little)

CARLA

Did Harold really cross the street yesterday?

(Silence)

MARTY

(slightly nervous)

Yeah, he did.

JOEY

How do you know? How do you know what Harold done or not done? What makes you the goddam expert?

MARTY

I saw him, that’s why. I saw him cross the street.

CARLA

Did he say anything? I mean after. Did he say what it was like over there?

MARTY

He said it was beautiful.

CARLA

Beautiful? How was it beautiful?

MARTY

He said there was nothing there. It was just space. Empty, nothing, and that was why it was so beautiful.

JOEY

Were there people?

MARTY

No.

CARLA

Were there flowers?

MARTY

No. I told you, there wasn’t anything. No people, no flowers, nothing! That’s why it’s so beautiful!

CARLA

How can someplace be beautiful if it hasn’t got any flowers? I think I’d go crazy if there weren’t any flowers. No roses? God, if there were no roses…

MARTY

You don’t understand!

JOEY

I understand plenty. I understand you been eatin’ too much of that Pansy Puff cereal and the damn stuff’s exploding in your head!

CARLA

No roses? Why aren’t there any roses?

JOEY

Because there ain’t no other side of the street! At least Harold never saw it. And he certainly never told Marty about it.

MARTY

(getting angry)

Shut up, Joey. Just shut your fat ‘ol trap. You just can’t understand how anybody could ever want to leave this bench, leave this side for something more, because you don’t think there *is* anything more. But there is, you’re just too damn crazy to see it. You’re stuck, Joey. You’re stuck here and you’re never going to move.

CARLA

(excited)

I think I see the bus.

JOEY

(enthusiastically)

Where?

CARLA

Yup! Here it comes. Isn’t it pretty? I think they must have cleaned it; it’s so white!

JOEY

(getting up)

What do you know, she’s right! Here it comes.

CARLA

Oh, look at all the people. There they go.

(The following verse is said

like a nursery rhyme.)

Up the stairs,

One, two, three,

Up the stairs,

You and me.

Oh, how I do wish I could go.

JOEY

(not understanding)

You want to go?

CARLA

Oh, yes.

MARTY

Then go. All you have to do is cross the street. Harold did it. Go ahead.

CARLA

I can’t.

MARTY

Why not? Go ahead, there’s nothing to it. Just walk across the street.

CARLA

I can’t.

MARTY

Come on. Go ahead!

CARLA

No.

MARTY

Why not?

CARLA

I don’t want to.

MARTY

You just said you did.

CARLA

No. I don’t want to anymore.

MARTY

What?

CARLA

(having collected herself)

I did then, but I no longer wish to, thank you.

MARTY

What are you, afraid?

(Pause).

Well, what do you know…Carla is afraid to cross a simple little street. Hah!

(rather amusing himself)

Miss Dental Hygienist USA is afraid to cross. If that don’t beat all.

JOEY

Look, Mr. Know-It-All. If it’s so easy, why don’t you do it?

MARTY

(confidently)

I would, therefore, I needn’t.

JOEY

Oh, you would, would you?

MARTY

Without hesitation.

CARLA

Then go ahead, Mr. Big Mouth. Show us how it’s done.

MARTY

I can’t today. I forgot my briefcase.

CARLA

What do you need a briefcase for? You said there was nothing there.

JOEY

Yeah. Besides, you wouldn’t do anything when you got there anyhow!

MARTY

(getting a little worried)

But…but that’s why I need the briefcase. So there will be something there.

CARLA

But then it won’t be beautiful! If you bring something over there, it won’t be beautiful!

MARTY

But you said it needed flowers!

CARLA

(almost in tears)

Flowers! Not a briefcase!

(PAUSE)

JOEY

You don’t know what you’re talking about, Marty.

(pause)

You’re a liar, Marty. Leave. We don’t want you on our bench any longer. Get out. NOW!

MARTY

Then you cross it. Go ahead, be a man. You cross it!

JOEY

Shut up, Fairy. I’m warnin’ you. Just shup up right now!

MARTY

You stop calling me names and leave me alone! I’ll cross the street when I damn well feel like it! I’ll cross the street and you’ll see!

JOEY

Leave, Marty.

MARTY

No.

JOEY

Leave. I said leave.

CARLA

Scram, you little liar. Get out of here!

JOEY

This is our bench now, Marty. It’s ours so you gotta leave.

CARLA

We don’t like you anymore, Marty. You’re ugly. You’re a pigeon, Marty. You just prance around, dropping everything on everyone you get near. You’re a disgrace to your kind.

MARTY

Yeah? Well, then you tell me what is my kind, huh? Tell me. What’s my kind, you? Are you two my kind?

JOEY

Beat it, Marty!

MARTY

If you two are my kind, My GOD! I might as well be a stone in a hole. Dead and buried, that’d be the way. Dead and buried, and never having to live next to you two unstainable little statues.

JOEY

Look, Marty.

MARTY

What?

JOEY

(jerking his head to indicate

the other side of the street)

Over there, Marty. What do you see?

MARTY

What are you talking about?

JOEY

Over there. What do you see over there?

MARTY

(not understanding)

What’s the matter with you? What do you mean, what do I see? What the hell am I supposed to see? There’s not a damn thing over there.

CARLA

Look, Marty…Don’t you see?

MARTY

What’s the matter with you two? There’s nothing there!

JOEY

Can’t you see it, Marty?

CARLA

Can’t you see it, Marty? Look, across the street.

MARTY

(getting worried)

What the hell are you talking about?

JOEY

You said you’d cross the street, right Marty? You said you weren’t afraid.

CARLA

Look harder, Marty. ON THE OTHER SIDE!

(Marty peers ahead unknowingly.

Playing along. He’s scared.)

MARTY

You mean that?

JOEY

Yeah, Marty, the light…Can you see the light?

CARLA

It’s beautiful, isn’t it? My God, look at all the colors. It’s so bright!

JOEY

Now you can see it, right, Marty? You can see the light?