

# JOBEY & KATHERINE

by  
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The play takes place in a cannery town, mostly in Katherine's home, during a night, a day, and another night.

The cast of characters, in order of appearance, are:

THE MAILMAN..... 30s/40s, a public servant.

JOBAY MacKENZIE..... 40s/50s, a fisherman, long  
thought to have died at sea.

KATHERINE ZUKOWSKI..... 30s/40s, a one-time cannery floor  
worker, now low-level executive.

JOBAY & KATHERINE

## ACT ONE

## Scene 1

(A mailman enters carrying a large, leather bound book. He opens the book and reads.)

## MAILMAN

"And the salts of the oceans rose in droplets throughout the heavens and, being carried across the lands by the winds and various weather systems unnamed, reminded the people of that which they could not remember. Of that which remained with them still, not in their minds, but in their flesh. Of that which they knew to be only and simply a kind of craving, familiar and itself unnamed."

(He closes the book.)

## MAILMAN

"The people craved a something and they knew not what that something was."

(Beat)

We live in a world of symbols. We live in a world of physical reality. In what, then, should we believe? The God shows us the way.

(Pointing to his tongue)

Here.

(Massaging his belly)

Here.

(Gesturing to his crotch)

And here. This is the language of The God. These are the words employed. Listen. Can you hear them?

(Beat)

A recitation from The Book of Origins.

(He opens the book to the appropriate page and reads.)

## MAILMAN

"Once upon a time there was a land, a special land which was fresh and new and clean and wonderful, and the water that flowed through this land was as clear as The God is good." Praise be The God. "The people came, and from the land they took its meats and roots and timber, its iron and copper and leather hides. From the land they took its

MAILMAN(Cont'd.)

mercury and its gold, its venison, cheese and wild corn. Families came, and their families made families. And from the land they took its grains and its poultry, its oats, its apples, its beef. It was a land of plenty. Yes, a land of everything. And yet, still, there was a something that the people did crave." And do you know what that something was? "Year after year after year after year the land" - this land - "yielded to the people the flavors and the tastes, the textures, sights and sounds they desired. It yielded to the people its glassware and its power. Its ceramics. Its ironworks. And the very idea that life" - Life! - "was, and always would be, a voyage of pleasure. A voyage of endlessnesses and delight. It was a land of wonder, oh yes, a land of buildings and of awe. And yet, still, there was a something left undelighted."

(He closes the book.)

MAILMAN

"The people craved a something and they knew not what that something was."

(He clutches the book to his chest. Lights fade to black.)

## ACT ONE

## Scene 2

(Midnight. Katherine's house. The set consists of a modest first floor living area: a couch, an easy chair, a footstool, a coffee table, a television, etc. Upstage right is a tiny kitchen area separated from the living room by a counter. Upstage center is the front door to Katherine's house. Upstage left is a staircase which leads to Katherine's bedroom upstairs. Two competing motifs define Katherine's interior design scheme. "The Sea", as expressed through picture's of fish, boats, the ocean, fishermen, cannery images, etc. is the dominant of the two. The other motif is an expression of some kind of spirituality, an invention of the play, complete with posters of positive sayings, holy objects, and a portrait of someone who might appropriately be described as "The Founder". The one object which doesn't fit into either scheme is a large, spotted, porcelain cat placed prominently somewhere in the living room. Jobey, dressed head to toe in deep sea fisherman's winter gear, sits in an easy chair watching T.V. Katherine enters carrying mugs of soup for the both of them. She places the tray on the coffee table, turns the T.V. off, and seats herself on the couch.)

## KATHERINE

It's so good to have you home, Jobey. After all this time. Back home where you belong. Where you're loved and cherished and your presence alone is enough to create a rush of pleasant memories and welcome associations among those who see you. Among those who know you're in the room.

## JOBAY

Yes. It's good to be home, Katherine. With you. In your home. I look about me and I see the things that are yours and I know that they are yours just by the sight of them. That porcelain cat there, with its red and green spots. Yes. That couldn't be other than yours. And this foot stool, blood red and corduroy, with the three thick legs stretching out beneath it to the floor like the petals of an inverted woodland flower. Oh, yes.

JOBEY(Cont'd.)

And this television. This one here. This, too, is yours. I know that it is. And I know that it is just by the look of it.

KATHERINE

Yes.

JOBEY

This is your home, Katherine. Yes. Yes it is. And these things? These are your things.

KATHERINE

Well, then. You're home.

JOBEY

Yes.

KATHERINE

You're in my home.

JOBEY

What else is there to be said?

(Beat)

I've missed you.

KATHERINE

I've missed you, too.

(Beat.)

JOBEY

I must tell you, Katherine, many's the night I stood at the bow of the ship, staring out across the black expanses during a chase down of some deep sea heavies, dreaming of the day I might come back to your home. To speak to you as I'm doing right now.

KATHERINE

The stories. I'd like to hear them.

JOBEY

I left this town a cannery boy, you know. As little more than a meat-packing boy.

KATHERINE

That story I know well.

JOBEY

But I return to you a fish-killing man. A fish-killing man  
come home to drag you screaming to the bottom of the sea.

(Beat.)

KATHERINE

That story I'm not so familiar with.

JOBEY

I'll have to teach it to you, then.

KATHERINE

Is it a happy story?

JOBEY

It ends with you in my arms.

KATHERINE

Then I'm sure it's one I'd be happy to hear.

(Beat.)

JOBEY

And you, dear Katherine? Are the cannery floors as much a  
memory for you as they are for me?

KATHERINE

They are. The day you left I began my ascent at the  
cannery, and I tell you I haven't allowed that ascent to  
wane for a moment.

JOBEY

The striving, I remember.

KATHERINE

There are too many things I want from this life, you see.  
And I'll not let a something stand between me and that  
which The God has in store for me.

JOBEY

Even me?

(Beat.)

KATHERINE

Oh. Look what I have here, Jobey.

JOBEEY

Dear God, I'm empty.

KATHERINE

Look, now. Look what I've brought you. Soup.

JOBEEY

Soup?

KATHERINE

Yes. Soup. For the both of us.

JOBEEY

(Seeing the soup)

Ahhh.

KATHERINE

I can see that you're pleased.

JOBEEY

I am.

KATHERINE

You're hungry?

JOBEEY

Of course.

KATHERINE

I could tell.

(Katherine stands and crosses upstage, facing the door to her house.)

KATHERINE

I could tell by the expression on your face when you walked into this home several moments ago. "By the color of your cheek", as my mother used to say.

JOBEEY

What else did your mother used to say?

KATHERINE

Oh, many things, Jobey. Many, many, many things.

JOBEEY

I should like to hear them.



KATHERINE

Perhaps you shall, then.

JOBEY

I should like to hear them all.

(In a sudden motion, Katherine opens the door and stands before it, facing out. Jobey remains focused on the soup.)

KATHERINE

But the look on your face when I opened that door several moments ago. My. My, but that was something to see, wasn't it? The things that went through my mind.

JOBEY

Tell them to me.

KATHERINE

The things?

JOBEY

Yes.

KATHERINE

All right. I'll tell them to you right now. I thought to myself -

JOBEY

Here we go, then.

KATHERINE

Why, this is Jobey, isn't it? Yes. Yes it is. He knocked on the door. I opened it. And here he is. We're looking at each other right now. This is not a dream. This is real. This is really happening. And after all this time, too. Oh.. Oh, wait a moment. What's this? I can see his lips separating from each other. I can see the tops of his teeth. What's he doing? What's this, now? He's.. he's..

JOBEY

Hello, Katherine.

KATHERINE

Ahhh. To hear his voice again. After all this time. This is pleasure, isn't it? Pleasure in my life? To feel it? Right now? Here, then, this is for you.

JOBey

Hello, Jobey.

KATHERINE

I did it. I've done it. I've done my part. How many times had I played this scene in my mind?

JOBey

(Reaching for the soup)

This piece of food.

KATHERINE

How many times had I rehearsed my lines, hoping, dreaming, pleading with The God that this moment might happen? Hoping that I might play my part appropriately?

JOBey

Yes.

KATHERINE

And, here, it happened.

JOBey

It had.

KATHERINE

It has.

JOBey

Yes.

(Exhausted, he collapses back in his chair.)

JOBey

It has.

(Katherine slams the door and spins around to face Jobey.)

KATHERINE

I must tell you, sometimes I doubted the moment. Oh yes. Sometimes I saw myself slamming the door in your face.

JOBey

Slamming the door to drive me away.

KATHERINE

Oh, but other times we embraced and laughed and cried and laughed and cried just like I see my favorite characters do on T.V. Or even in the movies.

(Beat)

And then there were times...there were times when I saw the gun in my hand. Praise be The God, and where did that come from? I don't own a gun. Or do I? Still? I thought I got rid of it. And the squeezing. The squeezing. The click, the bang, the crime right there on my front doorstep. Or in the house, here on the carpet. Or maybe upstairs.

(She crosses to the foot of the stairs, peering up toward her room.)

KATHERINE

Oh yes. Then. When I had you undressed. After I showed you the things that I have up there. Sometimes I saw the story ending that way. But the moment came, after all this time it came, and he said

JOBEY

Hello Katherine.

KATHERINE

And the moment came and I said

JOBEY

Hello Jobey.

KATHERINE

And the moment was. It just...was. It existed just as I knew it would. As I always knew it would. Thanks. Thanks, The God. Thanks be to The God for allowing a poor woman to experience the realization of her fantasy life. Thanks be to the various purposes of The God.

JOBEY

May I come in, Katherine? Would that be all right? That would be all right, wouldn't it?

KATHERINE

Ahhh. You looked so hungry. You looked so cold. So wet. Of course I let you in. You came in and sat yourself down on my easy chair. Quietly, you turned on the television set, my television set, and began viewing the things that were going on in there as you always liked to do. And me?

(She crosses to the kitchen.)

KATHERINE

I went to my kitchen - my silent, useful kitchen - and began to prepare something to take the cold away. Yes. Yes I did. I began to prepare something for the both of us. And that was only moments ago.

JOBEY

You must have been thinking of the soup.

KATHERINE

Hmm?

JOBEY

There you must have been thinking of the soup.

KATHERINE

Oh. Yes.

JOBEY

In your thoughts you were referring to the soup.

KATHERINE

Yes. That was the reference.

JOBEY

And here it is. Here is that soup you were referring to.

(Katherine returns from the kitchen.)

KATHERINE

Brought back to the present at last.

(She returns to her seat on the couch.)

KATHERINE

You've waited long enough, Jobey. Have some soup, then. Eat it.

JOBEY

I hope it hasn't grown too cold.

KATHERINE

After all this time?

(Jobey drinks.)

JOBEY

This soup is good, Katherine.

KATHERINE

Good. I'm glad you like it.

JOBEY

It's very good.

KATHERINE

Tomato soup.

JOBEY

It's very good.

KATHERINE

I'm glad. I chose the tomato soup, Jobey, because I remembered how it was your favorite soup. No soup was as special to you as the tomato soup was.

JOBEY

It was the purest.

KATHERINE

It was and is. All the days we ate together at the cannery. All the lunches. Hot lunches, too. It was the tomato soup which you chose.

JOBEY

I would ask for it.

KATHERINE

The cafeteria boys knew what you were about in those days.

JOBEY

Twenty minutes only and then back to work. Back to work for the cannery boys and girls.

KATHERINE

Not much time.

JOBEY

Time enough for soup.

KATHERINE

Time enough for tomato soup. It's true, I kept a can here for you. All this time, I kept a can. In that kitchen cupboard. That one there.

JOBEY

And now it's in my belly.

KATHERINE

Part of it is. But what of the mixer? Water or milk? Now, that's the thing of it. Water makes it lighter.

JOBEY

Milk makes it creamier.

KATHERINE

I chose the water.

JOBEY

That was my favorite.

KATHERINE

I chose it.

JOBEY

That's the purest.

KATHERINE

Slowly. Slowly. Mixing the water in bit by bit. That's the thing of it.

JOBEY

Otherwise you get chunks in the soup. Chunks of soup in the soup. An abomination. Impure. A horror.

KATHERINE

I took special care. I always took special care.

JOBEY

And yet, I know of the horrors. From my time on the ship.  
(Breaking down)  
They made me put it in my belly.

KATHERINE

Oh, Jobey. The stories.

JOBEY

The things they made me eat.

KATHERINE

Dear Jobey.

JOBEY

Mashed potatoes cold and dry except for where it had come into contact with the gravy. Watery gravy. Nice and salty but gray, not brown and chunky. Not brown at all. Toast, thin, white and damp which hadn't even the heat to melt a paddy of butter. Spaghetti and meatballs where the spaghetti had long since turned to mush, not a thing to chew on but a mush to dissolve in your mouth like a pudding. Chewy meatballs, more sausage than meatloaf, and small. Too small. Soggy bacon! Cold scrambled eggs, runny and untrustworthy! And all of it served on stainless steel trays like what you get for a frozen dinner but strong as steel! My fork scraped against the steel of those trays! Every day it scraped against it! Every day it did just that!

KATHERINE

Praise be The God.

JOBEY

They made me eat those things! They made me do so many different kinds of things.

(He weeps.)

KATHERINE

Drink, now. Drink. Put it in your belly.

(He drinks, becoming revitalized by the soup.)

KATHERINE

That's right, Jobey, feel the flavors on your tongue. Feel how good it is to have it inside you.

(Jobey finishes the soup. They eye each other warmly.)

JOBEY

You were kind to let me into your home, Katherine. Those several moments ago.

KATHERINE

"Though you see not its oarlocks, its wooden planks, you live your days on a lifeboat adrift. There are many people on the life boat. Look, can you see them? Share the fresh water with kindness."

JOBEY

So says The God.

KATHERINE

Praise be The God.

(They stare deeply into each other's eyes for a moment.)

KATHERINE

I have missed you, Jobey. I must say that. I have missed the touch of your body.

JOBEY

Even now?

KATHERINE

Yes. Especially now.

(Jobey rises from his chair with difficulty, takes a step, and collapses into Katherine's waiting arms.)

KATHERINE

Oh, Jobey. Jobey Jobey Jobey Jobey Jobey.

JOBEY

Oh Katherine. These past few years, they've been so hard.

KATHERINE

I want to hear the stories.

JOBEY

So hard for me. So very, very hard.

KATHERINE

The mashed potatoes, I know.

JOBEY

I'll not let you drive me away again, Katherine.



KATHERINE

The striving.

JOBEY

I'll not let you slam the door on my face.

KATHERINE

Here, on the carpet.

JOBEY

Or upstairs. In your room.

KATHERINE

Praise be The God, how cold you've become.

JOBEY

Oh, Katherine, all the moments I was gone - the tens of thousands of millions of billions of moments I was gone - I never stopped thinking about you. Ever. Visually. Textually. You were always at the very forefront of my consciousness. Always.

KATHERINE

Like an icicle.

JOBEY

That's why I came to this house. There are many places in the world, tens of hundreds of thousands at least. And there are people in those places, in many of them. This I know for a fact. But this place, this specific place with its mugs and foot stools and porcelain cats and television sets - this place, this is the place where Katherine lives. So this is where I came. Where Katherine...is.

KATHERINE

It's so good to have you home.

JOBEY

Yes.

KATHERINE

Back home where you belong.

JOBEY

Yes.

KATHERINE

Where people know you by sight. Where people, when they see you from close or from afar, say to themselves "That's Jobey, all right. I know him and am familiar with his personal history."

JOBEY

It's good to be home.

KATHERINE

Would you like to see my bed room now?

JOBEY

Oh yes.

KATHERINE

I want to show you the things that I have in there. Would that be all right?

JOBEY

That would be just fine.

(Katherine takes Jobey by the hand and leads him to her room upstairs. Halfway up the stairs, Jobey stops, surveying the room.)

JOBEY

I imagined this moment, you know. In my mind, I saw it all as it is happening right now.

KATHERINE

Such was the strength of your yearning.

JOBEY

Everything was exactly as it is right now, you know. Everything.

(Beat)

Everything, save one detail. One detail out of place.

KATHERINE

Oh?

JOBEY

That's right.

KATHERINE

Tell it to me, then.

JOBEY

The detail?

KATHERINE

That's right.

JOBEY

All right, then. I'll tell it to you right now. In my mind...in my mind a package lay on the table. A simple cardboard package rested on the edge of your table, that one there. It lay on the table fully opened without a person in the house to examine it.

(Beat)

What was in the package?

KATHERINE

What package?

JOBEY

The package in my mind.

KATHERINE

I must say, Jobey, the only package I've received of late is you. You'll be my little package for the night.

JOBEY

But in my mind I saw it. Maybe my mind was wrong.

KATHERINE

And maybe your mind was cold. Unbelievably cold. Ungraspably cold.

JOBEY

Like an icicle. Like something made out of ice.

KATHERINE

Oh, the things I'm going to do to your body a few moments from now.

JOBEY

Take the cold away, Katherine. Take the cold away from my body.

KATHERINE

That's what I'll do, then.

(They continue up the stairs. Lights fade.)

JOBEY

If only for a moment.

KATHERINE

That's exactly what I'll do.

(They disappear into Katherine's room.  
Blackout.)

## ACT ONE

## Scene 3

(Lights up on the mailman holding his large, leather bound book. He reads.)

## MAILMAN

"Though you see not its oarlocks, its wooden planks, you live your days on a lifeboat adrift. There are many people on the lifeboat. Look, can you see them? Share the fresh water with kindness."

(Looking to the audience)

With kindness.

(Reading again)

"For one day the oceans will water the boat. That day may come tomorrow, with black skies and rain clouds. That day may come during the time of your children, with meal worms feasting through the bottom. And that day may come in ten-billion years time, when the sun swallows hole the substance of the Earth, transforming every tomb, every cradle, every structure, every creature, every woman, every man, and every Thought of Man into hydrogen. But do not doubt that that day will come, and that I will announce its arrival with trumpets."

(He closes the book.)

## MAILMAN

The Founder built the cannery, and to the cannery the people came. The Founder built the roads, and to the cannery the night-riders came, bringing in their cargo of deep sea heavies only to carry them away as any one of the seventeen delicious recipes we offer the peoples of the earth. The Garlic Mash. The Grey Fish with Roasted Sweet Peppers in Brine. The Founder brought in the civil engineers and the health care workers. The Founder brought in the patrolmen, the street sweepers, and yes, even a postal worker or two to tend to the day-to-day goings-on of our very own cannery boys and girls.

(He opens the book to appropriate page and reads.)

## MAILMAN

The Founder writes...(page 457)... "How completely do our little tins - the Honey Salmon, the Three-Weathered Dill-Spiced Perch - defeat history (the endlessness of what was

MAILMAN(Cont'd.)

once our taken for granted engagement as hunter-gatherer  
monkey-men). Desire brought me to their recipes, Desire  
leads us to The God. Through desire we defeat history, but  
we defeat desire only when we cheer history as it defeats  
ourselves. When will that day come?"

(He closes the book.)

MAILMAN

The people craved a something, and The Founder - our  
Founder - knew exactly what that something was.

(Blackout.)