

EILEE, AMEN

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EILEE, AMEN

TIME AND PLACE

1991. A patch of beach in Southern California toward sunset. EILEE, barefoot, in a two-piece bathing suit. Sand. Water. A surfboard. Sounds of waves rolling in. In the discretion of the Director the ocean may be positioned at the back, side, or front of the stage. If at the front of the stage, EILEE steps into the ocean by stepping toward the audience.

CHARACTERS

EILEE, age 36. Married. Mother of two. In a state of serious, postpartum depression.

RACE, died at age 30 in 1984. In Eilee's imagination, Race is age 27. (Essentially a ghost figure in the play).

NOTES

Eilee [*rhymes with Kylie and Riley*] has come back to the place where she and Race shared a profound, wet, and carefree 4-year beach love affair in their early 20s. Race is present, but essentially in Eilee's mind only; and throughout the play she never looks directly at him nor speaks directly to him. Balancing on her surfboard in the sand she balances between returning home to her family, or paddling the board out into the ocean, forever.

... in the dialogue indicates a thoughtful break.

The young men ride their horses fast
on the wet sand of Parangtritis.
Back and forth, with the water sliding
up to them and away.
This is the sea where the goddess lives,
angry, her lover taken away....
The young men exalt in their bodies ...
sliding on and off their beautiful horses
on the wet beach at Parangtritis.

– Linda Gregg, from *Alone with the Goddess*, 2008.

EILEE, AMEN

EILEE enters with a surfboard, which she initially holds to her like a woman might her lover, while she stands in the sand looking out into her thoughts.

RACE is sitting in the sand, maybe ten feet, or so, away from her.

EILEE and RACE never make eye contact, nor in any obvious manner ever speak directly to one another.

EILEE

I found it, Race.
And you're still here, thank God.
It's been so long, I didn't know.
That has to mean something, doesn't it?
To the stars?
To my questions?
Returning here, to this patch of sand we claimed as our own.
Alone in it again. The quiet, and the ocean.
Where we made love. Do you remember? and silently never stopped loving it.
And you, going out there, forever searching for your perfect wave.
Who's going to remember it, if we don't?

Picks up a handful of sand, smells it, and drops it back down, slowly, over her legs and feet.

I can smell us here. Feel us here.
Can you hear me, Race? Can you?
Call me, if you can. Do something. Something. Talk to me.

RACE

I'm here.

EILEE

You ran like the wind over me, wet and naked.
And how I loved it! Day and night!
Up the soles of my feet, through my legs, into my heart, forever.

EILEE digs her bare feet into the sand.

EILEE

You're part of my soul, Race.
That's where you're safe. Inside me.
Your body gleaming brown and gold,
cresting the waves you loved so much.
Always so brown and beautiful in my thoughts.

**EILEE lays the board down in the sand
and restlessly lies on it.**

EILEE

God! How I still long for you against me.
I'm another man's wife now.
But my heart aches for you. For the sight of you.
For your eyes. Your voice. Your scent.
That's how I feel. That way. Faithful and unfaithful in the same instant.
Yearning for your fingers so hard I can feel them in my hair.
Do you remember? Do you remember how I could brush against you,
and you'd harden just to feel my touch?

Rolls onto her back, pulling the board on top of her.

I could scream inside, remembering.
That's how much I long for you, to have back. That way.
I never told you, did I? How I felt this way while you were alive.

RACE

No... No, you didn't. But I knew.

**EILEE stands, the surfboard still lying in
the sand.**

EILEE

Goddammit, Race! Why?...
Why did you not stop infecting us?
You had everything, as much as we loved each other.
Didn't you know what you were doing?
But sure as clockwork,
maybe a month, maybe two, maybe three, I'd catch something new from you.
From the boys on the beach.
No AIDS around, then. Just curable things, like syphilis and shit.
But even so, how could you keep expecting me to risk it?

**EILEE steps onto the surfboard, and
“rides” it as though she were actually on
a wave.**

EILEE

How many times can you be the most important person in the world,
to the person you love the most in the world?
And lose it?
Do you remember the last time we made love together?
It was at my place.
I told you to make love to me like it would be the last time.
And you did. And as we lay in bed, side by side, I told you it *was* the last time.
And when you wouldn't believe me, I told you again. And again.
The diseases were too much for me to bear.
Not jealously. Not jealously at all. Not like they were other women.
No.
It was the medication.
That's what did it, in the end. Fucking STD medication.
And you ran into the bathroom, gagging and vomiting.

We stopped seeing each other after that. For the most part.
Friends. Not lovers anymore.
And we drifted apart. Lost contact.
The pain used to come when I least expected it.
Not like now, when I expect it all the time.
Can you still hear me, Race?

RACE

Yes.

EILEE

I've always heard that a woman's heart is stronger than a man's.
It has to be true. Or else I'd be dead by now.

I got married. Two beautiful sons.
Then this God awful sadness fell like the sky on me.
I can't deal with it anymore. I've prayed for two years for someone to take it away.
But no one can. It's no one's fault. Not my husband's. Not the boys'. Not yours.
It's postpartum. Till I die.

I miss you so much.
My skin never detached itself from yours, or from our passion together.
That's whose fault.

**EILEE jumps off the surfboard, and then
slaps the sand from the bottoms of her
feet.**

EILEE

Some women tell me they can't really remember an orgasm afterwards.
I can.
The ones with you I can. Or, at least, the desperate passion in them....
What do you do if you never get over feeling that you'll never be loved like that
again?
Never be touched that way again?
Never be young like that again?
Feeling life drifting away from you?
Like a rowboat, drifting on its own, out to sea.
Really? What do you do?
I don't know what to do.
I can't feel a thing other than you.
And nobody gives a damn. There's nobody I can talk to like you.

Do you know that statue in Italy that's so famous for being so beautiful?
It's called "David" I think. Just simply David.
That's you. Looking out over the waves. Ready to grab your surfboard.
Then it comes back to me, how you looked in the hospital.
I just happened to run into one of your old friends.
And he told me you were dying.
AIDS had finally caught up with America. And with you. And this time, no cure.

I found you.
So lacking the brown and golden glow.
So lacking your youth and your halo.
So horribly thin.
Jesus God it twisted my stomach. Almost out of me.
I threw up, inside, feeling so sorry for you.
Feeling so sorry for myself, too, of course.
Feeling so sorry for lives that don't fit right when they could.
When they were young.
There you were, dying; and I felt dying, too.
And I choked. Remember? On my tears.
Too soon a life you had to lose. Too stupid a way to lose it.
O how it hurts to lose the love of your life,
even if you're not with him anymore.
Because, when he dies your dreams die, too.

EILEE

And it really makes you wonder, about choices in life.
You imagine they're so important, when all they are, are a matter of timing.
Here I am, alive, for the choice *I* made.
There you are dead, for the choice *you* made.
And that's the thing, isn't it? What's the difference?
What's to be alive for?
Living in a bathtub like I am.
After all the water's run out.
And I don't *feel* the water anymore.
And when I die, even the memory of water will be gone.
Except, when they find me, I'll make sure they know I died in the arms of my
lover.

**EILEE walks into the ocean to splash
water on her face, and returns. She's
holding up a seashell she's found, and
puts it down, on the sand, making a
circle in the sand around it.**

EILEE

Here's my sign. A seashell: To be or not to be....
What is the sign of a seashell?... Cancer? Pisces?
Whatever it is, tell me....
To paddle back home? or to paddle to Race's spot out there?

When we last talked, in the hospital, we held hands. Remember?
You said you'd never forgotten me. That I was always the love of your life.
You told me that. Remember? It's what I'll always remember.

**EILEE unfastens the top of her suit,
letting it fall to the sand onto the shell.
(In the Director's discretion, she may be
fitted with items which imply topless
nudity while protecting modesty.) She
gets back on the surfboard, crouches,
and begins to "ride" it in the sand.**

EILEE

I always figured, the hardest part of life is getting *into* the water.
The waves. How they ebb and flow. Like days and nights of love-making.
Life's forever running here and there, and never catching up.
And we're all so small about it. And let it just slip away.

EILEE

It makes me angry. And then sad. And so very, very angry again.
And I find myself thinking of a color. An angry red.
And all my anger, and all my disappointment, flow into it.
I hold it until I see it begin to bulge, and change.
The red fades into blue. And the anger and the pain fade slowly with it.
And I remember you. And that you're gone....

RACE leaves.

EILEE

I have a wonderful husband. And two fine boys.
I should feel blessed. Instead, I feel lost. Life is lost. Its purpose.
And then, like a sudden breeze out of nowhere, I can feel you, back inside me.
Running like the wind over me. Like a breath of Heaven.
"Heaven comes and Heaven goes, like the waves," you used to say.
Like the good ones.
Nothing's permanent the way the ocean is.
Nothing carries memories as heavy as the ocean does.
Nothing's as beautiful, or as ugly as the ocean.
Like every memory of us, lapping and lapping and lapping against my brain.
And in a minute, if no one stops me, I'm taking the rest of this suit off,
covering the rest of that shell, and paddling out to that point.
It's *your* point, isn't it? Your favorite place to catch a wave.
Your favorite place in the world, next to being with me. Me, and your surfboard.

And maybe, just maybe, time, like Heaven, has a hole in it, and you'll be there.
And I'll paddle right through, in the waves, and you'll see me.
And you'll smile. And maybe wave. And I'll wave back.
And the hole will swallow us up together.

Another thing I remember you used to say, at the end of the day:
"Today was a good day to be a good day."
Well, here it is. The end of the day. And here I am. Hello, Race! I'm coming.
And when they find my body, they'll be clueless, won't they?
Wondering why my clothes were off.
And the boys will grow up. And fall in love themselves.
And think of me. Sometimes. Their mother. Asleep, in the sea, in the nude.
In the arms of her lover.

END