



EMERITUS



CAST

GEORGE (70s) retiring Chair of a major university Linguistics Department
MARTHA (70s) his wife of more than thirty years.

SETTING

The comfortable living room of a university professor.

GEORGE is on his hands and knees hidden behind the high-backed sofa.

MARTHA comes from their bedroom SR, wearing an elegant evening gown – and fuzzy pink house slippers.

MARTHA

George, where are you?

GEORGE

Back here.

MARTHA

Where?

GEORGE

Down here.

Martha is stumped. She stares down at the floor.

MARTHA

I don't see you, George. Stop trying to kid me.

GEORGE

Back here. Behind the sofa.
Looking for my cufflink.

Martha manages to creak down flat. They can just see each other underneath the sofa.

GEORGE

Hello. Fancy meeting you here.

MARTHA

Good lord, we have a whole bunny ranch under here.

GEORGE

It's like discovering childhood toys in the attic. Look, here's the egg we lost last Easter when the grandkids were here.

MARTHA

(gasps)

My red wig!

She tugs out what could be a drowned muskrat.

GEORGE

We should explore down here more often.

MARTHA

I don't know about you, but I think I'm going to take up residence.
I can't get up.

GEORGE

Hang on.

George rises from behind the couch. He's dressed for a formal dinner in tuxedo jacket and pleated shirt.

GEORGE

I'll get you.

But as he comes around the sofa, below the tux jacket he has on only boxer shorts.

MARTHA

Here it is. Found it.

He takes Martha's arms and tugs her up. She's so glad to be upright, she doesn't notice her husband's missing trousers. She clenches the cufflink and carefully inserts it into George's French cuff.

MARTHA

I gave you these cufflinks for your full professorship thirty years ago.
Why did you lose one?

GEORGE

I didn't "why" lose it. The damned thing flew out of my hand and skittered under the couch.

MARTHA

(to herself)

Ugh. Whoever invented these things never had to put them in.

GEORGE

I think there's a secret
tunnel where things fall
through the earth.

Then China sells them back to
us.

Martha glances at her watch.

MARTHA

Oh my, we'd better get
moving. Andy will pick us up
at six-thirty.

GEORGE

Aren't we driving ourselves?

MARTHA

Of course not.
We are going to arrive in
style.

Except for the pink fuzzy house slippers Martha could be
headed for the Oscar red carpet.

MARTHA

Afterward, we're invited to
Dean ... whatever's his name ...
house for drinks.

George is also stumped for the name.

GEORGE

Dean of Faculty ...
Hell, I meet with him every
couple of weeks. Name's ...

MARTHA

His wife used to be married
to ...

GEORGE

Right ... But he died.
She was on trial ... or in the
hospital ... or something like
that.

MARTHA

No, she took a cruise to ...

GEORGE

Short man. Bald. Has this
little fringe of hair.
Friar Tuck.

MARTHA

... Brassy blonde ...

GEORGE

They share a perplexed gaze.

GEORGE

Sherwood! Dean Robin
Sherwood.

MARTHA

His wife is Marion!

They jump up and down like delighted children.

MARTHA

Okay, we've got to get ready.

GEORGE

I'm ready. Just waiting on
you.

She's heads for the bedroom, but turns to see George
striking a dignified pose as if he were having a portrait
painted.

MARTHA

Don't you think the
university expects the
Emeritus Professor of
Linguistics to wear pants.

He looks down. No pants. Just patent leather shoes and
garters holding up his socks.

GEORGE

I did have them.
They're right ... over ...

But his tuxedo trousers are nowhere in sight.

GEORGE

I came in here ...
... they were on a hanger ...
Then I went ...

George is extremely puzzled. He retraces his steps, and
even bends down to look under the sofa.

Martha hustles off to the bedroom.

MARTHA (OS)

Go find your pants, old man.

GEORGE

What?

At the same time, Martha sticks her head out from the bedroom --

MARTHA

Huh?

-- then disappears again. George is occupied with his hunt.

GEORGE

I must've gone through a door somewhere.

Finally, George walks backward to exit SL.

GEORGE

They're around here somewhere.

MARTHA (OS)

Get dressed.

He appears in the doorway proudly holding a hanger with the tuxedo trousers.

GEORGE

On the ironing board.

Martha enters from the bedroom

GEORGE

You know, there are research studies that prove when you walk through a door you forget why you've come in there.

MARTHA

Huh?

They cross, she takes the pants hanger and hands him a brocaded formal vest at the same time.

MARTHA

Okay, I'll run the steam iron over your trousers. You put this on.

George can't quite figure out how to take off his jacket and simultaneously put on a backless vest.

MARTHA

You know, from here on,
there's nothing that you have
to do.

Martha exits to the laundry room.

GEORGE

From here on, I have nothing
to do.

MARTHA (OS)

Come on. You still have your
office.

He has the vest inside out.

GEORGE

Until they tear the building
down next year.

He holds the vest at arm's length, and dives into it.

GEORGE

How come women can change
bras while at a stop light?

MARTHA (OS)

What?

GEORGE

Never mind.

Martha exits the laundry room carrying a freshly pressed
nightshirt. She hands it to George as she passes him on the
way to the bedroom.

MARTHA

Get dressed. We have to leave
in a few minutes.

George double-takes at the nightshirt, and mutters to
himself.

GEORGE

Must've walked through a
door.

He plonks down on the sofa

GEORGE

Thirty-five years of research
and teaching. Twelve books.
Countless journal articles.

MARTHA (OS)

What?

GEORGE

And years in the jungle
deciphering the language of
head hunters.

George forms a hand puppet (*i.e. ventriloquist Señor Wences*), and drapes Martha's red wig over the top.

PUPPET

Gowumba mata pe hubadaga.

GEORGE

Mobawbaw hubadaga?

PUPPET

Hu ... ba ... da ... ga.

The headhunter puppet leaps for George's neck and draws its "thumb" across the throat.

George sighs.

GEORGE

All for naught.

Martha bustles in from the bedroom carrying a small jewelry box.

MARTHA

In honor of your official
retirement, Professor.

She hands him the jewelry case. George pops it open, and for a moment he's speechless.

MARTHA

For everything you've
accomplished, Sweetie.

She kisses him.

GEORGE

Diamond studs.

MARTHA

To match your cufflinks.

She takes the box.

MARTHA

Better fingers for small
things.

She fumbles with the shirt and, naturally, one of the studs jumps out of her hands and rolls somewhere across the floor.

They exchange an unspoken "of course" look. Both drop down on all-fours to rummage under the sofa.

GEORGE

Quick, before it finds the tunnel.

MARTHA

I think getting down on the floor is God's way to make old people exercise.

He crawls on hands and knees toward the back of the sofa.

GEORGE.

I see it!

George struggles up, forcing the diamond stud into his shirtfront.

GEORGE

You're not getting away this time.

Martha boosts herself on the coffee table to come up to her feet.

A CAR HORN sounds outside.

MARTHA

Oh my. He's here.

George reaches from behind the sofa to take Martha's hand.

They summon a self-respecting pose, and head for the front door.

GEORGE

Let's go Mrs. Emeritus.

Except -

Martha wears a gorgeous evening gown - and pink, fluffy house slippers.

George is formally dressed - still without trousers.

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