

THE PICKUP

A Ten-Minute Play
by
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THE PICKUP

CAST OF CHARACTERS

RUTH: Age: late 30's: A discontented housewife.

HENRY: Age late 30's: An intimate apparel salesman.

WAITRESS: Age mid 50's: A tough, no-nonsense waitress.

THE PICKUP

SETTING: A street level coffee shop in a hotel lobby. There is a lineup of tables for two along downstage stretching across the stage.

AT RISE: *RUTH sits at a table gazing out, sipping her coffee. THE WAITRESS cleans off a nearby table.*

TIME: A Valentine's Day morning.

RUTH

Hey Honey...

(THE WAITRESS looks around sarcastically to see who RUTH is calling "Honey")

THE WAITRESS

Are you talking to me?

RUTH

Yeah. Who else? How's about a little warm up over here?

(THE WAITRESS crosses to refill RUTH'S coffee)

THE WAITRESS

You know... **Honey**... you can't just sit here all-day drinking coffee.

RUTH

What are ya talkin' about?

THE WAITRESS

As I told you before, if you are going to tie up a table this long...you are gonna have to order something besides coffee.

RUTH

And I told you, I'm waitin' for someone.

THE WAITRESS

Yeah, yeah, we're all waitin' for someone.

RUTH

And besides, they ain't exactly fallin' over each other to get into this dive.

THE WAITRESS

Yeah, no kiddin'.

RUTH

This place is deader than Kelsey's nuts.

THE WAITRESS

Well, okay, but seriously...you do realize, you have been waiting for over an hour?

RUTH

So...?

THE WAITRESS

So, I think maybe he ain't showin' up.

RUTH

Yeah, worry about yourself. He'll be here.

(HENRY enters with a salesman case and takes a seat at the next table from RUTH. RUTH smiles at HENRY and takes a lipstick from her purse which she applies while glancing over her compact to see if he is watching her)

HENRY

You know...there ain't nothing sexier than a woman applying lipstick.

RUTH

I beg your pardon?

HENRY

I was just sayin'...for a man...like me...there ain't nothing sexier than watchin' a beautiful dame putting on her lipstick.

RUTH

Well, I don't know about that.

HENRY

No really! Take it from me...there ain't sexier in this whole wide world.

RUTH

Well, pardon me for saying so, but I can think of a whole lot of things that are sexier than that...

You can? **HENRY**

Absolutely! **RUTH**

Like what? **HENRY**

Well, I'm certainly too much of a lady to say them out loud to a perfect stranger. **RUTH**

Well, I'm not exactly perfect. **HENRY**

(RUTH laughs)

HA! Who is these days? **RUTH**

The name is Henry. Henry Judd Gray. **HENRY**

How do you do? **RUTH**

I do very well. **HENRY**

I'll bet you do! **RUTH**

And how do you do? **HENRY**

Probably not as well as you. **RUTH**

May I be so bold as to ask you, Pretty Lady...what is your name? **HENRY**

I'm Ruth. Ruth Snyder Brown. Snyder was my maiden name. **RUTH**

HENRY

Ah, so you're married.

RUTH

I am.

HENRY

And how clever to tell me your maiden name so's I would know you were married.

RUTH

No, that isn't why. I always call myself that...I mean...but yes, I am. I am married.

HENRY

I should have known.

RUTH

What's that supposed to mean?

HENRY

Oh, I meant no offense. It's just that when a doll looks like you... she is rarely left unattached.

RUTH

Okay then. I mean...thank you. I think?

HENRY

It's a real pleasure to meet you, Ruth Snyder Brown.

RUTH

Thank you. You as well Henry Judd Gray.

HENRY

So, I'm Henry and you are Ruth...

RUTH

Yes. Apparently so.

HENRY

And now we are on a first name basis...wouldn't you say?

RUTH

Yes, it would certainly seem that way.

HENRY

So, now that we are no longer strangers...suppose you tell me what these things are that surpass the sexiness of a gorgeous woman like you applying her lipstick.

RUTH

Why Henry Judd Gray! You cad! You tricked me.

HENRY

I don't believe anyone can trick you.

RUTH

Believe me. It happens all the time.

(HENRY rises and moves towards RUTH'S table but remains standing)

HENRY

Mind if I join you?

RUTH

Well, I don't know. I mean I **am** a married woman.

HENRY

And I am a married man, so we should have lots to talk about.

RUTH

Believe me, my husband is the last thing I want to talk about.

HENRY

Oh? Problems in paradise?

RUTH

Something like that.

HENRY

You know I've seen you here before.

RUTH

Oh, yeah?

HENRY

But I could never muster up the courage to actually speak to you.

RUTH

I'm that scary?

HENRY

No, but you are a little intimidating. Fortunately, I like that in a woman.

RUTH

I've been called a lot of things but that's a new one! So how did you manage to rally up the courage today?

HENRY

I don't know. The lipstick maybe. So, you was saying...you're married...but it ain't exactly all bliss?

RUTH

Yeah. I suppose I'm what you might call a discontented married woman.

HENRY

Discontented. Well, that ain't good.

RUTH

There's a whole slew of us.

HENRY

What's the problem?

RUTH

I don't really want to talk about it. Besides, it ain't right that I should burden you with my problems.

HENRY

No please. Burden away! You can tell me anything. I'm a salesman. I'm a great listener.

RUTH

Well, I guess the biggest problem is I'm bored. My husband...Albert...

HENRY

Albert?

RUTH

Yes, Albert. Even his name is boring. And he...well he is just as dull as dishwater.

(THE WAITRESS comes to the table)

THE WAITRESS

Is it going to be two now?

HENRY

(To RUTH)

Well, is it?

RUTH

Yeah sure. Why not?

(HENRY sits next to RUTH)

WAITRESS

Are you ready to order?

RUTH

I'll have a muffin. Blueberry. And some more coffee.

HENRY

I'll have the same.

WAITRESS

Great! Two muffins. My boss will be thrilled to hear we're going to make our month!

(THE WAITRESS goes back to her counter)

RUTH

I have a confession to make, Henry Judd Gray. I've seen you here too.

HENRY

You have?

RUTH

Yes, you come in here with that salesman's case the second Tuesday of every month.

HENRY

Ha! Geez, that is exactly right. I have a standing appointment with the Macy's buyer.

RUTH

The Macy's buyer?

HENRY

Intimate apparel. I sell ladies corsets.

RUTH

Fascinating.

HENRY

No, what is fascinatin' is that you know I come here the second Tuesday every month! Now, that's downright amazing!

RUTH

But you were later this morning than usual.

HENRY

Yeah, they forgot my wake-up call.

RUTH

Who did?

HENRY

The jerks at the front desk of this flea bag hotel. They was suppose to wake me at six. I stay here...at The Edison. I have for years...

RUTH

Yes, I know...

(HE is a little surprised by her statement)

HENRY

Oh yeah? Are you staying here too?

RUTH

No, I just stop by for breakfast. So, you don't live in Manhattan...

HENRY

No, I live in Providence. But I'm surprised you don't know that. You seem to know everything else about me.

RUTH

No, not really. I don't live in Manhattan either. Queens. Astoria.

HENRY

Nice. So, let's get back to boring Albert and your discontented Astoria, Queen's marriage.

RUTH

Must we?

HENRY

Maybe you'd be more comfortable discussing it upstairs...in my room.

RUTH

What!?!

HENRY

Oh, now don't be so shocked. We're both adults. It will be quieter up there.

RUTH

Well, I don't know. I've never done anything like that before.

HENRY

Aww, come on...

RUTH

No, no. It wouldn't be right.

HENRY

Right/schmigh. You said your life was boring. I'll bet I could change all that for you.

RUTH

I'll bet you could.

HENRY

And you could show me all those things that are sexier than a beautiful dame applying lipstick. Come on. Let's go to my room.

RUTH

No, I really couldn't. What would people say?

HENRY

What people? There's nobody here but you, me and the waitress...and frankly, I don't think she gives two hoots about either one of us.

(Suddenly, his cell phone rings)

HENRY

Mom? Is everything all right?

RUTH

What's happened? Are the kids okay?

(HENRY holds up his finger to indicate, "Hold on a second...")

HENRY

Okay Mom...put Bobby on the phone.

HENRY

(After a beat)

Listen young man, you get out of your pjs and into your school clothes as Grandma has asked...and do it now! The school bus is going to be there soon, and you'd better make sure you are on it! And see that your sister is too! No more funny business! Now, put grandma back on!

(After a beat)

Okay, Mom... what?

RUTH

Is everything all right?

HENRY

(To Ruth)

He's throwing a hissy fit and Sue Ellen is now also throwing a hissy fit. Mom just cannot control them. They refuse to go to school.

(Back on the phone with Grandma)

Okay, okay Mom. Just relax. I'm sorry too. We're on our way. No, it's fine. See you soon.

(He puts his phone back in his pocket)

HENRY

I'm sorry, Judy. It's not exactly going to be the Valentine's Day we'd hoped for.

RUTH

Well, there's always next year.

HENRY

That's my girl!

RUTH

And Bob... when that day arrives...next Valentine's Day...let's do the one with the prince and the showgirl.

HENRY

You got it! Waitress, check please!

(BLACKOUT)

(End of Play)