

blog

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a short play

by

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Cast

MAY

JEAN

Setting

Café.

Time

Morning.

Blog by Alex Broun

Café. Morning.

MAY sits at a table with coffee, reading paper. JEAN sits at another table, close by.

After awhile JEAN approaches MAY.

JEAN: Hi.

MAY: Hi.

JEAN: You're Betty Boo aren't you ? You write that blog.

MAY: Yes. I am. How did you ...

JEAN: Your photo. On the site. Doesn't really do you justice.

MAY: No ?

JEAN: You're far more attractive in real life.

MAY: Thanks.

JEAN: I just wanted to say that was a great piece about the Poetry Slam. You really gave it to them.

MAY: You read it ?

JEAN: Absolutely. One of the many. Sure stuck it to those bastards.

MAY: Just an opinion.

JEAN: A very public one. And so ... on the mark. Spot on.

MAY: It needed to be said.

JEAN: So much. Betty Boo ...

MAY: Well you know, just "doing the do."

JEAN: Doing the ...

MAY: Do. As in the song.

JEAN: Oh of course. (SINGS) "Betty Boo just doin' the do."

MAY: Something like that.

JEAN: Cool. So cool.

MAY: Well, thanks.

JEAN: No problem. Just wanted to tell you what a big admirer I am. Big fan. Biggest fan.

MAY: That's nice to know.

JEAN: I'll let you ...

MAY: Thanks.

JEAN: But I'll be watching for the next opinion.

MAY: Great.

JEAN: Be looking out for it. Hard.

MAY: You do that.

JEAN: Betty Boo –

MAY: Just “doin’ the do.”

JEAN: Check ya.

JEAN GOES BACK TO HER TABLE.

MAY: (TO HERSELF) Yeah, right.

BEAT. JEAN APPROACHES AGAIN.

MAY: You're back ?

JEAN: Just can't stay away. Big fan. Biggest fan.

MAY: I am waiting for someone.

JEAN: Of course. It's just what you said – it really made an impact – on me personally - and I was wondering if you knew if it had been cancelled ?

MAY: What ?

JEAN: The Slam.

MAY: I'm not sure.

JEAN: Cause that was like the first night out of four nights and I was wondering if you knew if they had decided to cancel the other nights.

MAY: You'd have to ask them.

JEAN: Cause that's what you called for wasn't it ? The end to this "amateurish night of poop" that "you're ashamed to even admit exists."

MAY: Who are you ?

JEAN: Oh no-one. Big fan. Biggest fan.

BEAT.

MAY: Sorry. You'd have to ask the organisers.

JEAN: But that's what you want isn't it ? For the whole thing to be cancelled. For all the other poets who are going to read their work on the next three nights to just miss out. For the whole thing just to be totalled and the organisers to have to pay the cancellation fee on the venue – as well as scrounge around town trying to take down all the posters, retrieve all the fliers, unsend all the invites. Perhaps you could announce it on your blog. Betty Boo's next instalment. That should inform all of three people. One of them who is of course me – big fan, biggest fan. And what about those fans ? You were scheduled to read some of your poems on the fourth night – Betty Boo herself appearing at Poetry Slam. But if it is cancelled you won't be able to do that anymore will you. What will your fans says, your other big fans, biggest fans ?

MAY: Were you one of the poets ?

JEAN: No, of course not. I'm one of the organisers. Jean Moylan. You know one of the "scum suckers who trolled the neighbourhood to discover the worse possible poets – ever." Miss Scum Sucker at your service. Big fan, biggest fan. When I'm not sucking scum that is. Thought that was a strange way to put it "Worst possible poets." Did that mean they were the worst possible ? Or had the potential to become the worst possible ? The whole sentence was very strangely constructed. Still - emblazoned. Imprinted "Scum sucker" – stamped on the forehead. Let's have no doubts about that. So will you – be reading on the last night ? Will the fans get to see the great "Betty Boo" in action ? The identifier of (CONT) "poop", the seeker of "scum suckers". Will we get a chance to see her in action?

MAY: That depends.

JEAN: You're withdrawing ?

MAY: On whether The Slam is still going ahead and whether the organisers still allow her to participate.

JEAN: Of course they will. I know them – speak for them – well one of them – and she thinks you're great. Just great.

BEAT.

JEAN: Do you mind if I sit down ?

MAY: I'm not sure what that will –

JEAN: (SITTING) Thank you. Because it's just I wanted to discuss with you – you as an expert and me as a fan, biggest fan –

MAY: I wish you'd stop saying that.

JEAN: I wanted to discuss blogs with you. Not just yours of course – although of course we can do that. All blogs, in general. Because you see people keep saying blogs are a good thing but I'm not sure if that's true.

MAY: Blogs allow all people – not just the chosen few - to express an opinion. And that's what I was doing – just expressing an opinion.

JEAN: Yes but that's not necessarily a good thing. When that opinion is inaccurate, untruthful and hurtful – so hurtful – not just to the poets who performed on the night, the purveyors of "poop", but to the organisers, the aforementioned "scum suckers" who of course I am one.

MAY: I'm entitled to my opinion and you're entitled to yours.

JEAN: But do you really need to express it in a public forum ? Are you entitled to express it in a public forum where poop purveyors and scum suckers are forced to read it in the former sanctity of their bedrooms ?

MAY: No one made you read it.

JEAN: So I was going to be able to ignore it ? One of the poets performing in the last night calling the first night an "utter tragedy". Everybody in the entire event up in arms. I was going to be able, as chief organiser, not to read it ?

MAY: I did take it down – remember ?

- JEAN: After the damage was done.
- MAY: To me.
- JEAN: What ?
- MAY: Yes, to me. I was forced to remove it after being subjected to the most appalling personal attacks.
- JEAN: You said it – “public forum”.
- MAY: After I was called not only a “pathetic poet” but people – “Anonymous” people – saying I was “fat” and “lonely”.
- JEAN: Well if you –
- MAY: If I what ? What possibly justifies that ?
- JEAN: If you call people’s poetry “poop” and label other people “scum suckers” then people are going to get pretty upset.
- MAY: People like you ?
- JEAN: I never called you “fat”. Or “lonely”. Or a “pathetic poet” but when you use the sort of verbal abuse you used you had to expect some kind of comeback.
- MAY: “Tidal wave of fury” was how Woman in Red described it.
- JEAN: You called people’s poetry “poop”.
- MAY: Because it was !
- JEAN: Says who ?
- MAY: Says me.
- JEAN: Then why couldn’t you have just kept it to yourself.
- MAY: Hooray for censorship.
- JEAN: Or said it to their face. Because that’s what you would’ve really done – if you had any guts. You would’ve gone up to the other poets on the night and said “Your poetry is poop” then come over to me and said “You are a scum sucker” not scurry away to your little rat hole to type it up on your bloody blog for the whole world to see.
- MAY: I thought you said no body reads blogs.

JEAN: No that's the problem - they do. They bloody well do. Especially blogs that call people "poop" and "scum suckers."

PAUSE.

MAY: I'm not going to apologise if that's what you want.

JEAN: I wasn't expecting you too.

MAY: I have a right to my opinion. Critics have a right to criticise.

JEAN: Yes critics do – but not poets, criticising fellow poets, especially in an event they're meant to be supporting.

MAY: I'm not sure I agree with you.

JEAN: Did you ever think for one second that we organise this event for you ? You and other poets like you. Really talented young local writers who never get a chance to have their work heard. I don't get paid to do it. I do it voluntarily so people like you and James Tamber and Suzie Lord and Berinda Goh – really talented local artists – can get their work out there in an open and supportive environment. Supportive. James and Berinda will probably never write another word after what you said about them.

MAY: Well maybe they shouldn't.

BEAT.

JEAN: Ouch.

MAY: I'm not attacking Poetry Slam. I think it's a good event. I just think it needs to change.

JEAN: How ?

MAY: Be more selective. Choose better poets.

JEAN: A "no poop" policy ?

MAY: Less poets. Not four nights, just one night – and only the really good poets. The most talented.

JEAN: And who selects them ?

MAY: I don't know. A panel.

JEAN: We've already got a panel.

MAY: Well get a better panel, be tougher.

JEAN: We already said no to fifty other writers.

MAY: Well say no to more. Best ten – or best five. Only.

JEAN: And I'm gathering you would be among this best five ?

MAY: Definitely. Look at the shit that was read Monday night. My stuff is worlds better than that.

JEAN: Who gives you the right to decide what is good or bad ?

MAY: I do.

JEAN: What gives you the right to decide what is good and bad ?

MAY: My ears. My eyes. My nose. If it smells like shit – it probably is shit.

BEAT.

JEAN: I'm going to go.

MAY: That's probably good.

JEAN STARTS TO WALK AWAY. SHE STOPS AND COMES BACK.

JEAN: Do you know when the panel read your work there was only one judge who thought we should include you in The Slam ? One of out of five.

MAY: Who was it ?

JEAN: Me.

MAY: I find that a bit hard to believe.

JEAN: It's true. I thought your work showed real promise, insight. Big fan, biggest fan. The other four wanted somebody else but I was adamant. And I fought and I fought and eventually I got you.

MAY: Even if that is true – what's your point ?

JEAN: If it wasn't for me you never would have been included and then you wouldn't have come on Monday night. And written your blog.

MAY: I might've been there anyway.

JEAN: To an event that knocked you back ? I don't think so. Looks like I chose the wrong poet to support.

MAY: Truth hurts.

JEAN: Yes. It does.

JEAN EXITS.

MAY ALONE.

LIGHTS FADE.