

SO, WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THE PLAY?

By David K. Barnes

*Rita and Jack have come home from the theatre.*

*Rita and Jack had a negative altercation earlier in the evening. It is unresolved.*

*They enter their living room, not talking to each other. Take coats off. They don't talk to each other. Jack leaves the room with the coats, comes back with a drink. They don't talk to each other. Rita leaves the room. Jack takes his shoes off, sits down. Rita comes back with the drink that Jack should have offered to make for her but he didn't think of it. Rita sits on the other side of the room and looks through a newspaper that she's not interested in reading. They don't talk to each other.*

*Long silence.*

JACK:           So, what did you think of the play?

*Silence. Jack sips drink. Silence. Looks around the room.*

JACK:           *(Clears throat, because it needs to be, not to draw attention)*

*Silence.*

JACK:           What did you... think...

RITA:           *(Sighs, sharply)*

*Silence.*

JACK:           Mmm.

*SILENCE.*

JACK:           I wondered how you-

RITA:           I really don't-

*Rita stops; she can't be bothered yet. She turns a page in the paper instead.*

RITA:           *(Still looking at the paper)* It was...

JACK:           Yep?

RITA:           You know.

JACK: No I don't.

RITA: Well what did you think of it?

JACK: I'm asking what you thought of it.

RITA: I know.

JACK: So what did you think of it?

RITA: I don't know.

JACK: You must do.

RITA: Well I don't.

JACK: Really?

RITA: Yes, really.

JACK: You seemed pretty bored, I thought.

RITA: Well there you are.

JACK: You were bored?

RITA: Maybe. Yes.

JACK: You were maybe bored?

RITA: Yes, maybe.

JACK: You'd know if you were bored.

RITA: Well I was.

JACK: You were bored?

RITA: I am bored.

*Jack processes.*

JACK: We're talking about the play.

RITA: You're talking about the play.

JACK: I'd like to talk to you about the play.

RITA: Well, I thought it was very boring, so...

*Jack waits.*

JACK: So, what?

RITA: So what?

JACK: No - very boring, so? What?

RITA: So that's what I think.

JACK: You thought it was boring?

RITA: Yes, Jack. I thought it was boring.

JACK: Right.

*Silence.*

JACK: That's interesting.

*Silence.*

JACK: Mmm.

*Silence.*

JACK: Interesting.

*Silence.*

JACK: You thought it was boring.

*Silence.*

JACK: Interesting.

*Silence.*

RITA: What did you think of it?

*Silence.*

JACK: I thought it was interesting.

RITA: I see.

JACK: Yes. Very interesting.

RITA: Well there we are.

JACK: Very thought provoking too.

*Silence.*

JACK: I'm surprised you thought it was boring. Seemed right up your alley.

RITA: *(As if it shouldn't need to be said)* Maybe I wasn't in the mood. *(To ram it home)* After the day I've had.

JACK: *(Not sure about that)* It was definitely your sort of thing, though. I'm surprised I liked it, actually. I didn't think I would. About halfway through I wasn't sure one way or the other. But you know, by the end, I thought... *(Nods slowly to himself; it was a good play.)*

*Silence. Rita looks up.*

RITA: You didn't think you'd like it?

JACK: No, I didn't.

RITA: But you wanted to see it?

JACK: Not especially.

RITA: You didn't want to see it?

JACK: No but it won me over.

*Rita stares at him.*

JACK: The way it...

*Makes a gesture as if to illustrate something, and then gives up. Tries again, but he hasn't got it.*

JACK: So much.

RITA: But you didn't want to see the play tonight?

JACK: No but I knew you wanted to. And I didn't mind.

RITA: I didn't want to see it.

JACK: You didn't?

RITA: No. Why would I want to see it?

JACK: I thought it was your sort of thing.

RITA: It wasn't.

JACK: Well it definitely wasn't my sort of thing either but by the end it won me over.

*Rita goes back to her newspaper. Silence.*

JACK: That's why, as I say, I found it so interesting. All the, you know – all that, um... hardly something I'd have gone in there thinking, "Yes, I'm going to like this." It's really more your sort of thing-

RITA: - wasn't my sort of thing-

JACK: But it really took me by surprise. Especially the main girl.

*Rita looks up again.*

RITA: The main girl?

JACK: Yes, she was great, wasn't she?

RITA: The main girl?

JACK: Very good performance, I thought. Very good.

*Pause.*

RITA: What main girl would that be, Jack?

JACK: You know.

RITA: There were four women in it.

JACK: Yes but she was the main one. *(Beat)* You like her, from the other thing.

RITA: I'd never seen any of them before.

JACK: What about the main girl?

RITA: I don't know who you're talking about.

JACK: The one in the sort of... tight...

*He gestures.*

RITA: Tight.

JACK: You know, she had that speech.

RITA: What speech?

JACK: Well not a speech, you know, she had those lines, about the, er...

*Gestures at the heart of the play, but can't find it. He looks at Rita as if he has.*

RITA: Jack. It was an ensemble.

*Jack processes.*

JACK: Yes, but she was the main one.

RITA: She wasn't the main one. It was an ensemble.

JACK: But even in an ensemble there's always a main one.

RITA: No there isn't.

JACK: You know, the central point, the pivot.

RITA: No.

JACK: The one your eyes are drawn to.

*Silence.*

RITA: The one your eyes are drawn to.

JACK: Yes.

*Silence.*

JACK: She kept the whole thing going.

*Silence. Rita looks at her paper but doesn't read.*

JACK: You should have told me it wasn't your sort of thing. We'd have gone somewhere else.

RITA: Would we?

JACK: Found something we both liked. Instead it turns out we both saw something we thought we were going to hate and actually-

RITA: I didn't.

JACK: Sorry?

RITA: I didn't say I hated it.

JACK: I'm just saying you thought you were going to.

RITA: I didn't say that either.

JACK: You said you didn't want to see it.

RITA: Because it wasn't really my sort of thing, but I didn't say I knew I'd hate it, did I?

JACK: Right.

*Silence.*

JACK: So you didn't hate it, then?

RITA: No.

JACK: Right.

RITA: I didn't hate the play. Jack.

JACK: Well. Good.

*Silence.*

*Jack gets up. Exits.*

*Rita sighs, keeping a lot of things buried.*

*Jack returns with another drink. Sits down.*

*Pause. Jack sips drink.*

*Pause.*

JACK: I'm just surprised you found it boring.

*Rita tenses as he blithely carries on.*

JACK: It really had something.

RITA: Did it really?

JACK: I'm sorry you didn't like it.

RITA: The play was fine, Jack. It was fine.

JACK: No it wasn't.

RITA: You just said you liked it.

JACK: What I mean is I'd have liked us both to like it.

RITA: Well I'm sorry.

JACK: Why?

RITA: Because you enjoyed it and I didn't.

JACK: Ah well, I wouldn't say I enjoyed it, but it was definitely interesting.

RITA: Well.

JACK: You have to admit it was thought provoking.

RITA: Why do I have to do that?

JACK: Because whether you liked it or not, it was very thought provoking.

RITA: How was it thought provoking?

JACK: Sorry?

RITA: What thoughts did it provoke?

JACK: Well if you listened to the words.

RITA: Well I didn't.

JACK: So you won't understand.



RITA: Try me.

JACK: Well, the themes of the play.

RITA: Explain one to me.

JACK: What?

RITA: Explain a theme of the play.

JACK: Well there was that speech.

RITA: What speech?

JACK: The main girl's speech.

RITA: There wasn't a main girl and she didn't have a speech.

JACK: Well the lines she had – which I have to say she did extremely well-

RITA: Yes, your eyes were drawn to her.

JACK: Yes.

RITA: Your eyes specifically.

JACK: Yes, I thought the lines she delivered beautifully expressed what the whole thing was actually all about.

RITA: Which was?

JACK: Sorry?

RITA: What was it actually all about?

JACK: I don't think I could express it better than she did.

RITA: How did she express it?

JACK: Really well. She was very good.

RITA: What were the words?

JACK: Well, I can't remember the exact words.

RITA: What was the general sense?

JACK: You know what it was.

RITA: No I don't.

JACK: It was about how we – all of us – how we... how we are... all of us...

*A drowning man casts around for his epiphany.*

RITA: Yes?

JACK: It was all about how we are... how we are. Really.

RITA: Which is?

JACK: What?

RITA: How are we?

*Jack is working it out. Pause.*

JACK: Well, you should have been paying attention, shouldn't you? It was all said for us.

RITA: Was it?

JACK: I don't think it'd have worked if hadn't been.

RITA: And you cared, did you?

JACK: Of course I cared.

RITA: From beginning to end, you were able to care?

JACK: Well, if you're asking me if I was emotionally involved-

RITA: Yes, I am.

JACK: Then no, I wouldn't go that far – but then it wasn't that sort of play, was it, it was academically interesting.

RITA: Thought provoking.

JACK: Yes – you weren't meant to feel, the whole point, clearly, was that you were supposed to think, which personally I did.

RITA: And what were you thinking about, Jack?

JACK:           Sorry?

RITA:           Was it the main girl?

JACK:           Well you couldn't help thinking about her, could you? You know which one I mean, don't you? You used to dress like her.

*Silence. Rita looks back to the paper.*

RITA:           Did I?

JACK:           Yes. You don't anymore, though.

*Silence.*

RITA:           No. No I don't.

*Long, long silence. Jack stays silent for a while, and then with some quiet confidence, sits forward, and says:*

JACK:           Do you want to see it again?

*Silence.*

*Blackout.*