

Not Something Else

By

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Cast of Characters

Hector: Unemployed Man; 30s-40s

Elsa: His Therapist; 30s-40s

Scene

On the ledge outside the window on the 40th floor of an office building...

Time

Present Day

NOT SOMETHING ELSE

(At rise, HECTOR is standing on the ledge. ELSA climbs out the window and stands nervously beside him.)

Hector?

ELSA

Hmmm?

HECTOR

You really planning on jumping?

ELSA

Uh-huh.

HECTOR

Well, there's one thing I really need from you before you go.

ELSA

What's that?

HECTOR

I need to make arrangements for- I need you to just think about little Joey for a minute.

ELSA

What's he got to do with any of this?

HECTOR

Joey's got everything to do with this. You promised your father that you were going to take care of him, didn't you?

ELSA

Yes.

HECTOR

(He slowly steps back from the edge of the ledge and sits down.)

I think we need to talk about this. You've already paid for this last session. I think before you go you should at least get your money's worth, don't you?

ELSA

Whatever.

HECTOR

(She climbs back through the window and into her office. As soon as HECTOR is alone, there is a sudden change of demeanor. He is now completely in control of his faculties as he speaks directly to the audience.)

HECTOR

Oh boy, here we go again. Time to learn how to get in touch with my inner child and engage him in a meaningful dialogue with the old man. Hell, with any luck you'll get to hear us discuss the time I was six and walked in on him and mom. You see, that's where I must have developed the Oedipal Complex that explains-

(ELSA reemerges, now fully in character with her glasses on and her notepad out and carrying several pillows. As she is coming out, HECTOR changes character again, frowning. She tries to offer him the pillows, but he refuses. She sits down beside him.)

ELSA

Hector? Hector?

(no response)

Are you there? Who am I speaking to?

HECTOR

That little bastard!

ELSA

Mr. Thompson?

HECTOR

Yeah, what?

ELSA

I think you know what.

HECTOR

He swore to me.

ELSA

Yes, he swore. And he's done the best he can. Have you ever stopped to think what maybe you've done to get him out here on this ledge?

HECTOR

I tried to make him strong.

ELSA

Yes. And he has been. Up to a certain point. But he needed more than strength. He needed love, and without that, strength has only gotten him so far. Right now, its gotten him out here. Him and Joey. And now you've got to do your part to get him back inside!

HECTOR

I can't.

ELSA

Why can't you?

HECTOR

Because I'm dead!

ELSA

Not to Hector, you're not.

HECTOR

Bullshit!

ELSA

You are still a part of him. In more ways than you know. If you could speak to him right now, what would you say to him?

HECTOR

What I always told him. Suck it up and be a man! Damn bleedin' heart professors filled your head with the idea that this world somehow owes you something. And now you've got these damn shrinks cheering you on, reminding you how to whine about having to fulfill your grown up responsibilities.

(mimicing young Hector)

"Joey doesn't have to do it, Joey doesn't have to do it"

Joey's a large child! What's your excuse, you dumb son of a-

(He stands up and shakes his fist, only to look down and see how close he is, at which point he steps back in fear, and transforms into the retarded brother.)

HECTOR

N- n- no! No! Help me please. Get me down from here, Hector. Hector please!

(ELSA stands as well, and puts her arms around him trying to calm him, as he continues babbling.)

ELSA

Its ok, Joey. You're fine. Hector's here, he's going to take care of you.

(looking away to speak to the air)

Hector, look at what you've done to your brother. Hector? Your brother needs you. You promised your father. Hector, talk to your brother. Hector!!!!

(HECTOR turns back into himself, and pulls away)

HECTOR

It's ok, Joey. I've got you.

(Slowly they both go back to their spots. She offers him the pillows again, and this time he cooperates with her as they set up a makeshift "couch" for him to lie down on on the ledge. She sits next to him and resumes taking notes.)

ELSA

Now what's the matter?

HECTOR

Joey, Joey... how could I do this to Joey?

ELSA

Ok, you made a mistake. You frightened him. But now is your chance to avoid a much bigger mistake. Show him how much you love him and save his life. Come back inside my office.

HECTOR

No, no. It's too late for that now. I'll be doing him a favor as much as myself.

(He starts to get up)

ELSA

No, wait!! Ok, maybe there's nothing inside either of you that can get you to re-think this. But what about some of your other friends? Surely one of them has got something to say about it. Certainly one of them's got a reason to give you for why you don't want to do this?

HECTOR

Oh yeah, like who?

ELSA

How about Captain Clucker?

HECTOR

Who?

ELSA

You know... Captain Clucker...?

(suddenly assuming the pirate persona)

Ahoy, Matey!

HECTOR

(responding to the cue and stepping into character himself)

Well shiver me timbers. Who be this saucy wench come aboard The Explorer?

ELSA

Pirate Elsie, here to share the mother load me and the boys plundered from that scurvy knave, Pirate Bob, the terror of the seas! Now why don't ye come below decks with the boys and we'll divide up the plunder?

(She indicates the window into her office trying to get him to follow her in.)

HECTOR

Avast! Captain Clucker never signed on no Pirate Elsie to his crew. Boys, this scurvy bilge rat is come to steal the booty! Away with this intruder. Now she will walk the plank!

(He grabs her and starts trying to throw her off.)

ELSA

Hector, no!

HECTOR

Avast! Who be this Hector ye be callin' fer?

ELSA

Hector, its me, I know you're in there. I mean-

(back into character)

Unhand me, sir! When Baron Hector sees what ye've done to his girl-

HECTOR

Arrr! He wishes to challenge Captain Clucker to a duel, eh?

ELSA

Aye, sir. And after he runs ye up to the hilt with his sword, he'll keel haul ya' by God! But ye be wise not to turn him down unless ye want yer whole crew to know yer yellow!

(He lets go of her and she quickly runs to safety inside the window while he call after her.)

HECTOR

Go fetch up yer man. And hoist the colors, boys! Captain Clucker looks forward to making short work of this rapscallion, the Baron Hector!

(Once she is out of sight, he once again turns back into himself and addresses the audience.)

HECTOR

Well, that was fun. Well, I know what you're thinking. She's running for her life now. Gonna go down forty flights to tell the experts downstairs that its their turn to take over now.

(pause)

Are you kidding? Admit defeat? Say goodbye to her interview with Barbara Walters and her national book tour? Oh she'll walk the plank, alright. But not yet. Not til we reach our little "moment of clarity" For now, we just let the master do her work.

(Sits back down on the "couch")

I guess I could let her get Captain Clucker himself back on her couch to psychoanalyze. Nah. Been there, done that.

(mimicing Elsa)

"Now Captain, if Pirate Bob were here right now, what would you say to him"

(pause for response)

"Alright. Why don't we roleplay? I'll be Pirate Bob, right after he plundered your treasure, sunk your ships, and marooned you on a deserted island. Now repeat after me...

'Pirate Bob, I'm upset with you because...'"

(pause for response)

"Alright. And how did that make you feel?"

(pause for response)

"And you believe that that's why you have such a hard time getting past the anger and mending our relationship?"

(pause for response)

"I see. You're certain its not something else?"



(She's coming, so he returns to the lying position on the "couch" as she emerges in a full pirate costume, and holding a plastic cutlass)

ELSA

Alright, where be that dastardly scalywag that manhandled me woman? Aha! There-

(He looks at her as if he has no idea what she's doing because he's transformed back into Hector, who has no memory of what just happened. Embarrassed, she puts down the sword, takes off the costume pieces and sits back down)

ELSA

Hector? Is that you?

HECTOR

Yes. What was all that about?

ELSA

Nothing. For a minute I thought you were someone else. Captain Clucker couldn't get you back inside either. Not for all of Pirate Bob's treasure.

HECTOR

Well, the captain needs to deal with his own issues, and I need to deal with mine.

ELSA

Yes, Hector. Just like I've always told you I see you've been listening. We're really starting to make some progress here!

HECTOR

Yeah, right.

ELSA

I'm serious Hector. You're getting in touch with your feelings, so that you can develop a meaningful relationship with all of your friends, each of whom can tell us something about what brought you out here today. Why don't we ask another one of them? How about Julius?

HECTOR

(standing)

Julius? No, he would never understand any of this!

ELSA

(sees how close to the edge he is)

Hector, be careful! I mean-

(getting into character)

Beware!

HECTOR

What?

ELSA

I said... beware. "Beware the Ides of March"

(At this cue, he immediately transforms  
as planned)

HECTOR

"What can be avoided, whose end is purposed by the mighty  
gods? Yet Caesar shall go forth, for these predictions are  
to the world in general as to Caesar!"

ELSA

That's what you said to Calphurnia back in 44 BC. And look  
where it got you. I think we need to talk about this, don't  
you?

HECTOR

(acts like he's being stabbed)

"Et tu, Brute? Then fall, Caesar!"

(He falls back on the pillows,  
"dead". She starts slapping him in the  
face to revive him)

ELSA

Julius! Julius! Stop that! You know the healing process  
can never begin until we address this one issue that's at  
the root of the inferiority complex-

HECTOR

(rising)

Inferiority?? I am the great Caesar! I conquered the  
Gauls! I brought down the mighty Pompey! I scored with the  
Queen of the Nile!

ELSA

Julius, you're never going to mend your relationship with  
Brutus if you don't talk about it. Now tell me. Just what  
did your friend do to make you so upset with him?

HECTOR

You mean other than luring me to the capitol with promises to crown me and then stabbing me to death?

ELSA

Well, alright. We can start there if you like. How did that make you feel?

HECTOR

Well, I think it would be fair to say that that's what he's done to make me upset with him.

ELSA

Alright. And you're certain its not something else? Something from your childhood that you may have been carrying around for years?

HECTOR

No, that's pretty much it.

ELSA

Well, you know you're never going to find inner peace until you say this to his face, which he's more than willing to let to you do. You know that he's the only one of the conspirators that ever had any reservations, or expressed any remorse. He wants to apologize to you and make up. He's waiting for you inside the capitol to tell you. Why don't you go talk to him?

(Again, she indicates the window, trying to lead him inside.)

HECTOR

How stupid does he- do you think I am?

ELSA

Julius, you remember what you told Calphurnia? About how you weren't going to let your enemies make you live in fear? "Cowards die many times before their deaths. The valiant never taste of death but once"

HECTOR

Yes. "Once" is the operative word. Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me-

ELSA

Ok, lets just stop. This obviously isn't going to work. Its time for you to stop thinking about yourself and start thinking about Hector. Your friend-

HECTOR

(as himself)

Stop it! Just get off him will you?

ELSA

Hector?

HECTOR

Who does it look like? Can we just stop with this already? I'm not coming back in your office, and nothing you say is going to change that. Not you, not Dad, not Captain Clucker, not anybody. I think maybe you're the one who needs the reality check here. Isn't it obvious why none of them can give me the reason you're looking for to come inside?

ELSA

Why don't you tell me, Hector?

HECTOR

They've helped me to get in touch with my feelings, but they've never controlled my actions. If Joey were the strong one maybe he could help, but Julius and the Captain can't control me for the same reason Dad can't.

ELSA

And why is that?

HECTOR

Because they're dead?

ELSA

Yes!! So what does that tell you?

HECTOR

That the dead can't control my actions?

ELSA

Yes, but its more than that. Nobody can control your actions. Nobody but yourself.

(pause)

Now these friends of yours. They are a part of you. They always will be. Just as your father will always be a part of you. He'll always be with you, he just won't be there to fix that tire on your bicycle, cheer you on at your baseball games, and all those other things he was never there for you for. And that leads us to the big picture, to what your subconscious has been trying to tell you all along.

HECTOR

And that is?

ELSA

That you don't need him! You don't need them. Yes, they're all a valuable part of you, of your subconscious, but at the end of the day that's all. And once you realize that only you can do for yourself what you've always wanted other people to do for you, then you can take life by the horns and show your friends, show yourself, show those bastards down at the plant that you still matter. That your life has an intrinsic value, something that is bigger than any one job. Because you're a human being, damn it, and your life is worth something! Say it!

HECTOR

Say what?

ELSA

"I'm a human being, damn it, and my life is worth something"

HECTOR

I'm a human being, damn it, and my life is worth something.

ELSA

That didn't sound like you meant it.

HECTOR

I'm a human being damn it, and my life is worth something!

ELSA

Louder! Stand up and shout it out to the whole city!

HECTOR

(standing and shaking his fist)

I'm a human being, damn it, and my life is worth something!!!

ELSA

(clapping)

There you go! I'm so proud of you! Feel better now?

(He kneels down beside her, with a sinister smirk on his face)

HECTOR

No, not really.

(There is a long silence. She is in shock, and he is staring at her with a look saying "gotcha" and she knows it.)

HECTOR

You know, maybe its not me or them that I need. Maybe one of your little creations. Like say... oh I don't know, maybe Pirate Elsie?

ELSA

Pirate Elsie? You weren't aboard the Explorer when she came on board.

(looking down at the pirate costume and cutlass)

When I came out, you had no recollection-

(He punctuates the growing "gotcha" look with a finger point and raise of his eyebrows, and she knows she's been had.)

HECTOR

You know, I've gotta hand it to you. The Nazis had the Gestapo, the Khmer Rouge had the killing fields, Orwell told us that the tyrants of today would have the Thought Police. Instead, they've got you.

(As he speaks he crosses to the window, closes it, and stands in her way, blocking her escape.)

ELSA

Hector, what are you doing?

HECTOR

You know, sometimes I wonder if this country would even exist if the penalty for treason King George could have threatened the signers of the Declaration of Independence with was not "death by hanging", but enrolling them in mandatory "Anger Management" counseling with a shrink...

(He is now walking towards her, backing her up to where she's in danger of falling.)

ELSA

Hector, step back!

(He pulls out the bottle of pills he hasn't been taking...)

HECTOR

(pouring the pills over the ledge)  
... who would've force fed them whatever medication was necessary to drug them into complacency with the oppression,  
(MORE)

HECTOR (cont'd)

and then sat them down on a couch to find out the "real" reason they're so upset.

(mimicing Elsa)

"Are you certain its not something else, Mr. Jefferson? Maybe something you're carrying around about a bad sexual experience you had with Sally Hemmings?" Uh no, that's pretty much it.

(picks up the cutlass)

And now-

ELSA

Hector, stop!

HECTOR

For the wanton abuse ye and yer comrades have done to me friend, Baron Hector, Captain Clucker is going to see that ye walk the plank!

ELSA

You can't deal with your issues, and so now you're going to kill me?

HECTOR

Yes. How does that make you feel?

ELSA

Screw you!

HECTOR

Hmmm. I'll take that as... "upset". So would it be fair to say that what I'm about to do is the reason you think I'm an asshole? You're certain it's not something else? Something stemming from your disappointment with the size of John's dick?

ELSA

How did you know...? We never talked about my-

HECTOR

We didn't have to, Dr. Davis. Everyone down at the plant knows good ole' Johnny Boy. Such a great guy-

ELSA

Oh my god.

HECTOR

Cares so much for the little people that he puts a little extra in their severance checks, enough to pay for their therapy.

ELSA

It's you.

HECTOR

Hell, I had to make sure I got the best therapist the boss's money could buy. You should be flattered.

ELSA

You sick bastard!

HECTOR

I have to admit. You have been ideal. Except for not going for it when I suggested that it might help Julius recover some of his wounded pride if Cleopatra would sleep with him one last time. Oh, the pictures of that would have been a nice touch to go along with the little present that's waiting on the boss's desk.

ELSA

What have you done to him?

HECTOR

I guess that's for me to know, and you to never find out.

ELSA

You sick son of a bitch, what have you done to him?

(She runs to attack him. There is a struggle. She slips and falls. He catches her, and holds her by one arm as she dangles over the ledge.)

HECTOR

Uh, not so fast. Before you go, I think there's a couple things you should know.

ELSA

What? About how you're preparing to tell the DA that Captain Clucker did all of this? We both know-

HECTOR

Both know what, Doctor? Both know that he doesn't exist? I think the DA is going to find a victim with a drawer full of files that say that he does. But that's not what I wanted to tell you.

ELSA

What do you want to tell me? What you did to my-

HECTOR

No. I just thought you'd like to know a little bit about my family. The ones you've already gotten to know a

(MORE)



HECTOR (cont'd)

little. Except Joey has a 130 IQ and a Ph.D. And Dad. You know all the things I resent him for never having done for me?

(pulls her close to let this last point sink in)

He did.

(At this, he lets her go. He watches her fall, laughs hysterically, then jumps himself.)

BLACKOUT

(In the darkness, we hear the sound of a phone ringing, and then an answering machine picking up)

OPERATOR

(recording)

Hello, and thank you for calling ENDAMCO, the pathfinder for America's energy future. Our normal business hours are Monday through Friday, 9AM to 5PM. If you know your party's extention-

(We hear the extention numbers being punched in.)

OPERATOR

(recording)

One moment, please.

(We hear the phone ringing that extention several times, then the machine clicks again.)

OPERATOR

(recording)

The party you are attempting to reach-

JOHN

(recording)

- John Davis, Chairman and CEO-

OPERATOR

(recording)

- is not available. Please record your message at the tone.

(The machine beeps)

HECTOR

(recording)

Hey, Johnny Boy. Remember me? Yeah, of course you know who this is, someone who needs no introductions. Of course, your wife knows me as Hector Thompson, but that's another story. By the time you listen to this message I'll be dead, and if all goes as planned, so will somebody else we both know. You remember what I told the judge regarding the restraining order? That's right. I told him, that I had absolutely no intention of doing you any physical harm whatsoever. And you know something? For once in all this I was telling the truth. I never had any plans for killing you. That would have been way too easy.

(The machine beeps once more and clicks off.)

END OF PLAY