

# Bending The Illusion

A play in one scene

By

Mary Jane Blank

Cast of Characters

JOHN

MARY

THE ACTOR

Time: now

Place: the theater

*(The stage is set with two rows of chairs on one side, and a raised platform across from them. The lights come up and JOHN and MARY enter. They side step through the second row, mumbling to each other.)*

MARY *(quietly)*

Oh these must be our seats.

JOHN

Good, I think it's gonna start soon.

*(The lights come down. A very brief welcome recording plays. Lights come up on the platform. The ACTOR enters playing to MARY and JOHN.)*

THE ACTOR

Good evening folks. And welcome to the Theatre. It can be a transformative experience when executed properly. It simultaneously connects us to the present and the past. The latter invoked through our reinterpretations of the classics. The former is connecting us right now. You and me. You are sitting in a chair, watching an actor perform. You and I are in the same room. Bound only by rules of social conduct and expectation.

*(THE ACTOR makes eye contact with MARY)*

THE ACTOR *(cont.)*

What's stopping you; miss, from coming onto this stage? *(beat)*  
Or from leaving the building entirely?

MARY *(to JOHN)*

Is he talking to me?

JOHN *(to MARY)*

Maybe it's one of those interactive pieces.

THE ACTOR

What's stopping me, madam, from jumping off this stage, taking a bottle of water, and pouring it on your head?

MARY *(To THE ACTOR)*

No thank you. I'm not interested. Please thank you goodbye.

THE ACTOR

It's the unwritten, unspoken social contract of the medium that keeps me on the stage, and you in your seat. It's theatre's

THE ACTOR (*cont.*)

greatest strength and greatest weakness. Anything, truly, could happen. But it doesn't. The spontaneity is an illusion. I am speaking from a script. And as predictable as the ending is to me, your behavior is to you. That fine edge, between genius and disaster is a line we walk each night in the theatre. And it is a fine line indeed. Each person added to the equation adds greater chance for glorious success or dismal failure. The cost of which is one ruined evening. A paltry sum for the chance to witness true ephemeral brilliance. The chance that the stars align and you have a truly transformative experience.

JOHN (*to MARY*)

I don't understand a word of this. Do you?

MARY (*to JOHN*)

Not one bit. It sounds like a bunch of meta-theatre nonsense. Let's get out of here. I've seen enough.

*(JOHN and MARY stand up and start to scoot out of the aisle while THE ACTOR continues. When they reach the end MARY interrupts THE ACTOR)*

MARY

Hey!

THE ACTOR (*turning to MARY*)

Yes?

MARY

Leave the theory in the classroom, loser!

*(MARY and JOHN exit. THE ACTOR deflates. He sits on the edge of the platform dejected. He turns to the remaining audience members.)*

THE ACTOR

Why does this keep happening?

*(Whacky music plays as the lights fade out.)*

-END