

A BRIEF PAUSE

TEN MINUTE PLAY

By Greg Cummings

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PUBLISHED BY

HEUER PUBLISHING LLC

P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406

TOLL FREE (800) 950-7529 • FAX (319) 368-8011

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SYNOPSIS: Two lost souls meet, by chance, in the park and discover that their mutual reliance on the third person narrative, while restrictive, can also be a stepping stone to romance.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(ONE MAN, ONE WOMAN)

BOB (m) A writer in his early 20's. Romantic, painfully shy, detached. Talks out loud to himself about himself, in the third person.

NANCY (f) A poetic soul in her early 20's. Romantic, unattached. She sees herself as the characters in the books she reads. She can only speak of herself in the third person.

SCENE: A park.

TIME: A sunny, summer afternoon.

SETTING:

A park. Stage left, a tree stump. Stage right, a bench. Some flowers grow by the bench.

AT RISE:

The empty park. From off stage right, we hear sad music coming from a laptop. Pause. BOB enters, stage right. HE carries his laptop, which plays the sad music. His head is down, his shoulders are down, he is sad. He wears tweed, probably. He's a writer.

HE shuffles to the bench. HE sighs, listening to the music.

Soon, HE turns off the music. Pause. Slowly, HE sinks to the ground in front of the bench. HE rests the back of his head on the bench seat. HE crosses his arms in front of him.

BOB: *Sitting on the ground. He's...sitting on the ground, now.*

Pause.

NANCY enters, stage left, unnoticed by BOB. Her eyes are closed, and SHE clutches a book to her.

SHE opens her eyes. SHE doesn't yet notice BOB, and BOB doesn't yet notice her. And, THEY don't hear each other.

NANCY quickly crosses to the tree stump, and sits. SHE adores her book.

BOB and NANCY perform the actions which THEY describe to themselves.

NANCY: *The book is very close to her. Very close. She's holding it.*

BOB: *The man...closes his eyes. He...picks... "plucks" a flower.*

NANCY: *The book opens! She opens the book! She closes her eyes!*

BOB: *He...opens his eyes. And...throws it away!*

Without looking, BOB sadly throws the flower stage left.

NANCY: The woman opens her eyes....and reads!

BOB: He grabs another flower...

NANCY: (*Exuberantly.*) Reading!

BOB: ...and throws it away!

Throws this flower further stage left.

NANCY: Reading! Turning a page!

BOB: The man...rips out the next flower...

NANCY: Reading! Reading! Reading!

BOB: ...and casts it aside!

Throws this flower even further stage left.

NANCY closes her eyes, and the book. SHE clutches her book to her.

NANCY: The book is closed. She has closed it. It is close.

BOB: He uproots, wrestles from their beds, the last flowers...!

NANCY: She rises! Twirling!

BOB: ...and casts them aside!

NANCY: Twirling! Twirling!

BOB hurls these last flowers stage left, just as...NANCY'S twirling causes her book to drop from her hands.

Her book lands next to his flowers.

NANCY: The book!

BOB: The last flower!

BOB scrambles stage left to retrieve his flowers, just as...NANCY stoops to retrieve her book.

THEY are both on the ground, kneeling. THEY see each other now, for the first time.

THEY are frightened, frozen in their kneeling positions, looking at each other.

BOB: There is a woman in the park.

NANCY: There is a man in the park.

BOB: She's looking at him.

NANCY: He's looking at her.

BOB: He's looking at her.

NANCY: She's looking at him.

BOB: The man looks at the woman.

NANCY: The woman looks at the man.

THEY stand, and loosen up a bit.

BOB: *(Introducing himself.)* The woman is looking at...Bob!

NANCY: *(Introducing herself.)* The man is looking at...Nancy!

BOB: *(Greeting her, shyly.)* Nancy.

NANCY: *(Greeting him shyly.)* Bob.

THEY continue the "introduction" process.

BOB: *(Smiling.)* Nancy...Bob.

NANCY: Bob...Nancy.

BOB: *(Very tentatively.)* They...shake...hands...

To his delight, NANCY extends her hand. THEY shake hands.

NANCY: They...smile.

THEY do, but it is clearly a struggle.

As THEY continue to look at one another, NANCY stoops and mistakenly picks up BOB'S flower, and BOB stoops and mistakenly picks up NANCY'S book.

Pause.

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THEY realize that BOB has her book, and that NANCY has his flower.

THEY smile.

BOB: Bob hands Nancy her book.

NANCY: Nancy hands Bob his flower.

BOB tries a bold "courtship" move.

BOB: Bob...hands the flower...back to Nancy.

NANCY: *(Smiling tentatively.)* Nancy...accepts the flower.

BOTH: *(Happy.)* A pause. *(Pause.)* A brief pause.

Pause.

Suddenly, inexplicably, as THEY regard each other, their brief "courtship" ends. THEY become sad.

NANCY: *(Sadly.)* The silent woman...with the book...and the flower...turns to leave.

BOB: *(Sadly.)* The man...turns to go.

THEY both turn to exit, NANCY to stage left, BOB to stage right.

NANCY: *(Scared, then hopeful.)* The man...stops....

BOB stops! HE continues to face stage right.

NANCY stops. SHE continues to face stage left.

BOB and NANCY remain in these positions, facing away from each other, until nearly the end of the play.

NANCY describes actions which she hopes BOB will perform. BOB describes actions which he hopes NANCY will perform. Neither moves.

Slowly, BOTH begin to experience a marvelously heady time.

NANCY: The man...turns to her...and smiles!

BOB: The woman...turns to him, coyly...and smiles!

NANCY: They...eye each other.

BOB: He...approaches her.

NANCY: She...walks toward him.

BOB: He...offers her his arm.

NANCY: She...takes his arm. They stroll.

BOB: They stroll through the park.

NANCY: They walk to the bench and sit. He gives her his coat.

BOB: She...sits closer to him.

NANCY: He...runs to gather the other flowers, returns to the bench, and gives them to her.

BOB: She accepts them! She accepts all of his flowers, and then she leaves the bench. She dances, skipping, sliding about the park! She dances! She spins!

NANCY: He watches her! He lifts weights!

BOB: She finishes her dance, and bows.

NANCY: He applauds wildly, jumping! He rushes to her, and kneels in front of her!

BOB: She strokes his hair.

NANCY: He grabs her hands and kisses them both! One! Two!

BOB: She kisses the top of his head! Many, many times!

NANCY: He stands and they embrace. They embrace!

BOB: Her arms twine about him!

NANCY: His arms won't let her go!

BOB: They kiss!

NANCY: Their lips meet again and again.

BOB: Softly they kiss. Now they kiss with speed!

NANCY: Their embrace becomes tighter and tighter!

BOB: (*Loudly.*) They kiss! The kisses come so fast, so rapidly, that they are beyond control! The kisses are blurred. Bob can't control the kisses. Nancy can't control the kisses. Their lips have minds of their own! Rapidly and from all angles, lips kiss. Their lips meet, release, meet, release, meet, release! They kiss, kiss, kiss, kiss!

NANCY: (*Loudly.*) They embrace! Tightly! Tightly! Their embrace tightens, and they begin to turn blue! They gasp for air! The air can only hiss in and out of their lungs, but they can't let go! Their arms are like passionate boa constrictors! Bob and Nancy are close, they are very close, they are so close now that they don't know whose flesh is whose! And now - they don't want to know!

BOB: (*Screaming rapturously.*) I love a woman who acts on her own!

NANCY: (*Screaming in ecstasy.*) I love a man of action!

Pause.

THEY "recover."

BOTH: A...pause. A...brief pause.

THEY turn, slowly, to finally face each other.

BOB: (*So much in love.*) Oh, Nancy!

NANCY: (*So fearful.*) Oh, Bob! (*Turns away.*)

BOB: (*Pleading.*) Oh, Nancy!

Fearfully, NANCY returns to the tree stump.

NANCY: (*Scared.*) Oh. Oh. Oh. **BOB:** (*Forlorn.*) Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh.
Oh.

SHE sits on the stump.

Desperately ignoring BOB, SHE opens her book.

NANCY: (*Trying to lose herself in her reading.*) Reading! Reading!
Oh!

BOB: (*Very sad.*) Oh. (*Turns to go.*) Oh, Nancy.

NANCY is unable to lose herself in the book; she slams it shut.

NANCY: No! She closes the book! (*Realizing that she must live in the real world.*) Yes! The book is closed! (*Stands.*)

BOB: (*Turning back to her, hopefully.*) The book is closed?!

NANCY holds out the closed book to BOB, hoping to restart their "relationship."

NANCY: The book is closed!

THEY regard the book which NANCY holds between them.

BOB: (*Looking at the cover of the book, he sees his photograph and realizes.*) Hey! I wrote that book!

NANCY: (*Looking at the author's photograph on the back of the book, she realizes.*) Bob! This is you! You wrote this book!

BOTH: A pause. (*Smiling.*) A brief pause.

Pause.

THEY smile broadly.

NANCY, beaming, now in love, returns to reading the book.

BOB, beaming, in love, stands and watches her.

Pause.

Very slowly, with NANCY'S unspoken permission, BOB crosses to her.

NANCY continues to read.

Aware of their proximity, THEY smile and sigh.

Pause.

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Very slowly, with NANCY's unspoken permission, BOB sits next to her.

NANCY, beaming, in love, reads.

BOB, beaming, in love, watches her.

Without regarding each other, THEY sigh.

Fade to black.

THE END

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