HEAD GAMES

By Brian Feehan

SYNOPSIS: A man and woman have a brief encounter on a commuter train when the man becomes obsessed with the back of the woman's head.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(1 MAN, 1 WOMAN.)

HIM (m)..........................................A non-descript little man, like a Chihuahua in a suit and tie.

HER (f) ...........................................Taller than the man. Well-dressed, controlled, important in her own mind.

SETTING

“Head Games” can be performed using only two chairs, one behind the other, parallel to the front of the stage and facing stage left. The addition of the sound of a moving train can enhance the production.

PROPS

□ A woman’s nice briefcase
□ A nice purse
□ A file with a report inside
□ A paper lunch sack
□ An apple
□ A small book
□ Small compact mirror
AT RISE:
A moving train. Dusk. A WOMAN – well-dressed, business suit, sits reading a report. Calm, controlled – perhaps a slightly condescending air. Behind her sits a MAN. Nondescript suit and tie. A man of grandiose insignificance. He stares forward at her for a while as if transfixed, squirms a bit in his seat, tries to look away, but is compelled back. He then leans forward and cautiously taps her on the shoulder.

HIM: Hello...

She turns to him.

HER: Yes?
HIM: Excuse me, I’m sorry...but I hate the shape of the back of your head.

Pause.

HER: I’m sorry?
HIM: The back of your head. I don’t like it.
HER: Oh...well...hmm.

She turns front again and back to her report. He stares, then taps her, a second time on the shoulder.

HIM: Hello...

She turns.

HER: Yes?
HIM: I’m sorry...it’s just that – from back here – it’s pretty disturbing.
HER: I’m sorry...but there’s really nothing I can do about it, is there?
HIM: You don’t happen to have a hat, do you?
HER: No. I don’t have a hat.

Pause.
HIM: ...sweater doesn’t have a hood?
HER: (Indicating.) No. No hood. No sweater.

*She turns back around.*


HIM: Hello.

*She turns quickly to him.*

HER: Yes!!

HIM: I’m sure you’d understand if you were in my...well...position.

HER: (Trying her utmost to be charming.) I’m sorry if my head offends you. But I don’t know what I can do about it short of putting a bag over it.

HIM: If that wouldn’t be too much trouble...

HER: Yes. Yes, it would be too much trouble – even if I had a bag – which I don’t.

HIM: It’s just that – from back here – it’s pretty disturbing

HER: (With him.) ...pretty disturbing. So I’ve been told. You know, if you’re that disturbed, you might want to move to another seat?

HIM: (Adamant.) Oh no...no, I couldn’t do that, no. This is my lucky seat.

HER: Your lucky seat...

HIM: Mmmm. I met my wife in this seat.

HER: Oh.

HIM: Besides, there isn’t another empty seat on the train. If there was, I would have just asked you politely to move.

*She glances around.*

HER: Unfortunately, you’re right.

HIM: So I guess I’ll just have to grin and bear it.

*With an effort he does. The effect is comic in a gruesome sort of way.*

HER: Yes. Well. I suppose so.
She turns back around. He continues to grin and stare. She waits. Tries to read. Waits. His eyes never waiver. She shifts. Then quickly turns around.

**HER:** Will you stop staring at my head?

*He lets out his breath.*

**HIM:** I’m sorry. I can’t help myself. It’s like watching an accident on the highway: you know that you really shouldn’t look – know that what you see will be gruesome and unsettling, but you’re compelled.

**HER:** Well, I can’t concentrate knowing that you’re sitting back there examining every iota of my skull.

**HIM:** I wasn’t examining. Although there are those that do – study the shape of the head I mean. It’s called phrenology, I believe; like reading tea leaves or nonsense like that. These phrenologists claim that they can tell everything about a person just from examining the shape and size and imperfections of the skull. The cranium. The head. Although, I wouldn’t touch yours for all the tea in China. I can’t imagine what I might discover.

*He shudders.*

**HIM:** So I wasn’t examining. Merely observing.

**HER:** I have an idea. Since there are no other seats to move to, why don’t we just switch seats and let me look at the back of your head for a while.

**HIM:** *(Adamant.)* Oh no, no, I couldn’t possibly...this is my lucky seat.

**HER:** *(With him.)* Lucky seat. Right. I forgot.

**HIM:** I met my wife in this seat.

**HER:** So you told me.

**HIM:** She’s dead. My wife.

**HER:** Oh? I’m...sorry...I imagine the back of her head was lovely.
HIM: What an interesting thing to say. You know, come to think of it, I don’t know that I ever saw the back of her head. In all our time together. Ours was a true partnership; a meeting of the minds. Simpatico. We were always side-by-side – like Siamese twins – only she was Irish. I think. Irish and some Italian, I believe. From the front, she was perfection...but no, I never did see the back of her head. Huh.

He opens up a small paper bag, takes out an apple and begins to eat. Pause.

HER: How long were you two together?
HIM: Oh...ages.
HER: And you claim that - in all that time - you never once saw the back of her head?
HIM: No.
HER: Not waking up in bed...?
HIM: (Thinking.) Mmmmm, nope.
HER: On an escalator?
HIM: She was afraid of escalators, And flutes...aulophobia, it’s called. And of course, arachibutyrophobia, which is the fear of getting peanut butter stuck to the roof of...
HER: On the stairs, then.
HIM: No. She always had me lead the way. She called me her trailblazer. Lewis and Clark, Columbus and Napoleon all rolled into one.
HER: Mmmm.

Silence.

HIM: But that was an interesting thing to say.

He opens a book and starts to read. She turns front and ponders how it might be possible to never see the back of someone’s head. A moment passes. Unable to bear it any longer, she spins back towards him.

HER: I’m sorry, but that is plainly impossible.
HIM: Excuse me?
HER: It’s just impossible. There is no way that you could be with someone for more than...a day without ever once seeing the back of their head.
HIM: How do you mean?
HER: I mean you would have seen it...when she was getting out of the shower...
HIM: No.
HER: …or planting something in the garden...
HIM: No.
HER: …washing the dishes?
HIM: (Calmly.) No.
HER: She never asked you to zip up a dress or help her with the clasp on a necklace?
HIM: She wasn’t into jewelry.
HER: Well, I don’t buy it. I mean, the mind boggles at what sort of machinations you’d have to go through to never see the back of another person’s head.
HIM: (Patronizing.) You might be thinking about this too hard.
HER: No, I’m sorry. You’ve made some pretty outrageous statements in the last few moments, but I simply cannot let that particular one go. You will need to explain to me how you could have been married to this person and never – ever – have seen the back of her head.
HIM: I’d prefer it if you didn’t refer to my wife as “this person.”
HER: I’m sorry. What was her name?
HIM: I’d rather not say.
HER: All right. Then explain to me how you could never have seen the back of that sainted woman’s head?
HIM: We were always together, side by side....
HER: Yes, I know.
HIM: Simpatico. A true meeting of the minds.
HER: Bullshit.
HIM: (Reproachful.) Language...