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THE REVENANTS
BY S. THOMASIN BARSOTTI

S. Thomasin Barsotti
barsots@gmail.com
scottiebarsotti.wordpress.com
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THE REVENANTS

CHARACTERS:

KAREN

GARY

JOSEPH, KAREN'S HUSBAND

MOLLY, GARY'S WIFE

All four wear wedding bands.

SETTING:

An unfinished cellar under a home in a small town. Joseph and Molly are chained up, anchored to elements of the set for most of the play; these may be pipes, fixtures, anything secure. There are two entrances into the space, a staircase that leads up into the house, and a second door that leads to the garage. High up on one side is a short window looking to the outside, smaller than could be easily crawled through. Faint light comes in through here. Various boxes and milk crates litter the basement, and an old couch. There is no electricity, so they should have a candle and flashlights. Somewhere on stage should be located an umbrella, a wooden baseball bat, a hammer, a hunting knife, and a broomstick. A work bench with menacing looking tools on one wall.

SCENARIO/NOTES:

The near future. A zombie apocalypse has occurred, like we're familiar with from horror films. However, the scope here, unlike in zombie movies, is much more intimate, about what's happening in here, not what's happening out there. The play may begin where the text begins, or an intro may be created to imply global chaos and violence (radio announcements, tv reports, screams, explosions, etc.) for context before the characters enter.

The zombies' moaning should be incessant, though it should not overpower dialogue. There should be peaks and valleys, variations, brief moments of silence, a sort of guttural score to the play. The zombies are intended to be much more than groaning, slaving monsters. There should be moments in which audience members (as well as Gary and Karen) are unsure whether or not Molly and Joseph know what they're doing, what their intentions are. Maybe they are trying to communicate, to scold, to plea, to connect, etc. with Gary and Karen. Their eyes are hard to read. When they bite, it could be to feed; it could be to injure; or just a lashing out, as a frustrated dog might. It's entirely possible they are still present but have simply lost all of their mechanisms of expression. But then, at other times, they may seem hopelessly dangerous. Is this death? Is it sickness? Are they gone? There should be no easy answer.

Stage directions are intended as guidelines to track the zombie characters, they do not necessarily need to be concretely interpreted, except where actions move the plot forward.

THE REVENANTS

Scene 1 - a cellar, late evening

At rise, a dark, empty cellar. Sounds from outside. People approaching. Gary enters, with Molly slung over his shoulder. Molly has been badly wounded. The only light comes from the outside and Gary's cell phone. Panic. Confusion.

MOLLY:

Gary—

GARY:

Ok, ok. Everything's gonna be fine. Everything's gonna be fine.

(to the room)

Anyone here? Anyone in here?

Karen comes in. Panic. Confusion.

KAREN:

Is it clear?

GARY:

Yeah, yeah.

KAREN:

It's safe?!

GARY:

Yeah, safe enough, bring him in.

KAREN:

I need help, he's dead weight.

MOLLY:

Gary—!!

GARY:

Ok...ok...Molly, can you hear me? Don't try to move. I'll be right back.

They rush off. Molly moans loudly, retches and wheezes. She's reacting grotesquely to something internal.

MOLLY:

Gary...

They come back, each helping Joseph to walk. As Karen said, he's nearly all dead weight, dragging his feet, badly wounded as well.

GARY:

Come on, bring him over here. Come on, Joe.

JOSEPH:

Where are we, Karen?

KAREN:

Someone's basement, Joe. I don't know. It's safe. There's no one here.

JOSEPH:

I'm in trouble.

GARY:

Just relax, Joe. Everything's gonna be fine.

KAREN:

Careful.

(They set him down, a bit roughly)

Fucking careful!

Karen looks at Joseph's wounds. Gary looks around in paranoia, making sure they're alone, eyes both Molly and Joseph with fear. Molly and Joseph are both violently ill.

GARY:

Shit, the garage!

Gary runs out the second door.

KAREN:

Gary! Gary! Shit...come on Joe, look at me.

JOSEPH:

Karen, are you there?

KAREN:

I'm here.

JOSEPH:

I can't see.

KAREN:

I'm here, I'm here.

JOSEPH:

They got Molly, too.

KAREN:

I know, I know.

MOLLY:

(Molly vomits blood, catching much of it in her hands)

Oh god...oh god...

KAREN:

Fuck. Oh, fuck. Gary?!

Gary comes flying back in as she calls for him.

GARY:

What what what?!

Molly grabs him aggressively, clutching him, smearing blood on his clothes. It scares him.

MOLLY:

Gary...uhh...please...

GARY:

Oh fuck, Molly, Molly, I have to--

MOLLY:

S-s-s-stay.

(she shudders in pain, doubles over, releases him)

GARY:

I'll be right back, Molly, I'll...I'll be right back.

JOSEPH:

Karen?

KAREN:

What, Joe?

JOSEPH:

I love you.

KAREN:

I know you do.

JOSEPH:

I do.

KAREN:

You don't have to say it. Don't try to talk.

Joseph retches. Molly wails. Gary comes running back in.

GARY:

This is...oh no...Cooper?

KAREN:

What?

MOLLY:

Gary...

GARY:

Shit...this is...
They're gonna...

KAREN:

What, Gary, calm down...did you bar the door??

GARY:

FUCK!

KAREN:

Gary, come on, I need you!

GARY:

Yes...

KAREN:

We're safe here? You didn't see any more out there?

GARY:

No...no more...

MOLLY:

Gary, please...

JOSEPH:

Karen...please...

Gary pulls Karen aside.

GARY:

Are we staying with them?

KAREN:

What do you mean?

GARY:

I mean...we're staying with them, right?

*Karen and Gary stare at each other, then their spouses.
Blackout. There are loud noises outside. Explosions.
Helicopters.*

In the black Joseph and Molly cry out as their conditions worsen. Their cries become pained moans. Gary and Karen are heard laboring, gathering materials in great haste, heavy breathing.

Brief light on Joseph, slumped on the floor, shaking violently.

Lights out. Activity in the black.

GARY:

Get this around him.

KAREN:

Will that hold?

GARY:

I don't know, yeah, I think so.

Brief light on Molly, sitting against the wall, shaking, breathing very heavily. Joseph lies still near her. He has some sort of harness around him.

Lights out. Activity in the black.

KAREN:

We don't have long.

GARY:

I know, I...I think that's as good as we can get it.

MOLLY:

Gary...Gary...Gary...Gary...

KAREN:

It won't give?

GARY:

Probably not. No.

Brief light on Molly and Joe. Joe slowly twitches, his legs move very slightly. Molly is harnessed as well, lying still near Joseph.

Lights out.

Brief light on Gary and Karen, standing apart from their spouses.

KAREN:

Ok. So what now?

Black out. We hear a loud rumbling, and the moaning of the zombie horde. But that all fades away into silence.

Days pass.

Scene 2 – a few days later

At rise, Joseph and Molly. Zombies. They are chained up with found objects (eg. chains, bike chains, backpacks, bungee cords, carabiners, etc). They watch and breathe: raspy, shallow, mechanic. Nothing happens.

Then, Karen and Gary come in, Karen struggling with a heavy-looking duffel bag. Molly and Joseph respond, locking their eyes on them and watching.

GARY:

Move, Cooper, come on! Get inside.

KAREN:

Just get the door.

GARY:

(checks the exit)

NEVER again! Fucking NEVER!

KAREN:

SHH! Would you / be quiet?

GARY:

Fuck! I fuckin' hate you for that!

KAREN:

I'm sorry, ok?! I'm sorry.

GARY:

Was so fucking stupid. Don't fucking / touch me, Cooper!

KAREN:

Stop it, you're alright.

GARY:

Fuck me, I'm alright!

KAREN:

Gary, stop. Please. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

GARY:

She fuckin' grabbed me. That one fuckin' grabbed me!

KAREN:

I know.

GARY:

Fuckin' grabbed me...with her stupid fucking Mickey Mouse sweatshirt.

KAREN:

I know, but / she didn't...

GARY:

I don't want them anywhere near me.

KAREN:

Ok, Gary, settle down. You're ok. We made it back.

GARY:

They didn't follow us?

KAREN:

No, we were way ahead.

GARY:

There were so fucking many.

KAREN:

Uh-huh.

GARY:

Did you see? There weren't any behind us? None / in sight?

KAREN:

No, there weren't any. You didn't look?

GARY:

No, I didn't fuckin' look.

KAREN:

It's ok, we're fine!

GARY:

Yeah yeah yeah, you're right...you're right...we're fine, we just need to be fucking quiet now. That's all.

KAREN:

Yeah.

GARY:

Fucking quiet.

Pause. Breathing.

KAREN:

We still need to get food.

GARY:

Yeah, who's fault is that? What / the fuck were you thinking?

KAREN:

I know, ok, I wasn't trying to—I was just saying—

GARY:

I'm not going out there anymore unless I have to. Necessities. Not sentimental—
(stops himself saying 'bullshit')

KAREN:

Ok, Gary.

GARY:

Anytime we're out there I can hardly...I just...can't let anything happen to you.

KAREN:

Don't be so worried about what happens to me.

GARY:

What do you mean don't—you're my friend. You're my best friend's wife.

KAREN:

You just don't want to be left alone.

GARY:

That too.

KAREN:

You're right, ok? Is that what you want to hear? You're right. We should've gone to a store first, and then my house.

GARY:

We shouldn't have gone to your fucking house at all.

KAREN:

I thought we had more in our pantry...

GARY:

Tell me he at least has a gun in there, a machete, something we can use.

KAREN:

No, Joe does not keep a machete in his duffel bag.

GARY:

I can still feel her on me. Anytime one of them touches me I can feel it for hours, fucking rough, clammy—

KAREN:

Stop it. Seriously. What should we do? You want me to go back out?

GARY:

Yeah, right. No. I'll go, but let's lay low for a bit. You look really tired. Like more than usual.

Yeah? KAREN:

GARY:
Yeah, so just...rest for a while.

KAREN:
Yeah.

(*pause*)
I'd give anything for a shower. I'm disgusting.

GARY:
Fucking insane, just—we come away with Joe's old duffel bag. Great. We nearly got killed for that?

KAREN:
I didn't know what I was looking for.

GARY:
If you're trying to jog memories, why didn't you grab your fuckin' wedding album?

KAREN:
I don't care about what's inside the bag. Look.
(*holds up combination lock looped through duffel's zippers*)
Joe always locked the zippers together. That's what I wanted. Only he knows the combination. If he's in there, he'll remember it. Then it wasn't for nothing.
(*stepping toward Joseph*)

Joe? Joe?

Karen grabs the broom. She taps the floor, keeping a safe distance. Joseph looks at her. He moans at her, a quiet moan from within his throat. He comes as far as his harness allows.

KAREN:
(*like to a child or dog*)
Come on, Joe. C'mon. That's it. Joe? Joe, look what I got for you.

Joseph moans, looks between her and the duffel, but no recollection registers. She pushes it closer to him, pats the duffel to entice him.

KAREN:

Remember this, Joe? You / have to remember.

(pats duffel hard, shaking it)

GARY:

He doesn't have a clue.

KAREN:

Shh! Don't listen to him. Listen to me. Listen to me. This is yours. Your stuff. You remember how to open it?

Joseph reaches out slowly for her. It seems there might be some tenderness in the gesture.

KAREN:

C'mon, Joe...that's it.

Joseph tries to grab her hand but she pulls it away fast enough. He lunges for her with his mouth open, as if to bite her. Gary grabs her and pulls her away more forcefully. Joseph's tether catches.

GARY:

Damnit!

(he takes the broom, pokes Joseph with it)

Back off!

KAREN:

Gary, don't.

GARY:

You see what happens? One of these times you're gonna let him get too close!

(Molly comes toward him. She sort of sneaks up on Gary.

Gary looks at her and it breaks his heart.)

Molly...fuck...stay back there damnit...

Gary pushes Molly with the broom, but not very hard. She grabs the broom and wrenches it from his grasp.

KAREN:

Oh good...real good. That was really smart, Gary.

GARY:

Hey, you trust them so much, you / get it from her.

KAREN:

Whoever said I trusted Molly?

(Molly takes the broomstick in her hands and looks at it. She swings it clumsily into the ground, as though lifelessly swatting an invisible mouse.)

Molly. Gimme the broom. Molly.

(Molly keeps doing what she's doing)

Molly!

(to Gary)

She knows what I want, she's just being a pain in the ass.

GARY:

(turning away)

Give it up. She won't give it to you we'll just have to wait til--

During the following: Karen turns her head toward Gary as he walks away. Molly swings the broom at Karen, hitting her square.

KAREN:

You shoulda thought of that before y—

(THE HIT)

Hey!

(Molly looks at her, exhales loudly)

She did it on purpose!

GARY:

You're standing right in front of her. She's like a toddler with a Wiffle bat.

KAREN:

But--

GARY:

Just leave her alone / and she'll drop it eventually.