

The Phobia Clinic

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Characters

Doctor

Bob – a patient

Set in a doctor's surgery, a patient arrives with a most unusual complaint.

The stage is divided in two parts. Stage right is the doctor's office with a desk and two chairs. Stage left is the patients waiting area with three chairs. On lights up, Bob, the patient is sitting on one of the chairs. The doctor is leaning back on his chair with his feet on the desk. There is a small box about the size of a shoebox on the desk along with some loose paper. The men sit in silence for a while. The doctor eventually settles himself, puts the box under the desk and moves left to call the next patient.

DOCTOR: Send the next patient in.

Bob enters

DOCTOR: Bob? Is it?

BOB: Yes. Thanks for seeing me.

DOCTOR: Take a seat.

Bob sits

BOB: Thank you

DOCTOR: Now Bob, how can I help.

BOB: I have a phobia ...

DOCTOR: *(Interrupting)* and you've come to the right place. Our tagline is "if you fear it, we can clear it"

Bob looks at him puzzled

DOCTOR: It's a work in progress. We're constantly tweaking it.

BOB: OK, so anyhow ...

DOCTOR: No, don't tell me yet. I want to show you something. Just sit back and relax.

BOB: But ..

DOCTOR: Wait. This is going somewhere.

The doctor takes two sheets of paper from the desk and proceeds to dance provocatively around Bob's chair using the paper as fans in a bad burlesque type routine. Bob looks on in amazement. The doctor finishes and looks at Bob

DOCTOR: Well?

BOB: *(Standing)* I think I may have come to the wrong place.

DOCTOR: No, no stay. There's a point to this. You see, I too have a phobia but I've learned to live with it.

BOB: I don't understand.

DOCTOR: I have a phobia of dancing without an audience. You see, I love dancing but because of my phobia, I can't do it on my own. So now I take every opportunity to dance to an audience. What do you think?

BOB: *(Slightly nervous)* I'm not sure really.

DOCTOR: So we can rule out burlesque or homoerotic dancing as your phobia, am I right?

BOB: I suppose but I might develop one.

DOCTOR: Enough about me. Think of that as an icebreaker, to help you relax. So tell me about yourself. What's your phobia?

BOB: It's difficult to explain. On one hand I don't have a phobia but on the other hand, that is my phobia.

DOCTOR: I don't quite understand.

BOB: I have a fear of not having a phobia.

DOCTOR: Mmmm Interesting

BOB: Everyone seems to have a phobia or an anxiety these days but I don't and I feel left out. I've tried lots of things; spiders, confined spaces, heights but nothing worked then I started getting panic attacks. It took a while to realise what it was.

DOCTOR: Unusual. I've never come across this before. It sounds like a severe form of FOMO.

BOB: FOMO?

DOCTOR: You know. Fear of missing out.

BOB: I don't know. I don't feel special. I don't have a phobia to define me.

DOCTOR: But of course you do. You have the perfect setup. A phobia with no triggers so it's never really going to affect you.

BOB: But it's constantly on my mind and what's worse, it doesn't have a name so I can't even drop it into conversation.

DOCTOR: I can help you with that. I'm a leading member of the world association of severe phobias or wasps for short. I have the authority to create names for new phobias.

BOB: Really?

DOCTOR: So, let's see now (*pause for thinking*) I have it ... Nonphobophobia.

BOB: Nonphobophobia! That sounds great. I finally belong. Thank you.

DOCTOR: You're welcome.

BOB: Now that it has a name, you can treat it right?

DOCTOR: You want to be cured?

BOB: I don't want to go through life with Nonphobophobia.

DOCTOR: But .. I thought ... I can try but it could take a while.

BOB: Is there not a quick treatment?

DOCTOR: I could try exposure therapy.

BOB: What's that?

DOCTOR: It's where we gradually expose patients to their greatest fear until they realise how irrational their fear actually is.

BOB: Gradually sounds like a long process.

DOCTOR: I could try a short sharp shock version?

BOB: I'm up for it.

DOCTOR: OK.

Doctor reaches under the desk and produces the box which he places on the desk.

DOCTOR: This box will usually contain that which the patient most fears.

Bob leans back in the chair to distance himself from the box.

BOB: Will this hurt?

DOCTOR: Hard to say. Open the box.

BOB: *(Nervous)* I'm not sure now.

DOCTOR: This is a safe place. Open it.

Tentatively Bob takes the box and slowly opens it just a small amount to take a peek inside. He looks puzzled.

BOB: It's empty.

DOCTOR: Not quite. It has no phobia in it.

BOB: Looks empty to me.

DOCTOR: It's full of no phobia. Take the lid off completely

Bob does so.

DOCTOR: How do you feel?

BOB: Confused.

DOCTOR: But not frightened. You've faced your greatest fear and you're fine. I call that cured. I think I might dance again.

BOB: No! I don't quite understand. It's just an empty box.

DOCTOR: You're cured and best of all, you can tell people that you used to suffer from Nonphobophobia. You won't feel left out.

BOB: (*Dawning on him*) Yes ... that's a good point ... I see. Wow, you are a miracle worker.

DOCTOR: All part of the service.

BOB: Thank you doctor.

DOCTOR: No thank you. I get enormous pleasure from seeing people conquer their fears. Now there's the small matter of my bill.

He scribbles on a piece of paper and hands it to Bob

DOCTOR: You can pay in instalments if you like.

Bob looks at the bill and can hardly speak. He begins to hyperventilate.

BOB: What ... five hundred ... what ... but ...

He is stuck to the chair in shock.

DOCTOR: You look terrible Bob. If I'm not mistaken, you're showing all the classic signs of Billophobia; fear of receiving a bill. Now that is a common fear. I have a great treatment for that.

Bob struggles to his feet and moves towards exit

DOCTOR: Will I book you in? Same time next week?

Bob turns back and struggles to speak.

BOB: F..f..uck off and d.dance!

Bob exits.

DOCTOR: (*After him*) See you then Bob. Nice man.

He picks up the two sheets of paper he used for the fan dance, then reconsider.

DOCTOR: No, better not.

Lights fade.

END OF PLAY