

The States Collection – Wisconsin

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Why a Duck

CAST: 2: 1 female, 1 male or female

LOUISE (female) early 20's; a poet

BERTIE (female or male) ageless; a duck out of water (and on a bridge)

The Milwaukee Avenue Bridge has a statue of Gertie the Duck on it. Gertie was a very special duck.

LIGHTS UP on the Wisconsin Avenue Bridge in Milwaukee, WI. It is very early in the morning during the height of summer. Too early for traffic or for people out walking. LOUISE has the bridge to herself. She peers bends over the railings of the bridge looking at her reflection in the Milwaukee River. She tries to snap a photo of her reflection.

BERTIE enters and runs/flies into LOUISE.

LOUISE

What the – **OMIGOSH!** A duck.

BERTIE

Quack!

LOUISE

Why, Duck, why?

BERTIE

Quack quack! No jumping!

LOUISE

You thought/

BERTIE

/Quack/

LOUISE

/Wasn't/

BERTIE

/Quack quack!

LOUISE

I'm arguing with a duck!

BERTIE

Quack!

LOUISE

Look! I was taking a photo of myself reflected in the water, see?

(LOUISE hands BERTIE her cell phone.)

BERTIE

I don't have opposable thumbs. I'm a duck. (Beat.) Quack.

LOUISE

Why a duck? Of all days, why am I with a duck?

BERTIE

Show me the picture.

LOUISE

See? That looks rather nice, doesn't it? My reflection in the water? Perfect for the book jacket of a poetry collection... perfect... *oh who am I kidding? I hate this branding! This self-promotion, this pretentious way of presenting yourself! As if poetry wasn't pretentious enough! I'm supposed to let everyone in on my private life with Instagram and don't get me started on all these other platforms I never heard of.*

BERTIE

I understand.

LOUISE

But – you're a duck. You've never been asked to be in the center of a media moment.

BERTIE

Quack! My great-great-really great grandmother *was* a media moment! She laid her eggs right there – by those pilings and the whole world waited for her to give birth. People came from all over Wisconsin to get a picture of Gertie sitting on her eggs.

LOUISE

That's horrible. Everyone should be allowed to give birth in peace.

BERTIE

Quack! People were hanging on the bridge with their Brownie cameras peering at her all day. And then *after* the ducklings hatched, they were put on display in Gimbels Department Store – right in the front windows.

LOUISE

Those poor babies!

BERTIE

Quack! Gertie could never get her ducks in a row. Donald grew chubby because people sneaked into the windows and fed him chocolates. Puddle Duck dissolved into a puddle of feathers from all the attention. Daffy resorted to a life of stealing bread from the bakery and well Jemina – she ran off with the Wild Duck.

LOUISE

See? That's why I don't want my personal life on display. **No book jackets for me! No Instagram, no Facebook page, no Twitter followers!**

(Beat. LOUISE snaps a photo of BERTIE.)

You know... you would look fetching on my book jacket. Yes. The "First Duck Poet." Readers will eat it up.

BERTIE

Oh quack.

LOUISE

It makes sense. I write poems about water. And who knows more about water than a duck? I can make you famous. You could be the first duck to rise to Poet Laureate of Wisconsin.

BERTIE

Quit quacking me.

LOUISE

You'll be more famous than Gertie.

BERTIE

Will you be able to have a statue of me put on this bridge?

LOUISE

Nothing to it. Like water running off a duck's back.

BERTIE

Try my right side. I think that's my best side.

(BERTIE poses and LOUISE snaps photos.)

END OF PLAY