

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

A Play

By

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Affirmative action

Descriptions of character

- Jonathan - A reserved and somewhat shy young man with a preppie appearance.
- Barbara/Bob - A forward and aggressive young woman with androgynous appearance/a young man with the similar but slightly more masculine appearance.
- Pam - An attractive but rather dense, young woman who looks much older than she is because of her clothes, make-up and attitude. A regular "princess." Her looks becomes harder as she ages.
- Rick - A young man once noted for his athletic skills and not for his academic. He is very attractive and also knows it. Time along with drugs and booze take a toll on his appearance.
- Ernest - A young man who is smart but is known as the class nerd with glasses and all. His looks changes to that of a campus radical.
- Marilyn - A rather plain but somewhat pushy young girl who becomes the ultimate "take charge woman of the eighties."
- Louis - A young, nondescript man who basically blends into the scenery.
- Mr. Wiseman - An 50s high school administrator who looks like he's losing the battle.
- Wife - A woman in her late 20s who resembles Barbara.
- Mrs. Thomas - A woman in her early 50s.
- Registrar - A man in his early 50s.
- Classmates - An assortment of three males and three females.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION.

ACT 1

SCENE 1

TIME - 1984. LATE AFTERNOON.

PLACE - A MODERATELY-PRICED MOTEL ROOM.

As the house lights dim, the audience hears sounds a couple making love. As the stage lights come up, the audience sees a motel room lit only by a television with its sound turned off.

PAM

Oh yes....yes!

JONATHAN

I...I...I...

PAM

Yes...Yes...keep going.

JONATHAN

I don't know...I...Oh.....oh...oh.

PAM

Oh....you can say that again.

JONATHAN

Oh...oh! I don't know but I think I'm coming!

PAM

If you don't know, then no one knows. Don't stop. Just keep going.

JONATHAN

I...I....I don't know about this.

PAM

What don't you know? Why are you stopping?

JONATHAN

I....I can't.

PAM

What do you mean, "You can't"?

JONATHAN

There's nothing there.

PAM

Let me get on top of the situation. That always seems to help with other men.

JONATHAN

I don't think it will help.

PAM
Why not? It's worth the try.

JONATHAN
I don't think so.

PAM
Let me see if I can find out what the problem is.
(Looks under the covers.)
Oh...there he is.

JONATHAN
What are you doing? Oh..no. Pam....Pam, please
don't.
(Reaches over and turns the light, next to the
bed.)
Please. I don't think it's going to work.

PAM
(Comes out of the bed covers.)
Why not? Don't you like it?

JONATHAN
It's nice. But...I don't think it's going to work.

PAM
(Sticks her head out of the covers.)
Maybe if I use my hand along with it? Like they do
in the movies.

JONATHAN
I don't think so. Pam, please.
(Pulls her up from the covers.)
Forget it. Really...it's okay.

PAM
No...it's not okay. It's all my fault.

JONATHAN
You shouldn't feel that way.
(Starts looking for his shorts.)
Really.

PAM
But ever since high school, I've been trying to land
you and when I finally get my big chance, I blow it.

JONATHAN
It's not your fault.
(Finds his underwear under the bed.)
The truth of the matter is that ever since high
school, I've had difficult time sustaining intimacy
with women.

PAM
Intimacy?! What does that have to do with keeping
an erection?

JONATHAN

Well...I have a hard time being intimate with women who I don't know or ...love.

PAM

What are you saying, huh? Is there another woman in your life?

(Pause.)

Is there?

JONATHAN

Why are you getting so upset? We haven't seen or spoken with each other in over 10 years. This will probably be the only time we will be together, for Christ-sake. How can I be two-timing you?

PAM

You led me on.

(Pam grabs his underwear away from him.)

JONATHAN

Now come on, Pam. Give them back to be.

PAM

No! You should have been honest with me in the beginning.

JONATHAN

But this is the beginning. I told you that I wasn't seeing anybody and I'm not.

PAM

So who is she?

JONATHAN

Pam...please be reasonable. Give them back to me.

PAM

No...not until you tell me who she is?

JONATHAN

Okay. It's some girl that I met a long time ago.

PAM

(Throws Jonathan's underwear back at him.)

I knew that you were involved with somebody else. I knew it.

JONATHAN

(Puts on his underwear.)

The truth of the matter is that I haven't seen or heard from her since high school.

PAM

That's 20 years! I've heard about people carrying torches before but this is ridiculous. Who is she?

JONATHAN

You probably don't remember her.

PAM

(Suddenly realizes.)
It's Barbara, isn't it?

(Jonathan stops dressing.)

PAM

(continuing)
You're still in love with Barbara, aren't you?

(Jonathan looks down, not knowing what to say.)

PAM

(continuing)
Oh my God, you are. I don't believe it!

(Pam freezes in place, Jonathan picks up his pants and walks toward the audience.)

JONATHAN

Yes...I guess I am. I've tried to forget her. But I can't. Nothing comes close to the feelings that I felt for her. I can still remember the first time I saw her. It was in the fall of 1964. It was the first sock hop of the year

(The lights fade as the dance music swells. The song, **I SAW HER STANDING THERE**, by the Beatles is heard.)

ACT 1

SCENE 2

TIME - SEPTEMBER OF 1964. EARLY EVENING.

PLACE - A HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM

The song, **I SAW HER STANDING THERE**, by the Beatles is heard. The stage dims over Jonathan as he exits the stage and lights up the rest of the stage which is now a high school gymnasium.

Barbara comes walking out. With her page-boy haircut and wearing a hair band, she looks very reserved with her plaid skirt, white blouse, dark sweater, and knee-high socks. She stands and observes the people who are dancing in front of her. After several moments, a couple of girls walk on and join her. They start to chat as they appraise the situation.

Jonathan walks on and looks around. Just at the moment when he notices Barbara, she turns around, sees him, and smiles at him. It takes him by complete surprise and she becomes very self-conscious of herself, by pulling her sweater closer together.

Ernest and a couple of other boys come out and stand with Jonathan and start to engage in a conversation. One of the boys goes over and asks Barbara to dance but she declines. He then asks another girl in the group and she agrees. After they both take their shoes off, they walk out to the dance floor and start to dance.

As Marilyn comes out and joins the girls, another boy walks over and asks Barbara to dance. But again she declines. He asks another girl from the group to dance and the couple go out to the dance floor.

Mr. Wiseman walks on and motions the last couple to come off the dance floor and take off their shoes. They reluctantly agree to do so and continue to dance.

Rick walks on the stage and joins Jonathan and the other boys in their assessment of the dance and the girls. Louis walks on the stage by himself and walks past Barbara. They acknowledge each other and then he walks over to where the boys are standing. He acts very self-conscious and does not join in any of the conversation. The music's volume is lowered.

RICK

(Notices Barbara.)

So who is the girl, huh? I haven't seen her before.
Is she new in school?

JONATHAN

I was going to ask you the same thing.

ERNIE

She is in my political science class. I think her name is Barbara.

JONATHAN

(To himself as he looks over to her.)
Barbara.

RICK

She is kinda cute.

ERNIE

You think so? I don't think she's your type.

RICK

How do you know what my type is anyway?

ERNIE

I don't.

RICK

So..what are you talking about? My type?! Get off.
How do you know anything? You never had a type.

ERNIE

What do you mean by that?

RICK

You always have some reason why you don't like them. They are either too tall or too short or too fat or thin or not cute enough or too smart or dumb. They're always not your type.

ERNIE

Maybe I'm particular.

RICK

Particular, my ass! I don't think you ever made it with a girl, let alone dated one.

ERNIE

That's not true.

RICK

Hell, it isn't. If I didn't know you any better, I would think you were queer.

ERNIE

I'm not queer, am I Jonathan?

JONATHAN

(Not listening to the conversation.)
I think she's cute.

RICK

Who are you talking about?

JONATHAN

Barbara.

ERNIE

What about me?

JONATHAN

(Looks at him.)
I'm sorry, Ernest, but I don't think you're cute at all. In fact, you're kinda queer looking.

RICK

(Starts to laugh.)
See what I said.

ERNIE

That's not funny.
(To Jonathan.)
Jonathan, tell Rick that I have dated girls before. Come on. Don't you remember last year's Junior Prom?

JONATHAN

Oh yeah...that's right. You did have a date.

ERNIE

(To Rick.)
See what I told you.

JONATHAN

But she wasn't a girl. She was your cousin, Edith, from Queens. There's a difference.

RICK

(Starts to laugh.)

I don't believe it. You dated your cousin from Queens?

ERNIE

And what's wrong with Edith? She's a girl, isn't she?

RICK

I don't know, is she? I haven't seen her.

ERNIE

Jonathan...tell him she's a girl.

JONATHAN

The only thing that I can remember is that she worn a dress.

ERNIE

(To Rick.)

See. What did I tell you?

RICK

Yeah...just because she wears a dress, doesn't make her a girl.

ERNIE

What?!

JONATHAN

That's right. She is from Queens...anything is possible when you come from Queens.

(To Rick.)

I don't think she's your type. I think she's my type.

RICK

Who?

JONATHAN

Barbara.

RICK

Get off of it.

JONATHAN

You don't even know anything about her.

ERNIE

I know something about her.

RICK

What's that?

ERNIE

That she's very smart. There hasn't been an assignment or quiz that she hasn't aced so far. If she's not careful, she's going to throw the whole class average off.

RICK

I don't like it when someone does that...especially a girl.

ERNIE

That must be really a problem with you because most girls are smarter than you.

RICK

(Threatens Ernie with his fist.)
How would you like a knuckle sandwich?

ERNIE

Sorry but I've just eaten dinner.

RICK

(About to hit Ernie.)
Yeah...like jello...there's always room for more.

JONATHAN

(Breaks up the pending fight.)
Hey...hey. Knock it off you two. If Wiseman sees you, he'll throw both of you out of school.

(Barbara glances over at Jonathan.)

RICK

(Catches Barbara's contemplation.)
I think she wants to dance with me.

JONATHAN

How do you know that?

RICK

By the way she keeps looking over here at me.

ERNIE

Maybe she isn't looking at you?

RICK

Who else would she look at? You, zit face? I'm going to go over there and find out what she wants...and then give it to her.

JONATHAN

That's not fair. I saw her standing there first.

RICK

(To Jonathan.)
Yeah...well listen here, Mr. Class President. You had your chance and you blew it. She's all mine.

ERNIE

Hey wait a minute. She's in my class.

RICK

(To Ernie.)

Get real! What would she want with you anyway, huh? And besides, you wouldn't know what to do if you were given the opportunity? I'll see you later, guys.

(Rick starts to cruise over to where the girls are standing. The lights dim on the boys and raise up on Barbara, Marilyn and the girls.)

MARILYN

What do you mean you don't have an opinion on the Beatles? What kind of girl are you any way?

BARBARA

I don't. I mean I like their music but there are more important things.

MARILYN

Like what?

BARBARA

Like going to college and doing something with your life.

MARILYN

My mother thinks that it's very important that women go to college but their responsibility is at home....and I agree with her.

BARBARA

Oh come on, Marilyn. You don't believe that, do you?

MARILYN

Why yes...I...I think it's okay for a woman to have a career...like being a secretary or nurse before you get married.

BARBARA

But what if a woman doesn't get married?

MARILYN

(Laughs in disbelief.)

Barbara, I don't think we have a say in the matter. That's our role in life. That's our duty and responsibility.

BARBARA

I disagree with you. If God had meant for us to be in the kitchen, he would have made us into a Westinghouse appliance..like a garbage disposal. There's too much happening out there to just sit and do nothing with your life.

(more)

BARBARA (cont'd)

President Kennedy said that it's our responsibility to become involved and do something.

MARILYN

But he's dead. And the Beatles are alive. Really. I don't know why you're getting so excited about being socially responsible when we have the Beatles.

(Sees Rick coming over to them.)

Oh gees....here he comes.

BARBARA

(Looks around.)

Who are you talking about?

MARILYN

Rick. Isn't he cute?

BARBARA

Yeah...if you like baboons.

MARILYN

You can't be serious, can you? He's the captain of the football team. He's the best.

BARBARA

I've seen him play. And if he's the best, we're in big trouble.

MARILYN

Why Barbara! You don't mean that, do you? You're not being very supportive of our team.

BARBARA

Come on. You've seen the way he fumbles the ball. My 65 year old grandmother with arthritis can hold on to things better than he can.

MARILYN

Well..he still looks cute in that uniform. Did you see his shoulder muscles?

BARBARA

Marilyn...I hate to break this to you but it's only padding. And besides his inability to throw or catch the ball, I don't think he's very smart. Either his helmet is too tight and blood can't get to his brain or his head has been banged up beyond recovery. The guy's an idiot.

MARILYN

Well, if you think you can do any better, why don't you go out and play?

BARBARA

I wish I could.

MARILYN

That will be the day.

(Sees Rick walking toward them.)

Oh dear. He's coming toward us.

BARBARA

Maybe if we pretend to be dead, he'll leave us alone.

MARILYN

Why would we want to do something like that?

BARBARA

Self-protection.

(Pause.)

Well it works with most animals.

MARILYN

Oh dear. What if he asks me to dance? What will I do?

BARBARA

One...don't give him anything to hold onto or he'll drop it and two....keep the conversation simple. Like...sentences with three words or less.

MARILYN

(Waves at Rick as he approaches.)

Hi Rick. How are you doing?

RICK

Better since your friend came along.

(To Barbara.)

My name is Rick.

BARBARA

Hi.

MARILYN

Barbara has just moved here from Connecticut.

RICK

Connecticut?!

BARBARA

It's northeast of New York City.

RICK

Oh yeah...I know where Connecticut is.

BARBARA

(Turns to Marilyn.)

Marilyn...you didn't tell me that he was a wiz in geography.

MARILYN

I..I..

RICK
I'm also the captain of the football team this year.

BARBARA
I've heard.

RICK
Have you seen me play?

BARBARA
Yes...I have.

RICK
And?

BARBARA
Well...what can I say? From a distance, you look like a football player.

RICK
Do you want to dance with me?

BARBARA
Me? No. I don't think so...but thanks anyway.

RICK
Why not?

BARBARA
Because I just don't feel like dancing right now. It's nothing personal.

MARILYN
I don't believe it.

RICK
I don't either.

BARBARA
What about Marilyn?

RICK
What about her?

MARILYN
Yes...what about me?

BARBARA
I'm sure she would like to dance with you. Wouldn't you, Marilyn?

MARILYN
Well...I..

BARBARA
See. What did I tell you?