

# **Epiphany**

by

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Setting

A room.

Time

Now and then.

Cast

MAN - Middle-aged or older.

WOMAN - Middle-aged or older.

(A MAN and WOMAN sit at an angle to one another. They have cups of coffee next to them. He is reading a newspaper. She is reading a book. He lowers his newspaper and looks at her.)

MAN

I had an epiphany the other day.

WOMAN

That's nice.

(He raises his paper and reads. He turns a page. She turns a page. He lowers the paper.)

MAN

I don't suppose you'd be interested in hearing what it was.

WOMAN

Did you want to talk about it?

MAN

No, that's okay.

(He raises his paper and reads. He turns a page. She turns a page. He lowers the paper.)

MAN

I guess I wouldn't mind getting your opinion on it.

WOMAN

Your epiphany?

MAN

Right.

WOMAN

Okay.

MAN

What do you remember about 1979?

WOMAN

1979? Not much.

MAN

Me neither. But I remember watching the Academy Awards that year and one of the nominees for Best Actor was Peter Sellers in *Being There*. One of the other nominees was Dustin Hoffman in *Kramer vs. Kramer*.

WOMAN

Didn't Dustin Hoffman win?

MAN

Right.

WOMAN

What about it?

MAN

I was outraged.

WOMAN

Really?

MAN

Yeah. Genuinely outraged. *Being There* was this beautiful little fable, just a perfect jewel of a film. And *Kramer vs. Kramer* was just crap. Over the top, calculated, emotionally manipulative crap. I was angry about that for weeks.

WOMAN

I had no idea.

MAN

I would see people I knew and that was the first thing I would talk about. How unfair it was. How wrong it was.

WOMAN

And that was your epiphany?

MAN

Hmm? Oh no. No, my epiphany was about this year's Academy Awards.

WOMAN

I didn't know you watched it.

MAN

I didn't.

WOMAN

I don't understand.

MAN

I didn't watch it. And do you know why I didn't watch it?

WOMAN

Why?

MAN

Because I don't give a rat's ass.

WOMAN

I see.

MAN

I don't care who wins Best Picture. Best Actor. Best Set Design. None of it. I just don't care. It got me thinking.

WOMAN

About what?

MAN

Everything. I began to realize that I don't care about the Emmys either. Or the Grammys. Or the Tonys. And it doesn't stop there. I don't care about celebrities, about the Mideast, about the potholes on our street. I don't care about that stain on the carpet upstairs. I don't care about the latest fashions, video games, electric cars, rain forests, organic coffees, longer erections, calories in beer, business scandals, government screw-ups, I just don't care. And that was my epiphany. When it comes right down to it, there isn't a single thing in the world that I care about.

(He raises his paper. She returns to her book. They both flip pages. She looks up.)

WOMAN

Do you care about me?

(He lowers his paper.)

MAN

What's that?

WOMAN

Do you care about me?

MAN

Well, let me put it this way. When we first started seeing one another, I longed for you. I did. I physically ached for you. When the phone rang, my heart would speed up, hoping it was you. I thought about you all day and then I dreamt about you at night. All I could think about was seeing you, touching you, being with you. If anything happened to you I felt sure I would kill myself because I knew I couldn't live in a world without you in it. Do you remember feeling that way about me?

WOMAN

Yes, I do.

MAN

Do you feel that way now?

WOMAN

God no.

MAN

Right. And I don't really care that you feel that way.

WOMAN

Me neither. It's exhausting.

MAN

So what happened? Why don't we care like we used to?

WOMAN

I think it's all perfectly natural.

MAN

Not caring is natural?

WOMAN

Sure.

MAN

How so?

WOMAN

Well, look at it this way. How long did the average Neanderthal live?

MAN

Neanderthals? I don't know. Thirty years?

WOMAN

There you go.

MAN

I don't understand.

WOMAN

Mentally, physically, and emotionally, we are wired to live for thirty years. That's it. You're in, you're out. Once you get beyond that, it's like a duck flying across the sky that gets shot by a hunter when it's a hundred feet up in the air. Technically, the duck is still flying, but it's already dead.

MAN

So you're saying that's us? We're flying dead ducks?

WOMAN

Pretty much. And there's nothing wrong with that. From a natural selection perspective, we've done our job.

MAN

What job?

WOMAN

We mated and bred successfully. Now we're just killing time.

MAN

So are you saying you don't care about anything either?

WOMAN

Not really.

MAN

Not really you don't care or not really you do?

WOMAN

Not really I don't care.

MAN

I thought it was just me.

WOMAN

No. I am totally with you on that one.

(She returns to her book. He raises his paper. They flip pages. He lowers the paper.)

MAN

Do you think we should try and do something about it?

WOMAN

About what?

MAN

Not caring.

WOMAN

Like what?

MAN

Well, I was thinking. Maybe we should start smoking.

WOMAN

Smoking?

MAN

Yeah. Just for a change. Then maybe in a few years, I don't know, get into crack or crystal meth.

WOMAN

Why would we do that?

MAN

Well, I understand they're all highly addictive. It would give us something to care about, you know, what do we do if our dealer gets arrested? Where are we going to get our next hit? Besides, at our age, how much damage can we do?

WOMAN

I don't think so.

MAN

Why not?

WOMAN

I like not caring about anything.

MAN

You do?

WOMAN

Absolutely. I like not caring if you wear the same shirt three days in a row. I like it that our kids are gone and I don't have to worry about them eating their vegetables. I like not caring what the neighbors think of our bushes out front, and I like not caring about the kind of car I drive or who designed my purse. I find not caring very liberating.

MAN

Really?

WOMAN

Really.

MAN

It doesn't worry you at all?

WOMAN

Why would it?

MAN

Well, if you don't care about anything, that means you're a psychopath.

WOMAN

Not at our age.

MAN

No?

WOMAN

No. If you don't care about anything when you're twenty, then you're a psychopath. We're not psychopaths.

MAN

Then what are we?



WOMAN

We're Buddhists.

MAN

Buddhists? How so?

WOMAN

When we say we don't care about anything, what do we really mean by that? We're saying we have given up desire. That means we're Buddhists.

MAN

I had no idea I was a Buddhist.

WOMAN

Well, you are. Most old people are, whether they know it or not.

MAN

Should we go to some temple or join some kind of organization?

WOMAN

No. We don't care enough to go to a temple or join any organization. We're as Buddhist as you can get.

MAN

You know, I think you're right. We're Buddhists. And we didn't have to starve ourselves or meditate or anything.

WOMAN

If you live long enough, you don't have to meditate about these things. You just know them.

(He raises his paper. She returns to her book. They flip pages. He lowers the paper.)

MAN

I love you. You know that, right?

WOMAN

I know that.

(He smiles. She smiles. He raises his paper. She returns to her book. Lights fade.)

THE END.