

The Mortification of Heironymous Jones

CHARACTERS:

Heironymous Jones, man on a can

Woman Lady

Shopper Lady

Security Man

Other Man

HEIRONYMOUS JONES is seated on a toilet in a box at center stage. The box would ideally be wooden and have short legs, open top and bottom. Jones' head and shoulders stick out the top; ankles and feet visible at bottom. One side of the box is a door that swings open -- away from the audience. Next to him is WOMAN LADY, not in a box.

WOMAN LADY

I do realize it's entirely my fault, of course. I'm not blaming you, if that's what you think.

JONES

What do you mean? What's your fault?

WOMAN LADY

This. All of it. All this broken glass that used to be us.

JONES

Us? God you're beautiful.

WOMAN LADY

Don't say that, it makes me sad. I'm sick of crying myself to sleep at night hoping for a tomorrow that can never be because I'm stuck living in a thousand sordid yesterdays.

SECURITY MAN strolls onto the stage and stands in the background quietly at a discreet distance, holding a nightstick, which he occasionally taps against his open palm.

JONES

But why? What's happened?

WOMAN LADY

I have to get back to work. I'm sorry. We're really busy right now.

Woman Lady shakes her head sadly and starts to walk away.

JONES

No, help me understand! It's not your fault, whatever it is. Blame me! It's probably my fault. Let's at least talk about it!

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WOMAN LADY

It's too late now. I'm sorry, sir.

JONES

Wait! Who are you?

WOMAN LADY

And you shouldn't be taking a crap in here.

Woman Lady takes up a position upstage, where she shakes off her melancholy, picks up a bottle of perfume, and smiles a very broad and professional smile. SHOPPER LADY walks on stage from one side, OTHER MAN from the other. Both approach Woman Lady.

WOMAN LADY (CONT'D)

Would you like to try the new Princess 47?

SHOPPER LADY

No, thank you. Where's housewares?

WOMAN LADY

Over yonder.

OTHER MAN

Hey, while you're giving directions, can you point me in the direction of men's furnishings?

WOMAN LADY

Just beyond.

Shopper Lady and Other Man walk off to either side of the stage and browse along the edges. Security Man walks up to Jones.

SECURITY MAN

All right, you gotta move along.

JONES

What? Me?

SECURITY MAN

That's right pal.

JONES

Why?

SECURITY MAN

Taking a crap.

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JONES

No! I'm not, I...I...

SECURITY MAN

I what?

JONES

I don't know.

SECURITY MAN

That's what I thought.

Security Man gets up on his tiptoes and takes a peek down into the box, makes a face like he smelled something bad.

JONES

Hey...

Security Man backs off, hands up apologetically.

SECURITY MAN

You can't be doing this here. Take your box and get moving.

Shopper Lady approaches Security Man.

SHOPPER LADY

Excuse me, where's the proper toilet?

Security Man points to the other side of the stage.

SHOPPER LADY (CONT'D)

Thanks.

As she walks off she gives Jones a dirty look.

JONES

This has to be a... I didn't know this was even a store.

Other Man picks up a suitcase that was by the side of the stage and wanders over to Jones.

OTHER MAN

Holy mother of God, are you taking a crap in there?

JONES

No!

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OTHER MAN

I'm not judging you.

JONES

Thank you very much, because I am not taking one.

OTHER MAN

Are you sure? Because that's a toilet, right? And you're sitting on it, right? Unless you sit when you pee. Are you peeing? Are you a seated gentleman when you pee?

JONES

I stand when I pee, mister.

OTHER MAN

So you're taking a crap.

JONES

(ashamed)

I think I already took one.

SECURITY MAN

I knew he was taking a crap in there.

JONES

This is unbearable.

Shopper Lady crosses in front of Perfume Lady again.

WOMAN LADY

Would you like to try the new Princess 47?

SHOPPER LADY

Go on.

Shopper Lady holds out her wrist. Woman Lady smiles extra big. Jones frowns desperately.

SECURITY MAN

Let me ask you something. What gets into a man's mind? Look at you. I mean it. What gets into a man's mind? I'd really like to know.

JONES

It's not...I didn't...I don't...

OTHER MAN

I don't think he knows.

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Woman Lady walks up, maintaining a precarious balance between professionalism and distaste. She sprays her perfume bottle several times discreetly in the air around Jones as the other characters retreat, leaving Woman Lady alone with Jones. He holds his hand out to her and she takes it. He rises, opens the door to his box, and emerges. They embrace.

JONES

I missed you so much when you died.

WOMAN LADY

You shouldn't explain things so much. Let people see through you.

They dance, using most of the stage. Everyone gets out of their way. Jones is happy to be out of his box.

JONES

I feel like I'm seeing you for the last time.

WOMAN LADY

That's the most beautiful way of looking at something, kid.

JONES

I know.

WOMAN LADY

Nothing sadder than people smiling in photographs. I'm yellowing now myself. I'm curling up around the edges.

JONES

Don't worry baby. I'm having you restored.

WOMAN LADY

You can't grab sand, kid. Not for long.

Other Man walks up and taps Woman Lady on the shoulder.

OTHER MAN

Excuse me.

WOMAN LADY

Can I help you?

OTHER MAN

Oh, yes please. I'm on Flight 42. I'm afraid I'm a bit late.

He hands a clipboard to Woman Lady. She examines it, tears off some paper, and hands the bit of paper to him.

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WOMAN LADY

You're fine, sir. You can get in the business class line over there.

JONES

Oh no! Shit shit shit shit shit! I totally forgot, I need to be at the airport in like half an hour, I'll never make it!

WOMAN LADY

Right this way sir.

She walks Jones back over to his box. He starts to get in.

WOMAN LADY (CONT'D)

Shoes please.

JONES

Oh.

He removes his shoes and gives them to her, then gets in the box, drops his pants, and sits down.

OTHER MAN

Hey buddy.

JONES

Look, OK, I took one before, but there was nobody here. I didn't know it was an airport.

SECURITY MAN

Is there a problem here?

SHOPPER LADY

(to Woman Lady)

Excuse me, where did housewares go?

WOMAN LADY

Hmmm. You might try the shopping concourse at the main terminal.

SHOPPER LADY

Oh.

OTHER MAN

(to Jones)

You didn't know it was an airport?

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JONES

No, as I say, I'm alone. I'm minding my own business and suddenly this invasion. I'm not sorry. It's all of you who should be apologizing to me!

SHOPPER LADY

Is this guy taking a crap in the middle of the airport?

OTHER MAN

Sure looks that way to me.

JONES

It was ages ago!

OTHER MAN

But it's us that owes him an apology.

SECURITY MAN

Oh, is that a fact?

OTHER MAN

Are you even flying, or do you just come here to float your boat?

JONES

I'm flying all right, and I'm running very late. I don't have time for this discussion.

WOMAN LADY

Have you got a ticket, sir?

Jones searches frantically around his person for the ticket but is dismayed to come up empty.

JONES

Oh no...

SECURITY MAN

He's got nothing.

Shopper Lady notices that the box has a door, and she opens it, much to the alarm of Jones.

SHOPPER LADY

Look! A door!

JONES

Hey! Easy!

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Woman Lady tears a page off her clipboard and starts to read it loudly.

WOMAN LADY

Paging passenger Jones! Paging passenger Heironymous L. Jones! Last call for Flight 23, boarding on Gate 7 in Terminal 4.

JONES

That's me! See! I told you I had a ticket! That's my flight! Have any of you got any toilet paper?

WOMAN LADY

That's not going to help you, I'm afraid.

JONES

Oh yes it will.

OTHER MAN

I might have some.

Other Man opens up his suitcase and it is full of nothing but rolls of toilet paper. He hands one to Jones.

JONES

Thank you! Ha ha!

WOMAN LADY

I'm afraid you'll never make it to Gate 7 in time, it's miles away.

JONES

Oh no, really?

SECURITY MAN

It's in Terminal 4.

OTHER MAN

Terminal 4, that's not even in this airport! You'd better get wiping!

JONES

What?

WOMAN LADY

Yes, this is Kennedy Frankfurt Dublin, you want LaGuardia Schiphol Heathrow. You have one minute.

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SHOPPER LADY

Hey, are you going to wipe up or not?

JONES

Yes, goddamnit!

Everyone is pleased at this news. They grow quiet and attentive, peering at him with unabashed curiosity. Jones reels off a good stretch of toilet paper and stands up a little.

JONES (CONT'D)

Oh, but this is too much! Please! Do you mind?

They reluctantly turn around and face outwards, their backs to him. One might try to sneak a peek over a shoulder; another might sniff the air inquisitively.

After looking around and ensuring his relative privacy to his own satisfaction, Jones wipes, looks down at the paper in his hand, tosses it into the bowl.

OTHER MAN

Finished?

JONES

Hang on!

Jones unrolls some more paper and repeats the process, wiping, looking, tossing.

SHOPPER LADY

Surely now?

JONES

Once more, once more.

Again he gets more paper, wipes, looks, tosses.

JONES (CONT'D)

All right, all right.

They turn back around to face him, all smiles and congratulations.

OTHER MAN

Well done.

JONES

I've had about enough of you.

SECURITY MAN

You're about one more word away from breach of the peace, fly boy.

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WOMAN LADY

He's right. I'm so sorry but your flight's left and you can't stay here any more.

JONES

But where will I go?

They all shrug their shoulders and begin to back slowly away from him, except for Woman Lady, who lingers.

JONES (CONT'D)

Please. Don't go just yet. Don't I know you from somewhere? Sure I do. I know you.

WOMAN LADY

You have to go. I'm really very sorry. It's not my fault.

Woman Lady starts to back away as well. The lights begin a slow fade.

JONES

No no, it's my fault. I've been such a boor, I'm absolutely horrified. Just, have you, has anyone got a pair of shoes I might borrow? Any sort of shoes?

They back completely off stage, leaving Jones alone as the lights continue to fade.

JONES (CONT'D)

Hello? Anyone? Help?

Fade to black.