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Off with Y'er Head!

A Reality TV Short Comedy

by
Rebecca Ryland

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Off with Y'er Head

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CHARACTERS

JOHN JACOBS: *Carrie's husband*

CARRIE JACOBS: *John's wife*

SETTING

A room offstage of a TV show filmed live; in a time not so far from now

SYNOPSIS

Carrie and her husband, John, have just appeared as contestants on the first part of a reality TV show titled "Off with Y'er Head!" Each contestant presents grievances about the other before the Queen's Court, like what one might present in a divorce. The Court determines a winner. The winner receives \$10 million and the loser's head is lopped off by the Queen of Hearts herself—that is, unless the loser can convince the winner to forgo the prize money and commute the sentence. Carrie has just won her case and John has ten minutes to convince her to save his head.

Off with Y'er Head

by Rebecca Ryland

A Comedy in One Scene

SETTING: *An offstage room at a reality TV show. A table with two chairs center. The table covered with a white linen table cloth and napkins; on top a bottle of red wine, two stemmed glasses and a vase with three roses. There is a lighted "On/Off Air" sign in the corner of the room above a speaker monitor. Other than that, the room is bare. The "On Air" sign is on.*

AT RISE: *Before lights up: SFX: A crowd cheering and screaming. Lights rise on JOHN and CARRIE seated at the table each with a glass of wine. JOHN downs his glass; CARRIE fingers the stem on her wine glass. The lighted sign switches to "Off Air". SFX fades out.*

For nearly a minute neither speaks as JOHN pours another glass of wine and takes big gulps to down the contents. Otherwise, the stage remains silent.

JOHN sets down his empty glass and wipes his mouth on his sleeve.

JOHN

You know I detest red wine.

CARRIE

I really wish you wouldn't wipe your mouth on your sleeve. We have napkins.

JOHN

Thanks for the lesson in etiquette.

CARRIE

I didn't choose the wine, other than to select "red" where indicated on the contract.

JOHN

I distinctly checked white. And put a note in the margins that I preferred Zinfandel.

CARRIE

For people who don't like wine.

JOHN pours another glass of wine for himself, emptying the bottle.

JOHN

(Facetiously raises the glass to CARRIE)

As the connoisseur of fine wines...

CARRIE

You could save me a drop or two.

JOHN

You didn't seem all that interested. Besides you'll have all the time in the world to drink wine, *red* wine. Alone. I suppose you're really proud of yourself, aren't you? Wrapped the Court right around your little pinky, didn't you? Sobbing like a baby and shaking like a poor little chipmunk about to be scarfed up by a mountain lion.

CARRIE

Mountain lions don't eat chipmunks. A coyote, maybe.

JOHN

Once again, I stand corrected. Can you think of nothing at this moment but criticizing my table manners and correcting my knowledge of flora?

CARRIE

Fauna.

JOHN glares at CARRIE.

CARRIE, *Continued*

Sorry.

JOHN

Sorry? *(Rising; leaning in towards CARRIE)* Sorry! Have you no sympathy?

CARRIE

Me, sympathy? Well, that's pretty hypocritical don't you think? You whooped yer ass off during last week's episode when the verdict came in. What sympathy did you show for that poor woman about to get her head wacked off?

JOHN

What did you expect? She sold her husband's dog. His fucking *Bulldog*.

CARRIE

Pit bulldog A Pit Bull. It bit their kid.

JOHN

She was messin' with it. A kid ought to know better than to dangle a god damn chicken in front of a Pitbull.

CARRIE

It was a rubber chicken.

JOHN

And the dog was supposed to know that?

CARRIE

I should hope it could smell the difference.

JOHN

They aren't bred to smell, they're bred to kill. It was a slam dunk. Whoo-Boya! Ka-ching!

CARRIE

I don't want to fight about this.

JOHN

Why would you? You did what you came here to do. You got a bunch of sappy old women to believe your husband is some kind of uncouth doless douche bag.

CARRIE

You helped select the court. So don't blame me. And you loved it. Hanging out with producers. Getting to call "next" at auditions, like some sort of big shot. Rubbing elbows with celebrities. Your chance to be one of them. They know exactly how to get people like you...like us... to come on a show like this. Besides, there were just as many men as women on the court.

JOHN

Not a bunch of *old* men.

CARRIE

That's because you were so sure that a bunch of men your own age would identify with you. I had the where-with-all to get it that old women have had their fill of men like you and wish to hell they had a show like this back when to get rid of the bastards...and they'd have been just as willing to die trying.

JOHN

Ever hear of Divorce Court?

CARRIE

You have to fork up the big bucks to be on that show. No one watches it anymore. They can't get sponsors and no one gets paid. Not even when you win your case.

JOHN

So you think airing your dirty laundry in front of a bunch of gossipy old women is the only alternative? Saying shit in front of an audience that's no one else's god damn business? It's a stupid show.

CARRIE

You love this show.

JOHN

When it works. When the Court doesn't have its head up its ass. (*Beat; circling the table*) Look, look—we can walk away from this, Carrie. You have the right to override the verdict. You can reverse it altogether. You can throw it out. It's right there in the contract. Kapow! Gone, over and done with. We can walk out of here scot-free, a happy couple. Ready to start anew.

CARRIE

Would you give up ten million dollars?

JOHN

Money doesn't go that far these days.

CARRIE

Would you, had the verdict been in your favor, given up ten million dollars?

JOHN

I'd at least have considered it.

CARRIE

You are such a fucking liar. You would have delivered me lock stock and barrel to the Queen of Hearts yourself. And high-fived every damn guard with their AK40's in that wretched pack of cards. Or slapped the diamonds on their perfectly contoured asses as you paraded me in front of a cheering audience screaming "Off with Y'er Head! Off with Y'er Head!"

JOHN

Deck. Deck of cards. And don't be jealous. I barely noticed their asses. They're just a bunch of lame D-list actors who can't get a call back for a C-rated horror flick.

CARRIE

That doesn't change the shape of their asses.

JOHN

Or yours for that matter.

CARRIE

There. There, see. That's exactly what I knew you would say. You can't help yourself. You're obsessed with my ass. Why, at this moment, would you even think it makes any sense to make some stupid remark about my, my dimpled – but acceptable in today's size 12 is the new size 2 – ass? You hung your hat on my ass and it cost you your head.

JOHN

It was merely my attempt to encourage you to address the underlying cause of our less than stellar sex life.

CARRIE

And you thought the Queen's Court would buy it? You thought that pointing out that my growing three pant sizes after ten years of marriage had crippled your ability to get a fucking hard on? And that somehow your inability to get a hard on was reason enough to strip me and parade me in front of millions of viewers to prove your case? (*Pouring it on*) Do you have any idea how humiliating that was? How horrible I felt showing my ass to the studio audience and before the Queen of Hearts herself? Do you have any idea how popular she is? She is an icon, the top of the A-list. The most sought after host in American history. And all those people, people all over the country – the world for all I know – were laughing at me? At my ass?

JOHN

You agreed to that part.

CARRIE

(Beat; totally changing her tone)

True. In all honesty, I thought it would help my case. And it did, I think. A bit of a calculated risk. But then, what did I have to lose other than my head? (*Laughs*) And you agreed in writing to abide by the contract. We both signed the contract. We both took the chance. One gets ten million, the other gets her head lopped off. Or in this case, *his* head.

JOHN

(Reverses tactics)

I want you to understand it was not a criticism of your other many outstanding qualities that drew me to you the first day we met in the coffee shop at the CrossFit on Fifth and Main. You remember that day, don't you? The most important day of our lives?

CARRIE

When you suggested I change my order to a Skinny Cow? What the hell was I thinking?

JOHN

You were thinking about your future. Our future. You said it yourself. The moment you saw me, sweaty and all pumped up after a two-hour workout with my *personal* fitness trainer. You couldn't keep your eyes off me. (*Shimmies up to CARRIE*) What a good-lookin' hunk of man... and what is he packin' besides a six pack?

JOHN takes her hand and tries to slide it into his pants.

CARRIE

Really? *(Pulls her hand away)* Do you think that enamors you to me at this moment in some perverted way? *(Beat)* I was a silly little girl who thought a personal trainer was really dope and that a six-pack meant there was something *special* between your legs. I didn't know that it meant there was nothing between your ears.

JOHN

(Rubbing against CARRIE)

I never heard you complain.

CARRIE

How would you? You were too damn busy screaming Oh, God, Oh, God, Oh, God! How damn unoriginal is that? Do you have any idea how annoying that can be when you're making love?

JOHN

(Nuzzling her neck)

At least I didn't scream anyone else's name.

CARRIE

'Cause you knew I'd kill you. *(Giving in slightly)*

JOHN

But you would never do that. You would never let anything happen to your big Johnny. You couldn't live without him.

CARRIE

I haven't seen big Johnny for over a year.

JOHN

I can show you. I know you remember him. Here, *(Starts to unzip his pants)* he's all yours.

CARRIE

(Pushing JOHN away and onto the floor)

No! Forget it. You had your chance. All that I asked was we go *together* to work out. That *we* attacked the *issue* together.

JOHN

And let the guys at the club see you in Lululemon's?

CARRIE

They saw me naked! On national TV!

JOHN

Yeah, they promised they'd watch the show. I used to get razzed at the gym about ragging on you so much. That's not happenin' anymore. I've been vindicated. Now they know what I know.

CARRIE

Too bad you won't live long enough to feel that ah, so coveted slap on the back you so desperately need from 'the guys'.

JOHN sits at the table. Beat.

JOHN

So what was it? What was it, Carrie, that changed your mind? About us, I mean? Why talk me into auditioning for "The Queen's Court." I'm the same guy I was the day we married? Nothing has changed. Why now?

CARRIE

I think—I think...No, I *know*. It was the day, last October, that day we were standing in the kitchen. I was cleaning off the table from breakfast and you were complaining that my mother was coming for a visit.

JOHN

Everybody complains about your mother. Even you.

CARRIE

No, it wasn't that. (*Visualizing*) You pulled out a knife from the silverware drawer and cleaned your fingernails with it. You were standing there in the kitchen in a pair of underwear two sizes too small with your hairy balls hanging out and you were leaning against the counter cleaning your fingernails with a knife from the silverware drawer.

JOHN

You always complain about my fingernails. I thought I was doing you a favor.

CARRIE

When you finished cleaning your fingernails you put the knife back in the drawer and slammed the drawer shut.

JOHN

And that mattered?

This is Not the End of the Play
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