

# **There Can Be Only One**

by

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## **Characters**

MARY - 47 year old successful, professional woman.

BARRY - 62 year old shop keeper.

## **SETTING**

The play is set in an antiquated comic book store.

## **TIME**

Modern day.

The play takes place in one scene.

ACT 1

SCENE 1

A dusty, dirty antique book store.

Ribboned light streams into  
the store from a skylight  
exposing the dust and uncleanliness  
of the store.

On the left of the stage is a  
long book shelf filled with  
comic books in no discernible  
order - Superman, X-men and  
Batman are spread out in no  
particular order.

Opposite the large bookshelf  
is a long, glass counter.  
Stood behind the counter is  
**BARRY** a man wearing  
old clothes, in particular  
a stain-covered wool tank top.

At the rear is the front door of  
the shop.

*BARRY is reading a comic.*

*The door opens.  
The antiquated sound of a bell  
ringing sounds to indicate the  
door has been opened.*

*Barry doesn't raise his head  
from his reading.*

*A woman enters.  
She is dressed in a suit and  
carries a briefcase.  
She looks like a mother buying  
for her child - completely out of  
place in a comic book store.*

*She looks at the long book shelf  
for a limited time and turns  
to face Barry.  
He doesn't raise his head.*

MARY  
Good morning.

*Barry turns another page.  
He pretends not to hear her.*

MARY  
I said, good morning.

*Barry pauses as he turns a  
page. He doesn't look up.  
He turns over the page.*

*Mary steps up to the counter  
in front of Barry.*

MARY  
Good morning, I'm here to  
buy a comic book.

*Barry stops turning and  
looks at her like she has  
caught him on the toilet.*

BARRY  
Really?  
In a comic book shop?  
I'd never have guessed.

MARY  
(nervous)  
I... I'm sorry but I'm looking for...

BARRY  
Something for your son?

MARY  
(sternly, in control)  
No.

I hear you have a Spiderman, Number 1.

BARRY  
Yes.  
The last one in existence.

MARY  
The last one?  
Wow!

BARRY  
Well, strictly speaking there are  
two left in the world.  
But!  
One of them has been lost for over  
thirty years so our copy is  
generally regarded as the last one  
left in the world.

MARY  
I see.

BARRY  
But you don't want to buy it.

MARY  
I don't?

BARRY  
(patronizing)  
No.  
For your son,  
buy some up to date comics  
(pointing)  
on the shelf behind you.

MARY  
Thank you.  
But I'm here to purchase Spiderman, Number 1.

BARRY

Ok.

Well I didn't want to do this but you can't  
because... you can't afford it.

It is the last Spiderman, Number 1,  
left in the world and it is very expensive.

MARY

I would expect nothing less...  
if it truly is unique.

BARRY

Oh it's unique alright.

Unique to the tune of one hundred thousand  
pounds.

MARY

Ok.

May I see it?

BARRY

Ok what?

*Mary stands firm and bold.*

BARRY

But, you know, I like your persistence.

And I haven't looked at it for a while.

Keep it locked up in the safe in  
case some looney tries to burn  
it or something.

I'll just get it from out back.  
So we can both have a look.

Exit Barry stage right.

*Mary picks up the comic Barry has  
been reading. She flicks through  
it and throws it back on the counter.*

MARY

Now I see who reads this trash.

Enter Barry stage right.

*Barry is holding the comic.  
It is sealed in a protective  
plastic casing.  
He places it carefully on  
the counter.*

BARRY

Behold. The legendary, last surviving copy  
of Spiderman, Number 1.

MARY

Allegedly, the last copy.

BARRY

(smiles)

The last known copy.

*Mary moves to pick it up.  
Barry stops her.*

BARRY

No, no, no.

What do you think you're doing?

MARY

I want to have a look at it.

BARRY

You can see it just fine from there.

MARY

How much is it again?

BARRY

One hundred thousand pounds.

MARY

(looking closely at the comic)

Wow.

BARRY

Yes, expensive.

It would be more, a lot more.

MARY  
Really?

BARRY  
As long as the other copy is out there,  
even though it's been lost for years,  
this comic is not unique.

MARY  
Not unique?

BARRY  
As you have pointed out, this cannot  
be called "the last one in the world".  
The last Superman Number 1 comic  
is now worth over a million pounds.  
Now that truly is the last ever copy.

MARY  
I'm not interested in Superman.

BARRY  
No, me neither.  
Too much of a goody-two-shoes.  
It is a shame though.

MARY  
(not listening)  
Really?

BARRY  
Well, now that comic is stored in some  
vault. In a bank or someone's personal  
safe buried deep in their basement.  
It will probably not see the light of  
day again.

MARY  
Hmmm.  
I'd like to have a closer look at this  
one, if I may?

BARRY  
I have already explained that you'd have  
to buy...

*As Barry talks, Mary moves her briefcase onto the counter.  
She opens it and turns it towards Barry.*

BARRY (continued)

...it for...

PAUSE

How much is that?

MARY

(now in complete control)  
One hundred thousand pounds.  
In cash.

*Barry is open-mouthed.  
He shakes his head in disbelief.*

BARRY

Ok.

*Not taking his eyes off the money  
Barry pushes the comic to Mary.*

*Mary picks the comic up.  
Barry picks up a stack of money.*

*Mary gazes at the comic with the same love Barry is gazing at the money.*

*Mary unseals the plastic jacket and slides the comic out.*

*This wakes Barry from his trance.*

BARRY

Be careful!

I know you just paid all this beautiful money for it but remember it is unique.

MARY

Not quite unique.

BARRY

Ha, yes.

I suppose we won't go over that again.

Is there anything else you want?

MARY

No, no.

I'm fine.

(holding the unsealed comic)

This is all I came for.

BARRY

Good.

Your son will be pleased.

MARY

I don't have a son.

BARRY

Well, daughter then...

Look, I hope you don't mind if I just go and put this money away.

In my safe.

*Barry greedily picks up the still-open briefcase, turns and walks out.*

Exit Barry stage right.

*Mary takes a deep breath and lovingly strokes the front of the comic.*

*Mary then tears it up with her hands.*

*She tears the comic into strips. And then those strips into smaller pieces.*

*Just as she is finishing Barry crashes back into the shop.*

Enter Barry stage right.

BARRY

(shouting)

What are you doing?

*Mary finishes tearing.  
The small pieces are all over  
the counter and the floor.*

*Barry is speechless.*

BARRY

But... but... but... you can't.

*Barry picks up some of the pieces  
of paper and they fall through his fingers.  
Mary stands triumphant.*

MARY

Do you have a waste basket?

BARRY

(wide eyed)

I can't believe you did it.

MARY

You just don't get it, do you?

*Mary leans towards Barry.*

MARY

Now... my copy is unique.

*Barry's eyes widen even further  
with the realisation of what  
has happened.*

MARY

There can be only one!

*Mary turns and leaves the shop to  
the rear of the stage.*

Exit Mary.

*Barry frantically searches  
through the remnants.*

*Blackout*

THE END.