

## **No More than Reason**

*by*  
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*No More Than Reason | Penberthy*

**Cast**

Daniel, early 50's

Liz, early 50's

**Time**

Present day

**Place**

Backstage at a theater

Scene: The women's dressing room, backstage during a run of "Much Ado about Nothing." As the lights come up, we see Liz sitting at the makeup table, and Daniel standing in the doorway. They are running Beatrice and Benedick's lines from V, ii, speaking rapidly. Liz isn't doing well. From the monitor we can faintly hear the sounds of V, i.

LIZ

... which maintained so politic a state of evil, that they will not —

*(Correcting herself.)*

— *would* not, admit any good part to intermingle with them: but for which of my good parts did you first fall in love with me?

DANIEL

Suffer.

LIZ

Jesus!

*(Goes back)*

But for which of my good parts did you first *suffer* love for me?

DANIEL

Suffer love! a good epithet, I do suffer love indeed, for I love thee against my will.

LIZ

In spite of your heart I think, alas poor heart, if you spite it for my sake, I will spite it for yours, for I will never love that which my friend hates.

DANIEL

Thou and I are too wise to woo peaceably. And now tell me, how doth your cousin?

LIZ

Very ill.

DANIEL

And how do you?

LIZ

Very ill too.

DANIEL

Serve God, love me and mend. Here comes one in haste.

LIZ

Madam, you must come to your uncle, blah, blah, blah, and Don John... Will you come presently?

*(As Beatrice.)*

Will you go hear this news, signior?

DANIEL

I will live in thy heart, die in thy lap, and be buried in thy eyes; and moreover I will go with thee to thy uncle's.

LIZ

Dammit. I can't keep my lines straight tonight.

DANIEL

Want to do it again?

LIZ

I'll just run it in my head.

DANIEL

You okay?

LIZ

Yeah, I'm fine.

DANIEL

Okay.

*(He exits to go to his dressing room. LIZ checks her make-up in the mirror. DANIEL returns.)*

DANIEL

Was that one of those "I'm fine"s where you want to talk about it?

LIZ

What? No.

Although you'll find out sooner or later. Richard's moving out. He told me this morning.

DANIEL

For good?

LIZ

He says he just needs time to think.

DANIEL

Yeah?

LIZ

Yeah. But the more I think about it, the more I know he's not coming back.

DANIEL

That sucks.

LIZ

You can say "I told you so."

DANIEL

I wasn't going to.

LIZ

Good.

Seriously, though. He's not the right man for me.

DANIEL

I shouldn't have told you the day before your wedding.

LIZ

That was tactless.

DANIEL

I'm an asshole. "Though it be not written down, yet forget not that I am an ass."

LIZ

At least you've made it to 20 years. How do you do it?

DANIEL

Sensitivity and boyish charm.  
Beats me.

LIZ

You know where Don Pedro asks Beatrice if she'll marry him? Why doesn't she say yes? He's a prince, for God's sake! He's rich, he's good-looking, he's courtly —

DANIEL

Hey, I'm good looking!

LIZ

— he's nice to her — yeah, yeah — you are — but seriously, why doesn't she say yes? I was saying my line back to him, "No, my lord, unless I might have another for working days, your Grace is too costly to wear every day," and suddenly it hit me.

I'm just like Beatrice. I don't know how to pick men.

DANIEL

You're not like Beatrice.

LIZ

I need to divorce Richard, and give up.

DANIEL

Don't give up.

LIZ

Wait for a man to pick me.  
If anybody does.

DANIEL

Someone will pick you.

LIZ

I'm past 50, I've been married and divorced three times — or will be soon — I've got a daughter I barely see — which is my fault — who would pick me?

DANIEL

*(Lightly, but with an undercurrent of truth.)*

Me.

LIZ

*(Not noticing.)*

That's nice.

DANIEL

I would.

LIZ

You're rich, courtly, good-looking, nice to me.

DANIEL

Not rich.

LIZ

No.

I gotta go to the bathroom. Thanks for running lines.

DANIEL

No problem.

*(LIZ goes into the bathroom. DANIEL starts to leave, then doesn't. Presently we hear the sound of a toilet flushing and water running. LIZ enters from the bathroom, wiping her hands on a paper towel.)*

LIZ

Don't you have an entrance?

DANIEL

I would pick you.

LIZ

Thanks.

DANIEL

I shouldn't say it. I know.

LIZ

Why not? It's sweet.

DANIEL

It's hell. Five years of hell.

LIZ

It hasn't been five years of hell.

DANIEL

Yes it has.

LIZ

Purgatory, maybe.

DANIEL

For me.

LIZ

It was not your fault. You tried to save me from making a stupid mistake.

DANIEL

Didn't you understand?

LIZ

Obviously not. I married him.

DANIEL

*Why* I was telling you not to marry him?

LIZ

Because he wasn't right for me.

What are we talking about?

DANIEL

Now hear this, clear as a fucking bell. I told you you weren't right for Richard, because I was right for you. I am right for you.

And you're right for me.

*(Dead silence. LIZ stares at DANIEL, astonished.)*

LIZ

You're serious.

DANIEL

Deadly serious.

LIZ

You're really saying this.



DANIEL

I really am.

LIZ

You have been an actor too long to confuse your character with yourself.

DANIEL

I've been in love with you so long, I know Benedick hasn't got a goddamn thing to do with it.

LIZ

You're not in love with me. You're seeing a woman in pain and think you can soothe her with lies.

DANIEL

I'm seeing a woman I adore, and I know I'm telling you the truth.

LIZ

If you truly adored me, you'd see this is a bad time to tell me. My husband moved out this morning, and this evening you're expecting, what?

DANIEL

To give you my heart.

LIZ

If you had a heart, you'd have kept your mouth shut.

DANIEL

I have a heart, and if you'd open your eyes you'd see it.

LIZ

I'm blind? I see what I am.

DANIEL

If you had a heart, you'd see who I am.

LIZ

I see that you're an asshole.

DANIEL

And I know you're a liar. Tell me you don't love me.

LIZ

I'll tell you nothing but get the hell out of my dressing room.  
Don't you have an entrance?

DANIEL

Shit.  
We're not through talking about this.

*(He exits.)*

LIZ

Oh, yes, we are!

*(She is motionless. Then she sees DANIEL'S sword, where he left it when they were running lines. She picks it up just as he re-enters.)*

DANIEL

I need that.

LIZ

*(Keeping his sword well away from him.)*

Why did you say all that?

DANIEL

I need my fucking sword.

LIZ

Why?

DANIEL

Please give me my sword.

*(LIZ holds DANIEL at bay with the sword.)*

DANIEL

Because I didn't say it five years ago. Hell, because I didn't say it 25 years ago. Remember during Midsummer Night's Dream? You asked me if I'd go out with you, when the show was over. We did, but I was fucking what's her name, who played Hermia. I still remember the look on your face when you found out. If I hadn't done that you wouldn't have married your first husband.

LIZ

You apologized for that.

DANIEL

*(Continuing.)*

I still feel like shit for that.

LIZ

You already apologized —

DANIEL

You said during tech week that my work had improved? I finally got Benedick when I admitted to myself what an asshole I'd been.

LIZ

What about Charlotte? You're married!

DANIEL

I will leave Charlotte, if you will have me. I won't say our marriage is on the rocks, or that she doesn't understand me, or that I don't love her. It isn't, and she does, and in fact I do. But I have never loved anyone so well as I love you.

LIZ

You're a fool. You would throw away 20 years of marriage for someone who can't stay married more than five years at a time? Do you know how much I want what you have?

DANIEL

That's because you've picked the wrong men. But you're not picking me, I'm picking you. I have what you want.

Could you point that down?

LIZ

*(Lowers the sword.)*

I don't love you.

*(Holds out the sword to him.)*

Take your sword.

Take it.

You have an entrance. Take your goddamned sword!

DANIEL

*(Leisurely taking the sword.)*

I do spy some marks of love in her.

Get out. LIZ

See you on stage. DANIEL

Count on it. LIZ

*(DANIEL exits. LIZ fumes. Lights.)*