

THE CROSS EXAMINATIONS

By Ronald K. Burke

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The Cross Examinations

by

Ronald K. Burke, Ph. D.

CHARACTERS

MALE - dressed in white turtleneck shirt and black pants

FEMALE - dressed exactly like the male

SCENE 1

AT RISE: An empty chair is DC. Stage lights are low. The MALE actor enters from SR, the FEMALE actor enters from SL. The GUY is wearing a white turtleneck shirt and black pants. The GAL is wearing an outfit exactly like the GUY. Both ACTORS meet at CS. EACH ONE is carrying a flashlight. BOTH become annoyed when THEY recognize the OTHER is wearing the same clothes. THEY circle around EACH OTHER very inquisitively, shining the flashlight up and down, around, and over EACH OTHER's body. THEY stop...THEY stare...THEY speak. Now at down CS.

GAL: *(Hands on hips and indignant)* Mimic.

GUY: *(Irritated)* Copy cat.

GAL: *(Whispering)* Culprit.

GUY: *(Softly)* Crook.

(BOTH back off and turn away to think about the situation. Hands on chin, head scratching, arms akimbo, flashing light at ONE ANOTHER. THEY do all of those actions to suggest a perplexing moment. Then THEY turn suddenly and stride toward EACH OTHER slowly. Their bodies are leaning in and THEY speak angrily.)

GAL: *(Sneering)* Burglar.

GUY: *(Nastily)* Sneak thief.

GAL: *(Testily)* Criminal.

GUY: *(Pompously)* Fraud.

GAL: *(Arrogantly)* Petty pig. *(Her cell phone rings.)* I gotta get this.

Hello. Oh yes. We see eye to eye. No, don't go there. That's the ticket. You can say that again. Maybe you're just playing favorites? Well, keep your eyes peeled...okay?

GUY: *(Pacing back and forth and angry that HE has to listen to this phone call)* C'mon, c'mon will ya?

GAL: *(Ignoring HIS remarks as SHE continues to talk on her cell phone)* Strike while the iron is hot. Early to bed-early to rise. The early bird

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catches the worm. Don't count your chickens before they're hatched. A bird in the hand...(Suddenly the phone goes dead...SHE stares at it, hits it, shakes it and SHE gets very angry at it and flings it off stage.)

GUY: Now where were we? Ah yes...(Hautily) Spiteful hag.

(GUY tries to shine flashlight on GAL, but it won't work. HE smacks it to get it to light, and it won't. HE raises the flashlight to hit GAL and SHE retreats to down SL. HE follows her and trips. SHE runs to him at down CS to see if HE is okay. SHE helps HIM up. HE doesn't want her aid. HE brushes himself off and BOTH back away from each other. Then THEY cross slowly toward each other angry again.)

GAL: (Surly) Ungrateful robber.

GUY: (Circling her then looking her up and down) Sneaky con artist.

GAL: (Angered by the last remark from him, SHE walks away.) Phony...Phony... Phony! (SHE sits in a chair and then looks back at him.)

GUY: (Walks toward the chair slowly. HE really doesn't like being called a phony. HE mumbles, scratches his head, wondering.) Phony? (Beat) Phony? Wow! (Mournfully moans) layyy-dee.

GAL: (Sarcastically) That's right (Beat) phony.

(Stage light dim. HE kneels on the stage in front of her as SHE sits in the chair. HE hits HIS flashlight and it works. Then HE shines the flashlight up in HER face. HE begins to question HER as though SHE is a criminal in a police station. SHE stares at him fearfully.)

GUY: (HE looks up at her shining the light at her and speaks in a fast-angry-clipped-staccato) Where-did-you-buy-that-shirt? How-much-did-it-cost? Where-did-you-buy-those-pants? How-much-did-they-cost?

GAL: What is this all about? Stop! Please. Please. Stop! Stop!

GUY: Where? Where? Where did you buy those clothes? Speak up! Now!

GAL: (Shrieking) Stop! Stop! I can't think! I can't breathe. Leave me alone! (Breathes like SHE is hyperventilating and drops her head.)

GUY: (Tough cop) Never mind those flimsy excuses. Answer me! !

GAL: (Frightened) What am I gonna answer? I'm innocent!

GUY: You better think of something. You know what you did.

GAL: What exactly did I do?

GUY: You know.

GAL: (Exasperated) Really. I haven't the foggiest idea what you are talking about.

GUY: Listen to me and listen carefully.

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GAL: Yes. Yes. Go on.

GUY: Where were you on the night in question?

GAL: What night in question?

GUY: You know precisely what night I am talking about!

GAL: I'm sorry Mister. You've got the wrong person.

GUY: Oh so now you're telling me how to do my job, eh?

GAL: There must be some mistake. I think you're in the wrong, Sir.

GUY: Don't tell me I made a mistake. I never do that.

GAL: I think you did this time.

GUY: *(Stands up and paces in front of her)* Don't talk to me in that manner. You hear me?

GAL: I will if I like...you, you, you *(Beat)* thing!

GUY: Stop making me lose my train of thought.

GAL: *(Facetiously)* I would not intentionally make you lose your train of thought.

GUY: *(Kneels down in front of her again)* Well, that's what you think! Now, ... Now for the second time: Where did you buy that shirt? How much did it cost? Where did you buy those pants? How much did they cost?

GAL: Can we stop and get a bite to eat? I'm famished.

GUY: We'll do no such thing. Now back to work. Where? Where? When did you buy those clothes? Speak up! Speak up! Now!

GAL: *(Clicks her tongue, "tsk, tsk, tsk,")* I swear...I think you should know you have the wrong person!

GUY: There you go mouthing off again. I don't know what I'm gonna do with you. Come clean! Hear me?

GAL: Why do you pretend to be such a KNOW-IT-ALL? I am astonished at you, Sir. *(SHE begins to recite poetry.)*

(SHE gets off the chair and spins, glides and flutters in light airy movements around the stage while speaking these lines:)

Yes, we are matched in apparel *(Stops and looks at him)*

But my nerves will never shatter *(Dances some more)*

When you glance so lovingly at me *(Glides and dances)*

You are all that can surely matter. *(Stops and stares)*

(SHE dances and speaks the following lines in a sing-song way while fluttering about:)

I love your eyes

I love your broad shoulders

I love your voice

and most of all...I love you.

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(SHE glides around the stage and then SHE returns to the chair.)

(Not to be outdone, GUY responds by pacing back and forth in front of her as would a lawyer to a jury.)

GUY: You're a tricky one I may say *(Points finger at her)*
You surely get my attention *(Opens his arms to her)*
You'll never know how much I conceal *(Turns his back to her.)*
For you are truly worth some great mention. *(Snaps around to face her and speaks firmly.)*
I like your spirit *(Moves in close to her face)*
I like your style *(Moves back quickly)*
I like your looks *(In close to her face again)*
and most of all, I like your stunning smile. *(HE stands back, folds his arms and looks at her.)*

GAL: *(Teasing him)* That wasn't too difficult was it?

GUY: *(Beratingly)* Now just a minute here. I must admit you caught me off my guard. Will you please stop trying to change the subject. Diversion. Diversion. Diversion. That's just got to stop right now!

GAL: *(Ironically)* Who? Me? I don't want to divert your attention. That's the last thing I want to do...really.

GUY: *(Mystified)* Oh really? Then why do you keep introducing new ideas?

GAL: I do no such thing, my good man.

GUY: I'm not your good man.

GAL: Oh?

GUY: *(Bawling her out.)* Now see here. We need to get back to our inquisition.

GAL: Inquisition? Now wait a minute here. That's a mighty scary word...

GUY: Scary? No way. In exactly ten seconds I want you to come clean on this matter or you'll face the consequences.

GAL: What matter? What consequences?

GUY: Awright, awright. Let's get down to business. Hear me?

GAL: *(Throwing up her hands.)* What ever you say...Sir?

GUY: I'm going to ask you again for the last time. Where did you buy that shirt? How much did it cost? Where did you buy those pants?

GAL: *(Pleading with him)* C'mon let's get something to eat. Ain't...oops...Aren't you hungry?

GUY: I refuse to get caught up in your clever digressions. Now again... How much did they cost? Where? Where? Where did you buy those clothes? Speak up!

GAL: *(Has a big smile on her face as dance music begins in the background and steadily increases.)* Would you care to dance?

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GUY: What? The Samba possibly? The Mambo maybe? or perhaps The Tango?

GAL: *(Surprised)* Why yes...all of those if you'll teach me.

GUY: *(Confessing)* Pffft. I'm only kidding. I've got two left feet.

GAL: *(Hands on hips)* Well, do you want to dance or not?

GUY: *(Agreeable)* Yes, but you'll have to teach me.

GAL: *(SHE yanks him toward her.)* My pleasure. There's nothing to it. Pees-a-cake.

(THEY both assume a dancing position with their arms straight out.)

GAL: Both feet together now.

GUY: How's this?

GAL: Fine.

GUY: What's next?

GAL: Step forward with your left foot. *(GUY reacts.)* Good. Take a side step with your left foot. *(GUY reacts.)* Good. ..and follow that with your right foot. *(GUY reacts.)* Good.

GUY: Like this?

GAL: Yes. Now reverse all those steps. *(GUY does that.)* There. Now you can dance.

GUY: That's it?

GAL: Yes. When you gain confidence, you can embellish each step with your own creative movements.

GUY: *(All enthusiastic now)* I'm ready to trip the light, fantastic if you are.

(THEY embrace and dance to slow music.)

GAL: You have the most beautiful blue eyes.

GUY: You're not such a bad looker yourself.

(During the following dialogue they are not too close but as they speak each line they draw themselves a little closer to each other. The manner of speaking should be breezy, light-hearted and dream-like.)

GAL: *(Almost breathless)* Shall we fly away on a magic carpet?

GUY: *(Heart swelling with joy)* I can think of nothing more heavenly.

GAL: *(Moves in closer)* That is exactly where I want to be.

GUY: *(Pleasantly)* We shall run away from all those noisy crowds.

GAL: *(Enjoying every moment)* Oh, yes, to be near you far away from the masses.

GUY: *(The lover in him emerges.)* And you know very well I'll try to steal a kiss.

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GAL: *(Puts head on his shoulder)* But what if I may turn away?

(Gently lifts her head off his shoulder and as HE looks at her.)

GUY: Then...I will persevere to prove my love for you.

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