

The Master Switch of the Universe

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The Master Switch of the Universe

Characters:

DIBBLES

CRANSTON

A stage. On the stage is a toilet plunger. U/s hangs a large U.S. flag. DIBBLES is nearby. She is dressed in an elaborate uniform, and, as much as she tries to stand at attention, she can't stand still. CRANSTON enters, looks around, and spots the toilet plunger.

Don't touch it!

DIBBLES

Whaaat? Why not?

CRANSTON

That's the master switch of the universe.

DIBBLES

That?

CRANSTON

Yep.

DIBBLES

Are you sure?

CRANSTON

Yes. Read the sign.

DIBBLES

Doesn't look like it. I don't want to be disrespectful, but it looks more like a...well, more like a...

CRANSTON

CRANSTON just can't get it out.

Don't worry. People think that all the time. It's great camouflage, isn't it?

DIBBLES

But that's really it? I thought it would look different.

CRANSTON

Well, that's it
DIBBLES

What's it do?
CRANSTON

Everything.
DIBBLES

Everything?
CRANSTON

Yeah, everything. You name it, flip that switch and it does it.
DIBBLES

Does it fry my eggs in the morning?
CRANSTON

Yep.
DIBBLES

Run all the atoms that swirl around in my bed?
CRANSTON

Uh-huh.
DIBBLES

What about my shoes? Does it make them wear out?
CRANSTON

That too. It does everything.
DIBBLES

(Whistles.) Son of a gun.
CRANSTON

Yeah, huh? Then you really mash down on it and it reboots. Everything. Up is down, in is out, over there is over here.
DIBBLES

What's it doing here?
CRANSTON

That's where they put it.
DIBBLES

Seems like a dumb place to put it.

CRANSTON

Hmmm....

DIBBLES

Seems like poor planning.

CRANSTON

Hmmm....

DIBBLES

If that really is the master switch of the universe, it seems kinda last minute, don't'cha think? You think they would have put more thought into it—where to put it. Instead of just sticking it out here in the open.

CRANSTON

I don't know.

DIBBLES

Maybe over there in a corner, so nobody could trip over it. Set it off.

CRANSTON

Hmmm...

DIBBLES

That's where I'd put it.

CRANSTON

Yeah, well, if you're busy making the universe, you're busy making the universe.

DIBBLES

Meaning?

CRANSTON

Sometimes a few details slip through the cracks.

DIBBLES

Details? I wouldn't exactly call the master switch of the universe a detail.

CRANSTON

Oh, I don't know...

DIBBLES

CRANSTON

Pretty big fucking detail, if you ask me.

DIBBLES

Did anybody ask you?

CRANSTON

No. I'm just saying, if somebody asked me...

DIBBLES reacts.

CRANSTON

I'm not trying to be critical. Just...an observation.

DIBBLES reacts.

CRANSTON

Right. What do I know?

DIBBLES

Everything's under control.

CRANSTON

I'm sure it is. What I was saying is...what I meant to say was...

DIBBLES

Yes?

CRANSTON

I was just concerned. That's all.

DIBBLES

Concerned.

CRANSTON

Yeah. Concerned. For the universe. What if someone came along and accidentally—
not on purpose, mind you, not maliciously, you see, but accidentally—tipped it over?

DIBBLES

That's why I'm here.

CRANSTON

Oh yeah?

DIBBLES

Yeah. I keep a watch on it. Make sure nobody trips over it. Or mashes down on it.

CRANSTON

That's important.

DIBBLES

It is. (Pause) Do you mind watching it for a while?

CRANSTON

Me? Really?

DIBBLES

Yeah.

CRANSTON

Why?

DIBBLES

I have to pee.

CRANSTON

Is that why you've been dancing around like that?

DIBBLES

Yeah.

CRANSTON

You should have said something sooner.

DIBBLES

I'm not supposed to leave. I'm not supposed to let the master switch of the universe out of my sight. When I'm on duty. But I really have to pee.

CRANSTON

How did you do it before?

DIBBLES

Before what?

CRANSTON

Before. When you've had to go to the bathroom and no one was standing here. How'd you do it? Leaving the switch and all?

I didn't. DIBBLES

You've never gone to the bathroom. CRANSTON

No. Not if I'm on duty. And I'm on duty. They never worked that out. I think it was all last minute. DIBBLES

Like the switch? CRANSTON

Yeah, like that. But I'd appreciate it. DIBBLES

By all means. CRANSTON

Don't touch it. DIBBLES

I won't. CRANSTON

And don't mash down on it. DIBBLES

I won't either. CRANSTON

Just watch it. DIBBLES

I will. CRANSTON

You sure? DIBBLES

I'm sure I'm sure. Go pee. Before you hurt yourself. CRANSTON

DIBBLES exits to behind the flag. CRANSTON studies the switch. DIBBLES sticks her head out.

DIBBLES

You're not bothering it, are you?

CRANSTON

No.

DIBBLES

All right, I'm just checking.

DIBBLES exits to behind the flag. We hear a zipper, Velcro ripping apart, a pop top, a doorbell, an electric can opener, a jackhammer, a jet plane taking off, a crescendo. Quiet. DIBBLES expresses pleasure.

CRANSTON studies the flag. He studies the switch. He studies the switch again. He fights the urge to touch it. He doesn't touch it.

DIBBLES enters. From the way she enters we can see she's a changed woman.

DIBBLES

Oh my.

CRANSTON

Better?

DIBBLES

I feel...wonderful.

CRANSTON

That's good.

DIBBLES

I've never felt so good in my entire life.

CRANSTON

Well, you were holding a lot back.

DIBBLES

Yes. Yes I was.

CRANSTON

It's good to get it all out.

DIBBLES

Yes. Yes it is. Thank you for watching the master switch of the universe.

CRANSTON

My pleasure.

DIBBLES

Are you sure you didn't touch it?

CRANSTON

I'm sure.

DIBBLES

It's just...it's just that everything seem so different now. Like the entire universe has changed.

CRANSTON

Does it?

DIBBLES

Yes.

CRANSTON

Not me.

DIBBLES

You're joking. You don't feel that?

CRANSTON

No.

DIBBLES

You're lying. You're lying! Everything's different! Oh my God you pushed the switch! I know you did!

CRANSTON

What?

DIBBLES

Oh, I'm going to be in so much trouble.

CRANSTON

Nobody can't do anything to you because I didn't push the switch.

DIBBLES

You pushed it.

CRANSTON

I didn't.

DIBBLES

You did.

CRANSTON

I didn't.

DIBBLES

You did.

CRANSTON

I didn't.

DIBBLES

I know you did.

CRANSTON

I didn't!

DIBBLES

For real?

CRANSTON

For real.

DIBBLES

(Crying in total despair.) Then why do I feel so good?

CRANSTON

Maybe it was because you went pee. Listen, I thought about it. I really did. But I didn't push the switch.

DIBBLES

You didn't?

No. CRANSTON

(Drying her eyes) Really? DIBBLES

No. I swear. CRANSTON

That was nice of you. Thank you. DIBBLES

I sure thought about it, though. CRANSTON

But you didn't? DIBBLES

CRANSTON
Uh-uh. Seemed stupid to me anyway. Master switch of the universe. Sitting right out here in the open. Anybody can come along and mash it. Change everything. Oh yeah, they're going to stick it right here. Yeah, I'm going to believe that. All I got to do is mash down on that thing, and whah-la, everything's good in my life. You know anything about exploding diarrhea?

No. DIBBLES

I didn't think so. Know anything about bed bugs? CRANSTON

No. DIBBLES

CRANSTON
I took a piece of cardboard, like they tell you to. And I slipped it between the wood, like they tell you to. And yessir, there they were. Little babies. I went to the super. His apartment? He's got bottles of piss around his bed. Circling it. Bottles of piss. I said to myself, this is Rosemary's baby's room. I'm paying you to live here, you should be paying me. Right? That's right. Things got to change.

You don't feel very good, do you?

DIBBLES

No ma'am, I do not.

CRANSTON

Maybe if you peed you'd feel better.

DIBBLES

I share a bathroom.

CRANSTON

You don't have your own bathroom?

DIBBLES

No, I just told you. It's out in the hall. So I don't think taking a piss is going to make me feel any better.

CRANSTON

I have an idea.

DIBBLES

What?

CRANSTON

Let's push the switch.

DIBBLES

The switch.

CRANSTON

The master switch of the universe. Let's push it.

DIBBLES

That's bullshit. That thing doesn't do anything. Doesn't change the universe, that much I know.

CRANSTON

You don't know. Let's give it a try.

DIBBLES

No.

CRANSTON

DIBBLES

No?

CRANSTON

No. I've made a fool out of myself one too many times. No need to keep proving I'm a fool.

DIBBLES

Once more. Just one more time.

CRANSTON

Then when nothing happens that one more time, it's like ten more times of feeling like a fool. No thanks.

DIBBLES

Then I'll push it.

CRANSTON

Fine. You push it.

DIBBLES

I will.

CRANSTON

Fine.

DIBBLES

I'm going to push it.

CRANSTON

You can sit on that thing and rotate for all I care.

DIBBLES

That wasn't a very nice thing to say.

CRANSTON

It's not a very nice thing to get somebody's hopes up either.

DIBBLES

You're leaving?

CRANSTON

Yeah. I got to take a piss.

DIBBLES

You can use mine.

CRANSTON

I'd rather use mine. It's not all mine. And it's not much. But it's all I got.

CRANSTON exits.

DIBBLES regards the switch.

DIBBLES

Stupid switch.

DIBBLES exits.

Spot on the master switch of the universe.

Music. Something sappy, like the theme song to Lassie.

CRANSTON enters desperate, duck-walking, carrying a roll of toilet paper. He looks around, sees no one's there. He goes behind the flag. It's gross in there: The state of affairs in the United States is like exploding diarrhea.

CRANSTON

Ughh!

CRANSTON comes back out. Looks around desperately. Spies the master switch of the universe. Grabs it.

CRANSTON

This ought to do it.

CRANSTON goes behind the flag. DIBBLES runs on stage. Sees the master switch of the universe is missing.

DIBBLES

Oh no!

Lights out.