

THE INTERVENTION

By Mark Bellusci

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CHARACTERS

- JANEY Scared and nervous.
- PHIL Worn, beleaguered and disheveled.
- JOHNNY Tough looking guy, wearing a black leather jacket and jeans.
- NAILS A woman, dressed similar to JOHNNY. She can be any size, as long as she acts as tough as, well, nails.

SCENE

A normal living room. Entrance is upstage center. Center stage is a couch facing the audience. A comfortable chair flanks the couch on stage right. Downstage is an imaginary television, which is facing the couch.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

- Finalist, New York City 15-minute Play Festival
- Produced, New York Playwrights Festival
- Produced, Queens Playwrights Festival
- Winner, SwampKing Comedy Festival, Brooklyn Lyceum Theatre, NYC
- Semi-finalist, McLaren Comedy Competition, Texas
- Stage reading, Waveny Theatre, Connecticut

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AT RISE: JANEY is pacing nervously in the living room. Doorbell rings. JOHNNY and NAILS enter.

JANEY: Hi.

JOHNNY: Is he?--

JANEY: Soon.

JOHNNY: Okay, good. Janey, this is Nails. She'll help keep things under control. **(they murmur greetings)** You remember the plan, right? **(JANEY stares off into space)** JANEY!

JANEY: Huh?

JOHNNY: Are you ready for this?

JANEY: I. . . I think so.

NAILS: Not good enough.

JANEY: I just-- I keep imagining the look he'll give me when he realizes I betrayed him.

JOHNNY: Betrayed him? Are you the one who stopped living in this world? Who's about to lose a job? He's the betrayer, Janey. Him, and his addiction. That's why you called us. **(JANEY tries to keep from crying)** But we can do something about it. We can bring him back. Now, there might be some screaming--and maybe even a little physical stuff. But that's the only way I know how to beat this thing. And if he sees any weakness in you, he'll be back at it harder than Joan Rivers on Botox.

JANEY: **(angry)** Don't you think I know that?!

NAILS: That's it, Janey. Yell, scream, get angry. Whatever it takes, just be strong--for his sake.

JANEY: I will. I will!

JOHNNY: **(turns on the TV)** All right. Now remember, me and Nails, we were in the neighborhood, wanted to watch a ballgame, and you asked us to stay for dinner--then, the intervention.

JANEY: He'll fight you.

NAILS: We'll control him.

JANEY: But he's an animal. You don't know--

JOHNNY: No, I do know. . . because I've been there.

JANEY: Oh, you poor, poor soul.

JOHNNY: With Nails support, I fight it one day at a time. Johnny can, too. But, only if we follow the plan.

JANEY: **(drained)** Yes. . . Of course. **(Offstage, house keys jangle)** He's here!

JOHNNY: All right, let's save this poor slob.

(They get in position, JANEY and JOHNNY by the door, NAILS sits on the far side of the couch, stage left. PHIL opens the front door and is greeted by JOHNNY.)

JOHNNY: Dude!

PHIL: ***(surprised, then listless)*** Oh. Hi, John. ***(JOHNNY gives him a bear hug, then shakes his hand vigorously, pumps him on the shoulder, and feigns a friendly punch or two. Throughout, PHIL remains listless. JOHNNY then leads PHIL to the center seat of the couch. JOHNNY sits on his right. JANEY then sits on the chair flanking the couch. Meanwhile, NAILS just glares at PHIL.)***
It's good to-- Wow. It's been a--so long-- ***(nervously notices NAILS's glare)*** Um, who's. . .

JOHNNY: This is Nails.

NAILS: ***(brusquely.)*** How ya doin? ***(continues staring at PHIL)***

PHIL: Oh. . . uh. . . I'm, uh. . . what brings you to--

JOHNNY: Our new gym's up the street. We finished working out, wanted to catch the game.

PHIL: I'm. . . glad you stopped by and everything. But Janey--

JANEY: Oh no, it's fine.

PHIL: But dinner--

JANEY: I called in a pizza. With pepperoni, the way you like it.

NAILS: Boy, this should be some game, you know? The Nets are--

PHIL: The thing is, well, I have to get up early and--

JOHNNY: We'll have a few slices, watch the first half, you'll be in bed by eleven.

PHIL: But I have to work and--

NAILS: Work can wait.

PHIL: No, see you don't underst--

NAILS: You been following the Nets?

(As they watch the game, PHIL begins to twitch. The others sneak glances at him as they watch the game.)

PHIL: Nets? No. . . Yeah. . . I mean, a little.

JOHNNY: They're playing well, you know, moving the ball and--

PHIL: Where's the, um, remote control?

(Beat, as JOHNNY, NAILS and JEANNIE look at each other.)

JOHNNY: ***(deliberately and slowly, while holding the remote control away from PHIL)*** I've got it.

PHIL: (*major twitching*) Can I . . . Could you. . . Just throw it here?

JOHNNY: Why? We're just watching the game.

PHIL: (*increased twitching*) JUST! Just give it to me, please!

JOHNNY: Why don't I hang onto it? Pizza will be here soon and--

PHIL: NO! (*As HE speaks, his right hand holds an imaginary remote control and pantomimes changing channels.*) IT'S MY REMOTE CONTROL!

JANEY: Philly!

NAILS: Here we go.

PHIL: I WANT MY REMOTE CONTROL! (*NAILS prepares to restrain him*) I NEED IT!

NAILS: Talk him down, Johnny.

JOHNNY: Easy, Phil.

PHIL: I MUST HAVE IT!

(*JOHNNY then points the remote control at the TV and shuts it off. PHILLY lets out a howl and gets up to charge JOHNNY, but NAILS restrains him. Even after he's restrained, he points an imaginary remote at the TV.*)

JOHNNY: Hold him, Nails. Hold him good.

JANEY: Please don't hurt him!

PHIL: MY REMOTE. OH, GOD. PLEASE, GIVE IT TO ME. I NEED IT. I WANT IT. I LOVE IT. WHERE IS IT? I GOTTA FLICK, FLICK, FLICK--

NAILS: Deep breaths, Phil.

PHIL: WHAT'S ON? I NEED IT. PLEASE, COME TO ME LITTLE LOVE REMOTE, PLEASE. PLEASE, OH, PLEASE. JUST ONE CHANNEL CHANGE, PLEASE-- (*his thumb continues changing imaginary channels faster and faster, until his hand is a blur*)

JANEY: Look at his hand!

JOHNNY: Turbo Thumb. A bad case of it.

NAILS: He keeps that up, he'll pulverize his knuckles.

JOHNNY: Quick, Janey, Get me something soft--a wallet, a sponge.

(*JANEY runs offstage and returns with a sponge. She approaches PHIL to put it in his hand, but JOHNNY intercepts her.*)

JOHNNY: Whoa. In that state, he's a steel trap waiting for your rabbit's paw.

JANEY: He wouldn't hurt me. He's my husband.

JOHNNY: He doesn't know you from Adam, right now.

NAILS: (*struggling with PHIL*) Can't. . . hold him. . . much. . . longer!

(JOHNNY takes the sponge from JANEY and carefully places it in PHIL's hand. PHIL flicks it like a remote control and sighs in relief.)

NAILS: He's coming down, Johnny.

JOHNNY: Let up a little. But stay alert.

JANEY: Phil? Can you hear me? I'm so sorry! It's for your own good. . . don't hate me--

JOHNNY: Save your breath, Janey. He's. . . somewhere else right now.

(PHIL stares at the TV. HE smiles as he flicks the sponge.)

PHIL: Ohhh, my love.

JANEY: I'm here, Phil. ***(takes a step towards PHIL, but JOHNNY restrains her)***

NAILS: It's not you he's calling.

PHIL: ***(addresses the sponge/remote control lovingly)*** Ohhhhhh it's good to have you back, my love. Flick, flick, flick, all my channels, they're back. Look--

JANEY: Oh no, he's lost his--

JOHNNY: It's a flicking fantasy.

PHIL: Ah, my two-hundred-and-sixty-nine channels. Take me away from it all. ***(points at the TV and addresses JANEY)*** Do you see it?

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