

PLAY #22 PANACEA

by

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## CHARACTERS

JOHN	Middle-aged man.
SUE	Middle-aged woman.
BILL	Middle-aged man.
JANE	Middle-aged woman.
VOICE	

## PANACEA

(At Rise: Four people are arranged on the stage under four different spots. In the center of the stage is a tree. They respond to questions posed by VOICE, but address outwards, toward the audience.)

VOICE

What seems to be the trouble?

JOHN

I have this ache that starts here and ends here. It comes and goes. Sometimes it gets better. Then it's worse.

SUE

Every time I eat, something doesn't feel right. In here.

BILL

My vision is getting worse every day. Do you have anything that could help me see better?

JANE

I have this lesion on my leg. I think it's festering. Do you want to see?

JOHN

It's really excruciating. I can't sleep.

BILL

It worries me when I drive... You know... That I might have an accident.

JANE

It might help if you saw it. Could it be a spider bite?

SUE

Some days I get this... What is it?... Acid reflux?

JOHN

I don't know what I'll do if I don't get some sleep.

JANE

It's not really the season for spiders. But I don't

know what it is.

VOICE

What have you done for it so far?

BILL

I don't have insurance. I certainly can't afford to see an eye-doctor.

SUE

I tried eating less. I took antacids. That made it worse.

JOHN

Aspirin several times a day.

JANE

You don't want to look at it?

JOHN

Now my kidneys hurt.

BILL

Maybe I need glasses.

JOHN

Do you think that might be because of the aspirin?

SUE

I feel like I've tried everything. Some days I have no appetite. Yet I still feel bloated. I enjoy eating. Eating is a joy in life. I'm miserable.

JOHN

The pain's right here, almost like my back but not really. It feels like my nerves are on edge. My bones ache. I started wondering: Maybe it's Lyme disease.

BILL

I see little firefly-like things in front of me sometimes. Like I've been hit in the head and I'm seeing stars. Or maybe... I was reading, it could be my liver.

JANE

Sometimes the sore spot is hot. Like it's on fire. Sometimes it's cold. I feel like it's vibrating through my whole body. Could it be septicemia? I've

heard about that.

VOICE

Can you remember anything that stands out leading up to your problem?

(The characters slowly begin gathering around the tree.)

JOHN

The pain started, as I remember, the day after I ended an eighteen year relationship.

BILL

Well... My mother died. I don't want to dwell on it. All mothers die sooner or later.

JANE

Nothing seems to stand out... Except shortly before the wound appeared, I had an unpleasant experience with a co-worker.

SUE

One day a while back, I saw a terrible accident. A guy on a bike was basically run over by a bus.

BILL

Maybe there's something I'm not seeing. About how she died.

JOHN

We had started drifting apart after ten years, but it took eight more years to finally call it quits.

SUE

I wake up at night replaying the nightmare.

JOHN

I feel my partnership with that person in everything I do.

BILL

I avoid images of my mother... In a nursing home, away from anything she could ever call home.

JANE

It was nothing really, in the end.

SUE

It was probably shortly after that when I had a hard time taking anything in.

JANE

He pushed me into a closet and tried to... You know... Have intercourse with me.

JOHN

I've had a hard time processing things since then. Food doesn't nourish me. It doesn't break down.

JANE

When I refused, he said I'd been teasing him. He got real violent. But I came out of it alright.

BILL

I don't want to see myself in this situation.

SUE

I tried to move on. But every where I go I see how I was defined by this relationship.

JANE

At least I thought I was alright. Nothing happened. But I felt violated. Bitten.

BILL

I can't imagine the horror. I love my home.

JOHN

It all leads back to this event. This tragedy.

BILL

I guess I don't want to see the realities of my aging self.

JANE

The sore did seem to come out of a scratch I received in the tussel.

JOHN

I guess my pain started in my heart.  
(They have all gathered around the  
tree. Silence. The sound of birds.  
Wind. Nature sounds.)

JANE

My name is Jane.

SUE

My name is Sue.

BILL

My name is Bill.

JOHN

My name is John.

(Nature sounds increase. The tree  
brightens.)

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY