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BIFF & BLANCHE

A One Act Comedy

by John Twomey

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BIFF & BLANCHE

by John Twomey

CHARACTERS

BIFF: *A strapping man in his early 30's*

BLANCHE: *A slight woman in her early 30's*

SETTING

A bench on a New York City street

BIFF & BLANCHE

By John Twomey

(AT RISE: BIFF is sitting on the bench in a relaxed pose, circling items in a newspaper. He glances forward, jumps up, and waves frantically.)

BIFF

Taxi! Taxi! *(Watches as the cab drives off)* Damn cabbie. Next time pay attention.

(BIFF returns to the bench and continues circling items in the paper. BLANCHE enters. BIFF does not notice her. She takes a compact out of her purse, powders her face, and checks her lipstick. She then notices a cab and waves daintily.)

BLANCHE

Taxi...taxi...

(BIFF notices BLANCHE and gets up.)

BIFF

Hey, that's my cab.

BLANCHE

(Oblivious to BIFF) Taxi...taxi...

BIFF

Hey taxi!

(BIFF and BLANCHE watch the cab drive off.)

BIFF, *Continued*

That was my cab.

BLANCHE

The rudeness of that driver.

BIFF

You want to know about rude?

BLANCHE

I have an urgent appointment with my agent.

BIFF

I have appointments too.

BLANCHE

I must ring my agent.

(BLANCHE fishes a cell phone from her purse and attempts to make a call.)

BLANCHE, *Continued*

Battery dead...and I'm approaching... *(Turns to BIFF)* Do you have a mobile phone that I may borrow?

(BIFF hands BLANCHE a cell phone from his belt clip and then watches her closely as she attempts to make a call.)

BLANCHE, *Continued*

No service.

BIFF

Guess I forgot to pay the bill. *(Takes back the phone)* You don't recognize me, do you?

(BLANCHE glances quickly at BIFF and turns away.)

BIFF, *Continued*

We went out for drinks after an audition a few weeks ago.

BLANCHE

I go on so many auditions.

BIFF

It was for an extra.

BLANCHE

So many auditions.

BIFF

On some new cop show.

(BLANCHE reluctantly turns back to BIFF.)

BLANCHE

Yes, now I recall. It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance once again.

BIFF

I barely recognized you in this light.

BLANCHE

Daylight can be harsh.

BIFF

You didn't return my calls.

BLANCHE

I receive many calls.

BIFF

I called many times.

BLANCHE

I'm quite the busy bee.

BIFF

I thought we had a nice time together.

BLANCHE

Always buzzing about.

BIFF

I don't get it.

BLANCHE

Buzzing...buzzing about. (*Notices a cab*) Taxi...

(*BIFF and BLANCHE watch as the cab drives off.*)

BIFF

Didn't we have a nice time together?

BLANCHE

If you must know...I thought you were a bit...misrepresentative of yourself.

BIFF

I was just trying to make an impression.

BLANCHE

I should have known you weren't the executive producer.

BIFF

I didn't exactly say executive producer.

BLANCHE

Assistant to the associate to the executive of something. It made my head spin.

BIFF

I've been known to do that to women.

BLANCHE

You said something to make me think you were somebody.

BIFF

I am somebody. And I'm going to be somebody bigger. In this business I'm going to be a big somebody.

BLANCHE

And they're advertising for big somebodies in "Backstage?"

BIFF

None of this stuff is suitable to my talents.

BLANCHE

And what, dare I ask, are they?

BIFF

The leading man type. Something big and heroic.

BLANCHE

If you wanted to be big and heroic you'd hail a cab. *(Looks for a cab and then at her watch)* I don't like to keep my agent waiting.

BIFF

Nice watch.

BLANCHE

It's a gift from an admirer.

(BLANCHE holds out the watch. BIFF looks at it and then looks at his own watch.)

BIFF

It's got the wrong time.

(BLANCHE shakes the watch and listens to it.)

BIFF, *Continued*

I guess your admirer didn't have much admiration.

BLANCHE

Now I'll be late for my agent. I'm glad you find this amusing.

BIFF

This boy wouldn't have given you a broken watch.

BLANCHE

Opportunity lost...discarded. I'll bear my grief to the grave.

BIFF

So you had another audition?

BLANCHE

Yes, another audition.

BIFF

Good for you.

BLANCHE

My agent sent me on another audition.

BIFF

What was it for?

BLANCHE

My audition?

BIFF

Was it a movie or TV?

BLANCHE

I prefer to keep my professional pursuits private.

BIFF

I'm just trying to make a little friendly conversation.

BLANCHE

I choose not to converse concerning my career.

BIFF

Suit yourself.

(BIFF returns to his "Backstage" and starts whistling.)

BLANCHE

An actress must be discreet in discussing her endeavors.

BIFF

Whatever.

BLANCHE

Must you be so inquisitive?

BIFF

I'm just reading my "Backstage." *(Notices a cab; gets up and tries to hail it)* Taxi!

(BIFF and BLANCHE watch as the taxi drives off.)

BIFF, *Continued*

You didn't have an audition.

BLANCHE

I most certainly did have an audition.

BIFF

You're lying.

BLANCHE

How dare you accusing me of fibbing.

BIFF

Then what was it for?

BLANCHE

It was for a career-making role.

BIFF

Career-making?

BLANCHE

Yes, career-making. One that will show the world the beauty I have to offer.

BIFF

Did you have to take your clothes off?

BLANCHE

I beg your pardon.

BIFF

Did you have to take your clothes off?

BLANCHE

I deem your inquiry utterly impudent.

BIFF

Does the part include any nakedness?

BLANCHE

I'm a lady. I don't audition for parts that require nudity. That is not the kind of part that I desire.

BIFF

You said you'd offer the world your beauty.

BLANCHE

I meant my inner beauty. Maybe inner beauty is a concept you fail to grasp. But those for whom I auditioned saw my inner beauty, and for that they called my agent.

BIFF

Too bad your inner beauty can't get a cab. So what did you do, an improv? Did you have to be a flower or a kitten or something like that?

BLANCHE

I read a scene, a classic scene.

BIFF

Like Shakespeare?

BLANCHE

Close. Williams. Mr. Tennessee Williams. A Streetcar Named Desire.

BIFF

A Streetcar Named Desire? I read that in high school, for God's sake.

BLANCHE

As did many more enlightened individuals.

BIFF

Acted in it too.

BLANCHE

I portrayed Ms. Blanche DuBois in high school. And I suppose you portrayed Mr. Kowalski.

BIFF

I was one of the poker players.

BLANCHE

One of the poker players? There's nothing big and heroic about that.

BIFF

Yeah, well it just so happens I also played in Death of a Salesman.

BLANCHE

Miller. Mr. Arthur Miller. As who? The waiter?

BIFF

I was Biff.

BLANCHE

Biff Loman?

BIFF

Yes, Biff Loman.

BLANCHE

Biff Loman...youthful potential gone awry.

BIFF

But I've moved on. I don't bother with those high school-type parts any more.

BLANCHE

It's a wonder you got past high school.

BIFF

I'm going for the big time. So what is this career-making part?

BLANCHE

As I said, I prefer to keep my professional pursuits private.

BIFF

You're dying to spill your guts.

BLANCHE

My guts are not for spilling.

BIFF

Then don't spill them.

(BLANCHE sees a cab.)

BLANCHE

Taxi...

(BIFF and BLANCHE watch as the cab drives off.)

BIFF

I don't mean to get all into your business and stuff.

BLANCHE

Thank you for acknowledging my desire for privacy.

BIFF

It's just that we actors have to show support for one another.

BLANCHE

We actors?

BIFF

It can get rough out there.

BLANCHE

We actors? I'd hardly put you in the same category as myself.

BIFF

Oh, is that so?

BLANCHE

I was trained at a prestigious acting academy. What training embellishes your résumé?

BIFF

Training is for dogs.

BLANCHE

I'll take that to mean none.

BIFF

Your acting academy stuff doesn't impress anyone.

BLANCHE

In the world of theater it does.

BIFF

In this business it's not what you know but who you know. And you have to be liked.

BLANCHE

In the world of theater I am quite liked.

BIFF

And why are you wasting your time with theater?

BLANCHE

I beg your pardon. Is not theater the pinnacle of this profession?

BIFF

Theater is a waste of time for any actor who wants to be a success. Long hours, little money, and hardly anybody sees you. How are you going to get to know people and be liked if no people see you? Movies and TV. That's where all the action is.

BLANCHE

If that's the action you desire.

BIFF

I'm going out west. I'm going to Hollywood to make an impression. You watch. You'll hear about me. Any day now I'm going to head out west and make an impression.

BLANCHE

Impression...illusion...

BIFF

Your problem is that you don't have a grasp of reality.

BLANCHE

I live in the realm of reality, not illusion.

BIFF

Some reality.

BLANCHE

Now if only a taxi would pull over. My agent is waiting. I'm sure he has wonderful news about my audition.

BIFF

Turns out you're not the only one in this conversation who had an audition. I happen to be on my way to a callback.

BLANCHE

A callback?

BIFF

Yes, a callback.

BLANCHE

I suppose you will insist that I hear about this callback.

BIFF

No.

(BIFF returns to reading "Backstage" and starts whistling.)

BLANCHE

If you insist, you may tell me.

BIFF

(Mimicking) I prefer to keep my professional pursuits private.

BLANCHE

All right, that's fair. I chose not to divulge my audition. I certainly can't expect you to divulge yours.

BIFF

And so I won't.

BLANCHE

Then don't.

(BLANCHE turns away, but after a few moments they turn back to one another.)

BIFF

It's no big deal anyway, nothing that would impress you, graduate of an acting academy and all.

BLANCHE

It may not be something I'd consider a big deal for myself, but if it's a big deal for you, I'd be honored to hear about it.

BIFF

It's not exactly the hero-type role I'm going to play in the future, but it'll get my foot in the door, so to speak.

BLANCHE

What television program? Not that God-awful police drama, I hope.

BIFF

I didn't exactly audition for a TV show.

BLANCHE

A film? Maybe an independent film. Some of the theater's most prestigious actresses do independent film.

BIFF

It's not exactly a film either.

BLANCHE

Then what? From your prior comments it certainly cannot be the theater.

BIFF

You're not going to laugh, are you?

BLANCHE

No.

BIFF

Promise?

BLANCHE

I promise.

BIFF

I auditioned for a commercial.

A commercial?
BLANCHE

Yes, a commercial.
BIFF

A commercial for what, may I ask?
BLANCHE

Dog food.
BIFF

Dog food?
BLANCHE

Yes, dog food. What's the matter, that's not highbrow enough for you?
BIFF

Did you hear a word of derision pass these lips?
BLANCHE

No. Not yet, anyway.
BIFF

Continue.
BLANCHE

Anyway, this commercial is for dog food. I play this lonely single guy who can't figure out why his dog doesn't love him. He falls asleep and has this dream in which his dog tells him that he's feeding her the wrong dog food and that he should be feeding her Doggy Delight or whatever the hell the stuff is called. And the weird thing is in the dream the dog is played by a woman and I think after he gives her the right dog food it's supposed to get a little kinky.

Dog food?
BLANCHE

Yes, dog food. It was for dog food. Go on and laugh.
BIFF

I'm not laughing.
BLANCHE

No, worse, you're feeling sorry for me.
BIFF

BLANCHE

I don't feel sorry for you.

BIFF

Poor, poor fellow thinks a dog food commercial is a step up. There's a funny story you can tell your acting academy friends over brunch. Maybe it's not a leading man role, but I'm going to go in and make an impression.

BLANCHE

I'm sure you will.

BIFF

Then what's that look of pity on your face?

BLANCHE

My audition...

BIFF

I'm spilling my guts about my audition and all you can think about is yours.

BLANCHE

My audition...

BIFF

Typical prima donna.

BLANCHE

My audition...my audition...

BIFF

What about it?

BLANCHE

It was for the dog.

BIFF

The dog?

BLANCHE

Yes, the dog.

BIFF

That's your career-making role?

BLANCHE

A dog. They asked that I play a dog.

BIFF

At least I got to audition for a person.

BLANCHE

Me, an actress trained in the classics.

BIFF

You want to hear how I'm going to audition at the callback?

BLANCHE

Not especially.

BIFF

Then let me hear how you auditioned.

BLANCHE

And disgrace myself again?

BIFF

You really read from *A Streetcar Named Desire*?

BLANCHE

It's part of my repertoire.

BIFF

And that's all they wanted?

BLANCHE

No. They asked I imitate a dog. I chose to portray a poodle. At least there's some dignity in that canine. But it was humiliating...humiliating.

BIFF

So let me hear how you auditioned.

BLANCHE

Here, on the street? I couldn't. People will pass by and see. They might think I'm...deranged.

BIFF

Who cares what they think?

BLANCHE

Well...if you insist.

(BLANCHE takes her compact out of her purse and quickly checks her face.)

BLANCHE, *Continued*

This is the scene in which Blanche tells Mitch the tragedy of her young husband Allan.

BIFF

No no no.

BLANCHE

I beg your pardon.

BIFF

Not Blanche. The pooch.

BLANCHE

You want me to imitate a dog?

BIFF

You did it for the audition.

BLANCHE

Under great emotional duress.

BIFF

Let's see the pooch.

BLANCHE

Out of the question.

BIFF

Come on.

(BIFF pretends to be a dog and chases BLANCHE around the bench.)

BIFF, *Continued*

Ruff!

BLANCHE

Stop that.

BIFF

Ruff. Ruff.

BLANCHE

Very well, since you seem determined to make a fool of me anyway.

(BLANCHE does a few pretentious warm-ups. She then does a very weak imitation of a poodle.)

BIFF

That's the sorriest lame-ass poodle I've ever seen.

BLANCHE

I portrayed that poodle from the heart.

BIFF

The heart of what?

BLANCHE

My portrayal received heartfelt praise from the director.

BIFF

Oliver said something nice to you?

BLANCHE

Mr. Oliver. The director's name is Mr. Oliver, though he asked I call him Bill.

BIFF

Oliver let you call him Bill?

BLANCHE

He insisted.

BIFF

Really?

BLANCHE

Yes. I offered to call him William, but he said that was too formal. And Billy, well, that's just a bit too familiar, if you know what I mean.

BIFF

So you got kind of friendly with Oliver?

BLANCHE

Bill was quite captivated by my charms, worn and faded as they may be.

BIFF

Maybe you could put in a good word for me.

BLANCHE

After you derided my poodle? Deliberately and cruelly derided my poodle?

BIFF

I was just kidding you. It's just that you're too attractive to be that believable as a dog.

BLANCHE

Attractive? Do you really think so?

BIFF

I took you out for drinks, didn't I? You may find this hard to believe, but I can have any babe I want.

BLANCHE

I think I've held together rather well, especially considering that I'm...a bit beyond thirty...

BIFF

I have to fight them off sometimes.

(BLANCHE looks at herself in her compact.)

BLANCHE

...I've held together rather well.

BIFF

So what do you say about putting in a good word?

(BLANCHE closes her compact.)

BLANCHE

I suppose I could put in a good word, as you phrase it, if the opportunity arises. Bill did call you back. He must have seen...something.

BIFF

Oliver himself didn't exactly call me back.

BLANCHE

Then one of his entourage?

BIFF

Not exactly.

BLANCHE

You said...

BIFF

But I made a good impression. I could tell they were really impressed.

BLANCHE

But no invitation to a callback was offered?

BIFF

Not exactly.

BLANCHE

Your good impression is but an illusion.

BIFF

But when Oliver sees that I have taken the initiative and am the best guy for the part, he will have to give it to me.

BLANCHE

Impression...illusion...

BIFF

You have to be liked. And I'm liked.

BLANCHE

You delusional thespian. You don't have a call back.

BIFF

Of course I do. Well, maybe not officially, but I practically do.

BLANCHE

Practically? And I'm practically a poodle.

BIFF

Your problem is you have no self-confidence. You're always feeling sorry for yourself.

BLANCHE

I'm sorry for many things, but not myself.

BIFF

Do you see me feeling sorry for myself?

BLANCHE

I don't see a sense of self.

BIFF

I can make this part happen. I'll walk in and knock them dead.

BLANCHE

And if you don't...knock them dead?

BIFF

I will. And if I don't get this part, so what? There are plenty of other parts out there.

BLANCHE

For the desperate and untalented, so it seems.

BIFF

For one who takes the initiative and makes an impression.

BLANCHE

But for an actress with training and breeding...I'm starting to wonder.

(BIFF notices a cab.)

BIFF

Taxi.

BLANCHE

And so I prostitute myself as a poodle. Ruff...Bow-wow.

BIFF

He stopped. I'm on my way.

BLANCHE

A gentleman would relinquish the cab to a lady.

BIFF

There'll be another cab.

BLANCHE

My agent no doubt has other engagements. I suppose that is of no concern to you.

BIFF

Don't you dramatic types like to be fashionably late?

BLANCHE

My days of being fashionably late are...passing by.

(SOUND: THE CABBIE HONKS.)

BIFF

I'm coming. Now what's that address? *(Reads off his pen)* 1949 Broadway.

BLANCHE

Is that Bill's pen?

BIFF

Oliver's pen? I don't know. Maybe.

BLANCHE

He was searching for it during my audition...

BIFF

I have Oliver's pen?

BLANCHE

...accused an assistant of absconding with it...

BIFF

I took Oliver's pen?

BLANCHE

...almost fired him on the spot.

BIFF

I stole Oliver's pen?

BLANCHE

You ought to return it upon arrival with the sincerest of apologies.

This is Not the End of the Play

Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes