

# *Antiques and a Little Tolerance*

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Setting: John Wodgers' Antiques and Luncheon Counter. A small, jumbly shop full of every kind of junk imaginable, as well as a lunch counter. The proprietor, John Wodgers, is a puppet. No one in town thinks that this is odd, and all treat him like a normal human.

## Characters:

**Myrna:** *The shop assistant*

**John Wodgers:** *The owner*

**Susannah:** *A stranger*

**Adam:** *A regular*

**Dot:** *John's ex-wife*

*The lights come up on a small, cluttered shop. Behind the lunch counter stands Myrna, a pleasant, friendly woman of any age. Amongst the clutter, behind the shop counter, sitting on a high stool, is a Muppet-like puppet. It is motionless, and should be almost unnoticed amongst all the other bric-a-brac. Susannah, a stylish woman, enters. She blinks, and as her eyes adjust to the indoors, Myrna greets her.*

*Myrna:* Hi there! Welcome to John Wodgers' Antiques and Luncheon Counter!

*Susannah:* Oh. Thank you.

*Myrna:* I haven't seen you before. You must be new in town!

*Susannah:* Yes. Well, I'm just passing through, really.

*Myrna:* That's fabulous! We are always glad to welcome tourists.

*Susannah:* Well, I wouldn't say I'm a tourist, exactly. My car broke down a little ways out of town, and I'm getting it fixed. They said it would take about an hour, so I'm wandering around. *(With a distinct lack of enthusiasm)* Lovely town you've got.

*Myrna:* Why thank you.

*Susannah:* *(Wanders about, touching things. Finally picks up something)* What is this?

*Myrna:* *(Laughing)* Now that's a funny story! Well, it was brought over from Lichtenstein about eighty years ago by Horace Neubauer's grandmother. She said it used to belong to the crown Prince of Lichtenstein, and he was given it by the King of Sweden. Now we all believed it, why not? But about ten years ago, when Horace's granny died and the house was being sold, someone noticed that it said *made in Taiwan* on the bottom of it! *(She looks as though she's going to launch into another paragraph, and Susannah quickly interrupts)*

*Susannah:* Hilarious. But what is it?

*Myrna:* Well, I don't actually know. You'd have to ask Mr. Wodgers.

*Susannah:* And is Mr Rodgers in?

*Myrna:* No, but Mr. Wodgers is! *(She laughs a big belly laugh)* Oh, don't worry, you're not the first to think that I have a lisp! It's Wodgers, with a w, not Rodgers with an r. He's right over there, by the cash box. John, do you know what that thing is?

*The puppet turns his head to look at the thing Susannah is holding.*

*John:* Nope. Haven't a clue.

*Susannah is gobsmacked. She looks at Myrna, who shrugs, then back at John Wodgers. He shrugs.*

*John:* To be honest, I don't think anyone knows what it is. But if you can guess what it is, it's free. If you don't know but want to take it home to think it over, it's \$29.95.

*Myrna:* So far no one's taken him up on that offer.

*Susannah looks like she is about to say something, her mouth opening and closing, but is interrupted by Adam entering. Adam is in suit and tie, on his lunch break.*

*Adam:* Afternoon, Myrna, afternoon, John. Can I get a tuna on brown and a cup of coffee, Myrna?

*Myrna nods and goes into the back to prepare the food.*

*John:* On a diet, Adam? What happened to the usual club sandwich and two bags of chips?

*Adam:* Just wanted a change, John. Got a newspaper?

*John hands Adam a newspaper. Adam sits at the lunch counter and begins flipping through the paper.*

*Susannah:* Excuse me?

*John:* Oh, I'm sorry. Did you want to buy that thing?

*Susannah:* What? No. *(She puts the thing down).* No. I just...

*Adam:* Did you see this! They're agitating for another soccer field. Soccer! What we really need is a hockey rink. And I don't think they realize how much these things cost.

*John:* Don't be rude, Adam. I'm helping this young lady. She's in town getting her car fixed.

*Adam:* Oh. I'm sorry. Local paper always gets me riled up. Where are you getting your car fixed?

*Susannah:* At Portnoy's Garage.

*Adam:* Had lunch yet?

*Susannah:* No, but-

*Adam:* Myrna!

*Myrna sticks her head out.*

*Myrna:* It's on its way!

*Adam:* Something for this lady, too. On me. *(To Susannah)* What would you like? They do a good soup.

*Susannah:* Soup is fine. But-

*Myrna nods and goes back to the kitchen.*

*Adam:* Portnoy will fix your car fine, but he won't do it in less than five hours.

*Susannah:* He said it would be an hour.

*Adam:* It'll be five. Trust me.

*Susannah:* Well, I guess some lunch is a good idea.

*Adam:* The name's Adam.

*Susannah:* Susannah.

*Adam:* And you've met Myrna and John, of course.

*Susannah:* Of course.

*Myrna enters with the soup and sandwich and coffee.*

*Myrna:* Here you be. Did you want anything to drink?

*Susannah:* No, thank you.

*Myrna:* All right, enjoy. John? You want anything?

*John:* No, I had a muffin about an hour ago, I'm fine.

*Myrna:* Well, since these folks are eating, maybe you can show me how to do those tax forms. We've got to get them in by month's end.

*John:* Bring 'em over, then.

*Myrna digs up a ledger and takes it over to John. Adam eats his sandwich, and Susannah watches it all, disbelieving. Myrna and John huddle over the ledger, and soon Adam notices Susannah not eating.*

*Adam:* Soup okay?

*Susannah:* Yeah, yeah. Fine. Listen, can I ask you something?

*Adam:* Sure.

*Susannah:* What's the deal with the puppet?

*Adam:* Puppet?

*Susannah:* Yeah. You know. The puppet.

*Adam:* You'll have to be more specific. There's a lot of junk in here.

*Susannah:* The puppet that you've been calling John Wodgers. The one over there.

*Adam:* John? John's not a puppet.

*Susannah:* *(laughing)* Okay, very funny. Way to prank the tourist. But seriously.

*Adam:* Seriously, I don't know what you're talking about.

*Myrna:* How's your lunches over there?

*Adam:* Good, Myrna, good as always.

*Susannah:* This is surreal.

*Adam:* From the big city, are you?

*Susannah:* Yes.

*Adam:* I'd have thought you'd be used to ethnic diversity.

*Susannah:* Ethnic diversity?

*Adam:* John's from Portugal. You've never seen a Portugese person before?

*Susannah:* He doesn't.... sound Portugese.

*Adam:* No, well, he's been here a long time.

*Dot enters. She is furious, and waving a newspaper.*

*Dot:* John! What is the meaning of this!?

*John:* Dot, I haven't got a clue what you're talking about.

*Dot:* This...this article in the paper!

*Myrna:* Now settle down, Dot. Let's not get too upset. I'm sure whatever it is, we can work it out.

*Dot:* Just let me find the article....

*As she flips angrily through the paper, John and Myrna exchange looks. Adam whispers to Susannah,*

*Adam:* Dot is John's ex-wife.

*Susannah:* You're kidding me, right?

*Adam:* I know. They're like night and day. But they were married for thirty years. Five kids.

*Susannah:* What!?

*Dot finds the article she was looking for. She thrusts the paper at John.*

*Dot:* See! It says you announced your intent to run for MLA.

*John:* Well, yes. I told everyone at the last Rotary meeting.

*Dot:* You didn't tell me!

*John:* No, I didn't. But you aren't in the Rotary.

*Dot:* You should have consulted with me and the kids first.

*John:* The kids are all grown up and moved away, Dot. And you and I are divorced. I don't have to consult you anymore. Now, let's save this discussion for later, shall we?

*Dot notices the others in the shop.*

*Dot:* Yes. Oh, I am sorry. It just came as such a shock. You see, I'd been thinking of running, myself.

*John:* You, Dot! Why, I had no idea!

*Dot:* No, I hadn't told anyone.

*Myrna:* You could always run for MP. Federal election's next year.

*Adam:* Looks like I'll have to find somewhere else to have lunch. This was the one place I could come to eat without talking politics.

*Myrna: (To Susannah)* Adam here is our Mayor.

*Susannah:* Oh. Really!

*Adam:* Yep. I've got the monopoly on inevitabilities in this town.

*Myrna:* He's also the undertaker.

*John, Dot and Myrna:* Death and taxes- For both you go to Adam.

*All laugh. Susannah gives a half-hearted chuckle.*

*Dot:* Can I get a cup of coffee, Myrna. Sorry about all the fuss.

*Myrna:* Sure. And don't you worry about it. We're all friends here.

*She exits, and returns with a cup of coffee.*

*Adam:* How's business, Dot? *(To Susannah)* Dot here runs the local forensic cleaning company.

*Dot:* Slow, Adam, very slow. *(To Susannah)* Hi there. You're new in town, aren't you?

*John:* Just passing through.

*Adam:* Dot, meet Susannah.

*Dot:* A pleasure.

*Susannah:* Hi.

*Adam:* Well, as sorry as I am to hear that business is slow, it's good news for me. The fewer crime scenes you have to clean, the fewer crimes there are.

*Dot:* Always a silver lining. But I'm left with a lot of time on my hands. That's why I was thinking of going into politics. And I'd have the best slogan around: *Cleaning Up Crime For Twenty-Two Years.*

*Myrna:* Oh, that is a good one. You should definitely go federal.

*Dot:* You know, I might just do that. Two of the kids live out east- if I got in I'd be nice and close to the grandkids.

*John:* Has it been 22 years? How time flies.

*Dot:* Indeed it does.

*All shake their heads and ponder this inescapable fact, except for Susannah, who still looks like she's lost in the twilight zone.*