

MY MOTHER'S EYES

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When we see the Earth from space, we see ourselves as a whole. We see the unity, and not the divisions. It is such a simple image with a compelling message: one planet, one human race.

– Stephen Hawking, *Brief Answers to the Big Question*, 2018.

Dream on.

– Aerosmith, 1973.

MY MOTHER'S EYES

TIME AND PLACE

Present.

A snug cabin in a yacht, barely rocking in the waters of San Francisco Bay.

CHARACTERS

MARK, early 30s.

BELLA, 20s, with her hair up.

ELLA, 20s. Ella and Bella are dressed identically.

... in the dialogue indicates a thoughtful break.

SCENE

In the cabin are a bed, a wood stove, two chairs, and a table (on which rests a rotating dowel rod in a stand, to which are affixed a pair of theatre masks, back-to-back, like faces of Janus). If possible, a bear rug lies on the floor, in the mouth of which is concealed a roll of duct tape. Otherwise the duct tape is found on set in a place determined by the Director. Occasional moans of a buoy may be heard.

The door opens, and MARK and BELLA enter, wearing light coats.

MARK

Christmas in July!

BELLA

Unbelievable, isn't it, Mark? For summertime.

MARK

Mark Twain weather in the Bay.... I'll get a fire going.

MARK goes to the stove to start a fire while BELLA puts her handbag down on a chair and looks around the cabin.

MARK

Bella?

BELLA

Yes ...?

MARK

Do you often think of your mother?

BELLA

Every day. Several times a day usually.

MARK

Actually?

BELLA

Each time I go to the bathroom. Remembering how she potty trained me.

MARK

Hell! I wasn't thinking that.

BELLA

She used a potty with a blue plastic seat.... Why? What *were* you thinking?

MARK

About *my* mother. I always think about her like now....
[correcting himself] Making a fire.

BELLA

Why?

MARK

Because of her eyes.

BELLA

Her eyes?

MARK

When she'd build a fire in the fireplace at home, I'd watch my mother's eyes. They were brown, with specks of gold which sparkled like tiger's eyes in the flames.

I've never seen a woman's eyes more beautiful than hers.

I think over and over about those eyes, and how they'd watch me.

BELLA

That's sweet.

MARK

Bella? Why did you come out here with me today? May I ask?

BELLA

To see the sun set over the bridge, from your parents' yacht, you told me.

MARK

Do you trust me?

BELLA

Yes.... Why not?

MARK

Enough to spend the night?

BELLA

I don't think so.

MARK

What if I insist?

BELLA

I've got protection.

MARK

[*surprised*] What? Mace?

BELLA

Not mace. My faith.
In God, Jesus, and the Virgin Mary.

MARK

A modern day Trinity.

BELLA

Trinity. Duality. Unity.

MARK

Unity? What do you know about unity?

BELLA

Unity is belief in one, monolithic world.
Why? What do you know about unity?

MARK

To me, unity is two bodies uniting as one.
I don't get the monolithic part of what you said.

BELLA spins the wooden dowel.

BELLA

What's your favorite time of year?

MARK

Summer, I suppose.
Or the extra hour in bed when time shifts back in the fall.

BELLA

Mine's Halloween.

MARK

Come to think of it, mine is too.

BELLA

I love masquerade parties.
I'm crazy about having two faces: Duality. Yin, Yang. Outside out; inside hidden.

BELLA spins the wooden dowel again.

MARK

Which face are you?

BELLA

Both.

MARK

Just like a woman.

BELLA

Men are the same. Every man, I believe, has some beastly face to hide.

MARK

That's hardly flattering.

BELLA

Which is why I say:
Keep your mask on, and let your spirit run free.

MARK

What kind of spirit?

BELLA

The most exciting moment of my life, when I was sixteen, was at the Ensenada Carnival in Mexico. We were carefree, and dancing, and having a magical time when it came toward me. Swaying back and forth, the thing must have been seven feet tall. And when it stopped, I could see its mask was bone white with bloody red lips. It wore a purple cloak and a diamond tiara, and it smiled at me. I swear, the mask smiled at me, and tried to kiss me. After that my life has never been quite the same. It left my soul split in two.

BELLA again spins the wooden dowel.

BELLA

I couldn't believe how beautiful it was, or how scared I was.

MARK

Not my idea of what's beautiful.

BELLA

Which is?

MARK

E pluribus union. In the true, American spirit of oneness to greatness.

BELLA

Duality is cooperation to greatness.

MARK

I've almost got it.... There!

A fire is burning in the wood stove.

MARK

It'll be more comfy now.

MARK helps BELLA off with her coat and puts his and her coats on the chair with Bella's handbag.

MARK

I'm attracted to you, Bella. You must know that.

BELLA

It's my innocence. That's all.

MARK

That's not true. It's your eyes. They're so like my mother's eyes.

BELLA doesn't show MARK, or say a word, but there's a sign the audience can see that she's heard that line before.

BELLA

And how long do you imagine your interest will last?

MARK

Maybe forever. The body knows things a long time before the mind does.
And making love's the best way designed by Nature to get to know one another.

BELLA

Making love is the best way designed by Nature to get pregnant.

MARK

There are means of taking care of that today, haven't you heard?
And I'll pay for it, if it happens.

BELLA

For how long?

MARK

What do you mean?

BELLA

How many years does it take to take care of the memories?
And what if I keep the child despite the rape? and she asks to meet her father?

MARK

Rape? Who says rape? You're alone with me on this boat, and no one knows
you're here. So I wouldn't start using words like rape if I were you.

MARK takes BELLA into his arms and starts kissing her. She pushes him away.

MARK

What do you want me to do?

BELLA

Treat me like your sister, and show me the same respect.

MARK

I don't have a sister....

Let me get us something to drink.

MARK exits.

BELLA resumes looking around the cabin, and finds the roll of duct tape, which she sets on the table.

MARK

[from offstage] Bella ...?

BELLA

[calling out] Yes?

MARK

[from offstage] Are you a virgin?

BELLA

[calling out] Half of me is.

MARK

[from offstage] Which half?

The sound of a cork popping.

BELLA

[calling out] My left brain.

MARK enters with two filled glasses and hands one to BELLA. They drink.

MARK

Your left brain, did you say?

BELLA

My right brain's less manageable. Less sane.

MARK

What do you mean?

BELLA

I hardly talk to her. She's wild. Unpredictable. She may have killed a man once.

MARK

What makes you think that?

BELLA

Dreams.

MARK

That's scary. How do you dream something like that?

BELLA

Haven't you ever had a dream about something you're afraid people will find out?

MARK

No.

BELLA

I guess unity's your way of forgetting. Duality is my way of remembering.

MARK

Forgetting what?

BELLA

Something that happened once that hurt you ... or her.
Because you're in pain. I can see it.

MARK

[*beat*] I think it's time to go.... We're going back to the party.

BELLA

Why? For you to find someone else to bring out here?

MARK grabs Bella's champagne glass from her and exits.

ELLA enters (dressed exactly as BELLA). As BELLA exits ELLA lets down her hair. Then she takes a handgun out of Bella's handbag and holds it behind her.

MARK reenters and notices Ella's hair down.

MARK

What's this, Bella, a change of heart?

ELLA

The name's Ella.

MARK

Ella?! I thought your name was Bella. I've been calling you Bella.

ELLA

It's Ella. E. L. L. A. Ella.

MARK

Did something happened to Bella?

ELLA

She doesn't like being a part of bloody things.

MARK

What the Hell?! I didn't sign up for this.

ELLA

Sure you did. When you brought us out here.

MARK

Are you the one who killed someone?

ELLA picks up the roll of duct tape and shows it to MARK.

ELLA

Do you remember this?...

Our hair was a different color then.... When we were seventeen.

MARK takes a step toward ELLA, and she pulls the gun from behind her back and points it at him.

ELLA

You best not take another step. Prince here won't like it.

MARK

Stops.

What are you going to do?

ELLA

Tattoo your balls.

MARK

O my God! No. Please. Please don't shoot me. I'll do anything you say.

ELLA

Dream on. Except ... what you didn't try to do to me today has changed my plans.

Throws the tape at him.

But if I ever hear of your using this stuff again, or anything like it, God help me, your next confrontation with Prince will be your last. Does that communicate?

MARK

Yes.

ELLA

Now toss me the keys to your car.

MARK reaches into his pocket, fetches the keys, and tosses them to ELLA.

ELLA

We may have told you something extra, Man. More than just a stay of execution.

Exits with Bella's coat and handbag.

MARK picks up the roll of duct tape and throws it across the cabin. Then the wooden dowel, but only looks at it and puts it back down. Then he sits, holding his head in his hands.

MARK

Jesus! Why didn't she kill me?...

Because I didn't touch her? This time?

O! Lord! What I've done....

Help me, please. I know I'm not worth it, God, but please help me.

[beat] Forgive me.

END