

Parkside

a one act play

by Randall Davis Barfield

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Parkside (A one-act play)

Two rather nice-looking middle aged (or near middle aged) men are in an urban public park. There are two benches placed near each other. They can be side-by-side or opposite each other with a footpath in between. Practically no one is in the park at this hour (nearly dark), although a person or two (with or without a pet) can walk by without stopping if the director desires. The benches are not far from each other, so conversation is easy from one guy to the other. Not far away, within view, is one of the men's public toilets of the park. No one else in the park hears the conversation. If someone walks by, the men pause until the person is gone. One of the men is African-American (AA) and the other is white (W). Beginning of the play shows the AA guy coming out of the toilet. He goes and sits on one of the benches. Two to 3 minutes pass and the white guy exits the toilet. He walks over and sits on the other bench. At least two more minutes pass and the white guy speaks.

W: You're black.

AA: (chuckles) Yeah, I know. Head to toe.

W: Not being mean. I say it because I like black people.

AA: OK. That's nice.

W: It isn't easy to find a black guy in this area of the park.

AA: I don't follow you.

W: Everyone is usually white or Hispanic. This area has a certain... um... reputation about it. I guess you could say reputation.

AA: Really?

W: Yeah. I've been coming here a few years now. But I never know why you don't see more blacks in the park.

AA: Do you like, you know, meditate here?

W: Yeah, I do. Frequently. Among other things (chuckles). Is this your first visit here?

AA: No, it isn't. But I don't get over this way often. I was running an errand today. Thought I'd look around a bit. See the changes.

W: Well, not many of those. That's for sure.

AA: Right, I see that. Same old same old.

W: Do you live near here?

AA: Oh no. I'm about half an hour away. A bit too expensive around here for me. What about yourself?

W: I do live near. It was a dream—to live on the park. Took a while, like a lot of work you know but I finally managed it. What do you do? What kind of work?

AA: I'm a teacher. Science.

W: Oh, I like teachers. But in school I wasn't crazy about science. I do appreciate it more nowadays however. University?

AA: High school. It's a stable career you know. Has its ups and downs as all careers. What do you do?

W: Traffic controller. Pretty hectic at times, but pays well. I wind down a bit here.

AA: OK. Good, got that. By the way, why do you like black people as you say?

W: Oh. Well, um... you know. I guess I should've said black men.

AA: Oh, I see. Is that why I thought you were staring at me inside the toilet? And were you really?

W: Part of it, yes. And yes, I was staring. (Smiles) Really.

AA: I take it there's something in particular you're after.

W: Yeah, there is. Do you know what it is?

AA: I think I do now.