

DON'T PLAY GAMES WITH ME

TEN-MINUTE PLAY

By Matthew Thompson

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DON'T PLAY GAMES WITH ME

A Ten Minute Comedy

By Matt Thompson

SYNOPSIS: During a group therapy session for board game fanatics, we are privy to a variety of issues from playing Scrabble in Latin to using real money in Monopoly.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 female, 1 male, 1 either; gender flexible)

BOARD GAME THERAPIST (m/f)Facilitator of the board game fanatic session. *(38 lines)*

STEVE (m)English professor who plays Scrabble in Latin. *(13 lines)*

LAURA (f).....Doesn't recycle paper while playing Pictionary. *(18 lines)*

JENNIE (f).....Environmentalist who gets a little upset. *(10 lines)*

JAIMIE (f)Fears that she's falling in love with the way another man plays Monopoly. *(20 lines)*

AT RISE: STEVE, LAURA, JENNIE, and JAIMIE are attending a therapy session for board game fanatics. They are all seated in a semi-circle, so that they can see one another. The game Operation lies on a table.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: Okay, thank you all for attending this month's session. I'd just like to take this moment to say that, it takes a lot of courage and strength to be here. And I want all of us to remember, that we are never alone. So, let's turn to the person next to you and say thank you.

Everyone turns to the person next to them and says thank you.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: It takes strength from within to admit that one has a problem, but it takes the help, support, and determination from others in order to build a foundation of commitment. So, thank you all for being here today. I'd also like to thank Jennie for hosting this month. So, thank you.

JENNIE: You're welcome.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: Now, who would like to go first. Steve? You made a lot of progress last month, so why don't we start with you.

STEVE: Sure. Hi, I'm Steve, and I have a board game problem.

EVERYONE: Hi, Steve.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: How can we help you, Steve?

STEVE: Well, as some of you know, I'm an English professor at the University of Iowa, and my wife and I like to play Scrabble. But after I've exhausted the English language, I start spelling out words in Latin and my wife just gets aggravated. She yells at me, "English! In English, Steven!" Then she walks away, and I'm left alone with no one to play with.

There is a hushed general clamor.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: I see. Try using the Ye Olde English dictionary, and when you have that *urge* to spell out words in Latin, spell out sixteenth century colorful metaphors such as "zounds" instead.

That should keep your wife satisfied. And if you land on triple word score, that should keep *you* satiated for a while. Thanks for sharing Steve. Next?

LAURA: Hi, my name is Laura, and I have a board game problem.

EVERYONE: Hi, Laura!

LAURA: (*Very distraught.*) Hi. (*Beat.*) I'm not sure I can do this.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: The correct answer is that you *can* do this. We're all in this game together.

LAURA: Well . . . Alright.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: Great. Now, would you like to explain the rules of *your* game, please?

LAURA: I suppose. It started right after we got married. One of our friends knew how much we enjoyed games and gave us Pictionary, and, well . . . Oh, I don't know if I can say it. She starts to break down and cry.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: You're doing fine, Laura. We're all here for you.

JAIMIE: We're right here for you.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: Jaimie's correct. Now, please go ahead.

LAURA: Okay. Um, well, you know how in Pictionary, you have those little sheets of paper that you draw on?

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: Yes.

LAURA: Well . . . I don't use the other side.

LAURA breaks down again. General disapproval from the group.

JENNIE: That's a waste of paper.

STEVE: How can you sleep at night?

LAURA: (*Pleading.*) I'm sorry! I just like fresh pieces of paper! I don't recycle!

STEVE: (*Aggravated.*) Tell that to the environment!

JENNIE: And the Redwoods!

STEVE: And the Yangtze River Dolphin, which is now extinct!

JENNIE: And we all know who caused its extinction!

LAURA: Oh, dear, I am so sorry!

More general clamor.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: All right! All right! Could we have some order please?!

STEVE: *(Very upset.)* Who do you think you are, anyway?

LAURA: I'm just a woman! And I have needs too, you know.

THE BOARD GAME THERAPIST touches the side of the Operation game. This makes a loud buzzing sound.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: May I remind all of us that we are not here to judge. We have all elected to participate in this wonderful program that is HOG GAS: Helping Overcome Grown-up Board Game Addiction Symptoms. We have all elected to be here tonight in order to help each other.

STEVE: Well said.

LAURA: *(Crying.)* I'm, so sorry, everybody. I just don't know what I can do. If I ask my husband to use the other side of the paper, he gets all frustrated, breaks all the pencils, and then, goes out with the boys and plays Yahtzee.

JAIMIE: Just like a man.

JENNIE: *(Aghast.)* He breaks the pencils? Wood is from trees! Were they redwood pencils?

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: Jennie, please control yourself.

STEVE: Why won't your husband just use a pen?

LAURA: *(Breaking down, completely.)* I don't know! I have no idea! I've pleaded with him! I've tried to reason with him! He's so stubborn! He just won't use a pen in Pictionary!

General clamor, once again, as LAURA breaks down again and cries.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: Alright, alright. *(After everyone is quiet.)* Laura, you seem to have a multi-headed problem, just like a Hungry Hungry Hippos board. Part of solving a problem is acknowledging that you have one, and you have done that, so you should be rewarded.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST claps, encouraging others to join him, which they do.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: The second part of your problem is concerning your unwillingness to recycle.

JENNIE: I can't believe you.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: Jennie. Restraint, please.

JENNIE: Sorry.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: Now, Jennie, why don't you channel that anger into a constructive solution for Laura. What can Laura do to help her problem with Pictionary?

JENNIE: Well . . . What if you used scratch paper for drawing that already has printing on one side.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: Great suggestion, Jennie.

LAURA: (*A ray of hope.*) Thank you. I'll . . . I'll try that.

JENNIE smiles and then immediately reaches over and hugs LAURA, who hugs back. The rest of the group claps.

LAURA: Thank you, everybody.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: Now, about your husband; I suggest that taking Jennie's idea into consideration, is one option. Another option: why don't you get yourself a mini dry erase board? Buy a rainbow assortment of colored pens and slap some Velcro on them. Sometimes the dark black ink brings out the worst in people. Using bright and cheery colors such as orange, pink, even teal can bring out the positive aspects. If he sees that the pens erase, as pencils do, it might just ease him into using pens during those Pictionary moments. (*A warm smile.*) And you save the environment at the same time.

LAURA: Great idea.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: You see, part of role playing as a couple is . . . not playing games with each other. And tell him to call my office for an appointment.

LAURA: (*Relieved.*) I sure will.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: Now, anyone else? (*To JAIMIE.*) Jaimie? You've been awfully quiet this evening. I don't have my

hand on a Ouija board, but I'll bet that you have something to share?

JAIMIE: I don't think so.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: We're all here to help. But, only *you* can help yourself. We can wait as long as you need. We're not playing with a timer here.

Pause.

JAIMIE: Okay. Um . . . My name is Jaimie, and I'm addicted to Monopoly.

EVERYONE: Hi, Jaimie.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: Addictions are very difficult to break.

JAIMIE: I'm not sure I should talk about this in front of everyone.

STEVE: We're here to help.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: Steve is correct. Think of this group as your conscience. There's nothing to hide from us. We don't judge.

JAIMIE: Okay. (*Takes a deep breathe.*) Two nights ago, here at the house, my husband and I had a wine and cheese party. It was just us and another couple, Chet and Susan. After a couple of hours, my husband had a little too much to drink and passed out on the couch. Susan, who is a complete lightweight, laid down in the spare bedroom and, well . . . let's just say that we all had a bit too much to drink.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: So, you were alone with Chet.

JAIMIE: That's right.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: And how did you feel about that?

JAIMIE: Fine. Fine. We've been friends for years, so we get along well.

BOARD GAME THERAPIST: Go on.

JAIMIE: Well, one thing led to another and . . . next thing we know we're playing Monopoly together. Just the two of us. I tend to be a little aggressive when playing and of course he lost the game, and I jumped up and down and called him a giant panda bear. You know 'cause he's a big bear of a guy and all. He had to fork over nearly four thousand dollars after he landed on Park Place. I had four hotels on the property. And he hands me the money . . .

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