

The Constellation Minuet

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A version of this play was first presented by Lubbock Underground Theatre & Film

Dramatis Personae

GIRL

Young (8-12) but played by any age. A youthful soul is important.

WOMAN

Late 20's - Early 30's. Unhappy.

BALLOON

An inanimate balloon.

Place / Time

SCENE

An unpopulated portion of beach next to the ocean. North. Cold.

TIME

Twice the present.

Special Note for Performance

Throughout the play there are really three characters. The balloon should not “respond.” It is important that these women believe in this inanimate friend despite any visible reason. It is, after all, just a balloon.

Personal Notes

I originally wrote this play for a specific festival (it was not selected). The evening of what would have been the opening night would have found the constellation Gemini directly above the location of the event. My intention was for the stars to actually align. Also, I originally wrote this play thinking of an interior stage. The first production took place outside. The balloon was not a cast role but instead moved with the present wind. This was also wonderful.

1.1

At rise we hear crying. The sound of waves crashing into the shore on a remote part of oceanfront land. It is just after sunrise. Hard light from one side diminishing and diffusing as time goes on. Further back is a balloon, floating anonymously in the background. It is not the focus. But, at rise, is the only object on stage. Enter GIRL, crying, dragging a blanket that is around her body. She shows bruising on her arms, an eye, etc...

GIRL

Why? Why? Why? Why?

Sob.

Why?

Sob.

I didn't do anything. I didn't do anything. Why does he have to be that way, huh? Why does he have to be that way?

She sits down.

God loves us. God loves us. Preacher always talks about God loves us.

Sad lip.

God didn't love us today.

Cries.

God didn't love us today.

Looks straight out.

God made the ocean and the sky and the earth and the birds and the fishes and the plants and all the animals. God made me. God saw that it was good but God didn't love us today. Not today. No, not today.

1.2

There is no transition from the previous scene to this scene. It would be best to consider them as the same scene. This division simply notes a change in emotion for Girl.

GIRL

The sun.

She looks at it happily. Waves crash.

The sun will make it happy and hot and all go away. The sun takes away the darkness... the places where evil hides.

She looks at the sun again.

Nothing bad can happen when you're here.

She lets the blanket unravel around her. She is no longer cold/shivering.

Thank you sun.

She stands up. Looks around as if she is going to play. Spots the balloon.

Hello Balloon. Can I hold your hand?

She does.

Do you like the sun too? I really like the sun.

Pause.

I can't touch the sun though.

Pause.

It is too far away. Someone said that it would burn me even if I was close enough to touch it.

She turns. They both look towards the sun [straight out] for a moment, thinking.

Thank you for holding my hand, Mr. Balloon.

She continues looking at the sun.

Will you be here when I return?

She looks at the Balloon.

It will be a surprise then.

Laughs.

I will see you tomorrow. Goodbye friend.

2.1.

The lights change from dawn to dusk in a quick rotation through mid-day. Enter WOMAN, laughing and running on the tips of her toes.

WOMAN

Ah-ha! And then he would stride through the bushes beyond the bridge and approach the bad man. While passing, quickly, he would say “here” forcefully and offer a hand. In an instant I would be up on that horse, holding him tight, dreaming... but not for long. He would hand me the sword, “this is not my battle, fair lady” and I am afraid because I don’t know what to do. We’re getting closer and closer to the bad man... “do not be afraid,” he whispers, “good always triumphs.” And I swing, quickly, and with my eyes open, and the clouds part from the sky and everything is in bloom and we stand, in a large opening in the middle of the forest. The sword is gone. The horse is gone. It is just me and my prince and he says...

2.2

Another non-transition. Lighting goes towards moonlight. The happiness fades from her dream. Her hand comes to her mouth. She fights oncoming tears.

WOMAN

He says...

She flops to a sitting position.

He says... "I'm sorry," and "You didn't really think..." and "Here, take this but don't ever come back here again."

An outburst.

I...

She bites the sleeve of her shirt.

I'm not so sure anymore. I'm not so certain about things.

She looks up.

What do you do when the world is flipped on its head? Upside down?

She really sees.

What... the stars. Hello dear friends.

Pause.

Gemini. My favorite. The twins. Castor and Pollux. Thank you, dear friends, for joining me tonight.

Looks down at her feet. Back up.

Was it better to be mortal, Castor? Was it somehow better for life to eventually end?

Looks down again.

You only knew death for a brief moment though. Now you share immortality with your brother in the shimmering sky.

Pause. She pulls a deflated red balloon out off of the ground. Pause.

That I could be so lucky.

She lays back. Fade to black.

3.1

The next day for the girl. Early morning, as before.

GIRL

Good morning, Mr. Balloon.

She bows.

Very nice to see you.

She pauses.

Oh, these...?

She touches her arm.

These are nothing, Mr. Balloon. Nothing that concerns us anyway.

Pause. Looking down. Quietly.

God didn't love us today.

Pause. Looking up.

But the sun is rising. We could spend our time looking at it together. Don't you think that would be a great idea? Looking at the sun together?

She grabs onto the Balloon.

This is my favorite part.

The lights change as the sun rises.

The whole world is bright and the waves disappear.

Pause. She grabs onto Balloon's string.

One day I'll go there, Mr. Balloon. I'll take a boat and I'll go that way until I get to the other side of the world.

Pause.

It's probably nice there.

3.2

Another non-transition. Girl still stands holding a helium filled balloon. She looks at the balloon. Silence. Then:

GIRL

Tell me something interesting?

Pause.

Something to make my heart tingle with delight. Something to make the stars come out at the beginning of the day.

Pause.

I have a great deal of hope, Balloon, a great deal. Would you be sad if I left? Would you be sorry if I let you go?

Pause.

Of course not. Balloons are meant for flying.

She looks up.

Have you ever seen the ocean?

She continues to look straight up.

The ocean, if you stare at it long enough, begins to resemble the sky.

Pause.

And now that I'm staring at the sky... it begins to resemble the ocean.

Pause.

Up is down. Down is up.

Pause.

So it goes. I'll come back for you.

She ties the balloon to a pipe railing or something and walks away. Just as she exits the stage WOMAN enters from the other side.

WOMAN

Hello balloon, old friend. Where have you been? I've been high and now I'm low... I wasn't sure where to go... but then... I remembered when... I lost a friend.

She touches the ribbon.

It doesn't feel right.

She pulls her hand away.

No one can be so forgiving, but I find myself drawn to you. Connected. I never really left you, I guess, which is why I ended up here.

She looks up to the sky.

At the ocean.

Laughs.

This is the spot that the world turns upside down. Everything turns around. Up is down. Down is up. Rights are wronged and wrongs are righted... and you... calm... steady... through it all.

She looks at the balloon.

What is your wish? Your one desire? I've had many... wishes and desires... but when I got them I always thought: This wasn't worth it. This isn't that good. That's what's wrong with me: too much ambition and not enough success... I'd give it all back in a heartbeat if they'd let me. They could have their plastic happiness and their tea sets and... They could take it all... and I'd be better off.

Pause.

How are you still here? You're a tormentor you know. You never change, never, but people do. People change. And not many change for the better. You know what I'm gonna do? I'm gonna set you...

Enter the younger girl.

GIRL

Who are you?

WOMAN

Oh...

Pause.

...baby... hello.

Tears.

GIRL

Do you come here too?

WOMAN

Yes, dear, yes. I come here too. What are you doing here?

GIRL

I'm talking to my friend.

WOMAN

Balloon.

GIRL

Are you talking to Mr. Balloon too?

WOMAN

I am, sweetie. I came to talk to good old Balloon.

GIRL

What do you talk about?

WOMAN

We haven't spoken in a long time. We were just catching up.

GIRL

We talk about my thoughts about things. Did you know that if you stare at the ocean long enough it starts to look like the sky?

WOMAN

Well, did you know that if you stare at the sky long enough it starts to...

GIRL

Look like the ocean! They're both so peaceful. Calm and peaceful. I love the quiet blue.

WOMAN

Are you staying for the stars?

GIRL

I get tired. I'm supposed to go home.

1.3

Another non-transition. They look at each other. Freeze. Dawn moves quickly into dusk. GIRL gets up dutifully to go home.

WOMAN

Don't.

Pause.

Stay with me and see the stars. I haven't seen them in so long and I'd like to have a... friend see them with me.

GIRL

How long will it be?

WOMAN

The world takes a long time to turn itself around, little girl. A long time. But the sky turns red and purple and the stars come out and get brighter and brighter and brighter. The sky doesn't look like the ocean at all during the night.

GIRL

I've seen pictures.

WOMAN

Of the stars?

GIRL

Oh, yes. The stars glowing and making men and monsters in the sky.

WOMAN

The constellations. Gemini will be right up there. My favorite constellation. The twins.

GIRL

I've always wondered about the fish of the sky. Hey, that's just like the ocean!

Pause.

I'll stay.

WOMAN

Great. Sit here with me and we'll watch the sun set.

GIRL

Okay.

WOMAN puts her arm gently around GIRL.

Do we have to say anything?

WOMAN

No.

The balloon comes untied and floats towards the sky as the lights fade on WOMAN and GIRL.

No we don't.

END OF PLAY