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This is Your Lifetime

A Short Play

by

Jill Elaine Hughes

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This is Your Lifetime

by Jill Elaine Hughes

CHARACTERS

MARISSA; *a single woman in her mid-30's*

LIFETIME TELEVISION ANNOUNCER

LIFETIME WOMAN #1; *a rich-voiced inhabitant of TV Femme Heaven. She is athletic and of any age/ethnicity (Can double as LIFETIME TELEVISION ANNOUNCER)*

LIFETIME WOMAN #2; *another inhabitant of TV Femme Heaven. She, too, is athletic and of any age/ethnicity*

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS; *a mature, regal woman who rules over TV Femme Heaven*

SETTING

Marissa's apartment

ETC

EARLY PRODUCTION HISTORY:

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Women's Funny Shorts Festival, **University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth**

Women's Resource Center, (West Dartmouth, MA) February 2005

18th Annual Bailiwick Director's Festival, Bailiwick Repertory, (Chicago, IL), in the “Chicago Writes” segment, February 2005

This is Your Lifetime

by Jill Elaine Hughes

(AT RISE: MARISSA is at home alone in her apartment late one Saturday evening, recuperating from a recent auto accident. Her upper leg is in a large femur cast up to the waist. Her leg is propped up on a pillow. MARISSA is eating Ben & Jerry’s Chunky Monkey ice cream while absently flipping channels looking for something more interesting to watch.)

MARISSA

(Flipping channels) This is bad. Oh, this is very bad. Nine days cooped up in this apartment with nothing but the TV to keep me company and I’ve gotta watch *this* crap. How many clones of *Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire* do we need? Jesus. And I’ve still got at least forty more days to go before they take this lovely contraption off. Funny, I’m almost growing attached to it. And I don’t mean attached like you get attached to a kitten or something—I mean literally, *attached*. It’s becoming like, a part of my skin. I guess that’s what happens when you can’t take a bath. Oh well. They’ll just have to cut my leg off at the groin to get it off.

(MARISSA flips more channels. A mixture of STATIC and SOUND BLIPS are heard from the television.)

MARISSA

Infomercial. . . Infomercial. . . Jay Leno rerun. . . Infomercial. . . Televangelist. . . Rerun of the *Jeffersons*. . . Lifetime network movie. God, there is nothing on. But, I can’t sleep, and my good friends Ben and Jerry need devouring. Ben and Jerry, I really have to tell you guys—at four bucks a pint, it would be a real shame to waste you just because nothing’s on but the Lifetime Network movie, which probably has the same old crappy plotline as all the other Lifetime Network movies I’ve been watching for the past *nine days*. That’s it. I’m never breaking my leg again. Well, maybe when I have someone to take care of me I will. Nope—not even then.

(MARISSA settles on a channel, tosses the remote aside, and settles back to watch.)

LIFETIME TELEVISION ANNOUNCER, *Off*

Lifetime: Television for Women. You are watching *Love and Sexy Men Conquer All, Even When She’s In A Coma*, the Lifetime Late-Late Saturday Movie.

MARISSA

Somebody’s always in a coma on this network.

(CHEESY ROMANCE MUSIC floats from the television. MARISSA is transfixed for a moment, then rolls her eyes.)

MARISSA

Oh come on. Nobody looks *that* good in a coma. Yeah, and I can see your roots, lady. Time to go get a touch-up, Miss Bottle Blonde—but you can’t, ‘cause you’re in a coma. Ha! *(Beat)* Oh, *that’s* compelling. Yeah, just bring in some impossibly blue-eyed guy with eighteen-inch biceps to fawn over the coma lady and weep at her bedside. Like that’s really gonna happen in real life. Hey buddy, so ya think stripping down’s gonna wake her up? Yeah right. *(Beat; MARISSA’s jaw drops.)* Holy shit! With *those* abs, you could wake up *anybody*. Yowza. Baby, you can bring me out of a coma anytime.

LIFETIME TELEVISION ANNOUNCER/LIFETIME WOMAN #1, *Off*
You are watching Lifetime. We’ll be right back after these messages.

MARISSA

No—wait. Wait! Go back to the sexy ab guy.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1, *Off*
Do you ever have days where you just don’t feel fresh? I do, too!

MARISSA

Oh, no. No no no. If you just cut away from the sexy abs guy to do a fucking douche commercial I swear I am never watching the Lifetime network again. *(Indicating ice cream carton)* Right guys? See, Ben and Jerry agree with me. Bring back the abs.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1, *Off*
To restore that feminine freshness, use Springtime Vinegar and Water Disposable Douche—

MARISSA

I want some abs, baby! I don’t want no stinkin’ douche!

(MARISSA clicks off the television.)

MARISSA

That’s it, Lifetime Network. You’re fired. I should probably get some sleep anyway.

(MARISSA stretches out to sleep. Lights shift to indicate a dream state. Enter LIFETIME WOMAN #1. Music accompanies her entrance. SHE is wearing long flowing robes decorated with leaves and flowers, carries a magic wand, and SHE should “sparkle.” LIFETIME WOMAN #1 dances up to MARISSA and taps her with her magic wand.)

MARISSA

(Asleep) Oh yeah, baby. Bring that washboard stomach over here...

(LIFETIME WOMAN #1 shows irritation at this, and taps MARISSA harder with her magic wand. MARISSA jerks awake.)

MARISSA

I’m awake now, baby—wait. Who the hell are you? Where’s Sexy Abs Guy?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

My child, you don’t need a man to achieve true satisfaction.

MARISSA

Um, yes I do. And until you showed up I was very close to achieving true satisfaction with Sexy Abs Guy. Godammit—

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

There are other ways to love your body, Marissa, and have it love you back. *Without* a man.

MARISSA

How do you know my name?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

I know *every* woman’s name. Every woman that watches Lifetime, anyway, and in this country, that’s pretty much *every* woman.

MARISSA

(*Embarrassed*) Uhhhh—I don’t watch Lifetime. I mean—I *used* to watch Lifetime, but I really don’t anymore—

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

Oh yes you do, Marissa. We *know* you do. You were just watching *Love and Sexy Men Conquer All, Even When She’s In A Coma* and stuffing your face full of Chunky Monkey.

MARISSA

I—

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

It’s okay. Lots of women watch Lifetime. It’s nothing to be ashamed of. In fact, we know that you watch Lifetime on a regular basis. In fact, you’ve been watching it for the past nine days straight, with brief breaks for *The Bachelor* and *Who Wants To Marry My Dad?*

MARISSA

How do you know that? Do you work for the Nielsen ratings people? Or the government?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

You know, the Lifetime Women’s Auxiliary of TV Femme Heaven used to work for the Niensens, but we’ve gone freelance. The Niensens were a little too white-male-corporate for us. We’re now an independent contractor of Lifetime.

MARISSA

Uh huh. So, uhh, Miss Independent Contractor Lady, why are you in that weird getup?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

We prefer to be called Sisters of TV Femme Heaven. And my getup is not weird. My getup is beautiful. What makes you think it’s weird?

MARISSA

Well, if you work for Lifetime, shouldn’t you dress like Melissa Gilbert does in all those Harlequin Romance movies or something? Frilly blouses, spike heels—

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

As a Sister of Lifetime’s TV Femme Heaven, my purpose is to represent Life. Women’s Life. Why do you think I’m covered in flowers? Flowers are plants’ women. They are the way plants reproduce. And flowers are *fresh*. Lifetime was just trying to give you, Miss Marissa Chunky-Monkey Eater, important information on how you can feel fresh each and every day before you so rudely turned off your television set. That’s why I’m here, *personally*, to tell you all about Springtime Fresh Vinegar and Water—

MARISSA

Hold it. Hold it. What are you, some kind of subliminal commercial? I already said, I want Sexy Abs Guy! I don’t want no stinkin’ douches! I don’t need to—to—you know—use that stuff. I’m...clean!

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

Every woman has days where she doesn’t feel—fresh. And I think today is one of those days, Marissa.

MARISSA

I am perfectly fresh. Okay?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

Oh, I don’t know about that. How long has it been since you had a bath?

MARISSA

Well, um—I’ve been taking sponge baths. See, I can’t get my cast wet—

(LIFETIME WOMAN #1 leans toward MARISSA and sniffs—then winces.)

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

Uh, I think you’re getting pretty ripe down here. You’ll definitely be needing some Springtime Fresh.

MARISSA

Hey. Hey! Stop sniffing—that. Get out of here, Flower Freakshow Woman, or whatever the hell you are. I’m going back to my Sexy Abs Guy dream.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

(Calling offstage) BACKUP!! I need backup!!

(No response.)

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

Backup!!! WHERE ARE YOU, BACKUP??? I'm WAITING! BACKUP!!

(Enter LIFETIME WOMAN #2, in a stumbling hurry. SHE is dressed to resemble the Tampax “Pearl” brand of tampons and is carrying a wineglass and a rhinestone-studded evening purse.)

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

I'm here! I'm here!

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

Where have you been?

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

(Gulping her wine) I'm sorry. I was at the premiere.

MARISSA

Premiere?

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

You know, the premiere? The *commercial* premiere? Tampax Pearl? It was a gala.

MARISSA

They have gala premieres for tampon commercials?

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

All feminine products commercials have gala premieres. It's what separates them from the ordinary male-dominant commercials.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

That's right. All feminine products commercials are celebrated in the advertising world for their beauty and gentility with glorious gala premieres. And *you* turned one off in the middle like it was just another Budweiser commercial.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

(Shocked) It wasn't one of mine, was it? Anybody who turns off Tampax Pearl's gotta answer to me.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

Nope. It was mine. Springtime Fresh Vinegar & Water.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

No! Girl—

MARISSA

My name’s Marissa.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

I knew that. Marissa, girl, you are in big trouble.

MARISSA

But—what—no I’m not! This is a free country! I can turn my TV off whenever the hell I want!

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

Whatever you gotta tell yourself.

MARISSA

What is going on? This is not right. Am I dreaming this?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

Do *you* think you’re dreaming this?

MARISSA

I don’t know.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

You *definitely* are in big trouble.

MARISSA

Will the both of you—hygiene ladies just go away? I want Sexy Abs Guy back.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

Oh, you can have Sexy Abs Guy Back. You can have him back all night long and into next week if you want.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

Mmm—hmmm. And I’ll take him when you’re done with him. Mmm—mmm—mmm.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

But there are some things you have to do first. *Then* you can have him back.

MARISSA

What do I have to do to get Sexy Abs Guy back?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

You gotta get in touch with yourself. You gotta get in touch with the parts of you that you wanna show to Sexy Abs Guy. Make ‘em clean and fresh and rosy.

MARISSA

But I’m already in touch with—with that. I don’t need you to—you know.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

Oh, I could tell right when I walked in the room that’s not true. You definitely have got some major freshness problems down there.

MARISSA

No I don’t!

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

Oh, you got some problems all right. Phew-ee! Stinky stinky stinky!

MARISSA

Look. I’m a little bit limited in the amount of bathing I can do right now, but I assure you, my—area is perfectly hygienic.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

Hygienic? Ha! If that’s hygienic, then they must have started making perfume outa tuna fish.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

I know that’s right!

MARISSA

I *do not* smell like tuna fish. Okay? Maybe I don’t exactly smell like daffodils right now – I’ll give you that – but you do not have to play the tuna fish card, okay?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

Hey. Sometimes the truth hurts, babe. I think we’re gonna have to bring out the big guns on this one.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

Most definitely. Here, Marissa. Why don’t you try a Tampax Deodorant Pearl Tampon? Delicate, comfortable, and nicely scented to control odor.

MARISSA

No thanks. I’m allergic to perfumed tampons.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

If I had known before I came out here tonight that you have some more *elevated* freshness problems, I would never have targeted you for our Springtime Fresh Vinegar and Water product.

MARISSA

Well, that’s good, because you see, I really don’t—

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

You need Springtime Fresh’s Super-Acidic Lysol-Based Feminine Wash. Designed for female prison guards, Springtime Fresh’s Super-Acidic Lysol-Based Feminine Wash is GUARANTEED to knock out even the *worst* feminine odor problems. Be Tuna-Fishy No More with Springtime Fresh! *(Aside)* May cause irritation, lesions, and cancer.

MARISSA

Look. It’s just me here. I’m single. I live alone. My goddamn leg is in a hundred-pound plaster cast. I can’t take a shower, or a bath, or—anything. And who the hell cares? I’m just trying to watch my movies and let my leg heal in peace! What does it matter that I might smell a little—earthy for a while? Single men sit around stinking in their own filth all the time, you don’t see douche and tampon freaks showing up in their dreams!

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

I can see you’re going to be a tough sell. Sister, a conference please.

(LIFETIME WOMAN #1 and LIFETIME WOMAN #2 huddle and whisper, while MARISSA looks on, mystified.)

MARISSA

Can both of you just go away? Hey! Hello?

(LIFETIME WOMEN ignore her.)

MARISSA, *Continued*

Okay, so I seem to be stuck in some parallel douche and tampon universe. Um, is there somebody else in charge here? Hello? Anybody?

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

Uhhh—I’d be quiet if I were you.

MARISSA

Will whoever is in charge of this crazy fucking douche and tampon world please show up and get rid of these Feminine Wash Flower Freaks for me?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

(Worried) Please stop talking.

MARISSA

I *really* need to get back to my Sexy Abs Guy dream! Please? Anybody?

(SFX: A FANFARE of music and a puff of smoke.)

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

Oh shit.

(LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS appears, in regal robes and carrying a scepter.)

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

Did someone call for me?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

(To LIFETIME WOMAN #2) We’re in trouble.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

You said she was dead. You said she wouldn’t interfere with our commercial work anymore!

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

I—that is, I—

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

(Laughing) You told somebody I was *dead*?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

Well, I really thought you were when you disappeared after the Danielle Steele Weekend Marathon last year—

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

HAHAHAHAHAHA!!! You disappoint me, my Lifetime Daughter. Surely you know that the Lifetime Mother Goddess – that’s me – is *immortal*.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

I heard the network executives canned you and then you committed suicide!

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

Oh, how they mislead you, my Scented Tampon Daughter. Network executives might “can” me all they want—that doesn’t mean they can make me go away. You see, I am a *divine* being. I don’t need advertising revenue to survive.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

What? No advertising revenue? Then how *do* you survive?

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

Yeah, how do you stay on the air with no advertising? What do you live on?

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

I live on *air*. Or more specifically, a compound that’s distributed in the air. Good-old-fashioned secreted estrogen. *Pure* estrogen, mind you—not any of that chemical-perfume-altering stuff you two are peddling. I’m here to put a stop to this. You both are a disgrace to TV Femme Heaven, peddling these men’s-fantasy vaginal perfumes in the middle of people’s dreams like this. I should fire the both of you.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

Um, Oh Great Lifetime Mother, please forgive me, Oh Great One, um, but you can't fire us. We really don't work for you anymore.

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

HAHAHAHAHA! And who is it you think you work for, my Scented Tampon Daughter?

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

Uhh, the Lifetime Network?

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

Well, maybe the Network signs your paychecks, but you aren't really working for *them*.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

Then who are we working for?

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

You work for me. You *all* work for me. Even the Lifetime Network Executives work for me.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

Oh, the Great Goddess has gone completely off her rocker.

MARISSA

Hey, you should respect your Mother Goddess.

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

Ah. Here is a beautiful woman who understands. And I can see why you understand. You are emitting pure estrogen. Pure, beautiful, and *very* pungent estrogen. Why else was I drawn here so quickly when you called for me?

MARISSA

(Embarrassed) Oh, well, you know—

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

Don't be ashamed, my daughter. I see you are healing yourself.

MARISSA

I'm just wearing a cast. That's why I'm stuck here—you know, not bathing.

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

But you are healing yourself. You are keeping yourself at rest, in a natural state, while allowing your body to do what it will to heal itself. This is a lovely thing. So you're not shampooing twice a day—big deal! You are a powerful woman. You are emitting a life force.

MARISSA

Life force?

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

A man has been here recently, yes?

MARISSA

Well, sort of. I think I was just having an erotic dream.

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

(*Testing the air*) Hmm. I’m sensing—I’m sensing that this was a very handsome, very masculine, very *muscular* man. Ah, of course! The leading man of tonight’s Late-Late Saturday Movie.

MARISSA

Sexy Abs Guy.

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

Yes, he does have very nice abdominal muscles. I’m also sensing from the air that you had a liaison with this individual? A very *stimulating* liaison? His name is Abner, by the way.

MARISSA

Well, we did sort of have a liaison, but—

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

You were interrupted? You were left unsatisfied? Isn’t that so?

MARISSA

Yes. How did you know?

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

My child, I *am* the Lifetime Mother Goddess.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

Well, you used to be, until they canned you—

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

Silence!

(*The LIFETIME WOMEN cower.*)

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

I can also tell from your estrogen scent. You are emitting the aroma of a natural, earthy woman left unsatisfied. It’s very distinct. And very unfortunate.

MARISSA

(Indicating the LIFETIME WOMEN) Well, it’s their fault.

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

And why is that, my child? Although I can well imagine.

MARISSA

I was just dreaming along, have a very nice time with Sexy Abs Guy – I mean, Abner – and then this Springtime Fresh Douche Lady showed up and shut down my dream, telling me that I needed to wash with vinegar and water—

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

Just like the commercial that interrupted your movie watching.

MARISSA

Right.

(LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS walks over to the cowering LIFETIME WOMEN.)

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

Daughters, arise.

(LIFETIME WOMEN get up, shakily.)

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

Moonlighting, are we? Taking a little cash on the side, are we?

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

We didn’t do anything wrong—

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

We get really good money for subconscious advertising now.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

And that woman needs it. She stinks.

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

She does not stink. And I don’t care how much money those Lifetime suits bought you off with. What you did here was wrong. Sacrilegious.

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

But—

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

SILENCE!! I never approved much of selling out our network to those suits just so they can sell advertising that brainwashes women into thinking their vaginas stink, but I know the network was short of cash and in danger of going under, so I allowed it just to keep women’s programming on the air. But now, my daughters, you have gone too far. Not only that, you and those network suits are stupid. Short-sighted. If those suits are telling you to hawk products that wipes out estrogen in the middle of women’s estrogen-producing dreams – and you’re dumb enough to do it just for a little money – well, by the end of it all you’re putting yourselves out of business permanently. If there’s no estrogen, my daughters, there is no Lifetime. Women won’t watch your network anymore because they’d have become too much like men. And then where would you be? You’d be in the Big Land of Canceled Programming in the Sky, that’s where.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

But Great Mother—

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

Don’t you “but” me. Have you forgotten that I’m omniscient? I see and know all. As Lifetime members of the TV Femme Heaven, you know that invading erotic dreams for profit is tantamount to blasphemy. (*Statement of fact*) And you know what the punishment for blasphemy is, daughters.

(*LIFETIME WOMEN exchange looks and shrug.*)

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

Actually, we don’t know what the punishment is, exactly.

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

Oh. Well. I’ll tell you then. The punishment for blasphemy against the Lifetime Mother Goddess is that you must live the rest of your lives as men.

(*MARISSA laughs.*)

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

What? Oh no—

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

Oh please, Great Mother Goddess, spare us, show us mercy—

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

We were wrong. We were SO wrong—

LIFETIME WOMAN #2

PLEASE don’t turn us into men! Please? ANYTHING but that!

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

Well, daughters, there is one alternative.

LIFETIME WOMAN #1

What is it?

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

Death.

LIFETIME WOMAN#2

Death?

MARISSA

It's either that or become a man, right Great Mother?

LIFETIME MOTHER GODDESS

That's right. Death, or become a man. Which punishment do you choose, my daughters?

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes