

TRAFFIC STOP

a play in one act
(excerpt)

by

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CHARACTERS

CLAIRE A beautiful, bored and rather spoiled, if
 unhappy, woman near 40.

JOE A thoughtful and surprisingly well-read
 sheriff who is, unsurprisingly, a bit
 lonely.

SETTING

A deserted country road.

TIME

Present day.

Traffic Stop

(Despite every argument that she has tried so far, Claire has been given the speeding ticket anyway.)

JOE

Good. Now have a nice day.

CLAIRE

Oh, Joe, come on.

JOE

What now?

CLAIRE

What? Is Al Quaeda putting a dirty bomb in the county fairgrounds or something? What's the hurry? Talk to me for a while.

(beat)

(beat)

JOE

All right. Just for a while.

CLAIRE

Okay, just for a while. Thank you.

JOE

Well, what do you want to talk about?

CLAIRE

Men! Why do they always say that?

JOE

Hey! You're the one--

CLAIRE

Never mind. Tell me, Joseph...can I call you "Joseph?" Who else calls you "Joseph?"

JOE

My mother, if you have to know. Usually when she's angry.

Traffic Stop

CLAIRE

Well, I like "Joseph" better. It suits you. You know, the Chosen One.

JOE

The Chosen One?

CLAIRE

You know - Jacob and all his sons. In the Old Testament. Joseph and his dreams. The favorite. God's favorite.

JOE

God's favorite?

CLAIRE

Yeah.

(beat)

JOE

All right. But I have to say I don't think...

CLAIRE

Don't think what?

JOE

Well, I don't...think...God chooses favorites.

CLAIRE

Well! A real conversation with a man! God, it's been so long, I can barely remember the last time. So. Okay, God doesn't choose favorites.

JOE

Nope. I don't think so, anyway.

CLAIRE

Why not?

JOE

Because God is...

CLAIRE

Is...?

Traffic Stop

JOE

God...isn't like that.

CLAIRE

Like what?

JOE

I don't know. He doesn't--

CLAIRE

He?

JOE

Oh no, you're not one of those...!

CLAIRE

So, what if I am? Actually I'm not. At least not all the time. Anyway, so God doesn't...

JOE

God is fair. God treats everyone the same.

CLAIRE

You have got to be kidding me.

JOE

No, I'm not.

CLAIRE

Well, maybe it seems like that if you're Joseph, but what about if you're - I don't know - say, Napthali?

JOE

One of his brothers?

CLAIRE

Yeah.

JOE

Well...didn't they have it coming to them or something?

CLAIRE

Why?

Traffic Stop

JOE

Because...I don't know. They were...

CLAIRE

Were...

JOE

Assholes or something.

CLAIRE

Joseph!? My! Such language from a uniformed officer of the law. What is this country coming to?

JOE

All right. Ungrateful, then.

CLAIRE

For what? Being passed over? I mean there they are, all watching over their sheep or whatever they did, doing their jobs as best they see fit, but God decides that He likes one of them better than the others. And makes him the president.

JOE

Look...

CLAIRE

Okay, forget Joseph. How about Moses?

JOE

What is this? Sunday school?

CLAIRE

Call it a trip down memory lane. So. Moses.

JOE

What about him? He did a good job.

CLAIRE

Yeah, maybe if you're Moses you might think that. What about the Pharaoh?

JOE

What about him?

Traffic Stop

CLAIRE

Do you remember that little bit about Moses telling God that he's not up to it, and God saying, "Don't worry son, I'll harden the heart of the Pharaoh and make it easy on you."

JOE

He did not!

CLAIRE

Oh, yes, he did!

JOE

He...God! Yes, he did. I forgot.

CLAIRE

Mmm-hmmm.

JOE

Well, I'm sure God had his reasons.

CLAIRE

You bet He did. Playing favorites, that's what God was doing.

JOE

Look, I don't think we're supposed to question God's--

CLAIRE

Will? I do. How about David?

JOE

You do teach Sunday school, don't you?

CLAIRE

Not on your life. My parents just made me go to one of those Christian colleges.

JOE

Why is that?

CLAIRE

I don't know. I think they thought I was getting too wild or something.

Traffic Stop

JOE

Hard to imagine that.

CLAIRE

So, anyway, I'm enjoying this. David.

JOE

And...what's her name?...Bathsheba.

CLAIRE

Bathsheba. How would you like to be her husband? Oh, by the way, why don't you storm the gate? It'll keep you occupied.

JOE

Well. Maybe there's something to that.

CLAIRE

Thank you. It's nice talking with you, by the way. It's nice to meet a man who knows how to listen to a woman instead of rolling his eyes.

JOE

Yeah, well, I don't really like those kind of guys, anyway.

CLAIRE

Like my husband.

JOE

Like your husband.

CLAIRE

Say, I just realized why it's so important for you to believe that God is all objective and fair.

JOE

And just.

CLAIRE

And just. That's the kind of cop you're trying to be.

JOE

I...

Traffic Stop

CLAIRE

No, it's okay. I understand. Actually, I kind of like it.

JOE

Well...thanks.

CLAIRE

Don't mention it. Come on, Joseph, let your God choose favorites. Let your God have a dark side.

JOE

Claire!

CLAIRE

Well? When's the last time that you went around hardening people's hearts?

JOE

All right. All right. Look this is getting a little...ummm--

CLAIRE

No, I think I understand now. So what you're telling me is that you have annointed yourself to be more just than God.

JOE

What?!

CLAIRE

God plays favorites, but you don't.

JOE

What are you talking about?

CLAIRE

You're driving down the road, minding your own business, and suddenly whoosh! - a car driven by some woman crazy with grief--

JOE

Grief?

Traffic Stop

CLAIRE

Grief over the size of her thighs and a broken heart from being dumped for some navel-pierced bubble-head and instead of feeling sorry for her, you give her a speeding ticket.

JOE

I--! (*beat*) Nice try, Claire...