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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.
So you had another audition?

Yes, another audition.

Good for you.

My agent sent me on another audition.

What was it for?

My audition?

Was it a movie or TV?

I prefer to keep my professional pursuits private.

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

I choose not to converse concerning my career.

Suit yourself.

(BIFF returns to his “Backstage” and starts whistling.)

An actress must be discreet in discussing her endeavors.

Whatever.

Must you be so inquisitive?

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

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.

We actors?
It can get rough out there.

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

Oh, is that so?

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

Training is for dogs.

I’ll take that to mean none.

Your acting academy stuff doesn’t impress anyone.

In the world of theater it does.

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

In the world of theater I am quite liked.

And why are you wasting your time with theater?

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

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.

If that’s the action you desire.

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.

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.
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?

No.

BIFF
Promise?

I promise.

BLANCHE
I auditioned for a commercial.
A commercial?

Yes, a commercial.

A commercial for what, may I ask?

Dog food.

Dog food?

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

Did you hear a word of derision pass these lips?

No. Not yet, anyway.

Continue.

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?

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

I’m not laughing.

No, worse, you’re feeling sorry for me.
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.

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.

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