

The Wizard of Bras

Characters

- Joel: Flamboyant, fun-loving gay man, 60s to 70s. An actor, waiter and jack-of-all trades, JOEL recently suffered a heart attack and has other medical conditions including HIV.
- Jon: Serious and sincere gay man, 60s to 70s, retired college English instructor. A former boyfriend of JOEL's decades ago, he maintains a distant friendship.

Setting

JOEL's hospital room, sterile and white.

Time

The recent pre-pandemic past.

Synopsis

As an older gay man recovers from a heart attack, an old boyfriend and well-wisher appears and shakes things up.

Scene

SETTING: A hospital room with two beds.
There is a small table and chair
between the beds.
Several bouquets with "Get Well"
cards sit atop the table.

AT RISE: Sleeping peacefully, JOEL is
hooked to an EKG machine.

JON enters quietly and inspects
the flowers and the cards.

JOEL is startled, awakens.

JOEL
(rousing himself with difficulty)
Hey, hands off! Those are my flowers.

JON
I know. This arrangement is from me.
(beat)
I'm sorry I haven't been by sooner.

JOEL
Me too. You missed the great parties.

JON
When was that?

JOEL
My opening night in the ward. I made my grand entrance
via flashing red-light ambulance. But alas, no dancing
waiters.

JON
Michel said it was a heart attack. How are you doing?

JOEL
Heart attack yeah, although they haven't ruled out
stroke. I still haven't gotten a definitive answer.
(beat)
But seriously, why are you here, Jon? I haven't seen
you in five million years.

JON
Would you rather I go?

JOEL
Maybe.

JON
Joel...

JOEL
You're still here.

JON
I...I...

JOEL
You're the one with six college degrees and you still can't speak English.

JON
I...

JOEL
You've said that three times.

JON
I...

JOEL
Four.

JON
I wanted to wish you well, to see you.
(beat)
Plus, I had a dream about you the other night.

JOEL
A dream?

JON
You were flying on a jet, nattily attired in a white suit but the plane never lands. It just keeps flying. I wait for you at the airport gate, but your arrival just keeps getting postponed.

JOEL

Wow, that's honestly very weird. I don't know if I really needed to hear that. You know, I had a dream the other night, too.

JON

Yes?

JOEL

I dreamed...I grabbed the bull by the horns in my Maidenform bra!

JON

(chuckling)

I haven't heard that line in fifty years. God, you're old!

JOEL

You're two years older than me and you always will be.

JON

I also wanted to see you to...apologize. To ask your forgiveness.

JOEL

(beat)

It's a good thing I'm flat on my back because if I wasn't I'd have fallen over.

JON

I'm serious.

JOEL

Yeah, go on.

JON

I...always felt badly about how I...

JOEL

(interrupting)

How you dumped me? Like a grimy, smelly jar of gefilte fish gone bad?

JON

Well...yes.

JOEL

I'm glad I lived long enough to hear it.

JON

When I heard about your mishap I felt I really needed to see you, to try and make amends.

(beat)

I know it's been a lifetime, but...I've been ashamed about the way I ended things. And I never apologized to you.

JOEL

I was rather badly hurt, this is true. Okay, look, Jon, I'd like to accept your apology, but I think...

JON

Yes?

JOEL

You want the truth?

JON

Of course.

JOEL

It just feels...*flat*, so cut and dry. Maybe if you got down on your knees and did it that way.

JON

It's hard for me to kneel. I had knee replacement surgery last year and it wasn't successful.

JOEL

Okay, then try it again but this time use more emotion.

JON

(clearing throat, very heartfelt)

Joel, can you ever forgive me for the callous and thoughtless way I ended our springtime affair, completely one-sided without even giving you the opportunity to express your feelings of frustration and anger? Shutting you off like cold tap water.

JOEL

If you put it that way...

JON

Yes?

JOEL

Wow, it brings it all back. You know I tried calling you every twenty minutes, but you wouldn't answer your damn phone! Now I remember.

JON

I'm sorry.

JOEL

I was so frustrated I couldn't reach you in person I mailed back all your handwritten love letters. I couldn't stand looking at them, not to mention they were illegible.

JON

I was offered that one-year fellowship to Oxford which I couldn't turn down. But I was so overwhelmed I didn't know how to tell you.

JOEL

And then a few years later you and your new beau Stuart had the nerve to come into the restaurant where I was working at the time and you asked for a different section.

JON

Joel, I'm sorry. I was a jerk. Won't you please forgive me?

JOEL

All right, all right, That's enough.

(beat)

I accept your apology. And besides all that happened years ago. I mean YEARS.

JON

I know. But it was...I mean I should have been more considerate.

JOEL

You mean by dragging it out like slow torture? No, I think maybe fast and clean was the best way.

JON

But I hurt you.

JOEL

Yeah...but I never would have fit in with your high-minded academic crowd.

JON

I guess I was something of a snob.

JOEL

Look, I forgot you quickly enough. Back in those days another guy was just around the corner, or on the corner. Don't flatter yourself.

JON

I don't know what to say.

JOEL

You've apologized, that's plenty. Although you did wait till almost the last minute.

JON

But you're going home after this, right?

JOEL

I'm going somewhere, Jon, but it ain't home. I'll probably have to give up my apartment. I'm going to miss my funky little studio with that great view of downtown, and the young couple downstairs who keep everyone up when they go at it.

JON

(concerned)

You really don't think you'll be going home?

JOEL

(shaking head)

After the heart attack they discovered other issues, maybe a little diabetes, a little vertigo, throw in HIV for good measure, although that I've known about for years. My case manager's lining up a skilled nursing facility for me in a fascinating transitional neighborhood.

JON

I'm very sorry, Joel.

JOEL

It's OK. I'll finally get to read *War and Peace*, start it at least if I don't make it.

JON

You've got too much life in you not to pull through.

JOEL

You're not listening, Jon.

(theatrically)

"Prognosis: Not so Great."

JON

I hated that Bette Davis movie.

JOEL

And I loved it.

(A thought crosses JON's mind.)

JON

Joel, may I ask you something?

JOEL

Go on.

JON

Will you...marry me? Please?

JOEL

What?! Get the hell out of my room! Now!

JON

I won't leave till I get a positive answer.

JOEL

Why the hell are you doing this to me? Are you crazy?

JON

Maybe...a little.

JOEL

I'm just a cranky old fart who'll make your life miserable. Besides, I've got nothing...nothing but bills.

JON

I don't care. I know you're single and I couldn't contemplate marriage after Stuart died. But I'm ready now.

JOEL

You can't just storm into my life after all these years and make demands like this.

JON

Why not? And if you've forgotten, I can be just as stubborn as you. Like I said I'm not leaving till I get an answer I like.

JOEL

But we can't get married just like that! I didn't even get an overpriced dinner and a show.

JON

Given the present situation I say we do the wedding and honeymoon first and the courtship later.

JOEL

It's just like you to do everything ass backwards.

JON

Whatever. I can wait here all night for your answer.

JOEL

But...just say if it were to happen, which it's not, this marriage...can't be consummated. On top of everything I've got a bad case of ED (*whispering*) erectile dysfunction.

JON

So do I. It'll be our little secret.

JOEL

This is insane. No! I can't! This would be a big mistake.

JON

It would be a mistake if we didn't get married!

JOEL

But why? I may only have a few months.

JON

Even if it's only a few days, I'd rather spend them married to someone I care about...and love. And as my husband I'd add you to my health insurance. You'll get the best care. And who's to say how long you'll have?

JOEL

Well, you were always the responsible, rational one, except that one time.

JON

And you were always the life of the party.

(beat)

What do you say, Joel?

JOEL

Please tell me you've at least got a ring.

JON

(beat)

As a matter of fact, I do.

(JON slowly removes the ring on his left hand and offers it to JOEL.)

JOEL

Then please do it the tried-and-true way, Jon, on your knees. I'm old fashioned that way.

JON

I take it that's a yes.

(JOEL nods affirmatively.)

JOEL

I'm sorry about the pain.

JON

Don't be. It's worth every spasm.

(JON slowly, painfully lowers himself to his knees while holding JOEL's hands.)

BLACKOUT
END