

THE PRICE

by Shem Bitterman

Directed by Sandra Grand
Dramaturg: Abby Weintraub*He:* Andrew Ritter
She: Gina GiambroneStage Manager: Megan L. Kelly
Assistant Stage Manager: Omar Kamal
Costume Designer: Kevin R. McLeod
Lighting Designers: Michele Gallenstein, Brian Shippey
Sound Designer: Shane Rettig
Properties Designer: Mark Walston**CHARACTERS**He
She**SETTING**

A park bench

THE PRICE*(A park at night.
A man and a woman on a bench.)*

HE. So ... anyway ... what were you saying ...?

SHE. You weren't listening?

HE. No. I was. I was listening. I was just—

SHE. What?

HE. Thinking. I'm sorry. Go on. You were saying something about your mother.

SHE. I was talking about depression.

HE. Oh, yeah. That's right. Your dad.

SHE. Nothing. Anyway. It's boring.

HE. No. I'm interested. I didn't know it was chemical. I really didn't. I suffer from depression.

SHE. Really.

HE. Maybe not as bad as your dad.

SHE. He's not so bad really ...

HE. With me it comes more suddenly. I'm happy, then—for no reason—

SHE. That's the way it is with him.

HE. What? Oh. Yeah. But I don't think of it as chemical.

SHE. You should have it looked into ...

HE. Oh. Yeah. You're right. I will. I'm sorry.

SHE. What?

HE. Did you say something?

SHE. No.

HE. Oh. Sorry.

SHE. Why do you keep apologizing?

HE. I keep getting it wrong, don't I?

SHE. Getting what wrong?

HE. This date.

SHE. It's all right.

HE. Not really. For you maybe it's all right. You don't have to wake up with yourself.

SHE. I don't?

HE. I'm sorry. Of course you have to wake up with yourself ... what I meant to say is—you don't have to wake up with *me*.

SHE. What if I wanted to?

HE. What?

SHE. To wake up with you ...

HE. Oh. Yeah. Well.

(Pause.)

SHE. Would you like that?

HE. Yeah. Yeah. I think that's why I've been talking so much. I'm not generally such a—

(She leans in.)

HE. Stop.

SHE. What?

HE. Think about what you're about to do. What I'm about to—
Can we talk?

SHE. Sure. I thought that's what we were doing.

HE. Tell me about your father.

SHE. He's a nice man. We're not so close anymore.

HE. Why?

SHE. Why? I suppose ... I suppose I got tired of being the family arbitrator. The one sane person in my family. You know.

HE. Yeah. I used to have to nurse my mother through migraines.

SHE. So you know.

HE. Oh, yeah. She had a mattress on the floor. No bed. And I used to sit on the edge of it and talk her through them. Like a pilot landing a plane ...

SHE. That's how it was in my family too. Except I had two planes to land. Simultaneously.

HE. Yeah. *(Pause.)* Anyway, I'm glad you answered my ad.

SHE. Did you get a lot of response?

HE. A considerable amount.

SHE. What's considerable?

HE. Twenty.

SHE. Wow.

HE. It seemed like a lot to me too.

SHE. So what number am I?

HE. What?

SHE. In the hierarchy? Am I your first choice? Your second?

HE. Oh, no. It doesn't work like that. I agreed to meet them all.

SHE. Really? And am I the last?

HE. No.

SHE. I see.

HE. Do you answer these ads often?

SHE. Once in a while—when I have nothing better to do.

HE. Oh.

SHE. No, I'm kidding. You're my first.

HE. Really?

SHE. Yeah. Really.

HE. Wow. I mean—wow.

SHE. Well, it's just the way it worked out ... you don't have to be as flattered as all that.

HE. No, I—I'm not. I mean—I am.

SHE. Your ad did catch my attention.

HE. What about it?

SHE. I don't know. You sounded—serious—fun-loving—bright—committed—sensual—

HE. Yeah. I am those things.

SHE. It seemed a little schizophrenic to me. A little like a dog who was running in too many directions. I decided to check it out.

HE. I'm glad.

SHE. Are you?

HE. Yeah. I am. I'm glad. I liked your letter.

SHE. Did you?

HE. Yeah. I did. It was very—to the point. Very matter of fact. I appreciate that.

SHE. I'm glad.

(Pause.)

HE. So ... how long has it been since you've been seeing someone?

SHE. A few months.

HE. What, like ten?

SHE. More like five.

HE. Five?

SHE. Does that seem like a long time?

HE. No ... no.

SHE. I see.

HE. No. Not at all. Five isn't long at all ... especially after ... God, how long was your last relationship? You said in your letter, but I—

SHE. Five years.
 HE. Wow.
 SHE. Is that long?
 HE. No! No. You weren't married?
 SHE. No.
 HE. No thought of it, or—am I getting too personal?
 SHE. No. No thought of it. No. Just—didn't seem right.
 HE. Yeah. That's rough ...
 SHE. It was both of our decision ...
 HE. Yeah. Well—
 SHE. Just—
 HE. Sure.

(Pause.)

SHE. What about you?
 HE. Oh, I—uh. I was in a relationship.
 SHE. Long?
 HE. Some time.
 SHE. How long?
 HE. Some time.
 SHE. Am I—?
 HE. No. It was—five years.
 SHE. Wow. (HE shrugs.) How did it end?
 HE. I—ended it. Didn't seem to have a future. I wasn't ready ...
 SHE. But your ad said—
 HE. Yeah, well—things change ...
 SHE. How long since you ... ?
 HE. Five months ... like you.
 SHE. Wow. Coincidence.
 HE. Yeah.

(Pause.)

SHE. So—it's getting late.
 HE. Yeah. I guess I should be getting you home.
 SHE. No, I can—
 HE. Oh, you want to—?
 SHE. Well, it's a long trip uptown.
 HE. I can—help you get a cab.
 SHE. That's okay. I mean—thanks—sure. That sounds good.
 HE. Look, I didn't mean to imply anything about your relationship ...
 SHE. No, no—I didn't take it that way.

HE. It's just—with me—with Rachel ... that was her name—Rachel ... with Rachel and me ... it just didn't work out ... she just wasn't what I wanted ... you know ... in the long run.
 SHE. You were with her for five years.
 HE. That's right.
 SHE. Seems like—
 HE. What ... ?
 SHE. I don't know. It's none of my business.
 HE. Sure it is ...
 SHE. Seems like it took you an awful long time to find out.
 HE. Oh.
 SHE. Well, if I've—
 HE. No. No. No. You're right. You're right to say what you said ... it's true ... I did at first think we'd—well, anyway—look at you.
 SHE. Sure, I'm no different really.
 HE. That's what I'm saying—we're neither of us any different, really.
 SHE. So.
 HE. Yeah.
 SHE. Anyway.
 HE. Yeah. No. Wait. I—I like you. I thought—you know—we were closer before. Did I say anything?
 SHE. No.
 HE. Oh. Okay. See the thing was—with Rachel—the thing was—with her—I just didn't—I just never—that is—I—well, I really wanted, I guess I wanted it to work out for a long time ... maybe not at the very beginning ... maybe not then ... maybe I was just thinking of her as—I don't know—maybe I was just looking at her body—cause she was—well, anyway—she was very pretty... and we—it was a lark—you know—we went out to dinner—and we sat in a park ... like this, you know—warm summer night—and all—and we just—I don't know—I guess we just wanted to—both of us—I mean it wasn't like I forced her or anything—we must have just both of us wanted—to kiss—you know ... and so we did. And then we went to a movie. And then we went home. To my place. But we didn't—I mean, not that first night. Just fooled around. It was fun. We had a good time ... we played a game ... like—who would make the other—you know. Anyway—we did it, and—and, I don't know—things fell together ... they were never that great ... just—we liked each other—and I put it off to youth—you know—how confusing it all was—our feelings—and I said to her one time ... when we were at the old World Trade Center in Montreal ... I said ... If we stay together like this—for long enough—we'll get married. See. We'd invest the time and after we'd invested the time—all that time—that would become our love—see—?

SHE. I have to—

HE. Oh, I'm sorry—I—I've been talking. I'm sorry. It's late.

SHE. No, go on.

HE. I didn't mean to ...

SHE. Anyway, go on. Go on, please ...

HE. There's nothing more ... It's just ... the thought ... anyway...

SHE. What thought?

HE. Somehow, when we'd kissed ... in that park ... it was like a contract. It was fun ... It didn't mean anything. On one side ... but on the other side ... it was like the price ... you know ... the price of doing it. The price of kissing her ... was five years ... 'cause in the end ... we never really were right for one another ...

SHE. Do you believe that?

HE. I don't know.

SHE. Do you miss her?

HE. Yes.

SHE. So maybe it worked ... all those years ... the kiss, the night you spent together ... it all added up to something.

HE. But see ... from the start ... I don't know. I don't know what I ever really thought of her. I know one thing. I could never say I loved her. Never. We kissed ... and we were together for five years. It was just like that. Do you know what I mean?

SHE. The novelty wore off—

HE. No. The obligation ... the obligation that came out of the promise ... of that first kiss ... We could have just said good-night.

SHE. One of those either/or situations, huh?

HE. Yeah. I guess.

SHE. Good-night—

HE. Do you want me to—?

SHE. No, that's okay.

HE. Hey, listen—maybe another time—we can get together.

SHE. Call me.

HE. Do you mean that?

SHE. Not really.

HE. Good-bye then.

(SHE goes.)

HE. I'm sorry about your dad.

END OF PLAY

ROADTRIP

by

Victoria Norman Brown