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ask the doctor

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by Michael Cheikin

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Production Information

Synopsis: ASK THE DOCTOR is a three character piece about the relationship between patients and their doctors.

Actors: Three:  
two women, ages 35 and any age;  
one man, any age

Set: One set, an empty stage with a bridge table, two cheap metal chairs.

Playing Time: Between 8 and 16 minutes

Props: A sign saying "Ask the Doctor" in large letters.  
Another, larger sign, saying "HEALTH FAIR".  
Stethoscope.  
Business card holder and business cards.  
Clip board, pen.  
A box of latex gloves.

Time

Present. Fall day.

Place

The action takes place in the lobby of a nursing home or fitness club, during a Health Fair.

Dramatis Personae (in order of appearance)

Doctor, female, age 35, white, in a white coat.

Everymale, played by a single male actor, a variety of ages, personalities, accents, etc.

Everyfemale, played by a single female actor, a variety of ages, personalities, accents, etc.

(LIGHTS COME UP ON THE DOCTOR, IN A WHITE COAT, STETHOSCOPE AROUND HER NECK, SITTING AT FOLDING CARD TABLE, POSTER STATING "ASK THE DOCTOR" EITHER ON THE TABLE OR OVER IT. THERE IS A BUSINESS CARD HOLDER AND A BOX OF LATEX GLOVES ON THE TABLE.)

(THERE ARE TWO CHEAP METAL CHAIRS, ONE IN WHICH THE DOCTOR SITS, THE OTHER, EMPTY.)

(THE DOCTOR WON'T BE TALKING MUCH, BUT SHOULD FEEL FREE TO RESPOND GESTURALLY.)

(MALE 1 ENTERS FROM STAGE RIGHT, TOOTHPICK IN HIS MOUTH. SITS ON THE EMPTY CHAIR.)

MALE 1:

(LONG PAUSE. INTERMITTENTLY PICKING HIS TEETH, VERY FAMILIAR.) Have a son in Jersey. (LONG PAUSE) Bad knee and a hernia. (LONG PAUSE) Bunch of crooks out there in Jersey. (LONG PAUSE) See ya.

(MALE 1 STANDS, MAY SHAKE THE DOCTOR'S HAND, EXITS STAGE LEFT.)

(FEMALE 1 ENTERS FROM STAGE RIGHT. SITS ON THE EMPTY CHAIR.)

FEMALE 1:

Let's see, what can I ask you? I'm 71, I've been coming to this place for over a year. I love it here. What else can I ask? My husband, he won't come here. He goes to the Y down the street. That Y, it's a pick-up place. He likes the young girls. All perky. Well, gotta go. Thanks.

(FEMALE 1 SHAKES THE DOCTOR'S HAND, EXITS STAGE LEFT.)

(MALE 2 ENTERS FROM STAGE RIGHT. REMAINS STANDING.)

MALE 2:

Do you know where I could find a good barber?

(MALE 2 EXITS STAGE LEFT.)

(FEMALE 2 ENTERS FROM STAGE RIGHT. SITS ON THE EMPTY CHAIR.)

FEMALE 2:

Were you here the last time? (SHE NOTICES HER FRIEND AT ANOTHER BOOTH, RAISES THE VOLUME OF HER VOICE.) Bea! Beee! Hi! I didn't know you were coming, we could have come together. What am I doing? I'm Asking The Doctor. Yeah. Yeah? Yeah? Really? (TO THE DOCTOR) They have free samples over at that table.

(FEMALE 2 EXITS STAGE LEFT.)

(MALE 3 ENTERS FROM STAGE RIGHT. SITS DOWN, TAKES OFF ONE SHOE, PUTS IT ON THE TABLE, ITCHES WITH GREAT RELIEF.)

MALE 3:

I bet you never heard what I got. I got immuno-morpho-genic familial (degenerative) pedis vulgaris. Now let me ask you something, this is "Ask the Doctor", isn't it. What the hell does that mean? All I know is that my feet itch. In fact, my whole body itches. So this is what I'm asking-- please, for the love of God, come up with names we can understand. Like, Ichis Footis. Is that so much to ask? Well, thanks. (OFFERS HIS HAND, DOCTOR HESITATES). Aren't you going to shake my hand?

(THE DOCTOR GRIMACES, ? PUTS ON GLOVE, OFFERS HIS HAND, ? MALE 3 ALSO PUTS ON GLOVE, SHAKES HIS HAND. MALE 3 STANDS AND EXITS STAGE LEFT, SCRATCHING HIS BEHIND.)

(FEMALE 3 ENTERS FROM STAGE RIGHT. SITS ON THE EMPTY CHAIR.)

FEMALE 3:

Is this covered by The Medicare? Over forty years I've paid, and now, I'm getting what's coming to me. If a doctor says I need treatment, and The

Medicare don't pay, I'm not goin'. I don't care if I die. This is free, right? (THE DOCTOR NODS) The Medicare ain't paying you to do this? (THE DOCTOR SHAKES HER HEAD) Then I ain't interested. (STANDS, AS SHE EXITS:)  
I only want what The Medicare pays for.

(FEMALE 3 EXITS STAGE LEFT.)

(MALE 4 ENTERS FROM STAGE RIGHT. HE IS WEARING THICK GLASSES) SITS ON THE EMPTY CHAIR, HIS FACE IN THE DOCTOR'S FACE.)

MALE 4:

Are you a part of this operation? Good to see a black man in this place. What does this sign say? I can't read this sign. The letters are too small. Don't you guys know how to make signs?

(FEMALE 4 ENTERS)

FEMALE 4:

Harry!

MALE 4:

(GROANS) Uhhh.

FEMALE 4:

How many times have I told you not to wander.

(HE GOES TOWARD THE EXIT.)

FEMALE 4:

Harry! Where are you going?

MALE 4:

Away from you!

(MALE 4 EXITS.)

FEMALE 4:

(SEES THE DOCTOR) Oh, it's a doctor.

(LONG PAUSE AS SHE PONDERES THE DOCTOR, ALSO IN THE DOCTOR'S FACE. SHE MAY FEEL

THE DOCTOR'S FOREHEAD. THEN IN AN ACCUSING TONE:)

FEMALE 4:

Did you skip lunch?

(THE DOCTOR NODS.)

(FEMALE 4 REACHES INTO HER BAG, TAKES OUT A COOKIE)

FEMALE 4:

Here. Here's a cookie. Keep up the good work. Harry?!

(FEMALE 4 EXITS.)

(THE DOCTOR STARES AT THE COOKIE, HESITATES, LOOKS AROUND, BEGINS TO EAT THE COOKIE.)

(MALE 5 ENTERS FROM STAGE RIGHT, A MAN IN HIS FIFTIES, TRYING TO BE TWENTY. COULD BE BALD WITH ALL HIS HAIR COMBED OVER THE PATE, OR A GOOD LOOKING GUY IN BLACK SPANDEX.)

MALE 5:

I saw that. Is that all you're having for lunch. That's the problem with you doctors. You learn nothing about nutrition. Look at me. See this.

(LIFTS HIS SHIRT SHOWS THE DOCTOR HIS ABDOMEN.) Go ahead, punch me. (THE DOCTOR GESTURES NO). Go ahead. Go ahead. Know why I'm so strong? Liquid vitamins. Got so much energy, I bet my pecker stands straighter than yours! (LAUGHS, PUNCHES THE DOCTOR IN THE ARM.)

DOCTOR:

(THE FIRST AND ONLY THING THE DOCTOR SAYS:) Ow!

MALE 5 (CONTINUING):

Got my self a 26 year old! (LAUGHS). I got a special formula. (TAKES OUT HIS WALLET AND TAKES A CARD, PUTS IT ON THE DOCTOR'S TABLE AND TAKES ONE OF THE DOCTOR'S CARDS.) Here. Maybe you want to sell it in your office. Give me a call. I'll take good care 'a ya'.

(MALE 5 STANDS AND OFFERS HIS HAND. THE DOCTOR REACHES TO SHAKE, HE PULLS HIS HAND AWAY AND LAUGHS, EXITS STAGE LEFT.)

(FEMALE 5 ENTERS FROM STAGE RIGHT.)

(SHE AND THE DOCTOR STARE AT EACH OTHER FOR A WHILE. THEN SHE BREAKS DOWN IN TEARS. SHE CRIES FOR A WHILE, THEN GETS UP AND RUNS OFF STAGE LEFT, AS MALE 6 ENTERS FROM STAGE LEFT BUMPING INTO HER.)

MALE 6:

(APPALLED) What the Hell did you say to her?! You doctors, you're all the same. You know what your problem is, (you don't listen,) you're all a bunch of know-nothing, insensitive creeps. Go to hell (, you cold-hearted bitch).

(MALE 6 EXITS STAGE LEFT)

(FEMALE 6 ENTERS FROM STAGE RIGHT)

FEMALE 6:

I couldn't help but notice that you're not wearing a ring. I have a grandson, he's a lawyer. If you two got married, no one could touch you. A doctor and a lawyer! You'd be invincible! If you want, I'll give him your number. You got a card? Oh, I hope you're not gay. I mean, it's OK if you're gay, I just don't want to give him your number if you are. I'm sure you understand. You lesbians are so understanding. I bet you are a good doctor. Gay people make more sensitive doctors. (Ellen should be a doctor.) Well, have a good life. (STANDS, BEGINS TO EXIT AS SHE SAYS:) And be careful with that AIDS thing. I don't have to tell you.

(FEMALE 6 EXITS STAGE LEFT)

(MALE 7 WADDLES ON FROM STAGE RIGHT. SITS ON THE EMPTY CHAIR.)

MALE 7:

I got this problem. (WHISPERS) Constipation. Tried everything. Metamucil, Citrucel, FiberCon, Milk of God-Damned Magnesia. Been to 10 doctors. No one's done a thing for me. They do tests, tests, tests, I get bills, bills, bills. But am I any better. No. I am-- (ADJUSTS HIMSELF IN HIS CHAIR SEVERAL TIMES, MAKES A SERIES OF NOISES) Ohhhh... Uhmrh... (ETC...SOUNDS OF GIVING BIRTH) AIAIAIAIAIAIARRRR. (SITS UP STRAIGHT, RELIEVED) Ahhhhhhhhhhh. You're the best help I've had in years. Thanks. Thanks a lot.

(MALE 7 STANDS AND SHAKES THE DOCTOR'S HAND, EXITS STAGE LEFT.)

(FEMALE 7 ENTERS FROM STAGE RIGHT.)

FEMALE 7:

I got high blood shuga', high presha', low thyroid, emphysema, coronary artery disease, they say they might cut out half my stomach for a bleeding ulsa', I can't hold my water, I got tinnitus, several mini-strokes, but I still can dance, my bile is backed up, I got unstable angina, recurrent thrombosis, my kidneys are rotten, just rotten, and I'm a bit depressed. How is this place gonna help the likes of me? They don't even have a fucking cigarette machine.

(FEMALE 7 STANDS EXITS STAGE LEFT.)

(MALE 8 ENTERS FROM STAGE RIGHT AND SITS.)

MALE 8:

(MAY HAVE RUSSIAN OR CHINESE ACCENT) Fitness. Prevention. Generic prescriptions. Physician Assistants. The American Dream Doctor. Know what is? It is crock. (SPITS) A conspiracy perpetuated on the proletariat to maximize profits and alienate the masses. (STANDING) Welll, I'm not taking it any more. And you know what I'm doing? I'm not Asking Doctor. I'm (RIPS SIGN DOWN) TELLing Doctor. NOW YOU BETTER START TO LISTENING!

(WITH MALE 8 SNARLING AT THE DOCTOR, IN PROFILE, IN A SORT OF TABLEAU, THE DOCTOR LOOKS AT THE AUDIENCE & SHRUGS.)

(SLOW FADE OUT)

(THE END)