

MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH

by

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To the Cast:

The key to playing these characters is not in playing the humor of the situations, but in their absolute belief in what they are saying and why they are saying it. Both men have thrived in this relationship for years by BEing just who they are.

The Patient is insecure, needy, and is accustomed to being treated by the world the way the Doctor treats him. It somehow reassures him that he is accepted by everyone in the same way.

The Doctor is self-assured and arrogant. He needs patients like this to maintain his confidence. Once he reverses the roles as part of treatment, his confidence is reflected and affected by his relationship with the Patient. He sees himself the way others see him.

Scene One
Monday

Lights up on the representation of an office. Sparse furniture including a sofa, desk, comfortable chair at one end of the sofa, with a small table between the sofa and chair with a phone on it. Lying on the the sofa is a man dressed in a suit and sitting in the chair is a man dressed in a suit. The man in the chair is the patient and the man on the sofa is the doctor, who always wears glasses. The patient is sleeping, unbeknownst to the doctor.

DOCTOR

. . . and I think that this whole thing has been blown way out of proportion. What do you think? (Silence) Dan? (Silence) Dan?!

PATIENT snores.

DOCTOR

(Noticing the sleeper at last) Jesus! (Shouting) WAKE . . . UP!

PATIENT bolts upright.

PATIENT

Wh-a-a-a! Come in!

He runs to the door and opens it. He sees no one outside and looks back to the doctor.

DOCTOR

The session isn't up yet.

PATIENT

(Embarrassed) Right. Just thought I heard a knock.

DOCTOR

You did. It was your brain rattling against your skull as your head tilted backwards to gain a new perspective on what remains of the 45 minutes of our session.

PATIENT

If I thought you really meant that, I'd find myself a new shrink.

DOCTOR

If I thought you really meant that, I'd . . .

PATIENT

Don't say it.

DOCTOR

Stop.

PATIENT

Why should I stop? Isn't this the place I can say anything, do any--?

DOCTOR

No, no, no. Not you stop. I would stop. If I thought you meant that, I'd stop.

PATIENT

Oh. Okay. I just thought that . . .

DOCTOR

That's the trouble. You think. You have to learn to start feeling. With your heart. Not your head.

PATIENT

Yeah, but . . .

DOCTOR

No "buts". You have too many "buts" in your life. Here a "but", there a "but", everywhere a "but, but". (Sings) Old MacDonald had a "but" ...

They sing in harmony.

PATIENT**DOCTOR**

Eee-yi, eee-yi, ooooooh! Eee-yi, eee-yi, ooooooh!

(They both stop and stare thoughtfully at the floor. They have performed this ritual many times before. It breaks the tension. Then they abruptly resume their positions on the sofa and chair.)

DOCTOR

So, you think it's all out of proportion?

PATIENT

Yep. Every time I bring it up, she goes into a huge tantrum and there's no telling what the hell really brought it on. I have never in my life seen anyone get so ticked off about -- Could I ask you something?

DOCTOR

Shoot.

PATIENT

Why do you always lie on the couch and I sit in the chair?

DOCTOR

Don't you like the chair?

PATIENT

The chair's fine, it's fine. It's just . . .

DOCTOR

I could get another kind of chair if you want. You don't need to feel constrained here. I want you to feel as comfortable as possible.

PATIENT

No . . . it's okay.

DOCTOR

You're sure?

PATIENT

I just wondered . . . I mean, I thought the doctor was supposed to sit in the chair and the patient got to lie on the couch.

DOCTOR

That's the ninth time you've called the "sofa" a "couch" in the last week. The second time today.

PATIENT

Sorry. (Long pause) Why do you lie on the sofa, though?

DOCTOR

I guess because I'm usually here before you, and I get the choice of the good seat. In this case, it's the sofa.

PATIENT

Oh.

DOCTOR

Now about your wife's tantrum?

PATIENT

Yeah . . . okay. (Pause) She hates for me to pick my toes in bed.

DOCTOR

I beg your pardon?

PATIENT

You know, I get into bed and clean the lint from my socks out from between my toes. She hates it.

DOCTOR

So why do you do it?

PATIENT

I don't like to leave all that lint between the sheets. Don't you think that's considerate?

DOCTOR

What do you think?

PATIENT

I just told you what I think! Don't you ever have an opinion?

DOCTOR

Do you think I do?

PATIENT

I think you enjoy watching other people suffer without having to get involved yourself! I think it's easy to say "What do you think?" and never commit yourself to an opinion or take a stand. What do you think?

DOCTOR

I think -- that cleaning your toes in bed is semi-disgusting.

PATIENT

Aha! An opinion! A half-hearted, semi-committed opinion, but an opinion all the same! Congratulations!

DOCTOR

And I think your wife has a right to express her resentment ...