

DON'T LOSE YOUR HEAD

By Dana Hall

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SYNOPSIS: One night a year affords the dead a chance to come back to be amongst the living. Recently deceased Carol and Mark decide on their first trip back they want a quiet evening at home. What they get is anything but quiet. Can they manage to not lose their heads?



SETTING:

TIME:

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 females, 1 male)

CAROL (f).....Back from the dead for one night.
Open age. *(56 lines)*

MARK (m).....Back from the dead for one night.
Open age. *(53 lines)*

LISA (f).....A mortal, visiting family. *(34 lines)*

NOTES: This show is produced with minimal props and the director has the playwright's permission to alter staging to fit their performance needs. Mark and Carol are undead and very cautious about moving their heads too quickly as their heads could fall off. Have fun with it!

AT START: *The living room of MARK and CAROL HOFFMAN. It is Halloween night. MARK is on the couch as CAROL enters the living room. There is not much in the living room as it has not been lived in but rather staged for selling.*

CAROL: I just love the little ones in their costumes.

MARK: Oh, like that piece of cheese that came to the door.

CAROL: He wasn't cheese, he was a sponge. It's from a cartoon—
Mark.

MARK: Sponge? What kind of costumes are these? Back in the day, we'd make our own costumes. None of this store-bought crap.

CAROL: They're kids—ease up.

MARK: Could they use an ounce of creativity before they extort you for candy? Ridiculous, like that kid dressed as chocolate ice cream/

CAROL: Did it have a face?

MARK: Yeah.

CAROL: That wasn't ice cream, dear.

MARK: *(Makes a 'forget it' gesture.)* What time did Lisa say she was coming by?

CAROL: She said she'd be over after work.

CAROL checks the time.

CAROL: *(Continued.)* Oh—wow she'll be here soon.

MARK: I'm surprised you invited her.

CAROL: She's family.

MARK: She's your first cousin once removed, Carol.

CAROL: What can I say she was so excited to see us and we didn't have plans—

MARK picks up the remote.

MARK: Speak for yourself.

CAROL: Not like I could just walk away. She saw us checking out. Oh, come on we never get to see anyone anymore.

MARK: We saw plenty at the grocery store—I'm good.

CAROL: Oh don't be a stick in the mud.

CAROL starts straightening up the place a bit.

MARK: We've been dead for a while Carol. What do we say if she starts asking questions?

CAROL: Oh, I don't know—we were traveling for your job.

MARK: Where do I work?

CAROL: Wherever you want Mark.

MARK: Wayne Enterprises.

CAROL: Where's your cape?

MARK: It's a diversified multinational conglomerate owned by Bruce Wayne/

CAROL: No.

MARK: Fine, I'll just wear the cape.

CAROL: I was kidding about the cape.

MARK: (*Looks around.*) I can't believe our old place was still on the market.

CAROL: I know! It's been up before the accident. Such a gem I thought someone would've scooped it up by now.

MARK: You think anyone will notice that we're here?

CAROL: The agent left a card on the table, looks like there isn't a showing until tomorrow night—the place is all ours—again.

MARK: Did you hear that?

CAROL: Sounds like a car—probably Lisa pulling in.

CAROL adjusts her scarf and MARK'S scarf.

MARK: I look ridiculous.

CAROL: You look handsome. —Distinguished.

MARK: Could've worn a cape but—no my wife won't let me. It's Halloween no one would think twice/

CAROL: We need to look normal and not raise suspicion. Besides, you know they don't attach the head very well—they just shove your spirit back into these things. We don't need any accidents with Lisa here.

MARK: I highly doubt anyone would suspect we were undead and as long as I don't make any sharp movements the old noggin is fine. See—look.



MARK demonstrates neck movement.

CAROL: You're going to knock it off again. Don't ruin our first time back!

MARK: Me—ruin it? We get this one night a year and this is how we're going to spend it?

CAROL: Well, it's not like you planned anything. I thought a simple night at home would've been nice—just like the old days. Excuse me for living!

MARK: You're not alive!

Doorbell or knocking.

CAROL: Shhh... That's the side door, it must be her. *(Calls.)* Come in, doors open—we're in the living room!

LISA comes in and greets CAROL and MARK.

LISA: Well-well, if it isn't the Hoffman's—no costumes tonight?

MARK: I tried but/

CAROL: No-no. We'll leave that to the kiddos this year.

MARK: Nice costume yourself.

LISA: Good one—Mark. You've always been a jokester! I didn't have time to change after my shift. I know you two must be so busy now that you're back in town. I had to stop by and catch up/

MARK: This year has felt like we dropped off the face of the world.

CAROL elbows MARK. CAROL sees LISA'S grocery bag.

CAROL: Oh I'll take that, you shouldn't have brought anything/

LISA: *(Reveals.)* It's a carton of eggs.

MARK: Well, my cholesterol was high but what the heck—you only live once/

CAROL shoots MARK a glare.

MARK: It's just a saying.

LISA: Ha. This guy! It's not for dinner. It's for those hooligans out there.

CAROL: You throw eggs at children?

LISA: I defend myself and my property. I busted some teenagers stealing at the store and for two days straight my car has been covered in yolk. So these babies are my insurance policy. I noticed you didn't have any decorations up and thought maybe you might need some *insurance* too so I brought them in.

MARK: Thanks but we picked up some candy today to hand out. We should be fine.

LISA: Full size or regular?

CAROL: Licorice.

LISA: I'll just leave these right here—you might need them more than me. So what have the two of you been up to? It's like you just up and left one day—I tried calling but your number didn't go through.

CAROL: Oh—yeah sorry about that Mark's job had him take on a client in... Australia and well duty calls.

MARK is looking confused.

LISA: Oh I didn't know you were an international man of business, Mark! What do you do?

MARK: It's a diversified multinational conglomerate/

CAROL clears her throat and shoots him a look.

MARK: *(Continued.)* I'd hate to bore you with the details/

LISA: I'd love to see Australia one day. Did you see a kangaroo?

MARK: I can say I've seen a lot of things this year that I never thought I would—that's for sure.

CAROL: So Lisa, how have things been for you?

LISA: Nothing exciting here. Just picking up some extra shifts—the last time I talked to the two of you—where were you going? ...Somewhere down south/

CAROL and MARK: Nashville.

LISA: Right! How was it?

MARK: The Smoky Mountains were beautiful.

LISA: Oh where did you stay?

CAROL: Yeah Mark—where did we stay? I remember the drive then the creek...

LISA: Oh did you go swimming?

MARK: You could say that/

MARK and CAROL both rub their necks then catch themselves.

CAROL: Just a boring old vacation. Enough about us—any Halloween plans tonight?

LISA: Nah, I was never one to really get into it. But it's a fascinating holiday, isn't it? I remember as a little girl asking grandma why we dress up for Halloween.

MARK: Simple—candy.

LISA: Well, yeah but she said the farmers believed once their crops died there was a window of time when spirits could rise from their graves—so people dressed up to scare them off.

MARK: *(Starts coughing.)* Sorry, I just swallowed my spit and went down the wrong pipe.

LISA: Oh here—let me loosen your scarf a bit.

CAROL: No! No, he's fine.

CAROL smacks MARK on the back hard. He holds his head.

CAROL: Happens all the time/

MARK: *(Winded.)* Yup—All better.

CAROL: See.

LISA: What was I saying?

CAROL: Oh just something about farmers trying to explain the change of season I suppose/

LISA: Right—yeah a lot of cultures believe there's a window where our world and the afterlife overlap. *(In a fun spooky voice.)* Where the souls of loved ones can walk the earth again. Ha! I know what I'd do if I came back for one night—I'd haunt those little jerks that egged my car. What would you do?

CAROL: Do with what?

LISA: If you came back from the dead?

MARK takes the remote and clicks on the TV and puts up his feet.

MARK: I guess I'd kick up my feet and turn on Sportsnet.

CAROL knocks his feet down.

CAROL: Can't someone come back and want a quiet night in?

LISA: (*Laughing.*) I highly doubt anyone would want to sit around their house on their only day back in the world!

CAROL: (*Slow build of panic.*) But it's only one day. That's it. You think one would want to cram in everything but the pain of every interaction, knowing it's your last, knowing it's fleeting, is too much. Trying to decide what to see, whom to visit, being hit with feelings you took for granted—it's all so so heavy. You want to absorb every single moment but how? How can you!? (*Realizing.*) ...is likely what someone might experience.... Or uh—whoa it's a little hot in here—anyone else thirsty, I'm thirsty—are you thirsty? Let me grab us some drinks.

CAROL leaves.

LISA: (*To MARK.*) Was it something I said?

MARK: No, no she's just a bit flustered. We haven't seen... *family* in a while.

LISA: Oh, because for a moment there I thought she was going to lose her head.

MARK: They don't attach it as thoroughly as one would think. That's for sure.

LISA: (*Laughing.*) Oh, you could always make me laugh.

CAROL comes back with random drinks and puts them down on a table.

CAROL: Sorry, we don't have much in the house.

LISA: Oh, thank you but I'm fine.

CAROL holds out a juice box to LISA.

CAROL: Are you sure?

LISA: Yeah, I'm sure. I didn't notice your ring before—it's lovely.

CAROL: Thanks.

LISA: I didn't mean to upset you—I know I have a tendency to ramble on and on.

CAROL: Oh don't give it another thought. I found what I came for/ what I thought I'd lost.

MARK: Really because this is hardly a quiet evening at home/

CAROL: Not that—this/

CAROL shows MARK a ring.

MARK: Your Mother's wedding ring?

CAROL: I hid it in the way back of the cabinet—it was still there. Can you believe it?

LISA: That's so sweet. I bet she will love that you found it! Wait...

LISA listens intently.

LISA: Did you hear that? Right there. Sounds like eggs—

MARK: How could you possible/

LISA: Oh I can tell that sound. (*Calls offstage.*) Get away from my car you candy suckers! Looks like I'm serving breakfast early.

LISA grabs the carton of eggs and runs off stage.

MARK: I still don't understand why you invited her (*Looking towards the offstage window.*) but boy does she have an arm. Must be lifting all those heavy grocery bags.

CAROL sits next to MARK admiring the ring.

MARK: Do you want to visit her? We can.

CAROL: I can't.

MARK: I understand.

CAROL: They never found our car—she thinks we ran off to Paris or somewhere exotic. Let her live out her last years thinking we're living it up.

MARK: You're a good daughter.

LISA comes running through the living room.

LISA: It's not me they're after, it's YOU. You guys and your licorice. I told you—you are in a FULL-SIZE candy bar neighborhood. Good thing I had more ammo in the car. Here take these and follow me.

LISA gives MARK and CAROL a bag containing eggs.

CAROL: I can't hit a child.

LISA: Those aren't children tonight—egg or BE EGGED!

MARK: Come on Carol—let's live a little.

MARK and CAROL look at each other and grin. They run out after LISA. After each line we can hear a 'bang or splat.'

MARK: *(Offstage.)* This is for store-bought costumes! *(SPLAT!)*

CAROL: *(Offstage.)* Careful, Mark. *(SPLAT!)*

MARK: *(Offstage.)* And costumes that are puns! *(SPLAT!)* You're NOT Clever! *(SPLAT!)*

CAROL: *(Offstage.)* Your scarf is coming loose—*(SPLAT!)* Mark. *(SPLAT!)* Mark! *(SPLAT!)*

MARK: *(Offstage.)* JUST A MASK!? *(SPLAT!)* You're not even trying! *(SPLAT!)* HOW. *(SPLAT!)* DARE. *(SPLAT!)* YOU! *(SPLAT! SPLAT! SPLAT! SPLAT!)*

CAROL: *(Offstage.)* Lookout, Mark! *(SPLAT!)* No! Your head! It's falling off. *(SPLAT!)*

LISA: *(Offstage.)* Aaaaaiiiiiiii! It can't be—Aaaaaiiii! Aaaaii!

CAROL: *(Offstage.)* I knew this would happen. There it goes. Pass me a towel, Lisa. I'll wrap up—they can reattach it later.

LISA: *(Offstage.)* I-I-can't I—*(Vomit noises.)*

MARK: *(Offstage.)* Just pick up my head up—come on I'm rolling away!

CAROL: *(Offstage.)* I'm trying! It's so slippery! —So slippery! Got it!

MARK: Finally!

CAROL: *(Offstage.)* Oh no! *(SPLAT!)* I dropped it. Lisa—Grab it! Grab it!!!!

LISA: *(Offstage.)* Aaaaaiiii! I think I'm going to faint.

MARK'S head rolls on stage. CAROL enters chasing it.

CAROL: Fine. I'll just do it myself. (*As she picks up MARK'S head.*)
So much for a quiet night in! Am I right my dear? Ok—next time we'll do what *you* plan!

CAROL kisses MARK'S head.

THE END