

WELCOME TO THE BEEKMAN ARMS

A 10-Minute Play by Marisa Smith

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CHARACTERS

MEG: 45, a little daffy and scattered but well-meaning and warm.

DESK CLERK: 30's, handsome, fit.

SETTING: The Beekman Arms Hotel – maybe, maybe not

TIME: The present

WELCOME TO THE BEEKMAN ARMS

At the top of the show we hear squealing tires, MEG's voice yelling 'AHHHHHH!!!!' and the sound of a car crash. Lights up. We see what looks like the lobby of a hotel. The DESK CLERK, a handsome man, is at the front desk asleep with his head in his arms. MEG wanders in, confused, bedraggled, and holding her purse.

MEG

Hello? Hello?

(Approaches DESK CLERK who hasn't moved.)

Excuse me. Excuse me, sorry to disturb you.

(DESK CLERK raises his head from the desk. He is dressed all in black.)

I'm sorry to wake you up...sir...but I think I've been in an accident. I was just parking my car out front and, well, I'm meeting my husband Bernard here later. We have a reservation? Wappenagel?

DESK CLERK

(Looks at a big book in front of him.)

Wappenagel? You're not in the book.

(Puts head back on desk. MEG prods him.)

MEG

About my car? I think I ran into one of those nice trees out front. Sorry, but maybe you should call the police.

DESK CLERK

(Raises his head.)

No need. It will be taken care of.

MEG

Thank you. Could someone bring in my suitcase?

DESK CLERK

(Rouses himself, makes a very large yawn, takes off his glasses, shakes his head rather violently and stares at Meg.)
You're bleeding. That's odd.

MEG

(Looks at her arm.)
Oh, it's just a little scratch. I'll Purell it.
(Reaches into her purse.)
I just love this stuff, it's so handy. People say you shouldn't use it too much but I don't see why really. I say let's kill all the germs we can, they're plenty of 'em, don't you think?

(DESK CLERK just stares at MEG.)

MEG (cont.)

It's so quiet here, no wonder you were asleep!
(She looks around.)
Where is everyone?

DESK CLERK

What did you say your name was again?

MEG

Margaret Wappenagel. I still can't get used to saying that name. We've only been married a year.

DESK CLERK

(looking at computer monitor)
You're not listed.

MEG

But I made a reservation for two nights. Here, I even printed it out!
(She reaches into her purse and shows him the printout.)

DESK CLERK

(looking at the document)
Ah. The Beekman Arms.

MEG

What, I'm at the wrong hotel?

DESK CLERK

Not exactly.

MEG

I don't understand.

DESK CLERK

Maybe you're listed under another name.

MEG

Why would I be ...?

DESK CLERK

Full name please.

MEG

Margaret Wappenagel.

DESK CLERK

Date of birth.

MEG

That's a little personal isn't it?

DESK CLERK

Everything is kept in the strictest confidence here.

MEG

Okay. June first, 1972.

DESK CLERK

Mother's maiden name?

MEG

Are you kidding?

(The DESK CLERK gives her a quizzical look.)
Gewurztraminer. Like the wine. I'm Margaret Gewurztraminer Wappenagel.

DESK CLERK

Wait, maybe this is you—are you Bertha Gewurztraminer *Smith*, born 1967 in Queens, New York?

MEG

Oh, no, I must have used my old name. My first husband was Smith. Stuart Smith. He died. Hit by lightning on the golf course.

DESK CLERK

But you said your name was Margaret.

MEG

I changed it! Wouldn't you if your name was Bertha?

DESK CLERK

You said you were born in 1972.

MEG

So I fudged a little bit.

DESK CLERK

I'm afraid, Mrs. Wappenagel, that you have been misdirected and are here by mistake.

MEG

But I showed you my reservation and you found me in the book!

DESK CLERK

It appears that you have arrived much too early.

MEG

But today is Friday. We were supposed to come today.

DESK CLERK

Very much too early.

(MEG looks at him. He looks at her.)

MEG

Where am I? Isn't this the Beekman Arms?

(Beat)

Maybe I'd better go.

DESK CLERK

Margaret, I know this is hard to understand and in all my years here this has never happened but... you have arrived extremely early, before your expected date.

MEG

I have?

DESK CLERK

Yes.

MEG

Where am I?

(A long pause while they look at each other.)

DESK CLERK

Margaret, I'm sure there's an explanation for ...

MEG

If this isn't The Beekman Arms, what is it?

DESK CLERK

This is the Vestibule of Hell.

(MEG gasps.)

And, according to the book, Bertha Gewurztraminer Smith, born 1967, is due in on September 30th, 2056, age 94.

MEG

The Vestibule of *Hell*?

DESK CLERK

It looks like you've arrived 49 years too early.

MEG

I don't understand.

DESK CLERK

There are nine circles of Hell and all travelers have to check in here to see which circle they are assigned to.

MEG

This can't be happening. I must be having a dream. Or I'm having a psychic break with reality. Or maybe Bernard's doing one of his experimental theater exercises and using me as a guinea pig, is that it? Bernard? Are you here? This isn't funny! Show yourself. This is definitely not funny! Are you filming this or something? Omigod, am I going crazy? I can't be in Hell!!!

DESK CLERK

Mrs. Wappenagel. Margaret. You're not crazy. You're not having a dream. For some reason, you've landed here 49 years ahead of schedule; but don't worry, we'll get you home. There are some first rate minds here and I'm going to consult with them.

MEG

But how can I be sure I'm really in Hell? I don't see any guys running around with horns or any fires burning.

DESK CLERK

Well, I'm sure this is against protocol, but ... I'm going to open this door. Don't be afraid.
(He opens the door. Red light shines through, smoke billows in and we hear, faintly, a multitude of screams.)

Don't worry. You're just in the check-in.

MEG

How did this happen? How could I be in Hell? I haven't been that bad a person. I never even got a speeding ticket. I'm *religious* about my thank you notes! What could it be? Because I don't recycle, is that it? I hate to recycle! (Pause) Who are you? I don't even know your name.

DESK CLERK

My name is Hector.

MEG

Hector! I had a dog named Hector, a beautiful brindle boxer, but he died. Stuart ran him over in the garage, and that's why God struck him dead on the seventeenth hole, I'm sure of it!

DESK CLERK

Boxers are great dogs. Smart. Handsome.

MEG

I loved him. He was sweet and considerate and I swear he could read my mind. God, I miss him so much.

(She starts to snifle. The DESK CLERK puts his arm around her to comfort her and discreetly sniffs her hair. MEG looks closely at him.)

You have little yellow flecks in your eyes.

DESK CLERK

Yes, I know.

MEG

Before you came here, were you ever in Poughkeepsie?

DESK CLERK

Yes. I was. Excuse me Meg, but would you mind if I sniffed your hair?

MEG

No, go ahead. Would you mind if I scratched your neck?

DESK CLERK

I'd like that.

(MEG leans over and the DESK CLERK buries his face in her hair, inhaling deeply. MEG starts scratching his neck.)

That feels wonderful.

(As MEG scratches the DESK CLERK his left leg starts to jiggle.)

Meg. Oh Meg ...

MEG

Hector?

DESK CLERK

Oh Meg, it's you! Once I smelled your hair it all came rushing back to me! I should have known right away, but lately I've been so depressed my mind's been cloudy.

MEG

How can you be my Hector?

DESK CLERK

After Stuart ran me over I was sent to the check-in desk. Cerberus got a promotion.

MEG

You were a super greeter. You were the best!

(She looks him over.)

You look just like a real man.

DESK CLERK

I know. (Pause) I've missed you Meg.

(They stare into each other's eyes as they hold hands.)

MEG

I've missed you too, Hector.

(Pause)

DESK CLERK

About your husband ...

MEG

What?

DESK CLERK

In a minute he's going to total his car on Sleepy Hollow Road.

MEG

Oh God!

DESK CLERK

There's a young woman in the car with him. An Audrey Crumbine.

MEG

That's his graduate assistant!

DESK CLERK

She'll die for a few minutes but come back to life, but I'm afraid Bernard ...

MEG

Sleepy Hollow Road? What the hell – excuse me – is he doing on ...

DESK CLERK

...is pulling out of the parking lot of the Sleepy Hollow Motel.

MEG

That scumbag!

DESK CLERK

I'm sorry. And it appears that he's still married to someone else. He's a bigamist, Meg.

MEG

A bigamist! That douchebag!

DESK CLERK

(Checks his watch.)

Well, he *was* a bigamist.

(He sniffs her hair. She scratches his back.)

MEG

So, you're saying I'm really going to Hell, Hector?

DESK CLERK

Well, not for another 49 years. That is, if you don't redeem yourself.

MEG

How can I do that?

DESK CLARK

Only you can answer that question, Meg.

(Pause. They look at each other, intensely.)

MEG

I will, I will redeem myself, I promise.

(pause)

When I go back.

(They kiss passionately.)

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY