

A MEETS B

(A one-act play)

Time: 1996.

Setting: It is midnight in an isolated area. There is a lone telephone booth upstage center.

Characters (2): Mr. and Mr. B, any age from 20-40. Mr. A is wearing a T-shirt with "A" on it; Mr. B is wearing a T-shirt with "B" on it.

A MEETS B

SETTING: *IT IS MIDNIGHT IN AN ISOLATED AREA.*

AT RISE: *LIGHTS UP SLOWLY ON A LONE TELEPHONE BOOTH SLIGHTLY UP STAGE RIGHT. THE REST OF THE STAGE IS BARREN. INSIDE THE BOOTH, MR. B IS GESTICULATING WILDLY.*

B

I know, but you told me to call you anytime! Can't you help me?!

(MR. B IS IN HIS EARLY TO MID-THIRTIES. HE IS UNKEMPT AND UNSHAVEN, AND WEARING A SIMPLE WHITE T-SHIRT WITH THE LETTER "B" ON IT.

NOW, MR. A, A MAN IN HIS LATE-THIRTIES, APPEARS UPSTAGE LEFT. MR. A IS NEATLY GROOMED AND CLEAN-SHAVEN. HE IS ALSO WEARING A WHITE T-SHIRT, BUT WITH THE LETTER "A" ON IT.

B IS COMPLETELY ABSORBED IN HIS TELEPHONE CONVERSATION AND DOES NOT SEE A WHO SNEAKS UP QUIETLY ON HIM AND LISTENS).

B (cont.)

...But what am I going to do?!...You don't know!?!...Then how am I ever going to know!?

(A STARTS RAPPING LOUDLY AND INCESSANTLY ON THE TELEPHONE BOOTH WITH A QUARTER. B JUMPS).

B

CHRIST!...

(INTO TELEPHONE)

Can you believe this? It's midnight and there's a guy who wants to use the phone, *this* phone...

(HE SIGNALS TO A)

B

...You bet I'll be careful.

(WHISPERS)

Call me back in ten minutes. I'll get rid of this guy...
The number of this phone booth?...666-6666...Thanks.

(B HANGS UP AND EXITS BOOTH)

A

Sorry about that.

B

Don't you have a cell phone?

A

What about you?

B

I was on a very urgent call, so make it quick.

A

Sure, I'll make it quick. I'll make it very quick.

(A IS STARING AT THE TOP OF B'S HEAD)

B

Yes?

A

Oh, nothing, nothing...

(A GOES TO MAKE THE CALL, BUT STOPS; HE PUTS HIS HAND TO HIS MOUTH AND BEGINS TO GIGGLE)

B

What!?

(A POINTS AT B'S HEAD)

What's that? A

What's what? B

That? A

Where? B

There! On top of your head. A

(FEELING HEAD)
There's nothing on my head. B

Yes, there is, look! A

(FEELS HEAD AGAIN)
No, there isn't. B

I just saw a little man sitting on your head. A

Little man!? B
(HE FEELS HIS HEAD AGAIN)
Go on, make that call, will you?

Don't you feel him? A

Please. B

A

I distinctly see a man sitting on your head.

B

(FEELS HEAD AGAIN)

Are you sure you're alright?

A

Be careful when you touch your head. You might hurt him.

B

Look, there's no one on my head. We should find a doctor for your head.

A

Ah! He's gone! Funny. I must have imagined him.

B

Would you make that call? Go on, make it quick. You understand, I was having a-, you know, a kind of private conversation.

A

Wait a minute. I just heard him.

B

Heard what?

A

SHHH! Listen! The voice!

B

What voice?

A

Yeeesss, that's it!

(A SUDDENLY JUMPS IN THE AIR AND PUTS HIS HAND OVER HIS MOUTH. HE IS POINTING TO THE TOP OF B'S HEAD)

B

(GOING BACK TO BOOTH)

Look, Mister, I don't want to be rude but you're really encroaching upon my space.

A

(CIRCLING B)

There goes another cliché!

B

A what?

A

Cliché. C-L-I-C-H-E. It's French.

B

Yes, I know what it means.

A

So why do you do it?

B

Do what?

A

Use clichés. But maybe that's not really your voice?

B

What voice?

A

I think it's his. Just now, when I asked you a question, he would answer, but your mouth would jerk up and down like a puppet's.

(B SLOWLY TRIES TO EASE INTO THE BOOTH BUT A PUTS HIMSELF IN THE WAY. A STARES UPWARD AT THE AREA OVER B'S HEAD)

A (cont.)

Now he's gone again. Do you think he flew up there, so we can't see him? Do you think he's pulling the strings from way up there?

(A SWINGS LIGHTLY AT THE SPACE ABOVE B'S HEAD)

AND STOPS HIS HAND SUDDENLY. B PULLS OUT OF THE WAY. A PURSUES HIM, EACH TIME STOPPING HIS HAND TO FEEL THE AIR ABOVE B'S HEAD)

A (cont.)

Ahah! Ahaah! The strings!

B

Get out of here!

(A JUST STARES UP AT THE AREA ABOVE B'S HEAD)

A

Come on, little man, stop pulling the strings up there and come back down to squat.

B

Will you give me some space?!

A

(A POINTS AT B'S HEAD)

He's slid down the strings!

B

You're not well, are you?

A

I'll show him to you. You got a mirror?
Have you got a pocket mirror?

B

You need to see a doctor.

A

I can see him. Yes, I can!

(B PULLS A BUSINESS CARD FROM HIS POCKET)

B

I don't know what you want from me, but here's the number of a good doctor. Go home, have a good night's sleep and call her tomorrow.

A

(GRABBING CARD FROM B)

What about tonight? Is she good-looking?

B

No, you can't call her now. It's too late.

(A MAKES HIS WAY OVER TO THE TELEPHONE)

B (cont.)

Hold it! Where are you going?

A

That's a very good idea. I think I'll call her right now.

(PURSUING A WHO WALKS ROUND AND ROUND THE BOOTH)

B

Give me that card back.

A

I will not.

B

I was just trying to help you out.

A

Maybe you shouldn't have.

(A SNEAKS BACK BETWEEN B AND THE BOOTH)

B

Oh no you won't.

(B GETS BETWEEN A AND BOOTH)

B (cont.)

I'm expecting a call.

A

Who from?

(A GETS BETWEEN B AND BOOTH)

Never mind! B

(B RUNS AROUND A)

Oh yes, I am. A

(A RUNS AROUND B)

Oh no you're not! B

(B RUNS AROUND A)

I'm calling the doc. A

Would you just go, please! B

Where to? A

(REACHING FOR CARD)
B
Alright. Then give me that card back.

(ELUDING HIM)
A
She get up early?

B
Give me that card back!

(WAVING CARD)
A

The doctor's not at home!

B

I don't have a doctor!

A

No?

B

No!

A

Then why are you so defensive?

B

Because it's none of your goddamn business!

A

I was just asking a question.

B

I told you, you can call her in the morning. But if you're not going to do that, I want that card because you're not calling her now.

(A POKETS THE CARD)

A

Eat bran, does she?

B

Please, allow me.

(B GRABS A'S ARM AND ATTEMPTS TO LEAD HIM OFF)

A

Does she eat raisin bran?! Porridge? Washes it down with a lot of coffee I bet? Eh?! WASHES IT DOWN WITH A LOT OF COFFEE!?

(A SUDDENLY STARTS PRANCING ABOUT WITH HIS FISTS UNDER HIS T-SHIRT SO THAT HE APPEARS TO HAVE BREASTS)

B

Jesus!

(B RUNS BACK TO THE BOOTH AND BEGINS TO TELEPHONE)

A

Who the hell are you calling?

(A STRETCHES HIS T-SHIRT EVEN MORE)

A (cont.)

The wife?

B

You really want to know?

A

ARE YOU CALLING YOUR WIFE!?

B

I'm calling the police.

(A GOES INTO THE BOOTH WITH B)

A

The police!?! No! Not the police! You've got it all wrong.

(A HANGS UP PHONE, PUTS ARM AROUND B, AND GENTLY LEADS HIM DOWNSTAGE FROM BOOTH)

A (cont.)

We're definitely not from the same school now, are we?

B

What was all that prancing about like a woman then?

A

Woman? Which woman? Where?

B

I don't know! How should I know? You were the one imitating her.

A

Her? Her what?

B

That woman you were making fun of!

A

I don't make fun of anyone, Pal, even you. Especially you. You're seeing things! You're hallucinating, Pal!

(A SUDDENLY POINTS AT THE TOP OF THE TELEPHONE BOOTH)

A (cont.)

Look!

B

Oh no, not again!

A

There's a big fat woman wearing a puke green polyester dress waving a rolling pin. She looks like one of those hen-pecking women you see in the cartoons.

(TO B)

Is that what your big sister's like?

B

(GRABS A)

How did you know I had a sister?

A

She beat you up?

(A RUNS AWAY FROM B INTO THE TELEPHONE BOOTH)

A (cont.)

(TO IMAGINARY WOMAN ON BOOTH)

Is it me you're angry with or him?...

(BACK TO B)

Look, now she's jumping up and down up there. Christ! I hope the roof doesn't fall through!

B

Leave me alone, will you? Am I bothering you? No, I'm not. So why do you bother me? I'm just waiting for a phone call.

(A RUNS OUT AND PUTS HIS FISTS UNDER HIS T-SHIRT)

A

From her?

B

For Christ's sake!

A

From her?

(HE BOUNCES UP AND DOWN, FISTS UNDER T-SHIRT)

A (cont.)

Little bunny rabbit? No?

(HE EXTENDS SHIRT MATERIAL SLIGHTLY)

A (cont.)

Big, big bunny rabbit?

(MR. B MOVES BACK INTO THE BOOTH AND PICKS UP PHONE. MR. A APPROACHES BOOTH AND CIRCLES IT SLOWLY ALL THE WHILE STARING AT THE TOP OF THE BOOTH)

A (cont.)

OH NO! OH NO-O!!

(A RAPS LOUDLY ON THE BOOTH)

B

(INTO PHONE)

Police?

(A CONTINUES TO MAKE A TERRIFIC RACKET)

A

OH NO! OH NO-O-O!!

(A MOVES INTO THE BOOTH, GRABS THE RECEIVER FROM B AND HANGS IT UP)

A (cont.)

Baby's back! Who's in charge here?! The little man or the big fat woman?

(A BACKS AWAY AND STARES AT THE TOP OF THE PHONE BOOTH. NOW, B STEPS HALFWAY OUT)

B

Who did you say came back?

A

You know! He looks like you!

B

Who?

A

I got you now, huh?

B

Who did you say came back?

A

You're running scared now. I got you breathing hard.

B

WHO?!

A

You! You!

B

Me? No, what's that word you used?

Baby? A

That one, yes. Now where? Show me. B

It's this vision, see... A

...Go on... B

...I see him there, ok? He's in this old dark living room, not very big... A

(B HAS NOW STEPPED OUT OF BOOTH ENTIRELY AND HAS JOINED A)

...it looks like he's about to sit down in that armchair. A

...Yes?... B

No! She's moving into the other armchair and he, yes, he's moving over to the couch, that's right, go on, do it, sit down! Look! He can't decide whether to sit down in that armchair facing her or lie on the couch away from her. A

Why? What's he going to do to her? B

You mean, what's she going to do to him? A

(THE TELEPHONE RINGS LOUDLY. A AND B RACE FOR PHONE, A GETTING THERE FIRST. HE PICKS UP THE RECEIVER AS HE FENDS OFF B WITH HIS OTHER HAND)

B

Give me that!

A

Hello?...

(NOW, B CUTS THE CONNECTION BY HOLDING DOWN THE RECEIVER BUTTON)

A (cont.)

Hello? Hello? Hello! Hello!!

(A HANGS UP)

A

Expecting someone?

B

OF COURSE NOT! Who were you expecting?

A

Easy, Pal! Don't get so worked up. That's not like you now, is it?

B

How do you know?

A

Just calm down and tell me who that was on the phone.

B

No one!

(PAUSE)

A

No?

(A RUNS TO THE BOOTH, PICKS UP PHONE AND LISTENS. B SLAMS IT BACK DOWN. B PULLS A OUT OF THE BOOTH AND PUSHES HIM BACKWARDS IN A CONTINUAL CIRCLE DURING THE FOLLOWING EXCHANGE)

B

Nobody.

A

But I thought...

B

What?

A

I thought...

B

You thought what?

A

That you were expecting someone to call.

B

Why?

A

Well, you were speaking to someone earlier.

B

So?

A

And wasn't that person supposed to call back?

B

No one's calling back, get it?

A

Didn't you ask someone-

B

There was no one on that line!

A

Why would anyone call here, then, at midnight, in the middle of nowhere?

Wrong number? B

I know who it was! A

(A BREAKS AWAY FROM B AND MOVES TOWARD BOOTH, BUT B RUNS AHEAD OF HIM)

Oh no you don't! B

Fine. Guard the telephone. See if I care. But remember, A

(A WALKS AWAY)

I know who it was. A (cont.)

It was the wrong number! B

Oh no. No wrong number! I know all about your kind! A
(A PRETENDS TO WALK OFFSTAGE)

I know. A (cont.)

(JUST BEFORE A LEAVES THE STAGE AREA, B RUNS AFTER HIM AND GRABS HIM)

I- A (cont.)

WHO!?!? B

(B IS NOW SHAKING HIM)

B (cont.)

WHO!!?

(A CASTS HIS EYES TO THE TOP OF THE PHONE BOOTH)

B (cont.)

Well?

A

Her.

B

What do you mean?!

A

She'll be calling you.

B

Who, you little bastard!?

A

That little woman up there!

B

Which little woman?

A

You know.

B

No, I don't!

A

Sure, you do.

B

You mean the one in the chair?

A

That's right. The one in the armchair. The one on the booth. The little fat woman on your head. They're all over you. But look, the little man, see, he's the one lying on the-

B

I don't give a shit about the little man! Tell me about the little woman! You said she's fat and wearing polyester?

A

She's fat, enormous. She's sitting there, squat and solid as a Buddha, soaking up his energy, just soaking it up like an energy sponge, not giving anything in return. AN-Y-THING! And he, you see, he's just lying there, telling her everything, EV-ER-Y-THING, and...

(A TALKS TO THE BOOTH AND MOVES FROM SIDE TO SIDE TRYING TO SEE)

B

What?!

A

He was just squirming on the couch. It looked like he was crying.

B

Crying?

A

Now she's just handed him a box of Kleenex—presumably, I guess, to soak up his tears— There he goes again, just crying and talking and talking some more. What the hell's he crying about? And she, she's sitting there, fat and squat, like a huge sponge full of his water—

B

She sent you, didn't she?

A

What's the problem?

B

She sent you to spy on me!?

A

Who is that big, fat woman squatting on your head? Your wife?

B

You've been following me. Somebody sent you to follow me!

Who? The big, fat wife? A

Get out!! B

Why are you so upset? A

I am not upset! B

Of course, you are! Look at you! You're squirming. Your armpits are leaking. A

What do you want to know? If I have a wife? B
Alright, so I have a wife. Big deal.

There we go! Ve-ry go-o-od. She fat? A

Very rotund. And she also wears polyester. How's yours? B

Mine's in bed where she should be, sleeping. A

Then why aren't you with her? B

Too boring. A

Too boring? B

Sure. I'd rather be here with you. A

Why? B

A

Why? Why not? So... Tell me about the little wife in the little home. She call the shots?

B

What about your wife?

A

I love my wife. Look, off the record, ok? Every man needs a woman's helping hand once in a while. We all know that. Not just someone to fill the void. But someone to put the icing on the cake. She doesn't do that, does she?

B

Oh no?

A

I meant for you?

B

Oh.

(PAUSE)

She sent you to find out about me.

A

No, she didn't. Don't start that again. It's just something about you I noticed. It's written all over your face. Besides, how could she know you'd be here?

B

True. But how do you know so much about me?

A

I told you. It's written all over your face. Now, tell me everything. I bet I have the same kind of wife you have?

B

I don't think so.

A

Like to sit down? Get it off your chest?

B

Get what off?

(A PULLS OUT A CHOCOLATE BAR FROM HIS POCKET)

A

Like some chocolate?

B

What are you up to now?

A

I'm offering you some chocolate.

B

Why?

A

Why?! It's called an ice breaker, that's why! I offer the guy chocolate and he asks me why!

(B EXAMINES IT CAREFULLY. TAKES A SMALL BITE)

A (cont.)

I haven't poisoned it.

(A BECKONS TO HIM TO SIT DOWN. THEY DO SO, TOGETHER, ON THE FLOOR)

A (cont.)

Like the chocolate?

B

Very good, thanks.

A

I could tell you liked it.

B

You knew that too?

A

Sure, I did. But go ahead. Don't let me interrupt you.

B

The fact is, well, all she is, see, she's got nothing to do with the icing on any cake.

A

I see.

B

She's basically more like the cake part.

A

Dry?

B

Boring.

A

Boring, but functional?

B

Functional? That's the word! She's a functionary.

A

Terrible.

B

I know. And what's more, I can't stand functionalism, and sometimes -

A

You can't stand the little bitch?

B

What did you call my wife?!

A

Hey, nothing! I'm just listening. Anyway, as *you* were saying, -

B

Just watch it, ok? Anyway, as *I* was saying, she's always calling here, writing there, trying to direct traffic. Maybe that's good. I don't know. What do you think?

(A DOESN'T ANSWER)

B

But where's the joie de vivre, where's the fantasy in all that, that's what I want to know? Where has the fun in life gone?

A

You tell me, Pal.

B

She's always wanting something, and she can't seem to get it for herself. But I want something more from life, see? I don't want a lazy bitch lolling around filling herself with cheap soda, potato chips and soap opera. I want to eat steak, potatoes and peas. I want red wine. I want porno flicks. And it's all there welling up inside me, my cup runneth over. Why can't she just drink from it?

A

Are you waiting for her to call?

(B DOESN'T ANSWER)

A (cont.)

Oh well, why ask? She's your wife, and you love her. Right?

B

She's not my wife, and I didn't say I loved her. But since you ask, we do have a strong bond.

A

Oh, I get it.

(A NODS CONSPIRATORILY AT B)

A (cont.)

Say no more. Say no more! Don't want to upset the parents, do we now? Waiting for that special moment to make an honest woman out of her? I get it. Don't worry, shhh! I won't talk.

(A NODS CONSPIRATORILY AT B AGAIN)

A (cont.)

But all the same, isn't she getting to be a bit of a burden to you?

B

You mean, do I support her?

A

You don't say!

B

No, I mean, is that what you mean?

A

You're in charge, Pal. If you support her -

B

You bet I support her!

A

We're talking money now, right?

B

She's supposed to be working, supposed to be getting a good salary but I've never seen it. Where is it?

A

That's right, you tell me.

B

Probably spent wining and dining gigolos.

*(A IS STARING AT THE TOP OF THE TELEPHONE
BOOTH)*

A

That's what she looks like to me.

B

Now she's been fired, I hear. Maybe that's why she's become more affectionate again. She can't pay her gigolos anymore.

A
She's a burden to you, eh?

B
Well, the real problem is-

A
(STARING HARD AT BOOTH)
- a terrible burden...

B
...well, maybe I shouldn't tell you...

A
(TO BOOTH)
- an awful, terrible burden...

B
I'm talking to you!

A
What?

B
No, I can't really say it. I'll look like a fool.

A
Come on. You can tell me. Come on.

B
Well, -

A
Come on, Pal, let's hear it.

B
I don't know.

A
Hey!

B

Alright. What's really bothering me, well, the problem is, -

A

Out with it!

B

She orders me around.

A

No!

B

She orders me around! There's no doubt about that. I think I'm in charge, I think I know what's right, but then she'll say something, often in front of company—she likes me to bring my friends around for dinner, she likes to meet my friends even though she always criticizes them—and I'll feel like a moron. Quite unconsciously, she'll take the conversation away from me and focus it on her. It's not that she's obnoxious, not in the least. She's just much more interesting than I am, and my friends get taken in by her. They even prefer to listen to her rather than to me. And these are my friends! Often, during these dinners, I get so jealous that I begin to fill up with rage. I suck it up from below, and a hot yellow air spreads throughout my body like a cancer. I feel bloated, heavy. My cheeks are flushed. I-

(A POINTS TO HIS OWN BACKSIDE)

A

Up your ass, right?

B

Pardon?

A

Up your ass!

B

(PAUSE)

...Anyway, I feel like a huge yellow balloon...But hell, it's not her fault, is it, the way I feel? It's just the way she is. Do you know something? She's almost like a snake, magnetic at times, alluring and all, then she bites!

A

She sounds like a boa constrictor, except-

What? B

Boas don't bite. A

She's a biting boa. First the squeeze, then the snap. And what happens to me? B

You tell me, Pal. A

(A IS STARING INTENTLY NOW AT THE TOP OF B'S HEAD)

I swell up, see? I feel this great tingling sensation through my thighs, B

(B CLUTCHES AT HIS HIPS)

B (cont.)
which moves up through my stomach and into my chest. But at the same time I feel this horrible constriction--from the snake, see--this horrible constriction down in my bowels which gets tighter and tighter, but the gas inside is pushing out harder and harder, and I'm holding on, but it's pushing out, and I'm holding and it's pushing and I can't, I can't, I caaaannn't!!!

(A BLOWS OUT A LONG, HISSING STREAM OF AIR AS B CRUMBLES TO HIS KNEES. A AND B BOTH REMAIN VERY STILL. A, MEANWHILE, HOLDS HIS NOSE AND STARES FIXEDLY AT B'S HEAD)

(SILENCE)

What are you doing? B

The gas. It smells. Are you constipated? A

What? B

Hemorrhoids? A

No-, what!?! B

Colic? A

Of course not! Why!? B

Of course, not? Of course, not?! Then why are they loosening you up? WHY ARE THEY LOOSENING YOU UP!? A

Who's loosening me up? B

They are! A

What!? B

The little man and woman up there. They're taking turns jumping on your head. Don't you see what's happened to you? Your eyes have turned a dark brown. Your lips are green. Your skin is yellow. And on top of that you're beginning to smell very bad. Your head has just now filled with shit, do you realize that? You are literally full of shit. You must be suffering from migraines...Well, don't stand there like a dummy looking at me. You're the one who smells. You look like an ape standing there with a shit pie for a brain, and two flies jumping out of it. A

Why, you crummy little bastard...You set me up, you bastard! You set me up! B

(B ADVANCES SLOWLY ON A)

A

Wait a minute now. It's not my fault they do all your thinking! It's not my fault they're pulling the strings! It's not my fault they're riding the monkey, it's not...

(B POUNCES ON A AND BEGINS TO STRANGLE HIM. A DROPS TO HIS KNEES, AND THEN ON TO HIS BACK AS B STRANGLES HIM)

A (cont.)

Ah! Ahhh! Ahhhhhh!!

(B IS NOW SAVAGELY BANGING A'S HEAD ON THE FLOOR)

B

I'll let you know who does my thinking for me! I'll let you know! But on my own time, I'll let you know on my own time, at-my-convenience, DO-YOU-UNDERSTAND!?

(A IS GASPING FOR BREATH)

B (cont.)

Do you? Do you? DO YOU??!

(THE TELEPHONE RINGS LOUDLY. A DOES NOT MOVE. B SUDDENLY STOPS WHAT HE'S DOING AND CRAWLS OFF A. B IS SHAKING VIOLENTLY)

(THE TELEPHONE RINGS AGAIN)

(A CALLS OUT FROM THE FLOOR)

A

(GASPING)

Who is it, aren't you going to answer it? It must be for you.

(THE TELEPHONE CONTINUES TO RING)

(A HOISTS HIMSELF UP. STUMBLES TO THE PHONE BOOTH AND PICKS UP THE RECEIVER AND LISTENS)

A (cont.)

...Yes?...No...Of course, here he is...

(A TURNS TO B)

A (cont.)

It's the woman sitting on your head.

(B STARES AT HIS HANDS)

A (cont.)

Come on, it's the woman sitting on your head. She wants to talk to her little baby. You've been waiting to talk to her all night. She wants to talk to her weak little man!

(A EXTENDS THE RECEIVER TOWARDS B)

A (cont.)

I know how you feel. I can sympathize.
Why keep fooling yourself?

(B IS NOW STARING AT THE RECEIVER)

A (cont.)

It's Miriam, your mother.

(BLACKOUT)

END OF PLAY