

# Coconut Crème Pie

John Clifford





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## COCONUT CRÈME PIE

By

John Clifford

*(Production note: The content of the pie-box need not be seen by the audience, so a real crème pie is not totally necessary.)*

*(Stage can be bare except for one small table down front. Doorbell Rings SHE Enters.)*

**SHE:** Come in, come in!

*(to her surprise, HE enters, carrying a small box)*

Oh. I thought it was my grandson! Uh—yes?

**HE:** Mary Topinski?

**SHE:** No. Mary Jones.

**HE:** I've been looking all over for your address.

**SHE:** Is it missing? It was on the house, right out there beside the door.

**HE:** It still is, I just couldn't find it. *(shows HER the label on box)* This is your address on here isn't it?

**SHE:** *(reads box)* Yes, that's my address.

**HE:** Then this is for you.

**SHE:** But you said another name.

**HE:** No, you said another name.

**SHE:** I said Mary Jones.

**HE:** Yeah, see? I said Mary Topinski.

**SHE:** But you're wrong.

**HE:** Oh, yeah? *(shows HER the box label)* What does that say?

**SHE:** *(reads)* Mary Topinski. You're right!...No, I mean – that's my address, but it should say Mary Jones.

**HE:** *(setting box on table)* Well, I guess you know you're own name.

**SHE:** I'm absent-minded, but I do know that much.

*(HE pencil-erases quickly and rewrites the label. Then HE shows HER the altered name.)*

**HE:** Mary Jones. Right?

**SHE:** Right.

**HE:** This is for you.

**SHE:** What is it?

**HE:** It's a pie. It's from Peter's Pie Pantry.

**SHE:** Who is Peter?

**HE:** Let's don't get into names again. It's Peter's pie shop. He makes pies.

**SHE:** Why is he sending one to me?

**HE:** You ordered it.

**SHE:** I thought a Mary Topinski ordered it.

**HE:** You are absent-minded. You did. Mary Jones. *(HE shows HER the label)* See?

**SHE:** Oh, yeah...How much is it?

**HE:** Twenty-five dollars.

**SHE:** (*shocked*) Twenty-five dollars! I never paid twenty-five dollars for a pie in my life! I bake pies.

**HE:** Are you one of those who bake for Peter?

**SHE:** No!

**HE:** (*relieved*) I thought this might be a return address.

**SHE:** (*looks at box*) The return address is up in the corner. This in the middle is my address.

**HE:** And that's where I am—right?

**SHE:** Right...I guess so...What kind of pie is it?

**HE:** Coconut Crème, super meringue.

**SHE:** Oh no — too sweet. I can't eat all that sugar anymore.

**HE:** Me either. Indigestion.

**SHE:** Cholesterol...Must be a very fancy pie, but you'll have to take it back.

**HE:** (*steps away, alarmed*) I can't!

**SHE:** I can't eat it. You have to return it.

**HE:** Please — I can't!

**SHE:** Why can't you?

**HE:** Peter is my son-in-law. He's my daughter's second husband — and he's not as good as the first one — and he resents me for that.

**SHE:** Why should he resent you?

**HE:** (*embarrassed*) At their wedding reception, I had too much to drink. And I said, loudly, that I drank too much because my daughter married a jackass...And he has resented me ever since.

**SHE:** (*wry sarcasm*) For a little thing like that.

**HE:** Now – my daughter talked him into giving me this delivery job. He claims that I'm too old and too forgetful to do even this.

**SHE:** Oh, we're all forgetful.

**HE:** Yes, but see: Peter thinks I can't keep anything straight. And this is my very first delivery. I can't go back and tell him I messed it up. I can't do that.

**SHE:** I see your problem. But I didn't order this coconut crème pie.

**HE:** Then who did?

**SHE:** I don't know.

**HE:** Somebody phoned and gave this address.

**SHE:** Who took the order over the phone?

**HE:** I did.

**SHE:** That might've been a mistake. Did you write down the address right away?

**HE:** I couldn't, the pie wasn't in the box yet.

**SHE:** You should've written a note.

**HE:** To whom?

**SHE:** You could've written to yourself.

**HE:** To myself?

**SHE:** Yes.

**HE:** What would I say?

**SHE:** (*losing track*) I don't know!...I've forgotten what we were talking about.

**HE:** About me and Peter.

**SHE:** Oh yes...Do you have to work? (*carefully*) What does your wife think about all this?

**HE:** Why do women always ask what the wife thinks? I'm a widower.

**SHE:** (*suddenly seeing him in a new light*) Oh? I'm a widow!...Uh, I don't know why we ask— making conversation I suppose. But about your problem: I understand why you need to find work. It can be tough to make ends meet these days.

**HE:** I don't *need* to work. I'm pretty well fixed. But I need to keep busy.

**SHE:** (*more supportive now*) Yes, I can see that. I understand. You need to get out and about, add interest to your life, meet someone new — (*quickly*) new people I mean; I don't mean someone, I mean like new people.

**HE:** (*puffing up*) A man has to do something.

**SHE:** Of course. And you look active. Like you're very healthy.

**HE:** I used to be more so. Every day I'd use the barbells, my treadmill and my rowing machine...I just got outta the habit. Let myself get old.

**SHE:** We're only as old as we let ourselves be. Do you still have your equipment?

**HE:** Is that a personal question?

**SHE:** Oh my...(up) You know, maybe I should take the pie!...My quilting group is meeting here this afternoon. I've made some tarts—but, y'know, some of those women stuff themselves like trophy swordfish...I'll take it, I'll take the pie! So that's settled... Would you like a cup of coffee?



**HE:** Coffee? Yeah, I guess.

**SHE:** You can try one of my raspberry tarts and my friends will try your coconut crème pie...I'll have to write you a check, is that okay?

**HE:** Yeah...but probably you should show me some identity.

**SHE:** *(points to box label, brightly)* Sure! That's my name right there.

**HE:** *(looks)* Okay!

*(SHE goes off to write the check. Alone, HE rubs his hands, happy with the outcome. HE looks around a bit, then calls out cheerfully)*

Shall I bring the pie into the kitchen?

*(Getting no answer, HE scoops the box up lightly, starts off— and drops the box face-down on the floor! HE reacts in horror...awkwardly gets the box picked up and flips it upright on the table. HE keeps looking to see if SHE is coming...can't bring HIMSELF to raise the box lid...then does so slowly—reacts! and quickly closes it. It's awful!...Frantic, HE checks on HER again – goes through a calming routine)*

Be calm, be calm, very calm. I can fix it.

*(HE lifts open the box lid, puts HIS hands inside, and makes an apparent effort to reshape a mangled pie. When HE brings HIS hands out, one is conspicuously smeared with what looks like meringue.)*

Ohh gad!

**SHE:** *(calls from just off-stage)* I'll be out there in a second!

*(HER voice completely panics him! HE has just moments to wipe his hand— can't find anything—desperately steps out of one shoe, yanks off a sock, wipes HIS hand with it, discards sock into pie box, closes lid, steps away—and realizes HE has made matters worse! HE starts to flee, runs back to get his other shoe, bends to pick it up but jumps erect at sound of HER voice!)*

**SHE:** *(enters waving check)* Found it! It's done. Took me awhile to find where I left my checkbook. Do you keep losing things? *(then SHE stares at HIS bare foot)* I see you do.

**HE:** *(mock surprise)* Oh, my shoe must have fallen off. *(HE quickly puts his shoe on over bare foot)*

**SHE:** And that's not all. You left off one of your—never mind, none of my business. *(up)* Actually, you've got me looking forward to coconut crème pie!

**HE:** *(backing away)* I've gotta go.

**SHE:** No coffee?

**HE:** Thanks, I really must go.

**SHE:** Do you have a lot more pies to deliver?

**HE:** No—this was a test run. I think I flunked. I think I'm too old to go after this job.

*(SHE, then HE, get increasingly irritated)*

**SHE:** Stop it with that age stuff. Go after what you want, that's my motto. If I remember what it is, I go after it.

**HE:** Well good luck, whatever you're after.

**SHE:** We could have that cup of coffee and discuss it.

**HE:** I don't think you understand...

**SHE:** I don't think you understand! *(hands check to HIM)* Here.

**HE:** *(accepts check)* Sorry.

*(HE starts to leave ... stops, slumps...reluctantly comes back and drops the check on the table)*

I can't take your money.

**SHE:** Why not?

**HE:** (*falsely up*) I forgot to tell you. You won the contest! Congratulations.

**SHE:** I didn't enter a contest.

**HE:** You don't have to, every tenth pie I deliver is free.

**SHE:** (*stepping up to pie the box*) You said this was your first delivery!

**HE:** Oh for cry-eye, give me the pie back!

**SHE:** No! I may eat the whole thing myself!

*(SHE energetically opens the lid—stops—with no change of expression she stares down at what SHE sees. Slowly SHE raises her head and stares toward audience, speechless...looks down one more time...and gingerly closes the lid. Then...)*

You call that a twenty-five dollar pie? (*fast second look and close lid*)... And it's not even a pair of socks!

**HE:** (*softly*) It was an accident.

**SHE:** (*up, fiery*) Accident? (*fast*) You took off your shoe, removed the sock, opened the box, smashed the pie, and stuffed the sock into it. Then you closed the lid so I wouldn't see it until I served it to my sewing group! (*pause*) Do you dislike me for some reason?

**HE:** (*unhunching from the tirade*) No. I like you.

**SHE:** (*bitter*) Then try to explain this.

**HE:** (*gropes helplessly...then, gently, building up*) Do you remember when you were a child...and you did something you shouldn't have, on a momentary impulse? Then, hours later, you'd be standing, looking up at your parents, and they would be shouting: "How could you do such a thing! What could you possibly have been thinking?" ...And all you could do was just stand there. There was no way you could recreate the events and the original impulse, and come up with a satisfactory answer.

*(SHE remains transfixed for another beat, then)*

**SHE:** (*strongly up*) That's a surprisingly good explanation!...I had that experience... Okay...Okay, but I'm still not paying for any such pie as this.

(*may push pie across table closer to HIM*)

**HE:** Thank you.

**SHE:** What will you say when you return that to Peter?

**HE:** I won't. I'll dump it in the garbage, pay for it myself, and tell Peter you thought it was delicious.

**SHE:** (*kindly*) No. Tell him I'll order another one next week.

**HE:** You are nice. But I'm going to tell him I quit.

**SHE:** Oh don't give up. You're entitled to an off day.

**HE:** I seem to have a lot of them.

**SHE:** Don't we all. Maybe it's time we learned to just go with the flow

**HE:** ...just go with the flow.

**SHE:** If not now, when?

**HE:** (*gestures agreement*) No argument.

(*SHE picks up pie box and puts it in HIS hands*)

**SHE:** Now—how about that cup of coffee and one of my own, special, sockless, raspberry tarts?

**HE:** That sounds good.

(*as they start off, he looks at one of his shift sleeves*)

Do you have a washing machine?

**SHE:** Yes, but you're not going to put that pie in it!

*(they exit)*

**CURTAIN**