

FIRE DAMAGE

By Carolyn West

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Originally performed at The Brick Playhouse in Philadelphia.

CAST: TODD and MARY

SETTING: *A cemetery, modern and peaceful. The grass is short and the headstones modest. Center stage is a grave that has no gravestone. It is marked with a tag in the ground. (If done in competition, the setting and props can easily be mimed.)*

AT RISE: *MARY is down on one knee in front of the tag. Lost in thought, SHE runs her hand through the grass. TODD enters. HE watches MARY unnoticed. After a moment or two, SHE sees him. As if SHE's been caught doing something wrong, SHE stands up.*

TODD: I thought you'd be here.

MARY: I like it here. I like being close to him.

TODD: It's very peaceful...quiet. Have you been here all day?

MARY: No. Just for about **(looking at her watch. SHE is surprised by how late it is)** an hour and a half.

TODD: I called around lunch. I got the answering machine.

MARY: I had an appointment.

TODD: A doctor's appointment?

MARY: No. I'm finished with those. I'm all better, healthy as a horse.

TODD: So what kind of an appointment was it?

MARY: I guess you're hungry. I didn't make dinner yet. I'm sorry. I can whip up something... **(SHE moves to leave. TODD catches her arm.)**

TODD: I'm fine. Let's stay a while longer. We can get Chinese on the way home. We should bring flowers. You can't even tell there's anyone here without the headstone.

MARY: **(an edge to her voice)** Is it that important?

TODD: Well, yeah. We want it to look nice, don't we?

MARY: I guess.

TODD: I was thinking, once the headstone is in place, we could plant a perennial.

MARY: (**angry**) All these plans. It's too bad you haven't had a grave to take care of before this.

TODD: Mary, don't say that. You know this is tough for me. I just want it to look nice for Sam. So people know Sam was loved.

MARY: I love my son. I don't have to prove it to anyone.

TODD: You're twisting what I say. I hate when you do this.

MARY: You're the one who's saying it.

TODD: Just forget about it. Forget I ever said it. (**pause**) How was your day?

MARY: It was okay, I guess.

TODD: Who was your appointment with?

MARY: I've decided to get a job, go back to work.

TODD: Are you sure? You don't have to. We're doing fine on my salary.

MARY: I want to. I've got to do something during the day.

TODD: So you had a job interview. How did it go?

MARY: It wasn't a job interview. There's so much I have to do before I can apply for a job. I have to fix up my resume. Not working for the past two years isn't going to help me.

TODD: You'll do fine. So if it wasn't about a job, what kind of an appointment was it?

MARY: Why do you want to know so badly?

TODD: Why won't you tell me? (**There is a long pause as they stare at one another.**)

MARY: I'm not having an affair, if that's what you're worried about.

TODD: I don't think you're having an affair. It never crossed my mind, believe me. I just thought, maybe, you had been to, you know, a psychiatrist.

MARY: Oh gosh, you and your psychiatrists.

TODD: You know you haven't been happy. It might be good for you to talk things out.

MARY: I don't need a psychiatrist to know why I'm unhappy. My house burned down, my baby died, my husband is an ass. I have a right to be unhappy.

TODD: So fine, you didn't go see a psychiatrist. Who did you see?

MARY: You really want to know?

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