

EDEN

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REPRESENTATION:
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CHARACTERS:

CECELIA -- early 30s, HIV positive, former dancer/current waitress

MAURA -- Cecelia's mother, slight accent, a Survivor

HARVEY -- Ageless

REBECCA -- early 30s, Cecelia and Kate's best friend from childhood. Architect.

FRANKLIN -- Rebecca's fiancée. Architect.

L. -- Franklin's sister, divorced

KATE -- early 30s, Cecelia and Rebecca's best friend from childhood, gay, burgeoning performance artist

MAN/NEAL -- early 30s, also doubles as HOMELESS MAN, SILENT POLICE MAN

SETTING:

A unit set. A metal and mirrored jungle that transforms into whatever it needs to be.

The action is continuous.

It is true that these mysteries are dreadful, and people have always drawn away from them. But where can we find anything sweet and glorious that would never wear this mask of the dreadful? Whoever does not, sometime or other, give his full and joyous consent to the dreadfulness of life, can never take possession of the unutterable abundance and power of our existence; can only walk on its edge, and one day, when the judgment is given, will have neither been alive nor dead.

-Rainer Maria Rilke

Nighttime

Maura speaks to the audience.

Cecelia echoes her and takes over in some places

She has heard this story so often it has become her own.

MAURA

Once, a very long time ago, I was a small girl. Small for my age even and young, younger than you are now.

MAURA/CECELIA

I think of you as so young, I want to protect you from this story, I want to keep you from the nightmares, the imaginings, but I was even younger than you then.

MAURA

I was a small child as well, so I didn't look old enough to understand what was happening.

MAURA/CECELIA

I wanted to comfort my mother

MAURA

sitting at the window most of the night because during sleep, that is the time when our defenses are down. I was ashamed

CECELIA

I thought the yellow star looked so pretty against my black coat

MAURA

because to wear it -- I somehow knew to wear it was wrong.

It happened in the time it takes for you to rearrange the covers or to tie your shoe -- but it lives crystal clear in my head. The trance of walking -- so far past tired -- and my name called, shouted out I thought, but I was the only one who heard the man at the edge of the woods.

MAURA/CECELIA

He called my name-

MAURA

I can't say he was beautiful because you don't call men beautiful. I thought he had his own light coming from inside.

He called your name.

CECELIA

He beckoned to me with his hand

MAURA/CECELIA

and the guard

MAURA

the guard

CECELIA

turned his own head away towards

MAURA

someone falling

MAURA/CECELIA

to the ground. I ran. I ran to this man. I ran so hard I had to close my eyes. I opened them and the man was gone but I was safe.

MAURA

Someone turned his head

MAURA/CECELIA

and I became free.

MAURA

I saw the man again the day I met your father, but not until then. I lived alone in the woods for some time. When the partisans found me I was animal with the faint memory of girl.

I know what I lived for. I lived for the moment I saw your head push between my legs. I lived for seeing you extend your arm and your leg and rise on one toe to be a swan.

MAURA/CECELIA

I tell you this so you can think your mother is a little crazy, so you can pass it down to your children and tell them -- to think of how our history changed in a moment. Someone turned his head, a vision beckoned and future generations were saved.

MAURA

I lived for telling you this story.

*A nightclub called EDEN.
The bowels of New York City.
Pulsing music.
Light filtering through the smoke of the room.
Bodies moving against each other.*

*(CECELIA dances alone, looking not lonely, but singular.
She holds a drink tray, she's got a money bag around her waist.
When HARVEY appears, it is as if from nowhere.
He watches her.)*

CECELIA

What do you want from me?

HARVEY

Love.

Well, that's what you want. In love, in dangerous, right before we jump off the cliff into love. That feeling, that. I'm here only to oblige.

CECELIA

Not a chance.

HARVEY

Oh, that feeling you long to remember those days when you look at your love-er and don't see perfect anywhere anymore. That's what you're looking for. That.

CECELIA

Order a drink.

HARVEY

Twelve steps.

CECELIA

A soda.

HARVEY

I'm not permitted worldly goods.

CECELIA

No cash.
(he shrugs)

Pretend.

HARVEY

Nobody here cares if you look suspicious. Everyone comes to Eden to lose themselves in the possibility.

CECELIA

Of?

HARVEY

(snake-charmer)

-of something that's not the life they have right now.

CECELIA

(trancelike)

In too deep?

HARVEY

(drawing her in)

Over our heads.

CECELIA

Drowning?

HARVEY

In the sameness.

CECELIA

In the utter monotony.

HARVEY

Of the every day.

CECELIA

When will it ever change?

HARVEY

It used to be-

CECELIA

It used to be-

HARVEY

So good-

CECELIA

Oh I remember that. That feeling. It's delicious.

HARVEY

You don't have to remember. You could have it again.

(-the moment is broken-)

CECELIA

It fades.

(silence)

HARVEY

(trying again)

You're beautiful.

CECELIA

That won't last.

HARVEY

You never give in. I like that you never give in.

CECELIA

So?

HARVEY

With me around, I guarantee you will.

CECELIA

I don't know you.

HARVEY

But I'm kind of familiar. Like someone you've been waiting for your whole life finally standing right in front of you.

CECELIA

Let me warn you right now - you don't want to pick me up.
The way you assume I want to know you...you're so wrong.
(She turns to go)

HARVEY

I've been told you're wanting this.

(He takes the gun out of his inside pocket. A special gun.
It GLEAMS.)

It's exactly what you've been thinking of - am I right?

CECELIA

That's beauty.
(He shows it off - it catches the light. Tempting)
How did you know?

HARVEY

Words, wishes...they get around.
You'll find if you stick with me things like this will happen to you all the time. If you stick with me coincidence will not be coincidental at all anymore.

CECELIA

(She takes the gun from him.)
Show me.

HARVEY

Bullets are right here.
(Pats another pocket)
We'll go someplace a little more private.

CECELIA

(taken aback, slightly surprized)

No bullets.

HARVEY

No bullets.
It won't be much use.

CECELIA

I'm creating something here. And I'm sure - No bullets.
(Takes measure of the gun in her hands.)

It's forming in the back of my head. The pieces are coming together. The next thing is suddenly there, like I've actually got a plan. Soon I'll know exactly what I'm about to do.

HARVEY

Uh huh. I'll keep the bullets. Just in case.

CECELIA

(Points the gun at the mirrored ball hanging from the ceiling)
I hate this place.

HARVEY

You want to dance? I dance, you know, not like some

guys. It'll give you a chance to see what you're missing.

CECELIA

I see exactly what I'm missing.

HARVEY

There it is again. Feisty. Or is this a front?

CECELIA

You never give up. I hate that you never give up.

HARVEY

I'm always here. Right where I'm needed. Just turn around, you'll see me.
We're going to have a special relationship.
One dance, come on. I love this song.

(He pulls her closer. At his touch she pulls away.)

CECELIA

I need you for the gun, to learn a few tricks. That's all. Hands off.

HARVEY

No where in the rule book did it say we couldn't have any fun.
I checked. I'm very careful about these things. I have integrity, you know. Don't muck with things that are beyond my reach...however tempting...I know my limits very well. You think I don't know what you're shying away from. But one dance couldn't hurt anyone.
One interim of movement. One awakening to the beat. One blood warming to feelings you haven't let yourself have in a long time
(He dances a few gliding steps.)
Don't make this hard on me.
It would be a lot easier if you'd let yourself give in...
C'mon.

CECELIA

I'll figure it out myself.

(-as she disappears into the smoke-)

HARVEY

Hey! Hey!

(-she turns-)

My money.

The Bridal Store

(REBECCA and L. stand before a three way mirror.

L. wears a bridesmaid's dress.)

REBECCA

You look fine.

L.

I look fat. From all angles.

REBECCA

You look fine.

L.

Look. Really look.

REBECCA

It's fine.

L.

You're just saying that.

REBECCA

Yeah. I am.

(silence)

L.

You don't have to ask me, you know.

REBECCA

Don't start that.

L.

We're not even friends yet.

I mean you're marrying my brother. We'll be family. We'll see each other at holidays and occasional weekends and send birthday cards. You'll fix me up on blind dates with your fellow architects when I'm in town and warn me not to spend the whole time badmouthing my ex.

REBECCA

Don't do this.

L.

We'll become friends.

REBECCA

If you don't want to--

L.

I'm not saying I don't want to.

REBECCA

- You should have told me before then - because I ordered these dresses months ago and Franklin's got one best man and one usher and I have my maid of honor and you and had I known then I could have -- . We'll be unbalanced.

L.

Rebecca-

REBECCA

I knew we should have had a small, unassuming wedding. We should have borrowed someone's backyard. Found a justice of the peace. I knew we should have just gone to city hall and gotten it over with. Getting married. What was I thinking?

L.

I just mean you don't have to ask me to. I won't be hurt. Our relationship is ahead of us. And I know -

REBECCA

I asked you. (explodes) Why is it that everybody is so sure that they know what I want? Don't you think I know what I want?

(silence)

L.

I thought you should know I know I'm not really first choice. I just want you to have the wedding you've always wanted to have.

The Dressing Room at a department store.

(CECELIA stands in her bra and underwear, trying on outfits.
MAURA enters the small room, with clothes in hand.)

How about this?
I won't wear it.
It would look cute on you.
That looks nice.
I won't wear it.
It looks good. Let me get it for you.
It's too nice.
You might need it.
I don't have any place to wear it to.
Who knows?
I know. I don't go anywhere, Mom. I don't do anything.
I'll take you someplace nice. You can wear it for me.
Two ladies out on the town.
It's red.
You dress like you're in mourning.
Black is my color.
(silence)

MAURA

CECELIA

MAURA

CECELIA

MAURA

CECELIA

MAURA

CECELIA

MAURA

CECELIA

MAURA

CECELIA

MAURA

CECELIA

MAURA

Here, put this one on.

(Cecelia starts to change)

Oh...oh.

(Maura rummages through her cavernous pocketbook)

Hmmm...no...no...there...no! Ah Ha!

(pulls out a newspaper clipping)

The New York Times.

CECELIA

Don't show me that.

MAURA

Two noted young architects.

CECELIA

I know.

MAURA

She is the last one I would have thought to get married first.

CECELIA

I know.

MAURA

And the picture - such a nice looking boy. A few days away -

CECELIA

I know.

MAURA

Well, I just thought you might want me to tell you -

CECELIA

I know Mom. And I still don't want you to tell them where I am and I still don't want to know about them. I know all I want to know. Got it?

(silence)

MAURA

You've got a hole in your tights.

MAURA

You know.

CECELIA

I know.

(silence)

(Cecelia grabs the clipping, looks at it, crumples it)

CECELIA

His face is all smudged.

(silence)

MAURA

Have you met anyone?

CECELIA

Please.

MAURA

It's not impossible.

CECELIA

It is impossible. Nobody wants anyone like me. It scares them away. People are scared to breathe my air. They can't bring themselves to share my soda. You think they want to "meet" me? I wish you would understand this - I scare them away.

(Cecelia pulls a bottle of pills out of her bag, shakes the bottle at Maura, pops two defiantly. Beat.)

(Maura starts rummaging through her own purse)

MAURA

There's this service -

(Cecelia looks at her)

CECELIA

A dating service?

MAURA

Paula told me.

(stop)

CECELIA

You told Paula.

MAURA

She gave me a form. You fill in the bubbles with a number two pencil and they run it through the computer -

You need to get out more.

(She keeps rummaging)

CECELIA

You told Paula.

MAURA

You need to be with people.

(Maura finds the form and offers it to Cecelia, who bats it away)

CECELIA

You told Paula.

MAURA

A mother-

CECELIA

A mother-

MAURA/CECELIA

-knows about these things.

CECELIA

How the fuck could you tell Paula? This is my news. This is my disease. This is my story. This one is mine.

MAURA

You think this is happening only to you.

(Cecelia pulls off the new clothes and puts her own on)

-- What's that?

CECELIA

What?

MAURA

On your back.

CECELIA

What?

MAURA

There.

That's always been there. CECELIA

No. MAURA

Mom, it has always been there. CECELIA

It has not. MAURA

CECELIA
It has. It has! I know because I examine myself every day for changes and that has always been there.

(silence)

I'm going to put these back onto the rack. MAURA

Mom. CECELIA

I used to know every inch of your body. You're so grown up. MAURA
I'll just pay for this.

I won't wear it. CECELIA

I'll take you some place nice. MAURA

I still won't wear it. CECELIA

I need to buy you something. MAURA

CECELIA
I think it would be better for you if I just killed myself instead of waiting for it to show up whenever it damn well pleases. Faster. More efficient. Pow. Gone.

(silence)

MAURA

I wanted to buy you something pretty. It's always been our special time together. I take joy in that. You're so pretty.

There must be a proper way to behave but I don't know what that is. I need some way to help you. That's what you could give me -- some way to help you.

(Cecelia finishes dressing. She looks at her mother and for the moment, gives in, touching her cheek.)

CECELIA

Do they have any formal dresses out there?