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# **MIXED EMOTIONS**

by

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# **MIXED EMOTIONS**

**A Play In One Act  
For Four Women and Two Men**

## **CHARACTERS**

**YOUNG MAN** ..... impressionable  
**OLD WOMAN** .....bizarre  
**KAREN** ..... the intended love  
**ANNIE** .....lusty  
**JILL** .....cynical  
**TARZAN** .....blatant

**TIME:** The present.

**PLACE:** A shop and a party.

## MIXED EMOTIONS

**SCENE:** *The stage is dimly lit. At extreme DR there is a counter and a suggestion of a strange costume shop. Perhaps some of the merchandise hangs before us: masks of hideous ferocity, cloaks, some preserved beast, a small caldron bubbling eerily. NOTE: Hand-held masks could most effectively be used by the women for better character interaction.*

**AT THE RISE:** *An OLD WOMAN, a crone with a Gypsy accent so thick that Lon Chaney, Jr. might do a double take, waits on a YOUNG MAN.*

**YOUNG MAN.** So, you see, I'm looking for something... different...very different from your run-of-the-mill rubber-faced Frankenstein.

**OLD WOMAN.** I understand, young man. There are those you'd like to impress with your cleverness.

**YOUNG MAN.** You might say that. It's an office costume party...a couple hundred people. The big hit last year was this guy who came as the Ayatollah Khomeini in drag...a really scary-looking bearded belly dancer. And this year there are the imitators: one guy is coming as baby Gorbachev—diapers and a pulsing purple Italy on his forehead and there's this girl coming as Tammy Baker before and after, you know, one side made up, the other not.

OLD WOMAN. That could be scary.

YOUNG MAN. I'd like something unique, something creative, but I'm stumped.

OLD WOMAN. I have many things here of unusual quality. Things I have collected or that have come to me over the years. (*She holds up an unusual jar.*) This werewolf potion is popular.

YOUNG MAN (*with restrained skepticism*). Werewolf potion?

OLD WOMAN. Yes. Just a sip and with the full moon you will transform into a hideous beast—the sapient Lupus—the fanged stalker—great fun at parties.

YOUNG MAN. Yeah, I'll bet...*if* there's a full moon at Halloween. And what about the other eleven times a year?

OLD WOMAN (*with a shrug*). You roam. You star in movies. Go to obedience school. Many possibilities.

YOUNG MAN (*with a laugh*). No thanks. Too many werewolves anyway. I need something special.

OLD WOMAN (*gesturing to a garment behind her*). A cloak of invisibility?

YOUNG MAN. I want them to be able to *see* me. That's the whole point.

OLD WOMAN. Yes, yes. Well, I've had to push its rent far too high since the last customer who used it almost got me involved in a messy divorce...You could be a shadow.

YOUNG MAN. Shadow.

OLD WOMAN (*holding up a leather pouch*). Sprinkle this dust upon yourself and you will become the Brocken Spectre and be seen only as a shadow, a silhouette.

**YOUNG MAN.** Interesting idea...but I'm not sure if it would be...stunning enough, if you know what I mean.

**OLD WOMAN** (*nods*). One moment. (*She exits R.*)

**YOUNG MAN** (*to himself*). Werewolf potions, cloaks of invisibility, shadow powder...This one's a real character.

*(The OLD WOMAN returns, cradling something in her hands as if it was something precious.)*

**YOUNG MAN.** Funny, I've never noticed this shop before. How long have you been open?

**OLD WOMAN.** Oh, I've been here forever.

**YOUNG MAN.** And what have you got there?

**OLD WOMAN** (*holding up the invisible object between her hands for him to "see"*). It is the mask of Jirad, the spirit of passion.

**YOUNG MAN.** I don't see anything.

**OLD WOMAN** (*moving the object about in the dim light*).

Do you not? Can you not see the many hues of emotion in the mask? There, the fervent gleam coruscating on its surface. Here, the shimmer of excitement rippling on its brow. The mask of JIRAD contains all desires and feelings that the wearer may wish to display. Hold it! (*She holds out the "mask" to him. He gingerly reaches for it.*) Carefully!

**YOUNG MAN** (*taking it and examining it*). Say, there is something here! (*Feeling it.*) A mask. A transparent mask.

**OLD WOMAN** (*nodding*). The mask of Jirad, the spirit of passion. It was last worn by a great actor.

**YOUNG MAN.** How does it work?

**OLD WOMAN.** When you wear the mask of Jirad any emotion you feel will be intensified and heightened by the spirit within it.

**YOUNG MAN.** But it's transparent.

**OLD WOMAN** (*cackling*). Those around you will *see*... They will see and be awed by the fervor they witness. They will feel the sensations of the emotions you project.

**YOUNG MAN.** Any emotions?

**OLD WOMAN.** Any and all emotions you feel. But I warn you, it can be a dangerous thing. The actor I spoke of loved the mask and fell under its spell. He would try to numb his spirit with wine when he was not playing a role, but he sadly learned that this does not work.

**YOUNG MAN** (*not really hearing her, turning the "mask" in his hands*). Any emotion, eh? You say I have to "project" the emotions?

**OLD WOMAN.** With the mask on, if you look at someone with loving eyes they will feel every love they've ever known. It will cut right into their soul. Look at them with hate; they will know the most vicious loathing they have ever endured. It won the actor many awards...

**YOUNG MAN** (*thinking out loud*). Cut right into her soul...Uh, how much would something like this rent for?

**OLD WOMAN.** I will require your first-born child.

**YOUNG MAN** (*laughs*). Yeah, sure. You sound like the company I work for. How about a pint of sweat and blood instead?

**OLD WOMAN.** That might be sufficient, but I am overstocked.

YOUNG MAN. Seriously. I've only got fifty dollars to put out for any costume and this mask of Jirad thing ...well, it's kind of...well, a little weird. Can I... Well, could I test it first?

OLD WOMAN. Pay nothing until you decide you want to return it... Then we can bargain.

YOUNG MAN. That sounds reasonable...as long as it's under fifty dollars.

OLD WOMAN. The price will satisfy you.

YOUNG MAN. OK, then...At least it's different. The mask of Jirad, the spirit of passion. *(He starts to bring the "mask" to his face. The OLD WOMAN brings up her hands in a warding gesture.)*

OLD WOMAN *(sharply)*. Do not put it on here! You must think carefully of the emotions you will unleash before donning the mask of Jirad!

YOUNG MAN *(a bit taken aback by her seriousness)*. OK, OK. I'll give it some thought before I put it on.

OLD WOMAN. Carefully.

YOUNG MAN. Carefully.

OLD WOMAN. Good. Now, I will need your name and address for my records. *(She pushes a sheet of paper to him and he begins to write.)*

YOUNG MAN. I've already got a good idea of who I'd like to try this mask thing out on.

OLD WOMAN. Is she beautiful?

YOUNG MAN *(grins)*. Yeah.

OLD WOMAN. The eyes...be sure to catch the eyes.

YOUNG MAN. You bet. *(He finishes writing.)*

OLD WOMAN. Would you like a bag for that?

YOUNG MAN. That's all right. I'll just carry it. Thanks.

OLD WOMAN. Wear black with it. It will set it off.

YOUNG MAN. Sure thing. *(YOUNG MAN starts to exit L.)*

**OLD WOMAN.** Beware, young man. The reins of passion must be gripped tightly. One may let loose more than can be handled.

**YOUNG MAN.** You've been to one of the office parties before? Well, however it turns out, this is unique. Good-bye.

**OLD WOMAN** (*as he exits into darkness*). Fare well, young man. Fare well.

*(The lights fade from stage R and after a moment, they come up in gaudy colors full stage. Music can be heard as costumed CHARACTERS move across the stage. Three WOMEN in costume are watching the CROWD off, and enjoying their own private moment.)*

**JILL.** Did you see Michael Martin in the ape costume again? Gah! You think he'd try something new.

**ANNIE.** He says it's his trademark.

**JILL.** The thing about it is, it starts to stink around midnight.

**KAREN.** How would you know, Jill?

**JILL.** Get real, Karen! I have no interest in the boy. It just "wafts."

**ANNIE.** "Wafts"?

**JILL.** Yeah, you know (*As if waving a nasty smell away.*), "Wafts."

**KAREN.** Look who's wafting this way.

**JILL.** Lord, have mercy!

*(Enter TARZAN in briefs and briefest of masks. He crosses to the GIRLS. ANNIE obviously likes him. The OTHERS obviously don't.)*

TARZAN. Hey, girls. Me, Tarzan; which one of you Jane?

JILL. No Jane's here, Dick. Why don't you try Cheetah over there?

TARZAN. Frigidity is bad for your health, Jill.

JILL. Take a swing, ape man. You mistake disgust for frigidity, as usual.

TARZAN. See if I ask *you* to dance later.

JILL. I'd be afraid I'd fall off the tree limb, Simba.

TARZAN (to ANNIE). Great costume, Annie.

ANNIE (flattered). Thanks.

TARZAN. You, too, Karen. Time to mingle. See you girls later. (He exits.)

JILL. May his loincloth get caught in a blender.

ANNIE. Gah! What a body!

JILL. If only he had brains and personality to go with it.

KAREN. Methinks the lady doth protest too much.

JILL. Methinks Tarzan doth prostate too much.

*(Their conversation drops below our audible level as the YOUNG MAN enters in a skin-tight black body stocking that makes his face and hands stand out in the changing light. He holds out the "mask.")*

YOUNG MAN (bringing the mask up to his face). Well, here goes. We'll see if the old lady was as loony as she seemed. I guess I can always say I've come as a Rorschach test. (Fitting the mask to his face, he goes to the three GIRLS. Immediately, he centers his attention on KAREN. From this point on, the YOUNG MAN's personality undergoes a transformation that he tries in vain to control. OTHERS also react with extremes of emotion, each seeing things they love, fear or hate expressed on his