

REVELATION

By

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REVELATION

CHARACTERS:

JOHN – a handsome man in his mid-30's.

MARY – an elderly woman with poor eyesight and a sharp tongue

SETTING

A graveyard on resurrection morning.

SYNOPSIS

The trumpet sounds on Judgement Day. John, in his mid-30's wakes to find that he's buried beside an old woman who claims she's his wife, Mary. But she's nothing like the woman he knew. Can they navigate the minefields of memory in time? A Tragicomedy of Errors.

IN THE BLACKOUT THERE IS THE SOUND OF THUNDER. A TRUMPET SOUNDS. THE EARTH RUMBLES AND HEAVES. MORE THUNDER AND THE SOUND OF SPLINTERING WOOD. LIGHTS COME UP ON TWO COFFINS THRUST UP OUT OF THE EARTH AND BROKEN OPEN. UPSTAGE OF THE COFFINS ARE TWO GRAVESTONES, ONE FALLEN OVER, AND A DRIED UP WREATH OF ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS. (NOTE: IN THE FIRST PRODUCTION, THE SET CONSISTED OF TWO plain SLABS and they worked just fine.) THE TRUMPET SOUNDS AGAIN. AN OLD WOMAN LIES IN ONE COFFIN, OR SLAB, IN THE FORMAL ATTITUDE OF DEATH. A MAN OF ABOUT 35 SITS UP IN THE SECOND COFFIN AND LOOKS AROUND HIM.

JOHN

Well, I'll be damned. (Thunder) No. I'll take that back. I'm surprised, that's all.

He looks at his hands. Pinches himself.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I felt that. (He looks at himself, his surroundings) Geez. I - I thought - if I thought about it at all - well I figured it was - what's the word? Metaphorical - that's it! Hey - the old brain's still working too.

Trumpet sounds again. John looks startled. Mary opens her eyes.

MARY

Ohhhh! Why do they always have to make so much noise. Just when you've fallen asleep.

JOHN

I hope there's not too many embarrassing questions.

MARY

(Calling off) But what do you care about an old woman trying to get some sleep?

JOHN

Sorry?

MARY

Can't remember the last time I was comfortable. Nurses don't care. Nobody -

JOHN

(To himself) Poor old thing actually thinks....

MARY

They've changed the sheets.

JOHN

I guess there are advantages to not living to a ripe old age.

MARY

I never slept in silk sheets before. Never expected to till I was laid to rest.

JOHN

Am I supposed to tell her?

MARY

(She feels about) I have been laid to rest.

JOHN

That's a relief.

She sits up. Feels beside her; her head. He gets out of the coffin, testing his legs, brushing off his suit.

MARY

Where are my glasses?

JOHN

(To himself) I'm glad to be young. And in one piece.

MARY

I can't see a thing. (Pause) Except my dress. (Pause) That would be Bertha's idea of course - making me spend all of eternity in this.

JOHN

(To himself) Funny. I was so afraid that there'd be bits of me - scattered - having to be collected in a bucket maybe. But it couldn't have been so bad.

MARY

(Peering about) So where did they bury me then?

JOHN

(More to himself than her.) Beats me. Nothing looks familiar.

MARY

With my luck he'll pop up any minute now and rant on about me putting him in a walnut casket.

JOHN

Except my suit. I always liked this one.

MARY

I can just hear him. "Wanton, irresponsible waste of money."

JOHN

We couldn't afford it, of course.

MARY

(Focusing on John) Well, it wasn't my idea, Angus.

JOHN

What?

MARY

You heard me.

JOHN

I'm sorry, Ma'am, but you're making a-

MARY

And I know you.

JOHN

No, you don't -

MARY

You wouldn't have been happy with grey felt. Someone might take you for a pauper.

JOHN

(Feeble laugh)

I am one, I'm afraid.

MARY

You're a skinflint. There's a difference. And if you're going to drop dead on me, right on the doorstep without telling me what you want to be buried in, it's not my fault.

JOHN

(To himself) Just my luck to be planted alongside a nutter.

(To her) Look - ma'am - you're a bit confused.

MARY

Walnut was their idea. Bertha and Michael's. Even Jack went along with it. What did they put me in?

She leans over the edge of the casket.

JOHN

Hey - careful. You could hurt yourself.

MARY

Probably pine.

JOHN

Looks like walnut to me.

MARY

(Pause) Well, Bertha couldn't let anyone think she didn't do right by her step-mother, I suppose.

JOHN

That's all right then.

MARY

All right? (Accusingly) You're not Angus!

JOHN

I have been trying to tell you that.

MARY

Ah well, I suppose the saints fly immediately up to heaven.

JOHN

D'you figure it was all true then?

MARY

What?

JOHN

That we'll have to answer for -

MARY

Oh. Judgement, you mean.

JOHN

That sounds awfully harsh, don't you think? I mean failure is hardly a sin.

MARY

Don't fret now. Maybe we're just taken up in order of dying. Angus died back in '80 so -

JOHN

80?! What year is it now then?

MARY

1985.

JOHN

Are you sure?

MARY

Of course I'm sure. The nurses ask me every blessed day. What day is it today then, Mrs. Campbell? What's the year,

dear?" I think it's some sort of a test for senility. Go look at a calendar if you don't know," I say, but I know all right.

JOHN

That's maybe when you died, ma'am, but how long have you been - here?

MARY

(Beat) What do you think I am? A psychic?

JOHN

Sorry. No. I - I was just trying to figure out how old my -

MARY

Like that darn fool McKenzie King.

JOHN

(Confused) He's not still Prime Minister?

MARY

Pulled the wool right over our eyes, didn't he. All those years! Communing with his dead dog for heaven's sake.

She peers over the edge trying to judge the best way of getting out - perhaps she gets onto her knees.

JOHN

This is - Wow. This is weirder than H.G. Wells. I read all his books, you know. "The Time Machine," "The Invisible Man." And "The Shape of Things to Come." I got that one out of the library just before I - well, I never got to finish it.

She waves her hand at him.

MARY

Young man. Would you mind - ?

JOHN

D'you think you should-?

MARY

Better to face these things standing up.

Using him as a support, she steps out of the casket and puts her other foot on a stone.

MARY (CONT'D)

Ow! Dang blast it. They haven't given me any shoes.
Typical! Oooo.(Rubs her hip) Get away now. Let me stretch
my old joints.

She takes a step or two. Feels her
hip.

MARY (CONT'D)

Hmmmm. Not bad.

She takes another step or two and
bumps into his coffin.

JOHN

Careful.

MARY

What's this?

JOHN

That's my coffin.

MARY

So close?

JOHN

I wonder, did you ever read it?

MARY

What?

JOHN

"The Shape of Things to Come."

MARY

No.

JOHN

Oh.

MARY

I took it back to the library after - Oh my God!

JOHN

What is it?

MARY

John?

JOHN

Yes?

MARY

John!

JOHN

That was a lucky guess.

MARY

This is no time to be teasing me, John Burns.

She rushes towards him. He retreats.

JOHN

How do you - ? Oh, I see. You've been pulling my leg. You read the name on my stone.

MARY

Do you like it?

JOHN

What?

MARY

Your gravestone.

JOHN

It's - I never -

MARY

I insisted on marble.

JOHN

You?

She moves towards him with her arms outstretched.

MARY

You were worth it, darling.

JOHN

Just a minute. I -

MARY

Let me look at you. (She holds his face between her hands) They wouldn't let me look, you know. Said I should remember you the way you were. And I did. And now here you are. Just the same.

He takes her hands away. Moves back.

JOHN

I'm sorry. But there's some mistake.

MARY

It's me. Mary.

JOHN

It can't be. Your name is Campbell.

MARY

Well -

JOHN

And - you're different. Old.

MARY

Of course I'm old. Life went on, you know. We weren't all in some H.G. Wells time capsule.

JOHN

I'm sorry.

MARY

I thought you'd be glad to see me.

JOHN

I - I - I am. (Pause) It's just -

MARY

Aren't you going to kiss me?

JOHN

Of... course. (He does. On the cheek)

MARY

That was - chaste.

JOHN

It's been a long time.

MARY

It seems like yesterday. Kiss me, John.

JOHN

Not here.

MARY

Where then? They don't go in for things like that in heaven, you know. To tell the truth, I never could understand the point of having bodies but no bodily desires. Of course Angus always said the body was the temple of the holy spirit and fleshly desires would pass away. But he was wrong.

She goes towards him. He retreats.

JOHN

So if you were married to this... Angus, Mary -

MARY

Are you jealous?

JOHN

What? Of course not.

MARY

That's so sweet.

JOHN

I was just curious.

MARY

About Angus?

JOHN

About why you aren't - weren't - you know - buried beside him?

MARY

He's next to his first wife, isn't he. They were going to put me at his feet. Besides (she puts her arms around him) you were always my real love. I made Jack promise. I even put it in the will, but I didn't think Bertha would let him do it. (He pulls away) What?

JOHN

Jack.

MARY

Our son.

JOHN

Tell me about him.

MARY

We'll have all of eternity for that, John.

JOHN

Please, Mary. I have to know now. How is he?

MARY

Fine.

JOHN

He got over my ---

MARY

Eventually.

JOHN

Does he remember me - at all?

MARY

Darling, he was... very young.

JOHN

Oh.

MARY

I told him all about you, of course.

JOHN

Is he happy?

MARY

I expect so.

JOHN

Don't you know?

MARY

He lives way out west. Don't know why he had to go way out there. He visits of course. When he comes East on business.

JOHN

A travelling salesman?

MARY

No. He's a lawyer.

JOHN

A lawyer. Fancy that.

MARY

For an oil company.

JOHN

My son.

MARY

I knew you'd be proud.

JOHN

Is he like me.... at all?

MARY

(She begins to run her hands over his body) He's fatter. And - He's bald.

JOHN

Jack?

MARY

(Runs her fingers through his hair) He didn't get his father's hair.

JOHN

Mary, don't. Please.

MARY

Of course he is older...

JOHN

Than me? I feel dizzy.

MARY

That's exactly how I feel a lot of the time. I thought it was just my eyes. Well, my eyes and high blood pressure. That can make you terribly dizzy.

JOHN

(Angrily) I haven't got high blood pressure!

MARY

No, no. Of course you haven't. You're far too young.

JOHN

Jack is 7. You're....

He tries to clear his head.

MARY

Sit down for a minute now. Here.

She pats a place beside her.

END OF EXCERPT