

Two by Two in Love

A One-Act Play

By Jack L. Nuzum

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAY

One male actor and one female actor each play two parts – that's the challenge and fun of this 30-minute one-act play. All the action takes place in front of a simple park setting; one bench is all that's required. First a teenage boy and girl discuss their young love, he the romantic, she the practical one. She leaves (late for work) and the actress returns as a middle-aged woman, who gives the young romantic some sage advice on love from her lifetime experience.

The boy rushes off to save his girl's job and the actor returns as a middle-aged British man who is wooing the older woman. Their scene of second love is both funny and touching. The woman leaves to get ready for their date and the girl returns, upset by the erratic, if well-intentioned, actions of her boyfriend. The man listens patiently and then encourages reconciliation.

In this simple and touching play, people talk interestingly about the nature of love and demonstrate it, too. This is a great competition piece!

CHARACTERS

BOY/MAN

GIRL/WOMAN

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(AT RISE: A park bench center stage is the only required set piece. During the period the scene is being set up or before curtain rises, you may wish to play Trace Atkins singing "This Ain't No Thinkin' Thing." A tree or piece of shrubbery might be arranged for a park-like atmosphere. The same actress plays the teenage GIRL and middle-aged WOMAN. Similarly, the same male actor plays the BOY and MAN. BOY (Johnny) is pacing in front of the bench looking off SL in anticipation of someone coming. He is in preppy dress, cords, an Oxford or Harvard sweatshirt or polo. He's brimming over with barely suppressed excitement. After a moment GIRL rushes in from SR. She's dressed for work in some sort of fast-food style uniform with a school letter jacket and sunglasses.)

GIRL: Johnny!

BOY: Hi!

(THEY hug and kiss; hold hands – lots of touching.)

GIRL: Hi, hon, I've only got a minute; I'm running late to work again and my boss warned me about one more time. But you said this was important.

BOY: It'll just take a minute; I know it's weird to meet here in the park, but your parents get nervous when I come around your house. But I just had to tell you: it's real! The real thing. You feel it, too, don't you?

GIRL: Uh, yeah, sure, the real ... ?

BOY: Thing. The real thing. Right?

GIRL: Right. *(Trying to keep up with HIS enthusiasm.)* The real what thing?

BOY: Us. We. We're the real thing: true love! Isn't it wonderful?

GIRL: Us? Sure. Yeah. That's it? I mean, it is wonderful, but ...

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BOY: (*Crossing SR.*) I know, I'm acting crazy, but it just hit me: we've got the real thing, real love. (*Turning back to HER.*) Do you know how rare that is?

GIRL: Uh, really rare, right? Johnny, you are so sweet and so romantic, but ... I mean, I do love you and I love how you think about love all the time – (*Looking at watch; SHE tries to be patient.*) – but I can't be late to work again, really. And I told my parents I was leaving early to make sure I got there, so tell me what was so important.

BOY: (*Takes HER hands.*) I have. I did. Our love is the real thing. That's it. Your parents, my parents, they all say we're too young to know, but there's no age limit on love, is there?

GIRL: No, there isn't. And you're right; we do have real love and it's wonderful, but – (*SHE breaks HIS grip.*) – and I just want to be honest and real here – why did you make such a big deal of all this tonight? I had to, like, lie to my parents and all. I mean, we're going out tomorrow night, right?

(*The GIRL sits.*)

BOY: Tomorrow?! Tomorrow?! How could I wait until tomorrow? Tomorrow may never come, and we have to realize the truth and beauty of this now. Only now is real; we live in the eternal now. (*Front.*) Love is only real in the now, which is also the eternal.

GIRL: I'm thinking the eternal might include tomorrow, too. But you're right. That's so sweet, and love is the, like, realest real, but parents are real, too, and jobs, aren't they?

BOY: Not really. Oh, of course, they're real on one level. But if our love is the ultimate reality, then they exist only in relation to that love. You see? (*SHE doesn't.*) If parents or jobs enhance our love, they are more real; if they interfere, they are less real.

GIRL: Oh, I see; right. But don't they always interfere? I mean, my job has to take me away from you 20 hours a

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GIRL: *(Continued.)* week and my parents think we're getting way too serious and are always bugging us.

BOY: *(Crosses SL.)* But that's not interference because we don't let it be! The barriers and separations just make our love stronger. That's one way we know it's real!

GIRL: Okay, right, I get it. *(Rises.)* Those other things don't really interfere because we don't let them.

BOY: Exactly.

GIRL: So, being together or apart doesn't really matter because they both make us stronger.

BOY: Right!

GIRL: Then I need to go and make our love stronger that second way: being apart.

(The GIRL starts to exit SR.)

BOY: But wait. I have to tell you how I really know our love is real.

GIRL: Oh. It's not that being together or separate thing we just talked about?

BOY: Yes; no. Not just that. That's not the most important thing. I know we've got true love because I care more about what happens to you than what happens to me.

GIRL: Oh, Johnny, that's so sweet.

(SHE hugs HIM.)

BOY: No, it's not sweet. Well, yeah, kind of sweet, but it's lots more than sweet. It's the litmus test of love.

GIRL: Lipton test? Like with iced tea, or something?

BOY: No, no, litmus test, the paper they stick into a chemical to see if it's an acid or a base.

GIRL: Oh, chemistry stuff. I don't have chemistry until next year.

BOY: No, we have it now: the chemistry of love!

GIRL: Oh, Johnny, that's so sweet, too! We have the litamus, or limitless, or whatever test of love! And I do love you, more than anything - even my job which I'm now going to lose.

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(SHE sits.)

BOY: No, no, that would be selfish of me to allow you to be late again. Your job is important to you, so it is even more so to me since in true love your desires come before mine. So my love for you must let you go.

(HE pulls HER up.)

GIRL: But my love mustn't be so selfish. I'll stay because this talk is obviously very important to you.

(SHE sits.)

BOY: *(Front.)* Oh, this is wonderful: who is more unselfish! It is true love! *(To HER.)* But I know your love is real; you don't have to prove it to me with gestures like quitting your job.

(HE pulls HER up again.)

GIRL: But how will you know I'm sincere if I don't show you my unselfishness is more than just words?

BOY: Real sacrifice isn't necessary: it's your willingness that counts. You offered, and you meant it - that's all that matters.

GIRL: *(Looking at HER watch.)* Well, I'm now officially late, so my gesture may be real whether I want it to be or not - which I do, which it was - but I wanted to quit for love, not be fired.

(SHE sits.)

BOY: No, hurry, hurry, go! *(Pulling HER up.)* It would be selfish of me to keep you longer. I'll call you later.

GIRL: Okay; don't call too late or my parents will be angry.

(The GIRL exits SR.)

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BOY: Okay, I love you! *(This monologue should be slow and thoughtful to give time for costume change.)* I am so lucky! No, it's not luck, it was fated, meant to be. No, not fate – it was choice and effort. We have had to work to be worthy of this love we have been given! No, not given, created. We have created this love. That's it. *(Looking off SR.)* Oh, I'm sure she can explain things to her boss; surely he'll understand about true love. *(Front.)* I can't believe how we clicked on the selfless thing: love thinks first of the other person.

(WOMAN enters from SR and overhears the last lines. She is dressed casually, perhaps sweat pants, sweat shirt, reading glasses around neck. She is a spry middle age.)

WOMAN: Did you forget to take your medication, son?

BOY: *(Turning quickly.)* I beg your pardon?

WOMAN: Medication. Did you forget it? You're standing in the public park talking, but there isn't any public listening. I figured you may have other personalities you're conversing with.

BOY: Oh, no, no. I'm just so excited. I have found true love and I've just been in her presence. We had a wonderful meeting of the minds.

WOMAN: Well, you got one thing right: love is a person, not some abstract idea. But if I remember anything about your age, the mind is the last part of the body that gets excited. Since this is a public park, mind if I park it? *(SHE sits.)* I got a little romantic rendezvous of my own here in a little bit. My new flame is bringing a picnic supper for our date tonight.

BOY: Really. Are you in love, too?

WOMAN: Don't act so surprised; it happens. Love doesn't have any age limits.

BOY: Yes, exactly! That's wonderful. *(Moving to behind bench.)* I've found love early and you've found it late – er.

WOMAN: Listen to mister know-it-all! Like this is the first time I've been in love. You can twist your ankle jumping to those kind of conclusions.

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