

A SOBERING LAUGH

A Ten-Minute Dramatic-Comedy Duet

by
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CAST: MARLA and SANDY

(Two chairs represent seats in a bus. SANDY is sitting in the window seat looking forlornly out the window. SHE is quietly tearful and deeply in thought. MARLA enters either carrying cumbersome bags and suitcases or indicating them with pantomime. It is evident by her interactions with “invisible” passengers that SHE is causing a disturbance as SHE makes her way down the aisle. The actress playing MARLA may use a Brooklyn dialect; however, none is necessary as long as SHE conveys a flaky, chatty, klutzy, but lovable personality.)

MARLA: Pardon me... excuse me... Oops, beg your pardon... Sorry about your drink ma'am ... Coming through! This seat taken?

SANDY: Huh?

MARLA: This seat? Is it taken?

SANDY: Uh, no.

MARLA: Oh good! I think if I had to go two more feet, I'd plop! Right here in the aisle!

SANDY: ***(weakly smiling)*** It's all yours.

MARLA: Well... it's just... Would you mind if ... um ...

SANDY: Would you feel more comfortable by the window?

MARLA: Oh – my – Gawd, you're a mind reader! I have this sneaking suspicion that Joey's gonna show up to beg forgiveness. Trust me – it's a long story. But if I could be near the window, it'd really help the drama of the moment, if you know what I mean.

SANDY: Sure.

(The girls clumsily exchange seats. Legroom is minimal, and MARLA is still burdened by belongings.)

MARLA: 'Scuse me ... oops ... Sorry 'bout that ... Ouch, was that your foot? ... Pardon me ...

(Both girls sit exhaustedly. After an awkward silence, SANDY pulls out a book, real or pantomimed, and attempts to read.)

MARLA: Um ... pardon me ... but do you know what time it is?

SANDY: The time?

MARLA: Yeah, because I don't see any sign of Joey out there.

SANDY: It's 3:45.

MARLA: You gotta be kidding!

SANDY: Nope, 3:45.

MARLA: Darn, the bus is supposed to leave any minute! I was sure that he'd ... Hey, do I look like I've been crying?

SANDY: Not really.

MARLA: Oh gee, that's bad. That's very bad. How am I gonna make Joey feel like a low-down heel if I don't look like I've been crying? ***(standing)*** Do you mind?

SANDY: What?

MARLA: Could I get out to visit the bathroom, please? I need to smudge my mascara and muss up my hair a little bit.

SANDY: Oh ... well... sure, I guess.

(The girls awkwardly attempt to switch seats again. After they change places, they jolt as though the bus ride has abruptly begun.)

MARLA: Whoa – what's the driver's hurry? Guess we'd better sit tight. ***(They sit.)*** Can you believe that Joey? If he was a real man, he'd be running along side this bus screaming, “Marla! Marla! I've been an idiot! You're the only one for me! It was just a momentary lapse of sanity! I never meant to kiss your cousin!” MEN!

SANDY: ***(sympathetically)*** Yeah.

MARLA: So, I guess you sorta figured out my name is Marla.

SANDY: Yeah...Hi.

MARLA: And you are?

SANDY: Sorry ... I'm Sandy.

MARLA: Oh, I love that name! Like Little Orphan Annie's dog!

SANDY: ***(weakly smiling)*** I never made that connection.

MARLA: Haven't you ever seen the musical?

SANDY: No.

MARLA: Oh, you have to! It's playing right now in the city! Got an award for best revival, even! Hey, is that why you're off to the big city? To catch a show?

SANDY: Um ... no.

MARLA: I live there. I was just visiting Joey, being that he goes to college out here. But this is the last time I'll be making *this* trip, believe-you-me! **(SANDY smiles. After an awkward pause, SHE tries again to read, only to be interrupted again by MARLA.)** So... you planning on seeing a museum?

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