The Visitor

By Ev Miller

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Buck Howard is a successful author but his personal life has been marred by the loss of his wife. Howard blames God for this tragedy. He also begins to blame God for every minor ache and pain that comes along. Finally, God decides to confront Howard and visits him in the form of a dapper little man who seems to be somewhat of a klutz. Everything he does seem to turn out wrong and the audience is left wondering just what kind of Deity this is. But is he the stumble john that he seems to be or is it all an act? This very funny play says something important about how we handle what life sends us.

Approximately 90 minutes.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(3 m, 2 w)

HAROLD *(Buck)* HOWARD: A writer; in his mid-50s.

KAREN: Howard's married daughter. Mid-20s.

THE VISITOR: *(Mr. Snow)* Mid to late 20s. Well dressed.

KAY SHERMAN: Early 40s. Attractive woman.

LORAN KENTER: Professional man in his mid-40s.

NOTES ABOUT THE SPECIAL EFFECTS

The play involves the use of several special effects that might, at first appearance, seem difficult. These include the raising of a vase from an end table, the tipping of other vases and a flower pot, the falling of pictures from the wall, etc. Actually, they should not be all that difficult to perform. The vases and pot and tables could simply be attached to very thin wire that would be impossible for the audience to see. The pictures could be fastened to the walls with a nail that goes through the flat. When the pictures are to fall, someone from behind the flat could then push the nail from that direction.

Other special effects include the sound of breakage from the kitchen and from the darkened stage at the end of the play. This could be done with taped noises or, possibly, the breakage of other bottles and glass offstage. As pertains to the snow falling in Act I, the director may simply have Howard speak of it as he looks through the window if the actual effect is too difficult to do onstage.

ACT I

(AT RISE: The curtain opens to the main room of Harold (Buck) Howard's home. It is a rather expensive home set on ocean frontage. Glass doors stage right open to a deck which overlooks the water. The room itself is very much a man's room and is rather messy. Although the furnishings have an air of expense and elegance about them, books and bookcases dominate the room. The door SL leads to the outside. The room is dimly lit in the early morning light and the sound of the surf can be heard dimly from the outside. Slowly, Buck Howard enters the room. He is a large, rawboned, unkempt man in his mid-50s. He wears a pair of baggy pants and a T-shirt which reads "Randy's Tavern - Brew for you." He munches on a piece of toast and sips a cup of coffee. He shuffles through the glass doors onto the deck and leans on the railing. He stretches. Suddenly, he grabs his shoulder in pain. He winces, nearly dropping his coffee cup.)

HOWARD: Ow! Oh, Jeez! Dang it anyway! *(He walks away from the deck and back into the house, holding his shoulder.)* Wonderful! Did it again, didn't you? *(He rubs the shoulder and goes very slowly to a mirror which hangs over a small table. He studies himself in the mirror carefully. He pulls down his lower eyelids one at a time, peering into his eyes. Then, he pats himself under the chin a few times.)* Wonderful! I look like a fat rhinoceros! *(He looks up.)* You get your kicks every day, don't you? If it ain't arthritis, it's a saggin' chin. *(He turns sideways in the mirror and looks at himself in profile. He pulls his stomach in and pats it and then turns the other way and does the same thing.)* You couldn't see fit to make me look like Robert Redford, huh? At least you could have given me that with all the other trouble you've caused...

(He walks painfully to the sofa and sits. He sips his coffee as he leafs through a huge pile of paper on the table before him. He reads for a moment as the PHONE RINGS; he goes to it impatiently.)

HOWARD: *(Continued.)* Yeah? Yeah, hi, Loran... *(Pause.)* Of course I'm up. I'm always up early...you know that...what the heck I got to stay in bed for? *(Pause.)* Yeah...it's done...got it right here...the typist finished it yesterday and dropped it off last night. *(Pause.)* How many pages? Why are you always so darn hung up on length? *(Pause.)* So, I'm wordy...so sue me...*(Pause.)* Just a minute, I'll look. *(He goes to the manuscript and checks the number of pages.)* Loran...2,000 pages...*(He holds the phone away from his ear, wincing as he does.)* Loran...calm down...that's double spaced, you know...*(He sits.)* All right...all right...all right...so we'll edit it a little...*(Pause.)* All right...more than a little... That's what you get your commission for, ain't it? Us creative geniuses can't bother with things like that. *(Pause. He grins.)* Loran! Shame on you! Such language! Always tryin' to be romantic! *(Long pause.)* Yeah...yeah...I'll be here all day. Where would I go? Who? Where's Ken? *(Pause.)* Ken always does the editing, Loran. *(Pause.)* Well, if you'd pay him something decent, he wouldn't have gone over to Harcourt. *(Pause.)* Well, bring her over and we'll take a look at her. Just remember, I want final approval, as usual. *(He hangs up; looks up in the air.)* Wonderful! I suppose it was you that put the idea in Ken's head to go over to Harcourt. I work my buns off on this book for a year and now it's gonna be in the hands of a stranger. Thanks a whole lot! You really are somethin'!

(He is interrupted by the sound of a woman's voice as KAREN HOWARD pokes her head through the door. She is a lovely woman in her late 20s, obviously very pregnant.)

End of Freeview

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