

Rock, Paper, Schism



by

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Title: **Rock, Paper, Schism**
 a one-act stageplay by Dan D'Amario

Type: Lite Comedy

Synopsis: Two men argue about the origin and importance of
 a rock.

Cast:

Moshe - an older man

Ahmed - an older man

Zola - Moshe's wife

Setting: Any time. The characters are dressed in simple,
 ancient robes and sandals.

Set: A remote space in the desert. A rock that
 resembles a hand with a finger pointing up is
 covered by a bush.

Moshe enters, stage left, walking with a staff while scanning the area.

Ahmed enters, stage right, walking with a staff while scanning the area.

MOSHE
(perturbed)

Ahmed.

AHMED
(also perturbed)

Moshe.

The two men continue searching the area.

MOSHE
(talking to himself)

Is it too much to ask for something my Zola can burn to make a fire?

AHMED
In the desert, wood does not grow on trees. You should know that.

MOSHE
What I should know?

AHMED
What you should know.

MOSHE
What I should know is every day going deeper into the desert to find the necessities of life. That, I should know.

AHMED
I'm just saying.

MOSHE
You're just saying.

AHMED
I'm *just* saying.

(pause)

I'm just saying... *maybe*, if one group of people didn't consume more than their fair share of our precious resources...

MOSHE
(staring at Ahmed)

You're just saying.

AHMED
I'm *just* saying.

MOSHE
You're just saying!

AHMED
I'm *just* saying.

MOSHE
Then, I'm just saying... maybe if one group of people stayed on *their* side of the desert then *each* group of people would have enough precious resources.

(pause)

I'm just saying.

AHMED
You're *just* saying.

(pause)

And, how is your Zola?

MOSHE
(shrugging)

Ah. Like all women. She's a little... bitter.

AHMED
Ah, like all women.

Pause.

MOSHE
And, your Herta?

AHMED
Ah, like all women.

MOSHE
Ah, like all women.

Moshe makes his way over to the bush-covered rock. He coughs hard close to the rock and removes a cloth to wipe his mouth.

AHMED

(studying the cloth from a distance)

Blood?

MOSHE

At our age, a little blood is not a problem. A lot of blood - that's a problem!

AHMED

Still, blood is not good. I'm just saying.

MOSHE

You can't get rid of me that easily...
I'm just saying!

Ahmed notices the bushes.

AHMED

What is that?

MOSHE

A little blood! Like I said..

AHMED

No, behind you.

MOSHE

(turning to see)

Ah, wood for my Zola!

AHMED

No, behind the bushes.

Moshe and Ahmed break and move the bushes aside.

MOSHE

It's... a rock.

AHMED

Moshe, what's a rock doing here in the middle of this empty desert?

MOSHE

I don't know, Ahmed. But, I do know that I found wood for my Zola. This will make her a little less bitter.

AHMED

Moshe, I believe that I am the one who found the rock.

MOSHE

You? How could you find the rock that was covered by bushes?

AHMED

When we moved the bushes, I found the rock.

MOSHE

But, I found the bushes and without the bushes there would be no rock. I'm just saying.

Moshe and Ahmed step back and study the rock.

AHMED

Imagine a rock like this in a place like this.

MOSHE

A rock like this... in a place like this!

Moshe and Ahmed study the rock in silence.

MOSHE (CONT'D)

How could no one have seen this rock before today?

AHMED

The rock was covered by the bushes.

MOSHE

How could no one have seen these bushes before today?

AHMED

No one comes out this far from the village.

Moshe and Ahmed study the rock again.

MOSHE

Imagine my fortune to have discovered this rock.

AHMED

Dear Moshe, I believe I was the one who found the rock. You found the bushes.

MOSHE

Dear Ahmed. I found the bushes which, in turn, uncovered the rock.

AHMED

So, you are saying...

MOSHE

The bushes are mine. The rock behind
the bushes is also mine.

AHMED

But, I was here with you when we found
the bushes and the rock.

MOSHE

I fail to see your point, dearest
Ahmed.

AHMED

I think the bushes and the rock should,
at the very least, be shared between
us... since we were both present for the
finding of the bushes that hid the
rock.

Moshe thinks over the proposition.

MOSHE

I do not agree with your assumptions or
your proposition. However, I would be
willing to grant you... one branch from
the bush - for your... inconvenience.

AHMED

I see. And, what of the rock?

MOSHE

The rock is... just a rock. Zola cannot
burn a rock.

AHMED

Then, why do you stake a claim on this
rock?

MOSHE

Someone has to take ownership of a
rock. Otherwise, the rock does not
exist.

AHMED

Then, I think I would like to take
ownership of this rock.

MOSHE

Ownership of this rock? What would you
do with ownership of this rock?

AHMED

Maybe the same thing you would do with ownership of a rock in the middle of an empty desert.

MOSHE

It's preposterous that you would own such a rock!

AHMED

And the same for you!

The men think this over.

AHMED (CONT'D)

We can't split a rock.

MOSHE

We can't split a rock.

AHMED

What to do?

The men continue to think.

MOSHE

Dear Ahmed!

AHMED

Yes, dearest Moshe!

MOSHE

I have decided to give you... all the wood from the bushes.

AHMED

(thinking)

You want to give me all the wood?

MOSHE

Yes, dear Ahmed, all the wood.

AHMED

And, what about Zola and her... bitterness?

MOSHE

I could bring her all the wood from all the forests and still... there would be some bitterness.

AHMED

And, what do you get from this bargain?

MOSHE

Me? What would I get? Why, I haven't taken the time to even consider my needs.

AHMED

I see.

MOSHE

Buuuuut...

AHMED

Yes?

MOSHE

It would only be fair...

AHMED

Yes?

MOSHE

For me...

AHMED

For you...

MOSHE

To take ownership of the rock.

AHMED

Ah! I knew it! Now, you want my rock!

MOSHE

I graciously give you all the wood from the bushes and you will deny me the smallest return?

AHMED

You said yourself that a rock is just a rock.

MOSHE

True.

AHMED

But, you will give me all the wood in exchange for this rock and face more bitterness?

MOSHE

(shrugging)

What can I say? I'm a generous man.

AHMED

Then, you are not the man I've known
all these years.

MOSHE

People change.

Zola enters pulling a small cart.

AHMED

Zola! What a pleasure to see you!

ZOLA

Hello, Ahmed.

MOSHE

What are doing so far out here in the
desert?

ZOLA

What else would I be doing so far out
here in the desert? I'm looking for
wood.

MOSHE

Did I not tell you that I would find
wood for you?

ZOLA

Yes...

MOSHE

So...

ZOLA

So... two blind squirrels have a better
chance of finding a nut, no?

Ahmed ponders this.

MOSHE

My dear Ahmed. I must apologize for my
Zola calling you a blind squirrel.

AHMED

I don't think she was referring to...

MOSHE

Anyway, as you can see, dear Zola, I
have found wood for you.

ZOLA

Good! Help me load it in the cart and
we can return home before the cold air
makes you cramp.

AHMED

Excuse me please, dear Zola, but, Moshe has just agreed to give all the wood to me.

ZOLA

(staring at Moshe)

And why would Moshe agree to give away all the wood to you, dear Ahmed?

AHMED

In exchange for... the rock.

Zola, hands on hips, looks back and forth between the rock, Moshe and Ahmed.

MOSHE

An exchange that was quickly rejected by my friend Ahmed.

ZOLA

Who found the wood?

MOSHE

I, of course, found the wood.

AHMED

And I, of course, found the rock behind the wood.

MOSHE

(to Zola)

But, since the rock could not be found without first finding the wood, the rock is mine - ours - too.

AHMED

It is preposterous for you to continue to claim ownership of both the wood and rock as discoveries we made together on this very spot.

MOSHE

I offered you a deal and you rejected the deal. So..

AHMED

So, I should get some wood and no rock? Or, I should get a rock and no wood? What will my Herta say if I return home with no wood? She also has bitterness.

Ahmed realizes he has gone too far as Zola stares down Moshe.

MOSHE

Thank you, dear Ahmed, for that... clarification. As you can see, Zola, there are still details to be agreed to before we can resolve this issue.

ZOLA

So?

AHMED

We could split the wood..

MOSHE

But a rock cannot be split.

ZOLA

I cannot burn a rock to cook my meals!

MOSHE

Exactly as I was saying to my good friend Ahmed. So, he should agree to split the wood.

AHMED

And the rock?

MOSHE

The rock is still mine.

AHMED

Then, I reject the deal!

MOSHE

And, I reject to offer the deal!

ZOLA

It's getting late and cold. We all need to return home and deal with this pettiness tomorrow. Come, Moshe. Pull the cart.

AHMED

Yes. Go home, Moshe.

Ahmed lies down next to the rock.

MOSHE

What are you doing, Ahmed?

AHMED

I will stay here to protect my properties.

Moshe lies down next to the rock.

MOSHE

Then, I shall protect my properties as well.

ZOLA

What are you doing, Moshe? You'll freeze to death. Both of you! What madness is this?

AHMED

This is about justice!

MOSHE

Yes, Ahmed, I agree.

Zola shakes her head.

ZOLA

After all these years, you both have grown more foolish.

(fishing around in the cart)

Here. Take these blankets. Moshe, in the morning I will come to take your lifeless body back to the village. And, Ahmed, I will send word to your Herta so she can give you a proper burial - if the vultures don't eat you.

AHMED

Thank you, Zola.

Zola shakes her head, sighs and exits with the cart.

Moshe and Ahmed try to get comfortable.

AHMED

Moshe?

MOSHE

Yes, Ahmed?

AHMED

How do you think we will resolve this matter?

MOSHE

We will know in the morning, Ahmed?

AHMED

It is getting colder. I hope tomorrow comes quickly.

MOSHE

As do I. Good night, Ahmed.

AHMED

Good night, Moshe.

NEXT MORNING.

Moshe and Ahmed awaken.

MOSHE

Ahmed? Ahmed? Are you still alive?

AHMED

Yes, I am still alive, Moshe. Were you hoping for a different result?

MOSHE

I was only concerned for you.

AHMED

Concerned.

MOSHE

Yes, concerned... because of your age.

AHMED

Then, you should also be concerned for *your* age.

Moshe struggles to his feet wrapping himself in the blanket.

MOSHE

Yes, Ahmed, I am concerned!

Ahmed struggles to his feet wrapping himself in his blanket.

AHMED

The rock and the wood are still here.

MOSHE

What did you expect? That I would drag the wood and rock back to my village in the dark of night?

AHMED

Did I expect that? Nooooo. Did I worry about that? Yessss.

MOSHE

How long have we known each other?

AHMED

Almost too long.

MOSHE

And, you think that I would steal from you that which belongs to me?

AHMED

Well... when you put *that* way... I remember that time, years ago...

MOSHE

We have no time for such fragmented memories! We must resolve this issue so I can get home to my Zola.

AHMED

And, her bitterness. And, me to my Herta.

MOSHE

And, *her* bitterness.

AHMED

So, then, if we have no solution...

MOSHE

My dear Ahmed. If I may be so bold as to propose some new testimony?

AHMED

My dear Moshe. Where would you find new testimony in the middle of the desert?

MOSHE

I believe I received some clarity during the night.

AHMED

During the night? I did not hear any clarity during the night. What clarity comes during the night?

MOSHE

The clarity came to me as I was asleep.

AHMED

Asleep.

MOSHE

Yes.

AHMED

Clarity came to you as you were asleep?

MOSHE

Yes.

AHMED

I see.

Pause.

MOSHE

Are you going to ask me what clarity I received?

AHMED

I think I am afraid to ask.

MOSHE

Well, let me tell you.

AHMED

I was certain you would.

MOSHE

This place... in this desert... at this rock...

AHMED

Yes?

MOSHE

It's a sign!

AHMED

A sign.

MOSHE

Clarity!

AHMED

You may still be frozen from the night chill, dear Moshe.

MOSHE

I am not frozen, dear Ahmed - but thank you for asking. I am warmed by the clarity!

AHMED

Can I get some clarity for my cold feet?

MOSHE

The people in my village have been searching for years to find the meaning.

AHMED

The meaning?

MOSHE

The meaning! Of life, existence,
salvation!

AHMED

Ah, yes. In my village we also search
for this "meaning" - after searching
for firewood.

MOSHE

The spirits spoke to me in my sleep in
the night and I saw the rock!

AHMED

It is hard to miss.

Moshe walks over to the rock.

MOSHE

Don't you see, dear Ahmed, that this
rock is a sign from our spirits.

AHMED

I must have been sleeping too soundly
to have missed this sign.

MOSHE

(examining the rock more closely)

I tell you that it was as clear to me
as...

AHMED

As...?

MOSHE

What is this?

Ahmed walks over to the rock.

AHMED

What?

MOSHE

This! Look! This spot! It looks like...
blood!

AHMED

How can a rock bleed?

MOSHE

Don't you see, dear Ahmed? This rock
carries the blood of my people. This is

where we find salvation! I must bring this news to my village and, not that I would ever want to bring attention to myself..

AHMED

Of course not!

MOSHE

They will certainly hail me as the finder of clarity.

AHMED

A great honor.

MOSHE

A great and worthy honor!

The men stare at the rock.

AHMED

Or...

MOSHE

Did you say something?

AHMED

Yes. I said, "Or..."

MOSHE

Or.

AHMED

No. "Or..."

MOSHE

Yes. "Or..." Or what?

AHMED

Or... this rock could be "clarity" that my people have been searching for, too.

MOSHE

How can this rock, with the blood of my people, be clarity for your village?

AHMED

Do you see the shape of this rock?

MOSHE

The shape? The shape is the shape of a rock.

AHMED

But, if you look at it from this angle..

(the men move to view it)

...it looks like a hand.

MOSHE

A hand.

AHMED

Yes. A hand with a finger pointing to the heavens.

MOSHE

(looking up at the sky)

I think your brain has frozen with the chill of the night air. It clearly is not a hand with a finger pointing to the heavens.

AHMED

And, it is clearly not the blood of your people on the rock!

MOSHE

I say this is the blood of my people, on the rock of my people giving meaning and clarity to my people!

AHMED

And, I say this is the rock of MY people, with the finger of MY people pointing to the heavens of MY people!

The men stare at each other.

MOSHE

Or...

AHMED

Or... what?

MOSHE

Or... you can take all the wood from the rock and that... can be the wood of your people.

AHMED

And, the rock?

MOSHE

The rock would be... the rock of my people.

AHMED

Or...?

MOSHE

Or... what?

AHMED

Or... the wood can be the wood of your people and I will take the rock as the rock of my people.

MOSHE

That proposal clearly does not make sense!

AHMED

It makes perfect sense to me!

MOSHE

But the rock has the blood!

AHMED

The rock has the finger!

MOSHE

You are being inflexible!

AHMED

You are being obstinate!

The men stare at each other. Moshe coughs against the bushes by the rock and wipes his mouth.

AHMED

More blood?

MOSHE

More blood.

Pause.

AHMED

So, what do we do now?

MOSHE

I need to bring wood back to my Zola.

AHMED

And, I to my wife.

MOSHE

(moving close to the bushes)

Then, we will...

(looking closely at the bush)

We will...

AHMED

We will split the wood between us like civilized people.

MOSHE

Do you see this, my dear Ahmed?

AHMED

(moving closer)

What is that?

MOSHE

Blood, dear Ahmed. Blood!

AHMED

Blood? How can that be blood?

MOSHE

I say this is the blood of my people, on the... wood of my people giving meaning and clarity to my people!

AHMED

And, I say this is the wood of MY people, next to the rock of MY people that points to the heavens of MY people!

Pause.

MOSHE

An impasse.

AHMED

Yes. Clearly, an impasse.

Pause.

MOSHE

I will return to my village and report my findings of clarity to them.

AHMED

And, I will return to MY village and report my findings of clarity to them.

MOSHE

I am certain that my village will send people to secure these findings.

AHMED

As I am certain of the same from my village.

MOSHE

Then, we have done all that is possible
given the circumstances.

AHMED

As always.

MOSHE

I will return to my village to deal
with the bitterness that is sure to
greet me.

AHMED

Yes. Bitterness cannot be avoided.

Moshe takes his staff and blankets and begins
shuffling away.

MOSHE

Goodbye, dear Ahmed.

AHMED

Goodbye, dear Moshe. You should see a
doctor about the blood.

Moshe waves his hand and both men exit.

The End.