

PSYCHIATRY IN A CAN

A Ten-Minute Comedy Duet

by
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CAST: *TRANTHAM and PHIFER*

TRANTHAM: (*mimes speaking on phone to secretary*) Judy, is my three o'clock here yet?...Good. Some gentlemen from the university will be dropping by in a few minutes to pick me up for our golf game. If they get here before I'm out, tell them to wait. This is Mr. Phifer's first appointment, so we're just going to have a quick get-acquainted session. Okay, thanks. Judy...did you make an appointment for me with Dr. Nail? Yes, Judy, I know he's a psychiatrist like me. Yes, I'm okay. It's been rough lately. Sometimes even a shrink needs to see his shrink. Would you send my patient, Mr. Phifer, in please. (*MR. PHIFER enters*) Hello, hello. Come right in. Don't be put off by the furnishings. My office is in the midst of a remodeling job, and I feel as though I'm living out of a suitcase. An office is never a home unless you can feel organized, and organization is impossible with all this junk in here.

PHIFER: (*shake hands*) Art Phifer. Hey, nice clubs. Are those yours?

TRANTHAM: Afraid so...I'm addicted.

PHIFER: Me too. I've had the golf bug for years. It's one habit I don't care to ever give up.

TRANTHAM: Me neither. I'll play when I'm 90, if I can sweet-talk someone into pushing my wheelchair around the course.

PHIFER: Ah, yes. Nothing like it. The peaceful serenity of being out on the course, combined with a frustration level that would make you want to test your nail gun out on the neighbors' new waterbed.

TRANTHAM: (*laughs*) As a matter of fact, I'm playing with a few of the boys from the university after our meeting. I'm pretty excited today. Dr. Gerald Boyd is in town and he is supposed to come by my office and join our little golf crowd. I've never had the fortune of meeting Dr. Boyd in person.

PHIFER: You're playing golf with The Dr. Boyd!?

TRANTHAM: You've heard of him?

PHIFER: No.

TRANTHAM: (*looks confused, then proceeds*) He's one of the true pioneers in his field. I can't wait to visit with him, but let's focus on you, shall we. Have a seat, if you would, and try to make yourself comfortable. It's difficult in the midst of all this re-modeling mess, but I guess we'll manage.

PHIFER: (*both sit*) Thank you, doctor. Have you had a chance to go over my case history?

TRANTHAM: I've just skimmed it, as this is only a quick meeting. I'll read it thoroughly before we have our first session. For now, tell me a bit about why you've come to see me.

PHIFER: Dr. Trantham, I feel so out of touch...like I'm leading many different lives, but accomplishing nothing in any of them. My whole existence seems pointless.

TRANTHAM: Pointless? No one's life is pointless, Mr. Phifer. Do you have any specific goals at present?

PHIFER: Recently, I've been courting a fair maiden.

TRANTHAM: A noble goal, always. There's no stronger stimulus on earth than that of love. Have you had any success thus far?

PHIFER: That may prove to be rather difficult. I first saw her in an 18th century French painting.

TRANTHAM: (*to himself, but loud enough to be barely audible*) Oh boy!

PHIFER: The few times I've spoken with her, it's been hard sustaining a conversation. We truly come from two different worlds.

TRANTHAM: (*to himself again*) I'll say. (*to MR. PHIFER*) How did you ever come to meet this 18th century beauty?

PHIFER: (*breaking down, almost in tears*) She's more like an 18th century bimbo, Doc. Very lower class. My family is wealthy. But she's all I ever think of. I love this girl, but my family would never accept Cynthia. (*trying to pull himself together*) I fear I'm living a life of delusion. Sometimes, I believe I'm actually going mad. (*breaks down again, sobbing*)

TRANTHAM: Considering your love life spans a century or two, backing off might be the right move.

PHIFER: (*total change in demeanor, from sadness to anger...shouting*) Right move? What's right about it? (*stands*) You're going to sit there with that ridiculous pad of yours, cast judgment on me and the one I love, and you've never as much as left our century!?

TRANTHAM: Mr. Phifer, what I meant...

PHIFER: (*PHIFER gets in TRANTHAM'S face. TRANTHAM quickly stands and starts to back away.*) What you meant is to tell me who I can and cannot date. Isn't that right?

TRANTHAM: Is that what you think?

PHIFER: Next you'll be hating me for the color of my skin.

TRANTHAM: It's the same as mine.

PHIFER: See? You're arguing with everything I say...and charging me a fortune for the privilege.

TRANTHAM: Didn't you say you were wealthy?

PHIFER: Oh, great! Now we get into money! (*sarcastically*) I see how it is. Phifer's loaded, so we can bleed him dry. Well, not me, buddy! This guy knows when he's being taken advantage of. What did you do? Check out my net worth before I came here?

TRANHAM: You're crazy.

PHIFER: Of course I am. Do you think I stopped in for cappuccino...or dancing lessons, perhaps. What a bozo! I can't believe I made the mistake of trusting you with this sensitive information.

TRANHAM: It's not a mistake. Psychiatrists have a very important trust with their patients, and I would never violate that trust. It would be unethical.

PHIFER: Never?

TRANHAM: Never. Not if my life depended on it.

PHIFER: (*sits with legs crossed and folded in chair, eyes shut, making a humming noise as if meditating*) Hummmmm Mmmmm Mmmmm...

TRANHAM: What are you doing?

PHIFER: (*with a far Eastern accent, if possible*) Mmmmm...Waiting for an answer.

TRANHAM: About your 18th century woman?

PHIFER: Mmmmm...What woman?

TRANHAM: (*looks at watch*) Perhaps I've seen enough. I think it's about time...

PHIFER: Mmmmm...What time?

TRANHAM: Mr. Phifer, what on earth are you doing?

PHIFER: I am Karkarontuma and I can help you with your problem.

TRANHAM: I have a problem? I think it's time to end this charade. I have a golf game in a few minutes.

PHIFER: Mmmmm...I feel the vibrations from deep inside you...the anger...the fear...let it out! Let it out! Relax...and let all the negative thoughts of your body escape. Imagine you are a mountain goat living far up in the Himalayas.

TRANHAM: Mr. Phifer...

PHIFER: Shhhh... Picture a young boy taking pity on you, an ugly, old mountain goat. The boy climbs a great cliff in order to give you his last piece of bread. The only food the boy has.

TRANHAM: (*impatiently*) Mr. Phifer!

PHIFER: Unfortunately, the boy has laced the bread with hemlock and as you eat, you quickly go into painful convulsions and die.

TRANHAM: What?

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