

## Illusions

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A 10 minute play  
By Kym Fraher

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## **Characters**

**EMILIA** -- woman in her 70's/80's, going blind, relies on her adult son, who lives with her, for assistance, few friends because of her stubborn nature

**DANNY** -- man in his 50's/60's, lives with his mom, feels like life has passed him by, follows conspiracy theories but more from boredom with his life than because he honestly thinks they're true

**MATT** -- male in his 40's, friend of Danny's from work, heavily into conspiracy theories, enthusiastic supporter of Trump, not curious about the world except for information that confirms his biases

## **Setting**

Dining room in a small apartment in Chicago, Illinois, USA, January 5, 2021.

## ILLUSIONS

A modest dining table with 3 chairs sits beside a window with a curtain in a small apartment. EMILIA, an older woman with thick glasses, is peering out the window and a middle-aged man, DANNY, is reading a newspaper opposite to where she is standing. His coat is draped over the chair behind him. Increasingly, DANNY's attention is drawn to EMILIA.

DANNY

Why don't you sit down and drink your coffee?

EMILIA

I will in a minute--I'm just watching those little lambs jumping around on that hill. They are just so darn cute!

DANNY

Mom, there aren't any lambs on a hill.

EMILIA

Why there certainly are. (She points.) They're just right there. There are five, no, three, no, five of them, just jumping like they could not be happier.

DANNY rises from his chair and goes to her. He takes her hands, turning her to face him.

DANNY

Okay, now, we've been over this: Remember when the doctor said you're going to see stuff that's not real. Remember when the doctor told you that?

EMILIA

(hiding her confusion with gruffness)

Of course I remember what she said--I'm going blind, not losing my mind. (more meekly) Are you sure there aren't any lambs?

DANNY

Where are we?

EMILIA

Where are we?

DANNY

Yes, where are we right now?

EMILIA

(not sure where he is going with this)

In our apartment.

DANNY

Yes, and where do we live?

EMILIA

Stop treating me like a child.

DANNY

I'm not treating you like a child, I'm doing what the doctor told me to do. Remember?  
So, where do we live, what city?

EMILIA

What are you talking about? Why are you asking me such a dumb question? I have  
Bonnie Syndrome, not Alzheimer's.

DANNY

It's Charles Bonnet Syndrome, not Bonnie Syndrome and please cooperate with me here.  
I'm trying my best to help you. You gotta use logic to figure out what's real and what's  
not.

EMILIA

Fine, since you know it all.

DANNY

Okay...So?

EMILIA

We live in Chicago.

DANNY

And if you looked out the window of any apartment in Chicago, how likely would it be  
that you would be able to see a couple of lambs jumpin' around on a hillside?

EMILIA

Okay. Okay.

DANNY

Shit, you look out this window and all you see is the wall of the neighboring apartment building not 12 feet away/

EMILIA

/Okay, I get your point. Can we drop it?

DANNY sees how embarrassed EMILIA is.

DANNY

Mom, I know this isn't easy. You're going to have to use your brain or some other way to know if what you are seeing is real or not.

EMILIA

I can't count on thinking so hard about everything all the time.

DANNY

Well didn't you say before that your hallucinations are more vivid than what you can straight-up see?

EMILIA

Yes, that's right.

DANNY

So use that.

EMILIA

Well, you see, that's just the problem.

DANNY

What's just the problem?

EMILIA

When I see what I see, or what I think I see, I really like what I am seeing. See?

DANNY

Uh, say that again?

EMILIA

My...hallucinations--I'm really enjoying them. Like you said, they're so colorful and clear. When I was seeing those lambs just now, it made me feel, really, I don't know, light, like I was young again.

DANNY

Huh.

EMILIA

I know it sounds crazy for me to say that seeing lambs jumping around made me forget that I'm old for a minute, but it did. Besides, if you had the chance to look out the window and see lambs on a hill or see the side of a dingy brick apartment building, which would you chose?

DANNY

Yea, I can understand that.

EMILIA

I'm enjoying the things I'm seeing, even if they're not real.

DANNY

But Mom, that could be dangerous. You have to know what is real so you don't get hit by a car because you saw it as a swaying tree or a duck or something. This Bonnet Syndrome crap has to limit how you live your life. It sucks but it has to be. Do you understand?

EMILIA

Well, I'll just have you to go to the store for me, if I need anything. I'll just stay here and watch the lambs on the hill.

EMILIA returns to the window and looks out.

DANNY

Well, that's great--its not like I got nothing else going on in my life.

EMILIA

Oh yea? What do you got going on?

DANNY

You remember that my buddy's coming over today to pick me up, right?

EMILIA

He is?

DANNY

Yes. I told you that a few days ago. Matt's picking me up and we're going to drive up to Washington.

EMILIA

Washington? D.C.?

DANNY

Yea. We'll be there for a few days. There's a...event that's going to be happening.

EMILIA

An event?

DANNY

Yea. We're going to go be a part of that.

EMILIA

Well, Washington DC's pretty far--what if I need something?

DANNY

(annoyed)

I dunno, Ma, somebody else can help you for once. Don't you have any girlfriends that you can call to stop by?

EMILIA

There's Margaret, that I used to play bridge with, but we haven't spoken for a long time. Ever since she started acting stingy about the snacks she was supposed to bring when we played.

DANNY

Can't you just forget about that and call her? I mean, how long ago was that?

EMILIA

Not long enough that I haven't forgotten. If you come to my house and bring snacks to share, you don't take what's left with you when it's time to go--everybody knows that!

DANNY

You're going to have to figure it out then, cuz me 'n Matt are leaving as soon as he gets here.

EMILIA

I guess I could call on Mrs. Santos next door.

DANNY

You sure you wanna do that?

EMILIA

Whadya mean?

DANNY

Mom, we're not even sure that they legal. You don't want to get mixed up with them-- You'll basically be telling them that you're an old lady alone. You might as well put a big sign on the door saying, "Rob me. There's no one here but me."

EMILIA

Ya think so?

DANNY

I know so. Think about it--if they are willing to ignore laws about invading a country illegally, what do they care about laws about robbing old ladies?

EMILIA

Well, she's always been nice to me, but I guess that does make some sense, what you're sayin'.

DANNY

You know what? I could maybe call one of my buddies from work to check in on you, just while I'm gone.

EMILIA

Are you going to be gone long?

DANNY

No, I told you, just a few days.

EMILIA

You sure you gotta go?

DANNY

It's a duty. It's something I havta do, as a Patriot. We're going to be helping President Trump.

EMILIA

How are *you* helping President Trump?

DANNY

Don't worry about it. Just...just keep an eye on the TV news. We're going to be part of history.

There is a knock at the door. DANNY opens the door to reveal MATT, a middle-aged man who looks like life has ridden him hard and put him away wet. DANNY motions for MATT to enter.



MATT

Howdy.

EMILIA

Howdy yourself.

DANNY

Mom, this is Matt--Matt, my mom.

MATT

Nice to meet ya. (to DANNY) You ready?

DANNY

As ready as I ever was. I just gotta fetch my duffle from my room. Why don't ya have a seat and talk to my ma for a minute. I'll be right back.

DANNY exists. MATT sits. EMILIA looks at MATT closely.

EMILIA

Have you always had green hair? It's such a pretty color!

MATT

'Scuse me?

EMILIA

(motioning to his head)

Your hair. Your green hair. I don't know why you act surprised that I mentioned it-- people walk around with green hair it's cuz they want other people to notice it. So, I'm noticin' it.

MATT

Ma'am, my hair's not green. It's brown.

EMILIA

(cowed)

Are you sure?

MATT

I think I'd know it if my hair was green, wouldn't I?

EMILIA

Oh, shoot. I beg your pardon. It's that stupid Bonnet's again!

MATT

Ma'am?

EMILIA

Charles Bonnet Syndrome. I'm going blind and my mind is filling in the blank spaces with imaginary stuff. It's just something that's happening to me.

MATT

So everybody looks like they have green hair to you?

EMILIA

No. It could be anything, patterns, or animals, or people who've been dead for years. It's like I'm on drugs or somethin' but I can still think--I see weird things but my thinkin's still good.

MATT

Whoa. That's crazy.

EMILIA

It surely is.

EMILIA and MATT sit for a moment in an uncomfortable silence.

EMILIA

So what's this trip to Washington all about?

MATT

What did Danny tell you?

EMILIA

Nevermind what he told me, I'm asking you.

MATT

Well, the President is having this rally, ya see. And he asked that his supporters--that'd be me and Danny and other folk--come to it, to back him up about the stealing of the election. So we're answerin' his call to go and defend democracy, because of all the cheatin'.

EMILIA

What cheatin'?

MATT

You serious? *What cheatin'?* The only way President Trump could've lost the election was if there was cheatin' in some of the states. Maybe you haven't heard, but there's a group of elites who are controlling the election from their underground lairs--they control everything, and I, for one, am tired of it!

EMILIA

You don't say.

MATT

I *do* say. It's as clear as the hair on my head--the media's all against Trump because he's revealin' all the lies. He's the only one that's sticking up for the little guy, like you and me. Just look at any newspaper today and you can see how much they hate him. *I wonder why that is!*

EMILIA

A couple of weeks ago, I was watching a little bit of the news/

MATT

/Which one?

EMILIA

Which one?

MATT

Which channel?

EMILIA

Well, we don't have cable so I was watching something about what was happening on PBS/

MATT

/No! PBS is in on it! You can't watch (air quotes) "public television" because they get their money from the government--the government likes things how they are. They don't want disruptors in there messin' with their power and their way to get money. C'mon, you gotta know that!

EMILIA

I thought PBS got money from donations from their viewers--they're always asking for money/

MATT

(taps his head)

/That's what they want you to think!

DANNY reenters with a duffle bag strung over his shoulder.

DANNY

Okay, sorry that took so long. I couldn't find my FOID card. So let's be off now.

MATT rises from the table and gives EMELIA a stern look.

MATT

Remember what I told ya--trust no one.

DANNY

What were you two talkin' about?

MATT

Nothin'. Let's go.

EMILIA

Danny, maybe you should stay here with me. Just in case...in case no one shows up to help me. And I don't want you getting into any trouble. I need you. If something happened to you, I don't know how I'd/

DANNY

/I can't, Ma. I havta go. This is really important, and you'll be fine. I'll be back soon, I promise. Just, just keep an eye on those lambs while I'm gone.

EMILIA

Well, if you promise you'll be okay/

MATT

/He'll be fine, Ma'am. He'll be with me.

EMILIA

Okay--You boys be safe. God go with ya, and Danny--take that tutu off. You look ridiculous.

DANNY stops, looks down at his pants then looks at MATT. They exit. EMILIA goes back to the window, moves the curtain aside and smiles and laughs with joy at what she sees.

THE END