

**WHO KISSED
BARBARA? A
FARCE IN ONE ACT**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649234288

Who Kissed Barbara? A Farce in One Act by Lillian Rickaby & Franz Rickaby

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LILLIAN RICKABY & FRANZ RICKABY

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BARBARA? A
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Who Kissed Barbara?

A Farce in One Act

By
FRANZ AND LILLIAN RICKABY

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BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER COMPANY
1921

DAL 3142.7.50

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*Substituted for a copy lost
(Gift of Theodore Johnson)*
Who Kissed Barbara?

CHARACTERS

(In the order of their appearance.)

BARBARA NICOLS, the bridesmaid. (*Petite, lithe, impulsive, and distractingly pretty. Would much rather win a bet than lose it.*)

KATHERINE BLAKE, the bride. (*Paul's sister. Slightly older than Barbara, but not too much; also slightly taller. Ordinarily a very sane and sensible person, but hardly to be held responsible under present conditions.*)

JAMES, the butler. (*Not quite so pompous as we usually make butlers, but plenty at that! He does not have side-burns, though for the sake of the argument he does wear a dress suit. He has been with the Blakes so long that he can express himself rather freely, but also so long that he takes a great deal from them, especially the young fry.*)

PAUL BLAKE, the best man. (*Katherine's brother. Blonde, boyish, susceptible; keen for a joke, always enthusiastic over that which impresses him; witty at times, though frequently not so until some time after the opportunity to be so has gone; distinctly eligible. He appears in a dress suit. He is also cultivating a modest little mustache, so tiny and light in color that it might easily escape detection altogether.*)

HORACE GREGORY, the groom. (*Practical, efficient, but deeply in love just the same. He is to Paul what Katherine is to Barbara. He also appears in a dress suit, and it so happens that he, Paul, and James could wear the same dress suit, though of course they don't.*)



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Who Kissed Barbara?

SCENE.—*The drawing-room in a wealthy suburban home. It is spring. Some time after dinner, the evening before the wedding.*

(The curtain rises on the drawing-room of the Blake home, in darkness except for the semi-glow of the coals in a large fireplace at L., and such light as enters from a heavily curtained door on R., evidently from another room. Before the fireplace one can see the outlines of a large and comfortable davenport and a tall floor-lamp hovering over it from behind. On the other side of the room, outlined in the same way, are a large library table and a deep leather-upholstered chair. Full light would reveal another large chair near the table on the farther side, another curtained door at the back and numerous bookcases, chairs, pictures, etc. There is inviting comfort in every detail.)

BARBARA (*outside, R.*). Katherine, have you seen that piece of paper I had before dinner—the one Horace and I were laughing at? I can't find it anywhere.

KATHERINE (*also outside, but evidently in a different room*). No, dear, I haven't seen anything of it.—But come here a minute and tell me which of these negligées to keep.

BARB. (*evidently moving about*). In a moment. But I've got to find that paper first.

KATH. Why is it so important? Have you looked in the drawing-room? You were in there just before dinner.

BARB. I'll bet that's where it is.

(We see BARBARA enter through the lighted doorway and grope her way carefully across the room toward the floor-lamp. Suddenly the figure of a man is dimly outlined in the doorway at the rear. He silently overtakes the girl on her way to the lamp. There is the sound of a boisterous kiss. The girl screams. The man exclaims "Damn!" and escapes through the rear door. By the light of the lamp, which BARBARA flashes on as soon as she can reach it, she sees only the flying coat-tails of a dress-suited man. BARBARA rushes to the rear door and looks down the hall in the direction taken by the assailant, then turns back into the room, dabs at her lips with her handkerchief, glares back at the door as though it were in part responsible, then stamps to the davenport and throws herself down on it, burying her head in the pillows, registering all the while the anger derived largely from its own helplessness.)

KATH. *(entering from R.)*. For heaven's sake, Barbara, what made you scream like that? You frightened me to — *(Sees BARBARA and goes anxiously to her.)* Why, Bob, dear, what has happened? Are you crying?

BARB. *(sitting up suddenly and dabbing at her eyes)*. Yes, I—No, I'm not! *(Stands up and flounces across the room.)* I'm perfectly furious. I never was so mad in my life. It's simply outrageous. And he did it on purpose *(Throws herself into the easy chair and wails)* just so I'd lose my bet! I hate him! And if it wasn't for you I wouldn't be bridesmaid at his d-darned old wedding.

KATH. *(aghast, goes toward BARBARA)*. Barbara, what are you talking about? *(Gives her a little shake.)* What has happened? And what do you mean about my wedding?

BARB. *(looking up)*. Katherine, I think Horace Gregory is a nasty, horrid thing; and I don't think you ought to marry him. He's not to be trusted.

KATH. *(anxiously)*. Barbara, please, please tell me

what has happened. You worry me to death. What makes you talk so? Why don't you like Horace?

BARB. I tell you he is not to be trusted—in anything.

KATH. (*strangely close to tears*). But why? Why? What has he done? (*More angrily*.) Barbara, you've got to tell me what happened.

BARB. (*rises and crosses back to the davenport, rather nervously, perhaps*). I don't know how.

KATH. (*drops into the chair that BARBARA has just left*). Don't know how? Barbara Nicols, you're the most exasperating woman I ever knew. Why can't you tell me?

BARB. Well—I—I just can't. I—I—they—somebody—Horace—

(*Breaks off and buries her head in the pillows, kicking viciously against the davenport with a free foot.*)

KATH. Well, I—they—somebody—Horace did what?

BARB. (*raises her head to wail*). Kissed me!

(*And buries her head again.*)

KATH. (*vaguely, hardly knowing whether to be relieved or not*). Kissed you? Kissed you! Are you—are you sure it was Horace? (*Puzzled*.) How did it happen?

BARB. (*rises again from her pillows*). He did it just to make me lose my wager, and I think it's the meanest, dirtiest, most ungentlemanly thing I ever heard of. Especially since I made the wager with him! (*Petulantly*.) He's a tight-wad, a cheat, and I hate him!

KATH. (*has come over and sat down beside BARBARA*). Bob, I simply insist on an explanation, right from the beginning. And first of all, what is the wager you're talking about?

BARB. Well, if you must know. First of all, I was silly enough to tell Horace Gregory that I had never been kissed—

KATH. (*politely surprised*). Never been kissed! Why, what do you mean?

BARB. Just what I say. In all my life,—that is, after

I was old enough to have anything to say about it and up until about ten minutes ago, no man had ever kissed me. (*Begins to lose what calmness she has regained.*)

KATH. Well, go on. Do be sensible now. What has that to do with the wager?

BARB. When I was talking to Horace this afternoon, I told him about it, and about the vow too that I made on my sixteenth birthday —

KATH. (*whose eagerness, seemingly well in hand, steps ahead of her*). What was that?

BARB. (*coolly*). Now Katherine, dear, I can talk only so fast.—The vow was that I would never, never let a man kiss me, except the man I was to marry; and of course, any one can see that if he happened to be a—that sort of a man, there'd be no preventing it in that case. (*A slight pause, each girl with her own thoughts.*)

KATH. (*slowly*). And the wager, I suppose, was that you —

BARB. No use supposing. That's just what it was. When I told Horace all this, he shrieked and howled and thought that my aversion to kissing was quite the most humorous thing he had ever heard. At first he wouldn't believe me, but after I had convinced him —

KATH. (*uneasily*). Convinced him?

BARB. He wanted to make a wager with me that I *would* be kissed before he was a married man. I told him, not unless I got engaged too. I felt so absolutely sure of winning that I made him write it down. (*Turns and faces KATHERINE directly.*) Why, I knew he'd be a married man in twenty-four hours, and I didn't see how any one could possibly appear, get himself in love with me, and me with him, and kiss me, all in twenty-four hours. And now—and now—(*Evidences of rising temperature, and the handkerchief suggests tears*) the wager's lost, and my vow broken. (*Angrily.*) I never thought he'd cheat! I didn't have him specify my—my fiancé on the paper. I wish I had.—Where is it, anyway? (*Rises and looks for the paper, on the mantel and around the davenport.* KATHERINE sits looking thoughtfully into the fire. BARBARA finds the paper on the

table.) Oh, here it is. (*Returns quickly to KATHERINE holding it out to her.*) Here it is. Look.

KATH. (*takes the wager, looks at the signatures first, as is her prerogative, but says only.*) Foolishness!

(*As she apparently begins reading it.*)

BARB. Read it aloud, Katherine. I haven't any idea how things like that sound. (*Struck by a happy thought.*) There may be an error in it somewhere too!

KATH. (*reads.*) "Here followeth a wager between Horace Gregory, party of the first part, and Barbara Nicols, party of the second part. The party of the first part wagereth that the party of the second part will be kissed by a man before the party of the first part will have entered the ancient and honorable state of matrimony, that bourne from which no sensible man returneth. Which wager the party of the second part doth duly accept. The losing party to this wager shall furnish forth a dinner for twelve at Le Blanc's, the winning party to set the time, appoint the menu, and choose the guests. Horace Gregory—Barbara Nicols."

BARB. (*slowly.*) I don't see any flaws in it—any legal ones, that is. If I had only made him write "By her fiancé" instead of "by a man"! That was the spirit of it anyway, and he's taken a mean advantage, that's what he has. The very idea of his kissing me himself rather than lose the wager!

KATH. (*defending her stronghold bravely.*) But Barbara, dear, are you *sure* it was Horace? It certainly doesn't sound like him. I don't believe he'd do a thing like that. He isn't that sort. I think I know him much better than you do, and cheating or otherwise taking advantage of any one is utterly beneath him.—He's the man I'm going to marry to-morrow morning, and my faith in him is not easily shaken.

BARB. (*significantly.*) I'm glad it isn't.

KATH. Barbara, darling, can't you take my word for it that he didn't do this—this——

BARB. (*mischievously.*) Dastardly deed? Will that do?