

OPRAH MADE ME DO IT

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By **Bradley Hayward**

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SYNOPSIS: Two women at a bookstore fight to the death over the last copy of Oprah Winfrey's latest bestseller. Caught in the middle of their feud is a lowly cashier, trying desperately to please both women without becoming their target. However, the more he works his customer service magic, the closer the bull's-eye gets to his forehead. This scathing comedy is certain to have retail employees nodding their heads and your audience howling with laughter.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 MAN, 2 WOMEN)

GREG (m).....A cashier, genial and patient. (129 lines)

PATSY (f).....A customer, bossy and unreasonable. (133 lines)

MONICA (f)A customer, timid and defenseless. (48 lines)

PRODUCTION NOTES

Permission is granted to omit any profanity, if necessary.

It is very important that none of the characters play for laughs, particularly Greg. It is much funnier if he remains deadpan throughout.

COSTUMES

GREG: A neat button down sweater, khaki pants, and a lanyard style nametag around his neck.

PATSY: A frumpy blouse, stretch pants, and perhaps a vest with hideous embroidery.

MONICA: A delicate sweater set, mid-length skirt, and a string of tiny pearls.

PROPS

- Several paperback books
- Shopping basket
- Telephone
- Beanie Baby
- Pink hold slips
- Thick hardcover book with a red dust jacket

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SETTING:

The checkout of a major bookstore. There's a counter center stage. On it, a cash register, telephone, and impulse purchases (such as Beanie Babies, candy and bookmarks). Behind the register is a hold shelf, filled with books that have pink slips sticking out the top. The front of the line is somewhere off-stage right.

AT RISE:

GREG stands behind the cash register, putting a lanyard with his name on it around his neck. He motions for the next customer in line.

GREG: Next, please.

PATSY marches in, balancing stack of paperbacks in one hand and a basket filled with more books in the other. She leans over and sets the first pile of books down. They topple to the floor behind the register. GREG politely laughs, straight from the customer service manual.

GREG: Don't worry about that.

PATSY: Worry about what? *(She plops the basket on the counter. GREG gives her a funny look, then bends over and comes back up with the books.)* Now, before you start ringing anything up - - I'm looking for a book.

GREG: Actually, if you're searching for a particular title, you'll have to ask someone over at the information desk.

She's frazzled at the suggestion and throws her arms up in the air. Then she plants her elbows on the counter and leans in.

PATSY: Say again?

GREG: Okay. *(He searches for new words. After some deep thought, he gives up.)* If you're searching for a particular title, you'll have to ask someone over at the information desk.

PATSY: But, I'm here now.

GREG: This is true.

PATSY: And you have a name badge on.

GREG: Also true.

PATSY: You do work here, right?

GREG: I do.

PATSY: So what's the problem?

GREG: Well - -

PATSY: Your badge doesn't say Starbucks, does it?

GREG: No.

PATSY: Or Denny's?

GREG: No.

PATSY: What does it say?

GREG: *(Looks at the badge, then her.)* "Greg."

PATSY: Good. Now that we've got that settled, this book I'm looking for came out a few days ago.

GREG: Ma'am - -

PATSY: Do you have it?

GREG: Ma'am - -

PATSY: Come on.

GREG: Ma'am - -

PATSY: There's other people waiting.

GREG: Ma'am - -

PATSY: And I've got places to be.

GREG: Ma'am - -

PATSY: Like my kidney dialysis.

GREG: Ma'am - -

PATSY: And I can't be late.

GREG: Ma'am - -

PATSY: I just had a Slurpee.

GREG: *(Loses his cool.)* What's the name of the book?! *(He pants, then takes a deep breath. PATSY is thoroughly pleased.)*

PATSY: Now was that so difficult?

GREG: *(With a forced smile.)* What's the name of the book?

PATSY: Can I get your name, young man?

GREG: *(Points to his badge.)* Greg. Remember?

PATSY: Remember what? *(GREG starts to speak, then thinks the better of it. He shrugs.)* I like to keep track of names. *(GREG nods.)* In case anything goes wrong.

GREG: The title, please.

PATSY: Right, right. The title. *(She holds up her fingers.)* It's about this thick.

GREG: (*Sarcastic.*) Oh, yes. That book. I believe we have it.

PATSY: Great. I'll wait here while you go fetch it. (*GREG'S jaw drops. He sucks it back up.*)

GREG: I'm afraid I might need a little more information.

PATSY: Why? You said you have it.

GREG: I was joking.

PATSY: Am I laughing - - Greg?

GREG: No, ma'am. You're not.

PATSY: No, Greg. I'm not. (*She sighs. In fact, she makes a whole production out of it.*) What information do you want?

GREG: The title would be nice.

PATSY: Right, right. The title. (*She thinks.*) It has a red cover.

GREG: Okaaay. We're getting there. Were there any words on the cover?

PATSY: Sure.

GREG: Great! What were they?

PATSY: Let's see - - (*Seriously, without any tone.*) The title.

GREG: (*Smiles.*) Thank you. So let's see where we're at. We've narrowed it down to a book this thick, with a red cover. And it likely has a title on the front.

PATSY: That's the one.

GREG: (*Points.*) Ma'am, the information desk is just a few steps that way. They'll be able to help you.

PATSY: Listen - - (*She checks his lanyard.*) Greg. Don't get down on yourself. You can do it. You've just got to persevere. Where do you expect to go in life if you always give up like this?

GREG: My lunch break.

PATSY: Think of this as a challenge.

GREG: Oh, believe me. I am.

PATSY: This isn't merely the search for a book. Think of it as a quest for the unknown. The key to your future. As Oprah says, "life is a journey, not a destination."

GREG: Got it.

PATSY: So find me that book, Greg. And quickly. Because after my dialysis, I've got to pick up my son from his psychiatrist.

GREG: Gotcha. Is there anything else you can tell me about the book?

PATSY: What more do you need?

GREG: Whatever you can drum up.

PATSY: If I must, fine. Let's see -- Red cover. You got that part.

GREG: Yes --

PATSY: What else? -- Oh, it's a hardcover. Yes, that's right. I remember because the price is absolutely ridiculous.

GREG: Good, good. And?

PATSY: You need more? Hmm -- What else did she have to say about it? --

GREG: What else did who have to say about it?

PATSY: Huh, what? Oh, nothing.

GREG: You said that "she" had something to say about it. She who?

PATSY: Oprah. What's it to you?

GREG: The book was on Oprah?

PATSY: Yeah. So?

GREG: So you can stop right there. I know exactly the one you're talking about. Thank you, Jesus!

PATSY: No, I don't think that's it.

GREG: Red cover, hardback, over-priced --

PATSY: This thick.

GREG: Lest we forget. We don't have it.

PATSY: Is it on sale? Because -- *(Then it hits her.)* You what?

GREG: We don't have it. I'm sorry.

PATSY: Yes you do.

GREG: No we don't.

PATSY: Yes you do.

GREG: We sold out.

PATSY: That's not possible.

GREG: Well, it is. And -- it is. Sold out.

PATSY: You didn't even check.

GREG: I've had many people request it today.

PATSY: Did you give them all this big a hassle?

GREG: If you'd like, I can reserve a copy for you when the next shipment comes in.

PATSY: I don't believe you.

GREG: Sure I will. Just give me your name and telephone number. We'll call you when it arrives.

PATSY: I mean that you don't have it.

GREG: Believe me, if I had a copy, I'd give it to you. I'd even carry it out to your car. That way I could watch you drive out of the parking lot.

PATSY: (*Serious. Very serious.*) Greg - - You're getting on my nerves. And I'm fresh out of Paxil. You must have a copy in the back.

GREG: I swear to God, ma'am. There's not a single copy of Oprah's book in the store.

PATSY: That's just fine. I don't want Oprah's book. I want the book that was featured on her show yesterday.

GREG: It's not here. I promise.

PATSY: Did you even watch? It was a great show.

GREG: No, ma'am. If I had, I would get out a pen and transcribe the book from cover to cover for you.

PATSY: I'm sensing tone here, Greg. Is that tone in your voice?

GREG: No, ma'am.

PATSY: I know tone when I hear tone. There's a guy at my AA meeting that drives me crazy with tone. "My mother loves me. She's very supportive about my sobriety." He's a big fat liar, that's what he is. Mothers love nobody.

GREG: Ma'am -

PATSY: I should know. I am one. And my kid - - He makes me feel so lousy. So insignificant. How am I supposed to love a child that has no regard for my needs? What with all his criticisms and constant nagging. Everyone blames me, but it's him. That kid's the devil! Just last week, I received a call from his kindergarten teacher. Apparently, he's still having trouble with his shoelaces. Well - - If he wasn't always so concerned with my whereabouts, he may not need that Velcro. Get this - - Sometimes I make a big bowl of popcorn before he leaves for school in the morning. Then I hide in the closet, with the door open a crack, just to watch him try and put on his shoes. His pudgy fingers don't have a prayer when it comes to those thick laces. (*Chuckling.*) It's the funniest damn thing you ever saw. And, you know what? It serves him right. Let him struggle for a change. (*GREG has no idea how to respond, so he just stares blankly ahead, slack jawed.*) Aren't you going to say anything?

GREG: Ma'am, there are thousands of books in this store, and I don't think any of them have the proper words to follow that.

PATSY: I'd like to speak to your manager.

GREG: Uh - - why?

PATSY: You've been surly with me, Greg.

GREG: I think I've been nothing but kind.

PATSY: Well, you would. You're a man. Plus, I was in here a few days ago. There were dozens of copies over there, by the front door. I find it hard to believe they've all been sold in forty eight hours.

GREG: But they have. Why didn't you just buy it then?

PATSY: I didn't know I needed it. Thank god for Oprah. She's the only one on my side. Now are you calling the manager for me, or do I have to cartwheel across the store first?

GREG: I don't see how that will change the situation.

PATSY: Don't think I don't know what you're doing.

GREG: What am I doing?

PATSY: Men are always keeping things from me. When I was a child, my father never loved me. He died before I turned nine, thank god. But before he croaked, I swear he only spoke to me on Sundays. "Take this carton back to the store, kiddo. I said menthols." Then my husband came along. He's worse than my father. Do you know that he has four children? Four! Only one of them is mine. Get this - - the other three came after we were married. Nothing but lies and betrayal. And now you have the nerve to keep this book from me. *(She grabs him by the lanyard and yanks him forward.)* Well, I won't have it, Greg! *(GREG winces. In fact, he's on the verge of tears.)* What's the matter with you?

GREG: Well - -

PATSY: Come on. The truth. Oprah says keeping your feelings bottled up is like swallowing poison. So what's the matter?

GREG: Well, frankly, ma'am - -

PATSY: What, Greg, what?!

GREG: You're scaring me.

PATSY: *(Scoffs loudly, then rolls her eyes.)* You sound just like my parole officer. Now call a manager. *(She lets go of his lanyard.)*

GREG: When a book appears on Oprah, it tends to sell out quickly.
He'll simply tell you the same thing.

PATSY: He? Just great. The world is run by testosterone. Well, get him up here. Then I'll give him a piece of my mind.

GREG: As you wish. *(He picks up the phone and presses a button. His voice comes over the loud speaker.)* Manager, please dial 2-4-0. Manager, 2-4-0. *(He hangs up. Meanwhile, PATSY has picked up a Beanie Baby from the counter. For a moment she's pleased, even playful.)*

PATSY: Well, would you look at that?! It's Eager Beaver. He's the only Beanie I'm missing. I'll take this, too. *(She tosses the Beanie Baby on top of her books. The phone rings and GREG answers.)*

GREG: Hi - - I've got a customer up here who would like to speak with you - - It's about the Oprah book - - I know that, but she'd like to have a word with you anyway - - *(He laughs, a little too hard.)*
A problem? - - No, there's no problem! - - She's just, well - - Come up and see for yourself - - Thank you. *(He hangs up.)*

PATSY: Is he coming up?

GREG: Yes, he is.

PATSY: Don't you mock me.

GREG: I'm not, ma'am.

PATSY: "I'm not, ma'am." See. How do you like it? And stop calling me ma'am. I'm not your goddamned grandmother.

GREG: Yes, ma'a—I mean, you perfectly sane customer for which I'm assisting for only five-fifty an hour. Now will you step to the side so that I can move the line along? *(Calling offstage.)* Next, please!

MONICA enters without a book and approaches the counter. She's quiet, over-anxious to please and a little mousy. She almost reaches the register.

PATSY: Oh, no you don't!

MONICA: Excuse me?

PATSY: Greg, dear, tell this young lady to get back to the front of the line and wait her turn.

GREG: But I said "next, please."

PATSY: You must be kicking yourself, then, because it's still my turn.

BY BRADLEY HAYWARD

GREG: I just want to move the line along. The manager is on his way. I promise. (*PATSY firmly plants her feet in front of the register and barks at MONICA.*)

PATSY: Go back, Miss Mousy!

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