

APOCALYPSE HABIT

by

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Cast:

John ..... Male, 25-40. A blogger.

Mary ..... Female, 25-40. John's girlfriend.

Setting:

An empty stage.

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(Lights up on an empty stage. John is in the middle of the stage, facing the audience.)

JOHN

(To audience)

You all may be wondering: why didn't I bring it up right away? I did with my last girlfriend. She liked it, but I always thought she was a bit of an exhibitionist. I guess I just assumed that Mary...well...

The first month of our relationship was great. Spectacular. I arranged a very special first month anniversary, and then surprised Mary with it a couple of days before.

MARY

(Walking on)

The Napa Valley?

JOHN

(To Mary)

Yeah, they have this train that cruises around Napa. You get on the train, eat and drink as you watch the countryside go by. They even have a wine tasting car.

MARY

It sounds wonderful.

JOHN

And there's a one-hour stop to tour an actual winery.

MARY

God, John. Could you be any more perfect?

(Mary walks upstage right)

JOHN

(To audience)

And it was a perfect day. Mostly. Mary likes trains. And she likes wine even more. She did get a little sloshed; she had both her glasses with lunch, and one of mine. But that's okay. And when we got back, well...that really was perfect. No qualifications! How could I not write about it? So I did. But a couple days later...

(Mary walks to John, carrying a stack of papers)

MARY

John, I need to talk to you.

Sure, Snookums. What's up?

JOHN

What is this?

MARY  
(Holds up the papers)

Oh. I see you found my blog.

JOHN

I mean this.

MARY  
(Points at spot on page)

"Last weekend my new girlfriend and I rode the wine train in Napa..."

JOHN

I was writing about our wonderful weekend!

MARY  
(Takes papers back from John)

"She did get a little sloshed..."

"Sloshed?" Excuse me? I was not drunk last weekend.

JOHN

Yes you were.

MARY

How dare you!

JOHN

I'm sorry, but you even fell down once. What would you call that?

MARY

I was just a little buzzed.

JOHN

But I'm not complaining! I had a wonderful time. Especially when we got home and...well, you know...

MARY

You wrote about that too?

JOHN

Only obliquely. It's my diary!

MARY

I don't care! It's humiliating! Do you know who found this? My boss. She comes

walking into my cube in the middle of the day with all this printed out and...

JOHN

I'm sorry! I didn't think you would mind. After what you told me about your past...

MARY

What about my past?

JOHN

Well...that video you told me you were in, for starters. I mean, you...

MARY

That was a mistake.

JOHN

Oh, I...well...look, I'm sorry. But what do you want me to do?

MARY

You can remove that posting, right?

JOHN

Sure.

MARY

Do it. If you want to keep an online diary for the whole world to read, fine. But don't write about me again.

(Cross to upstage right)

JOHN

(To the audience)

And so I did. I debated putting up an explanation, but in the end didn't. I gave a vague reason to the two or three readers who emailed me asking why.

But then something funny happened...

MARY

(Cross to John, limping)

Hi, John.

JOHN

Mary, what's wrong? Why are you limping?

MARY

Oh, I had a little accident.

JOHN

Are you all right? What happened?

MARY

I was at the gym and...I was just being stupid.

(Pause)

I was on the treadmill and I...fell off.

JOHN

You mean as you were getting on?

MARY

No. While the machine was running. I guess I wasn't paying attention as I was running and...instead of stepping on the treadmill, I stepped on the side.

JOHN

Oh.

MARY

And I had one foot on the treadmill, one foot on the side. I lost my balance, fell, and then I just sort of flew off. Hard.

JOHN

Ouch.

MARY

Into a magazine rack.

JOHN

Into a....? Are you all right?

MARY

I'm fine. Except for my leg. And the palms of my hands. And my ego.

JOHN

I'll kiss it and make it all better.

MARY

You're so sweet.

JOHN

Assuming I can find out where your ego is.

MARY

I'll help you look for it.

(Cross upstage right)

JOHN

(To the audience)

I don't know. I thought it was a funny story. I couldn't resist posting it. I knew I shouldn't, but...well, I figured I could hide it. I started another blog, under an



assumed name. I didn't think she'd find it.

MARY

(Remaining upstage right)

"Maria's Treadmill Tumble." by "Juan". Did you think I wouldn't find it?

JOHN

(To Mary)

I changed the names. No one will know.

MARY

Take it down!

JOHN

But...

MARY

I mean it.

JOHN

All right.

(To audience)

And so Juan said "Au revoir."

(Pause)

I continued to write in my real blog, of course. Just not about Mary. Which was hard. I'd been writing for three years, and I've been pretty open about my life. But that's what she wanted, and I loved her.

And then it happened.

"Something terrible happened last night. Mary, my girlfriend was in a car accident. A bad one. She's in a coma. My God, how can this have happened? I haven't posted about her in a while, at her request, but I don't know how to deal with this. The doctors say she had alcohol in her system. Damn it, how could she do this to herself?"

It felt wonderful to post just that short message. And the comments I got back were so supportive. I don't know how I would have gotten through it without them. Did you know that if a coma patient's eyes still dilate, the odds are 80% that she'll survive? And if the ventricles in her brain...

The next day Mary opened her eyes. The following day, she was sitting up and talking. I waited a week, until the day after she was sent home, to confess.

(Mary crosses to center)

MARY

Hi, pooh bear. How are you?

JOHN

Me? I'm fine. How about you?

MARY

I'm doing pretty well. I haven't gotten a headache in two days! Dr. Nguyen says I can go back to work tomorrow. Hooray.

JOHN

That's great. You really had me scared. Do you remember anything?

MARY

Not really. I was driving, and then I woke up in the hospital.

JOHN

Wow. Hmmm.

MARY

What's up?

JOHN

I have a confession to make.

MARY

What sort of confession?

JOHN

I posted about you.

MARY

What? John, I thought we agreed...

JOHN

I know, and I'm sorry. But I was a wreck, and I didn't know what to do, and...

MARY

I don't want my life posted all over the Internet.

JOHN

I'm sorry, I won't do it again. But it was so helpful! I got so much support and information. I mean, look.

(Holds out printed-out version of blog entry  
and contents)

This guy sent me all these links about comas. The doctors wouldn't tell me anything, but once I read this...well, it was the only way I made it through Sunday night.

MARY

Well, if you were just looking for information, I suppose it's all right.

(Mary continues to read)

JOHN

Thanks. You wouldn't believe how...

MARY

What the hell?

JOHN

What?

MARY

"The doctors say she had alcohol in her system." Why did you put that in?

JOHN

Well, you did, and...

MARY

You made me sound like a drunk. How is that relevant to learning about comas?

JOHN

But you did.

MARY

So what? I had a glass of wine with dinner.

JOHN

Your blood alcohol level was 0.07.

MARY

Not drunk!

JOHN

I think it was probably higher before you got to the hospital.

MARY

Please. I can handle my wine.

JOHN

You couldn't that night.

MARY

This isn't about my drinking, John. I told you I didn't want my life posted for the world to see.

JOHN

This is how I deal with my life! Haven't you every kept a diary? This is just like that.

MARY

My diary had a little lock on the front. I didn't tear out the pages and give them to random strangers on the street.

JOHN

It's not like that! My readers have a genuine interest in my life.

MARY

And now they have a genuine interest in mine as well.

JOHN

All right. I'll take off the posting. And I promise I won't post about you ever again. All right?

MARY

I don't know if I can believe you.

JOHN

I took off the other postings.

MARY

So what? This one's been out for, what...ten days? It's a little late. I need to be sure you won't write about me again. Ever.

JOHN

I won't.

MARY

John, I need for you to give up the blog.

JOHN

Give up the...I can't do that.

MARY

It's the only way I can trust you. As long as you're posting, I can't be sure you won't post about me.

JOHN

But I've been writing for three years. My readers...

MARY

Your readers will just have to get lives of their own.

JOHN

It's not about them. It's about me.

MARY

And about me, which is why it needs to stop.

JOHN

No, it's...

MARY

Don't you love me?

JOHN

I can't stop. Yes, yes I love you. I love you more than...but...I don't want to be alone. And I'm not alone when I'm posting. I...how can I explain this?

MARY

I don't know.

JOHN

It's like I'm connecting to something larger than myself.

MARY

You're not making any sense.

JOHN

It's the only way I got through that second night, after your accident. It wasn't just the advice. I needed to pour my heart out and know someone was listening. You go to church.

MARY

A couple of times a year.

JOHN

That's what it's like.

MARY

John, I can't be with someone who shares so much of themselves with strangers. It's weird, and maybe dangerous, and...

JOHN

No, it's not dangerous.

MARY

And I want to be with someone who wants to share themselves with me, not with the entire world.

JOHN

I can't.

I'm sorry.

MARY  
(Mary exits, right)

So am I.

JOHN  
(To audience)

I haven't seen Mary since.

(Pause)

But I've learned my lesson: I'm always upfront about my blogging when I meet someone new. Though I haven't been dating that much recently.

(Pause)

But I still have you!

(Pause)

To leave a comment, click on the link at the bottom of the page.

THE END