

First Draft

A play by

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Cast of Characters

Mark, a young man

Mary, a young woman

John, another young man

Lee, a director

Guido, a playwright

Dale, another playwright

SCENE 1

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM. 1942.

MARY, a young woman of about 20, is sitting at her dressing table combing her hair.

Mark enters.

MARK

Mary, my darling!

He rushes over to her.

MARY

Oh, Mark!

As she stands, he sweeps her into his arms. They kiss.

MARK

I have big news! I've enlisted in the Air Corps. I can't wait to shoot down some of those Nazi Messerschmidts.

MARY

But what about our plans? We were going to get married next spring.

MARK

I don't want to leave you, but I must! Hitler must be stopped!

MARY

I understand. Here...

She takes a ring from the table and puts it onto his finger.

MARY (CONT'D)

Take this ring. It belonged to my late father. Wear it all the time you're apart from me.

MARK

I will. Every time I feel it on my finger, I'll think of you.

MARY

Take good care of it; it's the only one of its kind in the world. Just like you.

They kiss.

MARK

I have to go.

Mark leaves. Mary sits down and sighs.

SCENE 2

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM. PRESENT DAY.

Mary, a young woman of about 20, is sitting at her dressing table, combing her hair.

JAMES enters, wearing his military uniform.

JAMES

Mary, my darling!

He rushes over to her.

MARY

Oh, James!

As she stands, he sweeps her into his arms. They kiss.

MARY (CONT'D)

Is it really you? Have you really returned safely from Iraq?

JAMES

Yes, my dearest one. Now that Saddam Hussein has been executed, we have the insurgents on the run.

MARY

Do you still have the ring?

JAMES

Of course. It's the only one of its kind in the world.

MARY

Just like you!

They kiss.

GUIDO

Wait a minute!

GUIDO jumps up out of the audience and runs onto the stage.

GUIDO (CONT'D)

That's not the way I wrote it. Where's that idiot director? Lee, get out here!

LEE enters from off stage.

LEE

But Guido, that's what it says in the script you sent me. See?

Lee hands Guido a copy of the script. Guido leafs through the first few pages.

GUIDO

Uh-oh.

Guido starts frantically flipping back and forth through the pages, then stops.

GUIDO (CONT'D)

I see what happened. The hero was named Mark in the first draft, and it did take place in 1942, but then I changed him to James, and I changed the time to the present day. It looks like the file got messed up. It's got part of my first draft and part of the final version.

LEE

Ah.

GUIDO

What do you mean, "Ah"? Didn't you notice anything strange while you were rehearsing?

LEE

We just figured it was surrealism. I thought about calling you, but I knew you were going to be out of town until the premiere.

Lee turns to Mary and James.

LEE (CONT'D)

Isn't that right?

MARY

We all know how much you like Kafka. This isn't any stranger than some of his stuff.

JAMES

Yeah, Guido, we're sorry we messed up your play.

GUIDO

All right, all right, let me think. OK, how about this? You be Mary and you be James, and we'll just pick up the story from here. If you run into any problems in the next scene, just improvise. Everybody with me on this?

They all nod.

Guido turns to the audience.

GUIDO (CONT'D)

We're sorry for this little mix-up, folks, but everything's on track now. Just pretend that was James in the first scene. Now sit back, relax, and enjoy the show.

Guido starts heading back to his seat.

MARY

Uh, Guido, one thing.

GUIDO

What?

MARY

What's our time period? 1942 or present day?

GUIDO

I don't think it matters. Let's say 1942.

Guido returns to the audience. Lee exits. Mary and James sit facing each other, holding hands.

JAMES

Oh, darling, I've missed you so much. Do you still want to marry me?

MARY

Of course. All the time we were apart, I kept dreaming of our wedding day. And our wedding night.

JAMES

You mean?

MARY

Yes. I can't wait any longer. Make love to me, James, right now!

JAMES
But, what if you get pregnant?

MARY
I'm on the pill.

GUIDO (FROM THE
AUDIENCE)
They didn't have birth control pills in 1942; they
hadn't been invented yet.

MARY
Oh. Uh...I have an IUD.

GUIDO
Nope.

MARY
A diaphragm?

GUIDO
That'll do. Stay in the moment.

MARY (WHISPERS TO
JAMES)
Let's back up a few lines.

JAMES
OK.

MARY
I can't wait any longer. Make love to me, right
now!

JAMES
But what if you get pregnant?

MARY
I went to the Margaret Sanger Clinic and got a
diaphragm.

James picks Mary up and
whirls her around.

JAMES
Mary Potemkin, I love you!

They exit, hand-in-hand.

SCENE 3

EXTERIOR, THE FORUM, ANCIENT ROME.

Mark Anthony enters, dressed in a toga. This is the same actor who played "Mark" earlier.

MARK

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears; I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. The evil that men do lives after them; The good is oft interred with their bones; So let it be with Caesar.

Guido rushes back on stage.

GUIDO

What the hell is this?

MARK

It's in the script.

Mark pulls out a copy of the script from his toga and hands it to Guido. Guido flips through it.

GUIDO

This is worse than I thought. There's my first draft, my revised version, some Shakespeare...this next part isn't even in English...

DALE (FROM THE AUDIENCE)

This has gone far enough.

Dale comes out of the audience onto the stage.

GUIDO

Who are you?

DALE

I'm Dale, the real playwright.

GUIDO

But I'm the playwright.

DALE

No, you're just an actor playing the playwright.

GUIDO

Oh, yeah? Nobody else takes credit for my work.

DALE

What do you mean, "your work"? Even in the story, you admit you didn't write most of this. I, On the other hand, wrote all of it.

Dale grabs the script out of Guido's hand.

GUIDO

Oh yeah?

Guido cocks his fist back to punch Dale.

DALE

Oh, drop dead. (*snaps fingers*).

Guido collapses in a heap on the ground.

JAMES

Wow, you really are the playwright.

DALE

And none of you better forget it. Lee, get back out here.

Lee enters.

LEE

Sure, Dale.

DALE

Look, I need to write a new final scene that fits this all together. I have to tie up all the loose ends, like Mark Antony and Guido's corpse. And we'll need a big climactic finish.

Dale pulls out a pen and starts making notes on the back of the script.

Dale turns to the audience.

DALE (CONT'D)

Excuse us for a minute, folks.

Dale, Lee, Mary, and James
huddle for a while,
whispering and gesturing to
each other. Dale looks up.

DALE (CONT'D)

Mark!

MARK (O.S.)

Yes, Dale?

DALE

Are you still wearing the toga?

MARK

Yeah.

DALE

Well, change back to your regular clothes. We need
you for the final scene. Chop-chop.

MARK

OK.

They huddle again. Dale
looks up.

DALE

Darn. I need one more character. Lee, can you act?

LEE

I suppose.

DALE

Good.

LEE

Does this mean I'll have to join Actors Equity?

DALE

We'll worry about that tomorrow. OK, everybody,
here's what you do.

They huddle again. The
huddle breaks up.

DALE (CONT'D)

OK, places, everybody.

LEE

Hey, that's my line. I'm still the director.

DALE

Oh, right. Sorry.

LEE

OK, places, everybody.

Dale heads back to the audience. Mary heads off-stage. In the opposite direction, Lee and James head offstage. Just as they are about to leave, Mark enters, wearing his regular clothes.

MARK

Did I miss anything?

Lee and James link arms with Mark, spin him around, and all three exit. Guido is still lying on the floor.

JAMES

We'll fill you in...

SCENE 4

Mary enters. Mark, James, and Lee enter from the opposite side. Guido is still lying dead on the floor.

MARY

Hi, guys!

MARK, JAMES, AND
LEE

Good morning, Mary.

JAMES

How did you sleep?

MARY

It was the strangest thing. I thought I was in ancient Rome, listening to Mark Antony give the funeral address for Julius Caesar. Mark Antony looked a little like you, Mark.

MARK

Handsome devil, eh?

MARY

But then I woke up, and it was all a dream.

LEE

Well, that explains that.

Lee nudges Guido's body with a toe.

LEE (CONT'D)

Who's this guy?

MARY

Nobody important. You might as well drag him outside.

LEE

OK. I'll take his feet. You two take his shoulders.

Lee, Mark, and James carry Guido off stage.

F/X: Sound of brakes
squealing, then a violent
crash.

James comes running back
onstage.

JAMES

Oh, no! Mark and Lee just got run over by a
runaway truck! They're dead!

MARY

A truck? Let's go see!

Mary and James run offstage.

F/X: Sound of brakes
squealing.

MARY AND JAMES

(O.S.)

Oh, no! We're being run over by a second runaway
truck!

F/X: Sound of a violent
crash.

MARY AND JAMES

(O.S.) (CONT'D)

We're dead!

Lights out.

END OF PLAY