

HEROINES and HISTORY

-

Three one-act dramas by John Glass

☞ John Calhoun and a Thief - page **4**

☞ The Nonsense of Neutrons - page **44**

☞ Gracie and the Galapanzas - page **115**

john@studentplays.org

Copyright information. Please read!

These plays have full protection under the copyright rules of the United States. No one may produce these plays without written permission of *Student Plays*. Unless otherwise told by *Student Plays*, you must pay a royalty every time they are produced in front of a live audience.

You may not copy any part of these plays without written permission.

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

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 elementary school through college. *Student Plays* is proud of the variety of ages that our scripts serve.

We are particularly proud of our “creepy” plays, and also 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 basic exposure to the Spanish language, something that most schools and students already have.

To contact *Student Plays* or to communicate with one of the playwrights, simply email us at john@studentplays.org.

John Calhoun and a Thief

-

A one-act play

by

John Glass



John Calhoun and a Thief

☆ Characters ☆

MAGGIE Twenties. Angry, ambitious. Somewhat devoted to Paul, her boyfriend.

VICKI Twenties. Waitress. Loud, quick-witted, aggressive.

PAUL Thirties. Nurse. Somewhat relaxed, passive.

The time is the present. Most of the play is set in the living room of an old house in Jersey City, very close to New York City. A simple set, with a sofa or chairs, table, etc. All three characters live together in the house. **Scenes One, Three, and Four** are all brief, and can take place far stage right or stage left, with one light if possible.

6

Throughout the play, the females are dressed in everyday clothing, and Paul is dressed in his work clothes, a nurse's uniform/smock.

SCENE ONE

Before the lights go up, the following pre-recorded words are heard by Maggie, slowly and profoundly. They are spoken slowly and profoundly, and in total darkness.

“My name is Maggie. And I have a problem with history. With the way that it’s taught. The way it’s controlled.

(Pause)

My name is Maggie. And here is what happened.”

At RISE: The attic. Late afternoon. The scene is dimly lit. There is a small, dusty table, on top of which sits a small, cardboard box, open, with papers inside. As the lights go up, MAGGIE has just entered, and is ushering the other two inside the room.

VICKI: I have to get ready for work so this better be good.

PAUL: Maggie, what are we doing?

MAGGIE: Just wait and you’ll see.

(Beat.)

Now look . . . you guys are my roommates, and basically the only friends that I have in Jersey. You know that. So you have to swear this does not leave this room.

PAUL: Why are we in the attic?

MAGGIE: Stop. (*Lightly pops him in the chest.*) Pay attention.

VICKI: What is it? It's not weed, is it? Don't tempt me, girl.

MAGGIE: Vicki, no! Now, listen . . . are you ready for this?

PAUL: Yes! Come on, what is it?

MAGGIE: Okay, here we go . . . (*She opens the box slowly and reveals the inside of it*) Look . . .

VICKI: Whaaat? What is that?

MAGGIE: Take a look . . .

PAUL: (*Reading.*) "The private papers of John Calhoun." This . . . this is *the* John Calhoun?

MAGGIE: Yep.

VICKI: What's the big deal?

PAUL: These papers . . . are old! These are priceless! Right?

VICKI: Who was John Calhoun?

MAGGIE: Congressman. Secretary of State. Almost became president. One of the biggest racists in American history.

PAUL: Maggie, are these part of the New York Archives?

MAGGIE: Were. *(Sits down.)* They *were* part of the New York Archives.

VICKI: You . . . you *go*, mama! Yeah! Wow!

PAUL: Shit, I can't believe it. How did you do it?

MAGGIE: I walked out with them.

PAUL: You walked out with them?

MAGGIE: Yep. I've been working in the archives' back room all week, and nobody's ever in there. I knew these were temporarily stored in a large glass case in a closet. Our security is a joke. So I just walked back there, stuck them into this box, put it into my backpack . . . and walked out.

(Pause as they stare at her.)

PAUL: That's it. It's official. I'm dating someone who's lost it.

VICKI: Ha! You got that right!

MAGGIE: Paul!

PAUL: Baby, I know you're angry at all that you've been through. But good Lord . . .

VICKI: Girl, how often do you do this kind of thing??

MAGGIE: This is the first thing I've ever stolen! Ever!

PAUL: Is this your way at getting back at everybody? At all of the injustice done to man?

(Beat.)

Oh, sorry, at all the injustice done to *women*?

(Half-serious, half-playing, she lightly slaps him in the arm.)

PAUL: Sorry.

MAGGIE: Look. I don't know what it is. I just . . . I *don't know*. Yesterday, I was at work, and I was thinking about everything. My job at the archives is sort of my last link to NYU. So. I . . . was doing some filing and I thought of these papers. And I took them. And that's it. I took them.

VICKI: Maggie, this could be serious! How long before someone notices it's gone?

MAGGIE: Maybe a week? We just went on spring break, so everything is shut down. And like I said, they were in a closet in a back room. Nobody ever goes back there.

PAUL: You had a key to that closet?

MAGGIE: Well . . . I *obtained* a key. (*Off Paul's look.*) Oh, Paul don't look at me like that! Don't be upset!

PAUL: I'm trying not to! But good God . . . what were you thinking? This is serious business!

VICKI: Uh . . . you think??

MAGGIE: Vicki, don't you start! You're the last person to start pointing fingers

VICKI: Hey, guilty as charged, I know. But that was *then* . . . this is now.

MAGGIE: (*She paces, fuming.*) I can't believe you guys! You're my closest friends I have in this city! You're my *only* friends!

PAUL: Maggie—

MAGGIE: I didn't ask for a judgment! I just wanted to show you guys! I know it's wrong! But Paul, I kind of thought you'd be excited.

PAUL: Baby, we're not making a judgment. But . . .

(Beat. He is still floored.)

John Calhoun? Wasn't he sort of an important historical figure?

MAGGIE: Yeah, if you like fascist Southern politicians.

VICKI: Was he really a fascist?

PAUL: No. I'm sure he wasn't an actual *fascist*.

VICKI: Paul's right, hon. I had my fun but I also had to pay for it. And I just don't want to see you get into the kind of trouble that I did. And you have to understand . . . I live in this house too. These papers could bring trouble for me. *(Checks her watch.)* You understand that, right?

(Pause. MAGGIE looks down, no response.)

VICKI: Well, I've gotta go. I'm already late. We need milk, by the way.

PAUL: I'll pick some up later.

MAGGIE: Vicki, I'm sorry if this held you up.

VICKI: Hey, don't worry about a thing. You're out of your mind . . . but I still love you.

(She turns to leave.)

MAGGIE: Vickie?

VICKI: Yeah?

MAGGIE: You're not going to tell anybody, are you?

VICKI: Well, I thought about telling Aunt Lizzie. But . . .

MAGGIE: Vicki!

VICKI: Relax. You're talking to an ex-con, girl. (*Beginning to exit.*) I know how to keep my lips shut.

MAGGIE: Okay.

(VICKI exits. Pause.)

MAGGIE: Do you think I should have told her?

PAUL: Vickie? She's safe. With all the harebrained shit she's done, I wouldn't worry about her.

MAGGIE: Yeah.

PAUL: Besides . . . you two have become quite the party pair, haven't you?

(MAGGIE laughs.)

And she totally looks up to you.

MAGGIE: I'm her *big sister*, she says. (*Pause. She speaks slowly.*) Do you think . . . I should have told *you*?

PAUL: Baby, I'm no saint either.

MAGGIE: That's what I can't figure out! I thought you'd be a little excited! Or *something*!

PAUL: Look. You've been through hell. I know that. You move to New York, you start your PhD program at NYU. And now you're . . . you're *out*. All of that is *gone*. You've got a right to be angry.

MAGGIE: Yeah.

PAUL: You *damn* well have that right. But don't forget. Things are going to turn around.

MAGGIE: I know . . .

PAUL: You're gonna be accepted to another school. You'll have that PhD before you know it.

(Pause.)

Just don't let your anger . . . push you to have regrets. I've had my own share of regrets. You know that. But this . . . *(Pointing at papers.)* This could bring real regrets. Real regrets for *all* of us.

MAGGIE: Regrets. Hmmph . . .

(Beat.)

PAUL: Well. I've got to drive to Flushing and work a double. You're leaving these papers up here, right? In the attic?

MAGGIE: Yes.

PAUL: Make sure they're secure, okay? And that they don't leave this room?

MAGGIE: I know. I won't. *(She closes the box securely.)* So . . . you're not angry at me?

PAUL: Maggie . . . let's just say . . . I'm disappointed.

(Pause.)

Yes. But you're still my girl.

(Kisses her, turns to leave.)

And I'm confident you'll figure out what to do.

MAGGIE: All right.

PAUL: You're coming down, aren't you?

MAGGIE: Yeah, hang on. Give me a sec, Paul. Be right there.

PAUL: Okay.

(He exits. A few seconds pass and MAGGIE lifts the lid, and quietly stares at the papers. Lights fade to black. End of scene.)