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*Dramatic Publishing*

# AMERICAN BEAUTY

by

**JULES TASCA**



**Dramatic Publishing**

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(AMERICAN BEAUTY)

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# AMERICAN BEAUTY

A One-Act Play  
For Four Men and Three Women, Extras\*

## CHARACTERS

MONA O'NEIRIC ..... a beautiful young woman  
MARK O'NEIRIC ..... her husband  
GINGER .....Mona's best friend  
TOM MORLEY .....Ginger's boyfriend  
MARTY MORLEY ..... Tom's brother  
YOLA MORLEY ..... Marty's wife  
CHRIS MORELY .....another brother, a priest

\*Extras: MAN (opening scene), LEON FITTI (ending scene)

TIME: The present.

PLACE: New York City

## AMERICAN BEAUTY

**AT RISE:** *Bare stage except for a few chairs. A light comes up on MONA O'NEIRIC who sits dressed in a long robe. Around her head is a towel, and she wears dark glasses. We hear a door buzzer. MONA rises. A MAN enters carrying a brown envelope. MONA takes the envelope from him without turning around.*

**MAN.** Thanks.

**MONA.** This copy'll be done by Thursday. *(The MAN tries to look at her, but she turns to prevent him from doing so.)*  
Thursday...pull the door shut on your way out...

**MAN.** Okay...Thursday...*(He exits. MONA crosses down to the audience.)*

**MONA.** For now I work out of my apartment. I put an ad in the newspaper: disabled person with degree in advertising looking for work to do at home. I want it that way. I don't want to be the cause of any more trouble.

*(We hear a drum roll and a rim shot as another light picks up MARK O'NEIRIC dressed in prison clothes. He holds bars in front of him to simulate his cell. MARK and MONA do not speak to each other. Rather, they address their lines to the audience.)*

MARK. Her name's Mona O'Neiric. She's my wife. I'm Mark O'Neiric. I'm in this goddamned prison and she's... who knows where?

MONA. Thank God he doesn't know where I am. This is the second time I've run away from him.

MARK. Mona's the most beautiful girl ever. This prison holds only one terror for me and that's the thought that she's out there without me.

MONA. If you were with me, you'd wind up right back in jail.

MARK. No picture, no painting, no movie star is competition for my Mona. Sheer beauty come to life. Two gods must've banged on the softest cloud in heaven to conceive her.

MONA. I always had a lot of different friends in high school until I met Mark.

MARK. She was spoiled. All beautiful girls are spoiled. Every guy fawned over her. "If I can ever do anything for you, please let me know."

MONA. That's what they all said.

MARK. But nobody had to do anything for her. *I* did it all.

MONA. As I said, I had a lot of friends in high school until I met Mark. Then he wouldn't let anyone near me.

MARK. Because you were my girl.

MONA. A football player hugged me after the big Thanksgiving game. And Mark took his dad's chain saw and cut the football player's helmet in half.

MARK. It should've been his head! You never understand. Every guy wants you. Everybody's dream girl. You think a wimp is going to hold on to a goddess like you? I had to be strong.

MONA. In college this jealousy grew.

MARK. I loved you.

MONA. It was jealousy.

MARK. Love.

MONA. It went on. Once in the pouring rain a freshman gave me a ride to my marketing class, and Mark...

MARK. Yes, I banned him from the campus! The punk was after you!

MONA. The fights. The threats. Finally that boy who gave me a ride in the rain had to go to another college.

MARK. I still remember his car too. Blue Honda, license number 4YL-X2I. If I ever see him again, I'll smash him! She doesn't understand.

MONA. She doesn't understand, he told what few friends I had left. How could you expect a woman to live like that? At our wedding, after the best man kissed me, you punched him in the mouth.

MARK. He kissed you on the lips!

MONA. We were on the altar!

MARK. That's why he thought he could pull it off. Oh, Mona, Mona, you should be flattered that my whole existence is an act of love for you.

MONA. What act of love loses me my first job out of college?

MARK. Mona, the boss took liberties with you.

MONA. I should never have listened to you. We never should've gotten jobs in the same firm.

MARK. Mona, get real. Jason Peacock was pawing you.

MONA. Mr. Peacock was the boss. He promoted me. He patted me on the back as a gesture of "Well done, Mona."

MARK. It was a gesture of rubbing your back.

MONA. It was a friendly gentlemanly pat on the back.

MARK (*laughs*). How could she not perceive?! Jason Peacock hungered for you. The goddamned promotion was based on him wanting to display his power to you in front

of me. Haven't you ever seen films of buck deer smashing their antlers together to win the doe?

MONA. I am not an animal in the woods.

MARK. It's the same in humans. Beauty and power are an axis.

MONA. You wanted us both fired, Mark. Yes, you did.

That's why you hit Mr. Peacock in the head with a hole punch.

MARK. The stronger guy won the day, that's all.

MONA. You see why I ran away from Baltimore where we lived and tried to lose myself in New York?

MARK. I went crazy when you ran away that first time. It's not much better the second time. I love you, Mona.

MONA (*slowly removing the robe, towel and dark gloves*). This is not love.

MARK. How can she say that?

MONA. It's not. It's not love. It's...It's...It's some kind of... of compulsive possessiveness.

MARK. It is not possessiveness. You're mine. You're my wife. You belong to me.

MONA. I pleaded with you to get counseling.

MARK (*as the light slowly fades on him*). Mona, ours is a great love story. Lovers don't go into counseling. Where would the world's great passions be if...if Romeo and Juliet or David and Bathsheba got into a twelve-point program before they let their hearts go? Mona...Mona, wherever you are, I love you. (*MONA, now out of her coverings is seen to be a beautiful young woman.*)

MONA. That's why I first ran away from him to New York.

*(The lights come up fuller now as GINGER, another young woman enters. MONA addresses her.)*