

SILENCE

Audition Piece

RUMSEY

I walk with my girl who wears a grey blouse when she walks and grey shoes and walks with me readily wearing her clothes considered for me. Her grey clothes.

She holds my arm.

On good evenings we walk through the hills to the top of the hill past the dogs the clouds racing just before dark or as dark is falling when the moon

When it's chilly I stop her and slip her raincoat over her shoulders or rainy slip arms into the arms, she twisting her arms. And talk to her and tell her everything.

She dresses for my eyes.

I tell her my thoughts. Now I am ready to walk, her arm in me her hand in me.

I tell her my life's thoughts, clouds racing. She looks up at me or listens looking down. She stops in midsentence, my sentence, to look up at me. Sometimes her hand has slipped from mine, her arm loosened, she walks slightly apart, dog barks.

BATES

I'm at my last gasp with this unendurable racket. I kicked open the door and stood before them. Someone called me Grandad and told me to button it. It's they should button it. Were I young...

One of them told me I was lucky to be alive, that I would have to bear it in order to pay for being alive, in order to give thanks for being alive.

It's a question of sleep. I need something of it, or how can I remain alive, without any true rest, having no solace, no constant solace, not even any damn inconstant solace.

I am strong, but not as strong as the bastards in the other room, and their tittering bitches, and their music, and their love.

If I changed my life, perhaps, and lived deliberately at night, and slept in the day. But what exactly would I do? What can be meant by living in the dark?

ELLEN

Now and again I meet my drinking companion and have a drink with her. She is a friendly woman, quite elderly, quite friendly. But she knows little of me, she could never know much of me, not really, not now. She's funny. She starts talking sexily to me, in the corner, with our drinks. I laugh.

She asks me about my early life, when I was young, never departing from her chosen subject, but I have nothing to tell her about the sexual part of my youth. I'm old, I tell her, my youth was somewhere else, anyway I don't remember. She does the talking anyway.

I like to get back to my room. It has a pleasant view. I have one or two friends, ladies. They ask me where I come from. I say of course from the country. I don't see much of them.

I sometimes wonder if I think. I heard somewhere about how many thoughts go through the brain of a person. But I couldn't remember anything I'd actually thought, for some time.

It isn't something that anyone could ever tell me, could ever reassure me about, nobody should tell, from looking at me, that was happening.

But I'm still quite pretty really, quite nice eyes, nice skin.

BATES moves to ELLEN.

BATES

Will we meet tonight?

ELLEN

I don't know.

Pause.

BATES

Come with me tonight.

ELLEN

Where?

BATES

Anywhere. For a walk.

Pause.

ELLEN

I don't want to walk.

BATES

Why not?

Pause.

ELLEN

I want to go somewhere else.

Pause.

BATES

Where?

ELLEN

I don't know.

Pause.

BATES

What's wrong with a walk?

ELLEN

I don't want a walk.

Pause.

BATES

What do you want to do?

ELLEN

I don't know.

Pause.

BATES

Do you want to go anywhere else?

ELLEN

Yes.

BATES

Where?

ELLEN

I don't know.

Pause.

BATES

Do you want me to buy you a drink?

ELLEN

No.

Pause.

BATES

Come for a walk.

ELLEN

No.

Pause.

BATES

All right. I'll take you on a bus to the town. I know a place. My cousin runs it.

ELLEN

No.

Silence

ELLEN moves to RUMSEY.

ELLEN

It's changed. You've painted it. You've made shelves. Everything. It's beautiful.

RUMSEY

Can you remember... when you were here last?

ELLEN

Oh yes.

RUMSEY

You were a little girl.

ELLEN

I was.

Pause.

RUMSEY

Can you cook now?

ELLEN

Shall I cook for you?

RUMSEY

Yes.

ELLEN

Next time I come. I will.

Silence.

RUMSEY

Do you like music?

ELLEN

Yes.

RUMSEY

I'll play you music.

Pause.

RUMSEY

Look at your reflection.

ELLEN

Where?

RUMSEY

In the window.

ELLEN

It's very dark outside.

RUMSEY

It's high up.

ELLEN

Does it get darker the higher you get?

RUMSEY

No.

Silence.

NIGHT

Audition Piece

MAN

You agree we met at a party. You agree with that?

WOMAN

What was that?

MAN

What?

WOMAN

I thought I heard a child, crying, waking up.

MAN

The house is silent.

Pause.

MAN

It's very late. We're sitting here. We should be in bed. I have to bed up early. I have things to do. Why do you argue?

WOMAN

I don't. I'm not. I'm willing to go to bed. I have things to do. I have to be up in the morning.

Pause.

MAN

A man called Doughty gave the party. You knew him. I had met him. I knew his wife. I met you there. You were standing by the window. I smiled at you, and to my surprise you smiled back. You liked me. I was amazed. You found me attractive. Later you told me. You liked my eyes.

WOMAN

You liked my eyes.

Pause.

You touched my hand. You asked me who I was, and what I was, and whether I was aware that you were touching my hand, that your fingers were touching mine, that your fingers were moving up and down between mine.

MAN

No. We stopped on a bridge. I stood behind you. I put my hand under your coat, onto your waist. You felt my hand on you.

Pause.

WOMAN

We had been to a party. Given by the Doughtys. You had known my wife. She looked at you dearly, as if to say you were her dear. She seemed to love. I didn't. I didn't know you. They had a lovely house. By a river. I went to collect my coat, leaving you waiting for me. You had offered to escort me. I thought you were quite courtly, quite courteous, pleasantly mannered, quite caring. I slipped my coat on and looked out of the window, knowing you were waiting. I looked down over the garden to the river, and saw the lamplight on the water. Then I joined you and we walked down the road through railings into a fields, must have been some kind of part. Later we found your care. You drove me.

Pause.

MAN

I touched your breasts.

WOMAN

Where?

MAN

On the bridge. I felt your breasts.

WOMAN

Really?

MAN

Standing behind you.

WOMAN

I wondered whether you would, whether you wanted to, whether you would.

MAN

Yes.

WOMAN

I wondered how you would go about it, whether you wanted to, sufficiently.

MAN

I put my hands under your sweater, I undid your brassiere, I felt your breasts.

WOMAN

Another night perhaps. Another girl.

MAN

You don't remember my fingers on your skin.

WOMAN

Were they in your hands? My breasts? Fully in your hands?

MAN

You don't remember my hands on your skin.

Pause.

WOMAN

Standing behind me?

MAN

Yes.

WOMAN

But my back was against railings. I felt the railings... behind me. You were facing me. I was looking into your eyes. My coat was closed. It was cold.

MAN

I undid your coat.

WOMAN

It was very late. Chilly.

MAN

And then we left the bridge and we asked down the towpath and we came to a rubbish dump.

WOMAN

And you had me and you told me you had fallen in love with me, and you said you would take care of me always, and you told me my voice and my eyes, my thighs, my breasts, were incomparable, and that you would adore me always.

MAN

Yes, I did.

WOMAN

And you do adore me always.

MAN

Yes, I do.

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