

Acting Class

Will Owen

playlet

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Introductory Information

Synopsis: A director, and an actor and actress rehearse a play about Adam and Eve.

Cast Breakdown: The director (actor or actress) and the actor who plays Adam and the actress who plays Eve.

Scene Breakdown: The action takes place in one background -- a space being used to rehearse.

TIMES AND SCENES

THE ACTION TAKES PLACE NOW IN A SPACE BEING USED TO REHEARSE

CHARACTERS

THE DIRECTOR (actor or actress) (**D**).

THE ACTOR WHO PLAYS ADAM (**A**).

THE ACTRESS WHO PLAYS EVE (**E**).

*

Acting Class

A

And so I named them setting each apart
in mind one from the other each thing thus, and so
discernable, and the power of this human art
lifted within before my eyes my living soul,
and I saw the beauty of the world at one
with the brightness of the glory of great God.
Then on my knees I fell as must be ever done
in giving thanks for having made us so odd
that of all the pairs of creatures that God made
there are no others that take so by the hand
to stand, each in the other's gaze, arrayed
like nature's order both-both and one, man and
woman. The breath God breathed into the mud I was,
was warm and sweet as the breaths that join in this kiss.

D

No! Well yes, but not like that.

A

Like what?

D

Like you're in some prefab entertainment that's all cheap
suggestion wishing it could go ahead and be glossy porn --
which would almost be an improvement in some cases.

E

What?

A

I'm trying, okay? I'm really trying.

D

Well try without pretending to yourself you're trying. Don't
act like you're trying, try. Oh, it's okay -- sorry. And no
matter where you should be lucky enough to get work and try
-- I don't care if it's the lamest failure -- whatever work you're
blessed to get -- keep trying hard and be thankful, thankful
you have work, and art to make no matter what they gave you

to make it with. And try to remember that it may not be primarily all about you.

A

But it is about me. Look! I'm here. Me. At work. At center stage.

E

Right. You hyperturkey selfietude.

A

You know if you weren't such an angry little --

E

I get to work with you what --

D

hey! Don't need that. Back to work. Look, when you kiss her -- when you kiss each other -- it's like a lift by great dancers, all the mightiness of music, and no gravity.

E

Yeah, it's like we're in ballet, like floating down from a slide in art history class.

A

Yeah, whatever. Where do you want me to put my hands?

E

Not there! Here. And then like this.

D

And stand up straight. You're in paradise. Everything is busting at the seams with the energy of life and creation and all's brand new -- beautiful -- blissful and innocenceful, including you, the first persons ever.

A

Yeah, I know. I know. I'm cool with that.

D

No! I mean like seized by the awareness and experience of individual personality -- like for the first time!

A

Yeah, I told you -- I'm cool with that. I am totally self-aware and individual. In every way. And I'm very happy to be me.

D

Along with how many billion others has it been and is it now?

E

How 'bout other aware, huh? You know, like psychology...like having psychology, like that's what makes humans all the same 'cause you can know others have it too.

A

What? Oh...yeah, can't wait til you get to sociology class. Whatever. I understand, okay? From where?

D

Right. ..."like nature's order both-both and one"

A

like nature's order both-both and one,
man and woman.

The breath God breathed into the mud I was,
was warm and sweet as the breaths that join in this kiss.

E

Flesh of my flesh, bone of my bones
torn from my side beside

D

your side?

E

Right. Sorry. Minor slip.

D

Right, one of those psychology slips -- from the mother of all living. Keep going. Actually..keep it. Makes more sense.

A

What do you mean, keep it? The script says "your".

D

The script can say whatever, I'm the director.

A

The script says "your" -- blah, blah, blah bones..torn from your side from beside your heart. It's my rib that came first -- that's the issue here.

E

You got issues with that, huh? Like who came first? Like so you got that patriarch primacy? So you can like swag your dominant male thing and like justified lord it over the world? Like whoa...yeah! You know what I'm talking about. Got to be Mister Big. And are we sure one's missing anyway? *tickles him* Hah, we've always known they were all there just like everybody else.

A *laughing*

Okay, okay, I give up. Sorry, alright? I don't know what got into me.

D

I understand. But try to figure it out before it gets into you next time. Okay, let's go. Places where you were...and with feeling and understanding! From "flesh".

E

Flesh of my flesh, bone of my bones
torn from my side like a piece of my heart
cleave unto me, cleave, so for now sewns
back up what God made so apart.
Woman and man, God made the human,
made us in God's own image of dominion
to care for all alive beneath the sun,
to play, and to keep this rich earth for a garden.
All here without is ours, as is all within that rails
us on to know life's constant self, never the same --
that when the eyes close and shed their scales
sings so wildly in the soul, knowing no name.
So test life's strength to shaking the marrow,
delighting so deeply in taking me now.

A

I breathe, between fear and defiance, piety and desire.
But didn't God say -Lest ye die ye shall not

E

what? Know? No, God said of all with life afire
in the glory of God's creation ye shall

A

what? Have dominion over all but not
partake of knowing

E

self and other, yet also one?
Are you afraid? Lest ye die?

A

Lest I know that I defy, lose myself
and fear I die?

E

And if we die, what of it? So we live
in calm and wisdom knowing what can be known
that partakes both of light and dark --
of great God's ordering power and the others

A

aye, I will. I too shall know and be
near like Him, naming, making anew
beside great God and the here-below-him powers.
I... ... But now my fear is more than I can bear.
Oh I will sacrifice to Him and worship --
I don't know about "worship," I mean can't that like be
sensitive for some people...that're like...um...religious...so
you'd like want to revise it?

E

You're suggesting you revise the author's work?

A

Yeah. I'm a creative. (I got the right if [he]/[she] does.)

D

Revise to what?

A

Like for me it's like not, you know, worship, like with a belief and all that; for me it's like a personal lifestyle choice alternative that works for me.

D

Works for me. Me!

A

Yeah. Me. It's like I'm here. Me. Not like somebody else that's like you want them to be.

D

Okay. Okay. Try it.

E

And if we die, what of it? So we live in calm and wisdom knowing what can be known that partakes both of light and dark -- of great God's ordering power and the others --

A

aye, I will. I too shall know and be... .. I got to think of it, like how to put it -- just give me a minute --

D

when you've found your alternative, we'll go back to it. Alright?

A

Okay.

E

You're planning to think about it now?

A *taking out and consulting his phone*

No. I'm too busy. We got to get through this, and I got important stuff to do today.

E *taking out and consulting her phone*

Yeah, me too.

A

(And how come you get to just change it? And [she]/[he] doesn't say anything?)

E

(You're jealous? But you're the leading man.)

D

Hey, the clock's running here and time takes no breaks. Back to it.

A

Yeah. *consulting script* So now what?

D

So now you're hiding -- in shock from first self-consciousness -- and fear and shame and guilt.

A

That was it? It's over?

E

Completely. And you didn't even notice what you got yourself into.

A

What is this? Where's the tree of this and that? And you're telling me there's no..like apple? And like no nudity?

E

But maybe there's a flaming sword?

A

Flaming sword?

E

Yeah, so that way when you stick it up your ass ther'll be like two of a kind.

A

What do you know about my ass?

E

What do I want to know about your ass?

D

Stop it! I don't want to hear it. That whole put-down and rivalry and anger and frustration thing. It distresses... It depresses..sensitivity. Stressful, you know. So, not on my stage, please. Got it?

E

You can't like deselect us or something for like not having your..your aesthetic perception or whatever, okay? That's like probably a rights violation or something.

A

Yeah. Yeah. Like a grievance. You can't like diss people like that 'cause they're like not up to like your higher standards -- I mean I could file one on you..if I wanted to. You're like supposed to be securing rights not --

E

What? What don't you get?

D

Okay. Okay. I'm asking. Please. No..you know..so self-absorbed, relentless, selfish and superficial all the time.

A

Okay. Hey, I want to do what you want. That's like my job. But I also have my responsibility to myself as a creative artist.

E

Spare us. Please.

A

Okay. I'm not going to say anything to you anymore. I don't care. Okay? So, flaming sword?

D

Actually, there is no flaming sword. At least not in this script, so --

A

no. There's like supposed to be a flaming sword, right? So, okay, I don't get it. But that doesn't mean --

D

no! It just means there's like nobody putting a gun to your head..I think.

A

Yeah, so? I don't get the joke, I don't get the sword. So like you think I'm common and stupid and self-absorbed, and you all keep laughing at me.

D

Why would we do anything like that?

A

Stop being dismissive about me, that's all. That's one thing, one thing I just won't stand for.

D

Oh for God's sake..look, that's the last thing I am..please! Let's just go back to where

A

yeah, uh-huh? And so how come there's not even no stupid serpent?

D

Oh!

E *pulling stuffed animal from her bag/backpack, and then dancing and singing with it like a pop-music star*

Coo-coo! Guess who? I brought one just in case. Never know when there might be a special appearance opportunity for a good-looking, smooth-talking, sing-and-dancing moon-snake.

*Uhuhuh baby, c'mon 'n' uhuhuhu...night away
who's to say, right or wrong*

so long's we uhuhuhuh loving on...

Right baby? Hssss....

D

Put away the singing serpent! Now! Please.

E *putting away stuffed animal (see below) in bag/backpack, behind something etc.*

(See you later, alligator.)

D

Come on. Time is running. Now, now you're in the garden trying to hide. Yeah, go...

E

I sense it rippling in among the leaves
the breeze that cool from having kissed
the racing crests of sea swells' gentle heaves
comes quell from West the heat of day in Eden's East.

A

In the rustling in the trees I think I hear...
but it's my heart and breath both running faster...
the sun's yet high but yet the shade's so cold here...
this fear that rages is more than I can master!

E

Be silent, be silent. Your groans of fear alone
are enough to bring great God to find us.

A

And great God will and oh! make us atone
for your wiles and wisdom that so blind us!

E

Better great God had let us live ignorant and free.

A

As in this life now awaiting death, can never be.

E

But soft I hear the voice come near us. Help me! Help me!

A

Give me your hand. I will that too. If you...

E

I do.

A

And I will answer when great God may find me.

E

But betrayed great God will strike down both me and you.

A

And rightly so for He allied Himself with me and I for you

E

you did betray Him for knowledge of your own

A

that His abject equal I too now know right from wrong

E

with only the consolation that you're not alone.

And now He comes for an accounting and what will

A

I am here! For I was afraid, in shame,
and hid, for subtle, ever-beguiling evil
angers me to actions I now cannot un-name,
and in your likeness struggling to stand
I ever stumble, fallen, failed in self-command

E

so emptied after triumph of battle, lost
astride the killed, in denial of the cost,
return to eking out the life of each day --
to dust returning, all lives to silence carried away.

A

For seeing justice, I fail to fight
iniquity. For before wronging violence
I wall up my hearing and hide my sight
and turn away, humiliated, keeping silence.

E

And guilty you'll multiply, from righteous pride
the cruelty and pain of all our living,
already hard with birthing's groans and toil beside --
you, simple man by God exalted, ever unforgiving.

A

My cruelties and failings may unhinge the world,
but to His way now will I hew to my last breath
and sacrifice and worship atoning for my sins.

E

No! Come with me West to the sun-matched sea
where by foam-tressed stones none but nature orders death.

A

And not great God? No! For I will stay and so will you.

E

For over me God said you rule?

A

My strength is trust in Him. What He commands, we do.
For to your powers I'll not play the fool.

E

And so the enmity between us will

A

last and last, and rightly so, as great God said.

E

You question not? Have you not learned? But still

A

I? I had not? It was you! You who
so blithe in power of your own creation risked
and beguiled, and gave also unto me
against the radiance of his light, and in the shadow
of your belly so proudly held out the wrack
and seethe of life's life-giving now, and

E

you took thereof and

A

the knowing so

E

to be desired

A & E *together*

is so both of God and here below.

E

Yes both, both of God and here-below-him

A

No! Of only God alone, all-knowing and all one!

E

So regaled in righteousness so zealous and grim

A

Yes! I will kill His enemies so His work be done.

E

And the blood and the blood and the blood

A

shall be pleasing to Him lest His enemies kill me.

E

And heart and hearth and love in family?

A

I will rule and teach to sacrifice for God.

E

And if I or child would live for lives of our own?

A

You'll be constrained to stay or banished to stay out.

E

Slave or exile -- and thus free to flout

A

No! You break the laws I make for God and you'll atone

E

I'll make the laws for me by good reason's light

A

And die faithless in Godless, brutal night!

E

I will, I will -- make my way as I see the right.

***A** in the argument the stuffed animal put away above is inadvertently spilled from bag/backpack, kicked out from behind something etc. and both grab after it.*

You'll stay! And in his name I'll kill
rebellion and defiance. Never dare defy God's might!

E

Haargh!

A

Huurgh!

E

It's mine!

A

So?

E

Give it back!

A

Come get it.

E

I'm going to!

A

Hah...yahah...

E *trying to take it as he keeps it away from her*

Urrghch...arrghgh! Hey!

A

Nyahah...

E

Give it back, I said! Give it back to me now. It's mine!

A

It's right here..nyew-nyew-nyew...right in my hand where I can squeeze the breathing daylight out of your cutsie-wootsie singy-dancy warm and fuzzy...

E

Arghrgh!

D

Give it back to her, I mean alright...Oh! I mean...now!

A *tossing it to her and she immediately puts it away again*

Take it. Keep it. There, you happy? ... So, what are we going to be wearing anyway? Fig leaves, haah?

D

No, nothing. You're supposed to be naked..like apes.

A

Yeah? Yo, 'way kool, huh? You hear that? Like we're going to get naked and do a little steam scene for

E

forget about it.

D

Completely. You're going to be nakedly there, not nude.

A

Yeah? C'mon, like wouldn't it be like more realistic?

D

Absolutely, that's why you're going to be naked -- naked as can be, as the best can be -- at work at center stage decked out completely in tinsel and grease -- and clothes.

E

So what are we going to be wearing?

A

Wouldn't want to miss no fashion selfie costume moment, huh?

D

Wear whatever -- what you're wearing..jeans, t-shirt -- doesn't matter.

A

But what if they're people want to see me take my clothes off? They're people want to see my bod, like in action huh? Like if that's what they want, why not give it to them? You know, like that way they'll see the real me -- and like me.

E

Dream on.

A

What's with you? Like just a little suggestion... And anyway, I'm happy being me and I like me a lot -- so there.

E

Great. We're all so glad.

A *consulting script*

So now what? We still got work to do.

D

So now we go to the end. Now you're old. What you've been through and now know...so old now...you'd never believe you'd know. And I don't know, if shrunk and leathery, glint-eyed and exhausted, there's any fierce spark of hope remaining or all's beaten resignation having seen sons kill one the other -- but then life persists anew...from "day" ...go!

A
The day

E
the night

A
draws down

E
draws near

D
Yes but...more like
This day, this night, draws down, draws near -- so still --
as side by side from the threshold of this house
we stand together looking to what will
be anew a next tomorrow sure to rouse
all life in great God's creation to again
engage, each it's next begin-and-end, and
rise, decline, grow, grow old, and then
disorder erasing flows and nets, just end.
Go on.

E
Til then, in flesh and bone now so slow and aching

A
in mind and heart that strain to stand, upright
against the hunching weights of knowing's making

E
stay by my side now our end's in sight.

A & E *together*
Turn, engage -- prepare and share with me -- despite what we
know,
and partake again the bread of sorrow ere we go.

E
To tasks of love that are my self's unmaking
I turn again a help meet made by habit --
soul-seared again at wombwater's breaking,

then the hurt and howl of the smeared head spit
from the wombmouth, again to live the Eden peace
of child and mother alive as both-both and one.
Didn't you all tug equally, refusing to release,
suckling at what were my breasts? So why oh so undone?
Did we not play and play, and learn to laugh together?
The cold stun of the news still chokes my heart
that one brother lifted to death his hand against the other --
oh arrogance and jealousy that broke my life apart...
But love is made, a son is born and hope anew
with somber brightness springs from human habit too?

A

Hope's only hope is wisdom in the fear
of life's all-maker's judgment of us now --
here too, living this spark of time we're here,
spark now and gone, yet long enough to allow
such pain. Did I, walking in the sun not see
the figure bent and panting in the field
glaring at his brother on the ground and I...aieeee...
did I not run across the earth and yield
to fear blasting the heart and lift the head
so cold and hot and bloody on this arm?
"Why did you do this?" And he turned and fled,
ascurrying like a beast judgementless in alarm.
What hope can life bestow upon a man
who buries his own son killed by a brother's hand?

E

Were we not blessed to have another in his place?

A

No.

E

We were blessed.

A

As time and desire

E

engaged us to a last born

A
that when I see his face

E
so in your likeness

A
that I smile

E
your heart afire?

A
Yes. or God so willed it?

E
To turn us from hard despairs?
Here take

A
this cup of water

E
to your lips

A
that parched,
drink its sweetness sweeter for my thirst of cares?

E
And stay to end this life through which we've marched?

A
The day

E
the night

A
the tumult

E
of the years

A
come

E
go

A
greater, lesser light

E
laughter and tears.

A
Yet still we rage against what wrongs are done.

E
But look yet with pride at all what we've begun.

A
Here

E
take

A
at end

E
of living's

A
cries

E
of joy

A
and groans

E
of paining

A
at last

E
to ground

A & E *together*
this house of bones.

D
Okay... Okay, now again, from the top. ... Whenever you're
ready.

A
And so I cried out their names each thing thus, and so

*