

MARVIN AND THE MUSES

A Five-Minute Play

by

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CHARACTERS (2M, 1W)

MARVIN—A struggling playwright in his thirties or older. Any race or ethnicity.

YAKOV—An attractive young man in his twenties. Any race or ethnicity.

MELPOMENE—The Muse of Tragedy, ageless.

SETTING

Marvin's workspace. Desk, chairs, couch, computer, whatever other set pieces are desired.

TIME

Now.

SYNOPSIS

Is Marvin's new muse more distraction than inspiration?

NOTE

"Melpomene" is pronounced mel-paw-MEN-ee (except as indicated).

"Thalia" is pronounced THA-lee-yah.

Lights up on the workspace of a not-very-prosperous playwright. Desk, chairs, couch, computer, etc. A door to the rest of the house. MELPOMENE, the ageless Greek Muse of Tragedy begins the scene lounging impatiently on the couch. She wears ancient Greek garb. MARVIN, a struggling writer in his thirties or older, enters.

MELPOMENE

It's about time you showed up.

MARVIN

Who are you? Where's Thalia?

MELPOMENE

(She produces a business card and hands it to him.)

Melpomene, Muse of Tragedy, at your service. Thalia passed your case file on to me.

MARVIN

Tragedy? But Thalia's the Muse of Comedy, and that's what I write—comedies.

MELPOMENE

Not according to her. She says your plays are definitely no laughing matter.

MARVIN

Everyone's a critic.

MELPOMENE

Comes with the territory.

MARVIN

Anyway, where have you been? I've been calling for a muse for weeks.

MELPOMENE

I was busy elsewhere. You aren't the only writer around, you know. There are over ten thousand playwrights in America alone, every one of them badgering me for inspiration day and night.

MARVIN

Well, you can go right back to Mt. Olympus or wherever you and your sisters hang out. I've found a new muse who makes my creative juices flow like a mountain stream.

YAKOV enters, shirtless, toweling off from a shower.

YAKOV (to Melpomene)

Mother? What are you doing here?

MELPOMENE

Kid, you have me mixed up with someone else entirely. I think you're looking for Necessity. She's the mother of invention and you would appear to be the invention of this poor writer's sex-starved brain. A mere figment of his overheated imagination.

MARVIN

That's rich, coming from a mythological being. But he's solid flesh. I think after last night I can attest to that.

YAKOV

For the time being, anyhow.

MELPOMENE

What's your name, figment?

YAKOV

(Slightly emphasizing the two syllables.)

Yak-ov.

MELPOMENE (to Marvin)

Really?

MARVIN

Yakov, meet Mel-OPP-a-knee.

MELPOMENE

(She produces a business card and hands it to Yakov.)

Melpomene.

YAKOV

(Reads the card.)

"Mel-po-MEANY. Muse of Tragedy. Mother of the Sirens." You mean like fire trucks and ambulances?

MELPOMENE

No, like the women who sing such hauntingly beautiful songs they lure sailors to crash their ships upon the rocks. Not something you have to worry about. And it's pronounced Mel-paw-MEN-ee, not MEANY.

YAKOV

Well, you sure look like a meany. Marvin, honey, didn't you promise me brunch?

MARVIN

I was hoping to get a little work done this morning. I really feel inspired.

MELPOMENE and YAKOV

You're welcome!

YAKOV

Pleeeeeeze? Last night was very strenuous, and if you're expecting a repeat performance anytime soon I need to build up my strength.

MARVIN

Well, if you put it like that, I guess the work can wait.

MELPOMENE

After all the weeping and wailing you've been sending my way, now that I'm here you're letting yourself get distracted by the likes of him?

MARVIN

(Looking from one to the other.)

Ancient Greek hag. Gorgeous young hunk. What do you think?

MALPOMENE

Hag?

MARVIN

Close my case file. Your services are no longer required.

MELPOMENE

You mean I'm fired? I don't understand.

MARVIN

Fired, canned, axed, furloughed, laid off, made redundant, released, sacked, let go, discharged.

YAKOV (to Marvin)

You got discharged last night. Several times.

MELPOMENE

But you need me!

MARVIN

You rarely ever come to work. He comes whenever I need him to.

YAKOV

I sure do.

MARVIN

So, begone, muse!

Yakov starts for the door.

MARVIN (Cont'd)

No you, her!

MELPOMENE

You'll be begging me to return once this little will-o'-the-wisp fades into the bright light of day. He may get you through Act One, but don't bother calling on me when you get stuck in the morass of Act Two.

YAKOV

More ass is my specialty.

MELPOMENE (to Marvin)

Don't say I didn't warn you.

She disappears.

MARVIN

So, you ready for brunch?

YAKOV

Just let me get my shirt on.

MARVIN

Must you?

YAKOV

That's entirely up to you.

They exit.

END OF PLAY