

MacLear

by  
Oded Gross  
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## **MACLEAR**

### **CAST OF CHARACTERS:**

John - (45-65, Male, Any Race) - An actor, Jane's husband

Jane - (35-50, Female, Any Race)- An actress, John's wife

### **SETTING:**

A town in the middle of nowhere. The modest home of John and Jane.

### **BRIEF SYNOPSIS:**

John, a frustrated actor in a small-town theater company laments his poor casting in the company's production of King Lear, a lead role he feels he was destined to play. His wife Jane tries to convince him that in order to achieve his destiny, he must act.

AT RISE:

A spotlight on John.

JOHN

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!  
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout  
Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!

Beat. John thinks.

JOHN

I always forget what comes after cocks.

Lights up, and we see John's wife, Jane is also here,  
sitting at a dinner table eating.

JOHN

Well, anyway, you get the idea.

JANE

I've already told you many times, it should have been you. You would have been great.  
So much better than Ted.

JOHN

And yet, Ted is Lear and I am just a spear carrier. Failed again.

JANE

The road to success is paved with failure.

JOHN

The road to failure is also paved with failure. Failure is like Starbucks, it's on every road.  
And yet, I am better than Ted. It is so unjust!

JANE

When you are the director of the play, like he is, you can do such unjust things like cast  
yourself in the lead, even though you're thoroughly unqualified.

JOHN

He wouldn't know true talent if it stabbed him in the chest.

JANE

Well, he did cast me.

JOHN

You are wonderful. The perfect Goneril.

JANE

I'm sad there's only a few weeks left in the run. I enjoy playing someone so...

JOHN

Ruthless and amoral.

JANE

I was going to say ambitious and determined.

JOHN

It's a role you were born to play.

JANE

And you are destined to be Lear.

JOHN

(Sadly)

Apparently not.

(Then)

Though, you want to hear something silly? Just this morning on the way to the theater I came across that... psychic shop-

JANE

You didn't? Did you go in again? Get your palm read?

JOHN

I didn't have to this time. I was about to walk passed the door, and the prophesier came out. Boasting of her supernatural knowledge, as she often does.

JANE

(A believer)

What did she say this time?

JOHN

She seemed to imply that I would be Lear.

JANE

She did?

JOHN

Well, at first she said I would be the Duke of Albany strangely-

JANE

Boring.

JOHN

But then she made it clear that I would be the king. I don't even know how she knew I was in the play. Who knows how she performs her magic, if you believe in such a thing.

(Then, obviously lying)

Normally I don't.

JANE

Don't you? I do. I believe in all of that stuff. Crystal balls, Tarot readings, astrology-

JOHN

I don't believe in astrology. But that's only because I'm a Virgo.

(Then)

I have often believed this fortune teller though. Madam Wayward. So old and strangely dressed, yet she knows things about me, it's hard not to believe she's mystical. But how can I trust her this time? The play is half way done. Ted is Lear. He is the lead. Ted is always the lead. It's his company and it's the only game in town for at least 300 miles. He can do what he wants!

(Self-pitying)

It's so discouraging. I'm just a spear carrier. Again. Nothing more.

The phone rings. John picks it up.

JOHN

(On the phone)

Hello? Yes. He did? I understand. Thank you.

He hangs up the phone.

JANE

You know, John, I have to say that I don't like when you talk like that.

JOHN

That was strange.

JANE

Nothing more than a spear carrier? What does that say about me? I can't do better than a spear carrier?

JOHN

I'm not a spear carrier.

JANE

You're damn right, you're not. You are a lead!

JOHN

I'm the Duke of Albany.

JANE

I said a lead! Think bigger, John!

JOHN

No. I have just been promoted to the Duke of Albany.

JANE

What?

JOHN

That was Ted. He's on his way here to talk about it with me.

JANE

Wait. What about Steve? He plays Duke of Albany.

JOHN

Steve quit in some jealous rage. He heard his wife call out Ted's name while having sex.

JANE

That's why he quit?

JOHN

She was having sex with Ted at the time.

JANE

I see. I'm surprised it took Steve this long to find out.

JOHN

You knew?

JANE

Ted wasn't very discreet. I caught him and Steve's wife in the prop room a week ago.

JOHN

Well, Steve's gone now. So Ted gave me the role.

JANE

Just like the psychic said!

JOHN

That's what's so incredible.

JANE

(Eyes widening even further)

She also said you were going to be Lear!

JOHN

I know! But what are the odds of that?

The phone rings again. John picks it up.

JOHN

(On the phone)

Hello? I understand.

He hangs up.

JOHN

That was Ted. He said the person playing Albany is also the understudy for Lear.

JANE

Oh my God!

JOHN

If something happens to Ted-

JANE

You will be king.

JOHN

Let's not get excited now. You and I both know Ted has understudies for all the roles he plays and in the 10 years we've known him I don't think he's ever used one once.

JANE

That is true.

JOHN

He never gets sick. He never gets hurt. He never has a relative die. It's horrible!

JANE

As if any of that would stop him. He'd have to be dead for the understudy to go on.

JOHN

So there's no point in getting excited.

Beat. Jane considers this.

JANE

Well, it depends how badly you want the role.

JOHN

You know I would do anything.

JANE

Would you?

JOHN

What would you have me do?

She picks up a knife.

JANE

I'd have you ACT!

Beat.

JOHN

Jane. I don't want to do anything bad.

JANE

No, nothing worse than bad acting.

(Then)

Of course good and bad are subjective.

JOHN

Murder is bad.

JANE

Did you think I was suggesting murder?

JOHN

Weren't you?

JANE

I was.

JOHN

That is bad. You'd make a killer out of me? That is not a role I wish to take on.

JANE

Oh, the roles we must play in order to play the roles we truly want.

JOHN

It is an evil act.



JANE

Is it? When you murdered the dog because he was sick in the head, started biting children, was that an evil act?

JOHN

I didn't murder the dog. I put him down.

JANE

You say putting him down to protect yourself because it is too horrible to say what you actually did, which was murder the dog. The same way cutting off his balls was called "getting him fixed," though I am sure if you asked the dog he'd say, "Fixed? I'm broken! I was working fine until you cut my balls off.

(Then)

You killed the dog. Don't be horrified by it. Own it! He was a menace. It was the best thing for everyone.

(Then)

Intention is important, isn't it.

JOHN

I'm an actor. Intention is everything! What is your intention?

JANE

Mine? To see my husband, who I love more than life, reach his full potential, which is not to be a bit player in a company led by a man who'll never see him as anything more.

(Then)

Only with the small parts for you, is that it? Is that good enough? I think not.

JOHN

(Weakly)

There are no small parts, just small actors.

JANE

There are small parts and they are played by small actors! Actors who say they are fixed, when they are really broken. No one unmans my husband!

JOHN

I'm hardly unmanned.

JANE

(Imitating him)

"It's so discouraging. I am a spear carrier. Again. Nothing more."

JOHN

What would you have me do?

She holds up the knife again.

JANE

Ted is a menace.

JOHN

Ted is not a dog.

JANE

Isn't he though? Aren't we all? Is this not a dog eat dog industry?

JOHN

Do you want me to kill the dog or eat the dog?

JANE

You can't do one without the other. But you have to be hungry, John.

JOHN

It just seems wrong.

JANE

Is it not wrong to lead a company of men and women as he does but only have interest in himself? Only putting up the shows that he wants, always casting himself in the roles that he wants to play, with no thought or consideration or opportunity for the rest of us. He did a modern adaptation of Medea and cast himself as the lead. Is that not wrong?

(Then)

Is it not wrong to dismiss your fate as proclaimed by your soothsayer who you have trusted time and time again, now she has outlined your destiny, and you doubt it? It has been foreseen! She has shown you her crystal ball, you can get everything you want. But you need crystal balls of your own. If you equivocate, if you deny your destiny, is that not wrong?

(Then)

Is it not wrong to treat you wife this way? It pains me to see you sulk in self-pity, lamenting your lot in life. You are my husband. I want no other man. But I do want a man. Someone who will fight for what he wants and not cry about injustice. "Whoa is me, I only get cast as a spear carrier." I say don't just carry the spear, use it!

She places the knife into his hand.

JANE

You are carrying it for a reason. The psychic has told you what that reason is. She's given you your purpose and all but said you would succeed. You can take the throne. Of the play and of the company. All you have to do is ACT.

(Then)

You are the understudy. It is time for you to go on. Do it, if not for yourself, then for me.

JOHN

For you? You have a role. A good role.

Pause.

JANE

Do you know what Ted had me do in order to get my good role?

JOHN

...I presume... he had you act.

JANE

(Shamefully)

He wanted me to perform an act.

JOHN

(Understanding)

What?

JANE

(Becoming emotional)

I didn't care much for that casting.

JOHN

You didn't.

JANE

No. But I had to promise that I would. Pretend that I wanted to... Satisfy his advances. Do things only a wife should do for her husband. Things I only wish to do for you. I had to promise him as much.

JOHN

But you haven't kept that promise?

JANE

I haven't been forced to yet. Like Steve's wife. Like all the wives in the company. Ted is insatiable. His lust for women is rabid. He is...

JOHN

A dog.

She nods as she starts to fight back tears.

JANE

And I had to pretend to be his bitch. Not my favorite role, to be sure.

The doorbell rings. John is seething.

JOHN

That must be Ted.

Jane nods.

JANE

So now it's time for you to decide. What role will you take on in order to get what you want?

JOHN

What role, indeed?

John holds up the knife.

JOHN

Is this a dagger which I see before me?

He looks at his wife for approval. She nods wickedly.

JANE

Break a leg.

He exits with purpose. She smiles menacingly as he leaves. Once he does, she picks up the phone.

JANE

(On the phone)

Hello. Madam Wayward, It's Jane...

Black out.

The end.