

**"BECAUSE YOU SMILED"**

by

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SCENE HEADER

EXT DAY:

A park with grass and trees. A picnic table sits center stage. A restroom building tucked in one corner, a public trash can in another corner.

JUDY enters stage left with shoulder bag, purse and water bottle. She sits at the picnic table, pulls out a notebook, a fat file, and a pen, centers all perfectly in front of her, crosses her legs, puts her hands in her lap and waits. Looks around. Checks watch. Sips water. Looks around some more.

A Frisbee flies in from stage left and lands on the stage. DAD runs in grabs it and runs back out again.

PETER strolls in, stiff and guarded, from right stage, unkempt, and sits down on the opposite side of the table.

PETER  
Hello Judy.

JUDY  
You're late.

PETER  
I had a flat tire.

JUDY  
Only you could manage to get six flat tires on the same car in the course of six months.

PETER  
It's a three hundred dollar car. I'm lucky the damn thing runs.

JUDY  
Maybe you should buy a better car.

PETER  
Maybe you should give me my Camero back.

JUDY  
The Camero loan is in my name. It's my car.

PETER  
What are you gonna do with two cars?

JUDY

I drove it here today. Maybe later I'll cruise the strip and pick up firemen. They'd be more inclined to climb into a Camero than a minivan.

PETER

You chose to get a minivan.

JUDY

That's because I thought we were going to have children!

Peter jiggles his knee under the table.

Judy opens the file and picks up the pen.

JUDY

Can we get this over with?

Peter shrugs.

Judy picks up a clean sheet of paper with a typewritten list.

JUDY

Do you want to start with the money, the terms, or the personal property?

PETER

The stuff, I guess.

JUDY

Living room set. You don't have room for it in your studio anyway, so....

PETER

I have room for the love seat. Can I have the loveseat?

JUDY

I don't want to break up the set. It's a matching set.

PETER

Whatever.

JUDY

Is there anything else in the living room you want?

PETER

Can I have the chair? It's not part of the set.

JUDY

You hate that chair.

PETER

Not as much as I hate sitting on the floor.

JUDY

But it's my chair.

PETER

Then keep the chair and give me the love seat. All I want is a place to sit that fits in my dinky apartment.

JUDY

Fine... Do you want any of the paintings or anything? The bookshelf?

Peter waves all that off.

JUDY

On to the kitchen. I'm sure you probably need some cooking gear. I'll give you the old pots and pans set and a few of the extra utensils.

PETER

That avocado colored crap from your grandmothers? I'll stick with TV dinners, thanks.

JUDY

Oh! So you do have some style.

PETER

I have always had a style. It's just not the same style as yours.

JUDY

Fine. Anything else in the kitchen?

PETER

Can I have the microwave?

JUDY

For the TV dinners?

Peter shrugs, nods.

JUDY

You can get your own microwave for 30 bucks.

PETER

You're getting the entire living room sans loveseat and the entire kitchen. All I'm asking for is a few trinkets to get started out. It's not fair you get the lion's share just because you can still afford the mortgage payments.

JUDY

It's not fair you rob me of stuff I'm just going to have to go buy again!

PETER

It's not fair I have to go buy the stuff again either!

JUDY

This divorce is not my fault!

PETER

I didn't kick me out!

JUDY

You left that night!

PETER

Only because you were pointing at the door!

Peter and Judy stare at each other a moment, both angry and hurt. Both look away.

PETER

Look. If this whole meeting going to be like this, we're going to be here all fucking day. Did we come here to negotiate or so you could dictate how bleak the rest of my life is going to be? Because if that's all you're going to do, I'll go and you can mail me a certified letter in detailed list of what sparse pieces of my own crap I'm allowed to have!

JUDY

Fine. You can have the loveseat and the microwave.

PETER

Thank you.

JUDY

Would you like a couple of the Calphalon pots too? Couple dishes?

Peter surprised but suspects a trap.

PETER

Sure.

JUDY

And the bedroom? Anything there?

PETER

The rest of my clothes. My alarm clock. The book I was reading.

JUDY

I found your Ipod too.

PETER

Oh yes, that. And the computer?

JUDY

(sincerely)

I need it for work.

PETER

If you get a new one, can I have the old one?

JUDY

Sure. But I don't know when that will be.

PETER

Just let me know when it happens.

Judy gives him a double take.

PETER

What?

JUDY

Uh, I don't know I guess I thought... I didn't think you wanted to stay in touch.

PETER

I didn't want to move out.

JUDY

That's only because you didn't want to live in a dinky apartment.

Peter struggles to answer and doesn't.

Judy struggles being brave for the next item.

JUDY

The baby's room.

Peter jiggles leg hard and stares at table top.

JUDY

I was thinking of selling at all at a yard sale.

PETER

You don't have to. You can still have children.

JUDY

Even if I get married again, children would be five years out and by then I'll be heading toward menopause. I've already had one miscarriage, Peter. I'm just too old.

PETER

You kicked me out because I can't give you children.

JUDY

I kicked you out because you died, Peter. You went from a strong and cocky pain in the ass to a withering slob the minute you found out you had cancer! Now, I'm glad they got it all. I'm glad you're out of the woods, but dammit, they took out your prostate not your personality!

Peter jiggles leg hard again.

JUDY

I waited too long. I missed my shot at kids. Both of us did. Now I'm never going to be a mother and you're never going to

be a father. I'm going to sell the baby's room in a yard sale.

PETER

Can I have the Winnie the Pooh cross stitch you made?

JUDY

What for?

PETER

So I can remember the child we almost had.

Judy crumbles but tries to stiffen. Writes note.

PETER

He would have been beautiful.

Judy sniffs hard, slaps down the pen and gets off the bench.

JUDY

I have to go to the bathroom.

Peter sighs.

Frisbee flies in from left stage. Peter smiles sadly, gets up to pick it up and tosses it back, eyes smiling at the play OS.

KID

(OS)

Thank you, mister!

Peter waves and remains standing on her side of the table to watch them for a moment

Judy comes back out, stiff again, passes him to sit down.

JUDY

The garage.

Peter hovers over her shoulder to look at the list.

PETER

I'd like my Camero back.

JUDY

Only if you can get a loan to take over the payments, but your credit is shot.

Peter strolls back around the table to sit opposite.



PETER

Why don't I just make the payments to you?

JUDY

I don't trust you with money.

PETER

Can I just drive it on the weekends? Every other holiday. I'll let you pick the mechanic. You want Camero support?

JUDY

Cute.

PETER

(smiling)

It's my car!

JUDY

I'll think about it.

Peter looks a little victorious.

JUDY

Are you working?

PETER

Kind of.

JUDY

What are you doing?

PETER

I'm flying a cash register at the Quickie Mart.

JUDY

Oh.

PETER

It's was the best I could do on short notice. They're not going to give me my pilot's license back until I'm cancer free for at least a year. (beat) But I have a friend from the glider port looking into a mechanic's spot at the airfield. So we'll see.

JUDY

That's good. At least you'll get to be around planes.

PETER

Don't know if that makes it better or worse.

JUDY

Look, Peter. I know it sucks. It's sucks bad enough you got cancer. Worse that you can't have kids anymore. It takes the cake that it made you lose your license, your hobby and your job.

PETER

And my wife.

JUDY

We didn't break up because of the cancer.

PETER

No? Then why?

JUDY

Because you... you stopped being you.

PETER

I was depressed! Because I lost my ability to give you children. Depressed that I lost my job, because I lost my license, and all of this was because I lost my prostate. So yes, we broke up because I got cancer.

JUDY

I tried to support you, Peter. I tried so hard.

PETER

But you hate me for it. You're angry at me because we can't have kids. I know badly you wanted them, Judy. You supported me only as much as letting me live there until I healed up from the surgery, but you were cold and bossy the moment we found out they had to take it out.

JUDY

I did not.

PETER

You did too. It felt like I was living with my elder sister. You don't even look

at me the same way anymore.

JUDY  
I didn't think of you any differently.

PETER  
(harshly)  
Bullshit!

Peter shoves off the bench and paces.

PETER  
Now you've got me sitting here begging for  
pots and pans! As if you think I'm not  
diminished enough!

JUDY  
Peter...

PETER  
Don't. Don't start with the fucking  
sympathy. That's the last thing I need.  
Especially from you.

Judy drops her eyes, uncomfortably silent.

PETER  
I hate feeling like this!

Judy looks at list.

JUDY  
Do you have room in your apartment for the  
kitchenette table?

PETER  
Probably.

JUDY  
How about the barbecue? Do you have a  
place for it?

PETER  
Yes.

Judy writes notes, looks down her nose at the list for a  
long minute.

JUDY  
Can you afford to take over the Camero  
insurance payments too?

Peter is shocked, slowly sits back down.

PETER

I would make it happen.

Judy puts down pen and reaches into her purse and takes out a ring of keys. Unhooks the Camero keys and hovers them in the air over the table.

JUDY

I'm keeping the other key. The minute a single payment is late I'm coming to repossess it.

Peter's hand hovers by the keys but is unsure to take them.

JUDY

If you can't try to kill yourself flying like a maniac, at least you can try to kill your self driving like a maniac.

Peter smiles wide and takes the keys slowly.

PETER

Thank you, babes.

JUDY

Don't call me 'babes'. And you have to give me a ride home when we're done here.

PETER

Sure thing, babes.

Judy glares at him with a sparkle she can't help.

Peter smiles big and winks at her. Fidgets with the keys in his hand.

Frisbee flies over high. Peter leaps to catch it from the air. Stands to fling it back to the kids with a smile. Strolls back to the table

PETER

Y'know, we could consider adopting.

JUDY

I don't want to inherit someone else's problems. I've got enough of my own.

PETER

I know it's not ideal, but we have to work

with what we have.

JUDY  
We're getting divorced, Peter!

PETER  
I haven't signed anything yet.

JUDY  
You can't deny me a divorce in this state.

PETER  
No. But I can be a royal pain in the ass about it.

JUDY  
You wanted this too.

PETER  
I never wanted this. I just wanted to stop living with a babysitter.

Peter fidgets with Camero keys, considers them deeply.

PETER  
And I don't think you really wanted this either.

JUDY  
But I can't live like this! Constantly fighting all the time! Trying to get you get up and do something! So you lost your job and your license. Get a new job, get a new hobby. Get in trouble! Go drink beer with your best friend. They took your prostate, Peter, not your balls!

PETER  
They certainly didn't take yours, did they?

JUDY  
A woman is has to be strong to be married to a man like you.

PETER  
Would that be the man I was or the man I am now?

JUDY  
The situation changed, beyond our control.

You let the situation change you.

PETER

Y'know, I've heard of men who won't get a vasectomy because they don't feel man enough if they're shooting blanks. But I'm not shooting anything! Where does that leave me?

JUDY

Does it still work?

PETER

It's... it's trying.

JUDY

How long until you know?

PETER

Probably another six months. I'm supposed to be 'exercising' so I can recover. Turns out the physical therapist office doesn't offer that particular service.

Judy is confused.

Peter is humored that she doesn't realize what he's talking about. Absently fidgets with Camero keys.

PETER

Maybe you could help me with my physical therapy.

JUDY

What- what physical therapy?!

PETER

Wanna see?

Judy figures it out by the look on his face.

JUDY

Oh just sit down. We have to go over the rest of this list.

Peter slowly sits down, thoughtfully fidgets with Camero keys, looks at them with a warm smile from time to time.

Judy turns her attention back to the list.

PETER

Wanna go for a beer later?

JUDY

What?

PETER

Wanna go for a beer? When we're done.

Judy rattles her head.

PETER

You said I should go drink beer with my best friend.

Judy raises to the compliment, but grins wisely.

JUDY

I meant Steve.

PETER

He's not as fun as you. Especially in the Camero.

JUDY

Oh god, Peter. I am not trying to do it in the back of that car again. That was a disaster! We ended up on the ground of that orchard. With all those walnut shells poking into my back!

PETER

But it was fun.

Judy shies to admit this.

PETER

Have you been out with Sarah?

JUDY

Sort of. I spent the weekend at her house and we got drunk.

PETER

The whole weekend?

JUDY

We watched Russell Crowe movies and ate chocolate.

PETER

Sounds like you had a good time.

JUDY

We did.

PETER

You should do that more often. You don't have to wait for us to get into a fight.

JUDY

I was trying to be there for you.

PETER

I'm grown up, babes. I can go a weekend without a babysitter.

JUDY

Can you? You were so down!

PETER

Maybe I was down because you felt I needed a fucking babysitter! (beat) Just because a couple is married doesn't mean they can't have their own lives too. You don't have to be single to have your own friends and your hobbies. When was the last time you picked up a paintbrush?

JUDY

Thursday.

PETER

See? You didn't for two whole years. The damn things dried up in their cleanout cup on the table they sat so long. Why did you wait until I was gone?

JUDY

Why did you wait to look for your balls until you were gone?

PETER

Because I couldn't see with a babysitter in my way.

JUDY

Okay.



PETER

Okay.

Judy tries to look at the list but tosses it down.

PETER

So? Wanna go for a beer?

JUDY

Can we watch a Russell Crowe movie?

PETER

No.

JUDY

Fine.

PETER

But... since we're negotiating... we can watch a Russell Crowe movie if we can also watch a Natalie Portman movie.

Judy laughs, seeing her original husband again for the first time in a long time.

PETER

And! We go for a ride in the Camero.

JUDY

I'm not doing it in the Camero again.

PETER

I mean a real ride. A drive.

JUDY

Are you going to drive like a maniac?

PETER

Are you going to squeal if I do?

JUDY

Probably.

PETER

Probably.

JUDY

I'll think about it while we finish this list.

PETER

I have an idea. Can I see the list?

Judy hands it to him. Peter studies it for a long minute, then sets it down.

PETER

Can I see the papers?

Judy hesitates, but pulls out a thick stack of legal papers with signature tabs hanging out the side and hands it over.

PETER

Tell you what? I've got a proposal for you. You can have everything on that list if I can have these papers.

JUDY

You want to file it yourself?

PETER

(not confirming or denying  
her last question)  
Is it a deal?

JUDY

Okay. Deal.

Peter sets both elbows on the table and stares at her as he rips the first page off the pack, then rips it into shreds, sprinkles it over the table.

JUDY

What did you do that for?

PETER

Because you smiled.

Judy huffs.

PETER

You told me that night that I couldn't make you smile anymore. So, now, every time you smile, I'm going to rip up another page. And if I run out of pages before this meeting is over, then... you're just going to have to start from scratch.

JUDY

Is this you being a royal pain in the ass

to delay the divorce?

PETER

This is me using my balls.

Judy tries not to smile but does.

Peter grins and pointedly rips off another page, tears it to shred and throws them at her face.

Judy giggles to turn her face away.

Peter tears off another page and does it again.

Judy tucks her mouth to stop smiling, but can't not smirk.

JUDY

Cut it out.

Peter starts to tear off another page.

Judy stands up and stops his hands with hers, smashing the pages down against the table.

JUDY

Come on, Peter. We have to get through this. Quit playing around.

Peter pushes up from the table to lean over it too, locks eyes, and leans slowly in to kiss her.

Frisbee sails in from OS and beans Judy on the back of the head.

JUDY

Owe!

PETER

(laughing)

Are you all right?

Peter gets up to get the Frisbee and prepares to throw it back.

DAD comes in from stage left to catch it. Thanks Peter with a wave and grins.

DAD

Sorry about that, dude. You okay, ma'am?

JUDY

Yeah, I'm fine.

Dad waves them goodbye with a knowing grin to Peter and leaves stage left.

DAD

Carry on.

Judy shakes head and sighs, sits back down, glances at Peter and huffs.

JUDY

Sit down, Peter.

Peter strolls back over but remains standing.

PETER

No.

JUDY

Come on. I know you don't like this, but we have to get through this part.

PETER

But we don't have to get through this part this way.

Peter picks up legal papers and rattles them in the air.

JUDY

Look. You still don't have your license. You're working at a convenience store! You need time to pull yourself together, Peter! Without me as a babysitter, you said so yourself!

PETER

You want to see me pull myself together? Right here in front of you. Watch.

Peter picks up the rest of the legal pack and rips the whole thing up and throws it back down in a mess on the table, turns and paces away with a glare, still fidgeting with keys.

Judy hides her face in her palms.

PETER

That's me being a royal pain in the ass. And I will continue to be a pain in the ass about this until you can admit to me one thing.

JUDY

What?

PETER

That you're angry because I can't give you children.

Judy looks down.

PETER

Admit it.

JUDY

I'm just disappointed.

PETER

It's not my fault.

JUDY

I know that.

PETER

But your heart doesn't know that. You even look at me like I'm less of a man. Admit it.

JUDY

I don't mean to, Peter.

PETER

But you do. And that kills me more than losing my license or my job. By far.

Judy looks down again.

PETER

We were together six years Judy! We both waited too long to try to have children! It is not my fault!

Judy puts a hand to touch his forearm.

JUDY

Peter...

Peter yanks hand back. Gets up and paces more.

PETER

No sympathy! I'm not feeling sorry for myself anymore. I'm tired of it.

While he is on his rampage, Judy slowly gets up and starts cleaning up the ripped paper.

PETER

I'm going to do exactly what you said. I'm going to get a new hobby. I'm going to get a new job. I'm going to drive like a maniac. I'm going to get my license back. And I'm going to take my best friend out for a beer, and hope to God she doesn't look at me like some kind of insect while I'm doing it.

Judy is now on his side of the table, gathering papers, stops with the wad in her hands and huffs to the sky, dropping her head back.

PETER

But you know what? I don't need the job, or license, or the prostate... I don't even need my fucking Camero to climb out of this dive.

Peter steps up behind her and drops his head forward, resting his forehead against the back of hers.

PETER

The only thing I need is my best friend.

Judy turns and dives into his shoulder, crying silently.

Peter wraps his arms around her, soaks it in a moment, then stares out passed her.

PETER

The only thing I need to find my balls again is for you to believe that I can.

Judy squeezes him harder.

PETER

You believed it for five years. I can do this, babes. I can. But it has been immensely more difficult without you. (beat) So we can't have children. We can either figure something else out, or accept it. Maybe I won't get my license back. If so, I'll... drive like a maniac more often. I'll figure something out. But I can do this. I can figure something

out... But only as long as my best friend thinks I can.

Judy falls away from the hug slowly and turns back to the table, collects up the paper shreds, pauses to look at the un-ripped list, then wads that up as well. Walks to the trash and throws it away, comes back with eyes down.

Peter watches her with guarded eyes.

Judy gathers up her stuff and puts it back in the tote. Sets tote and purse on the table. Stands tall but looks at the table.

JUDY

Do you have a Russell Crowe movie at your apartment?

PETER

Yes. But I don't have a couch. We'll have to sit on the floor.

JUDY

And you're going to buy a pizza to go with the beer.

PETER

And I'm driving.

JUDY

No maniac driving though. No trying to make me scream. And no sneaky passes at my boobs. I'm coming over for beer and a movie. That's all. You're not allowed to be a pain in the ass.

Peter grins devilishly.

JUDY

(trying not to smile)  
I'm serious, Peter!

Peter tucks the keys into his pocket, stomps up on the bench, stomps onto the table, steps on her tote, steps down the other side, steps to the ground in the four inches between her and the bench, pulls her in boldly and lays a big kiss on her.

Judy blinks in shock, stunned by his boldness.

PETER  
I'm glad we got that settled.

JUDY  
Why did you do that?

PETER  
Because you smiled.

JUDY  
Dammit, Peter! When will you learn to  
behave?

PETER  
I was behaving. That's why we fell apart  
in the first place.

Peter squeezes her boob.

JUDY  
Peter!

Peter dares her with a look - what are you gonna do about  
it?

Judy is charmed like a school girl because she cannot  
control him anymore, but grimaces to remember it means she  
can't control him anymore.

Peter smugly leans his head over to the side of her face,  
hovering for another kiss.

Judy tries to glare at him.

PETER  
I found my balls.

Judy rolls eyes and tries to be frustrated with it.

PETER  
Wanna see em?

JUDY  
And here all this time I thought it was  
the pilot's license that made you cocky.

PETER  
So did I.

Judy steps side to reach around him for her tote.

Peter gooses her when she's turned away.



Judy jumps and turns.

Peter rocks on his heels, tucks hands in pockets, and whistles.

Judy slaps his ass and turns back to the table for her stuff.

JUDY

And you wonder why I ended up being a babysitter. Sometimes you just need a good spanking.

PETER

Well, if you're going to baby sit that way, maybe you could help me with my physical therapy.

Judy rolls her eyes back to him, but is charmed again.

PETER

Wanna go for a ride in a Camero, little girl?

Judy angles her head to look away, trying not to smile.

PETER

I'll let you shift the gear stick.

Judy blushes.

JUDY

I thought it didn't work yet.

PETER

Maybe if it got closer to its old stomping grounds...

JUDY

You-- Peter-- Oh dear god.

PETER

You wanted to see me with balls again. So grab your shit, get in, sit down, shut up, and hold on.

JUDY

Beer. Pizza. Movie. That's all your getting.

PETER

But a Russell Crowe movie? Uh huh. Get in  
the fucking car.

Judy locks eyes with him a long moment, but Peter doesn't  
back down. Obedient, smiling, she picks up her bags and  
steps toward stage left.

Peter gooses her, smiles when she jumps, and struts off  
behind her, spinning his Camero keys on his finger.

TRANS OUT

THE END