

Hui Ying Wen
May 4, 2008

Midnight

SETTING: A spare bedroom with a bed at upper stage left. At stage right is a window frame.

AT RISE: It is night; the lights are out in the room. HARRIET is tucked in bed. MARIA is outside, speaking in through the window frame.

MARIA

Can I go home now?

HARRIET

No! Just a bit longer. Come on, there's no school tomorrow.

MARIA

How much longer do you want me to stay?

HARRIET

What time is it?

(MARIA looks at her wristwatch)

MARIA

11:44. And 56 seconds. 11:45.

HARRIET

Fifteen more minutes.

MARIA

Oh . . . ok.

(Sighs)

Do you think something's going to happen? Maybe nothing's gonna happen.

HARRIET

Don't you want to find out? That's why you have to stay here 'til 12 o'clock!

MARIA

If something happens, *I* don't want to see it.

HARRIET

Maybe I'll be struck with a bolt of lightning. But maybe not, because I'm indoors.

(Points to a dark corner of room)

Maybe a statue of Mary will appear right over there. Crying blood.

(They shudder)

MARIA

Stop it, stop it, I don't want to think about it. Oh come on, Harriet, how come you have to do this tonight?

HARRIET

If I don't need to pray at bedtime anymore, why should I keep doing it?

MARIA

You'll still have to pray at school Mass.

HARRIET

That's different.

MARIA

We're not supposed to be up this late. I'm not even in my house! You're gonna get me in trouble.

HARRIET

Scaredypants. Fine, go home.

MARIA

If I do go, promise me you'll pray and then go to sleep.

HARRIET

No, I'm not gonna pray tonight. I'm gonna see what happens.

MARIA

You can't stay up without me.

HARRIET

Your fault for going home.

MARIA

If you do this without me, I'm not gonna be your friend anymore.

(Pause)

Did you hear what I said?

(Pause)

I said I'm gonna go home and I'm not gonna be your friend anymore!

(HARRIET doesn't say anything. MARIA hovers, then decides to stay. She looks at her watch)

Thirteen more minutes.

HARRIET

If you're really tired, you can come in and lie on my bed.

MARIA

No way. If God does something to you, I don't wanna be on your bed. Besides, I can't come in cuz you don't want to be my friend anymore.

HARRIET

Your Baptism was really nice today. I saw it.

MARIA

Yeah. Thanks.

HARRIET

What was the water like?

MARIA

Really cold. My dress got all wet because I had to stand in the Baptismal font. Then my hair got all wet, and it ran into my dress. I had to sit there all wet until Mass was over.

HARRIET

Do you feel different?

MARIA

No. Not really. But they say you're not supposed to. You're just supposed to remember that you're baptized and be a good person and stop sinning from now on.

(Beat)

But then we had a really nice lunch with Father Thomas. It was really nice.

HARRIET

Lucky.

MARIA

But now I have to go to Mass on Sundays. That's two Masses a week.

HARRIET

I wouldn't mind. I think it'd be fun.

MARIA

You can come to Sunday Masses with me.

HARRIET

No I can't.

MARIA

Lots of people go who aren't baptized.

HARRIET

But if they don't go, it doesn't matter! If they don't pray at bedtime, it doesn't matter either, cuz they're not baptized!

(HARRIET covers her head with pillow. MARIA looks at her wristwatch)

MARIA

11:50.

(Beat)

You have ten minutes left to say your bedtime prayers and then you can go to sleep and I can go home to bed. Come on, Harriet, pretty please?

HARRIET

No, I have to see if something happens or not, even if it's something horrible.

MARIA

This is stupid. I think I'm gonna go home.

HARRIET

Maria, don't go. If something bad happens to me, you have to be here so you can tell my parents.

MARIA

No! I don't want to wake your parents up.

HARRIET

You have to. When they find out, they'll be sorry.

MARIA

Why?

HARRIET

They told me no, they wouldn't let me get baptized.

MARIA

Really? When?

HARRIET

Today. After you got baptized, I asked them if I could get baptized too. They said they don't believe in God.

MARIA

Then why did they send you to Catholic school?

HARRIET

Because it was a good school. They told me to just get good grades and forget the religion part.

MARIA

But you can't do that.

HARRIET

They said I'm too young to decide if God is real or not, and when I get older then I can decide if I want to get baptized. They said I'm not an adult so I don't understand these things. But Father Thomas is an adult, and so are all the teachers. Why would Father Thomas become a priest if he didn't think God is real?

(Beat)

I'm not stupid. I *am* old enough. I'm in the seventh grade, I'm almost going to high school! Hey, how come your parents let you get baptized?

MARIA

(Shrugs)

They didn't care. They said the teachers are good and Father Thomas was nice, so they let me do it. Hey Harriet, you can keep praying and going to Mass until your parents let you get baptized. I'll go to Mass with you. And I'll go to your Baptism, I promise.

HARRIET

No . . . I have to prove to them that they're wrong.

(Beat)

If something happens to me tonight, you have to tell my parents. No matter what. You have to run around the house and tell my parents. They'll be sorry.

MARIA

Maybe nothing really bad is going to happen, ok? I bet lots of people forget to pray at bedtime. They don't die in their sleep or something. It'd be too many people . . . right?

HARRIET

But deliberately not praying is worse than forgetting to pray. I'm committing a sin, you know.

MARIA

If it's a sin, then don't do it! I'm gonna go home now.

HARRIET

I said until 12 o'clock! You promised!

(MARIA checks her wristwatch)

MARIA

11:54.

HARRIET

I have to see if something happens. Then I can tell my parents they're wrong and they have to let me get baptized.

MARIA

But you just said they'll let you do it when you're older –

HARRIET

No. I have to find out now.

(Pause)

Maria, you don't have to worry, ok? You just got baptized this morning. If bloody Mary appears over there, only I will be able to see it. Nothing's going to happen to you.

MARIA

But I don't want anything to happen to you either! What's the point, I don't get why you're doing this. Your parents did say they'll let you get baptized when you're older, so you'll get baptized when you're older! You'll get baptized, and it'll be great, and I'm gonna watch you, and we'll go to Sunday Masses together.

(Beat)

Lunch with Father Thomas wasn't *that* fun, you know.

HARRIET

Maria, I don't want to get baptized just so I can have lunch with Father Thomas! Promise me you'll go in and wake my parents and tell them to come here if something happens?

MARIA

(Reluctantly)

If I don't, it serves you right.

HARRIET

I'll prove it to them. They'll be sorry.

(MARIA checks her wristwatch)

MARIA

11:57.

HARRIET

What if nothing happens?

MARIA

So nothing happens.

HARRIET

Then it means that you shouldn't have gotten baptized.

MARIA

No, it doesn't mean that.

HARRIET

Yes, it does.

MARIA

No it doesn't. You're just jealous because I did get baptized!

HARRIET

Fine, what if I am. But if God doesn't care if I stop praying to Him, then He probably doesn't care if I don't get baptized. Then I won't be jealous. What time is it?

MARIA

It's almost time, ok?! Come on come on come on, I don't want something to happen to you, it'll be horrible, who'll be my best friend then –

HARRIET

What time is it?!

MARIA

You're not even listening to me. I'm leaving you. Goodbye, Harriet –

HARRIET

No! Please please please stay here. Just tell me what time it is!

MARIA

(Checks her wristwatch)

11:59. One more minute. Harriet, this is stupid. If you do this, I swear I'm not gonna be your friend anymore –

HARRIET

Shhh!

(They wait one minute, tensely. Then . . .

A mouse scampers above the ceiling. MARIA flees from window. HARRIET screams and dives under the covers)

HARRIET

Maria! Maria! Where'd you go?

(MARIA reappears at window)

MARIA

What was that?

HARRIET

A mouse . . . I think. What time is it?

(MARIA checks wristwatch)

MARIA

12 o'clock.

(HARRIET flings back the covers. She sits on the edge of the bed. They look at each other)

HARRIET

I've been doing bedtime prayer for six years.

(Stands up)

I'm not going to say another prayer again.

MARIA

Just because nothing happened doesn't mean that.

HARRIET

I don't know how I'm gonna fall asleep. It's like I didn't brush my teeth, or didn't do my homework, or something.

MARIA

You'll still have to pray at Mass.

HARRIET

That's different.

MARIA

You can still come to Sunday Masses with me.

HARRIET

No. I don't want to anymore.

MARIA

Fine, be that way. I'm gonna be at Mass, and you'll have to sit in your house on Sunday morning. You're gonna be so bored without me.

HARRIET

No, you'll be bored cuz you'll be at Mass.

MARIA

I wouldn't be bored if you were there too! You're a lousy friend.

HARRIET

You're lousy.

(Stirs)

I can't sleep. I'm hungry.

(Feels under bed. Pulls out an unopened package of marshmallow Peeps)

MARIA

I thought you gave up candy for Lent. I have a cookie in my pocket. You should eat that instead.

HARRIET

Why do they give out candy when they know we all give it up for Lent?

(Tears open a corner of plastic)

Should I?

MARIA

No. Don't you want my cookie? What are you doing?

(HARRIET pulls out a marshmallow chick. She nibbles a few sugar grains from its beak)

HARRIET

Wow.

(Eats the whole chick. Pulls out another one)

You want some?

MARIA

I can't. I gave up candy for Lent.

(HARRIET eats it. And another, as MARIA watches. And another, until the Peeps are almost gone. She stops)

HARRIET

I feel a little sick now.

MARIA

Serves you right.

HARRIET

I should brush my teeth.

MARIA

I should go home.

HARRIET

You want the last one?

MARIA

No. I told you I can't eat candy until Lent is over.

HARRIET

Sucks for you.

MARIA

I don't care.

HARRIET

Come on, Maria. Take it. You can eat it after Lent.

MARIA

No, I don't want it. It's yours.

(HARRIET looks for somewhere to throw away the remains. She finally stuffs it back under the bed)

Well. Goodnight, I guess.

HARRIET

Goodnight. I'm sorry I made you stay here so late.

MARIA

No you're not.

(Beat)

It's ok. Who else would tell your parents if something horrible did happen?

HARRIET

Yeah, I guess.

MARIA

Other bad things can happen too, you know. It didn't have to happen tonight. Maybe you'll fail a test, or you'll have to go to Purgatory. That's much worse than seeing bloody Mary.

HARRIET

Or maybe nothing will happen. What, you *want* something to happen to me?

MARIA

Of course I don't. Why would I want something to happen to my best friend? I kept telling and telling you, you shouldn't do it because something bad might happen. You didn't listen.

(Beat)

I'm gonna go to Sunday Mass every week and you'll be so bored sitting in your room all alone without me. You're gonna wish you were going too.

(Beat)

Goodnight.

(She disappears. HARRIET climbs back into bed without brushing her teeth. She lies there, wide awake)

END OF PLAY

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21M.785 Playwrights' Workshop
Spring 2012

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