

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S HALLUCINATION

By Jerry Rabushka

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SYNOPSIS: Remember the days when your history teacher gave you eight weeks to write a paper and you started it eight hours before it was due? Time's growing short for our performer, who is fighting off sleep to write a paper about Washington crossing the Delaware. What a great time for writer's block! Our actor turns over a host of ideas – what about George and Martha in a steamy romance? What if Washington was so cold and hungry he was seeing and hearing things? What if... what if the way to write the paper was to return to 18th century technology? Better hurry, the British are coming!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 Either)

A high school student who plays other characters as indicated.

DURATION

10 minutes

I have writer's block. It's true, I can't think of a thing to say. (*Gets more embarrassed as this goes on.*) Of course, my paper is due tomorrow... at about eight in the morning... and it's now eleven fifty-eight... p.m..

(*Calling out, as if Mom will excuse the assignment.*) Mom! I don't know what to write!

(*As mom.*) When was it assigned?

(*To audience.*) You know where this is going, and it's not going to go well... (*To mom, shyly.*) Eight weeks ago.

(*As mom, a bit sarcastic.*) "And when is it due?"

Eight hours from now. (*Short pause.*) I need help.

(*As mom.*) You needed *help* eight weeks ago. Now you need a miracle. (*Matter of fact.*) After the miracle of giving birth to you, I'm all out.

(*Still asking mom.*) So... mom... did George Washington have a love life?

"What does he have to do with it?"

(*To the audience.*) It's a paper on George Washington crossing the Delaware – now *that* was a miracle! But what did I have to contribute to that? People have been writing about the Delaware and George Washington crossing it for about 240 years. I had nothing new to get across about that crossing. Every inch of that river has been surveyed and documented and sold on *Pawn Stars*. (*As a salesperson.*) Here's some river water from 1776, what do you think it's worth?

(*In response.*) Smells like catfish! I'll give you a dollar!

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So I wanted to show the world a different George.

(With a sleazy smile.) This George... *(Narrating, romantically.)* George looked deep into Martha's eyes. He drew her closer. He gave her kiss after tender, delicate kiss as the founding father and mother wrapped themselves in a passionate embrace.

Martha looks into the man who will literally make a world's worth of difference... *(As Martha, scolding.)* "With those teeth? With that breath? *You* want to kiss *me*? I say kiss off!"

This is 1760, don't forget. The American obsession with floss has yet to begin.

Mom didn't like it either. "I won't have you turning in that embarrassing filth!"

Mom, it's not filth. It's the founding father.

"It's filth!"

Okay, let's try a different approach. I'll put on my powdered wig and transport myself back to revolutionary America. *(As George Washington.)* "Martha, what's for dinner?"

(As Martha, scolding again.) I don't know, George, I'm not the cook.

"Ask the cook, Martha, I'm hungry. And with these teeth, it needs to be soft."

(As Martha.) Dinner won't matter if we lose this war. Don't you have a revolution to fight?"

(As self.) Six hours and forty five minutes... otherwise known as 1:15 a.m.

I'm starting to hallucinate.

So, George is at Valley Forge...

(As Mom.) He's at the Delaware, remember?

(To mom.) He's hallucinating, Mom, so he *thinks* he's at Valley Forge. Remember *Abe Lincoln Vampire Hunter*? Like history has to be accurate!

(Short pause, then narrating.) As icicles formed on men's beards, mustaches, and eyebrows; as smallpox wound its way through the rebel army like earthworms through a rotting corpse; as disease and dysentery, cold and clamor made the men's cause seem hopeless and worthless, George Washington was seeing visions of Martha, her cook, and a big vat of soup. A big huge humongo ginormous vat of mutton soup.

(Thinking it over.) Mutton soup. Mom was helping me by being remarkably unimpressed.

It's low sodium, OK? Campbell's low sodium mutton soup.

"If the river were soup," said George, "we could drink it and walk across on leftover carrots."

The men weren't having it. (As a rabble-rousing soldier, uneducated.) "Who puts carrots in mutton soup?"

(As George.) Soldier, you're being insubordinate!

(As soldier, more emphatically.) You want us to win a revolution with cooked carrots, are ya crazy?

(As George.) Give me your carrots, soldier!

(As soldier, taunting and dangerous.) Come and get them, General Washington. Come and get them...

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Other soldiers noticed a bigger problem and started to riot.

"There's no mutton in this soup! It's all carrots."

(With a tempting smile.) But other than that, have some! *(Takes a taste, and it's not very good.)*

(Reacting to the taste.) It's not soup, it's river water.

(To audience, exasperated.) George is hallucinating again.

Three a.m. and here I am, googling a recipe for mutton soup so we can win the American Revolution.

(Reading a recipe, listing off ingredients.) Pound of mutton, onion, turmeric, tomato, corn flour... not a carrot in sight. The war is lost, and my paper is a failure!

Mom agreed. "Why didn't you do this eight weeks ago?" She was enjoying herself a little too much.

(Whiny.) Mom, I still have timmmme!

"Can't you be late?"

"And look irresponsible? And like everyone else in the class isn't doing the same thing?"

Finally mom had an idea. "Put yourself in Washington's shoes," she advised.

But they're too small, and they're wet, muddy, and uncomfortable.

"I mean his figurative shoes. What would he have done in your position?"

BY JERRY RABUSHKA

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