

MAYTAG VIRGIN

A Play in Two Acts

by

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Cast of Characters

JACK KEY: high school physics teacher
30s-40s, Southern (Alabama)

ELIZABETH "LIZZY" NASH: high school English teacher
30s-40s, Southern (Alabama)

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Scene

The fictional town of Lenoraville, Alabama.

Time

Present day.

ACT IScene 1.1

SETTING:

*Mid-morning. August.**Playing area 1: Jack Key's back porch and yard, which are in total disarray, filled with moving boxes and small furniture.**Playing area 2: Elizabeth Nash's back porch and yard, populated with an eclectic mix of wind chimes, bird houses, bottle trees and folk art. There is a clothes line that runs along the edge of her property adjacent to Jack's yard, and at times like this, when it is filled with laundry, it serves as a boundary (a sort of virtual "wall") between them.*

AT RISE:

JACK KEY is busy moving boxes and furniture around, in and out of the house. ELIZABETH "LIZZY" NASH emerges from her house with a pie. She approaches Jack's yard.

Hello?

LIZZY

Hello?

(From off.)

JACK

Mr. Key?

(Calling.)

LIZZY

JACK

(Appearing in his doorway.)

Yes ma'am.

LIZZY

Elizabeth Nash. That's a job there, I see.

*JACK walks out onto his porch and
approaches her for a handshake.*

I'm so sorry, I've been out of town this week, I'm a bad neighbor.

JACK

Oh, alright. That's a nice place there. Good to meet ya'.

LIZZY

Lizzy...

JACK

Lizzy.

(Regarding her colorful yard.)

You an artist?

LIZZY

Uh...no. I'm mean...am I?

JACK

It's an explosion.

LIZZY

Oh. Yes, I guess so. Well. That's me.

(Beat.)

I love the color and the...well the sounds, I guess.

JACK

Aren't the bottles supposed to hang upside down?

LIZZY

Oh, yes, upside down to catch the—but I like 'em this way. They catch the rain instead of the evil spirits...I don't need any more...spirits, ya know. So...

(Beat.)

When they get too full, they don't sing real well, so I do have to patrol now and then, and, uh...feed the weeds or whatever.

(Beat.)

Well. Neighbors. Am I keeping you from-

JACK

(Overlapping.)

No, no, it's-

LIZZY

(Overlapping.)

I can come back.

JACK

It's fine. It's fine.

LIZZY

Okay. Well, welcome to the neighborhood.

JACK

Alright.

LIZZY

And to the city too, teaching over at the high school, have I got that right?

JACK

That's right.

LIZZY

Up from Biloxi?

JACK

You seem to have the advantage.

LIZZY

Oh, I hope that's alright if I take an interest in my new neighbor. I guess the days of welcome wagons are all over, but I just had to bring you a pie or something.

(Beat.)

Or maybe you don't eat pie, are you a diabetic?

JACK

I eat pie, yes ma'am I do.

LIZZY

(Nervously.)

It's really nothing. I mean it is a pie, but it's-I could bake one in my sleep.

JACK

Very sweet of you.

SHE holds on to the pie as if carrying a security blanket.

LIZZY

(Regarding the house.)

How do you like it?

JACK

It's a keeper.

LIZZY

Isn't it great?

LIZZY turns to look up at the house, shielding her eyes from the sun, straining the buttons on her blouse. JACK notices...

JACK

Yes, it is.

LIZZY

It's got good bones.

JACK

Mnn hm.

LIZZY

You think you can do something with it?

(Beat.)

JACK

Mnn hm...

LIZZY

Well good! I was so happy to hear somebody had bought the place. Not exactly a selling point: *dead man's house*.

JACK

I'm aware of the story.

LIZZY

Oh good. See any ghosts yet?

JACK

Not a one.

LIZZY

Well, that's good. I mean they were lovely people, but you never know about a ghost. That sounds like I know something about ghosts, I have nothing to base that on, really.

(Beat.)

Oh my gosh, I just thought of something, did you take the front room?

JACK

The front room?

LIZZY

For the master, I mean?

JACK

Uh...yeah.

LIZZY

Oh...

(Beat.)

Well, that's where he died. Mr. McElway...

JACK

In the front room?

LIZZY gives him a pained expression.

I did not know that.

LIZZY

(Almost a whisper.)

Yes, and his wife Minnie Faye a few months before.

JACK

Oh.

LIZZY

(Horrorified.)

Oh, lord, Mr. Morgan didn't tell you?

JACK

I don't-

LIZZY

What good is a realtor-I'm gon' get him. I should have been here to tell you!

JACK

(Overlapping.)

No, no...I, uh...

LIZZY

(Overlapping.)

I am so sorry.

JACK

(Unsettled.)

You wanna sit down?

LIZZY

(Concerned.)

Do you?

JACK

(Exiting into the house.)

Excuse me...

LIZZY

Alright...

*JACK exits into the house, leaving
LIZZY alone on the porch, unsure if
he plans on returning.*

(Calling.)

Well that was thoughtless of me. I mean sometimes you say things, they need to be said, but maybe just not...

(To herself.)

...not like that. Stupid Lizzy.

(Calling.)

I'm so sorry. I guess I figured you knew the whole story...you said you knew the...story. Not that I believe in ghosts, but you just never know about the hereafter. If you

start seeing dead people you might wanna-well, I don't know what you'd do about that, but let's just hope you don't.

(Beat.)

It's a beautiful day for...construction. I really am sorry I wasn't here to help you move in, Mr. Key. I've been up at my brother's in Savannah-

JACK re-enters the porch wiping his face with a tea towel and handing Lizzy a cold Coca-cola.

Oh, thank you.

JACK

Lemme get this...

LIZZY

Mr. Key, are you alright?

JACK rather abruptly begins moving boxes out of her way.

Oh, don't fuss.

(Beat.)

Do you need me to-

JACK

(Overlapping.)

Nope.

LIZZY

(Almost overlapping.)

Alright.

(Beat.)

You know, I'm a teacher there too. At the high school.

(Beat.)

I'm on a leave of absence.

JACK

I'm sorry for that. I heard about your husband.

LIZZY

What have you heard?

JACK

An accident. He fell?

LIZZY nods.

It was recent?

LIZZY

We buried him a month ago, Sunday.

JACK

Awful thing.

JACK leans against the porch railing drinking his Coke as Lizzy drinks hers. Neither notices the awkward silence, each in their own memory.

LIZZY

Sometimes I feel like I have a scarlet "W" on my chest, the way people talk and stare. It's like you're branded. You ever notice when people come up to you and they hadn't seen you in a while, and no matter how long it's been, they take that tone with you, you know the one people use when someone has died?

(Beat.)

In this case, I mean, someone *has* died, but they still take that tone with you-*I'm so sorry...someone has died*. As if that's the only allowable tone. I mean there must be some other tones out there, but that's the one, you know, they use, or whatever.

JACK

You say it all out loud, huh?

LIZZY

(Mortified.)

I've brought nothing but death into your yard. Mr. Key, I am so sorry, I don't know your situation.

(Beat.)

Do you need some help unpacking?

JACK
I can manage.

LIZZY
Alright.

JACK
Thank you.

LIZZY
(Somewhat nervous now.)
You just let me know what you need, I may not be able to lift the heavy stuff, but I know all the high school boys and I can make the sandwiches.

JACK smiles politely.

Have you met Mr. Sutherland? In the Cape Cod?

JACK
Ah, yes, I have.

LIZZY
He is the sweetest neighbor.

JACK
Real nice.

LIZZY
He can fix wiring, too. And he doesn't charge anything. His family has money and he just does it to pass the time in his golden years. But they left you in good shape, it's a good house and you won't have any trouble. Most likely you won't.

JACK
I like a challenge.

LIZZY
When I saw you leaning against that porch railing just now, I thought you reminded me of him. Mr. McElway, I mean. He never could sit still, especially after Miss Minnie Faye died. Oh that was a terrible thing, we all felt that one.

(Beat.)
So you teach physics?

JACK

There's a lot you know.

LIZZY

I know nothing about physics.

JACK

I don't know much myself.

LIZZY

Oh, I don't believe that. I teach English.

JACK

Yes I know. I'm in your room. 202.

LIZZY

202? What'd they do, put you in there?

JACK

I don't know.

LIZZY

Who's in 308?

JACK

Uh...

*LIZZY walks through JACK'S yard
looking at the mess.*

LIZZY

(Rapid fire.)

Three-oh-four, three-oh-six, three-oh-eight: math, math,
physics on three; English, history, civics on two. There
must be something goin' on up on three-

*LIZZY notices a small statue of the
Virgin Mary on Jack's porch.*

Is that the Virgin Mary?

JACK

Yeah...

LIZZY

Hmn.

LIZZY looks around, suspiciously.