

THE TWO BOBS

By Barry Kaplan

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS:

Inspiration: I used to live in New Haven and would often take Metro North into New York City to see a play. The ride back was long and dreary. On one of these trips I was happily reading a book when two men sat behind me and started talking. I kept trying to read but their conversation was really annoying and I finally gave up, took out a yellow legal pad from my knapsack and started to transcribe everything the men were saying. I couldn't always make out complete so I just wrote what I could hear. When I got home, I transcribed what I'd heard into my computer and spent the next few hours filling in what the two men might have said between the random words and sentences I'd been able to jot down. So much for inspiration!

Stylistically, the play is probably influenced by the plays of Harold Pinter: lots of pauses, non sequiturs, suggestive meanings, meaningless suggestions and a bit of fear of the unknown. The play was performed last summer at the Berkshire Theatre Company in Great Barrington, MA. The cast had a lot of fun trying to make sense of their characters and the audience response suggested they thought it was pretty funny. (Spacing is playwright's own.)

The Two Bobs

Cast

JACK 30, light voice

BILL 40, older, gruffer.

Set

A commuter train.

LOUD SPEAKER SYSTEM CRACKLES WITH STATIC. STATIC MAKES NONSENSE OF THE ANNOUNCER'S WORDS.

ANNOUNCER: ...leaving at 5:15. Last call....

TRAIN STARTS UP AND MOVES SLOWLY.

JACK

God this thing is creeping along.

BILL

That's what it does, Jack. It creeps.

JACK

Makes you glad to be getting out, though.

BILL

They ought to just blow it all up, tear it all down.

JACK

I thought it was supposed to be an express.

BILL

It is an express.

JACK

Well I'm in no rush. You? Bill? You in a rush?

BILL

I get there when I get there.

JACK

I don't even want to think about it.

SOUND OF THE TRAIN GOING A BIT FASTER

JACK

Look at that.

BILL

How do people live like that?

JACK

They're lucky they're alive.

A SOB IS STIFLED.

BILL

Hey hey, come on.

JACK

I'm just...I'm in it.

BILL

How do you mean?

JACK

Ursula said they're not hiring.

BILL

What'd she say?

JACK

I mean, not hiring me.

BILL

Get off it.

JACK

I'm quoting.

BILL

Come on.

JACK

Yeah.

BILL

Jack. You?

JACK

She said it wouldn't look good.

BILL

What's that supposed to mean?

JACK

Taking on someone from the outside.

BILL

Yeah, right.

JACK

She has the last word, I guess.

BILL

What a load of bull.

JACK

I'm supposed to do dinner with Tom tomorrow but now I don't know.

BILL

Tom is the guy.

JACK

I think I should call it off.

BILL

Tom is the go to guy.

JACK

I mean, it would be a little awkward.

BILL

What're you talking about?

JACK

It would be beside the point.

BILL

What a load of bull.

JACK
Ursula said it would send the wrong message.

BILL
To who?

JACK
To hire me.

BILL
Oh quit it.

JACK
I don't think Tom even knows.

BILL
This is such a load of bull.

JACK
She's not going to like this at home.

BILL
Ursula doesn't have the last word.

JACK
I asked her about Tom.

BILL
You asked her?

JACK
I mean, you know...the dinner.

BILL
Ursula doesn't have the balls.

JACK
She said she'd try to get to him.

BILL
Oh come off it.

JACK
You think she'd actually call him?

BILL
Tom likes Japanese, by the way.

JACK
I didn't know. I don't know.

BILL
I'd go anyway.

JACK
But Ursula said.

BILL
Don't give up without a fight.

JACK
Someone always comes out bloody from these things and I don't want it to be me.

BILL
Tom could talk to her. Tom could override her.

JACK
Things are shaky enough as it is.

BILL
You're still breathing right?

JACK
So?

BILL
So you've still got a chance.

SOUND OF TRAIN MOVING FASTER

JACK
Look at that.

BILL
Yeah.

JACK
Could anything grow out there?

That reminds me. BILL

The stench... JACK

You know Bob and Bob, right? BILL

Bob...? JACK

Bob. And his partner. The other one. Bob. BILL

Bob...? JACK

The other Bob. BILL

Bob...and...Bob. Oh yeah. Right. The Bobs. JACK

The Bobs. BILL

The Two Bobs. BILL & JACK

THEY LAUGH.

Yeah. So...? JACK

Huh? BILL

The Bobs...are...? JACK

Were. BILL

JACK

What?

BILL

Melanoma.

JACK

Which?

BILL

Both.

JACK

Bob and...?

BILL

Bob. Both Bobs.

JACK

But they were only...what...?

BILL

In their early 40s.

JACK

That is definitely not right.

BILL

No it is not.

SOUND OF THE TRAIN.

JACK

Didn't we just pass your stop?

BILL

Uh uh.

JACK

God. The two Bobs.

BILL

They were funny.

JACK

I didn't really know them that well.

BILL

Bob was extremely tall. Remember?

JACK

Right, right.

BILL

The other Bob used to say he was aggressively tall.

JACK

I don't know that I actually knew that Bob. Maybe I knew the other one.

BILL

They were nutty.

JACK

Oh yeah?

BILL

One Saturday they stole a set of golf clubs out of my Volvo.

JACK

That was them?

BILL

43 and 45.

JACK

That is crazy.

BILL

You know what the priest said?

JACK

I'm 43.

BILL

"There's nothing to learn from this."

JACK

Catholic?

BILL

It's unbelievable.

JACK

Look at all that. What, they just pile it all up at the tracks and that's that?

BILL

The whole concept of taking civilization forward is a thing of the past.

JACK BURSTS INTO TEARS.

BILL

Hey hey hey hey hey.

JACK

Tom can't override her.

BILL

This is such a load of bull.

JACK

I'm scared of her.

BILL

Hey are you putting me on?

JACK

Where are we...?

BILL

You're putting me on. I knew it.

JACK STOPS CRYING.

JACK

She said it wouldn't send the right message at this time.

BILL

Oh come off it.

JACK

She gave me the whole we-love-you-you're-great thing.

BILL

That's Ursula. What a load of bull.

JACK

The whole let's-stay-in-touch thing.

BILL

That is such a load of bull.

JACK

She's *formidable*.

BILL

Formidable.

JACK

Yeah.

BILL

See that old movie theater? I used to go there.

JACK

The whole there's-no-one-like-you-but-at-this-particular-time thing.

SOUND OF THE TRAIN.

BILL

Moving to London's going to be painful for Tom.

JACK

And that kid of his is no picnic.

BILL

Which? The boy or the girl?

JACK

He has two?

BILL

You didn't know that?

JACK

I still feel bad about that dinner.

BILL

He was looking straight at you.

JACK

You saw that?

BILL
He wanted to help.

JACK
Maybe it's the golf.

BILL
You still play?

JACK
Yeah but don't ask about my handicap.

BILL
Tom used to play with the two Bobs.

JACK
Golf. Golf and the two Bobs. Oh my God. Did you see that?

BILL
Everybody hates each other. They're all trying to make money. But no one wants to call anyone on it.

JACK
I was in Tom's apartment. Huge closets. Plus a...a...an abattoir.

BILL
You mean an armoire.

JACK
I do? Oh. Oh yeah.

BILL
He's going to get the contract but the chances of him taking over...

JACK
And he was going to be the guy.

BILL
The go to guy.

JACK
We hung out with them for a few days in Madrid on the way back. Spanish food is all molecular science now but Ursula just...

BILL

Again with Ursula?

JACK

She scares me.

BILL

She should.

JACK

She does.

BILL

Well she should.

JACK

Gee, whole towns are disappearing. Like the mud is just sucking them up. I was thinking...

BILL

Mmm?

JACK

Just a thought...

BILL

Spill.

JACK

Could you...?

BILL

Me?

JACK

I thought....maybe....

BILL

Nah. No can do, pal.

JACK

Oh.

BILL

I'm not really in the position...

JACK

Right. Right.

BILL

You know what I mean.

JACK

I should be getting off soon.

BILL

If I was, I would. But...

JACK

I thought you were. I thought...

BILL

Like I said...if...

JACK

If.

BILL

Yes. The big if.

JACK

The big F.

BILL

Ah. Ha.

JACK

This is me.

SOUND OF THE TRAIN SLOWING DOWN

JACK

Well I guess that's that.

BILL

That it is. Yes.

JACK

We're slowing down...

BILL

That is that.

JACK

It is.

BILL

Not that anything is ever really final.

JACK

Oh. Of course not. Absolutely. Except...

BILL

Don't even say it.

BILL & JACK

The two Bobs.

JACK

Yeah.

BILL

Yeah.

STATIC FROM THE LOUD SPEAKER. THE TRAIN SLOWS DOWN.

JACK

This is me. Oh god. Oh god. I can't!

THE TRAIN COMES TO A SCREECHING STATIC FILLED STOP.

End

AUTHOR'S BIO: *Barry Jay Kaplan has won the Whitfield Cooke Best Play Award through New Dramatists, also a grant from New York State Council on the Arts and the Joe Calloway Award from New Dramatists. He has been cited by the Writers Guild of America on the list of 101 best written television series for his work on Hill Street Blues. Wits End, an evening of performance pieces, was done at Limbo Lounge. Two Good Boys was produced at the McCarter Theater and off-Broadway at the Neighborhood Playhouse Theatre. The Limits of Admiration was workshopped at the White Heron Theatre on Nantucket Island. Landscape of Desire was selected as the American entry in the 25th Annual Playwriting Conference of Australia and published by Smith and Krause. His musical biography of Rock Hudson, Rock and Roy (music by Stephen Weinstock), was developed at New*

Dramatists with grants from the Frederick Loewe Foundation and the Cameron Mackintosh Foundation and had workshop productions at New Dramatists in New York and at the Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, both directed by Simon Callow. His musical Like Love (music by Lewis Flinn) won a DramaLeague New Directors/New Works Project Prize and premiered at the New York Musical Theatre Festival.