

WHY NOT US?

by

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SCENE ONE

INT. BEDROOM – NIGHT

FX MOVIE SOUNDTRACK EXPLOSIONS IN THE
BACKGROUND

KATIE (KATIE RANT, late twenties, south English accent)
Ben! Ben!

FX ELECTRONIC BEEP. MOVIE SOUNDS STOP.

BEN (BEN RANT, early thirties, Scottish, speaks slowly and deliberately)
Yes?

KATIE I'm trying to sleep. Can you turn it down? The explosions are giving me a headache.

BEN If I turn it down so you can't hear the explosions, I can't hear the dialogue. 21st century blockbusters. Designed for a sole viewing in the cinema and-

KATIE Ben. It's two thirty in the morning and we have to be up in five hours.

BEN Fine I'll turn it off.

KATIE I didn't say to turn it off. Just down. Why don't you go downstairs and watch it?

BEN No no it's fine. It's fine. Good night.

FX LAPTOP CLOSING. SHUFFLING IN BED.

BEN (Heavy breathing)

KATIE Ben? If you're stressed-

BEN I'm not stressed, babe.

KATIE You're breathing again.

BEN Oh I'm so sorry-

KATIE I didn't mean-

BEN (chuckling) No, I know.

KATIE Smartass. I meant you're breathing like you're having trouble. And you're not sleeping.

BEN I'm not not sleeping. I just wanted to watch Batman is all.

KATIE You can't lie to me. I know when you're not happy, Ben.

BEN Well, you know I'd be happier if you let me watch batman.

KATIE (Laughs) Put headphones on your Christmas list.

BEN (a heavy sigh) Katie? Babe. Do you ever wonder if it's worth it? You know, planning our lives around work. Sleeping so you're rested for a job. The whole idea is we work to make our lives easier. Not live around our jobs. I'm twenty nine and if I can't stay up late and watch movies whenever I want then what was the point of working to pay for the movie, you know? Katie? Babe?

FX KATIE SNORING.

BEN (sighs) Good night to you to, darling.

SCENE 3

FX LONDON TUBE. FRONT DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING. KEYS DROPPED ON THE TABLE.

INT. HOME – DAY

BEN Honey?

FX ANSWER PHONE MACHIENE BEEP

ANSWERPHONE You have one new message, message one.

KATIE (D) Ben darling it's Katie, I'm sorry I've been asked to work late tonight. The hospital is really short staffed like bloody always. Damn conservatives. Treat yourself to a pizza and Batman on full blast on the big tv. Ok love you!

BEN Love you too.

FX TV POWER ON.

TV PRESENTER Tonight on the-

TV PRESENTER 2 ...And as you can see here the lemon sea bass is cooked to absolute perfection...

BEN No-one likes sea bass.

SPORT VOICE And that's a fantastic pass from Rooney, England are...

BEN Still shit.

BRAVO Are you tired of your dead end job? Sick of been the smartest guy in the room but no-one seems to listens to you? Are you funny? Charming? Or bitter and Sarcastic?

BEN All of the above?

BRAVO Or all of the above! I have just the thing for you! I'm Johnny Bravo and every Thursday I hold a comedy workshop. Why not come along? And see if comedy might be the thing you're looking for to change your life only-

FX TV POWER OFF

BEN Not tonight, Johnny Bravo. I have some unfinished business.

FX BATMAN SOUNDTRACK

FX KEYS IN LOCK. FRONT DOOR OPENING / CLOSING.

KATIE Ben! I'm home. Ben?

BEN I saved you some pizza.

KATIE I love you.

BEN How was work?

KATIE Not bad. A women used expanding foam instead of shampoo. A bloke managed to nail his hands together.

BEN Ouch.

KATIE Oh and here's one you'll like.

BEN Yeah?

KATIE This woman came in with her son who'd glue his hand to his penis.

BEN OW! Why would I like that? Oh the humanity.

KATIE Well apparently he thought it was tingle lube.

BEN How? How? How do you get super glue mixed up with lube?

KATIE Easily, apparently. Well the story is, the bathroom cabinet door was loose so the mum kept the glue in the bathroom to fix it and it happened to be similar in appearance to lube. I think he'd had a few.

BEN Christ.

KATIE Anyway, how was your night?

BEN Fine. Boring.

KATIE Another day in paradise.

BEN Mmm. I was thinking of maybe going to a workshop thing tomorrow night. Change of pace, you know.

KATIE What kind of workshop?

BEN Like a humour based performance type thing.

KATIE A comedy workshop? You? But you don't like laughing Ben.

(Ben laughs)

Well, ok! You like people laughing at things you say and you mock the world. But I can't see you going anywhere to watch people try and be funny.

BEN No that's the thing. I want to go to try and be funny.

KATIE Very funny, Ben.

BEN Why is that so amusing?

KATIE It's not, it's not. I'm sorry. It's just a little ironic. People would have to know who you are and your outlook on life. The way you speak and act and think to get your humour.

BEN You don't think I'm funny.

KATIE Yes of course I do, silly. It's one of the reasons I married you. But you're not like 'laugh out loud' 'hahaha' kind of funny. Try and make me laugh.

BEN Fine. I won't go.

KATIE Oh I didn't say that. No you go. If it makes you happy, that's fine with me. It'll be nice to the house to myself for an evening anyway. I might take a leaf out of your book and watch Batman on full volume.

BRAVO Better. Any hobbies? Interests?

BEN No. I like movies.

BRAVO Not giving me much to make fun of here, Ben. Why don't you give us a joke?

BEN I'm more of a commentator.

BRAVO Hey at least he's honest. Commenting on things is a great skill and we'll work towards that. But today, seen as there are so many new faces. I think we'll start with something a little more...funny. Pair up. Tell as many jokes as you know. Ben, you're with Amanda. Amanda, start easy.

BEN Hey.

AMANDA Hi Scottish Ben. You can start so I know what I'm up against.

BEN I don't know any jokes.

AMANDA Well then you're in the right place. I got one for you. What do you call a man who's lost eighty percent of his intelligence? Divorced. What's the difference between a girlfriend and a wife? Two dresses sizes and roots.

BEN (scoffs) Why do the joke have to be sexist? That's not exactly the height of comedy.

AMANDA Comedy is not about height, my friend. It's about how low you're willing to go. Sexism is good because that way at least half of your audience will laugh. Or tell a joke about sex. Then everyone will laugh, even if it's not funny.

BEN Why's that then?

AMANDA The ones who get it, will find it funny. The rest will laugh along so no-one thinks they're stupid or virgins. Jokes are the easy part of stand-up but you have to pick the right ones. Or you'll just be a guy standing on a stage saying 'I'm so funny, you need to pay to listen to me speak'.

BEN You can make money doing this?

AMANDA You can make money doing anything if you're good enough.

SCENE 5

INT. HOME – DAY

BEN Babe?

KATIE (B) In here!

Hey honey. How was your thing?

BEN It was er...interesting. I don't know. I can't help but appreciate the irony. The guy is calls himself Johnny Bravo and then opens the night on 'this is not a platform for my own performance'.

KATIE Did you perform anything?

BEN No. I have to next week. It's tradition for all newbies to perform their second week. Initiation of sorts.

KATIE You're going back?

BEN Yeah. Is that ok?

KATIE Sure. Of course.

BEN I think it could be something, you know.

KATIE Something like what?

BEN I don't know. I'm just...I'm just excited.

KATIE (laughs) Ok.

BEN What?

KATIE Nothing.

BEN Tell me.

KATIE You're just so cute when you're excited. C'mon. Let's go to bed.

BEN Hey Katie?

KATIE Yes, Ben, my darling?

BEN What's the hardest part of playing badminton?

KATIE I don't know.

BEN Telling your parents that you're gay.

KATIE (laughing) Ben.

BEN How can you tell if your wife is dead?

KATIE Ben!

BEN I haven't done it yet. The sex is the same but the dishes pile up.

FX A LIGHT SLAP.

BEN Ow!

(Laughs)

Ok last one. What is hard and pink when it goes in and soft and wet when it comes out?

KATIE Oh Ben please-

BEN Strawberry chewing gum you dirty minded git!

KATIE You're an asshole.

BEN I love you too, babe.

SCENE 6

INT. HOME – DAY

FX LAPTOP KEYS TAPPING.

KATIE You writing jokes again?

BEN They're called skits, babe.

KATIE Sorry, sorry. But are you writing jokes?

BEN Yup. Can I ask you something?

KATIE Erm..

BEN This isn't the start of a joke. I'm being serious.

KATIE Oh, ok. Yeah of course!

BEN Bravo told me about this small gig at a local club that had slots for new performers going.

KATIE Right. And what did you want to ask?

BEN Can I do it?

KATIE Ben you don't have to ask me. I'm your wife not your mother. You can do what you like.

BEN Do you think it's a good idea?

KATIE I don't know. Why not? I guess. How about you have a little tester? Perform something to me and Steve or something.

BEN That's a great idea. Hey babe? How do you know if your wife is a good housekeeper? Don't give me that look!

KATIE I don't know, Ben. How about when she divorces you for being a misogynistic git and keeps the house?

BEN That's not what I was going to say. But yours is better. I'm using that.

KATIE You don't have a sister.

BEN I know but it just something I thought of. Don't interrupt!

(performance voice)

By the end of the evening I was beginning to wonder what this kid's problem was so I asked him what his name was. I had been on the toilet while he had done his introduction, you see. I received his introduction. He revealed that his name was Cliff. I need no further information but he gave it to me anyway. Apparently 'Cliff' was his nick-name, his real name was Richard and his last name was Dunham but no-one ever remembered that so they called him, naturally so, 'Cliff Richard' which eventually got shortened down to 'Cliff' you would have hoped that it would have got shortened down to 'Richard' but apparently not.

STEVE I don't get it.

BEN You wouldn't, you're a telemarketer. Amanda?

AMANDA You could perhaps be a little bit more...what's the word? 'LOL' right now you're in the reign of inwardly smirking. DVD comedy rather than pub comedy.

BEN Katie? Babe?

KATIE It's good. It's just not you. You're Ben. You're my sarcastic, blunt, dry humoured husband. Which is why we love you and that doesn't really come across.

BEN I have to make a character. That's what Johnny says.

AMANDA Johnny's a talent agent, not a professor.

KATIE Why can't your character be you? A sarcastic bloke who pokes fun at those around him? Why do you have to make up stories when your real stories are better? Like when that woman locked herself in her panic room and instead of unlocking it, you pretended to have bad signal and left her in there for two days. That's funny.

BEN She didn't think so.

The others laugh.

KATIE See? Naturally amusing.

SCENE 8

INT. COMEDY CLUB – NIGHT

BRAVO And that ends today's session! Oh before we go let me just say a big good luck to Mr Ben Rant. He has his first gig tomorrow night at The Trinity. The pub any wannabe comic should be applying to. They have loads of slots going and they pay! Right, class dismissed. Ben, a word.

BEN Yeah?

BRAVO Look I had to pull quite a few strings to get you this gig. You on from Seven to Seven thirty. You're the warm up, so you've got to be good as there's no coat tails to ride. Alright?

BEN Yeah. Look, Johnny, I'm sorry but can I ask you something?

BRAVO It's better to ask for forgiveness than it is to ask for permission, and you just asked for both. But go ahead.

BEN Am I funny?

BRAVO You're Scottish, Ben. Anything you say is funny if you say it with enough conviction or distaste. Alright? I've got to go. But good luck, you'll be fine.

SCENE 9

INT. COMEDY CLUB – NIGHT

BEN ...I mean what is the point of a panic room in Birmingham?

FX CROWD LAUGHING

BEN Personally, if you told me you had a panic room I'd think.
Yeah. That house must be worth breaking in to.

You might have noticed I am Scottish, which naturally means I have three facts about Scotland that I like to repeat over and over again when anyone asks me about Scotland. The first is-

HECKLER Scottish wanker!

BEN Well done. Original. Jerk-off. Right so yeah...what was I saying? Oh yeah. Right so facts. Facts. Did you know Scotland is the only country in the world that Coca-cola isn't the number one soft drink? Does anyone know what it is?

HECKLER Your mom?

BEN It's actually your mom but that's besides the point.

FX CROWD LAUGHING

BEN Iron Brew. It's Iron Brew. I've got a funny story about Iron Brew actually...

BEN ...So there I am stuck listening to this woman drone on about how it is our fault her home got broken into. Funny. I don't see how that was our fault. Security systems don't typically work unless you turn them on.

FX CROWD LAUGHING

BEN Anyway, I'm getting the flashing light so that means it's time to go. Little truth before, this was actually my first gig. I just didn't want to paint a target on my back by telling you. (crowd clapping) Thank you. So I'd say you've been a wonderful crowd but I've got nothing to compare it to so six months down the line I might look back and think 'no, they were shit'. I'm Ben Rant, thank you for listening!

SCENE 10

FX DOOR OPENING / CLOSING.

INT. HOME – DAY

KATIE Ben that was great!

BEN No it wasn't. I froze half way through. I just rambled about Iron Brew! That was supposed to be a one line joke. I didn't perform half the things I was supposed to do.

KATIE They clapped for you. A whole room of people. You were great!

BEN It's stupid.

KATIE No it isn't. Do you know why?

BEN Why?

KATIE I noticed it last night. And in the early hours of this morning. You, my friend, are snoring again.

BEN I'm sorry, I'm just stressing I-

KATIE No, no. It's good. You only snore when you're deep in sleep. You're sleeping better. You're tiring yourself out writing and then you're sleeping like a baby. That's good. Tell me. How did it feel on that stage?

BEN (laughs) Sweaty. Hot. Amazing. Oh my god babe it was amazing.

KATIE Well there you go!

BEN It was really fun. And I got paid for it. I got paid for having fun. Thirty quid too. Not too shabby.

KATIE I'm proud of you. You know what I think we should?

FX BEN, KATIE MAKING OUT.

BEN Mmm?

KATIE Well I was going to say order Pizza and watch the Dark Night Rises but we could do that first.

BEN I'm Scottish, it's part of the job description.

STEVE Ok. Rip it off like a plaster. Erm. That woman was not actually a client.

BEN What?

STEVE Well see my computer froze while I was playing Spider Solitaire but it's back up and running now thank god! So I just searched that woman's number and it looks like she's an employee of Sutton Security's human resources department.

BEN Balls.

STEVE Shit here comes Pete. Hide!

BEN What do you mean hide? It's an office you...Hey Pete! How's the wife? You ok?

PETE A word. In my office. Steven, stop playing solitaire and get back to work please.

SCENE 12

INT. OFFICE – DAY

BEN Look I'm sorry if I may have-

PETE Save it Ben. You were a terrible telemarketer. You're an even worse technical supportist.

BEN You mean support technician.

PETE Regardless, you are suspended pending completion of a customer skills training session.

BEN Oh! What? You gotta be joking.

PETE No I am not. Go home and have a long hard think about just what you want to achieve in this job. The customer is always right Ben! You can close the door on your way out.

SCENE 13

INT. LIVING ROOM – DAY

Ben is on the phone to Katie.

KATIE (D) What do you mean suspended?

BEN Like I had a go at a customer and now I need some time think about what I want to achieve in this job. Personally in light of the suspension, I think I just achieved what I wanted to achieve in this job.

KATIE (D) Ben what about money? We've got a mortgage. I'm a Nurse, I'm not exactly well paid. How long until you can go back to work?

BEN I don't know. I don't know if I want to go back. A month maybe. I can always do some more gigs to make money,

KATIE (D) Thirty quid here and there, great. Right well I'm working 'til late tonight which is probably a good thing in light of this. Can you do me a favour and just cook one of those ready meals and leave it on the side for me? Anyway, I've got to go my break is almost over.

BEN Yeah sure. Babe? You're not angry are you?

KATIE (D) I've got to go. Bye.

BEN Bye. Love you!

(sighs)

Great.

SCENE 14

INT. LIVING ROOM – LATER

KATIE (fade in) Ben. Ben. Hey honey.

BEN (sleepy voice) Babe. Sorry must have dosed off. You ok?

KATIE Yeah. Look I'm sorry I was kind of short with you earlier. I was stressed. A boy died in A&E today.

BEN Oh no. I'm sorry.

KATIE Yeah.

BEN What happened?

KATIE He was admitted last night with stomach pains. No idea what caused it. They ran test all night, he wasn't allergic to anything. Then today he just started crying and I asked what was wrong and he told me. He'd been worried about an assignment or test or something. And he didn't want to disappoint his parents but he couldn't focus so he didn't study. Today was the day of the test. I asked why he was crying and he- He. (sobs)

Ben Babe.

KATIE He drank lye, Ben. Eleven years old. By the time he told us it was too late for the doctors to do anything. We just had to make him comfortable. It was horrible.

BEN I'm so sorry babe.

KATIE You know what? I was thinking of you. All day. I was thinking I wish Ben was here. Ben would know what to say. He might not say the right thing, or the most politically correct thing. But he'd say something. And I'd laugh. Ben, you make me laugh even when I want to cry.

BEN Well I feel bad now. You're being nice to me and I forgot to cook your ready meal.

KATIE (Katie laughs which makes her sob more)

I told the boy some of your jokes.

BEN Hadn't the kid suffered enough?

KATIE Ben.

BEN You want me to tell you a joke? I can tell you a joke. I'll cheer you up, my darling.

KATIE Ok but only if it's not racist or misogynistic or overly sexual.

BEN If it's all of the above is that also a no? Oh! I know. I've got a nice one. Why did Hitler kill himself? He got the gas bill.

KATIE Wow. Start gently, baby.

BEN Ok. After getting laid, what takes a long time to get hard?

KATIE Babe.

BEN Cement you-

KATIE I love you.

BEN You won't in a minute. What do you get if your cross London with a bicycle? Stabbed. You get stabbed.

KATIE Nice. You hate London.

BEN I hate everything! Accept for you. I can tolerate you.

KATIE Charming. I'd go to the moon and back for you and you can tolerate me. You're lovely.

BEN I know. Right. I'm gonna tell you a story.

(performance voice)

So once upon a time there was a place known as Scotland. Where it rained and rained and rained. Which in literature is referred to as pathetic fallacy as everyone in Scotland is miserable. However, there was a Scottish boy who decided to get away from the wet wonders of the highlands and move to somewhere much happier where the sun could shine freely. He moved to Wales. He was eighteen, he was naïve but he great beard! Do you want to carry on?

KATIE Keep going.

BEN Well our bearded friend was in a band of course. What else do you go to University for? And one day he met a girl who lacked in the Welsh charm he had become accustomed to. She was English. A Londoner no less who loved Scottish accents and boys with beards. And unlike the Scottish lad,

she had come to University, to come to University. So after graduation, and after then had fallen madly in love. The Scottish boy moved to London to be with his girl, and they've been happily annoying each other ever since. The end.

KATIE

Cute.

BEN

You'd go to the moon and back for me, I came to London for you. So I think I'm braver.

KATIE

I think you should do more gigs.

BEN

Yeah?

KATIE

Yeah. You're funny. And sweet. And you are right. Why the hell should you be stuck working in an office dealing with idiots for money? I hate to break it to you but you're not very good at it. So if you're going to fail at something you don't want to do, might as well try to succeed at something you do want to do.

BEN

Even if I wanted to be a stand up comedian?

KATIE

Especially if you want to be a stand up comedian. Someone's gotta do it. Why not you? Why can't we be the ones that are happy?

BEN

Are you happy?

KATIE

I'm sad now. But I'm happy too. That's why we make fun of the idiots who glue their hands to places they shouldn't. We need to laugh, Ben. We have to. People die every minute. So yeah, if you love it. Why not?

BEN

I'm going to need some more funny stories if I'm going to do this full time.

KATIE

I think between us we've got that covered. And you've got an accent that just makes everything funny.

BEN

I love you.

KATIE

I know. But don't you have a phone call to Johnny Bravo to make?

The End.

Why Not Us – Written by Ally Haran.