

## ***About What Matters***

*a short, pointed play between two women*

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## ***About What Matters***

**Characters:**        **THE DOGGED WOMAN**, who enthusiastically pursues and doesn't give up easily; and  
  
                              **THE WOMAN IN REPOSE**, who usually manages to convince herself she doesn't want what doesn't come to her.

**Setting:**            **A seating area inside or near a formidable building that probably has something to do with the government.**

**Time:**                **Well after lunchtime.**

*Casting:*

*The women can be any age and any race. Multi-racial casting is encouraged.*

*Dialogue Notes:*

*— Indicates a character's dialogue is interrupted, by another character speaking, an event or a character abruptly shifting gears within a line of dialogue.*

*... Indicates a character is searching for words, does not complete a thought or leaves a line of dialogue open.*

**Synopsis:**

*About What Matters* is a short, pointed play about, among other things, priorities, boundaries, certainties and letting life get to you. Waiting together for an acknowledgement that may never come, two friends find themselves caught up in a dangerously circular game of logic and loyalties, as they realize they've probably missed lunch.

### **SPECIAL THANKS**

to the following artists and advocates for their roles  
in the development of *About What Matters*:

Willow Geer, Melora Marshall, dir Jen Bloom, Theatricum Botanicum SeedlingsFest

## ***About What Matters***

*We see two women and a bench inside or adjacent to an official-looking building. One woman is in repose, curled up on the bench like a cat, ostensibly quite comfortably. Or perhaps she is comforting herself. Her coat is on her lap like a blanket. Her handbag is close to her. Unfettered by belongings, the other woman is standing. She appears to be on the lookout for, or on the trail of, something important. And can't remain still forever.*

DOGGED WOMAN:

I don't understand.

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

What don't you understand?

DOGGED WOMAN:

What was it he said?

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

You don't understand what he said?

DOGGED WOMAN:

No, I *understand* what it was, it's just... How could he say that?

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

Because he's an asshole?

DOGGED WOMAN:

No. Assholes don't fuck with reality like that.

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

Some assholes do.

DOGGED WOMAN:

But what did he say?

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

I told you.

DOGGED WOMAN:

Tell me again.

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

You know what he said. What does it matter?

DOGGED WOMAN:

It matters to me!

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

Why?

DOGGED WOMAN:  
Pleeeeeeease!

WOMAN IN REPOSE:  
“*That conversation never took place.*”

*Pause.*

DOGGED WOMAN:  
That conversation never took place. How could he say that?

WOMAN IN REPOSE:  
I don't know, because he's an—

DOGGED WOMAN:  
*(interrupting)* But he wasn't part of the conversation, right? The conversation was between you and the guy who was here last week, right? So how can he say the conversation never took place? He has no right saying that! He can't know, it wasn't his conversation, he wasn't there! *(short pause)* He wasn't there, was he?

WOMAN IN REPOSE:  
He wasn't there.

DOGGED WOMAN:  
Not that *that* really matters. Because he's saying the conversation *never* took place. Ever. You guys never, ever had the conversation. Even outside of his presence or knowledge. That conversation never actually happened. That's what he's saying.

WOMAN IN REPOSE:  
I know.

DOGGED WOMAN:  
Where did he come up with that?

WOMAN IN REPOSE:  
I've no idea.

DOGGED WOMAN:  
It's incredible!

WOMAN IN REPOSE:  
We'll, I do have an idea. I told you. He's an—

DOGGED WOMAN:  
*(interrupting)* But think about it! This *asshole* feels like he can issue a proclamation and erase the existence of an entire conversation. That's not part of his job description.

WOMAN IN REPOSE:  
I guess he's just that way.

DOGGED WOMAN:

And that makes it all right?

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

No, that makes him— exactly who he is and there's nothing I can do about the kind of... person he chooses to be.

DOGGED WOMAN:

Well, I would be furious.

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

I've moved past it.

DOGGED WOMAN:

I wouldn't be able to. My anger would keep me rooted. "*That conversation never took place.*" It wasn't his conversation!

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

It wasn't your conversation, either.

DOGGED WOMAN:

But I'm not telling you it never took place.

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

It doesn't matter.

DOGGED WOMAN:

It *does* matter! How long have you been coming here, to get this done? This guy's obviously some kind of megalomaniac who likes to pull people's rugs of reality right out from under 'em. His world is *the* world, and if he says it, it's so. Ohhhhhhhhhh I know people like this guy. I've married people like this guy. This is a dangerous guy and we can't let him get away with this!

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

It's almost over, how 'bout I just stay out of it.

DOGGED WOMAN:

It's not that easy. That conversation never took place, that night never happened, I never did that, you don't feel that way...

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

It actually is that easy. Or almost that easy. It's out of his hands now, so we move on. We'll get the approval, everything will go through. So even if I run into him again, *he - doesn't - matter.*

*The woman in repose shifts her weight to punctuate the end of the argument. Perhaps she opens her handbag. The dogged woman sits next to her.*

DOGGED WOMAN:

*He doesn't matter, or it doesn't matter?*

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

What?

DOGGED WOMAN:

Because it's two different things.

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

The validation is what matters. The stamp, the seal, the acknowledgement.

DOGGED WOMAN:

The permission?

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

Yes! And he doesn't matter, the conversation doesn't matter, nothing else matters.  
That's done.

DOGGED WOMAN:

The conversation doesn't matter?

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

What?

DOGGED WOMAN:

You said the conversation doesn't matter.

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

Right. None of it matters.

DOGGED WOMAN:

Which conversation?

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

What?

DOGGED WOMAN:

Which conversation doesn't matter?

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

What are you talking about?

DOGGED WOMAN:

That's what I'm asking you. Which doesn't matter: the initial conversation with that other guy that supposedly never took place, or the conversation today with our would-be godhead in which he denied the occurrence of said conversation?

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

Oh, Jesus. It's late. Are you hungry? I'm hungry.

*She stands up with her handbag. The dogged woman pursues her.*

DOGGED WOMAN:

The reason I ask is because I'm not sure you really give yourself enough credit. Your feelings, your experiences, your *self*.

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

Do you want a Cappuccino or something? Is there a machine somewhere?

DOGGED WOMAN:

I worry about you! The fact that you let this guy dictate what did and didn't happen in your life, even here, is very disturbing to me! And then to say "It doesn't matter, it's over, I've moved *past* it?" How can you move past something if it never happened? That's of great concern!

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

How long has it been since ...? Did we even have lunch?

DOGGED WOMAN:

Are you listening here? I'm telling you this is not right, something is not right and as such cannot be moved past—if indeed it took place—so you need to take a look at it and ask yourself really hard questions like "How?" and "Why?" and "It *does* matter! It matters a great deal, god damn it!"

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

That last isn't even a question.

DOGGED WOMAN:

"How?" and "Why?" are questions. Start with those.

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

Because you're worried about me? And this all comes out of your great concern?

DOGGED WOMAN:

Yes.

*After a moment, the woman in repose settles back into her seat, perhaps with a satisfied smile. Then the dogged woman gets a new scent.*

Unless...!

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

Uh huh...?

DOGGED WOMAN:

Unless he was *told* the conversation never took place.

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

What?

DOGGED WOMAN:

Maybe the other guy told him you two never had the conversation. Maybe it was the first guy who denied the whole thing, maybe that's where this all started!

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

That is not where this all started.

DOGGED WOMAN:

But if he was lied to, then it makes sense: "*That conversation never took place.*"

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

The conversation *did* take place.

DOGGED WOMAN:

Oh, I know that. But maybe *he* didn't know that! If he was *told* it never took place, how was he to *know* it took place?

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

There were witnesses.

DOGGED WOMAN:

To the conversation?

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

Yes. There were at least three, four people in the room. I know for a fact that Vicki heard the conversation.

DOGGED WOMAN:

But did he ever talk to Vicki?

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

Of course he talked to Vicki. Vicki was here earlier.

DOGGED WOMAN:

I mean, I know he *talked* to Vicki, or imagine she heard him talk, but I'll bet she could tell he was an asshole and didn't want anything to do with him. So I'm guessing she was in and out of there and there wouldn't really be an opportunity for her to weigh in on that particular conversation. I mean, did she say anything to you?

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

All right. If that were the case, wouldn't he just have said to me "What's-his-bucket said he never said that"?



DOGGED WOMAN:

No. Remember it's not the content that's in question, it's the entire exchange.

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

Right! (*short pause*) What?

DOGGED WOMAN:

He would've said "What's-his-bucket said '*That conversation never*'—"

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

(*interrupting, standing up*) Right!! And, okay, here's something else. This wasn't an isolated incident. Because now I'm remembering that the other, hideous woman with him in there today said it too. Earlier, after I first started this whole thing. This must be like their mantra, how they live, how they get by, how they rationalize their actions, or non-actions. I actually think I have it from her lips, in an email: "*That conversation never took place!*"

DOGGED WOMAN:

Those exact words?

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

Or close. About an entirely *different* conversation! And you know, she also said it over the phone yet *another* time!

DOGGED WOMAN:

A third conversation?

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

Yes! Is that insane, or what? These people are truly satanic!

DOGGED WOMAN:

Because none of these conversations took place?

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

According to them! Unbelievable, isn't it? Don't they know how this makes them look? Their whole operation look? It's crazy! And crazy-making. *God* will I be glad when I'm through with this.

*The woman in repose gathers her coat and handbag.*

DOGGED WOMAN:

It is difficult when stories don't match up.

*Pause.*

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

What?

DOGGED WOMAN:

There are two sides to every story and when you've got powerful people up against each other...

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

No, no. There are no "stories." We're talking about facts. Things that happened, conversations that were *had*.

DOGGED WOMAN:

*"Took place..."*

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

Yes! Took place! Conversations that... What is going on here?

DOGGED WOMAN:

Nothing's going on here!

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

What are you trying to do?

DOGGED WOMAN:

I'm not trying to do anything! Like I said, like *you* said, the whole tale is laughable and I'm just trying to see both sides—

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

*(interrupting)* There's no both sides! There's only one side! The side that took place! My side! And let me tell you that despite their desks and forms and "come back tomorrows" the only power these people truly have is in their own altered universe, but it's still not anything to laugh at if you're caught up in it! Do you see me laughing? Do you?

DOGGED WOMAN:

Sweetie, calm down! I'm sorry, I didn't mean to get you upset! Of course! You're right! I'm sorry! I'm really, really sorry!

*After a moment,*

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

*I'm sorry.*

DOGGED WOMAN:

No, it was me. It was my fault. You said you were done with this and I dredged it all up again.

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

I am done with it. It's just so... I shouldn't have lost it. I'm sorry. But these are really horrible people.

DOGGED WOMAN:

I know.

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

I feel like this has been going on forever and it takes a lot for me to be *able* to move past it, you know.

DOGGED WOMAN:

I know!

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

So it catches me off guard when I sense they're still trying to get their nasty little claws into me.

DOGGED WOMAN:

They are from the worst kind of hell!

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

But the truth is they can't touch me! Even if I never get their goddamned validation, I've already left them far, far behind!

DOGGED WOMAN:

Right!

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

Right!

DOGGED WOMAN:

And who cares what anyone else says or believes! I mean, *you're* the one who knows what actually happened!

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

Right. I know.

DOGGED WOMAN:

I know.

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

And Vicki. She knows.

DOGGED WOMAN:

Vicki knows!

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

And the other witnesses know.

DOGGED WOMAN:

Of course! The other witnesses! To the conversation!

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

Right!

*Pause.*

DOGGED WOMAN:

And the other conversations?

*Pause.*

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

The other conversations?

DOGGED WOMAN:

The other conversations. Were there witnesses to the other conversations? The other conversations that never took place?

*Pause.*

Not that it matters.

*Pause.*

WOMAN IN REPOSE:

No. It doesn't matter.

*Facing away from the dogged woman on the bench, the woman in repose stands and holds onto her belongings with an air of desperation.*

It doesn't matter one bit.

*Really long pause, until*

***End of Play***