

MAGIC REVISITED

A Ten-Minute Play

by Robert Lipkin

THE CHARACTERS

Male:

1. Mark – a writer (25- 45).

Female:

2. Sharon – Mark's date (25-45)

Unspecified:

3. Dr. Levin – a psychologist.

SETTING

Scene One: Manhattan, Dr. Levin's office;

Scene Two: 4:00 am, Barbados, a high rise, beachside condo bedroom balcony

TIME

Present

MAGIC REVISITED

Scene One

(At rise, DR. LEVIN is sitting on one of two arm-chairs with a pen and legal pad, as MARK prances excitedly about the office.)

MARK

This is not working for me, Dr. Levin. By the time you figure out who everybody is and how they fit in my life, I'll be ninety-nine years-old. By then, it won't matter much whether I've learned to commit to a long-term relationship.

DR. LEVIN

(Interrupting.)

Mark, mostly you tell funny stories here – the same ones, I'm sure, you entertain your friends with. There are two ways to avoid intimacy: by telling your story to no one or to everyone. Do you understand that?

MARK

Not yet. And I've been coming here twice a week for six months; and we're just wandering all over the place.

DR. LEVIN

Where did you expect to be after six months?

MARK

I don't know. I can't predict the future. I can't even predict the past anymore.

DR. LEVIN

You were expecting instant analysis?

MARK

Actually, I was picturing me and Moses together in therapy, wandering around Manhattan for forty years trying to find the Promise Land.

DR. LEVIN

Picture instead an archeological dig through the mind. We sift through memories for buried relics that solve the mysteries of who we are. I'm interested in your perception of your behavior and your reality.

MARK

Okay. No more funny stories. Now what?

DR. LEVIN

Good. Last week you said you were feeling quote "suicidal" about seeing Sharon again. How did that go?

MARK

Last night was our third date. We did dinner and then back to her apartment. I was okay until we eased – seamlessly - into her bed where I observed that I was having sex and she was making love.

DR. LEVIN

You knew Sharon wasn't just having sex also?

MARK

Yea. Afterwards I'm checking train schedules and saying, "Hey, look at the time", while she's pitching some adorable shabby-chic breakfast place we should go to tomorrow morning - after which – breathe, breathe - it's time to pick out china patterns and baby furniture.

DR. LEVIN

This is probably a good time to stop. Let's continue this next time.

*(Light fades on **DR. LEVIN.**)*

MARK

I didn't get to tell Dr. Levin that I asked Sharon to go to Barbados with me. My friend Max has a beachfront condo there and offered it to me for the week. I don't know why I asked Sharon. After three dates, it's time for me to move on. Seven days with one person. What was I thinking?

*(Lights fade out as **MARK** makes an entry in his notebook.)*

Scene Two

(4:00 am. *Lights up on a beachfront, high-rise condo balcony decorated with a glider-sofa or two chairs. A balcony door opens to an unseen bedroom. **SHARON**, stands at the door, while **MARK** is seated on the balcony reading from his notebook.*)

MARK

Either moonlight splashing on my face or the gentle rumblings of ocean's tide awakened me. I tiptoed from bed to balcony to avoid disturbing her sleep and to move a few feet closer to the stars suspended slightly above the balcony rail. I was inhaling Barbados's sensual buffet of tropical fragrances when I noticed, through the early morning darkness, an old couple huddled below me on the beach. A few moments later, she awakened and joined me on the balcony.

SHARON

She? My name is Sharon. Thank you. I'm here. I'm real. And Sharon did not awaken. You dragged Sharon out here to see some old couple on the beach, and now you're writing a book about them in real time.

MARK

I've got to capture the moment before I lose the feel of it.

SHARON

I broke up with a guy for doing exactly what you do. Jack would take pictures of me in bed and then run in the other room, print the pictures, and run back to show them to me. The last time it happened we were buried in bed under three-dozen eight by ten color glossies of me not smiling. I told him: "I'm going home. You have thirty-six copies of me. You don't need the original." Are you listening, Mark? Throw the notebook away and, maybe, some day you might really find something worth writing about.

MARK

(***SHARON** sits beside **MARK**.*)

I'm sorry. You're right. But listen to this:

(*Reading.*)

Our eyes said hello, and I ...

SHARON

(Interrupting)

Quickly began writing about it before, God forbid, I experienced a real connection with another human being.

MARK

(Reading.)

Our eyes said hello, and I pointed to the couple on the beach sitting motionless, watching waves I supposed. Had they turned in our direction – they didn't - they would have seen us studying them. "Such an odd couple," I whispered to her – oops – to *Sharon*. The old woman sat so close to her companion - her husband I decided - that time must have carved a place in his side for her to fit so snugly there. Such was the harmony I gave them.

SHARON

Wow. He that dares not to be intimate dares to write about it.

MARK

I have a hat exactly like his - a fisherman's hat. I wear it all the time. I'll be buried in it someday. I'm telling you, that old man is wearing my hat.

SHARON

I sense a kinship developing between the old man and you.

MARK

Absolutely. What if that old man is me, visiting from my future, still wearing my hat, our hat? What is he here to tell me? And who's the woman sitting beside me on the beach? Have I met her yet? And if not, how will I recognize her?

SHARON

Webster's Dictionary should define a casual relationship as one where the words "we" or "us" are never used. *We* will probably spend most of this week within inches of each other - either on the beach or in bed - but nothing will happen worth remembering. Being intimate is not intimacy.

MARK

I like that. With your permission I'd like to use that someday.

SHARON

Sure. And write this down too in your little red book: How do you expect to become that old man? You strike me as a solo traveler committed only to beginnings, to an endless parade of casual connections.

MARK

Ouch! Not true. I'm working hard at getting to the Promise Land.

SHARON

Good for you. It's getting chilly out here - feels like a storm's brewing. I need a something to put over my shoulders.

(SHARON exits into the bedroom.)

MARK

If that old man is me, when did I stop running away and begin instead to weave a life with the threads of another's soul? God, I wish Dr. Levin were here. This will take years to explain.

(MARK writes in his notebook. Heavy rain is heard as SHARON returns to the balcony with a sweater draped over her shoulders.)

SHARON

Wow, doesn't rain like this in Manhattan.

MARK

Ergo, tropical storm.

SHARON

Cute. Hope this condo floats. Why don't they get out of the rain? Mark, they're not even moving.

MARK

This is an interesting metaphysical mystery. Perhaps, the rain from our time dimension doesn't affect them in their time.

SHARON

You need instant therapy.

MARK

Bless you. I've been saying that for weeks.

SHARON

I'll be back. Something's wrong. Maybe they're homeless and have no place to go.

(SHARON exits. In a few seconds, from Offstage.)

Hello, Hello do you need help?

(Lights out and up signifying a passage of time. SHARON enters the balcony.)

SHARON *(cont'd.)*

(Laughing.)

Wow, that was weird. I ran up to the old couple, but they didn't move...

MARK

(Interrupting.)

I heard you laughing... and then I saw you kick the old man's hat right off his head. Even through the darkness, I could see the old couple crumble and disappear in the sand.

SHARON

They weren't real, Mark.

MARK.

Why didn't you leave them alone? They weren't bothering you.

SHARON

The old man's hat – your hat – that was just a piece of driftwood resting on a mound of sand. It was all in your head, Mark.

MARK

They mattered to me, and now...

SHARON

(Interrupting.)

Wow, there's something real going on here, isn't there? I knew you weren't really a jerk.

MARK

You thought I was?

SHARON

Not really. Honestly, I thought you could be special if only I could get the train schedules out of your hands.

MARK

But I am a jerk. Look, nothing good ever lasts; so I run away before it ends. The old man – the old couple - were showing me something I needed to see.

SHARON

And I ruined it for you, but wouldn't you rather know the truth about things?

MARK

No. By morning, the rain and tide would have washed all evidence of them away, and I would have been none the wiser; but I still would have had their message.

SHARON

What was their message?

MARK

When I was about seven, my older brother Richie – our family's Harry Houdini - was always pulling quarters out of my ears. It wasn't a magic trick then. Not to me. It was magic. He'd perform that trick again and again, and I'd beg for more. Eventually, I noticed that Richie was hiding the coin in the palm of his hand before pulling it from my ear. When I told him I figured out how he did it, the magic shows ended forever.

SHARON

Why would he punish you for figuring out the truth?

MARK

Look, Richie was ten years older than me. We really had little in common. I begged him to repeat the trick, but he refused -- said it was stupid since I knew it wasn't really magic. We never talked much after that. Six months later Richie was dead - killed in an auto accident - drunk driver – back-page news except for me and my family. Figuring

out how those quarters got into my ears was my first lesson on innocence lost - how everything we learn comes at a price. Want my honest opinion? Reality. Knowledge. They're both overrated - and way, way too expensive.

.SHARON

Doesn't your brother still live somewhere in your heart? Put the old couple there for as long as you need them.

MARK

I wonder why most of the important people in my life don't really exist.

SHARON

I'm real, Mark.

MARK

I know. And, surprisingly, I like that about you. If I leave my notebook home, would you like to get together again back in the city?

SHARON

You don't want to run away?

MARK

No. I have a different feeling now about the Promise Land. No wonder I couldn't find it. Turns out it's not a place at all. Wait til Dr. Levin hears that.

(Blackout.)