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Dramatic Publishing

a play in one act

THE MAKE-UP ARTIST

by DAVID HENRY WILSON



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(THE MAKE-UP ARTIST)

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THE MAKE-UP ARTIST

A Play in One Act

For One Man and One Woman

CHARACTERS

MARY *a make-up artist*

JACK *An actor*

CALL-BOY *An off-stage voice*

SCENE: *A dressing room.*

TIME: *The present.*

PROPERTIES

Chair

Table with mirror

On the table:

Make-up items: paints, powder,
brushes, pencils, etc.

Cloth to cover neck and shoulders

Walking stick behind table

The Make-up Artist

SCENE: A dressing-room. There is a chair, and a table with a mirror.)

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: MARY, the make-up artist, is arranging requisites on the table. She is young and very beautiful. After a few moments JACK, the actor, comes in--young, self-confident.)

JACK. Hello. You the make-up artist, then?

MARY. Yes.

JACK. Very nice, too. Very nice, too. Where have you been all my life, eh? What's your name?

MARY. Mary.

JACK. Mary. (Singing:) Cos it was Mary, Mary . . . Lalalalalalalaa. (The "la's" are somewhat lecherous.)

MARY. Would you like to sit down?

JACK (sitting). You're new, eh?

MARY. No.

JACK. Oh. How come I haven't seen you before?

MARY. Perhaps you never noticed me.

JACK. Hohoho, a likely story. (Grabbing her.)
Come here. Give us a kiss.

MARY. Oh!

JACK. Come on, come on. (JACK pulls MARY onto his knee and kisses her.) Very nice, Mary. Very very nice. You're just my type, you know that?

MARY. Hadn't we better get on?

JACK. I'm getting on fine, thank you.

MARY. I mean with the make-up.

JACK. Oh. Well, if you insist. (JACK lets MARY go, and she returns to the table to fetch a cloth, which she then tucks around his neck.) Mary, Mary, quite contrary, how does your . . . er . . . garden grow?

MARY. The same as everybody else's.

JACK. Hoho, not from where I'm sitting. You know something? (Grabbing her hand.) You shouldn't be here at all. You should be out there, in front of the lights, all lit up like a palace so people can gaze at you. You're too beautiful to be stuck down here. Ever thought of acting?

MARY. No.

JACK. Why not? You're a natural star.

MARY. I like my job.

JACK. Make-up? It's a dead end.

MARY. Yes, but I like it. I'm good at it. (MARY extricates herself and begins to make JACK up. She continues to work right through the dialogue, except where otherwise indicated.)

JACK. A girl like you could drive a bloke like me barmy, you know that? Got a boy-friend?

MARY. No.

JACK. What you doing tonight?

MARY. Working.

JACK. I mean when you've finished working.

MARY. I never finish working.

JACK. Is that the brush-off?

MARY. I don't have time for boys. Close your eyes.

JACK. No time for boys . . . oh dear, oh dear!

MARY. What's the play like?

JACK. Play? Oh, the play. It's great. It's a great play. The audiences love it, and we love it, and the author loves it and the producer loves it.

Everybody loves it. We're all blissfully happy. In fact if there was a dolly bird like you in it, it'd be perfect.

MARY. Are you the hero?

JACK. You bet I'm the hero. I thought you said you weren't new here.

MARY. I'm not.

JACK. How come you don't know who I am, then?

MARY. I've never watched the play.

JACK. Oh! Why not?

MARY. It doesn't concern me.

JACK. Well, it's a great play. You should see it. You should see me, anyway. Do you know that I am one of the greatest actors the world has ever seen? I'm a supercolossal star. I'm a histrionic tonic. The rage of the stage. And I'm irresistible. (JACK tries to grab MARY again but she eludes him.) Wouldn't you like to be my Juliet?

It is my lady: O, it is my love:

O, that she knew she were!

She speaks, yet she says nothing; What of that?

Her eye discourses, I will answer it. -

I am too bold, 'tis not to me she speaks:

Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,

Having some business, do entreat her eyes

To twinkle in their spheres till they return. . .

MARY. Close your mouth.

JACK. Mmmm! (When MARY has finished:) Where's your sense of romance?

MARY. I'm just a make-up girl.

JACK. Even make-up girls must be human. (The work continues.) If you haven't seen the play, how do you know what sort of make-up to put on me?

MARY. I've got my instructions.

JACK. Who from?

MARY. The director. Who do you think?

JACK. You know him, then.

MARY. Yes.

JACK. On . . . er . . . intimate terms?

MARY. Not what you mean by "intimate."

JACK. She knows me, she knows me! Didn't he try and get you to act?

MARY. Why should he? It was a make-up artist he wanted.

JACK. But it's a waste! A waste! (Fixing his eyes on MARY'S waist.) What a waist. (JACK puts his arms around MARY'S waist, but again she extricates herself.)

MARY. Actors should learn to control their hands.

JACK. You flatten me.

Here sit I, lady; dart thy skill at me;
Bruise me with scorn, confound me with a flout
Thrust thy sharp wit quite through my ignorance;
Cut me to pieces with thy keen conceit . . .

MARY. "And you will wish me never more to dance."

JACK (his mouth falling open in disbelief). Then you are an actress?

MARY. You don't have to be an actress to quote. Do you want to look at yourself? (In order to look in the mirror, JACK has to get up and walk a few steps. He studies himself. He now looks thirty-five.)

JACK. Can't see much difference. Have you done anything?

MARY. It's the beginning.

JACK. I look the same--more or less. Just a few . . . faint lines.

MARY. Shall we go on?

JACK (shrugging his shoulders and sitting). You enjoy your job, then, do you?

MARY. Yes.

JACK. Even though it doesn't lead anywhere.

MARY. You might say the same about any job.

JACK. But I mean there are no prospects. You change somebody's face, then you change somebody else's, and . . . that's all there is to it. No . . . upward movement.

MARY. Every time I make someone up, it's a work of art. Do painters have to move upward?

JACK. But what painters paint sticks, doesn't it --I mean, it lasts. These faces just get wiped off again.

MARY. I never run out of faces. And the faces I do are real.

JACK. Oh, well, please yourself. All the same, a girl like you buried in a dressing-room . . . (He shakes his head.)

MARY. Keep your head still.

JACK. You should at least get married.

MARY. Why?

JACK. Because it's a waste! As I said.

MARY. Are you married?

JACK. Yes, worse luck.

MARY. Why "worse luck"?

JACK (flashing back to the lecherous expression). Well, you're . . . er . . . not so free when you're married, are you? I mean . . . er . . . once you're married . . . I mean . . .

MARY. You're not so free.

JACK. Precisely. If I was free now, you don't think I'd be taking orders from you, do you? I mean, clutch control and all that.

MARY. You've made your passes.

JACK. Oho, if I wasn't married I'd've raped you by now.

MARY. How charming.

JACK.

O Mary, goddess, nymph--perfect divine!
To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!
That pure congealed white, high Taurus' snow,
Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow,
When thou hold'st up thy hand: O, let me kiss
This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

(JACK grabs MARY'S hand and kisses it.)

MARY. Keep still and close your eyes.

JACK (shaking his head). No soul. (JACK sits still while MARY paints.) It's a great life, being an actor, you know. All the different characters you get to grips with--climbing inside their skins to find out who they are. It's a rich life.

Gathering experience, painlessly.

MARY. Don't you have a life outside the theatre?

JACK. Oh, yes, but it's not the same. It's limited
--the theatre's not limited.

MARY. Is your wife an actress?

JACK. Yes. She's good, too. Almost as good as me.

MARY. You have children?

JACK. Two--both boys. They'll probably be actors as well. Still, we don't want to talk about my family, do we, Mary? I mean, there's other things we could . . . er . . . talk about.

MARY. Such as?

JACK. How about sex? We haven't talked about sex, have we?

MARY. Not directly, I suppose.

JACK. Has any man . . . er . . . broken down your defenses, yet?

MARY. No.

JACK. But plenty have tried, eh?

MARY. Yes.

JACK. I reckon if I wasn't married I could.