

The Communication Age

A 10-Minute Play by  
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## Cast of Characters

JOHN: A college student. Is dating Mary

MARY: A college student. Is dating John

## Setting

A college dormitory. The present.

## Author's Note

In order to communicate my intent I had to develop some new syntax to be used for this play. Any dialogue that is contained in double quotes (“”) is text that is also typed, either in an email or as part of the instant messenger conversation, and it should be accompanied by corresponding typing actions. Note that during the email portion of the play, the text is not always typed by the one who says the line. Lines that appear in single quotations (‘’) are not actual texts, but refer to actions taken on the computer, and should be accompanied by appropriate movements. Lines that are in quotes and curly brackets “{}” are aborted typed speech. That is, it is something that one of the characters typed, then changed his or her mind about, and deleted

## The Communication Age

*[Lights come up. JOHN and MARY are seated at opposite sides of the stage facing the audience. They both have “computers” in front of them, which will likely be either totally mimed, or represented only by a keyboard and mouse (recommended). John also has a cell phone, which should be consistent with the computers (mimed if they are). The reveal at the end of the play works best if it is treated as a split scene with two different locations (which it might well be). As the scene opens JOHN is writing an email. Mary is reading the same email on her computer.]*

JOHN: “{Dear Mary, I love you...}” “{Dear Mary, I need you...}” “Dear Mary, I am writing you this e-mail, because I am not sure how else to get a hold of you. You seem to be avoiding me

BOTH: “And I have strong reason to

MARY: “Believe you are blocking me on IM. I even tried calling you, but you I just got your

BOTH: “voice mail. I want to know

JOHN: “what happened. Things were going so well. I thought we had really developed a close bond, and

BOTH: “Then all of a sudden you treat me like I

MARY: “Don’t even exist. Did I do something to offend you? Can I

BOTH: “Make it up to you somehow? Please, if you

JOHN: “don’t talk to me, we can’t fix this problem.

“xoxox

“John.” ‘Send.’

MARY: ‘Deleted.’ *[Mary takes a second to think, then opens up a new e-mail to send to John.]*

MARY: “Dear John,” ‘Caps lock’

BOTH: “DO YOU THINK I’M STUPID!?!?!”

MARY: ‘Exclamation, question mark, exclamation, question mark, exclamation.’  
“Mary.” Send.’

JOHN: *[Beginning a new e-mail to Mary.]* “Mary,

“No, of course I don’t think you’re stupid. You’re one of the smartest people I know. Who else could

BOTH: “hack a Gibson in under five minutes? You’re probably even

JOHN: “Smarter than I am.”

MARY: Duh.

JOHN: “Have I

BOTH: “said something that would make you

MARY: “think otherwise? If that’s the problem, let me assure you, I have

BOTH: “never once doubted your intelligence. Please believe me. I

JOHN: “don’t want to throw away everything we had over a misunderstanding.

“John.”

MARY: [*Writing a new e-mail to John*] “It’s funny you should say you don’t want to throw

BOTH: “everything away over a misunderstanding because you’ve

JOHN: “already thrown it away for some

BOTH: “cheap floozy.

MARY: “DID YOU THINK I WOULDN’T FIGURE IT OUT!!!

BOTH: “Did you think I was

JOHN: “so stupid that I wouldn’t realize what was going on?

MARY: “Well I did.”

JOHN: [*New e-mail*] “What are you talking about!? Cheap floozy? I’ve said it a million times,

BOTH: [*MARY has heard it a million times, and her attitude speaking the words makes this clear.*] “Mary, you’re the only girl for me and I would never dream of seeing anybody behind your back.

JOHN: “I didn’t think you would figure it out, because there is nothing to figure out. I swear to you, I am not seeing anybody else.”

MARY: [*New e-mail.*] “I can’t talk to about this subject over e-mail anymore. It’s just too impersonal. I unblocked you on IM, if you still want to talk, you know my screen name.”

[*JOHN opens up a window in his instant messenger to send a message to MARY*]

JOHN: “Hi”

MARY: “Hi”

JOHN: “I got your e-mail.”

MARY: “I got yours too.”

JOHN: “I haven’t been seeing anybody else.”

MARY: “Give it up. I know about your little hussy.”

JOHN: “What hussy?”

MARY: You know what hussy. “PhysixDominatrix.”

JOHN: PhysixDominatrix? “PhysixDominatrix?”

MARY: “You really shouldn’t leave your indiscretions on your buddy list.”

JOHN: “We’re just friends.”

MARY: “Really? You’re just friends with a dominatrix?”

JOHN: “She’s not really a dominatrix.”

MARY: “Yeah right.”

JOHN: “Mary, PhysixDominatrix is Amanda.”

MARY: Amanda? “Amanda?”

JOHN: “Yeah, from my physics class.”

MARY: “She seems likes such a {frigid...} {quiet...} nice girl.”

JOHN: “It’s just a screen name.”

MARY: “Why did she choose that name?”

JOHN: “I don’t know. It rhymes and she thought it would be funny?”

MARY: “And what did she mean about ‘I’ll see you in the torture chamber tomorrow’?”

JOHN: “{That’s just what we call—}” Wait a minute. “Have you been reading my IM logs?”

MARY: “I needed to find out if you were cheating on me.”

JOHN: “That’s an invasion of my privacy.”

MARY: “You wouldn’t mind unless you had something to hide.”

JOHN: “It’s the principle of the thing. Like if John Ashcroft read your email.”

MARY: “That’s different.”

JOHN: “How?”

MARY: “I’m not going out with John Ashcroft.”

JOHN: “Fine, then how would you feel if I went rooting through your underwear drawer?”

MARY: “Have you gone through my underwear?!”

JOHN: “No, it’s just a comparison.”

MARY: “That’s totally different.”

JOHN: “How?”

MARY: “My underwear is personal.”

JOHN: “So are my IM logs.”

MARY: “But that’s different!”

JOHN: “HOW!?”

MARY: It just is! “I think you’re just skirting around the real issue.”

JOHN: “I agree.”

MARY: “{The real issue is that—}”

JOHN: “The real issue is that you don’t trust me.”

MARY: “Maybe I have reason to not trust you!”

JOHN: “When have I ever given you reason to not trust me?”

MARY: “What about KutieKat84693?”

JOHN: “What about KutieKat84693?”

MARY: “You asked her out!”

JOHN: “I asked her out BEFORE you and I were dating.”

MARY: “I know. I looked at the date on the session.” “You asked her out TWO DAYS before you asked me out!!!”

JOHN: “Besides she turned me down.” “{But you probably already knew—}”

*[John’s cell phone begins to ring. If the ring could be a song, that would be beautiful]*

MARY: “I know.” “So what was I then? Just the next name down on your list?”

JOHN: “{You have to understand—}”

MARY: “Are you that fickle that you can fall in love after two days?”

JOHN: “I wasn’t in love with when I first asked you out.”

MARY: What?

JOHN: “But I’m in love with you now.”

MARY: “But then, I was just a consolation prize?”

JOHN: “You can ask somebody out without being in love with them.”

MARY: “Maybe *you* can but it means something to me.”

JOHN: “{It’s just that, back then—}”

MARY: “Was I just something to pass the time.”

JOHN: “{I was going through some tense—}”

MARY: “A temporary girlfriend while you waited for something better to come along.” “{Maybe you were hoping to make KutieKat84693—}”

JOHN: “I WANTED TO GET LAID! OKAY?” *[Awkward pause. The phone is still ringing.]* “brb.” *[John answers it.]* Hello?

MARY: ‘Increase size, increase size, increase size. Bold. Capital W-H-A-T. Exclamation, question mark, exclamation, question mark, exclamation. Enter.’

JOHN: Mom, this is a really bad time can I call you back?... I know, and I was going to call later tonight, but right now I..

MARY: 'Warn.'

JOHN: Well I order something off Amazon for him... That book he wanted about... I don't know it was something about Winston Churchill...

MARY: 'Warn.'

JOHN: Well according to the tracking it should be there. [*He goes to the tracking website, and finds the information.*]

MARY: 'Warn, warn, warn.'

JOHN: Mom, I'm looking at the tracking information right now, and it says it should be there... Listen can I call you guys back... of course I want to talk to him it's just...

MARY: 'Warn.'

JOHN: Hi Dad. Happy birthday. Did you get that book I sent you?

MARY: 'Warnicus maximus.'

JOHN: That's weird I order it like two weeks ago... Listen Dad, can I call you back later?... Yeah it is... well me and Mary are in the middle of something...

MARY: Warn warnity warn warn warn.

JOHN: No, Dad, we're not... well, yeah... Thanks dad... Yeah I know... Yeah, you told me that already... okay Dad... I love you too... bye.

MARY: 'Warn.'

JOHN: "I'm back." "Did you warn me?"

MARY: "No." 'Warn'

JOHN: "Yes you did!"

MARY: "If you already knew the answer why did you ask the question?" 'Warn'

JOHN: "You just did it again!"

MARY: "Maybe you should have thought of that before you before you tried to weasel your way into my breeches!" 'Warn'

JOHN: "That's just how it was at first." "I was stupid." "As I spent more time with you I actually fell for you."

MARY: "How am I supposed to trust you?" 'Warn warn warn.'

JOHN: "Stop that!"

MARY: "What this?" 'Warn.'

JOHN: "Yes!"

MARY: "Make me!"

JOHN: "Fine!" [*JOHN get out of his seat, and crosses to Mary's side of the stage. This is the first time that they acknowledge sharing the same space. JOHN grabs onto Mary's chair, and drags her away from the computer.*]

MARY: You can't do that!

JOHN: I just did.

*[MARY lunges of her chair towards the computer, but JOHN grabs the keyboard and holds it over her head. She jumps for it a few times, but each time JOHN moves it.]*

JOHN: 'Alt-F4. Enter.'

MARY: How dare you!

JOHN: How dare you look at my IM logs.

MARY: That's not the same.

JOHN: What are you going to do about it?

*[MARY goes over to John's side of the stage, and unplugs his computer.]*

JOHN: I can't believe you just did that.

MARY: Believe it.

JOHN: I had almost finished a SETI block.

MARY: I guess the Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence will just have to continue with out you.

JOHN: At least I shut yours down properly.

MARY: Not like how you improperly shut down my heart.

JOHN: Improperly shut down your heart? What kind of stupid metaphor is that?

MARY: I bet you'd think it was a great metaphor if KutieKat84693 said it.

JOHN: [*Tries to think of a intelligent come back, but can't, so he goes with the old stand by.*] You're stupid.

MARY: Your mom's stupid.

JOHN: Shut up!

MARY: No you shut up!

*[The glare at each other intensely. Then embrace and begin kissing passionately. Lights begin to fade.]*

MARY: Is that a hard drive in your pocket?

*[Fade to black]*

THE END