

MRS. B

by Ed Valentine

SPOTLIGHTON FESTIVAL AWARD FOR BEST SHORT PLAY, 2003
AMERICAN GLOBE/TURNIP FESTIVAL ALAN MINIERI AWARD, 2004

(1W, 1 M)

*A bored housewife overhears her husband on a suspicious phone call
and fancies herself in the role of Bluebeard's seventh – and final - bride.*

RUNNING TIME BETWEEN 10 AND 15 MINUTES

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ed@edvalentine.com

MRS. B

SETTING:

Breakfast nook, modern day.
Nearly bare stage. 2 chairs, a small table.
Later, a door, a trunk and a dropcloth.

CHARACTERS:

JUDY

A wife, dressed in a bathrobe.
Later, A sea-captain's wife. Curious. Too curious.

HUB

Her husband. Dressed in a business suit.
Later, a Sea Captain. Commanding. Dangerous.



PRODUCTION HISTORY:

First Produced as part of the SpotlightOn Halloween Festival by En Avant Playwrights at Chashama Theater in October, 2003. Directed by Peter Bloch.

CAST:

JUDY: Susan Barnes Walker
HUB: Peter Downey

Subsequently produced by:

- EB Theatre Company, NYC (director, Linda Gillen)
- Buffalo Quickies, Buffalo, NY (director, Joyce Stilson)
- New England Academy of Theatre, New Haven, CT (artistic director, Reno Venturi)
- American Globe/Turnip Festival, NYC (director, Peter Bloch)

AT RISE: Morning. A woman with a frying pan, two eggs in it. Her husband sitting, reading the *Wall Street Journal*.

JUDY (To us:)

Let me explain. It was a Tuesday, and, honestly, I always feel so *squirrely* on Tuesdays. Don't you? I think Tuesdays are worse than Mondays. You get through Monday, *whew! What a relief!* Then, SLAP! You wake up, it's Tuesday, and you have to do it all over again. So you have all this *coffee*, cup after cup, and - Maybe *that* was it. Maybe I'd had too much coffee that morning. That could explain a lot. *Morning, Hub. I made eggs!*

(HUB grunts. His cell phone rings.)

Then he got this call. And maybe I misconstrued some things.

HUB (Into phone:)

Hello?

JUDY

But I don't think so.

HUB

Oh, hi! Hey... No, now's not good. Right. Yes, she's right here. That's right...

JUDY

It wasn't what he said, really.

HUB (Checks watch:)

Um, give me fifteen, twenty?

JUDY

Could have been anyone on the phone.

HUB (Brightly:)

Great! See you then.

JUDY

But I don't think so..

HUB

Right, then. Bye.

JUDY

And until then, I hadn't thought... hadn't even considered...

HUB

Ok: Bye.

(Laughs. Hangs up. Back to his paper.)

JUDY

And maybe I do have a vivid imagination. Maybe I do jump to conclusions. But I could smell a secret in the air over my kitchen. An oily odor. Smelled like fried eggs.

(Pours him coffee.)

HUB

Thanks.

JUDY

Hub, are you having an affair?

HUB

What? *Jesus!*

JUDY

I just want to know.

HUB

Jesus, Judy, where is this - GOD.

JUDY

I just want to know.

HUB

I'm trying to have a peaceful morning here, Judy, before a really long day. Why would you ask me a crazy thing like -

JUDY

I'm sorry.

HUB

The call? Was that it? Fine, it was Dwick, Reggie Dwick, from the office. There's a big deal going down today, this big, big -

(Drinks coffee.)

Gonna be a beast. So I may be home, uh. Late. That's all. No worries, hon. OK? Hey. Hey - we still going to Quogue this weekend? Judy? Judy?

JUDY (To us:)

Quogue? When he asked me, I wasn't there. Ha! I'd already gone. *Poof!* I'd gone to this castle, with a grotto? By the sea? I was thinking of a woman - a bride.

(She takes off her bathrobe. She's wearing a bridal gown.)

Young. Blonde. Hay-colored hair and skin like white satin - to die for. Imagine, okay? And the husband, oh, burly, intense, commanding. Imagine that too. Oh, yes, one thing unusual about him, one teeny little thing out of the ordinary: his bushy blue beard. A Bluebeard. It made her heart flutter. Have you heard this story? No?

(HUB puts on a sailor's peacoat. Takes a false blue beard from pocket. JUDY holds a mirror while HUB faces upstage, becomes BLUEBEARD.)

JUDY (continued)

They don't read it to children anymore. And for very good reason - grisly! My mother read it to me, for reasons I cannot explain. The husband was a sea captain.

BLUEBEARD

Avast!

JUDY

A good one.

BLUEBEARD

Fly the jib!

JUDY

Very wealthy.

BLUEBEARD

Gold doubloons.

JUDY

Very. The wife was an idiot. Okay, no, not an idiot: an innocent. They were married just yesterday, yesterday morning! A whirlwind romance! Now she's been Mrs. B for 24 hours. One day. Right, B?

BLUEBEARD

Correct, my dove.

JUDY

And what a day it's been. What a night it was. Right, B?

BLUEBEARD

Yes, my tigress.

JUDY

Oh, B! A wife 24 hours, and now a widow.

BLUEBEARD

Not a widow.

JUDY

Almost a widow, B. He's a sea captain.

BLUEBEARD

Setting off for sea. Today!

JUDY

So soon?

BLUEBEARD

Business calls, love.

JUDY

What kind of shipping are you in again?

(To us:)

Can you believe this chick hadn't found this out yet? I'd think this would be a pertinent question to have asked *before* the wedding.

BLUEBEARD

Oh, you know. Exporting. Importing.

JUDY

Everything - ha ha! - legal?

BLUEBEARD

Ask me no questions, I'll tell you no lies.

JUDY

I shall not press. If a husband has secrets from a wife, he should keep them and she should never pry!

(Drops the act:)

And she actually believed that. She actually believed that she believed that. Maybe she *was* an idiot.

BLUEBEARD

My servants will do your every bidding. The house is yours and you have the run of it.

(Takes a ring of keys from his capacious pocket:)

Here are your keys. This for the Pantry. This for the Menagerie.

This for the Ballroom, the Billiard Room, the Library.

This for the Map Room. This the Gymnasium.

These three are labeled, and these three inscribed.

JUDY

And that small one?

BLUEBEARD

This for the Speedway. This for the Ninepins.

JUDY

No - that small one...

BLUEBEARD

The Owlery, the Chapel. The Grotto on whose warm wet sands we'll couple when I return.

JUDY

The small key there.

(Takes the keys, reads the inscription on the smallest one.)

"The Room at the Top of the Westward Stair." What's in there?

BLUEBEARD

Nothing.

JUDY

If it's nothing, love, why can't I -

BLUEBEARD (Takes keys:)

It's my thinking room. Keep out. Promise? Promise.

JUDY

But I thought we gave each other everything.

BLUEBEARD

Promise me.

JUDY

I do. (They kiss.) Don't go. Darling - we haven't even danced.

BLUEBEARD

I don't like long goodbyes. Farewell.

(He goes to leave. Her words stop him:)

JUDY

I'll go up to the widow's walk, where the boards are fresh, untrod. I'll be the first to wait for you, watch for you, dusk after dusk and dawn after dawn. Husband, sail straight for me and steady, haul your keel above the waves, till you find safe haven. Till you come to your harbor. I'm your harbor. Berth in me. (To us:) Do I embarrass you? I'm embarrassing you. Forgive me. I was just married yesterday, and what a night it's been.

(They kiss.)

BLUEBEARD

Keep those promises. Watch for me.

(BLUEBEARD gives her a playful spank on the bottom. Exits. Somewhere far below, sound of a large door shutting firmly. JUDY wipes her mouth.)

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