

BEING ANTITHETICAL

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS

- ANTHONY The lead ant, more experienced and generally more level-headed. If there's a conflict, he's the ant that's most likely to help get things moving in the right direction again.
- ANTONELLA An impatient ant who thinks she is in charge, the end-all-be-all of the ant world, and that all the other ants want to be just like her. Which is understandable, because aside from Sandy, they generally are. After all, they're a bunch of ants.
- ANTONIO A more hot-headed ant, a real drone among drones. Always does what he's supposed to, and not comfortable with anyone who messes with the status quo.
- SANDY A truly unique individual, which is not an endearing trait amongst ants. She's stubborn, but willing to pay the price of nonconformity, at least up to a point. She's also, in comparison, quite *intelligent*.

SETTING

A totally blank stage.

SCENE

(Lights come up on a blank, empty stage. The stage stays vacant long enough to start feeling uncomfortable, and then Anthony enters from stage left. He makes his way, sniffing, to stage right, his path mostly straight, but wandering upstage and downstage just a bit. He exits.

After a few beats, Antonella enters stage left. She does the same thing, but with less meandering. She exits stage right.

A moment later, Antonio enters stage left. He also makes his way stage right, sniffing as he goes, but in a rush compared to the other two. Just as he gets to the edge, Anthony enters stage right. He is carrying a very large piece of food, slung over his shoulder.

They stop for a moment to regard each other.)

ANTHONY

Great stuff over there.

ANTONIO

No kidding!

(Anthony starts walking stage left.)

ANTHONY

Better hurry!

(Antonio nods, and hurries off right. Anthony heads quickly left, then exits. After a couple of beats, Sandy enters stage left. Sandy sniffs, makes a face, and then starts to meander around the stage. After a bit, Antonella enters from right, carrying another large piece of food. She stops short, surprised to see Sandy just wandering aimlessly.)

ANTONELLA
(To get Sandy's attention.)

Hey!

SANDY
(Responding like she's just saying hello.)

Hey.

ANTONELLA
It's that way *(motioning stage right)*.

SANDY
I know.

(Antonella looks at her shrewdly, assessing. Then...)

ANTONELLA
You okay?

SANDY
Yeah.

ANTONELLA
Your sniffer okay? You know *(she motions to her own nose and takes a sniff)*.

SANDY
Yep. I'm just looking around.

ANTONELLA
The food's over there.

SANDY
Right. I know.

ANTONELLA
Soooo... go get it, slugger.

SANDY
I will.

(Antonella gives her a "well?" look.)

Just give me a minute.

(Antonio enters from stage right carrying a large piece of food. He walks up right behind Antonella and stops short, suddenly noticing her.)

ANTONIO

Whoa! What's the hold up?

(Antonella points at Sandy. He looks at her.)

Food's that way *(pointing off right)*.

SANDY

That's what they tell me.

(Sandy starts sniffing out towards the audience.)

ANTONIO

(To Antonella...)

What in the world is she doing?

ANTONELLA

She says she's "looking around".

ANTONIO

We don't do that. When did we start doing that?

(Anthony enters from stage left, stops to say...)

ANTHONY

Start doing what?

(Antonella and Antonio simultaneously point at Sandy, who is now starts swaying back and forth like she's listening to music.)

That's weird. We don't do that. Why are you doing that?

SANDY

I'm just enjoying the breeze.

ANTHONY

Why?

Just am.
SANDY

(The other three share a confused look. Then...)

Well cut it out.
ANTHONY

Ahhh nope.
SANDY

(Sandy starts twirling gently around the stage.)

SERIOUSLY. Cut it out. There's food over there.
ANTONELLA

I know. You said.
SANDY

So why are you doing... whatever *that* is?
ANTONELLA

Just feel like it.
SANDY

(The other three look at each other, clearly confused. Then like they are of a single mind, they all start rushing along, Antonella and Antonio head off stage right in single file and Anthony crosses and exits stage left. Sandy continues to dance around the stage as if to music that she alone can hear.)

After a few moments of this, Antonella enters again stage left. She is sniffing, and clearly intent on making her way across, but suddenly she veers and starts to follow the meandering path around stage that Sandy walked. After a few moments she realizes that something's wrong and stops.)

What are you doing?
ANTONELLA

(Antonio enters halfway through the next line.)

SANDY

I told you. I've decided to call it "smelling the roses".

(Near the end of the last line, Antonio suddenly veers to follow the scent trail that Sandy and Antonella left, and immediately stops short.)

ANTONIO

Whoa! What the hell?!

(Sandy shrugs, and goes back to drifting around.)

ANTONIO AND ANTONELLA

Stop!

(Sandy stops, but asks...)

SANDY

Why?

ANTONELLA

You're messing everything up.

SANDY

I'm just doing what feels right.

(Anthony enters stage right carrying yet more big food.)

Why should that mess anything up?

ANTONIO

Because it does.

ANTONELLA

There's a system here. You don't just go and do something else.

SANDY

But it makes me happy.

ANTONIO

It makes you weird.

ANTONELLA

It's not right. Isn't that right, Anthony?

ANTHONY

You can't just wander around aimlessly. There's food over there, and we need to carry it back over there.

SANDY

I'm not stopping you. Go ahead.

ANTONELLA

He means we *all* need to.

ANTONIO

Including you. Isn't that right, Anthony?

ANTHONY

Yep.

ANTONIO

Isn't that right, Antonella?

ANTONELLA

Definitely, Antonio.

SANDY

Well I don't like doing that. At least not all the time.

ANTONELLA

What does that matter? None of us *like* doing it, but that's not the point.

SANDY

Maybe it *is* the point.

ANTONIO

It's not.

SANDY

Maybe it *should* be the point.

ANTONIO AND ANTONELLA

It's not!

ANTHONY
Alright, look, An... (*struggling to get her name*)

SANDY
Sandy.

ANTHONY
Antsandee?

SANDY
Just Sandy.

ANTHONY
That's not a real name.

SANDY
Yes it is. It's my name.

ANTONIO
It doesn't even start with "ant"!

SANDY
I know! Cool, right?

ANTONELLA
It's not *cool*. It's stupid.

SANDY
It's not stupid. It's just different.

ANTONIO
Different *is* stupid.

ANTONELLA
Why would anyone want to be different?

ANTHONY
Look, Antsandee—

SANDY
Just Sandy—

ANTHONY
We've got a good thing going here. We take the food from there to there. It's easy peasy. No stress, no worry.

ANTONIO

No thinking required.

ANTHONY

Why are you trying to mess with that?

SANDY

I just don't find it satisfying. You know, fulfilling.

ANTONELLA

That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard.

ANTONIO

Food. That's what's filling.

SANDY

I agree that food's important. I'm not saying it's not.

ANTHONY

Then what *are* you sa—

SANDY

I'm just saying that it doesn't have to be the only important thing.

ANTONELLA

We need food to eat!

SANDY

I know that—

ANTHONY

And we need to eat to live!

SANDY

I know that—

ANTONIO

And if we don't live then we're gonna die!

(Sandy gives him a "duh!" look.)

SANDY

Look, I know all that. And I'm not saying I won't get some food. I'm just saying we don't need to rush quite so much. I'd rather spend a little time exploring. Or dancing. Or—

ANTHONY

While you're doing your nonsense, the rest of us are left doing the work. Is that fair?

ANTONELLA

Is it?

ANTONIO

I don't think so, and neither does Anthony or Antonella!

ANTHONY

If you're part of the colony, then act like it. Help get the food.

(Sandy stares at them, annoyed. Then finally...)

SANDY

Fine. That way to the food?

(They all nod. She gives the area one last look around, then resolves herself, and finally starts to skip off to stage right. The other three immediately start shouting.)

ANTONIO

Whoa whoa whoa!!

ANTHONY

Stop!

ANTONELLA

What the heck are you doing?!

(Sandy stops.)

ANTHONY

What was that??

SANDY

What? I'm going to get the food.

ANTHONY

Not like that. That's not how you do it.

ANTONIO

Like this.

(Antonio demonstrates, moving in a straight line and sniffing.)

ANTHONY

Unless you are the first one to find it. Then you can go like this.

(Anthony demonstrates how he did it the first time, going in mostly a straight line but wandering away from the line just a little, still sniffing.)

SANDY

I'm going in the right direction. What does it mat—

ANTONELLA

We have a system. You don't go all willy-nilly. You don't just throw away our traditions because you want to be weird.

SANDY

What does it matter how I do it?? The point is to get the food, right?

ALL OTHERS

It's tradition!

(Sandy retreats stage left, giving them a dirty look. They stare back at her, rigid. Finally, she shakes her head, walks way upstage, and then starts to cross like they want her to.)

ALL OTHERS

(Not in unison.)

Stop! Stop stop!

ANTONELLA

Down here. *(Points to the line that they were following.)*

SANDY

We don't need to walk along the same line.

ALL OTHERS

(In unison.)

Yes we do!

SANDY

The food gets back just as fast if...

(They all just stare at her, angry.)

Look. It's stupid for all of us to walk along the same line. The food doesn't get back any faster. To the contrary, if we each go on a different line, more of us can get food at the same time.

(They continue their silent stares, but now with a look of confusion.)

Contrary. It means 'opposite'.

(Their looks change to ones of disdain.)

ANTONIO

(Muttering in disgust...)

The weird ones always use fancy language. Have you noticed that?

ANTONELLA

(Muttering back...)

They're always trying to come off better than everyone else.

SANDY

(Not having heard them...)

Besides, walking different ways is safer. Suppose one of the giants finds the line and squashes us. Now everyone's dead, instead of just some of us.

(They stare at her, impatient.)

Right? I'm right, right?

(Antonio and Antonella walk over to Sandy, take her arms, and walk her to the 'right' line. Anthony points stage right. Sandy glares at them all, then turns around and starts to walk along the line backwards, sniffing. The others immediately stop her, and turn her around.)

She starts to walk again, forward, but humming a happy tune. Again they stop her physically, anger on their faces. Finally she resigns, and walks across the stage, sniffing and looking utterly miserable. The others look very pleased with themselves. Then they all line up, take on blank expressions and march off, Anthony going off left and the others stage right.

Lights out.)