

# WHAT WOULD MARY DO?

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A Play in Two Acts

by

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ACT 1

Scene 1

SETTING: Apartment, night.  
Everything neat, organized.  
DVDs alphabetically arranged  
near the player and TV. Book  
shelves lined with books. A  
baseball bat leans against the  
wall.

AT RISE: JONI ROBERTS, dressed in her  
perfectly coordinated outfit,  
sleeps at her desk, hunched  
over a laptop and neatly stacked  
piles of papers, BlackBerry in  
hand, bluetooth in ear.

LIZ CONROY, holding a Tab can,  
wearing ripped sweatpants,  
ratty t-shirt, a beret and  
wedding ring, quietly sneaks in.

Liz checks everything including a  
sleeping Joni before moving to  
the DVDs.

She flips through them and pops  
one in the player, clicks the TV  
on, cranks up the volume. *Love  
is All Around (The Mary Tyler  
Moore Show Theme)* blares.

Joni jolts awake, grabs the  
bat and rushes Liz.

Liz runs around dodging Joni.  
She holds her Tab can in one  
hand and pitches books with  
the other.

JONI  
Who the...heck...are you?

LIZ  
Guess.

JONI  
How did you get in?

LIZ  
(points to the door)  
I'd invest in better locks if I were you.

JONI  
Leave now and I promise not to call the police.

LIZ  
That and my good looks get me a one-way ticket to the  
slammer.  
(tosses her a book)  
Still haven't found that signed first edition, have you?

JONI  
(catches the book)  
Ngaio Marsh signed --

(Joni eyes the Tab can,  
the wedding ring then  
Liz.)

LIZ  
(calmly strokes the bat)  
Ya still use this as a burglar alarm? Would Mary use this?  
Nah, she'd hire one of those security companies.

JONI  
(lifts the beret up)  
Liz?!

LIZ  
In the flesh, kid.

JONI  
Liz! I haven't heard from you in so long. I wasn't sure  
if you were still in --

LIZ  
-- Africa. I was, until yesterday, I think...Hope my  
wheels are safe outside. I've got some valuable  
merchandise in them.  
(laughs at the TV)  
That Ted Baxter...always thought he could nail Mary but she  
put him in his place.

(Liz darts out the door.  
Joni pinches herself.)

JONI  
Ow!

(Liz wheels a shopping  
cart filled with cases of  
Tab and a duffle bag,  
inside.)

LIZ

Guess I'll park this here. Never know who's lurking  
around.

(Liz, pops open a Tab  
then bops around handling  
all of Joni's things.  
Joni, on her heels,  
straightens up after  
her.)

JONI

It's good to see you. So good...Why didn't you call?!

LIZ

Thought surprisin' you'd be more fun. The time seemed so  
right for comin' home, things were getting a little too hot  
there, my work visa expired and...I was being hunted. If  
anyone comes lookin', you haven't seen me in decades.

JONI

(blocks Liz's view of the  
TV)

Feels like it, it's been over two years. You never  
answered any of my letters but I just kept on writing,  
sending them to your old address, hoping to hear --

LIZ

Did ya know the only years ending in "00" that are leap  
years are the ones divisible by four hundred? In Caesar's  
time somebody screwed up and made the year a little too  
long. They figured this be the best way to correct it. Of  
course those schmucks figured this out in the year seven-  
thirty but didn't do a thing about it for over eight  
hundred years. By then they'd lost ten days so they  
decided that the day after October fifth would be October  
fifteenth.

(pause)

What the hell happened to those ten days?

JONI

We were so worried, didn't know where you were or if you  
were --

LIZ

-- dead. I'm not! And I'm here now, the perfect place for  
healing.

JONI

Wasn't that why you returned to Africa?

LIZ

Except all I did was end up hiding from immigration. Two years of having to keep one step ahead of them, sleeping in caves, the bush, with different tribes. I barely made it out.

JONI

I'm so sorry. I lost track after MSNBC let you go.

LIZ

Let me go? They canned my ass! No sympathy for the grieving widow. Or maybe it was the potential Emmy winning news special I was producing...an objective report about the true nature of the hippopotamus.

JONI

You advocated the elimination of an endangered species.

LIZ

I presented evidence proving their docility masks vicious killers.

JONI

All you filmed were shots of hippopotamuses sleeping in the river.

LIZ

Lying in wait.

JONI

You had no proof.

LIZ

What do you call a dead husband?

JONI

It was an accident...a rogue hippo...

(Liz pulls a stack of  
"hippo shaped" cards.)

LIZ

What animal sleeps during the day and maintains activity at night?..The hippopotamus. What animal frequently raids agricultural crops and inflicts so much damage that the villagers starve?..Hippos. What is the leading cause of animal mutilated deaths in Africa?..You guessed it, that same, ugly, mud colored massive animal, the hippopotamus! And what is one of the most valuable food sources for the natives in Africa? That one and only killer, the hippo!

LIZ (CONT'D)

(throws the cards on the  
floor)

The last tribe I stayed with, the Barangees, definite communication problem but that didn't matter...the food, just what the doctor ordered. Did you know there are thirty-three ways to prepare hippopotamus? Spent four weeks gorging myself on Horace and some of his pals.

JONI

(picks the cards up and  
organizes them)

Horace?

LIZ

Chase's murderer.

JONI

You named the hippo?

LIZ

Those animal rights freaks did. Horace! What a lame name for a killer.

(pulls a DVD from her  
duffle bag)

And the chicken shits refused to air this. They were afraid they'd lose the support of those freaks and that obviously outweighs the victim's families. Victim's rights my...I sure as hell told them, in graphic detail, where they could put Horace before --

JONI

Liz...

LIZ

Figured I'd crash on the couch, at least for tonight. We'll figure out the permanent sleeping arrangements tomorrow.

(Joni walks over to her  
desk and reorganizes the  
papers on it.)

JONI

Tomorrow? Tonight's okay but tomorrow...you don't want to sleep on the couch, it's so uncomfortable.

LIZ

(tries helping her clean)

I've had worse.

JONI

It's the time of year for our annual marketing plan. I am going to be buried in work.