

# **READ ABOUT IT**

a ten minute comedy

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## READ ABOUT IT

AT RISE,

A bus-stop bench, stage left.

A MAN (HERB, 40's, wearing heavy coat, muffler) sitting on the bench, reading the newspaper.

Behind the bench, stage right, is a travel agency (posters, etc.). In the window is a cardboard cut out of a ship with the mirror in front of it. The caption over the ship reads: You could be here. A lei is draped over the mirror.

After a few seconds, A WOMAN (Hilda, 40's, also dressed in heavy coat, scarf, gloves) comes along, is heading for the bus-stop bench, but sees the mirror in the window, checks out her image (right profile, left profile, backside), happy with what she sees; studies it some more; starts to leave; comes back to study her image again); walks over and sits down next to the man on the bus-stop bench.

HILDA

Are you waiting for the bus?

Man looks up from his newspaper, out at the audience and sighs at the ridiculous question.

HERB

No. I'm waiting for a bus.  
(goes back to newspaper)

HILDA

(nods; crosses her arms; uncrosses her arms; sighs;  
looks back at the travel agency window)  
You ever been on a cruise?

HERB

What?

HILDA

A cruise?  
(nods to the window behind them)  
On the sea.

HERB

(hates being interrupted while reading his newspaper)  
Yeah. Once.

HILDA

(excited)  
Was it wonderful?

HERB

No. My wife got seasick.

HILDA

Did she take anything?

HERB

Everything.  
(resumes reading)

HILDA

Did she take the patch? I hear the patch works.

No response from Herb.  
Hilda nudges his arm.

HILDA

Did she take the patch?

HERB

(trying to maintain his cool)  
Did she take what?

HILDA

The patch.

HERB

She wasn't trying to give up smoking. She was seasick.

HILDA

They have a patch for everything now.

HERB

Do they have a patch for not bothering other people  
when they're trying to read?

HILDA

I wouldn't wear it if they did. I'm sorry I bothered you.

Herb resumes reading. After a few seconds, he starts to feel guilty for having  
been so rude.

HERB

They didn't have the patch when we went on the cruise.  
It was a long time ago.

HILDA

Where did you go?

HERB

Bermuda.

HILDA

Oh, Bermuda! Was it nice?

HERB

Nice? It was... yeah, nice.  
(tries to resume reading)

HILDA

You should try it again.

HERB

Reading my newspaper?

HILDA

No. A cruise. Your wife could wear a patch.

HERB

She's dead. They didn't have a patch for cancer.

HILDA

Condolences.

Herb tries to get back to his newspaper.

HILDA

You have grandchildren?

HERB

No. I'm forty eight.

HILDA

Really. That young.

(smooths her hair, straightens her dress)  
You haven't remarried?

HERB  
Not yet. I'm looking for a nice quiet woman who  
lets me alone.

HILDA  
My name is Hilda.

Herb can't make her stop no matter what.

HILDA  
What's your name?

HERB  
(sighs)  
Herb.

HILDA  
What's your last name, Herb?

HERB  
(reluctantly)  
Martin.

HILDA  
No! We have the same monogram. HM. Hilda Masaratti.

Herb snaps his paper.

HILDA  
My husband was Italian.  
(crosses herself)  
Stroke. It happens to Italian men early.  
I'm Polish.  
Polish women are good cooks.  
And good listeners.

HERB  
And talkers.

HILDA  
I like to cheer people up.

HERB

Do I look like I need cheering up?

HILDA

Yes. I thought you were a recent widower.

HERB

You did. How'd you know that?

HILDA

You're missing a button on your coat. And your socks don't match.

Herb looks at his socks.

HILDA

And you got a stain on the front of your pants. A wife would take better care of your clothes. That coat isn't that old, so you haven't been taking care of yourself very long.

HERB

You noticed all that just sitting down?

HILDA

I'm very observant. You know, the mirror in that window... it's like one of those trick mirrors.

HERB

What?

HILDA

Look in it. Go ahead. I'll save your paper...

Realizing Hilda isn't going to stop until he does, Herb gets up, walks over to the window, looks in the mirror.

He studies his profile, right and left, and backside, front again. Studies it several seconds, comes back to the bench.

HERB

It must be warped or something.

HILDA

Did it make you look thin?

HERB

Well, thinner.

(looks back at the window)

Excuse me a minute.

Herb walks into the shop.

He is seen talking to a woman inside the shop.

Herb comes back with brochures.

HERB

I got these brochures about cruises. For singles.

Here.

(plops them in Hilda's lap)

Read.

HILDA

(smiles)

That mirror really turned you on.

HERB

Showed me what I could look like if I took off  
some weight.

HILDA

Why you giving these to me?

HERB

I thought you might like to go.