

A GRAPHIC
MYSTERY



My Faire Lady



Bambi Everson

MY FAIRE LADY

One act, approx. 12 minutes

CHARACTERS

ROD WHITE (40s) - Widower, cinephile, awkward.

BOB WHITE (40s) - Younger brother, pragmatic, loyal.

ELIZA HIGGINS (30s-40s) - Intelligent, confident, hirsute.

TIME: This evening.

PLACE: A coffee shop.

SYNOPSIS: A widowed cinephile is pressured into returning to the dating scene, but finds himself facing a plot twist that even he could never have guessed.

SCENE ONE

*A coffee shop somewhere in Anywhere, USA.
ROD has a cup of tea in front of him. He is with
his younger brother, BOB.*

ROD

Tell me again - why I am doing this?

BOB

Because it's time. Because Shelley has been gone for four years. Because you don't do well living alone. Because I've had enough of the midnight calls because you forgot how your toaster works.

ROD

And you think dating is the answer? I haven't had a date since 1984. That was Shelley. We were married for 22 years! I don't know what to say to women. And nowadays, you have to be so careful. I don't understand the new vernacular. So, you can't call a woman exotic anymore?

BOB

No. It denotes a racial difference.

ROD

But, Hedy Lamarr, Dorothy Lamour...

BOB

Just don't. And don't call a woman "feisty," either, or "shrill," or God forbid, "bossy," unless you want to be wearing your coffee. Don't say their outfit is flattering. In fact, try not to compliment their physical appearance at all.

ROD

I can't say they look good?

BOB

God, No! Good is what you call a doggie when it's behaving. And cute is just as bad. Puppies are cute, not women.

ROD

But Shelley liked...

BOB

Jesus! Don't bring up Shelley, or the fact that this is your first date in 30 years. And for God's sake, don't tell her your brother picked your profile pic and chose her. And don't cry, for fuck's sake. Promise me you won't cry!

ROD

It's no use. I'll never remember. Can't you sit nearby? Like at another table? We can have a signal. If I drop my fork, you can come to the rescue.

BOB

Sorry. You're on your own now. First dates are supposed to be awkward. If she shakes hands at the end and says, "It was nice meeting you," it was a bust. No harm, No foul. If she takes your phone and types in her number, you're golden. I put a lot of effort in this. She looked nice in her picture.

ROD

People lie.

BOB

Of course, people lie! But you'll know all that in 15 seconds. I used your picture from my wedding! You were 15 pounds heavier then! It's a strategy. You look better now! She'll be pleasantly surprised.

ROD

How did you describe me?

BOB

Cisgender male, of an .. ahem.. certain age, widowed, well read, eclectic but not snobbish, a cinephile, prefers Tod Browning to Quentin Tarantino. Seeking cisgender female with similar interests to take advantage of the culture our great city offers. All ethnicities and body types welcomed.

ROD

What is Cisgender? What have you gotten me into?

BOB

Whoa - relax! It just means you identify with the gender you were born with. Born a male, identify as such. And it would become you to ask the person's pronoun, if you are unclear. Now, in this case, Eliza appears to be cisgender as well. If Eliza were non-binary, the pronoun might be they/ them.

ROD

I thought binary had to do with the Dewey Decimal system or bar codes. I still don't understand bar codes. I don't know how to access messages on my new cell phone, which I hate by the way. What was wrong with my flip phone?

BOB

No one will date a man with a flip phone. You're welcome. Welcome to the new millennium. I'm leaving. I will be across the street in the Argo Tea, trying to write. You are a good man, Rod. Clueless, but good. Try to have a good time. It's a date, not an execution. Are your hands clean?

ROD

Yes, I washed them like 40 times.

BOB

Well, that's another thing you don't need to disclose. You'll be fine. Don't cower. Sit up straight. Jesus. You look terrified. Smile.

BOB gets up to leave.

BOB (cont'd)

Eliza, dark hair, dark eyes. She likes old movies. What else could you ask for?

ROD

What if her idea of an old movie is... The Breakfast Club? What if she only eats meat-free haggis and quinoa? I don't even know what quinoa is! I am not ready for the new world of dating. She probably she won't even show.

BOB

She'll be here. She answered your ad, remember?

ROD

YOUR AD!

BOB

You don't need a wingman. You said at some point, you were going to try dating again. Well, today is that day. Seize the moment. You got this!

BOB exits. ROD is uncomfortable. He straightens the other side of the table, Making sure the napkins, silverware and glasses are perfectly aligned. He looks up and smiles at every person walking into the restaurant. He realizes he looks like a maniac doing that, so takes out his wallet to make sure he has both his credit card and cash. Change falls on the floor. ROD goes under the table to pick up the loose change. ELIZA enters.

A poised and confident woman who happens to have a full beard. ELIZA approaches the table.

ELIZA

Rod?

ROD bangs his head on the table top. Not once, but twice.

ROD

Yes. Oof. Sorry. Ow. Dropped my... So sorry. Nice to meet you....

ROD pops up to shake her hand, is momentarily taken aback and trying desperately to hide it.

ROD (cont'd)

Eliza! Please sit down.

ELIZA sits. There is an awkward silence.

ELIZA

So, Rod, you don't look much like your picture.

ROD

Um... No... Sorry. I thought the new me would be an improvement. So many times people are disappointed when they see me in the flesh, not that a lot of people have seen me in the flesh... I mean... and you look ...

ELIZA

Hairier?

ROD

I was going to say taller.

ELIZA

Taller than my picture?

ROD

I... I don't know. I am a terrible conversationalist. See? One minute into our date, and I am already failing. I am supposed to say something complimentary but not objectifying about you. You seem very... anchored... in a good way, not a longshoreman/pirate kinda way... Not that... you look... um.... Crap. Can I start again?

ELIZA

No need. Let's cut to the chase. I have a fairly common condition called polycystic ovary syndrome. It's an over-sensitivity to testosterone. It's not hereditary and there is nothing medically wrong with me.

ROD

Ok.

ELIZA

People are so quick to judge. I had my beard lasered off for the photos. But this is who I am, and I am comfortable with it now. I had been working County Fairs for the last 28 years. I got paid good money to be gawked at, but as of late, I decided it was time to stop identifying as a "freak" and claim my beard-dom. I got a job at Sephora. I find people still gawk, but in our politically sensitive world, no one dares say anything, for fear I will sue for harassment. I bet people are gawking now.

ROD

Oh... I am sure they're not.

(looks around)

Ok, they're gawking. Do I say something?

ELIZA

Nah.

ELIZA turns around and waves at them all.

ELIZA (cont'd)

Yeah. It's real folks. Used to cost you a quarter to look. Y'all got a freebie!

(Pause)

So, you like Tod Browning, huh?

ROD

Yes. Sorry. I know the connotations. I saw "Freaks" when I was six. Scared the beejesus out of me, but I knew even then who the real freaks were.

ELIZA

You must have been a most unusual six year old.

ROD

You have no idea. My role model was Quasimodo. I was a hopeless doomed romantic. Love fulfilled only in death. At recess, in second grade, I saw Kathy Abrams kissing a boy behind the flagpole. I hollered, "There is all I ever loved" and started throwing rocks. My mom thought it best to send me to an all-boys private school after that. Never learned the art of wooing a woman. The only woman I knew, other than my mom, was my third grade teacher, Mrs. Appleman. She looked like Maureen O Hara.

(MORE)

ROD (cont'd)

When I told her I had “the love of a damned soul,” she thought it was best I transfer to Mr. Silverstein’s class. The rejection stayed with me always. And you? You couldn’t have had an easy go of it.

ELIZA

I was a normal kid, whatever that means. Sometime around middle school, this started happening. Kids called me the teenage werewolf. I had a pretty tough skin. I loved those old movies myself, so I told the kids to be wary of me at a full moon. I was liable to bite those who displeased me. Scared kids sacrificed their whoopie pies at lunchtime, but I didn’t have a lot of close friends. One summer, when I was 13, and couldn’t get a job to save my life, a carnival came through the Aqueduct racetrack, so my mom suggested I stop by. Welcomed into the fold immediately. I loved those carnny kids. We were quite the crew. Me, Priscilla, the pickle girl, and Portly Pete. He was 15 and must’ve weighed 400 pounds. He could eat 15 hot dogs per show. We did five shows a day. I hung out with Larry the Lobster boy, and Carla the Camel girl, whose knees went backwards instead of forwards.

ROD

So you literally ran away and joined the circus. That’s so cool! I lived at home until I was 30. Fun fact, I got married at 26. So, I am not what you’d call adventurous. Are you still in touch with...

ELIZA

Pete didn’t make it to 30. His heart. I think Priscilla quit when she had enough money for a nose job. I think she married her plastic surgeon. Gorgeous, but unrecognizable. So, you seem pretty chill about the facial hair.

ROD

Had a beard myself in the 90s. My wife... ex-wife... dead wife... hated it.

ELIZA

Did she hate it before or after she was dead?

ROD

I was sloppy. Shelley could always see what I ate for lunch. She refused to kiss me if there was egg in my beard. I’m sorry. I was not supposed to bring up Shelley. She died.

ELIZA

Yes. You said. And you mentioned that in your personal ad.

ROD

Right. Full disclosure - my brother did this whole thing. Made my profile, did the swiping thing. I don’t even know how to get on line with this phone.

ELIZA

Give it here. It's Ok. I'm not going to steal it. Here's mine.

ELIZA puts her phone on the table. ROD hands over his phone.

ELIZA (cont'd)

Ok, first things first.

She types in her phone number and moves closer to him so they are side by side.

ELIZA (cont'd)

My number. Now the hairball is in your court. Click here to call me and your number will come up on my phone. No pressure. Now, here's your account. Click here. You swipe right on the ones you find attractive. Left for the rejects.

ELIZA demonstrates.

ELIZA (cont'd)

Wow, you rejected a lot of women.

ROD

Not me, I'm not in a position to reject anyone. I hate that thing. Can you delete it?

ELIZA

You sure? Mary Colton looks pretty hot. See, here's her picture in a rubber cat suit.

ROD

No. Please. Just delete the... whatever you call it.

ELIZA

App?

ROD

Sure. Whatever.

ELIZA

I'm going to show you. See that little x? It pops up when I hold down this button. Click it.

ROD does.

ELIZA (cont'd)

Ta-da! Deleted. Look at you, mastering technology.

ROD

Bob's gonna be pissed. He paid a year in advance for me. I'm going to text him... Is that Ok?

ELIZA nods her approval and ROD texts BOB. His texting skills are awful but ELIZA is patient, even amused.

ROD (cont'd)

I hate this. I hate bars. Whatever happened to meeting at a school dance? Or at a cocktail party? Or on a cruise ship?

ELIZA

Truman Capote and Noel Coward are dead. Who the hell throws cocktail parties anymore? We have to embrace the age we are in, and we have to embrace who we are. It's empowering. Loving ourselves for what we are... it's very liberating.

ROD

What am I? I am a mess. Not very liberating. Oh, God! I never offered you anything. I forget people sit here for hours with one cuppa coffee. You want coffee? Some toast, an omelette? The omelettes are really good here.

ELIZA

Aren't you afraid I'll get egg in my beard?

ROD

No. I like eggs.

ELIZA

Whatever you're having. And maybe one of those danishes.

ROD

Be right back.

ROD goes up to the counter. BOB rushes in.

BOB

What? It's over already? You deleted the app? Come on... You didn't give this a fair shot. What the fuck?

ROD

I am giving it a very fair shot. Eliza is over there. The date is still in progress. I didn't screw it up yet. So, I'm fine. Shhh... Just pretend you don't know me right now.

BOB looks over. ELIZA's back is to him.

BOB

So, I did good, huh? Told ya. But, I wouldn't walk off into the sunset with the first woman you meet. There are a lot of nice women out there in Cyberland. Don't settle just because dating scares you.

ROD

I'm not. She's going to see me talking to you. Oh, God. Might as well introduce you.

ROD grabs the tea and the danish and walks back with him. ELIZA turns to look at him. BOB is taken aback.

ROD (cont'd)

Bob, Eliza. He's going now.

BOB

What? YOU are Eliza? Are you kidding me? Now, I am as progressive as the next guy, but my brother is an innocent. That's not fair! Rod stuck his toe into the dating pool for the first time in forever. He didn't deserve this. Is this a joke? 'Cause I am not laughing. You misrepresented yourself to my brother, Miss.

ROD quickly puts the stuff down at the table and leaps to ELIZA's defense.

ROD

She most certainly did not. Not anymore than I did with that dumbass picture of me from 20 years ago.

ELIZA

I can handle myself, thank you. Hi, Bob. Your brother appears to be a decent dude. So... Bob, you wouldn't date a woman with a beard?

BOB

I wouldn't. I am married. But Rod deserved a heads up.

ELIZA

Maybe I am a reminder of how arbitrary the categories of femininity and masculinity are. If facial hair determines your sexuality, we are in a world of hurt.

ROD

Yeah... Bob couldn't grow a beard to save his life. He tried for a mustache for senior prom. I remember our sister using her eyebrow pencil to fill it in because it looked like he had half a dead caterpillar on his face.

BOB

Thanks, bro.

ELIZA

Point being, the problem is not my beard. Once I gave up the idea of trying to conform to conventional standards of beauty, my self esteem grew, along with my beard. It's not a detraction of my womanhood. It's part of my womanhood, but my beard is not the most interesting thing about me. I think Rod gets that.

ROD

I do. And maybe a little of her testosterone will rub off on me. I could use some.

BOB

Fine. Good luck to ya. All I want is for my brother to be happy. He's the best. I was hoping he'd meet a lovely woman with a ... well, an exposed chin maybe. But who am I to pass judgement? Remember, I am the guy behind this match, so if this works out... y'all can thank me later. I'm not splitting hairs. No offense.

ROD

Bye, Bob.

BOB leaves the restaurant.

(to ELIZA)

That was awesome. You are awesome. I think I wanna kiss you.

ELIZA

Hey, just because I have extra testosterone, doesn't mean I'm easy. Let's get through the first date first. Then we'll see. Good danish. Want some?

ELIZA pulls off a piece for him.

ROD takes his phone and clicks on her number. ELIZA's phone goes off ("Gabba Gabba Hey!" by The Ramones is her ringtone). He smiles. She shuts off her phone and smiles too. They eat in silence. As the light dims ROD takes ELIZA's hand. She allows that.

LIGHTS OUT

END OF PLAY