

THE RECKLESS ROMANTIC

By Jacquelyn Priskorn

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CHARACTERS

MARY.....female, 20-50. The maid.

DOBBINS.....male, 40-80. The butler.

PAUL.....male, 29. The master of the house.

PROPS LIST

Push button open umbrella

Lady's evening glove (preferably red to match the painting)

Engagement ring

PRODUCTION NOTES

This play is inspired by the painting "The Singing Butler" by Jack Vettriano. It is recommended that the costumes and props reflect this as closely as possible.

This can be a fun, yet challenging exercise in physical comedy. The more rehearsal time you give the piece, the more moments you can discover with the umbrella and other elements. Also, the cast will feel safer and more comfortable with practice.

In the first production, the director chose to have both of Mary's hands stuck to the umbrella, which made for some funny moments involving the engagement ring. However, one hand free of the umbrella is perfectly fine.

Be prepared that your umbrella will take a lot of abuse and you may need more than one! You should be able to find an umbrella that has a button near the bottom that Mary can use to engage opening the umbrella on cue. She will likely need Dobbins and Paul to help her reclose it.

THE RECKLESS ROMANTIC

(inspired by the painting "The Singing Butler" by Jack Vettriano)
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MARY reclines on a couch in the parlor. SHE is unconscious. SHE wears a slightly singed, slightly damp maid's uniform. Her hair appears as though it has just been fried by a huge dose of electricity. In her hand that dangles off the couch, SHE clutches a closed umbrella.

Suddenly MARY sits bolt upright, as if awaking from a nightmare. SHE screams and the umbrella pops open, startling her and causing her to scream again. SHE tries to drop the umbrella but for some reason it is stuck to her hand. DOBBINS rushes in, wearing a damp suit.

DOBBINS: Here, let me get that for you.

(HE quietly recloses the umbrella for her. SHE can only weakly scream now as SHE tries to shake the umbrella from her hand.)

The doctor is on the way. I'm afraid the umbrella is melted into your hand, Mary. Don't try to pull it off.

MARY: What happened?

DOBBINS: Mary, please relax.

(HE pushes her to recline.)

MARY: Why do I smell burning hair?

DOBBINS: It was another of Master Paul's outrageous proposal schemes.

MARY: Oh no.

DOBBINS: A picnic at the beach. Master Paul asks Miss Stacey to dance...

MARY: Oh...

DOBBINS: A storm blows in. It all happened so quickly. I begged him to go for shelter. "Keep singing, Dobbins!" He cried over the wind. "And man those umbrellas!"

MARY: No...

DOBBINS: Just as he is about to spin Miss Stacey and ask for her hand in marriage there was a flash of light and a sound the likes of which I had never heard.

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MARY: Lightning?

DOBBINS: Next thing I knew you were on the ground several yards away, umbrella fused to your hand--

MARY: And Miss Stacey?

DOBBINS: Dead.

MARY: No!

DOBBINS: I'm afraid so.

MARY: That's the third one in two months!

DOBBINS: I know.

MARY: Master Paul must be devastated.

DOBBINS: It was all I could do to get him in out of the rain. I had the gardening staff bring Miss Stacey up to the shed with the others until the coroner can come by to claim them.

MARY: Oh, this is just awful!

DOBBINS: I'm just glad that you're okay.

MARY: Aside from this.

(SHE gestures with her umbrella hand, which pops open again. DOBBINS helps her to reclose it.)

DOBBINS: One really shouldn't open umbrellas indoors. It's bad luck.

(MARY laughs.)

MARY: Bad luck? Master Paul has killed three potential brides with marriage proposals gone awry and we're worried about a little bad luck?

(PAUL enters, suit damp, towel over his shoulders and a single, red, lady's evening glove clutched in his hand.)

PAUL: Ah, Mary! Doing well, are we?

MARY: Master Paul!

PAUL: No, no. Don't get up.

MARY: How are you?

PAUL: Hmm. Suit's a bit wet. Got sand in my shorts. Fiancée's dead. But, other than that, can't complain.

DOBBINS: Bad luck, sir.

PAUL: I'll say! The gardening staff's a mite cross with me these days as well. But that should pass. Maybe I need to give them a raise.

MARY: Sir?

PAUL: Not too big, mind you. Just enough to let them know I appreciate all they do.

DOBBINS: Well thought, sir.

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(PAUL sits beside MARY on the couch.)

PAUL: So! We had a bit of a scare tonight, didn't we?

MARY: Master Paul--

PAUL: Now, don't you fret too much about this, Mary. I don't blame you for anything. You just sit back and rest. Dobbins will go and fetch the picnic stuff back from the beach. Won't you, Dobbins?

DOBBINS: Certainly, sir.

MARY: Aren't you...upset, sir?

PAUL: Oh, I don't know! I mean, it was a lovely picnic. And when I asked for her hand, I mean technically she said "yes".

(HE holds up the evening glove.)

DOBBINS: I'm afraid that isn't enough to meet the conditions of your father's will, sir.

PAUL: Ah, well! We can't let a little act of God dampen our spirits. Tomorrow is another day and all that.

DOBBINS: And you still have another month to get married before you lose your inheritance.

PAUL: And there's that!

MARY: But Miss Stacey--

DOBBINS: I'm sure she had a lovely evening up until then, sir.

PAUL: Oh, most definitely. Your singing could melt butter, Dobbins.

DOBBINS: Why thank you, sir.

MARY: Yes! In fact, it could melt an umbrella to a girl's hand!

(MARY holds up the umbrella like a torch. It pops open. BOTH MEN stare at her for a moment.)

PAUL: I like you, Mary. You remind me of a nanny I had when I was a boy. But umbrellas indoors? Bad luck, you know.

(HE closes the umbrella back up for her.)

MARY: Bad luck? You have three dead fiancées in the gardening shed!

DOBBINS: By the way, the coroner hopes to make his pick up by Tuesday.

PAUL: Aces!

MARY: Master Paul, these are some serious tragedies that have befallen you. I don't know how you aren't as upset as I am about all of this!

PAUL: Oh, Mary. I hate to see you upset. I promise. I'll cover whatever your doctor bills might be.

MARY: Right, but--

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PAUL: I know things look glum now. But being a sour puss isn't going to remove that umbrella from your hand, now is it?

MARY: Master Paul--

DOBBINS: I believe Mary is more worried about you, Master Paul.

PAUL: Me? Why ever so?

MARY: I understand how desperately you need to be married, Master Paul, but... have you, perhaps, considered that your wild, romantic gestures might be... dangerous?

PAUL: Romance? Dangerous? Never! Reckless, maybe... But reckless romance... Oh, doesn't it just make you feel giddy inside?

MARY: No...

PAUL: Women always go gooey for a chap that loves them with reckless abandon! It's all about the drama. The daring... The--

MARY: Death?

PAUL: Like I said, spot of bad luck. But I guarantee I will be engaged before my thirtieth birthday fulfilling my father's final wishes. I will keep the estate and you two will keep your jobs. Everyone's happy.

MARY: Aside from the three in the gardening shed.

PAUL: I told you, they're getting a raise... Oh, right... The ladies. Sad business that.

DOBBINS: Perhaps, sir, if you tried proposing to the next young lady in a less dramatic fashion?

PAUL: Where's the romance in that, Dobbins? How would you know? You've never been married, either.

MARY: Not every woman requires a grand gesture to fall in love.

PAUL: No?

MARY: No. Especially if it might kill her.

PAUL: I thought my gestures were quite romantic.

MARY: They were. The two thousand long stemmed roses that spelled out Miss Anna's name were lovely.

DOBBINS: How were you to know a swarm of bees would come and sting her to death?

MARY: And the fireworks display you set up for Miss Chloe?

DOBBINS: Rogue rocket... couldn't be predicted...

MARY: But I think a girl could fall in love to a lower key proposal. A proposal that was... I don't know... a kiss?

PAUL: A kiss you say? Oh, you're starting to make sense, Mary.

(PAUL takes the red glove and shakes the contents into his palm. A diamond ring. HE gets down on one knee.)

Like this? Will you marry me?

MARY: Sure. That could work, too.

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PAUL: Aces! Mary, I think you'll make a stellar wife! Your K.i.s.s. method works brilliantly.

MARY: Kiss method?

DOBBINS: Keep It Simple, Stupid.

PAUL: Suppose we should apply the k.i.s.s. to the wedding, too. We don't want any unfortunate accidents there, either, do we?

MARY: I'm sorry?

PAUL: I'll go call the judge now... Keep it simple, Stupid!

MARY: *(Realizing)* Stupid.

(The umbrella pops open.)

PAUL: Hopefully, we'll get that umbrella removed before the wedding!

Oh, Mary, you're the bee's knees! Better go make that call!

Dobbins, help my fiancée, would you?

(DOBBINS helps close MARY's umbrella as PAUL exits joyfully.)

MARY: Dobbins, what have I done?

DOBBINS: You tell me... Stupid.

MARY: Is that helping? How is that helping? I didn't mean to make Master Paul... I mean, it would be nice to marry a wealthy man and all, but... I want to live!

DOBBINS: Yes, your future does seem to be headed to the gardening shed.

MARY: This isn't funny! I mean, what if Master Paul IS cursed or something? I don't think I'll survive the wedding!

DOBBINS: I would have to concur.

MARY: Plus, the man is disturbingly cheerful.

DOBBINS: That is disturbing.

MARY: I mean, I would be set for life... but how long would that life be?

DOBBINS: It's a mystery.

MARY: But if I turn him down, I may be fired... and then where will I be?

There has to be another alternative... Oh look at me, Dobbins!

(SHE shakes her umbrella hand.)

Maybe I need to seriously consider a career change anyway.

DOBBINS: Can't say I haven't considered that myself.

MARY: What are we going to do?

DOBBINS: I've got it under control.

MARY: You do? How?

DOBBINS: I've worked here long enough to understand Master Paul.

MARY: What do we do then?

DOBBINS: Just lie back and don't move.

MARY: Don't move?

DOBBINS: Do you trust me, Mary?

MARY: I... do.

DOBBINS: Then don't move.

(HE pushes her back to recline on the couch. PAUL enters.)

PAUL: Mary, I called the... Mary? Dobbins, what's wrong with Mary?

DOBBINS: I'm sorry, sir?

PAUL: Oh, now what?

DOBBINS: It seems Mary has succumbed to umbrella poisoning.

PAUL: Umbrella poisoning? Really?

DOBBINS: Bad luck, sir.

PAUL: I'll say! I honestly thought that k.i.s.s. thing of Mary's was going to work out.

DOBBINS: Perhaps it did work, sir. Just not for Mary.

PAUL: That's a good thought, Dobbins! No need to give up the ghost yet. The battle's not lost and all that. I'm going right back out there and find me a girl to KISS!

DOBBINS: You do that, sir. But may I suggest you wait for the storm to pass first?

PAUL: You may suggest that, Dobbins. But you know me. Even when I am K.I.S.S.ing, I'm still recklessly romantic!

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