

Important Papers

By

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ACT ONE

Scene One

(Three bathroom stalls in a public restroom. We only see the two men's legs under their respective stalls. Their doors are closed, thank God. "A" is behind the Right stall; "B" is behind the Middle stall, next to "A's" stall. The Left stall is not in use: there's no one there. After a few moments, they begin speaking:)

- A:
Hello. Hi. I'm sorry to bother you. May I borrow some paper?
- B:
I'm sorry. But I don't have today's paper.
- A:
Yes. I'm sorry? -- I meant: May I borrow some TOILET paper?
- B:
Oh! Of course. Sure!... Let's see... Oh, boy.
- A:
I really appreciate it.
- B:
You're not going to believe me!
- A:
What?
- B:
And I swear, I always look first, but this time I didn't.
- A:
Don't tell me.
- B:
I don't. Oh boy. I really don't have any.
- A:
Ok, let's not panic here.
- B:
We're trapped.

(CONTINUED)

A:
Let's maintain our dignity.

B:
Well -- aren't we??

A:
At least we did what we came here to do.

B:
Yes, but we didn't FINISH it!

A:
We're not going anywhere. Let's sit down and think.

B:
I can't believe we BOTH used the toilet, and neither one of us checked for toilet paper ahead of time.

A:
You said you didn't have today's paper.

B:
I threw it in a trashcan just before I walked in here.

A:
You don't, by any chance, happen to have YESTERDAY'S paper with you, do you, sir?

B:
Nothing. Not even the horoscope.

A:
About and around you, do you see anything? Classifieds, Liz Smith, anything at all??

B:
Well, we don't want anything too glossy or too full of ink.

A:
Right now, it doesn't matter. Right now, we need just enough help to get us out of here and into the nearest convenience store.

B:
Yes. Too bad we're at the movies, though.

A:
Which one were you watching?

B:
The Julia Roberts. You?

A:
The Disney.

B:
Is it a cartoon?

A:
No. Live-Action Disney. I'm not missing anything.

B:
You don't happen to have... either two fives or ten singles for a Ten, do you??

A:
I do. In quarters.

B:
... Well... It's two of us... You don't happen to have them in pennies, by any chance?

A:
I guess we can't go anywhere.

B:
If we were snails, this wouldn't be a problem.

A:
I have a brilliant idea.

B:
Let's not moon anyone?

A:
Can you tell if there's any paper left in the stall next to yours?

B:
From my vantage point? No, I can't.

A:
Well, no, of course. But can you bend over, or something?

B:
Wouldn't that look a little funny, though?

A:
It's just US in here, and we need toilet paper.

(CONTINUED)

B:
What about in the stall next to you?

A:
There is no other stall next to me. Can you check? Can you reach over and get some?

("B" tries to gracefully check, poking his head around: we may even see his head trying to check that stall from under.)

B:
It's on the other side. And I don't think there's any.

A:
You don't think there's any, or you KNOW there isn't any?

B:
Well, there's nothing HANGING.

A:
Look where the actual roll usually goes.

("B's" head goes down even lower as he looks.)

B:
I think there's a little left.

A:
How little?

B:
I can't tell. It's difficult to tell.

A:
Try.

B:
Okay. I'm trying.

A:
Divided by two, how little?

B:
Divided by two? Our fingernails.

A:
Why don't you go over to that stall and check?

B:
Why don't YOU go?

(CONTINUED)

A:
Because you're closer to it.

B:
What if somebody comes in while I walk over there?

A:
Do it quickly!

B:
What do I do with my pants? I can't put them back on. Think about it!

A:
Can't you hop over to the stall? No one has walked in yet.

B:
No, but the WILL at the very moment I leave my stall and start jumping up and down with my pants around my ankles.

A:
I have another idea.

B:
Is it brilliant?

A:
I think so. Why don't you take off your pants and THROW them over to the other stall, so you can go over to that stall WITHOUT hopping up and down? That way you can get there even quicker. And no one will see you.

B:
What if they land on the toilet?

A:
Don't throw them towards the toilet. Throw them over a little more to the OTHER side.

B:
... You want me to throw my pants over to YOUR side??

A:
NOOO! The OTHER way! -- to the other stall!!... And AWAY from the toilet! Throw them AWAY from the toilet!

("B" take off and throws his pants over: they fly OVER the empty stall and land on the other side -- right ON THE FLOOR, outside of any stall whatsoever.

(CONTINUED)

A split-second after he throws them, he runs out of his stall and into the empty stall with his long shirt covering his unmentionables.)

B:
I did it!

A:
See? And nobody saw you, right?

B:
.... And you're not gonna believe this.

A:
What?

B:
There's only one and a half sheets of toilet paper.

A:
... Heads or Tails?...

B:
And you're not gonna believe this either.

A:
It's wax paper?

B:
My pants are not in here.

A:
... Did you look inside the toilet bowl?

B:
They must have landed outside, on the other side of the stall. I threw them too far. I should have at least kept the belt.

(Suddenly, "C", a new person, enters the bathroom with a LARGE BUNDLE OF NEWSPAPERS, and he walks towards the Center stall - that is, the now-unoccupied stall, which "B" has just left.)

B:
Excuse me? Sir?

C:
Yes? You talking to me?

B:
Yes: I wouldn't use that stall for anything too complicated.

C:
Yeah? Why not?

B:
It doesn't have any toilet paper.

C:
Really?... (looking:) So you're right. Thanks.
*("C" leaves, with the whole bundle of newspapers
still in his hands.)*

B:
I just couldn't bear to have him go through what we're
going through.

A:
I can't believe what you just did.

B:
I know, I forgot to ask him for my pants.

A:
You forgot to ask him to get us some more toilet paper,
you stupid idiot!

B:
Didn't he just tell us the stall didn't have any??

A:
We KNOW it doesn't have any! I mean, from outside,
from maintenance, from a STORE!

B:
We could yell.

A:
No one would hear us. We're two floors up from the
lobby.

B:
Maybe the first floor will hear us, and then THEY could
yell towards the lobby.

A:
Do you have an undershirt?

B:
Yes. Thank God. It's cold in here.

A:
Do you NEED IT?

(CONTINUED)

B:
Why? Do you like it?

A:
I don't even know what you LOOK like. I've never even SEEN you. I'm talking about an undershirt, socks, handkerchiefs, our underwear.... ANYTHING! We could use them!

B:
For what?

A:
To send out smoke signals! (then:) To WIPE!

B:
... What, the graffiti?

A:
Your ASS!!

B:
... and what about YOUR ass?

A:
If we count every article of clothing we can just discard and never use again -- to get us out of here... you follow me?

B:
Oh, I see.

A:
But we could start with that small strip of paper.

B:
I used it already.

A:
You did?

B:
But don't worry. It wasn't enough.

A:
Okay. I'm just going to use my underwear first.

B:
Why?

A:
Because I don't have an undershirt.

(CONTINUED)

B: Where do we throw the stuff afterwards? In the toilet??

A: Just throw them over the stall.

(Beat. "A" takes off his underwear, uses it, and throws it over and into the Middle stall. "B" does the same with ALL articles -- and throws them into the Middle stall also.

"A" continues on, using handkerchief and socks.

While "B" puts his shoes back on over his socks, "A" remains still.)

A: Did you just throw everything you own over the stall?

B: I had the runs.

("A" flushes.)

B: Good idea. You couldn't reach down and flush mine too, could you?

A: Why don't you do it?

B: Because I'm not in that toilet anymore. I'm here.

A: And I suppose all of our clothes probably landed IN the toilet!

B: It doesn't matter, because I don't EVER want to wear those again!

(The JANITOR enters quietly. NOTE: This part can be played by the same actor that played "C", if necessary. He carries LOTS OF ROLLS OF TOILET PAPER. "A" and "B" continue conversing.)

A: Well, I'm done. I think I can walk out now.

B:
You have enough clothes?

A:
I have no shirt left, but I'll wear my jacket. You?

B:
I have shirt, socks, and shoes.

A:
Pants?

B:
I threw them over the stall by mistake. My wallet's in there.

(Beat)

A:
How long is your shirt?

B:
Pretty long, but I'll still attract some attention.

(JANITOR, puzzled by all this, leaves the rolls of toilet paper -- LOTS of them -- inside a cabinet, and EXITS.)

B:
I think there was somebody here.

A:
No. Nobody.

("A" comes out, looking.)

B:
Not now. I mean, before. They left now.

A:
Where's the sink? Ah! -- Here!...

B:
Nobody pays any attention. My wife doesn't pay me any attention. She's probably watching that stupid movie without even missing me.

("A" washes his hands, then looks around.)

A:
I can't find paper towels either.

B:
Well, I sure don't have any.

*("A" now looks inside the cabinet -- and discovers
all the rolls of toilet paper in there.)*

A:
You're in luck.

B:
What?

*(And on the way out, as he passes "B's" stall, "A"
throws a roll of toilet paper over it and into
it.)*

A:
There you go. Good luck!

("A" exits.

Pause. Then we wear "B's" voice:)

B:
(praying:)
"Dear Lord: You know I'm not ungrateful. Thank you
for the toilet paper. Now, just one thing: Could you
teach me how to dry out toilet paper AFTER it falls in
a toilet bowl?..."

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY