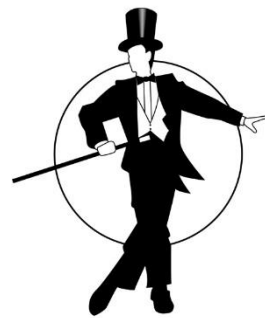


Action and Reaction

Joël Henning Doty



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ACTION AND REACTION

By Joël Henning Doty

CAST

MARION: Late fifties to early sixties, smartly dressed, competent, caring, engaged in life.

PHILIP: Early sixties, Marion's husband of forty years, set in his ways, less likely to care about his appearance, loves Marion but takes her for granted.

Place

Philip and Marion's suburban living room.

Time

The present. Night.

ACTION AND REACTION

SETTING: *A modest and comfortable suburban living room with a sofa, chair, cabinet, and coat rack; an entrance to the outside and an entrance to the kitchen/interior of the house.*

AT RISE: *The room is dark. There is a loud BANG from a door being swung open so hard it hits the wall. Philip storms in, throws his coat on the sofa, sits on the chair and stews. Marion calmly enters and turns on the light switch.*

MARION: Why are you so angry? *(she hangs up her coat)*

PHILIP: What in God's name were you thinking?

MARION: I don't know.

PHILIP: People don't do that. *(he searches the cabinet)* Where's the scotch? Didn't we have scotch in here?

MARION: The one from five Christmases ago?

(Philip pulls out a bottle and wipes it off.)

MARION: It will make you sick. *(Philip ignores her and heads off to the kitchen)* What are you doing?

(Philip returns quickly with a 7-Up bottle and makes a drink.)

MARION: Things don't last forever.

(Philip takes a long swig. He pours another.)

MARION: I'll have some 7-Up. *(Philip obliges)*

PHILIP: It wasn't our business, Marion.

MARION: I was afraid he was going to be killed.

PHILIP: People get killed when they interfere.

MARION: Well, we didn't.

PHILIP: God, I'm still shaking. What were you thinking?

MARION: I don't know. You can't just sit in a car watching three men beat up another without doing something.

PHILIP: You call the police.

MARION: He looked so young.

PHILIP: They don't recruit old gang members. Or maybe they're just dead before they're twenty-five.

MARION: We're okay.

PHILIP: You could have killed the both of us. Don't ever do anything like that again.

MARION: Don't yell at me.

(Philip goes for a scotch refill)

PHILIP: You've never done anything crazy like that before.

MARION: I told you. I wasn't thinking.

PHILIP: The police said you were stupid.

MARION: They didn't say that exactly.

PHILIP: They couldn't believe what you did.

MARION: They said I saved his life.

PHILIP: And you were lucky you didn't lose yours.

MARION: Let's go to bed.

PHILIP: I'm too worked up.

MARION: (*matter-of-fact*) Why are you so worked up? You didn't do anything.

PHILIP: I watched my wife get out of a car in a neighborhood we shouldn't have been in—

MARION: Thanks to your GPS system.

PHILIP: Thanks to that crazy lecture series you signed us up for.

MARION: You agreed. I thought you were enjoying—

PHILIP: Get out of a car, run up to three hoodlums who probably had automatic guns ready to blast her head off—

MARION: They were using fists.

PHILIP: —and yell, STOP.

MARION: Well, they did.

PHILIP: They heard the police sirens.

MARION: Yes. But they stopped.

PHILIP: In shock.

MARION: I couldn't think of anything else to say.

PHILIP: When that big thug turned, my life flashed before my eyes. I thought he was going to smash the window in and beat me to a pulp. I thought I was going to have a heart attack.

MARION: I'm sorry. It's over now.

PHILIP: What were you thinking?

MARION: Would you quit? It was instinct or something.

PHILIP: A normal person doesn't do these kinds of things.

MARION: I'm not normal?

PHILIP: You're a wife, a mother, a new grandmother for heaven's sake. You bake cookies. I still can't believe it.

MARION: I had to take some action.

PHILIP: The action we take is when we write checks out every year to the social service agencies.

MARION: He was right outside my door. His eyes were so bloody he could barely see.

PHILIP: You're supposed to turn around and call the professionals we pay taxes for.

(Marion adds scotch to her drink; takes a long swallow)

MARION: All right, Philip. I see your point.

PHILIP: Good. Let's go to bed.

MARION: I see your point. I just don't agree with it. I'd do the same thing again.

PHILIP: You'd put your life - our life - everything we have - on the line again for some loser who probably deserved whatever his crony hoodlums were dishing out?

MARION: You're creating something out of nothing.

PHILIP: Would you stop a robbery in progress?

MARION: Of course not.

PHILIP: Offer yourself up for a kidnap trade?

MARION: Go to bed. Now you're getting drunk.

PHILIP: It was a stupid, stupid thing to do.

MARION: Stop saying that.

PHILIP: What would you call it then?

MARION: Reacting. Someone needed help.

PHILIP: You help people in need at the church or the soup kitchen - or people you know - not some thug in the middle of the street.

MARION: Sometimes something happens, and you just have to act.

PHILIP: No, you don't.

MARION: Why didn't you like the lecture?

PHILIP: I didn't say I didn't like it.

MARION: Yes, you did.

PHILIP: All that intellectual hocus-pocus. It's a waste of money.

MARION: You didn't like any of them?

PHILIP: It's not about real life.

MARION: It makes you think.

PHILIP: Apparently not about life and death.

MARION: It was the best thing I've done in a long time.

PHILIP: Going to the lecture?

MARION: Getting out of the car.

END OF FREEVIEW

You'll want to read and perform this show!