

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.
Ribbioned light streams into
the store from a skylight
exposing the dust and uncleanness
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.