FIRE DAMAGE
by
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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?