

The Cobwebs and the Sorrow

A ten minute play

By

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A husband (50s) and his wife (30s) are sitting at the breakfast table. He is reading, she is watching him.

WIFE

Does the sun rise earlier than it used to? Is it rise or raise? Raise.

Beat.

WIFE (Cont'd)

It seems like the sun raises earlier than it used to? Rises? Which is it?

Husband doesn't respond.

WIFE (Cont'd)

I suppose it's old age. Early raising, I think it's called. Was it Mark Twain who said that old people wake early because "they've done so many mean things they can't sleep, anyhow?" I wonder how many skeletons are in the sun's closet. Did Mark Twain exist?

HUSBAND

This coffee tastes sour.

WIFE

Does the sun raise earlier than it used to?

HUSBAND

It's rise. Intransitive, remember?

WIFE

Yes, I remember. Does it rise earlier than it used to? That doesn't sound right.

HUSBAND

I really don't see how it's any concern to you one way or the other. It's still dark outside, so it hasn't risen at all. Suppose it were to rise now. Glaring its insistence upon all of those diurnal creatures with their extensive breathing gadgets and sun-bleached skin. Yes, let's expedite, note the transitive, the start of yet another forsaken morning.

He rises and starts out.

WIFE

Where are you going?

HUSBAND

To get my grapefruit. I can hardly be expected to endure a morning without it.

WIFE

There isn't any.

Husband stops stunned.

HUSBAND

What?

WIFE

It's gone. Haven't you heard?

HUSBAND

Heard? Heard what?

WIFE

About the grapefruit, dearest. There isn't any left. It's instinct.

HUSBAND

It's...extinct?

WIFE

I'm pretty sure it's "in."

HUSBAND

It's in? So we have some?

WIFE

No, the word is instinct.

HUSBAND

It's not "in," it's "ex!"

WIFE

How would you know? You didn't even know it was gone.

HUSBAND

Even if it's not "ex," it's still not in! (*Beat*) Now wait a minute. Let's not get hysterical. Mustn't become unhinged.

WIFE

But it is still dark outside, so that may be cause for alarm.

HUSBAND

Are you absolutely sure?

WIFE

Yes, I can see that it's dark.

HUSBAND

No, no, the grapefruit. Are you absolutely sure there's none left?

WIFE

Absolutely.

HUSBAND

Huh. (*Beat*) Huh.

WIFE

I suppose we should have planned for it.

HUSBAND

Yes, yes, it may have been wise.

WIFE

And with the sun rising earlier than it used to, or perhaps not at all, as may be the case.

HUSBAND

I suppose there is a certain logic in it.

WIFE

I read somewhere that the Earth is three quarters of something or other smaller in diameter than it was just a hundred years ago.

HUSBAND

I suppose it's natural.

WIFE

And the universe getting larger, you know, as it does.

HUSBAND

Taken for granted.

WIFE

Expounding, I believe is the word.

HUSBAND

And out of grapefruit.

WIFE

Shrinking. And growing. Growing and shrinking.

HUSBAND

What? You're not shrinking.

WIFE

Well no, I remember to swallow the calcium.

HUSBAND

And out of grapefruit.

WIFE

I suppose we should have planned for that.

HUSBAND

Yes.

Beat.

HUSBAND (Cont'd)

I don't think I can go on.

WIFE

Because of the grapefruit? Seems a bit drastic.

HUSBAND

The last straw, as it were.

WIFE

And it still being dark outside.

HUSBAND

The final nail.

WIFE

Pitch black.

HUSBAND

Finished.

WIFE

Is it armadillo?

HUSBAND

Is it what?

WIFE

You know, the end? The biblical prediction?

HUSBAND

No, it's not Armageddon. Honestly, that is a pedestrian thought.

WIFE

Well then, I guess I'm a pedestrian. I do like to look both ways.

HUSBAND

You don't know what you're talking about.

WIFE

And your nose is too big for you face.

HUSBAND

Maybe you should go to the pod and take a nap!

WIFE

Maybe you should go and fuck yourself!

Beat.

WIFE (Cont'd)

Was that right?

HUSBAND

Yes. Yes, it was.

WIFE

It's so much fun. I do love learning. What did you call it? Inquisitive, wasn't it?

HUSBAND

Yes, but you clearly are lacking the capacity to fully comprehend the weight of this situation. That is called oblivious.

WIFE

And that is called patronizing, you web-footed ass-crack.

HUSBAND

I think we can stop!

Pause. Husband sits.

WIFE

It's still dark outside. We must have woken up in the middle of the night.

HUSBAND

No, no, this doesn't feel right at all. This is wrong.

He rises again.

WIFE

What is, darling?

HUSBAND

How am I to behave like a rational person when there is no grapefruit? Am I just expected to become insane and arbitrarily go through the motions of my day? I can't.

WIFE

Well, we still have each other.

HUSBAND

Oh, will that remedy the loss?

WIFE

We have the shade to draw on the window, and the combination to the food box, and the air vents. You do love to decontaminate the water supply.

HUSBAND

I think I've already forgotten how it tastes.

WIFE

And of course we have these lovely morning chats. I think I look most forward to these.

HUSBAND

All I can taste is that sour coffee. Did you brew it with water from the hatch again?

WIFE

Sometimes I think about other things.

HUSBAND

It's like bile. It's as if that sourness is only there as a cruel reminder of something I shall never taste again. I can't remember how it tastes.

Beat.

WIFE

Maybe it's tongue cancer.

HUSBAND

What?

WIFE

I read somewhere that tongue cancer is prevalent among men who...bloviate. (*Pleased with her word choice*)

Husband goes to respond; refrains.

WIFE

And that people who have it, can't taste anything properly. They say that everything has a "sour" taste. Maybe that's why you like the grapefruit so much.

HUSBAND

I don't have tongue cancer.

WIFE

Of course not. But it does beg the question—

HUSBAND

Don't extrapolate. And I like grapefruit because it is quite clearly the king of the citrus world.

WIFE

Well the king is awfully bitter.

HUSBAND

And without it...

Husband sits again. Wife begins writing rapidly in her journal.

HUSBAND (Cont'd)

I never truly. That is to say, I never quite, or rather fully, no, no, I never completely...yes, yes, completely prepared myself for such an occurrence. To have something, and then

suddenly...not. Can you not have something? Hmm. What is that you're doing?

WIFE

I'm writing.

HUSBAND

I know you're writing.

WIFE

Then why did you ask? Are you having a stroke?

HUSBAND

What are you writing?

WIFE

It's private.

HUSBAND

Nothing is private in this house anymore.

WIFE

Then I guess you already know what I'm writing.

HUSBAND

Just tell me.

WIFE

Fine! It says, (*Reading*) "I'm sad that grapefruit is gone, and I shall miss it. Even though I was never partial to it. I shall miss my dear husband's morning ritual of spooning large chunks of flesh from its skin, and slurping up its nutrients. And the way he would wince while he was chewing it like it was a chore, because grapefruit is sour and disgusting. And I shall always remember the way it smelled. That sharp biting smell that made me sneeze. Nothing remains to smell so much like the past. And I will never forget the look of utter disappointment on my husband's face upon learning that it is no more. I shall miss you, grapefruit. The end."

HUSBAND

Surprisingly sincere.

WIFE

Sincerely surprised?

HUSBAND

I've never heard you speak so well of grapefruit before.

WIFE

Yes, it's always a shock to suddenly grasp for something that's no longer there. No matter how vile the thing may be.

HUSBAND

You understand why I cannot face a single morning without it.

WIFE

Yes, but the sun has not come up, so there may never be a morning to face.

HUSBAND

I seem to have lost the words.

WIFE

I read somewhere that the sun might not rise until next Tuesday.

HUSBAND

It's so strange to contemplate—

WIFE

We probably should have planned for that. It very well could be next Tuesday right now. And since we didn't plan, we just don't know.

HUSBAND

To hardly breathe—

WIFE

Mm, mm, mm, mustn't split our infinitives, even in the face of great despair. We must hold to our grammatical integrity.

HUSBAND

There's just so little left. It's gone. I don't see the point.

Beat.

WIFE

We could have bananas instead.

HUSBAND

Bananas?

WIFE

Bananas! Turns out they're flourishing in the hostile environment.

HUSBAND

I had no idea. And to think I nearly lost my mind.

WIFE

Out with the old, as they say.

HUSBAND

I've never consider a banana.

WIFE

It is a worthy option.

HUSBAND

Is it?

WIFE

Yes, it's strong and yellow and pointy. And with the sun not rising, you know, we can't really afford to be picky.

HUSBAND

Yes, there is that. Well then, get me a banana.

WIFE

Get it yourself, fuck face. Oh, I think that one is my favorite.

HUSBAND

Yes. Yes, I can live with bananas.

WIFE

Oh! Look. The sun is rising. There it is, right on time. How do you like that?

Blackout
End of play