

The Tie

A very short play
by Dawson Moore

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(An apartment. JUDY sits on the couch, reading. Next to her is a table with a phone on it. MAX enters.)

JUDY
(not looking up) Hey.

MAX
Hey, how are you?

JUDY
Good.

MAX
Good. That's good. I'm fine.

JUDY
Oh.

MAX
Work was pretty awful, thanks. I take it you didn't catch it?

JUDY
No, I stayed home.

MAX
Great, that's great. How was it?

JUDY
What?

MAX
How was it, I said "How was it."

JUDY
I heard what you said. Thank you. How was what?

MAX
How was home. I was asking how your evening at home was.

JUDY
Sit-coms were crap.

MAX
Not funny tonight.

Not really funny ever. JUDY

Never. MAX

Almost. Stopped watching about an hour ago. JUDY

Gave up in disgust, they weren't funny. MAX

No. I've been reading. JUDY

Good. Not funny, gave up in disgust. MAX

Just gave up. JUDY

Right. MAX

How was your night? JUDY

Thank you for asking. My night was a total fucking disaster. MAX

(looking up) Oh? JUDY

They hated me. All five of them. Not a single laugh. MAX

Come on. JUDY

Not one. MAX

You're exaggerating again. JUDY

No I'm not. *(pause)* Not one laugh at my jokes. MAX

Other laughter. JUDY

My tie got the two drunk G.I.s giddy. MAX

Well, it's all part of the act. JUDY

I'm so proud, maybe I should go into clown suit design. MAX

Come on. JUDY

I used to like it. MAX

You liked it when I got it for you. JUDY

What are you talking about? MAX

I got it for you two years ago, you liked it then. JUDY

The tie? MAX

The tie. JUDY

I didn't mean the tie. MAX

You didn't. JUDY

No, no, I didn't. MAX

Oh. Sorry. Which one did you use? JUDY

What? This one. MAX

JUDY
No, I didn't mean the tie.

MAX
You didn't?

JUDY
No, I meant which routine.

MAX
Oh, all right. I used my first date material... the first date routine.

JUDY
I'm trying to remember--

MAX
You remember... it's old but... you know, the one about how nervous I've always got—

JUDY
Oh, right.

MAX
...on any first date.

JUDY
That one.

MAX
How I always make an ass of myself, because. . . you like it?

JUDY
Yeah, yeah, it's fine.

MAX
It's gone over really well before.

JUDY
Uh-huh.

MAX
“And then you get that gristle in your teeth, and you can't just swallow it, but she's watching you, and your mouth's perpetually full, so you can't talk, and then there's a meaningless silence, which you hope she thinks is romantic, and as soon as she looks away, it's up with the napkin. . .”

JUDY
Right.

(*pause*) What, does it suck? MAX

No, no, it doesn't suck. JUDY

(*pause*) Do I make my living doing it? MAX

Stand-up? JUDY

Yes, stand-up. MAX

No, of course not. Not by a long shot. JUDY

Then why do I do it? MAX

Love? JUDY

I just said I hated it. MAX

I know but— JUDY

I meant it. I dread it. I go in and terror, no, not terror, abhorrence engulfs me. MAX

Oh. JUDY

Thank you. MAX

What? JUDY

You've summed it up nicely, thank you very fucking much. MAX

What are you talking about? JUDY

MAX

Your response. “Oh.” Fuck you very much, that pretty much does sum it all up, doesn’t it.

JUDY

Don’t you even try to take this out on me.

MAX

Oh.

JUDY

(*pause*) What?

MAX

Feels shitty, doesn’t it? You unload, and what do you give me? “Oh.” Which really means, “Oh, tough shit, your problems bore me, keep it to yourself.”

JUDY

I didn’t even imply—

MAX

You did. You have.

JUDY

Don’t blame me you tried to make a hobby your life. That is not my fault.

MAX

A hobby!

JUDY

Yes, a hobby.

MAX

(*ripping off the tie*) Have the fucking thing. Here. Here! Take it! (*throws it at her*)

JUDY

Please stop.

MAX

Far be it from me to be a fucking beggar, a fucking leech. Take it. Go on, pick it up and put it in the pile of things that are yours.

JUDY

Come on, Max. You have a routine entirely based on rude jokes you used giggle at with your friends in the nut-house. Things you stole off television, changed a word and called your own.

MAX

That is not true.

JUDY

Yes, it is. If you were paying attention, you'd notice. You do something.

MAX

Like what? What are you talking about?

JUDY

Max.

MAX

No, what am I supposed to do? Should I quit, is that it? I'm a talentless, unoriginal moron—

JUDY

I didn't say that!

MAX

—and I should fucking go be a secretary!

JUDY

(rising) Thanks.

MAX

Wait.

JUDY

Thank you very much. I'm going to go to sleep now. Here, take this. *(hands him the tie)*
You'll need it.

(She walks toward her door, then turns the other direction, heading towards the front door.)

MAX

Where are you going?

JUDY

(grabbing her coat) Out for a drink. I was thinking to myself, "I'm not going to let him drive me out of here." But, really, I don't want to let you make me stay.

MAX

Oh. *(pause)* Judy...

JUDY

Max, don't. You're not invited.

Invited? I'm not—
MAX

I don't want you near me right now—
JUDY

Judy—
MAX

JUDY
Max! You can push this right now, or you can leave me alone. I'm telling you, if I were you, I'd leave me alone.

(JUDY leaves. MAX looks at the door for a few moments, then grabs the phone. He hits a number on the speed dial. He waits a moment...)

MAX
Mom, hi, it's me, Max... Mom, this just isn't working out... no, I don't hate her... no, Mom, no, I don't hate my sister, but she's just... I just don't think... yes... I understand that, I understand the terms of my release... yes... She called it a nut-house again! I was not in a nut-house!

(MAX sinks lower in the couch, obviously taking a tongue lashing.)

Okay... okay... okay, I understand. Bye... Mom?

(She's gone. He hangs up and stares ahead. Slowly, he starts laughing. It builds in intensity, in desperation, in loneliness. He stops suddenly and sighs.)

Well, I think I'm funny.

(He sits motionless as the lights fade out.)

The End