

Behind Closed Doors

By Karen Moore

Behind Closed Doors was originally produced at Texas Tech University as part of the Raider Red's One-Act Play Spectacular (RROAPS) in the spring of 2006 with the following cast:

JOHN: Gabriel Vasquez

JAQUELINE: Jackie Petrak

The play was directed by David L. Wygant.

Address all inquiries concerning performances, readings, or reprinting of this work **or any portion thereof** to Karen Moore, bdseuss@hotmail.com or (806) 441-6406.

Characters:

JOHN – A man. Thirties or Forties.

JAQUELINE – A younger woman. Attractive.

Setting:

Scene One – Outside a bar.

Scene Two – JOHN's room.

Time – The present. Anywhere.

Special Notes: This play is not a sentimental tragedy. It was never meant to be a Hallmark greeting card on loss or an after-school-special about child abuse. It is based on real people that I encountered, or encountered through friends. I never saw the two characters befriending one another or continuing the relationship. It exists only for this one night. I have found that, over the years, I seemed to have had the most intimate and revealing of conversations with people I hardly knew in the span of only a few hours. I still recall all of them. This play was written to express that.

It was originally performed on a thrust stage with very minimal sets and lighting. The costumes were suitable for the characters; nothing fancy or experimental, just honest.

Scene One

At rise: (A woman is lighting a cigarette. A man sidles up next to her and begins talking.)

JOHN: How much?

JAQUELINE: Huh?

JOHN: How much?

JAQUELINE: For what?

JOHN: To have you for the night.

JAQUELINE: Depends.

JOHN: On what?

JAQUELINE: On what you wanna do.

JOHN: I want to sleep with you.

JAQUELINE: Most men do.

JOHN: So how much?

JAQUELINE: Three thousand.

JOHN: You're that good?

JAQUELINE: I'm that good. You have the money?

JOHN: I'm an architect.

JAQUELINE: You have the money.

JOHN: Can I take you home?

JAQUELINE: My place or yours?

JOHN: Mine.

JAQUELINE: Fine with me. Cab?

JOHN: I drove.

JAQUELINE: Are you okay to drive?

JOHN: Do you really care?

JAQUELINE: Kind of. If my face gets messed up in a car wreck, I can't pay the bills.

Ugly women don't make it very long in my business.

JOHN: You're not worried about dying?

JAQUELINE: Are you?

JOHN: No. I'm parked this way.

JAQUELINE: How far?

JOHN: Not far.

JAQUELINE: I'm just asking because I'm in heels and my feet are killing me.

JOHN: I never understood why women wear those things.

JAQUELINE: We wear them to get men like you to take us home. *(He ushers her out.*

They exit. Lights down.)

Scene Two

(Lights up on a room. There is only a bed and a night stand with a lamp.)

JOHN: This is it.

JAQUELINE: Not much here.

JOHN: Sorry there aren't any places to sit or anything.

JAQUELINE: I don't really sit that much when I work, anyway.

JOHN: Right. I guess not.

JAQUELINE: So, how do you wanna do this?

JOHN: This is your side.

JAQUELINE: Okay. I take it the other side is yours?

JOHN: Yeah. And could you put this on? (*Takes t-shirt out of plastic bag, hands it to her.*)

JAQUELINE: Okay...anything else?

JOHN: Yeah.

JAQUELINE: What?

JOHN: Can I undress you?

JAQUELINE: You can do anything you want with me.

JOHN: I just want to undress you.

JAQUELINE: Okay. (*He begins to. Stops after he unzips her dress.*) Everything alright?

JOHN: Yeah. It's just been a while. You know?

JAQUELINE: Not really, but you can tell me if you want.

JOHN: I'm sorry. You can put the shirt on now, if you want to. (*He turns his back while she changes.*) Are you dressed?

JAQUELINE: Yeah.

JOHN: (*Turns around to see her.*) You look...perfect.

JAQUELINE: Thank you. And now?

JOHN: Sleep.

JAQUELINE: Sleep...?

JOHN: I'm tired.

JAQUELINE: What are you paying me for anyway?

JOHN: To stay here the night.

JAQUELINE: Whatever. It's your money. This is my side?

JOHN: And this is my side. (*Begins to undress.*)

JAQUELINE: Nice tie.

JOHN: Thank you.

JAQUELINE: Where'd you get it?

JOHN: My wife gave it to me.

JAQUELINE: Oh, no. I'm not sticking around if you have a fucking wife. Is she going

to be back soon?

JOHN: No.

JAUQUELINE: Are you sure about that? Because this one time I got the shit kicked out of me when this guy's wife---

JOHN: She's dead. (*Stops undressing.*)

JAUQUELINE: Oh. Sorry.

JOHN: It's okay.

JAUQUELINE: How long has she been gone?

JOHN: Forever. One-hundred and sixty-three days.

JAUQUELINE: You've been counting the days?

JOHN: Couldn't think of anything better to do with them.

JAUQUELINE: What was she like?

JOHN: Why do you wanna know?

JAUQUELINE: I dunno. All I know is that you're paying me to sleep in your dead wife's bed with you and you obviously loved her enough not to try and fuck me. That counts for something.

JOHN: She loved to read. She was always reading something. You could stand right in front of her, talking to her, and she wouldn't look up or notice you until you touched her. I used to jump up behind her and scare her. Sometimes, she would skip class and take long lunches so we could make love on the kitchen counter. She...um...she hated it when I jingled the change in my pocket; drove her crazy. And she hated wearing shoes. She used to wear sandals, even in the winter and her feet were always cold. I would almost be asleep in bed and she would put them on me. It used to scare the shit out of me. I'd jump five feet in the air. She would just lie there, laughing at me. God, her laugh.

JAUQUELINE: Sounds beautiful.

JOHN: She was. I miss those cold feet.

JAUQUELINE: How did she die?

JOHN: Why do you care?

JAUQUELINE: Why are you getting defensive all of a sudden?

JOHN: Why are you so interested?

JAQUELINE: I'm just talking to you.

JOHN: I have therapists for that.

JAQUELINE: They seem to be doing a great job so far.

JOHN: They're professionals. They deal with people like me all the time.

JAQUELINE: So do I.

JOHN: She died slowly, alright. I just watched the heartbeat on the monitor get slower and slower...and slower. And then, it wasn't there at all. She was so quiet. No twitches or loud breathing. She looked...small. I just sat there for a while, not really knowing what to do; waiting for her to speak and tell me something. I thought I heard her a couple times. I think I do, some nights.

JAQUELINE: Cancer?

JOHN: Yeah. She was always cold, towards the end. I used to turn the thermostat all the way up and I would wake up dripping with sweat in the morning. She would be shaking, asking me if the heater was on. *(Beat)* Never mind. It doesn't matter. I'm sure you get sick of men's sobs stories.

JAQUELINE: Actually, you're the first one to say anything to me besides, "Tell me how big it is."

JOHN: Don't you ever get sick of that?

JAQUELINE: I get tired of telling them it is. Most of the time, it's not.

JOHN: Do you enjoy your job?

JAQUELINE: *(Sarcastically)* Oh, yeah. Every day. You should see some of the fat bastards I fuck. "Uh! Uh! Call me Daddy!" How could I be turned on by that? Most of them don't give a shit about me anyway, so why should I give a shit about them? They'd be more upset if someone stole their last cigarette than they would be if I turned up dead somewhere. Damn. I wish I had another cigarette.

JOHN: Have you ever thought about quitting?

JAQUELINE: Smoking?

JOHN: Turning tricks.

JAQUELINE: Oh. Yeah, I guess. Sometimes I think I was born for this.

JOHN: For being a prostitute.

JAQUELINE: Everyone's gotta be good at something. I mean, I've always known what

men want from me. I guess I was born to fuck good.

JOHN: Who was your first?

JAQUELINE: My first trick?

JOHN: The first man you slept with.

JAQUELINE: Are you getting off on this or something?

JOHN: No.

JAQUELINE: Then why the fuck did you ask that question?

JOHN: I didn't mean to upset you, I just wanted to know something about you.

JAQUELINE: I'm a prostitute. I fuck men for money. That's why I came here with you:
for money. The end. You wouldn't know shit about it anyway.

JOHN: I really didn't mean---

JAQUELINE: Just forget it, alright? *(Starts to gather things and leave.)*

JOHN: Where are you going?

JAQUELINE: Home; there's no job for me here.

JOHN: How do you know that?

JAQUELINE: You're paying me to sleep---just sleep---in bed with you? Why me?

There must be dozens of women who would be happy to go home with you for free, so why me?

JOHN: Because I was too embarrassed to ask anyone else to come back here and do this for me, alright? And maybe I thought you'd understand. I thought if I paid you enough you wouldn't care about what I asked from you. If you want to leave, I understand, I'm sure you're sick of hearing me talk. I'm just... I'm tired of talking to people who treat me like a case number and don't know dick about being lonely.

JAQUELINE: And you thought I'd know dick?

JOHN: You are a prostitute. *(Pause; she continues to put on her clothes and try to leave.)*

I'm sorry. God, look, please stay. I'm tired of going to sleep alone and waking up alone. *(Pause)* Will you please stay here the night?

JAQUELINE: *(Pause as she puts the t-shirt on again)* My stepfather.

JOHN: What about him?

JAQUELINE: Don't make me say it.

JOHN: (*Pause*) Oh Jesus.

JAQUELINE: I hate him.

JOHN: I can imagine.

JAQUELINE: No; you can't. (*Pause*) I hate him a little more every day.

JOHN: I'm sorry.

JAQUELINE: Yeah me too.

JOHN: How old were you?

JAQUELINE: Too young. (*Pause*) That's why I started. I thought "As long as I'm getting fucked by someone I don't like, I might as well get paid to do it." My first trick was when I was sixteen. He paid me three hundred dollars. I thought it was a fortune. God, can you believe that? Three hundred dollars won't get you shit. He just did his business and left. Seems like that's all any guy ever did with me. That's all my *stepfather* ever wanted to do with me. He was my first kiss, my first fuck. He's the only man I'll ever know. I don't know why I'm telling you this shit. (*Pause*) Maybe I'm just too tired to be someone else.

JOHN: I don't want to fuck you.

JAQUELINE: I know. You're probably the first guy I've ever met that I wouldn't mind fucking, either. What a waste.

JOHN: You look tired.

JAQUELINE: I am.

JOHN: Then let's sleep.

JAQUELINE: I don't think one night is going to help me. Besides, I don't think I can fall asleep now.

JOHN: Yeah. Me either.

JAQUELINE: When was the last time you slept good? You look like shit.

JOHN: One-hundred and sixty-four days ago. I didn't sleep the night she died. I just watched her because I knew that was it.

JAQUELINE: You don't sleep any more?

JOHN: Not really.

JAQUELINE: Why?

JOHN: There's no one in bed with me. It's amazing how your body can get so used to

having someone else there.

JAQUELINE: I wish I knew. I've never slept with a man before.

JOHN: Never?

JAQUELINE: They want me gone as soon as they're done. No one ever wanted me to stay with them.

JOHN: I do. *(Pause)* Do you ever feel invisible?

JAQUELINE: Yeah. People pretend not to see me, like I'll give them crabs if they look at me. Churches are the worst. They either judge and sentence me or try and save me.

JOHN: I haven't been to church in forever.

JAQUELINE: When was the last time you went?

JOHN: The day the doctor told me she was going to die.

JAQUELINE: What happened?

JOHN: Nothing. I mean, I knelt there, I bowed my head, but I felt ...nothing.

JAQUELINE: What a coincidence? The last time I was on my knees with my head bowed, I felt nothing.

JOHN: *(Laughing)* I miss talking with someone like this.

JAQUELINE: I don't know if I've ever talked with a man like this.

JOHN: You never talk with them after?

JAQUELINE: They don't want to know me, I don't want to know them. Conversation is more intimate than fucking, I guess.

JOHN: *(Pause)* May I kiss you? I won't do anything else. Just kiss you.

JAQUELINE: I'd like that. *(He kisses her.)* Why did you want me to wear this t-shirt?

JOHN: It was what she always wore to bed.

JAQUELINE: I'm not your wife.

JOHN: I know that. You think I don't know that?

JAQUELINE: No, I don't think you do.

JOHN: You probably think I'm completely twisted, don't you.

JAQUELINE: No. You just sound lonely for something you'll never have again.

(Pause) Why do you keep it in a plastic bag?

JOHN: It's the last thing that smells like her.

Jacqueline: If I wear it tonight, it won't smell like her in the morning. You know that, right? She'll be gone.

John: I know. I just needed one more night with her. (*A long pause; she folds the bag and puts it under the bed*)

Jacqueline: Would you hold me?

John: Why?

Jacqueline: Because I'm cold. (*He goes to her and holds her. Lights out.*)

END OF PLAY