

Hourglass
by
Marshall Ryan Maresca

JUDY
MARION
RANDALL
HOWARD
CAROLINE

(Lights come up on a sitting room of an old house. The room has a simple elegance, with more than a couple remnants from the 1920's: an old radio, record player, etc.

*Sitting in a chair, sleepily, is **MARION**, a woman over 100 years old.*

***JUDY**, a woman in her thirties (**MARION'S** great-granddaughter) comes in, straightening up a few things.)*

MARION: Leave that alone, dear.

JUDY: Oh, Nana! I thought you were sleeping.

MARION: Dozing, dear. I hardly ever sleep.

JUDY: I just thought I'd straighten up a few things, maybe take a few of these old things...

MARION: I am one these old things, Judy.

JUDY: I didn't mean that, Nana.

MARION: My husband, God rest, knew well enough not to meddle with my things.

JUDY: I'm not meddling, I'm just...

MARION: ~~Just nothing, is what you're doing.~~

JUDY: Are you cold, Nana? Do you need a blanket? Or a cup of tea?

MARION: I'm fine. I'll take a bit of scotch, though.

JUDY: Nana, you know at your age...

MARION: I know perfectly well my age, young lady, it's one hundred... and... and...

JUDY: Seven.

MARION: Exactly. And drinking scotch has gotten me through ninety of those years, it won't hurt me now.

JUDY: You really should think about...

MARION: All I do is sit and think...

JUDY: Nana, please!

MARION: Your great-grandfather always tried to stop me from drinking, you know, but it didn't work with him either.

JUDY: Fine, fine. Just...

(The sound of boys laughing and playing is heard outside)

JUDY: One second...

(She goes out the door)

JUDY: *(As she goes)* Boys, you can't be making such a commotion out here! Nana Marion...

MARION: Let them be!

(Slowly, with a lot of difficulty, Marion gets up from the chair and looks around the room.)

MARION: Always kept a bottle hidden in here somewhere...

(As she looks, she half-hums, half sings.)

MARION: Da-da dum-di-dum And still he says... he loves no one but me.

(Judy comes back in, carrying a dirty hourglass.)

JUDY: It's not in here.

MARION: What's not?

JUDY: The scotch.

MARION: Well, go and get it and... what's that?

JUDY: The boys found it. I took it from them.

MARION: Found it? Where... where did they ever find—

JUDY: They said they dug it up in the yard. I'm sure they were just...

MARION: Dug it up? It was buried?

JUDY: I'm going to put it with...

MARION: No!

JUDY: No what?

MARION: Leave it here. I...

JUDY: Nana, it's filthy.

MARION: Well, of course it is. It was buried in the dirt.

JUDY: Why would it be...

MARION: Because my dear husband buried it, you fool.

JUDY: Why on earth would Great-Granddad do that?

MARION: I don't know. My memory is as sharp as a wet sponge.

JUDY: Well, it's ridiculous. I'm going to clean it and—

MARION: Leave it on the blasted table, Judy, and get me a drink!

JUDY: Nana!

MARION: I'm... I'm sorry, dear. Just... leave it here. All right?

JUDY: All right, Nana. *(Places the hourglass on the table.)* But I'm coming back with a chamomile tea, you understand?

MARION: Fine, dear, fine.

(Judy leaves. Marion goes over to the hourglass. Slowly, almost fearfully, she turns the hourglass over. Lights change. The radio comes to life, quietly playing jazz. Marion changes from being an old woman to a twenty-three year-old.)

(From off-stage, Caroline calls)

CAROLINE: Marion? Where are you hiding?

MARION: Here!

(CAROLINE, also a young woman, dressed stylishly for 1923, enters the room.)

CAROLINE: Marion, what are you doing?

MARION: Randall's father keeps a bottle of scotch hidden away here somewhere.

CAROLINE: *(In mock outrage)* Why, Marion, alcohol? What would your husband say to such lawlessness?

MARION: He'd say to start pouring.

CAROLINE: The boys will be dreadfully upset if we don't invite them.

MARION: Then we must.

CAROLINE: I suppose so. Did you find it?

MARION: I found it!

CAROLINE: *(calling out the door)* Howard, Randall, get in here!

(Howard and Randall, two handsome young men, also in stylish 1920s garb, come into the room.)

HOWARD: *(In mock outrage)* Why, Marion, alcohol? What would your husband say?

RANDALL: Start pouring. *(comes over and kisses Marion.)*

MARION: Has your father finally gone to bed, Randall?

RANDALL: Finally. I thought he never would. What time is it?

CAROLINE: Almost one a.m.

HOWARD: The first time, at least.

MARION: The first time?

CAROLINE: Howard, dear, what ever do you mean?

HOWARD: Well, tonight daylight savings time comes to an end.

RANDALL: Oh, that.

CAROLINE: Is that the messing with the clocks that you were on about before?

MARION: Wait, what?

CAROLINE: The clocks change, or the time changes, or something dreadfully boring. Will you just pour, Marion?

(Marion pours scotches for everyone.)

MARION: I don't understand.

RANDALL: Neither do I, sweetheart. Howard, could you try and explain it? We change the time?

HOWARD: All right, back in the spring, we lost an hour, setting our clocks ahead. Tonight, we get it back.

MARION: How do we get it back?

HOWARD: At two o'clock, the clocks officially get set back an hour. So it'll be one o'clock again.

CAROLINE: Boring.

MARION: No it isn't.

CAROLINE: How is it not boring?

RANDALL: You have an impish look, darling.

MARION: Because... if we have the one o'clock hour, and then set the clocks back, and have that hour again, then it's like the first hour didn't happen.

HOWARD: No, it doesn't work that way.

CAROLINE: Wait, I think I get you. If the hour didn't happen, then....

MARION: Anything we do during that hour didn't happen.

RANDALL: Anything?

MARION: Anything.

HOWARD: As in, "As I was asleep at one o'clock, I couldn't possibly have been drinking your scotch at that hour."

CAROLINE: Scandalous! I adore this idea. 'I swear, I was not skinny dipping at one a.m. I went to bed at one a.m.'

RANDALL: Your wife, dear Howard, is quite the spitfire.

HOWARD: I'll say.

CAROLINE: To the pond, then?

MARION: Wait, wait!

HOWARD: Wait?

RANDALL: We do only have an hour, dear.

CAROLINE: Or are you all talk?

MARION: No, it's not that...

RANDALL: Then what, dear?

MARION: Randall, dear... you remember what we talked about? Our problem?

HOWARD: Problem? What's up, old boy?

RANDALL: Marion, dear, is this the time or place?

MARION: I think so.

CAROLINE: What is it? We'll help you, however we can.

MARION: I know. You two are our dearest friends, and... Randall, I think this is our best choice.

RANDALL: I'm not sure I agree, my love, but... if this is what you want.

CAROLINE: Marion, dear, you are killing me with the drama here.

MARION: I want a child. And we can't have one.

RANDALL: More to the point, I can't have one. Ill-placed shrapnel in the war.

CAROLINE: I didn't need to know that much.

MARION: And we want... your help. Howard's help, in particular.

HOWARD: My help? You mean...

CAROLINE: Dear, those DH Lawrence books are going to your head.

RANDALL: Look, we know this is rather unorthodox.

HOWARD: I'd say so.

RANDALL: I can't say the idea thrills me, but Marion...

MARION: I want this. Please. Caroline, tell me what you think.

(The room is quiet, all eyes on Caroline. She stands up, walks across the room, and takes a long, slow drink of her scotch.)

CAROLINE: I think... I think it's a gloriously decadent and modern idea. But I insist we all be a part of this.

HOWARD: Really, dear, I think...

CAROLINE: All or nothing, love. If we're having an hour that doesn't exist, I get to be decadent as well. *(She pointedly flips the hourglass over)* One hour.

(Now the radio starts playing Bessie Smith, "Any Woman's Blues")

HOWARD: So it goes, then.

MARION: Thank you. *(She stands up,)*

~~**RANDALL:** Now, dear friends, should this work, it goes without saying that this must be a complete secret. If my father got wind, for example...~~

~~**HOWARD:** Mum's the word, chap.~~

~~**CAROLINE:** I was asleep at one o'clock.~~

~~**MARION:** We never speak of it again.~~

~~**RANDALL:** Right.~~

~~**MARION:** *Never.*~~

~~**CAROLINE:** Yes, of course, dear.~~

RANDALL: Well, perhaps somewhere with a bit more privacy, don't you think?

CAROLINE: I should say so.

HOWARD: Yes, let's.

CAROLINE: Don't get too excited, dear.

HOWARD: Right.

(Caroline and Harold exit, Randall right by them.)

RANDALL: Very good, then. Marion, dear? Shall we?

(Marion is still standing by the hourglass.)

MARION: Right behind you.

(The music fades, and the lights shift. Marion becomes an old woman again. Lost in memory, she's singing along to the half-forgotten lyrics.)

MARION: *I love my man
Better than I love myself...*

(Judy enters, breaking whatever spell is left on Marion.)

JUDY: Nana? Are you all right?

MARION: Hmm? No, I'm... I'm fine... I just... thinking. Memories.

JUDY: I have your drink. *(hands her a glass.)*

MARION: Not chamomile tea?

JUDY: I figured, what's it going to hurt?

MARION: You're very sweet. *(going back to her chair)* I think you get that from your great-grandfather.

JUDY: What do I get from you?

MARION: Being so annoying.

JUDY: I'll let you rest, Nana.

MARION: Wait, Judy.

JUDY: What is it Nana?

MARION: Take the hourglass. Have your boys bury it where they found it.

JUDY: Bury it again? But Nana...

MARION: My husband obviously wanted it buried for a reason, so we'll respect that.

JUDY: All right. *(Takes the hourglass, and chuckles to herself.)*

MARION: What's so funny?

JUDY: Nothing, just...

MARION: Spit it out.

JUDY: It just occurred to me how you're always, "My husband this" and "Your great-grandfather that". I swear, sometimes it's like you're talking about two different people.

(Marion looks at Judy, first angry, then afraid, then turns away.)

MARION: What a ridiculous thing to say.

JUDY: I know, Nana. That's why I thought it was funny.

MARION: It's not funny.

JUDY: I—I'm sorry, Nana. I didn't mean...

MARION: You should be. There are some things you don't joke about.

JUDY: You're right, Nana.

MARION: Go have the boys bury that.

JUDY: Yes, ma'am. *(She goes to the door.)* I am sorry, Nana.

MARION: I know you are, sweetheart.

(Judy leaves. The lights slowly fade as Marion sings the song)

MARION: *Oh, I love my man
Better that I love myself
And if he don't have me
He won't have nobody else.*

BLACKOUT
END OF PLAY