

"Mail Order Bride"
Animation Treatment
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Logline: Mousy Jane Stamp sees a chance to make a new friend when the undertaker takes an out of town bride, but things get complicated when she notices something wacky about her potential acquaintance.

Act One*July 1888*

On the front steps of a dilapidated two-story house, a golden-haired beauty sweeps. Townsfolk (mostly men) gawk as they walk by. Their expressions transparent, this is creepy Jake Bell the undertaker's new bride? Mrs. Bell smiles serenely as she works, and occasionally she sends kisses to Jake as he peers from a window.

Across the way in Bushwell's General Store, mousy Jane Stamp watches the commotion outside the window with an intense expression. The store's owner, Everett watches Jane closely, and his wife the robust Annie steps into the shop from a backroom, talking lively about the upcoming summer festival. She carries an assortment of stylish hats and places them on a counter. Everett silently listens while he peers from a newspaper to Jane. In mid-speech, Annie stops and notices Jane staring out the window. Annie grumbles about the girl's behavior and calls out to her. She gets no response. Annie grabs a box of gingersnaps and walks over to Jane placing a hand on her shoulder. Jane jumps out of fright and spins around. Offering Jane a cookie, Annie questions what's distracting her and Jane hesitantly points a finger outside. Jane states something is off with Mrs. Bell and precedes to explain.

In a flashback, Jane arrives at the post office after church. Like most things in Bushwell, not much is different. Eagle-eyed Atticus Hocking sits behind the counter watching his customers' every move while his handsome son sends Jane a flirtatious smile. A nervous Jane avoids his gaze and settles on the figure behind her. Mrs. Bell enters alone with a large brown package. Jane and others, try to engage Mrs. Bell in conversation, but receives stock answers. Mr. Hocking's son tries to carry the package and almost drops it due to the weight. Jane notes that Mrs. Belle easily carried that crate while it took three men to move it. Over time, Jane notices that the woman's movements became still and sluggish. Through voice-over, Jane explains that she thought the woman was sickly.

After dropping off the package, Mrs. Bell leaves the post and drops her handkerchief by mistake. Jane retrieves it and calls out to Mrs. Bell, but the woman ignores her. Following her home, Jane notices Mrs. Bell's movements becoming slower and slower, until she completely stops in the doorway of her home. Jane recalls hearing a loud tick-tock sound and Jake the undertaker

dragging his wife inside. Curious, Jane knocks on the door and hears the sound of a crank on the other side.

END OF ACT ONE

Act Two

Jane's story concludes and Annie remarks that the whole tale is a load of codswallop. Jane states that she will figure out Mrs. Bell's secret. Annie looks out the window, the crowd around the undertaker's house disperses and Mrs. Bell is now tending a sparse garden. Atticus walks by and Mrs. Bell looks his way with a smile. At this moment, Jake stumbles out the house and his wife turns her attention to him. Thinking Mrs. Bell is an adulteress, Annie offers to help Jane figure out the Bell conundrum.

Jane continues to investigate Mrs. Belle. The woman appears to be her normal cheery self, helping her husband and running errands. At times, Jane catches the woman's movements becoming stiff or erratic, and this prompts Jake to drag his wife away. Like previously, Jane isn't able to get a closer look.

Annie is sweeping the store's steps and casually turns an eye towards the Bell residence. In the window, Mrs. Bell waters plants and humming prettily. Atticus arrives, gazing longingly at Mrs. Bell, while Annie watches with amusement. Jake appears next to Mrs. Bell and pulls her away, not before throwing Atticus a glare.

It's the day of the summer festival, and Jane stands next to the pie stand. She's uncomfortable as Atticus' son shamelessly flirts with her. Annie enters, carrying a tray of pies and tells Jane to loosen up. Jane retorts but spots the Bells walking past the stand. Jake tells his wife to stay as he joins a drunken game of cards at a nearby table. Mrs. Bell instantly follows his command and stands straight on the spot he left her.

At the card table, Atticus tidies his appearance and fixes his gaze on Mrs. Bell. Annie eagerly takes Mrs. Bell by the arm and drags her to the bar's counter. Seeing this as her chance, Jane abandons the Hocking son's advances and greets Mrs. Bell. The ladies inquire about Mrs. Bell's background and she steadfastly comments about her strapping husband. Jane turns to Annie and suggest offering Mrs. Bell a slice of pie and lemonade. "Why not? My Uncle Cecil always squawked after eating a whole tin."

END OF ACT TWOAct Three

Looking up from his card game, Jake spots his wife at the pie stand, he announces that this will be the last round for him this evening. Atticus stands, crossing the grounds and challenges Jake to a game. Jake inquires the odds and Atticus replies Mrs. Bell.

Meanwhile, at the pie stand, Jane and Annie manages to get sweets into Mrs. Bell. Interestingly enough, Mrs. Bell automatically takes a slice after slice and shock those around her. Everett quietly exclaims that the woman should've entered the pie contest. Loud tick-tock sounds grow as Mrs. Bell downs a glass of lemonade in one gulp. Everyone around notices the woman's movements become jittery.

The game between Atticus and Jake becomes intense, but it is clear that Jake doesn't have a snowballs chance in hell. Downing his drink, Jake reveals his final hand, laying the cards out on the table. Atticus, meanwhile, looks up from his hand and then to Jake's. Casually he lays his hand on the table. It's a straight flush. Atticus wins.

Copper coils ping and pops out of Mrs. Bell's head. Those at the stand jump back in shock. Jovial, Atticus practically skips up to Mrs. Bell and states that he's her husband now. Turning shakily, Mrs. Bell smiles in a deranged fashion causing those at the stand to take another step back. Unfortunately for Atticus, he is too lovesick to notice. Grabbing her by the shoulders, Atticus leans in for a kiss, but before his lips touches hers another coil pings, popping out one of her eyes that hits Atticus square in the face. Mrs. Bell then seizes and falls to the floor. Annie then turns to Jane and says, there was something strange about her alright.

END OF ACT THREE