

The Writer's Muse

By
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STORY OF THE PLAY

The blank page. It strikes fear into the hearts of writers everywhere, but not student Jan Clark. She thinks writing a novel is the way to an easy A in English class. After battling constant interruptions of well-meaning friends and family, Jan discovers this assignment may be more than she bargained for. All is not lost. Jan is visited by a demanding Muse, who summons a group of struggling actors to play outrageous literary genre characters. As Jan works to finish her story, the actors complain about the size of their parts, the inane dialogue written for them, and the performances of the other actors. Will the Muse be able to corral the actors and guide Jan to her final page? And will Jan have any friends left in the real world? Run time 90 minutes.

CHARACTERS

(Cast of 20: 8 m, 12 w. With doubling, 14: 5 m, 9 w.)

JAN: High school senior. Determined to become a writer.

DAD: Jan's father, sweet but clueless.

TRISHA: Jan's younger sister.

SANDY: Sally's twin sister and Jan's best friend.

SALLY: Sandy's twin sister and Jan's best friend.

MOM: Jan's mother, loves poetry.

AXLE: Jan's boyfriend.

MUSE: Mythical woman who is only seen and heard by Jan.

THE GENRE CHARACTERS

DETECTIVE: A 1940s detective who wears a fedora and trench coat.

WOMAN: A 1940s woman in distress who needs the detective.

CAPTAIN: A 1960s starship captain.

ALIEN: A 1960s logical alien and assistant to the captain.
Three eyed.

VICTIM: A man trying to escape zombie.

ZOMBIE: A female zombie.

QUEEN: A monarch protecting her kingdom.

SWASHBUCKLER: A villainous swordsman.

TOM: A clean-cut high school student who loves Bobbi Jo.

BOBBI JO: Tom's high school girlfriend.

ZACK: Tom's best friend.

TAYLOR: Zack's girlfriend.

(Roles may be doubled as follows: Detective and The Woman with Swashbuckler and Queen; Captain and Alien with Zack and Taylor; and Zombie and Victim with Trisha and Dad.)

SETTING

Single set. All action takes place the bedroom of Jan Clark. There is a door, a window, a desk with a laptop, and a bed. The set can be created without walls with the window and door framed out. If it is a full set, the walls can be adorned with various posters that are in fashion for a girl of that age.

SCENES

Act I: Saturday morning.

Act II: Four weeks later.

PRODUCTION NOTE

All of the genre characters should be playing their roles broadly and over the top.

ACT I

(AT RISE. JAN appears in the doorway.)

JAN: *(Calling down the hallway.)* Now remember, I don't want any interruptions. I'm writing. *(Closes the door. Goes about organizing the room, first sitting at her desk, then adjusting the chair and turning on the laptop. Turns off her cell phone.)* There. No distractions. Okay, today is the day. This is the start of my writing career. Open up Word. Here we go. *(Stares at the screen. Nothing happens.)* Okay, here we go. *(Stares harder, straining. Still nothing.)* Oh, come on. I finally have some peace and quiet and my brain is as blank as this screen.

(SFX: Knock on the door.)

DAD: *(Off.)* Jan, can I come in?

JAN: No, I'm writing.

DAD: *(Off.)* What?

JAN: I'm writing. I'm in the middle of...uh...

DAD: *(Off.)* What?

(JAN gets up, crosses to door and opens it, revealing DAD.)

JAN: Yes?

DAD: Oh, hi.

JAN: Dad, I'm writing.

DAD: That's great.

JAN: What do you need?

DAD: Yeah, what was it?

JAN: I don't know, but I need to get back to work.

DAD: Is this for school?

JAN: Yes and no.

DAD: Filling out another college application?

JAN: No. Everything's in the mail.

DAD: Exciting isn't it?

JAN: Dad?

DAD: Yes?

JAN: You came up here for a reason, right?
DAD: Sure.
JAN: And that was?
DAD: *(Stumped.)* It was...it was...give me a minute.
MOM: *(Calling from downstairs.)* Edgar.
DAD: What?
MOM: Is Jan eating with us or not?
DAD: I don't know.
MOM: *(Off.)* Did you ask her if she wants a hot dog?
DAD: Do you want a hot dog?
JAN: No.
DAD: *(Calling down.)* She said no.
MOM: *(Off.)* Okay.
JAN: I'm not hungry.
DAD: You sure?
JAN: Yes. Now go.
DAD: I'm grilling them. It wouldn't be any trouble.
JAN: I'm closing the door now.
DAD: *(Still in the doorway.)* If you change your mind...
JAN: You'll be the first to know. *(Closes door.)*
DAD: *(Off.)* Love you.
JAN: *(By rote.)* Love you. *(Heads back to desk.)* No one listens. You tell anyone and everyone that today, today is the day that you, finally, have set aside to write your book. Do they listen? No! Instead, they're yelling up and down the stairs about hot dogs. Hot dogs...death on a bun. Now, where was I? *(Settles back into chair and stares at the screen.)* Okay, I'm ready. *(Squints at the screen.)* Still ready... *(Massages temples.)* Maybe if I close my eyes.

(SFX: Knock on the door.)

JAN: *(Cont'd.)* Leave me alone.

(SFX: More knocking.)

JAN: *(Storms over to door. Cont'd.)* Dad, I told you... *(Opens door to reveal TRISHA.)* What do you want?
TRISHA: It's really important.

JAN: I'm already doing something important.

TRISHA: *(Moves past JAN into room.)* This is life and death.

JAN: Uh huh.

TRISHA: My phone's dead, and Dad's lost the power cord.

JAN: You have your own power cord, don't you?

TRISHA: Till Dad borrowed it.

JAN: How does he get dressed in the morning?

TRISHA: I don't want to think about that. Jeez, what a creepy thing to say.

JAN: Thanks. Now get out.

TRISHA: Oh, come on. Lori was texting me about her date with Mark and right then and there, it goes dead.

JAN: You're right. That is life or death.

TRISHA: See? I told you.

JAN: Get out.

TRISHA: Oh please, Jan. This is so important to me.

JAN: Just call her on the house phone.

TRISHA: The house phone? No. She'll think I'm desperate and nosey.

JAN: You are desperate and nosey.

TRISHA: But I don't want her to think that.

JAN: Even if it's true?

TRISHA: Especially if it's true. Oh please, please, please, Jan. Please, I'll do anything. Please, please, please!

JAN: Stop it. Okay, I'll give you my cord on two conditions.

TRISHA: Anything.

JAN: You don't let Dad borrow my cord.

TRISHA: Done.

JAN: And you get out and don't come back. *(Hands HER the power cord.)*

TRISHA: *(Squeals.)* Sure, sure. *(Stops and looks at the power cord.)* Hey. This doesn't fit my phone.

JAN: Really? I thought you had an X.

TRISHA: No, I have an X2.

JAN: And they have different power ports?

TRISHA: As if you didn't know.

JAN: Honestly...

TRISHA: What a dirty trick. You led me on.

JAN: No, I didn't.

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