

The Turban and the Fish
Stageplay
by
Allison Fine

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Characters:

Prince: A Man of 25 wearing a Turban

Judy: A pudgy woman of 50 wearing a mini skirt and a tight T-shirt 2 sizes too small for her.

George: African American man of 45

SCENE 1

*MUSIC UP: RAP MUSIC WHICH FADES
OUT AFTER A MOMENT.*

Prince enters stage right dressed in jeans, T-shirt, and a "genie" turban. He sits on the chair waiting downstage.

Judy enters stage left and sits on the chair next to Prince. For most of the dialogue they do not look at each other but look straight ahead, unless otherwise directed.

PRINCE

(to audience)

I know what you're thinking. You are wondering why I am wearing this turban, and it is because I am really insecure about my individuality and I am endeavoring to be different.

JUDY

I could not care less about your individuality because I am totally preoccupied in how I look. I mean, I feel really bad that my thighs are so fat, and my stomach rolls a bit. (she pinches her stomach and he leans over to look) I can't help it. We live in such a God damned anorexic society and I am a compulsive eater. I hate that.

PRINCE

It's biological. And hormonal.

JUDY

That I eat compulsively? Huh! I'm a binge eater. I binge every night non-stop from 7 p.m. until midnight. Carbohydrates especially, although I'll make anything in the refrigerator. Last night I had tomatoes soaked in Worcestershire Sauce. I think it's because my mother just didn't allow me to bloom-when it was my blooming time of course.

That was when I was about twelve or thirteen-I think-I stopped playing golf with my father and I developed breasts and then I got my period and then there was nothing.

PRINCE

Nothing?

JUDY

Well, nobody told me I was beautiful. My father told me to change my clothes all the time and my mother told me to go buy a bra, and that was it. There was no sense of joy. They hated me, I think. I am pretty sure of it. Well, I don't think they actually hated me-no-I mean, it was more about the fact that they were unhappy for me. I was obviously going to be fat and unattractive and they were always over-compensating with the money and stuff--driving around in a big car and-

PRINCE

Your family has money?

JUDY

Hah! They are all dead now.

PRINCE

Oh, I am so sorry. Why did you say "hah?"

JUDY

Did I?

PRINCE

Yes.

JUDY

I have no idea. So what are your problems?

PRINCE

Not problems really. I am the second brother. I have an elder brother who was an Eagle Scout, a National Merit Scholar and an honors graduate of Harvard Medical school. He went to Oxford on a Rhodes Scholarship and now he is a full professor at U.C. Santa Barbara at age thirty-six. I only did 350 on my SAT Math score and my father had to bribe the dean of admissions to his alma mater to let me in. Consequently, I feel worthless and useless.

JUDY

Did you graduate?

PRINCE

No, I dropped out to get married. Well, actually I got this girl pregnant and her father, a professor, tenured, threatened to expel me if I didn't marry her so I did. My grades were bad enough that I probably could've flunked out anyway. I was barely squeaking by. She was fat before she had the baby and she became even fatter afterwards. I don't what it is about me and fat women.

JUDY

What about the baby?

PRINCE

Oh, he's fine. He's three. He is a genius like my brother and her father. He even looks like my brother and her father. He's in fourth grade. I have a younger sister too. She invented a new kind of algorithm and so now she is a fellow at Stanford University doing research into Chaos Theory.

JUDY

I'm not sure what Chaos Theory is but I bet I'm living it.

PRINCE

She re-married. After she divorced me, of course. The man she married owns an insurance agency. They're rich-they live in Montauk, Long Island and my son goes to a private school. They let me have him for visits for three weeks in the summer.

JUDY

Oh, that's kind of sad.

PRINCE

My life is sad. I frequently get depressed about it. Depressive people are not very popular, have you noticed?

JUDY

Yes, I have, but I'm not depressed, I'm an angry woman. A woman of iron or steel or some hard metal. Angry all the time. It really pisses me off that people don't want to take the time to hear about my problems. Know what I mean?

PRINCE

I know exactly what you mean. We wouldn't all need therapy if we could all get together and help each other out!

JUDY

Boy, isn't that true! So, do you think two people like us could fall in love?

PRINCE

Well, I don't know. Could it be done without conflict?

JUDY

Why? Don't you like conflict?

PRINCE

Oh, I love it. I love conflicted, complex, unusual, demanding women.

*Judy looks down in shame and is silent for some moments.
Prince looks over at her, looks away, and then looks at her again.*

PRINCE

What's the matter?

JUDY

Well, I'm just not a very complex woman. I wish I was complex. I always wanted to be. I've tried to be but it just gets down to that I am probably stupid and too simple to be complicated. Dumb people are bad liars and I am a terrible liar. Smart people lie and get away with things. I wish I could lie! Everything I feel is right on the surface. I wear my heart on my sleeve. It's probably because my mother didn't admit me into the secretive woman's circle and I am always stalking people for friendship.

(she looks at him for a second)

I was a 36DD when I was twelve. I just can't hold back anything. I'm not that unusual, and I am terrified to be demanding when I always get left. Will you leave me?

PRINCE

I can't leave anyone because they always leave me first.

JUDY

Can't we stop them?

PRINCE

My fat wife left me because she said she'd rather be a single parent on welfare and food stamps than be with me. She said I bored her. Then she met the rich guy that's her husband and everything went well for her. I wish her well.

JUDY

No you don't. You wish her dead.

PRINCE

I wouldn't want my son to grow up without a mother.

JUDY

True. Still, if you are honest with yourself, which I assume you are, you wish her dead.

PRINCE

Only once in a while. Do you want to get married?

JUDY

You're boring, aren't you?

PRINCE

Yeah. I try to hide it, though.

JUDY

I'm not boring. I'm fucked up. I'm sick. Two people like us would make a disastrous marriage.

PRINCE

I wish I could invent an algorithm or something.

JUDY:

I wish I could lose forty pounds.
(He looks at her.)

PRINCE

You could lose forty pounds, no one would miss it.

JUDY

Thanks.

PRINCE

All right.

She glares at him a moment and then resumes looking straight ahead.

JUDY

This isn't working.

PRINCE

Agree.

JUDY

We have nothing to say to one another

PRINCE

Agree. You're not that attractive and you **are** kind of stupid.

JUDY

(shouting)

You fucking asshole!

PRINCE

I'm just being honest!

JUDY

Fuck you!

A moment of silence.

PRINCE
Interesting.

JUDY
Didn't go far enough.

PRINCE
What do you want me to do, smack you around, push you down, kick you in the stomach and rape the shit out of your ugly virgin cunt?

JUDY
OK.

PRINCE
OK.

JUDY
So do it!

(silence)

JUDY (CONT'D)
No?

PRINCE
You are such a stupid bitch. I can't stand you.

He stands up. She stands up and approaches him nose to nose. They perform the next bit at top volume, shouting at one another.

JUDY
I can't you either! You remind me of my father and he was a demonic idiot. You remind me of my mother too and I hated her!

PRINCE
Me too.

JUDY
You didn't know her!

PRINCE
I know her through you.

JUDY
That's complete bullshit.

PRINCE
Your stomach is repulsive.

JUDY

I am going to kill you.
(*Offstage Voice: SHUT UP.*)

They both stand silent.

PRINCE

Who was that?

JUDY

The voice of my father.

PRINCE

Complete rubbish.

They both go back to their chairs dejectedly.

JUDY

Why do you wear that dim-witted Turban? Are you losing your hair?

PRINCE

I told you why.

JUDY

I don't remember.

PRINCE

I'm not telling you again.

JUDY

Something about your brother, your sister and algorithms.
Have I got it right?

PRINCE

I hate you. I am losing my hair. It's because I am depressed
and there are so many fucking toxins in the food.

JUDY

I don't hate you. I like you. Maybe I'll call you repeatedly,
leave messages on your Facebook page and stalk you.

PRINCE

If you do I'll fucking shoot you in the head.

JUDY

You can't shoot me, you don't have a gun.

PRINCE

How do you know that? How do you know I don't have a gun?

JUDY

Because you're too stupid to have a gun. And you're balding-- a balding loser, dysfunctional idiot with baggage.

PRINCE

MENTAL baggage I have, but you carry you baggage all around your stomach, your thighs and your sagging, ugly, worn out breasts!

Lights to black as they continue talking in this vein, ad-libbing if necessary, totally oblivious to the black stage. Their talking can be heard until a gun shot rings out and there is total silence.

MUSIC UP : MOZART

SCENE 2

Prince's apartment. It is furnished very sparsely, with a couch, a chair, a Television (which is on), a purple Target stereo and a small dining table with 2 mismatched chairs. On the coffee table is a Fish tank. A blanket is hung over a window upstage to resemble a curtain.

There is a knock at the door. Prince grabs the remote and switches on the mute button. The flickering picture of the TV can be seen without sound. The knock comes again. He lunges across the room to grab his Turban, puts it on backwards, takes it off, puts it on again sideways, thinks better of it and as the knock resumes insistently he throws the turban across the room. It lands in the Fish tank. Prince starts for the turban, then decides to get the door. He opens the door and Judy stands there, her hand up to knock again.

JUDY

Oh, it's you.

PRINCE

Well, you did knock on MY door. This is my place.

JUDY

I know that. I don't need you to tell me that.

PRINCE

How did you find me?

JUDY

Googled you. Can I come in?

PRINCE

You don't know my name. How could you Google me?

JUDY
I followed you.

PRINCE
You followed me?

JUDY
After our last date. Can I come in?

PRINCE
That wasn't a date! It was an accident.

JUDY
Let me in.

PRINCE
Not yet.

JUDY
I told you I'd stalk you.

PRINCE
I didn't believe you.

JUDY
You should have.

PRINCE
I suppose so.

JUDY
You ARE going bald.

Prince feels his balding head.

PRINCE
So what?

JUDY
It's cold out here. Let me in.

PRINCE
All right. The place is a mess.

Judy walks in. Prince slams the door behind her. Standing in the center of the room she surveys the mess, then spies the turban floating on top of the fish tank.

JUDY
Your turban--

PRINCE

I know.

JUDY
Are you going to do something about it?

PRINCE
Maybe. What's it to you?

JUDY
I need a drink. Have you got anything to drink?

PRINCE
Clamato Juice.

JUDY
Yuch. What's wrong with you?

PRINCE
I don't entertain much.

Judy sits on the couch.

JUDY
You're the anal type.

PRINCE
Do you want some Clamato Juice?

JUDY
No. Tell me about your brother. What did he do after he graduated from Harvard?

PRINCE
What do you care what he did?

JUDY
I want to know. I'm curious. Is he doing Chaos Theory like your sister?

PRINCE
Oh shut up.

JUDY
Why do you say that? It's rude.

PRINCE
I didn't invite you here!
(beat)
How do you remember all this stuff about my family? I don't remember a single thing about your family.

JUDY

Well, I didn't tell you much.

PRINCE

I remember tomatoes and Worcestershire Sauce.

JUDY

And--?

PRINCE

Would like some Clamato juice?

Judy sighs with resignation.

JUDY

All right.

Prince goes off stage and returns with two glasses of Clamato Juice. While he is gone Judy looks around the apartment-picks up a few objects and sets them down again with disgust.

PRINCE

Here's yours.

JUDY

Thanks.

PRINCE

Bottoms up?

He downs his in one gulp.

She watches him intently

JUDY

You know your turban's in the fish tank, right?

PRINCE

We've been here.

He slams the juice glass down on the coffee table.

JUDY

Well-I-I-I

PRINCE

The fish don't give a damn, why should you?

JUDY

You don't know that, do you? How do you know they don't give a damn? They could. They could, you know--give a damn.

She gets up and paces the floor, winding up to a major, dramatic moment.

JUDY(CON'T)

I mean, truly-this is something important, even though it may seem very, very trivial.

PRINCE

It's intensely trivial.

JUDY

Don't interrupt me. It may seem, on the surface of it, to be meaningless, but don't fool yourself! Don't kid yourself! That's just the game-a daring, gritty confrontation to keep us from understanding the real meaning, the true sabotage. It really **is** a case of mistaken identity. We mistake the Turban in the fish tank as not something, when, in fact, it may be something. In fact, the real reason why I am fat and you are bald! It may be.

PRINCE

It may be that you are out of your fucking mind. Exit that door quickly. Please. The same way you came in.

JUDY

I came in slowly. You kept me at the door talking-you wouldn't let me in.

PRINCE

Whatever.

JUDY

I really think you don't understand anything. Your grasp and comprehension of what matters in life is so irksome, it's laughable.

PRINCE

I don't know what you're talking about.

JUDY

Forget it. You're bald. I'm fat. We're done.

PRINCE

Good.

JUDY

Before I go-

What? PRINCE

JUDY

Nothing.

Say it. PRINCE

JUDY

I can't.

Say it. Just say it. PRINCE

JUDY

I love you. I just need to know-

PRINCE

What?

JUDY

You'll be mad.

PRINCE

Chance it.

JUDY

Are you good?

PRINCE

I'm small--inadequate. I told you that.

JUDY

Could I see?

PRINCE

No. Later.

JUDY

Please?

They freeze. Lights go to black.

MUSIC UP: BEGINNING CHORDS OF
BEETHOVEN'S FIFTH.

SCENE 3

LIGHTS UP

It is later--a week or so has passed. Judy is sitting on the couch watching TV, eating incessantly from a large plate holding a sandwich, pickles, fruit, cottage cheese and chips. The room has taken on a more feminine feel--there are colored throw pillows and a wicker chair added. The blanket has been removed from the window and replaced with frilly drapes. Prince enters wearing Pajama bottoms only. The turban is still in the fish tank, not floating anymore but wet and sitting on the bottom of the tank. Fish continue to swim around it.

PRINCE

I'm going to bed.

JUDY

I thought you were in bed.

PRINCE

What are you watching?

JUDY

Comedy Central.

PRINCE

Can I watch?

JUDY

What are you asking me for? It really annoys me that you are always asking my permission for things you know good and well are not in my jurisdiction to grant--it's entirely up to you what you do from moment to moment. Would you mix me a drink?

PRINCE

Clamato and Vodka?

JUDY

That'll do. I mean, for God's sake, I just wish you'd assert yourself once in a while.

PRINCE

(from offstage)

I do.

JUDY

I do. I do. When? When do you assert yourself? You ask my permission for everything and you run around me like a fucking lap dog. I can't stand it. Not really. I can't stand it. And I won't. I think we need to talk. Talk about it. Talk about this. That I won't. Stand for it. Stand it. Won't.

PRINCE

(entering with two glasses-
handing one to her. He sits on
the chair and sips his drink)

I'm becoming an alcoholic.

JUDY

No you're not.

PRINCE

I never even drank before I met you.

JUDY

Don't blame it on me. Don't even go there. Whatever you
choose, you choose. You choose, you lose.

She smiles at this

PRINCE

You SNOOZE you lose. God, you're stupid.

JUDY

Not as stupid as you are. And certainly not as much of a
loser. I still have hair.

PRINCE

So what? 2% of all women lose their hair. Many men lose their
hair. Baldness is a sign of excess testosterone. We're
virile.

She gives him a withering look.

JUDY

Drink your drink and go to bed. I want to watch this program.

PRINCE

Fine. Whatever. I hate my life. I might as well drown in the
fish tank along with the turban.

JUDY

I wish you would.

PRINCE

Thanks.

JUDY

I'm only being honest.

PRINCE

Well, I'd rather you lied to me. Lie to me. Will you please-please-PLEASE-lie to me?

JUDY

Shut up!

He leaves-slamming the door. She continues sipping her drink and watching TV and eating. Lights dim and come up again. It appears to be the next day but several months have passed because nothing has changed. It could be the next day. The only thing that has changed is that Judy has put on 100 pounds-she is sloshing around in an enormous house dress, eating incessantly from a bowl of food. The apartment is ugly, messy and filled with plates of food and half-eaten garbage. Judy puts a shirt over her dress and continues watching TV. Her cell phone rings-the ring tone is "Stayin' Alive". She answers it.

JUDY

Hello. No. He's not here.

Prince enters. He is wearing a multi-colored scarf wound around his head and a long African caftan.

PRINCE

Who was that?

JUDY

No one.

PRINCE

What did no one want? (pause, no answer) It might be a potential job.

JUDY

You'll never work and you know it.

PRINCE

Well, we can't keep living off your retirement fund and my savings is gone.

JUDY

We can go on disability. I'm too fat to work.

PRINCE

True.

(He sits on the couch and watches her eat)

PRINCE

You never stop eating.

JUDY

Lot's of people who can't stand each other still spend time together you know.

PRINCE

And what would be the point of that?

JUDY

Because hating each other is one of the privilages of being alive. It's what keeps families going, you know.

PRINCE

Families keep going because they hate one another?

JUDY

Well, of course. I should have thought that was a foregone conclusion.

PRINCE

Not in my world.

JUDY

Well, you're world. (she snorts) That really means nothing, doesn't it? In the real world, the real, real world where people are interacting the way people normally, really interact, they all hate one another and pretend to tolerate it but in actual fact all they apparently want to do is strangle the other person absolutely all the time. I should think that was obvious.

PRINCE

Oh shut the fuck up, will you?

There is a moment's pause.

JUDY:

No, it's not possible to love one another I have come to that conclusion long ago. But hating one another-now that is a reason for living! That is what gets your balls in a twist and gets my twat in a ball! That I can really drive home the day with a moment to moment loathing of the human race, every god damn fuck that I meet, but especially those repellent bastards I had the misfortune to be born with, be born into-my family! But family you choose-you know, the surrogates, the ones not born, there is a certain glee to that kind of loathing too, don't you think?

PRINCE

You are a sick bitch.

LIGHTS TO BLACK

Scene 4

Judy is lying on the couch, too large to move. A TV table is next to her heaped with plates of food, half-eaten. Glasses and cups and dirty clothes are strewn all over the floor and draped around furniture. Prince has bought a new Turban and is wearing a tight-fitting, fashionable suit. He stands by the window.

PRINCE

You're probably going to die on that couch, you know. And I should let you.

JUDY

Go ahead. I don't care. I have nothing to live for anyway.

PRINCE

You should start smoking. That, along with your eating compulsion will kill you much faster and we can get this over and done with.

JUDY

Get me some cigarettes and I'll try.

PRINCE

I would except I can't stand the smell of smoke and anyway, I don't want to die from second hand smoke.

JUDY

Always thinking about number one, eh?

PRINCE

That's right. I am a Prince you know.

JUDY

You're as much of a Prince as I am a pencil.

PRINCE

I'm leaving.

JUDY

For good?

PRINCE

No. I'm going on a job interview.

JUDY

Great. I hope you get the job. I am bored with this whole situation.

PRINCE

I am too. Bored, bored, bored.

JUDY

Something ought to happen right about now.

PRINCE

Something should happen, but will it?

JUDY

How should I know?

There is a knock at the door. Prince and Judy are startled, they freeze.

JUDY

What's that?

PRINCE

A knock.

JUDY

Is someone here?

PRINCE

Not yet. I haven't let them in.

JUDY

Could it be your brother?

PRINCE

I doubt it.(pause) He hates me.

The knock comes again. More insistent.

JUDY

I think you should answer the door. They're not going away.

PRINCE

They might.

JUDY

We're bored. Answer the door. If you don't, I will.

PRINCE

You can't even get up off the couch, stupid-you're not answering anything!

Judy tries to heave herself off the couch to no avail. She heaves and pants for some moments, succeeding only in getting one leg on the floor. She lays back down exhausted. As she does so, the knock comes unrelentingly.

PRINCE

I told you.

JUDY

Answer the fucking door.

Prince walks over to the door and answers it. A young African American man wearing a George Washington wig and costume stands with his hand up about to knock again.

PRINCE

It's the President of the United States!

JUDY

What?

PRINCE

I mean, the first President of the United States.

JUDY

What?

GEORGE

Hello, I'm George.

And? PRINCE

Your brother sent me. GEORGE

(shouting) What does he say? JUDY

(shouting) My brother sent him. PRINCE

(shouting) I told you. JUDY

Is there some historical significance to the way you're dressed? PRINCE

(shouting) Let him in. JUDY

Yes? PRINCE

NO. GEORGE

The other shoe drops. Yes? PRINCE

No. GEORGE

LET HIM IN. I'M BORED! PRINCE

George is let inside the apartment. He takes off his three-cornered hat and quickly surveys the place.

I'm not sure I am supposed to be here but I'll be here anyway. I'm a kind of invention. GEORGE

You mean **intervention**. PRINCE

He doesn't know what he means. (to George) Do you? JUDY

Could or could not. GEORGE

PRINCE

Could or could not what?

JUDY

Never mind. (*of Prince*) He's slow. Sit down. What's your name?

GEORGE

George.

PRINCE

George is trying to be an intervention.

JUDY

You can't TRY to be an intervention. You either are one or you are not.

GEORGE

I am not an intervention. As I say--I am an INVENTION.

JUDY

Of?

PRINCE

Meaning, who invented you?

GEORGE

I'm not an imaginary invention. Kind of like a figment. I'm not that.

JUDY

You mean fig?

GEORGE

I do not. Fig--no. Invention. You know.

JUDY

Imaginary. Invention.

PRINCE

He's real.

JUDY

He's not real.

PRINCE

He's not real.

JUDY

He's real. If he were not real why would he be sitting here?

GEORGE

I'm real. Why would I be sitting here?

JUDY

You said you were an invention.

GEORGE

No, I said I am NOT an invention, but if I were, I would be I'm my OWN invention, not yours.

JUDY

What does that mean, exactly?

PRINCE

It means--

JUDY

Don't tell me what HE means! Please!

PRINCE

I know what he means!

JUDY

I don't care!

GEORGE

Let's not fight.

JUDY

We always fight, that's how we get along.