

# WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?

## ACT ONE

### FUN AND GAMES

*Set in darkness. Crash against front door. Martha's laughter heard. Front door opens, lights are switched on. Martha enters, followed by George.*

MARTHA. Jesus ...

GEORGE. ... Shhhhhhhh ...

MARTHA. ... H. Christ ...

GEORGE. For God's sake, Martha, it's two o'clock in the ...

MARTHA. Oh, George!

GEORGE. Well, I'm *sorry*, but ...

MARTHA. What a cluck! What a cluck you are.

GEORGE. It's late, you know? Late.

MARTHA. (*Looks about the room. Imitates Bette Davis.*) What a dump. Hey, what's that from? "What a dump!"

GEORGE. How would I know what ...

MARTHA. Aw, come on! What's it from? *You* know ...

GEORGE. ... Martha ...

MARTHA. WHAT'S IT FROM, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE?

GEORGE. (*Wearily.*) What's what from?

MARTHA. I just told you; I just did it. "What a dump!" Hunh? What's that from?

GEORGE. I haven't the faintest idea what ...

MARTHA. Dumbbell! It's from some goddamn Bette Davis picture ... some goddamn Warner Brothers epic ...

GEORGE. *I can't remember all the pictures that ...*

MARTHA. Nobody's asking you to remember every goddamn Warner Brothers epic ... just one! One single little epic! Bette Davis gets peritonitis in the end ... she's got this big black fright wig she wears all through the picture and she gets peritonitis, and she's married to Joseph Cotten or something ...

GEORGE. ... *Somebody* ...

MARTHA. ... *somebody* ... and she wants to go to Chicago all the time, 'cause she's in love with that actor with the scar ... But she gets sick, and she sits down in front of her dressing table ...

GEORGE. What actor? What scar?

MARTHA. *I can't remember his name, for God's sake. What's the name of the picture?* I want to know what the name of the *picture* is. She sits down in front of her dressing table ... and she's got this peritonitis ... and she tries to put her lipstick on, but she can't ... and she gets it all over her face ... but she decides to go to Chicago anyway, and ...

GEORGE. *Chicago!* It's called *Chicago*.

MARTHA. Hunh? What ... what is?

GEORGE. The picture. It's called *Chicago* ...

MARTHA. Good grief! Don't you know *anything?* *Chicago* was a thirties musical, starring little Miss Alice Faye. Don't you know *anything?*

GEORGE. Well, that was probably before my *time*, but ...

MARTHA. Can it! Just cut that out! This picture ... Bette Davis comes home from a hard day at the grocery store ...

GEORGE. She works in a grocery store?

MARTHA. She's a housewife; she buys things ... and she comes home with the groceries, and she walks into the modest living room of the modest cottage modest Joseph Cotten has set her up in ...

GEORGE. Are they married?

MARTHA. (*Impatiently.*) Yes. They're married. To each other. Cluck! And she comes in, and she looks around, and she puts her groceries down, and she says, "What a dump!"

GEORGE. (*Pause.*) Oh.

MARTHA. (*Pause.*) She's discontent.

GEORGE. (*Pause.*) Oh.

MARTHA. (*Pause.*) Well, what's the name of the picture?

GEORGE. I really don't know, Martha ...

MARTHA. Well, think!

GEORGE. I'm tired, dear ... it's late ... and besides ...  
MARTHA. I don't know what you're so tired about ... you haven't *done* anything all day; you didn't have any classes or anything ...  
GEORGE. Well, I'm tired ... If your father didn't set up these goddamn Saturday night orgies all the time ...  
MARTHA. Well, that's too bad about you, George ...  
GEORGE. (*Grumbling.*) Well, that's how it is, anyway.  
MARTHA. You didn't *do* anything; you never *do* anything; you never *mix*. You just sit around and *talk*.  
GEORGE. What do you want me to do? Do you want me to act like you? Do you want me to go around all night *braying* at everybody, the way you do?  
MARTHA. (*Braying.*) I DON'T BRAY!  
GEORGE. (*Softly.*) All right ... you don't bray.  
MARTHA. (*Hurt.*) I do not *bray*.  
GEORGE. All right. I said you didn't *bray*.  
MARTHA. (*Pouting.*) Make me a drink.  
GEORGE. What?  
MARTHA. (*Still softly.*) I said, make me a drink.  
GEORGE. (*Moving to the portable bar.*) Well, I don't suppose a nightcap'd kill either one of us ...  
MARTHA. A nightcap? Are you kidding? We've got guests.  
GEORGE. (*Disbelieving.*) We've got what?  
MARTHA. Guests. GUESTS.  
GEORGE. GUESTS!  
MARTHA. Yes ... guests ... people ... We've got guests coming over.  
GEORGE. When?  
MARTHA. NOW!  
GEORGE. Good Lord, Martha ... do you know what time it ... *Who's* coming over?  
MARTHA. What's-their-name.  
GEORGE. Who?  
MARTHA. WHAT'S-THEIR-NAME!  
GEORGE. Who what's-their-name?  
MARTHA. I don't know what their name is, George ... You met them tonight ... they're new ... he's in the math department, or something ...  
GEORGE. Who ... who are these people?  
MARTHA. You met them tonight, George.  
GEORGE. I don't remember meeting anyone tonight ...

MARTHA. Well you did ... Will you give me my drink, please ... He's in the math department ... about thirty, blond, and ...

GEORGE. ... and good-looking ...

MARTHA. Yes ... and good-looking ...

GEORGE. It figures.

MARTHA. ... and his wife's a mousey little type, without any hips, or anything.

GEORGE. (*Vaguely.*) Oh.

MARTHA. You remember them now?

GEORGE. Yes, I guess so, Martha ... But why in God's name are they coming over here now?

MARTHA. (*In a so-there voice.*) Because Daddy said we should be nice to them, that's why.

GEORGE. (*Defeated.*) Oh, Lord.

MARTHA. May I have my drink, please? Daddy said we should be nice to them. Thank you.

GEORGE. But why now? It's after two o'clock in the morning, and ...

MARTHA. Because Daddy said we should be nice to them!

GEORGE. Yes. But I'm sure your father didn't mean we were supposed to stay up all *night* with these people. I mean, we could have them over some Sunday or something ...

MARTHA. Well, never mind ... Besides, it *is* Sunday. Very early Sunday.

GEORGE. I mean ... it's ridiculous ...

MARTHA. Well, it's *done!*

GEORGE. (*Resigned and exasperated.*) All right. Well ... where are they? If we've got guests where are they?

MARTHA. They'll be here soon.

GEORGE. What did they do ... go home and get some sleep first, or something?

MARTHA. They'll *be* here!

GEORGE. I wish you'd *tell* me about something sometime ... I wish you'd stop *springing* things on me all the time.

MARTHA. I don't *spring* things on you all the time.

GEORGE. Yes, you do ... you really do ... you're always *springing* things on me.

MARTHA. (*Friendly-patronizing.*) Oh, George!

GEORGE. Always.

MARTHA. Poor Georgie-Porgie, put-upon-pie, (*As he sulks.*) Awwwww ... what are you doing? Are you sulking? Hunh? Let

me see ... are you sulking? Is that what you're doing?

GEORGE. (*Very quietly.*) Never mind, Martha ...

MARTHA. AWWWWWWWWWW!

GEORGE. Just don't bother yourself ...

MARTHA. AWWWWWWWWWW! (*No reaction.*) Hey! (*No reaction.*) HEY! (*George looks at her, put-upon.*) Hey. (*She sings.*)

Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf,

Virginia Woolf,

Virginia Woolf ...

Ha, ha, ha, HA! (*No reaction.*) What's the matter ... didn't you think that was funny? Hunh? (*Defiantly.*) I thought it was a scream ... a real scream. You didn't like it, hunh?

GEORGE. It was all right, Martha ...

MARTHA. You laughed your head off when you heard it at the party.

GEORGE. I smiled. I didn't laugh my head off ... I smiled, you know? ... it was all right.

MARTHA. (*Gazing into her drink.*) You laughed your goddamn head off.

GEORGE. It was all right ...

MARTHA. (*Ugly.*) It was a scream!

GEORGE. (*Patiently.*) It was very funny; yes.

MARTHA. (*After a moment's consideration.*) You make me puke!

GEORGE. What?

MARTHA. Uh ... you make me puke!

GEORGE. (*Thinks about it ... then ...*) That wasn't a very nice thing to say, Martha.

MARTHA. That wasn't *what*?

GEORGE. ... a very nice thing to say.

MARTHA. I like your anger. I think that's what I like about you most ... your anger. You're such a ... such a simp! You don't even have the ... the what? ...

GEORGE. ... guts? ...

MARTHA. PHRASEMAKER! (*Pause ... then they both laugh.*)

Hey, put some more ice in my drink, will you? You never put any ice in my drink. Why is that, hunh?

GEORGE. (*Takes her drink.*) I always put ice in your drink. You eat it, that's all. It's that habit you have ... chewing your ice cubes ... like a cocker spaniel. You'll crack your big teeth.

MARTHA. THEY'RE MY BIG TEETH!

GEORGE. Some of them ... some of them.

MARTHA. I've got more teeth than you've got.

GEORGE. Two more.

MARTHA. Well, two more's a lot more.

GEORGE. I suppose it is. I suppose it's pretty remarkable ... considering how old you are.

MARTHA. YOU CUT THAT OUT! (*Pause.*) You're not so young yourself.

GEORGE. (*With boyish pleasure, a chant.*) I'm six years younger than you are ... I always have been and I always will be.

MARTHA. (*Glumly.*) Well ... you're going bald.

GEORGE. So are you. (*Pause ... they both laugh.*) Hello, honey.

MARTHA. Hello. C'mon over here and give your mommy a big sloppy kiss.

GEORGE. ... oh, now ...

MARTHA. I WANT A BIG SLOPPY KISS!

GEORGE. (*Preoccupied.*) I don't *want* to kiss you, Martha. Where *are* these people? Where are these *people* you invited over?

MARTHA. They stayed on to talk to Daddy ... They'll be here ... *Why* don't you want to kiss me?

GEORGE. (*Too matter-of-fact.*) Well, dear, if I kissed you I'd get all excited ... I'd get beside myself, and I'd take you, by force, right here on the living room rug, and then our little guests would walk in, and ... well, just think what your father would say about *that*.

MARTHA. You pig!

GEORGE. (*Haughtily.*) Oink! Oink!

MARTHA. Ha, ha, ha, HA! Make me another drink ... lover.

GEORGE. (*Taking her glass.*) My God, you can swill it down, can't you?

MARTHA. (*Imitating a tiny child.*) I'm firsty.

GEORGE. Jesus!

MARTHA. (*Swinging around.*) Look, sweetheart, I can drink you under any goddamn table you want ... so don't worry about me!

GEORGE. Martha, I gave you the prize years ago ... There isn't an abomination award going that you ...

MARTHA. I swear ... if you existed I'd divorce you ...

GEORGE. Well, just stay on your feet, that's all ... These people are your guests, you know, and ...

MARTHA. I can't even see you ... I haven't been able to see you for years ...

GEORGE. ... if you pass out, or throw up, or something ...

MARTHA. ... I mean, you're a blank, a cipher ...

GEORGE. ... and try to keep your clothes on, too. There aren't many more sickening sights than you with a couple of drinks in you and your skirt up over your head, you know ...

MARTHA. ... a zero ...

GEORGE. ... your heads, I should say ... (*The front doorbell chimes.*)

MARTHA. Party! Party!

GEORGE. (*Murderously.*) I'm really looking forward to this, Martha ...

MARTHA. (*Same.*) Go answer the door.

GEORGE. (*Not moving.*) You answer it.

MARTHA. Get to that door, you. (*He does not move.*) I'll fix you, you ...

GEORGE. (*Fake-spits.*) ... to you ... (*Door chime again.*)

MARTHA. (*Shouting ... to the door.*) C'MON IN! (*To George, between her teeth.*) I said, get over there!

GEORGE. (*Moves a little toward the door, smiling slightly.*) All right, love ... whatever love wants. (*Moving toward the door.*) Isn't it nice the way some people have manners, though, even in this day and age? Isn't it nice that some people won't come breaking into other people's houses even if they *do* hear some subhuman monster yowling at 'em from inside...?

MARTHA. FUCK YOU! (*Simultaneously with Martha's last remark, George flings open the front door. Honey and Nick are framed in the entrance. There is a brief silence, then ...*)

GEORGE. (*Ostensibly a pleased recognition of Honey and Nick, but really satisfaction at having Martha's explosion overheard.*) Ahhhhhh-hhhhhh!

MARTHA. (*A little too loud ... to cover.*) HI! Hi, there ... c'mon in!

HONEY and NICK. (*Ad lib.*) Hello, here we are ... hi ... (*Etc.*)

GEORGE. (*Very matter-of-factly.*) You must be our little guests.

MARTHA. Ha, ha, ha, HA! Just ignore old sour-puss over there. C'mon in, kids ... give your coats and stuff to sour-puss.

NICK. (*Without expression.*) Well, now, perhaps we shouldn't have come ...

HONEY. Yes ... it *is* late, and ...

MARTHA. Late! Are you kidding? Throw your stuff down anywhere and c'mon in.

GEORGE. (*Vaguely ... walking away.*) Anywhere ... furniture, floor ... doesn't make any difference around this place.

NICK. (*To Honey.*) I told you we shouldn't have come.

MARTHA. (*Stentorian.*) I said c'mon in! Now c'mon!