

That's Not the Problem

Pamela Loyd





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THAT'S NOT THE PROBLEM

By Pamela Loyd

CAST

THERAPIST: Female marriage counselor, referred to as Doctor. Supportive and encouraging voice—except when she breaks into hysterics. Dressed professionally.

HELEN: Woman in for marriage counseling, married to Dave. A bit prim and proper. Nicely dressed, but casual.

DAVE: Man in for marriage counseling, married to Helen. A businessman, dress shirt, slacks.

ALPHONZO: Man who is a point of contention between Helen and Dave. Not too bright, a bit of a doofus, tries to act 'bad' but is really insecure with a need for approval. Dressed a bit scruffy. Wears a cap at first.

Place

A marriage counselor's office. This therapy session is perhaps the 4th for this couple.

Time

Present day, late afternoon.

Setting: A marriage counselor's office. There are three comfortable chairs, a side table, an area rug. Include other décor if wanted, to create a comfortable looking space.

At Rise: THERAPIST sits in chair at right, HELEN sits in middle chair, DAVE sits in chair at left. HELEN'S and DAVE'S bodies are turned slightly away from each other, arms crossed angrily, sulky expressions.

THERAPIST: Well, it's been ten minutes since I asked you how things are going this week, and for ten minutes we have been sitting here in silence.

HELEN: We're giving each other the silent treatment.

THERAPIST: Yes, I can see that, Helen. But at \$85 an hour that's a very expensive silent treatment. And it doesn't require a therapist to read your body language. It's very obvious there's a problem.

DAVE: Oh there's a problem alright, Doctor. There's a big problem.

THERAPIST: Would you like to talk about it, Dave?

DAVE: I thought Helen and I were making progress, that we were getting along better...

THERAPIST: Dave, it's more helpful if you speak to Helen. Look at Helen and say, "Helen, I thought we were making progress--"

DAVE: I'm not talking to Helen.

THERAPIST: Part of marriage counseling is learning effective communication skills. So I want you to practice those communication skills while you're here. You need to speak directly to Helen about how you feel.

DAVE: No! I don't want to talk to her. (*shouts directly at HELEN*) And you know why. You know exactly why I'm never speaking to you again.

HELEN: (*to DAVE*) I'm not speaking to you, either. (*to THERAPIST*) But I'll speak to you, Doctor. Dave destroyed my trust. He invaded my privacy by snooping in my purse.

DAVE: If you want to talk about destroying trust—

HELEN: A woman's purse is sacred, Dave. You can never look in a woman's purse without her permission.

DAVE: Let's talk about how you destroyed *my* trust. Let's talk about what I found in your purse. (*stands, pulls napkin out of his pocket*) Here it is, Doctor. A cocktail napkin from Bamboozie's Bar. There's a message written on it: "Meet me at 9:00." And a phone number. And it's signed Alphonzo. Alphonzo, for God's sake!

HELEN: Why are you so upset about his name?

DAVE: You can't just get involved with someone named Bill or Steve or Tom like normal women do? Oh no, you have to choose some fancy-dandy dude named Alphonzo.

HELEN: (*stands*) Well, I imagine that's not his real name.

DAVE: That's my point.

HELEN: No, the point is you had no business looking in my purse!

THERAPIST: (*stands*) O.K., both of you please sit down. (*all sit*) Now Dave, would you like to tell Helen how you feel about finding another man's phone number in her purse?

DAVE: Oh I don't care about the phone number. That's not the problem.

THERAPIST: What I mean is, how do you feel about your wife having *another man's* phone number?

DAVE: I'm not bothered about that.

THERAPIST: You're not?

DAVE: Oh no. That's not the problem. Sure, at first I thought Helen was having an affair with another man. So I called him up. I mean, I had his number. So I just called him up, told him to get over to my place so I could beat the shit out of him for sleeping with my wife. [*can change line to "beat the you-know-what out of him" if preferred*]

HELEN: And he told you he wasn't sleeping with me. And he's not.

DAVE: So I said what *are* you doing with my wife then? And he said he couldn't tell me unless my wife said he could.

HELEN: Then I grabbed the phone and told Alphonzo I don't want my husband to know about any of this, so keep your mouth shut. Cancel everything. And that was that, so I hung up.

THERAPIST: So Dave, how do you feel about that conversation?

DAVE: Oh, I feel fine about that. That's not the problem.

THERAPIST: That's not?

HELEN: But then a few minutes later there's a knock on the door—

DAVE: A pounding, actually. Bam! Bam! Bam!

HELEN: I open the door, and Alphonzo bursts in.

DAVE: Jabbering about his money. He wants his money.

HELEN: And I told him I no longer want to buy what he's selling, so I wasn't paying him.

THERAPIST: Dave, a strange man bursts into your house demanding money. That must have upset you. How do you feel about that?

DAVE: I don't feel anything about that. That's not the problem.

THERAPIST: I see. I mean, I don't see.

DAVE: Well, I thought you wouldn't understand. *(stands)* That's why I'm going to call him in here. *(starts towards door)* Let you see for yourself the terrible betrayal my wife has done to me.

THERAPIST: Call who in here?

HELEN: Alphonzo. He wants Alphonzo to join us.

THERAPIST: Oh, no, that's not appropriate, Dave. This is just between you and Helen.

HELEN: See, I told you so, Dave. Very inappropriate.

DAVE: Oooh nooo, she brought Alphonzo into this situation, so I'm bringing him into therapy with us. It's the only way we're going to straighten this out. *(opens door)* Alphonzo, get your ass in here. *[can change line to "get your butt in here" if preferred]*

(ALPHONZO slinks in, creeps sideways along wall)

ALPHONZO: Howdy all. I really don't want to be here. These shrink places kinda give me the creeps.

DAVE: I imagine they do, "Alphonzo." But you got involved with my wife, so now you have to deal with my *therapist*. She wants to talk to you, don't you, Doctor?

THERAPIST: No, this man is not my patient. It's not my business to talk to him. But if you have something you want to say to him, Dave, and he's willing to listen, you may do so.

DAVE: Yes, I have something to say. Alphonzo, I want you to tell the doc exactly what happened when you burst into our house.

ALPHONZO: *(all innocence)* I just said, "You owe me some money."

DAVE: No, no, no, you didn't say it like that. Say it the way you said it. And say everything you said.

ALPHONZO: Oh, well I don't know if I can; I'm not in the right mood anymore.

THERAPIST: *(stands)* You know, there is a therapeutic technique that can help you with this. A re-enactment of what happened. Let's recreate the scene. Helen and Dave, where were you in your house? And where's the front door?

HELEN: It's over there. *(points to back left corner)*

THERAPIST: O.K., Alphonzo, go over there, knock, come in, and say what you said when you came to their house. *(ALPHONZO goes to back left corner, HELEN stands, DAVE still stands, THERAPIST goes to stage right)* And I'll observe the group dynamics.

ALPHONZO: *(imitates pounding on door)* Bam! Bam! Bam!

HELEN: *(goes to imaginary door, opens it)* Oh! What are you doing here?

ALPHONZO: *(storms in, angry)* Give me my money, you rotten woman! *(to THERAPIST, mild and apologetic, removes his cap to show respect)* Excuse my bad language. But that is what I said. *(angry again)* Give me my money right now! I'm not leaving until you pay me! *(to THERAPIST, looking for approval)* How was that? *(sets cap down)*

END OF FREEVIEW

You'll want to read and perform this show!