

COCONUTS AND CANDLES

--

A holiday one-act

by

John Glass



john@studentplays.org

Copyright information. Please read!

This play has full protection under the copyright rules of the United States. No one may produce this play without written permission of *Student Plays*. Unless otherwise told by *Student Plays*, you must pay a royalty every time this play is produced in front of a live audience.

You may not copy any part of this play without written permission.

Please give credit to the author and to *Student Plays* on all printed programs when producing this play.

Please respect the work of the playwrights at *Student Plays*!

Violating copyright law is a serious offense. If you are unsure or have any questions please contact us at

john@studentplays.org, or at 251-463-8650.

👉 About Student Plays 👈

Student Plays consists of **John Glass, Jackie Jernigan,** and **Dominic Torres**. We are a group of playwrights and directors that have written scripts for middle school, high school, and the university. We are proud of the variety of ages that our scripts serve, and we are particularly proud of our *Latino-themed plays*. These are scripts that focus on Latino youth and the Latino experience. Any school can perform a Latino-themed play: it just requires a general introduction and exposure to the Spanish language, something that most schools and students already have.

To learn more, or to communicate with one of the playwrights, contact us at john@studentplays.org.

** Although part of the *Student Plays* domain, “Coconuts and Candles” was written for adults. **

👉 Characters 👈

JOHNNY Seventies. Grumpy. WW2 veteran.

MITZI Seventies. Cheery, kind. Retired nurse.

SHIRLEY Seventies. Funny, gregarious. Retired nurse. Southern accent.

The time is 1995, New Year's Eve. The setting is Fremont, California, a holiday reunion gathering for the soldiers and military personnel that served on the Pacific island of Wabu Wabu during World War Two. The characters are in a large room, furnished with a few chairs and a table. The room is placed off to the side of the main room of the party. There are holiday party favors and scattered cups of punch and plates of food.

Hanging in the background is a large banner that reads
Welcome Back, Wabu Wabu!

If possible, there can be an assortment of other holiday accessories, mistletoe, holiday wreaths, etc. There can also be a few reminders of Wabu Wabu, such as tiki torches or decorative straw hanging from a table.

At RISE: *As the lights go up, JOHNNY is sitting in a chair, sipping punch, and SHIRLEY and MITZI have just entered the room, fervently chatting. The typical party noise and general hubbub from the other room are heard as they enter the room.*

SHIRLEY Well, that settles that. You were right, Johnny.

JOHNNY Huh?

MITZI We nurses just took a survey of every man here. And almost all of them said they still have a gun! Some of them even carry one in their car!

JOHNNY What the hell did you expect? They were soldiers. Hell, I have one in *my* car.

MITZI Johnny!

JOHNNY Hey, Fremont isn't what it used to be. I need my protection.

SHIRLEY I'm just surprised a bunch of old veterans are allowed to carry guns like that.

MITZI You're telling me.

JOHNNY Well. That's what we do.

(Beat.)

Hey, what was Darwin doing in there? He's not getting drunk, is he?

SHIRLEY Maybe! Come on, it's a reunion, isn't it? The last time I saw him he was dancing with Betty White.

MITZI (*Laughing.*) Oh, stop it, Shirley! She wasn't Betty White!

SHIRLEY Damn sure could've fooled me.

JOHNNY (*Grumpily.*) Well . . . keep an eye on him. He's careless when he drinks. Especially during the holidays.

MITZI What's wrong, Johnny? Why are you in here?

JOHNNY (*Waving hand.*) I'm alright. Just got tired of the loud music.

SHIRLEY Mitzi, aren't you going to tell him what else you just learned?

JOHNNY What?

MITZI Oh, right. I just talked to somebody, Johnny, that remembered *everything* about the war! He said it *was* Bob Hope that came to Wabu Wabu!

JOHNNY Oh, Mitzi, no it wasn't! It was George Burns!

MITZI It was *Bob Hope!*

SHIRLEY I honestly don't know who it was.

JOHNNY It wasn't that pansy Bob Hope. It was George Burns. I remember!

MITZI Oh, you don't remember anything! At our last reunion you couldn't even think of the name of your own commanding officer.

JOHNNY Huh?

MITZI See what I mean!

SHIRLEY Ha!

JOHNNY (*Waving hand in dismissal.*) Ehhhhh

SHIRLEY Oh, I'm hungry! I'm gonna go try some of that chocolate cake they're serving.

MITZI Oh, Lord . . .

SHIRLEY Be right back!

(*Exits.*)

MITZI (*Suddenly remembering*) Oh, Johnny! *Chocolate cake!*

JOHNNY Huh??

MITZI When Bob Hope came, we had that gigantic chocolate cake in the shape of a battleship! Remember?

JOHNNY Hmmm . . .

MITZI And it was the same week we had the follies! We did all that work, building the stage, and getting the music together . . . ?

JOHNNY *That was the same week?*

(Pause as he thinks.)

I remember that big cake. Lord. Someone there, doing a show. But I could have sworn it was George Burns. No, but wait, maybe he was there at a different time. Maybe Christmas.

(Throws hands up in defeat.)

I don't know!

MITZI The follies were a hoot! Tommy and all those navy guys dressed up like women! Those grass skirts and makeup!

JOHNNY I loved that!

MITZI Bunch of clowns!

(They laugh and laugh. Pause as they look at each other.)

JOHNNY Fifty years . . . wow.

MITZI Yep.

JOHNNY Mitzi, where did all that time go?

MITZI Johnny . . . tell me, seriously. How is life in Fremont? How are things?

JOHNNY I'm getting by.

MITZI Are you still volunteering at the library?

JOHNNY No. Had to give that up.

MITZI Oh.

JOHNNY It got to where I had trouble focusing for long periods of time. I just had to stop. I feel pretty good, overall, I guess.

(Pause. He is more uncomfortable.)

Some of the . . . of the infantry stuff comes back to me time and again. You know, the war . . .

MITZI Ohh . . .

JOHNNY Lots of it, to be honest.

MITZI How many years has your wife been gone?

JOHNNY Exactly three.

MITZI And you're not dating?

JOHNNY No. I . . . I tried. Sort of.

MITZI Well, come on. Surely you've got something going on.

JOHNNY Not a whole lot. Darwin and I play cards, and, you know, we have lunch.

MITZI You just don't . . . seem happy, Johnny.

JOHNNY In some ways, my life didn't turn out the way it was supposed to, Mitzi. That's all. Lots of things have happened over the years. I mean, I'm okay. The war . . . well, it really did a number on me.

(Pause.)

But, you know, I got into gardening. I see my grandkids every now and again. When my son isn't too busy with *his* life.

MITZI Not dating. Tsk-tsk-tsk. You always were mysterious with the women, weren't you?

JOHNNY Oh, please. Give me a break. You were the one nurse that caught the eye of every soldier in the Pacific.

MITZI Johnny!

JOHNNY Mrs. Mitzi, who volunteered to run the follies so she could be around all those officers. Mrs. Mitzi, who was always late for our dates.

MITZI I am *shocked* at you!

JOHNNY (*Laughing a little.*) Well, it's true.

MITZI. Oh, go jump in the lake.

JOHNNY Mrs. Mitzi . . . who lit all of those beautiful red candles under that coconut tree that night. For our dinner.

MITZI Mmmm . . . I remember.

JOHNNY You called it 'coconuts and candles.'

(*Pause.*)

MITZI What happened to us, Johnny?

(*Pause. He is incredulous.*)

JOHNNY What *happened?* I can't believe you're asking me this.

MITZI Why?

JOHNNY What happened was I left Wabu-Wabu. I got transferred to Midway. *You* stayed there.

MITZI But what happened?

(*Enter SHIRLEY, abruptly.*)

JOHNNY Mitzi, what are you talking about? You *know* what happened.

SHIRLEY Mitzi, I just told two fellers that you were a widow and now they're looking for you!

MITZI Oh, Shirley!

SHIRLEY Ya'll come in here and dance! They're finally playing Glenn Miller! Come on, you're missing the party!

JOHNNY Oh, goodness . . .

SHIRLEY Why did I come in here? (*Sees her drink.*) Oh, yeah. To get my drink. There it is!

MITZI Isn't there a bar in there?

SHIRLEY Yes, but the line is too dang long! Can you believe they ran out of eggnog?

(Sound of loud popping offstage.)

JOHNNY Whaa . . . ?

MITZI What's that noise??

SHIRLEY Fireworks, goofy. It's New Year's Eve!

MITZI Oh.

SHIRLEY Mitzi, liven Johnny up and ya'll come in here!

MITZI Um, okay.

(She exits hurriedly with her drink. Pause. JOHNNY and MITZI are still in mild shock.)

MITZI Um. Johnny—

JOHNNY Mitzi, what were you just talking about? What *happened* to us? You . . .

(Gets up stormily and paces.)

MITZI I *what*?

JOHNNY You never answered my letter! That's what! I . . . I poured my heart out to you in that letter! With a flashlight and a tablet and my pen!

MITZI What??

JOHNNY I sat on the deck of the James Madison, looking up at the Little Dipper! I wrote it all out! I told you how I felt! And all . . . all for *what*?

(She stands up, stunned.)

MITZI Johnny . . .? I never got a letter.

(Long, dead pause.)

JOHNNY Don't tell me that.

MITZI I didn't. I never received anything. When you shipped off, I . . . I thought that was it. We had that awkward week before you left. You didn't talk.

JOHNNY (*Quietly, absolutely stunned.*) What . . . ?

MITZI I didn't know what to think. And . . . and . . . you *wrote* me? I always wondered why you didn't. But . . .

JOHNNY I've been wondering for fifty years why you never answered. Why you never wrote back.

(*Pause.*)

Now I know.

MITZI Oh, Johnny . . .

JOHNNY (*Standing, pacing in disbelief.*) Mitzi, I've *never* written a letter like that. Never before. Never since.

(*Pause.*)

I . . . I told you *everything*!

MITZI Ohhh . . . !

JOHNNY I know I was such a jackass when it came to face to face communication. But in that letter I told you I'd come back for you after the war! Wherever you were! Wabu Wabu, or your home in New Hampshire. Anywhere!

MITZI Oh, I can't believe this . . .

JOHNNY I wrote about that last date we had. The coconuts. The candles. How much that meant to me. I told you how much I loved you!!

MITZI I never got it! I swear, Johnny! You know how the mail was during the war!

(Sits down, still in disbelief.)

Oh gosh! I'm speechless. There were so many people on Wabu Wabu. There's no telling where that letter wound up!

(Pause.)

Who knows . . . ?

JOHNNY Who knows, indeed. I'm speechless too.

(Pause as he sets his drink down, begins to exit.)

Hey, I'm gonna go make sure Betty White isn't taking advantage of Darwin.

MITZI Johnny?

JOHNNY I just need a minute, Mitzi.

(Exits.)

MITZI Johnny, wait!!

(She sits alone, confused. Lights fade to black. There is a quick music note, cueing a transition. Lights back up. MITZI and SHIRLEY are standing in the same room, talking. SHIRLEY is holding a party horn and her drink. Both are very distraught.)