

THE BEAST

One Act Comedy

CAST OF CHARACTERS

LUCY: 30, HELEN's friend, she dresses in multiple unmatched colors, like a crazy quilt. She quotes famous movies all the time, sometimes for no reason. If the actress can imitate the actual line - that would be hilarious.

HELEN: 30, a pretty young widow in a little black dress, black stockings and black high heeled shoes. She carries a black lace hanky and has full makeup and hair.

GREGORY: 35, menacing, wrinkled clothing, uncombed hair, big and loud and obnoxious, but with romance and poetry deep, deep in his soul.

SCENE

The action takes place in the living room of Helen's home.

TIME

NOW

HELEN is reclined on her sofa looking mournfully at her cell phone. She occasionally dabs her eyes with her black lace hanky. LUCY enters with tea and rice cakes on a tray.

LUCY

Helen, please. This has gone on long enough. You need to get over it. All of this crying and grieving is not healthy for you! Have some herbal tea. It has chai and lavender! My friend, I'm sorry to say it, but you're just making your life a misery. Twelve months of this is just too long! Now, put away that phone and try to perk up. "There's no crying in this hall."

HELEN

I shall never. I shall never get over it. I shall dress in black and be in mourning for my dear, sweet husband Nicky for the rest of my days. Why should I cheer up? My life is over. Why should I go on? He is truly gone. Lucy, I can't bear the idea of being in public again without his strong arm to hold onto. Without his smile that lit up every room. Without his eyes that twinkled with fire and joy. Without his charm that won over every challenge and made my knees weak. My life was enveloped in his, I miss him so terribly. I promised myself that I would never stop mourning him. Never. As far as I am concerned, we are both dead.

LUCY

Now, you stop talking like that! You've stayed locked up in this old house and you never go out. You moon over that cell phone image and you cry every day. You have an entire walk-in closet filled with pretty dresses and shoes, but you only wear black things. Your garden is a weed filled mess, your new car hasn't moved in a year. I hate seeing you this way! You used to be so full of life and happiness! Helen, you've shed tears for twelve months and that's enough. "Nobody puts Helen baby in a corner." You can find

someone else! I mean, let's face it, Helen, you're very pretty, and you are still young. But, your looks won't last forever. If you wait too long, it will be too late. The time has come to stop this nonsense and get on with your life. Nick was my friend, and I loved him and hung out with him. But, Helen, Nick isn't worth all this!

HELEN

Don't talk to me that way, please. Why should I care about any of those things? My love is gone. My Nicky. My soul. I gave him everything, there is nothing left now. I have no more love to give anyone! But, I'm going to make my Nicky see how much I loved him! Let him look up at me from the afterworld and know that he did this to me. He was unfaithful and he was mean, but I'll be true to the grave and I'll show him how much I loved him. He'll find me in the next world and realize what he has lost. He'll be so ashamed of what he did. I died with him!

LUCY

Ugh! That's just crazy talking. Here, take some tea, I made it just the way you like it and there are those rice cakes from Trader Joes. "Mama always said life was like a box of rice cakes. You never know what you're gonna get." I took an Uber to get those! "As God is my witness, I'll never be hungry again." Oh, let me tell you! The driver was such a hottie! You need to take an Uber sometime. The guy's name is Lawrence. "He had me at "Hello, I'm your Uber driver - Lawrence." Dark hair and a long ponytail. Can you believe it? Tres Johnny Depp! He had a tape of Low Cut Connie playing when I got in. Like, who does that? Very indie! Once we got to Trader Joe - he dropped me off at the front door. Then, after I finished shopping, he actually waited around to bring me back here! What a nice guy! So we talked and flirted a bit on the ride home. He was a real gentleman. Let me tell you! We talked. We laughed. We quoted movie classics! Oh my! He was like Channing Tatum on fire! "Of all the drivers in all the towns in all the world - he drove up to mine." And now? I'm seeing him again tomorrow for a real date! See what you've been missing? A cute girl like you? Why don't we take an Uber someplace?

Maybe we can find you a hot guy? It would be so good for you!

HELEN

No. Not today. I'm not in the mood.

LUCY

Helen! You need to at least get some fresh air and walk around. Let's just go for an Uber car ride! Or hey! even a nice hike in the woods! Or, we could see a movie and maybe walk around the mall and window shop! We could get a Cinnabon, babe. You know, the mall food court is filled with good looking older guys. You'd get scooped up before you knew it!

(the doorbell rings)

HELEN

Oh, who could that be? Lucy, please tell them I'm not home?

LUCY EXITS - HELEN gazes at cellphone photo

Oh, my Nicky, my sweet nicky nacky! Do you see how much I love and forgive you? How I adored you, no matter what? My love for you will only fade when I fade away, when my heart stops beating.

(she dabs at her eye makeup with her black lace hanky)

Aren't you ashamed that you treated me so badly? Here I am, being good and faithful and I've locked myself away and I will mourn forever - aren't you ashamed? You deceived me. But I've stayed good, I've stayed faithful. I've been true to your image and our vows. I can barely ever eat or drink, my love for you is so strong! Oh, my Nicholas! I miss you so much!

Enter LUCY

LUCY

"Fasten your seatbelts. It's going to be a bumpy night."
Someone is here to see you, Helen.

HELEN

I hope you told them I'm not in. Tell them that I haven't received visitors since my husband died.

LUCY

I did, but he won't listen. He says that his business with you is urgent.

HELEN

Please, just tell him I'M NOT HOME!

LUCY

I TOLD HIM! But he just barged in and he says he isn't leaving without speaking with you. "What we've got here is a failure to communicate." He's a goddamn royal pain in the ass.

HELEN

All right. Fine! Let him in.

(LUCY EXITS)

Oh, Nicky, do you see now what our love story has become? We were so glorious once! What do people want from me? Why are they disturbing me? Why can't everyone just leave me alone?

(enter LUCY and GREGORY)

GREGORY

Thank you for seeing me, this won't take long. My name is Gregory Smith. Please accept my sincere condolences. I knew your late husband, Nick, very well. He died owing me twelve thousand dollars. I have his two IOUs. I waited a full year out of respect. But now, I need to pay that money back to a very dangerous loan shark tomorrow morning. So, may I have my money right away?

HELEN

Twelve thousand dollars! How did my husband come to owe you twelve thousand dollars?

GREGORY

Nick was a great guy, we all loved him, but he was a poor judge of horseflesh.

HELEN

I see. Of course, if Nick owed you something, I'll pay. But I don't have any money here with me. My accountant is out of the country on vacation in Machu Picchu until the day after tomorrow. I'll have him pay you what you are owed then. But for now, I can't help you. Sorry. Besides, I'm in mourning and I'm in no condition to talk about finances.

GREGORY

I'm likely to be a dead man if I don't get my money today.

HELEN

I can get you the money the day after tomorrow.

GREGORY

I don't want it then, I want it now.

LUCY

Hey! She told you - she can't pay it now. "Wet your beak someplace else."

HELEN

I'm sorry. Gregory, is it? How can I pay you? I have no money with me today.

GREGORY

So you can't pay what you owe?

HELEN

Oh, I can pay. Just not today.

GREGORY

So that's it? That's how it's gonna go down? You know, people always ask me why I lose my temper so much. But, how can I help it? I'm desperate and I need my money now. I spent the day yesterday going around to all the people who owe me money, and not a single one is able to pay me back. Old Fat Mickey managed to avoid me somehow, Little Stevie's girl told me he's on his deathbed and Paulie! Idiot Paulie is in jail. My car broke down and I slept on a park bench last night and now I walk all the way here, hoping that my deceased friend Nick's widow will be decent and pay me my due. I waited a whole year out of respect! I did the right thing! And now this! How can I keep my temper?

HELEN

I've made myself clear - you can have your money when my accountant gets back into town.

GREGORY

That don't work. I need my money now. From you! Let's just get in your car and drive to an ATM or something!

HELEN

I'm so very sorry. My car hasn't been driven in a year. I doubt that we could even get it started. And I don't have a card to get money out of a machine. My accountant counsels against it. Gregory, I'm so very sorry. Please go away, and leave me in peace. You'll get your money the day after tomorrow! I promise. But, please, if you continue to harass me, I may not give you a penny!

LUCY

"Abide, Dude." I think you know the way out.

(LUCY and HELEN exit)

GREGORY

Would you just look at that! What am I supposed to do now? The shark is after me and I need that cash! Oh, MAN! I hate dealing with women. Lame excuse after lame excuse! It's like the blood flow to their breasts causes their brains to

malfunction. All they can think about is being pretty and nagging innocent men. And, boy do I know about women! I've been with twenty one women in my life, I ended it with ten of them and six ended it with me. The other five don't count and don't ask about them. And the excuses! Women are never on time, they can't concentrate for more than a few minutes, they are used to always having things handed to them. They all think they're some kind of royal princesses and demand to be treated that way! And it don't pay to be a nice guy when it comes to money. I gave her a year after Nick died, out of respect. I was honorable! I did the right thing! I did even more than required! There's an agreement about this kind of thing between gentlemen. I'm a professional! You see, I'm the local numbers runner. I pick up the numbers on Monday, the race is on Tuesday and I collect and pay off on Wednesday. I do it Thursday, Friday and Saturday, too. And then, I take Sundays off for church. It's a great job! But sometimes, well, sometimes the marks get lucky and I have to pay out more than I take in. It almost never happens. But when it does, that's when things get dicey. I got to go to the shark and take a loan. Usually, I make enough to pay the shark right away. I have never been late with a payment. But lately, I had a string of marks getting long shot wins. Like someone fixed the races and tipped off my clientele. So now, I'm into the shark for 12 G. Now the shark, he's a professional, too. He don't give credit, he don't tolerate lateness. He has a couple of boys who enjoy breaking bones in a most excruciating way. You pay back what you owe on time every time, or else. Oh! Why did I let this go for a full year? I'm too nice a guy. What the heck am I gonna do? "She's in no condition"! That's female nonsense for you! That weaker sex stuff is just an excuse to drive men crazy! Why, I'd rather get a root canal without novocaine than have business dealings with a woman!

(GREGORY sits on the sofa - enter LUCY)

LUCY

She's not feeling well and she won't see anyone anymore today. Time for you to go.

GREGORY

Go away. I'm not leaving without my money.

LUCY

We will see about that! "Grego, I've got a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."

(LUCY exits)

GREGORY

"Won't see anyone. Not feeling well". Fine! I'm not leaving. I won't budge one inch! You can be sick for a week! I don't care! I'm getting my money!

(GREGORY pours himself a cup of the tea)

Where's the sugar and milk? Who the heck drinks tea without sugar and milk?

(GREGORY takes one of the rice cakes and bites - he spits it out)

That's horrible! Is this supposed to be real food? That tastes exactly like sauteed packing peanuts and roasted sawdust! Yuck! What kind of widow is she? Certainly not a hungry one! And as for that pretty face and that black dress - Oh, I see right through that - it's all a front. She thinks she can get to me that way? Hah! I'm not that easy to seduce. I can promise you that! I've been with twenty one women, ten I ended it with and six ended it with me. Don't ask about the other five. I've had a bad night and a rough morning and now this? Well, just look at me, unwashed, I need a shave, my hair needs a comb, I have a wrinkled shirt and pants. I bet she thinks I'm some kind of low life! I know it wasn't polite to show up here looking like this. But, I'm not a guest, I'm collecting a debt! She has no right to make me feel bad - I'M THE ONE WHO IS BEING WRONGED HERE! I AM OWED A DEBT!

(enter LUCY)

LUCY

Hey, keep it down! She's trying to rest!

GREGORY

Okay, sure, I'll keep it down. Sure. Sorry. But, hey, I'm starving here. Would you bring me a sandwich and a drink? Salami and gouda on rye with yellow mustard and an iced tea.

LUCY

"I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take this anymore!" I'm not the maid! I'm a trusted friend! I'm Helen's BFF!

GREGORY

Oh. Okay, but, you know where the kitchen is, am I right?

LUCY

The gall! The unmitigated gall! "I'll be back."

(LUCY exits in a rage - enter HELEN)

HELEN

Look, I'm not used to all the ruckus and I can't stand shouting. I think I'm getting a migraine. Please stop and go away.

GREGORY

Pay up and I'll go.

HELEN

I've already told you, I have no cash. Wait until the day after tomorrow.

GREGORY

And like I told you - I need that money today, not the day after tomorrow. If you don't get me my money today, I won't be alive tomorrow.

HELEN

I can't help that! I have no cash here. This is all pretty odd.

GREGORY

There's no way you can get the twelve thousand today?

HELEN

I can't think of any way.

GREGORY

In that case, I'm not budging. I WILL GET MY MONEY OR ELSE. I'm gonna wait right here.

HELEN

Don't you dare raise your voice at me.

GREGORY

Do you think this is some kind of joke? That I won't hurt you for the money?

HELEN

You don't talk like that to a widow in her own house. You're being crass and ill-bred.

GREGORY

Oh? So, maybe you'd like me to ask for my money in some high class language? Like French, perhaps? Madame, parlay voo? Isn't the weather aperitif today? And your little black dress looks too, too charmaine. If it please Madame, may I acquire my few francs and ducats apres vous? Civil play?

(Gregory bows)

HELEN

That's silly. And not very clever. OR particularly French. Plus, it's obvious that you don't know how to behave like a gentleman.

GREGORY

"That's silly. And not very clever. Plus, it's obvious that you don't know how to behave like a gentleman". Hah! I've been with twenty one women in my life, I ended it with ten of them and six ended it with me. The other five don't count and don't ask about them. So I have experience and I know women like very few men ever do. Your little black dress and pretty painted face do not impress me! You women are just simpering, mincing creatures with no brains. While we poor men face danger and make enormous sacrifices every day, you women just flick the hem of your dress and try to maneuver us under your painted thumbs.

HELEN

Is that so?

GREGORY

Absolutely! And frankly, in spite of what some people say, women are horrible creatures. They don't know how to love anything or anyone, unless it's a puppy or a kitty cat, all mewling and slobbering. There has never in the world been a sincere, faithful and true woman. Not ever.

HELEN

And are you suggesting that men are sincere? And faithful and true?

GREGORY

Of course, what else?

HELEN

What nonsense! MEN? The finest man I ever knew was my late husband, Nicholas. He was a joy to be with and I gave him my love, my youth, my life. But as fine a man as he was, (and he truly and honestly was!) he was unfaithful, insincere and untrue. He left me for days at a time, spent our money like it was water and made fun of me in public to our friends and acquaintances. After he passed, I found text messages on his phone from his many mistresses. Pictures, too! But, I have remained faithful and true to him. I shall wear widow's weeds until I die.

GREGORY

Widow's weeds? Who are you kidding? You wear those dark clothes because you want to look mysterious and romantic in them. You just want some young buck to come by and spy you in the window and fall under your spell.

HELEN

WHY YOU HORRIBLE BEAST! I'm a widow! How dare you?

GREGORY

Oh, you can't fool me! I've been with twenty one women! Ten of them...

HELEN

GET OUT!

GREGORY

Don't raise your voice at me! You owe me money!

HELEN

I SAID GET OUT! LEAVE!

GREGORY

Pay me. I'll leave.

(he sits)

HELEN

What? What are you doing? Don't sit! Leave!

GREGORY

Listen, just because you look so pretty with that dress - do you think you can just say anything?

HELEN

THIS IS MY HOME! OH, YOU BEASTLY MAN! GET OUT!

GREGORY

YOU CAN'T MAKE ME! I WANT MY MONEY!

HELEN

I'm not afraid of you. You may be a big dumb beast, but you don't scare me!

GREGORY

A BIG DUMB BEAST??? Why, if you were a man, I'd challenge you to a duel, or a fistfight!

HELEN

Then, let's fight! I'm not afraid of you! I have training! Wait! I have just the thing! Stay right here!

(HELEN exits and LUCY enters)

LUCY

Look, this has gone far enough. Let's not turn this whole incident into a farce. "You've got to ask yourself one question: "Do I feel lucky?" Well, do ya, punk?" Please just leave.

GREGORY

If she wants to fight, I'm up for it! I'm no punk who gets abused by some female. I'll drop her like a hot potato.

LUCY

No, you won't! You need to leave, NOW! "One morning I shot an elephant in my pajamas. How he got in my pajamas, I'll never know." Do you remember the song about little bunny foo foo? "Little Bunny Foo Foo, walking round the forest, picking up the field mice and bops them on the head"? Well, I'M BUNNY FOO FOO and YOU are just a field mouse. If you don't leave immediately - then, little mouse, just like Bunny Foo Foo, I WILL BOP YOU ON THE HEAD WITH MY BIG WOODEN SPOON!

(LUCY begins chasing GREGORY with a large wooden spoon. They run around the furniture and the room. She finally catches up to him and hits him on the head).

GREGORY

Ow! OWW!! OWW! Hey! Stop it! RAWRRR!!

(He roars at her like an enraged bear)

You don't go hitting people in the head with a big wooden spoon! It's not very nice! She owes me money! This is wrong! I'm within my rights here! I'm the victim!

LUCY

Okay. Fine! Fine! "Get your stinking paws off me, ya damned dirty ape!" I won't hit you anymore. But, look! "I'll make you an offer you can't refuse." She hasn't been well. She has mental issues. She took fight training from her father. Just leave.

GREGORY

I'm staying. And where's my sandwich?

LUCY

"I'll get you, my ugly and your little sandwich, too!"

(LUCY exits in a huff)

GREGORY

Well, I've never met a woman like Helen. She seems like a real spitfire! And such beauty, too! I think I'm captivated! I'm smitten!

(HELEN enters with boxing gloves, she has on a small pillbox hat with a black net veil).

HELEN

Here they are! I remembered where I put them a couple of years ago. We can't fight inside, we might damage something valuable - let's go out to the garden and I'll break your rude, crass nose there. You can bleed into my prized red begonias. I have my hat and veil, so I'm properly dressed to go out. Now, you should get ready to have your proboscis shattered! But first, help me get these boxing gloves on, they're a little tight.

GREGORY

Okay, first keep your hand open and make sure the thumb goes into the right place. Got it?

HELEN

Of course. I know how to wear them.

GREGORY

There you go.

HELEN

Thank you. Now, prepare to duel with me!

(she begins shadow boxing)

I shall break your bulbous and monstrous snout!

GREGORY

Okay, fine, uh, keep your elbows tucked in.

HELEN

Don't worry about my elbows! Put on those gloves! You better try to protect yourself!

GREGORY

I won't.

HELEN

What? Why? Is it because you are afraid I will hurt you?

(she shadow boxes some more)

GREGORY

Yes. That's it.

HELEN

HA! That's not it! I don't believe that! Really? What's the real reason? Come on! Put 'em up! Why won't you fight me?

GREGORY

Well, actually. It's because I like you. I think I like you very much. I'm almost in love with you.

HELEN

WHAT??? YOU BEAST! NO CHANCE! YOU KEEP AWAY FROM ME!

GREGORY

As soon as I saw you with those gloves, I thought, Wow! What a woman!

HELEN

You. Get. Away! If you come one step closer, I swear that I will break your nose right here and now!

GREGORY

Go ahead. Break it. Won't be the first time. I don't mind. Lady, you're so fiery, so passionate, so alive! "A thousand ships have been launched for your visage, Helen!"

HELEN

Watch yourself. I WILL BREAK YOUR NOSE! I PROMISE! I CAN DO IT!

GREGORY

I've somehow gone all soft and runny in the middle. I've lost my head. Ah! "She walks in beauty like the night!" Helen, I love you. You have a nice house and I have a wonderful job. I'm a hard worker and I'm just crazy about you.

(GREGORY drops to one knee)

My darling, dearest Helen, will you be my wife?

HELEN

What? What are you asking? GO AWAY!

GREGORY

Helen, make me the happiest man on earth! "Come away with me and be my love and we shall all the pleasures prove."

HELEN

Oh my! This is so sudden. But, I can't. I just can't.

(GREGORY rises and goes to the door)

GREGORY

Think carefully, Helen! I'm going to leave here and I won't be coming back. I've been with twenty one women in my life, I ended it with ten of them and six ended it with me. The other five don't count and don't ask about them. You need to make up your mind, darling. Take me or leave me.

HELEN

Wait. Don't go.

(she turns away)

No! Leave. Go Away.

GREGORY

"I only have eyes for you, my darling Helen." I won't even look at another woman, ever, forever. That's my pledge!

HELEN

(she looks at him and steps forward)

Could this be? Finally? A true and faithful man?

(she stops and turns away)

But, no! Leave me! You are a crass and obnoxious beast! Go away!

GREGORY

Helen, my one true love! I have been with twenty one women, ten I ended it with and six ended it with me, and five who don't count - don't ask about them! But not one of them can match your allure! I'm lost in you! If I were Shakespeare, I would write a thousand sonnets to you. "Shall I compare thee to a summer night?"

(she looks at him and then looks away - undecided)

HELEN

I barely know you! You are loud and obnoxious.

GREGORY

You bring out the poetry in my dark soul! I am overwhelmed by your inner and outer beauty! "We are but lonely ships that pass in the night." Can't you feel the electricity between our auras?

HELEN

I admit that I do seem to feel something for you.

(She looks to him and then turns away)

But, no. Go away! Oh, you are a beastly beast!

GREGORY

I'm like a middle school Romeo, Helen. I just can't help myself. I'm in trouble with a loan shark, my car broke down, I skipped work for the past two days and now you come along! It's just what this week needed. Why, if I were Elizabeth Barrett Browning, I would write a thousand odes to you! "Helen, I love thee to the depth and breadth and height my soul can reach."

(GREGORY goes to her and takes her by the waist)

HELEN

No! Take your hands off me!

(she turns to him)

I hate you! STOP! Wait. Oh!

(GREGORY lifts her veil and they have a prolonged kiss)

GREGORY

Helen, you're the only one for me. Let's go away together.

HELEN

What about the money? What about the loan shark?

GREGORY

I don't care about any of that. I love you! Will you still want to be with me when they break my kneecaps?

(they have another prolonged kiss as LUCY enters with a salami sandwich and an iced tea)

LUCY

Oh my! At last! Love has finally come for Helen! She's the pretty widow and he's the crass beast. Why, "it's a tale as old as time!" This will be the biggest social media post of the century! "Love means never having to say you're sorry." Hashtag Helen's Hungry Hunk!

(LUCY puts down the food and takes out her phone and begins recording the kiss. GREGORY and HELEN head to the exit arm in arm)

Wait! Here!

(LUCY hands GREGORY an envelope from her pocket)

Take this. I've been living for free with Helen for a year and I've saved up exactly twelve thousand dollars. You take it and pay off the loan shark! You can consider it an early wedding gift! I think that you two are the perfect couple! Just like the Phantom and Christine. Like Scarlet and Rhett! Like Heathcliffe and Catherine! Like George Bailey and Mary! Like hundreds of couples on the top of the Empire State building on New Year's Eve! "Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn." Now, you two go and live happily ever after! Oh! And one more thing. "Leave the gloves and take the salami!"

(HELEN removes the gloves and GREGORY takes the sandwich as they go out the door)

(LUCY exits while typing on her phone).

THE END OF PLAY