

Transformations

A Ten Minute play

By Alan S.Austin

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A DESK AND CHAIR ARE STAGE RIGHT. UPSTAGE CENTER THERE ARE THREE PANELS. EACH IS A FRAME WITH A SLIDING CURTAIN AS THE DOOR. LEFT PANEL IS MARKED STAGE 1. RIGHT IS MARKED STAGE 2 AND CENTER IS MARKED STAGE 3. NEXT TO THE DESK IS A FULL LENGTH MIRROR ON WHEELS.

(Lights come up. Enter Madge down aisle from back of audience. She is a decrepit looking old lady with thick stockings, a grubby worn overcoat, wool gloves and hat over her straggly unkempt hair. She pushes a shopping cart full of plastic bags. She speaks with a lower class British accent)

MADGE

I'm right outta breath, I am. Must be somewhere "round 'ere. I'll ask this gent.

(Approaches an audience member).

S'cuse me govner, do you know where Transformations is? I've got the advert somewhere 'ere ... I walked all the way from the Fish Market. This is Exchange Street isn't it? It is (current day?) (current date?)

(She finds the add in her shopping cart)

Look. 'ere it is. I was right. (insert current date). What does that sign say?

(She points to thin air above panels)

I've got to get new spectacles.

(She finds them in her cart and puts them on)

There. Transformations. See it? I'm in the right place. What's the time? 7 o'clock? I'm a bit early.

(Enter Veronica S.R. She wears high heels, is smartly dressed and speaks with an upper class English accent. She gets out her keys and mimes bending down to unlock the front glass door C.S.. Madge approaches her.)

MADGE

Pardon me dearie .

VERONICA

Good Day.

MADGE

Good Day. I'm 'ere.

VERONICA

(Puzzled, she stares at Madge and her
dirty hair, clothes, etc. as well as her cart)

Yes?

MADGE

For da free offer.

VERONICA

Free offer?

MADGE

(She brandishes the add and reads aloud)

Free Transformation for the first customer on (insert current day and date)

VERONICA

Well, hum... I'm not sure if ... hold on. I'll have to make a call.

(She gets out her cell phone and dials. She
smiles at Madge who comes in the store.
Veronica indicates she should leave her
cart outside which Madge does with great
reluctance.)

Veronica here at the Exchange Street Branch. There's a ... lady here with a free offer from
the newspaper.

(She beckons Madge to hold up the add
so she can read it)

(She reads)

A free transformation for the first customer on (current day and date). That's right?

(Pause)

But...she's...not our usual sort of customer. All right. Whatever you say. To Stage 3?

MADGE

I found it... the advert... up at the fish market. I was telling the blokes one of me jokes.
They like me jokes. You wanna 'ear it?

(she proceeds to tell the joke)

Why is fishin' better than sex?

Because a limp rod is still useful while fishin'.

(She laughs. Veronica grimaces)

VERONICA

You have to fill in this paperwork. Name ?

MADGE

Madge

VERONICA

Just Madge? (Madge nods yes). Okay. Please sign. Here, here, and here.

MADGE

I don't like signing things.

VERONICA

There are risks. The procedure is new. We have to protect against lawsuits.

MADGE

What if it doesn't work?

VERONICA

It always works. Please just sign.

MADGE

The letters are very small. I have trouble... reading these kind o' things.

VERONICA

I have other bookings... if you want to take advantage of this offer...

MADGE

All right. I've signed.

VERONICA

Please remove all metal objects from your person.

MADGE

I've got me nail clippers and me keys.

VERONICA

Leave them with me.

MADGE

'ow do I know you ain't gonna pinch em?

VERONICA

We at Transformations are a highly ethical organization working for the good of the community. We do not pinch...steal.

MADGE

Sorry. I didn't mean to be rude. 'ere they are.

VERONICA

Kindly proceed to Stage One. You'll find a white robe just inside the door. When you are ready, press the start button.

MADGE

(Repeats to herself)

White robe... start button...

(Enter through stage one)

I've got the robe. I'm pressing the button.

(Pause)

There's nothin' 'appening.

(Veronica sighs deeply, shakes her head and looks to the ceiling)

VERONICA

Just be patient.

(Suddenly there's the sound of hissing steam and a piston clanking)

MADGE

Oooooo... Ooooooo..... OOOOO..... Cor? Blimey!

VERONICA

Try to stay calm.

MADGE

Oooow..... I can't see nothin. It's gone all smokey like. Oooooooww. You're worse than the blokes. 'elp! 'elp!

(Smoke comes out of the door)

VERONICA

Stay calm. It doesn't take long.

MADGE

Oooooooooo

(Madge emerges dressed in a white robe, still with her wool socks and old shoes on. Her hair is plastered down. She is still wearing thick bifocals)

Blimey. I haven't felt like that since I met Bert, forty years ago. He used to chase me round the bedroom like a right monkey. Is that it?

VERONICA

That is the preparatory Stage, Stage 1. You have two more stages to go. Please stand in front of the mirror.

MADGE

Cor blimey. I still look like an old hag.

VERONICA

I assure you. It works.

MADGE

What are you going to do about me hair? I was very beautiful when I was young. They made a calendar out of me pictures. Gents used to look at me and go all mushy.

VERONICA

Stage 2 takes a little longer than Stage 1 so when you get in there, relax. The refraction and realignment process is complicated. Please drink this.

(She hands Madge a glass of water and she takes a sip.)

MADGE

It's water. 'aven't you got something a bit stronger?

VERONICA

We don't want you to get dehydrated.

MADGE

(She drinks)

Cheers. 'ere's to Stage 2.

VERONICA

When you get in there, sit in the chair, adjust the height, put the blindfold on and press the start button on the panel in front of you.

MADGE

It is safe, ain't it?

VERONICA

Satisfaction guaranteed.

(Madge enters Stage 2)

MADGE

'ere's the chair. I'm sitting in it. Do I put me head in this fing?

VERONICA

Just sit and relax. Put the blindfold on.

MADGE

But this fing is gettin in the way.

VERONICA

Put the blindfold on.

MADGE

It's not comfortable.

VERONICA
Please put the blindfold on.

MADGE
Alright. I've got it on.

VERONICA
Press the Start button.

MADGE
I can't see it.

VERONICA
It's by your left hand.
(There is the sound of a siren.
Ooowwwwoop, oooowwwwwoop,
ooowwwoooooop. Then electronic
clicking as if a machine is going into
action.)
Get ov me. Ouch. That 'urt. What are you doing to me face? That feels disgusting. It's
all wet and sticky. I'll call the coppers.

VERONICA
Please remain calm.

MADGE
The chair is coming alive. I fink I'm goin' bonkers.

VERONICA
It is a difficult process. Remain calm.
(There's a long sucking sound)

MADGE
Ooooooooooh..... Ooooooooooh..... OOOOooooooooooooohhhh.
(There's a popping sound then silence)

VERONICA
Are you all right?
(Silence)
Are you all right?

MADGE
I feel different. I don't know what it is but...

VERONICA
You can come out.
(Madge emerges, her hair in curlers, same
white gown, same socks but no shoes
and her face is beautifully made up.

She has regained her figure and she looks twenty years younger. She steps carefully into the light)

MADGE

That was.... I hope I've..... look at me in the meerar
(Looks in the mirror)
blimey..... There's a bit o' change.

VERONICA

Look again.

MADGE

Oh... yea... I do look better. (be-ar)
(She moves in front of the mirror with her hands on her hips.)

VERONICA

Your face?

MADGE

I've got no wrinkles and me eyes. They sort of sparkle like. I look ever so much younger.

VERONICA

Your figure?

MADGE

I've got me waist back. Legs aren't bad eiver. They'll go bonkers at the fish market. Bet they won't be able to keep their eyes off me bum or me tits!

VERONICA

You still have Stage 3 to go.

MADGE

Stage free?

VERONICA

You signed up for the first three stages.

MADGE

I can move 'beter now too. I used to be a dancer. Before... ya' know... the drugs...

VERONICA

For Stage 3, you'll find a bell on the table. Ring it and close your eyes.

MADGE

Stage free. Right. This is getting 'beter!

(Madge goes through Stage 3 curtains.
The lights flash)

It's dark in 'ere.

VERONICA

Look for the table.

MADGE

I see it. Now what?

VERONICA

Ring the bell.

(Rings bell)
(Sound of wind blowing)

MADGE

(Her voice is different. Younger and more
cultured like a 50's movie star.)

Yea, Yea! I feel so..... free, baby. I luvve you too. 'old me. (long dramatic pause) Hold
me darling. I'll love you forever. Forever! Kiss me. Kiss me, sweetheart. Kiss me. Yes
darling. Yes. I promise.

VERONICA

It's time.

MADGE

What?

VERONICA

It's time.

MADGE

Time for what?

VERONICA

You have to come out.

MADGE

Now?

VERONICA

Yes.

MADGE

I'm coming.

(Madge steps out resplendent in sparkling evening dress and looking gorgeous)

VERONICA

Well? Look in the mirror.

MADGE

(She looks at herself and breaks down out in joyous laughter.)

I can't believe it! It's me. It's really me. I could have been in the movies, you know? An actress!! Look at this dress and the fur and oh ...these shoes!!

VERONICA

This is all part of what Transformations offers.

MADGE

This is the way I use to look - except for the fancy clothes!!!

VERONICA

You have three minutes.

MADGE

Three minutes?

VERONICA

Before you go back.

MADGE

Go back where?

VERONICA

It's part of the agreement you signed.

MADGE

What are you talking about?

VERONICA

You have to go back to who you were when you entered the shop.

MADGE

I don't care what I signed. I will not go back to who I was.

VERONICA

You have no choice. We have changed you and we will change you back.

MADGE

But this is not fair!

VERONICA

Nobody said it would be fair.

MADGE

But....

VERONICA

You signed an agreement. This (pointing to her) is not permanent unless you pay for the final stage - stage 4.

MADGE

I can't. I haven't any money. I don't always make enough to even pay the rent. The gentleman at the fishmarket, they help be out. A few pence here or there. A bit of fish now and again. If I looked like this, I'd never have to worry. I'd be up the Savoy... all those fancy gentlemen with posh cars looking for a nice... lady. This would turn my life around.

VERONICA

I'm sorry. I do sympathize but it's company policy.

MADGE

I have to go back?

VERONICA

Yes. There is no other way without payment.

MADGE

You couldn't make an exception this one time?

VERONICA

Everything has to be accounted for.

MADGE

Accounted for...like me.

VERONICA

Your three minutes are up.

MADGE

I'd better get back then. It says in the ad you could have a photograph. May I?

VERONICA

Of course. Stand in front of the mirror.

(She stands in front of the mirror.)

There's a flash and Veronica hands her a photograph which she retrieves "from the mirror" almost magically.)

MADGE

I was...

VERONICA

You were indeed.

VERONICA

You have to go back now. Go back into Stage 3. Sit in the chair and press return.

(Madge goes into Stage 3)
(Sound of a waterfall)

MADGE

Press return?

VERONICA

Return.

MADGE

Actually it's not so bad. It's rather comfortable in here. There's a nice smell. What is that? I remember smelling that a long, long time ago. One of those expensive perfumes Bert always liked. Mon Amour. It was his favorite. I'm feeling a bit tired now..

(Sound of garbage disposal)

(Madge emerges from Stage 1 dressed as she was at the beginning. She is clutching her photo and brandishes the photograph to the audience.)

Look at that. Would ya believe it?

VERONICA

I hope....

MADGE

You done a wonderful job dearie. It was good of you what with me 'aving no money and not bein' one of ...them... but you waz kind to me. Fanks where fanks is due I always say. Fings don't always turn out like you expect. I always thought I'd end up in a lovely house, wiv nice children, an a garden. I always wanted a garden wiv roses, lovely red roses. If Bert had made it...still, you gotta look on the bright side. I got me photograph. Oh, and I need me nail clippers and keys back.

VERONICA

That you were.

MADGE

(she exits the shop)

I've got me things. I'll be off to the market now.

MADGE

(she gets her basket and exits through the aisle past the audience)

The boys at the fishmarket are gonna love this. I'll tell 'em. "This was me this morning you bunch of wankers." They won't see me as a piece of old rubbish no more. I was a real looker, I was... a real looker...

VERONICA

(As soon as Madge is out of sight and hearing, Veronica picks up the phone and dials.)

No, it was fine. She had no money for Stage 4 so we sent her back. It worked perfectly. No side effects at all this time, thank goodness. Yes, I think we're ready to try the complete process out on paying customers.

Lights out.