

EILEE

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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....
Give her an offering.
I give a coconut to protect
the man I love. The water pushes it back.
I wade out and throw it farther....
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

TIME AND PLACE

2001. 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 37. Married. Mother of two. In a state of postpartum suicidal depression.

RACE, died at age 29 in 1992. In Eilee's imagination, Race is still age 24. (Essentially a ghost figure in the play).

DAVID, Eilee's husband.

... in the dialogue indicates a thoughtful break.

NOTE

Eilee [*rhymes with Kylie or Riley*] has come back to a place where she can rejoin the memories of a love affair from her early 20s. Her lover, Race, is present in form only – essentially in Eilee's mind, and throughout the scene she never directly acknowledges his physical presence. Balancing on her surfboard in the sand she teeters between returning home to her family, or paddling out into the ocean to join her dead lover.

SCENE

EILEE enters with a surfboard, holding it at her side like a woman might stand in the sand next to her lover. In a few moments she walks with it to the edge of the waves.

RACE is sitting in the sand, a short distance away from EILEE.

EILEE and RACE never make eye contact, nor do they have any direct interaction, EXCEPT WHEN Eilee's eyes are closed.

EILEE

Looking out to the ocean.

I used to cherish closing my eyes here and just listening.
[beat] Like the sand flowers, to the waves.

Reaching down to touch the water.

If anything that's how life is:
Just the moment.
The breathing.
The thoughts.
The feelings of loss.
The insistent presence of the universe on our backs.
Its inhuman love. Its indifference.
Its filling up our emptiness.
And then taking everything away from us in the end.
Like a shipwreck.

[pause] When I drive I count milestones.
It's my habit, to pass the time.
If traffic is normal, and the weather is normal,
there's hardly a thing on my mind that's more unwinding than driving.
The mechanics of it. The escape.
Like slow waves brushing against the sand.

[pause] I got here a couple of hours ago, I guess you know.
Thinking of you.
Talking to you.
Just sitting there.
Not getting out of the car right away.

EILEE

I'm not alone, you see.
Thirty thousand suicides a year, the person on my cell phone told me.
Give or take.
In our country alone.
And far more who try and fail.

[*pause*] It's not always the pain of a broken heart.
But I spose it mostly is.
Lost love.
That, and shame and guilt.

**EILEE lets the surfboard fall to the sand and
puts her hands over her eyes.**

**As she does, RACE comes over to her and
holds her in his arms.**

**After a space he returns to sitting in the sand;
and EILEE takes her hands down from her
eyes.**

EILEE

You were in the hospital when you died.
So thin.
So hopeless I could barely stand it.
I still can feel your hand in mine.
Some of the time.
When it's dark.
[*beat*] How many died young back then?
How many angels were lost?
My God! Will we ever forget?

[*pause*] I looked, and looked around when I got out of the car.
And can you believe it? I've found it!
I didn't know whether I could.
This patch of sand we claimed as our own, our very own, and the ocean to go with it.
It's been so long.
Hidden for so long.
Forbidden for so long.
Except in my memories.
[*beat*] It's time.

EILEE

[*pause*] I haven't come here just to remember you, Race.
I've come to join you.
You see, I've never been able to get you out of me.
You're as much in my blood as AIDS was in yours.
The sadness of missing you.
It's grown too large for me to bear.
I need someone to love me; and I pray you'll be there when I cross.

Again EILEE puts her hands over her eyes.

When she does RACE comes to her, puts his hands on the sides of her face, and kisses her. Long.

He returns to sitting in the sand; and EILEE takes her hands down from her eyes.

EILEE

I can feel you, Race.
And see you, kissing me.
Is that what death feels like?

[*pause*] Back when our closeness was always near, I could forget everything else.
When we were young for forever, and made love into our sleep.
When sleep would forget everything else.
Except you.
And me, wanting you.
To never stop loving me....
You understand, don't you, my Love?

RACE

[*pause*] I understand.

EILEE

Now there's no place for me to hide.
No surfer's arms to bury myself in.
No new ocean to wash the grief out of me.
No endless waves and their paramour.
No endless youth.
No endless belief in love.
I loved you and every burning spark of us.
[*beat*] Is remembering everything so clearly now so odd?

EILEE

[*pause*] When I left, I died.
Part of me did.
Part of my life went cold.
I didn't know it until later it was too late.
I'm sorry.
I should never have gone.
But, then, of course, I'd be dead now, too.

RACE

You'd be dead now, too.

**EILEE sits down and stretches her legs into
the water.**

EILEE

I want to laugh at the water.
How it tickles my feet.
My legs.
And cry....

There's no escape from memory, is there?
I try to say to myself:
"Don't think about that now."
But there's still no escape.
Even when you don't let yourself think of the memories they're there.

RACE

[*beat*] No, there's no escape.

EILEE

Why couldn't you stay away from boys?
You had me.
We had each other.
Why did you have to have them, too?

[*pause*] I never really understood you, did I?
We'd be okay for a month, or two, and then some new infection.
Not AIDS.
Not AIDS yet.
AIDS hadn't been around long enough to get to us.
But other diseases to ruin things.
I never understood, did I?

RACE

[*pause*] No, you didn't.

EILEE

You know, I still can feel you here with me.

Your heat.

Your breath.

I still can see you sitting there, listening to the silence of the waves.

That has to mean something, doesn't it?

That I can remember things like that?

So clearly?

That we could be so close and not ruin it with words.

So silent. Your silence.

You were the most quiet person I ever knew.

And our making love so many times.

That has to mean something, too, doesn't it?

Do you remember?

I never stopped loving it.

[*pause*] Sometimes, afterwards, you'd go out there, searching for your perfect wave.

Remember?

RACE

I remember.

EILEE

**Picks up a handful of sand, smells it, and lets it drop down,
slowly, over her legs and feet.**

[*pause*] Who's going to remember us if I don't?

The smell of us here.

The feel of us.

The love of us.

Can you hear me, Race? Can you?

Tell me, if you can. Do something. Say something. Talk to me.

RACE

I'm here.

EILEE

You ran like the wind over me, bare, wet, and naked.

And I loved it! How I loved it! Every time!

O God! Into my heart, forever. I can't stand it.

EILEE stands, digs her feet into the sand, and then stands on the board.

EILEE

What's life mean if the person you love is gone?
Is it what insanity is? I feel insane at times.
Or is it mere blindness?

My heart's gone blind.
I'm moving in darkness without feeling.
Except for this depression.

[*pause*] You became part of my soul, Race.
You pulled it out of me; held it in your hands; and put it back inside my chest.
And that's where you are now.
Hidden safe inside me.
Your body gleaming brown and gold,
crested the waves you loved so much.
Always so brown and beautiful in my thoughts.

EILEE restlessly lies down on the surfboard.

EILEE

God! How I long for you against me.
I'm another man's wife now, but my body aches for you.
For the touch of you.
For the scent of you.
Is that legal? Or adultery?
No matter: It's how I feel.
Faithful and unfaithful in every breath.
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 be aroused?

EILEE rolls onto her back, pulling the board on top of her.

EILEE

I could scream, remembering.
That's how much you did to me.
That way. That much.
I never told you, did I? How I felt that way while you were alive.
We didn't talk about loving each other, did we?

RACE

[beat] No, we didn't.
But we knew.

EILEE stands, the surfboard still lying in the sand.

EILEE

I don't belong there anymore.
I don't belong anywhere anymore.

When we make love I think of you.
I think it's you.
And then I know it's not.
You're not the same.
Even with my eyes closed making love is not at all the same.
And my mind disappears into the water.

EILEE kneels and slaps the water.

Everything starts spinning, and I think I'm losing my mind.
When the worst cramps of depression come I cry.
Sometimes uncontrollably. By myself.
Doctors say it will go away.
I doubt it.
It never has.
Am I going to Hell?
For leaving you?
You leaving me in a storm with a body I don't expect clutching me.
Guilty.

[pause] Goddammit, Race! Why?
Why didn't we run away?
Or sail away?
Somewhere with plenty of waves,
and no boys with water sliding off their chests and legs.
No young boys exalting in their bodies.
Why?
We had everything.
Why did you have to keep infecting me?
Syphilis and shit.
Didn't you know what you were doing?
Did you keep expecting me to endure it forever?

RACE

[beat] I didn't think.

**EILEE crouches on the surfboard, and "rides"
it as though searching for her wave.**

EILEE

How many times can you be the most important person in the world to the most important person in the world to you, and lose it?

Do you remember the last time we made love?

I do. It was in my bedroom.

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, naked and panting, I told you it *was* the last time.

And when you wouldn't believe me, I told you again. And again.

The ghosts of disease were too much for me.

And the medications.

That's what did it.

Effing STD medications.

And you ran into the bathroom, gagging, and vomited.

We stopped seeing much of each other after that.

Somewhat friends.

Never lovers anymore.

And drifted apart.

Lost contact.

Can you still hear me, Race?

RACE

[beat] Yes I can.

EILEE

I can't believe it.

I can't believe I could do it.

The pain comes when I least expect it.

It's overwhelming.

And no remedy.

No freedom but water.

My life slipping through my fingers like water.

Forgive me, Race. Please forgive me.

I am the last person on Earth who remembers you the way you were.

When I'm gone it will be as though you've never been.

But I have to do it. I so desperately need to find love again.

EILEE

I've always heard that a woman's heart is stronger than a man's.
If it weren't true I wouldn't still be here.

I got married, and we have two beautiful sons.
Then this God-awful sadness fell on me.
Postpartum. Till I die.

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

EILEE

Whom can I pray to when living is slow suicide?
Who would understand?
Jesus?
He never loved a woman like you loved me.
He never had a woman whose skin wouldn't detach itself from his passion.
He never knew a woman whose greatest dread was the fear of never being loved like that
again. Never being young like that again.

I found you in the hospital alone. So lacking the brown and golden glow.
So lacking your youth and your young halo. So horribly thin.
AIDS had finally caught up with America, and America had finally caught up with you.
And this time, no cure.
Jesus God it twisted my stomach, feeling so sorry for you.
And for me, too.
Feeling so sorry for lives that don't fit.
For falling into a future with its mouth open, ready to eat the hearts out of the 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.
Too stupid for dreams to die so young. Forever.
Because, when the love of your life dies, dreams die, too. Do you know what I mean?

RACE

Yes, I know.... You were the love of my life, too.

EILEE

[*pause*] Do you know that statue in Italy that's so famous for being so beautiful?
It's called "David."
It's my husband's name, but it's your body.
Your old body, looking out over the waves. Ready to grab your surfboard.
And it really makes you wonder, doesn't it: Did Michelangelo ever see the ocean?

EILEE

[*pause*] Do choices in life matter? Or is it all the luck of an idiot?
Here I am, alive, for the choice *I* made.
There you are dead, for the choice *you* made.
And the difference is only a matter of time.

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

EILEE

Is this your sign? A seashell? To be or not to be.
What is the sign of seashells? Pieces? Cancer?

EILEE searches the beach for more shells, which she carefully arranges on the sand in the shape of a broken heart.

Then she removes the top of her bathing suit. (In the Director's discretion, she may be fitted with items which imply topless nudity while protecting modesty.) She ties the top of her suit like a blinder over her eyes and begins walking. RACE joins her, taking her hand to guide her.

When they return to her surfboard EILEE unties the blindfold, drops it to the sand, gets back on the surfboard, crouches, and begins to imitate riding out into the ocean.

RACE exits.

EILEE

I always felt the hardest part of water was getting in.
How the waves push and pull at you.
Like love, forever ebbing and flowing, and we just let them slip away.
It makes me angry.
And I see color. Red. Angry red.
And all my anger flows into it.
Until it changes: The red fades into blue. Like my soul.
And the water, and the sand, and the ocean all fade into blue, and the anger subsides.
And I remember you. And that you're gone.

EILEE

[*pause*] I have a good man for a husband.
And two fine boys.
I should feel blessed; but they're on the other side of an ocean.
They don't understand.
What do you do when life has lost its purpose?
Drown it?
Or let it drown you?
What's the point?
I remember you used to say at sunset: "Today was a good day to be a good day."
Well, here it is.
The end of the day.
And here I am, Race.
I'm coming!
And when they find my body, they'll be clueless, won't they?
Why I'm naked.
And my boys will grow up.
And fall in love themselves.
And think of me. Sometimes. Their mother. Asleep, in the sea, in the nude.
Nothing is permanent the way water is.

[*pause*] In a minute, if no one stops me, I'm taking off the rest of this suit,
and paddling out to your point.
Your favorite place to catch a wave.
And maybe, just maybe, this ocean has a hole in it, and you'll be there.
And I'll paddle right through, 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.

**DAVID enters, and runs frantically toward
EILEE shouting.**

DAVID

Eilee! Eilee!
Stop! Stop, please!
I'm on your side.
I feel what you're going through. And there's hope.
Talk to me, and there's hope....
I love you.

**EILEE jumps off the surfboard, picks it up,
and at first holds it against her like a shield.**

EILEE

David?

**EILEE lets the board drop, and DAVID takes
her into his arms.**

DAVID

I never understood, did I?

EILEE

You found my letter.

DAVID

How angry you were.

EILEE

Crying.

God took them away.
Race and so many other young men.
And I had to do it. I had to.

DAVID

I felt the warmth of your body next to mine.
And its softness.
And mistook the touch for love.

EILEE

Can the dead touch?
Touch your hand?
From the other side?

DAVID

We made love.

EILEE

Making love through pain isn't making love.
Sex, maybe.
Not love

DAVID

I want you alive. With me.
Making love is only part of making love. Being alive is bigger.

EILEE

[*beat*] What is being alive?

DAVID

There's so much I don't know I can't pretend to know what it's all about.
Or what being dead is about.
Maybe we meet the happiness again.
Maybe not. I don't know what to believe.

But one thing I believe with all my heart:
After nights of fright, and grief, and sadness, and despair,
weary to the bone with disappointment,
a parent does what needs to be done to feed the children...

Children are more important than lost love. Or a broken heart.
I *do* believe that.

Come back.

EILEE

And you'll help?

DAVID

Every moment I can.

EILEE

You understand?

DAVID

I'm learning

EILEE

And you still love me?

DAVID

With all my heart.

EILEE

[*pause*] I felt his hand in mine.

DAVID

My hand is here. Always.
To hold yours.
And my ears. Always.
With God's help we'll get through this.

EILEE

And you'll understand?
Even if it doesn't make any sense?
Like ... ghosts?

DAVID

Your ghost I'll carry on my shoulders with you.
When you're ready.
No competition.
No jealousy.
I promise you that.

EILEE

I need a breath.

EILEE picks up the top of her bathing suit and puts it on.

Then she holds out a hand to DAVID.

EILEE

I'll try.

DAVID

And I'll try.

EILEE

That has to mean something, doesn't it?

DAVID

We'll make it mean something.
Life is too precious to mean nothing.

They exit, hand-in-hand, DAVID carrying Eilee's surfboard.

END