

## EVERY GIRL A PRINCESS

*TIME:* Halloween night.

*PLACE:* A chic organic restaurant, complete with an open/closed sign upstage. Curtains, upstage center, are pulled open.

*STAGING:* A few tables.

*CHARACTERS:*

-A MAN in his early thirties, wearing a classic suit. He is suave, handsome, and moves like a panther.

-JUDY, a pretty waitress, in her mid-twenties. For Halloween, she is dressed as Scheherezade, complete with colorful blouse, silk pantaloons and velvet slippers.

-ANOTHER MAN.

*A well-dressed man enters and sits at a table.*

*Judy, the waitress, pads up to a nearby table and wipes it.*

*Man:* Hey, didn't we go to different high schools together?

*Judy ignores him.*

*Man:* I wanna talk to you.

*Judy:* I'm busy.

*Man:* I'll wait.

*Judy:* It'll be awhile.

*The man looks at Judy.*

*Judy:* You wanna order or what?

*Man:* Nice costume. Looks like you're going to a party later.

*Judy:* Tonight's special is lentil soup. Sprouts on the side. You want a menu? Five dollar minimum.

*Man:* Right.

*Judy:* Will that be all?

*Man:* A cup of your blackest New Orleans blend.

*Judy leaves.*

*Another man enters.*

*Man:* We're closed.

*The Other Man:* But it's only five to ten.

*Man:* It's eight to five.

*Other Man (checking his watch):* No, it's--

*Man:* It's eight to five you're gonna crawl outta here with a broken nose if you don't split voluntarily. *(Beat)* Look, the waitress is a little PMS tonight. *(Breaking into Mexican accent)* I'm the busboy, taking a break. Go grab an organic fishburger down at MacDonald's, comprende?

*Other Man:* I'm sorry, but--

*The man rises, advances on the other man, who retreats offstage. The man turns the sign around to signal "closed," and returns to his seat.*

*Judy enters with the food. As she places it on the table...*

*Judy:* What's going on?

*Man:* Guy taking donations for Easter Seals.

*Judy:* Yeah?

*Man:* Told him I don't like seals anytime o' year. Spring or fall. 'Specially the baby ones.

*The man breaks his bread, dunks it in the soup, his elbows on the table.*

*Judy:* You have the table manners of an animal.

*Man:* I am an animal. What's your excuse, Princess?

*Judy:* Finish up and leave.

*Man:* I honor my word. When I say I'm gonna call someone I call 'em. I show up for appointments—on time. Pay my rent—on time. Car payments—on time. I open doors for ladies and light their cigarettes. We take a vote on which movie we're gonna see. Same with restaurants. I cover gas and bridge fares. I walk on the curbside to guard you against flying mud. I've even been known to lay my jacket over puddles. For the right people.

*Judy:* I'm impressed.

*Man:* You could still be one of those people.

*Judy turns to leave.*

*Man:* Sit down. Please.

*Judy pauses.*

*Man: SIDDOWN!*

*Judy: I'm on duty now.*

*Judy exits.*

*Lights down.*

*Lights up.*

*Judy, upstage, brushes her hair. The man lingers over his lentil soup.*

*Judy (Calling out):* It's okay, Carlos. I'll close up. Lock the back door on your way out.

*Judy puts her hair brush into her shoulder bag.*

*Judy:* All right, so what's on your mind?

*Man:* Why didn't you call?

*Judy:* I never said I'd call.

*Man:* I gave you an envelope this afternoon. Containing a letter. Telling you to call me.

*Judy:* I no longer read your letters. They disturb me. I got a third of the way through this one and dumped it.

*Man:* I write beautiful things to you.

*Judy:* I'm not what you think I am. You write such impossibly lovely words. I'll just disappoint you.

*Man:* You've already done that. You've enthralled, enraged and bewitched me. This last week's been—I never dreamed you'd approach me. But they say that once your name's in the paper, everyone's your long lost friend. I think actors are overrated, don't you? *(No reply)* You were lovely, you were. Came out of the audience like Aphrodite on her bed of sea foam, in your woolen jacket and leather pumps. We talked 'til midnight and desired each other the whole time. Your submission was so sweet. The room was paid for. *(Beat)* Do you touch yourself for other men? You enjoy being watched, don't you?

*Pause.*

*Judy:* A voice came to me as I opened that envelope.

*Man:* The voice of angels, I trust.

*Judy:* In my solar plexus. It said not to see you anymore.

*Man:* Preposterous.

*Judy:* I trust that voice. It guides me. I'm very sensitive to who people are beneath the mask. There's something evil about you. My acupuncturist agrees.

*Man (Laughing):* In my mother's day, that was the beautician's duty. (*Judy doesn't get it*) To hear your problems and then agree with your solutions.

*Judy:* She said that a man with your past wants to control people. (*The man laughs*) Listen to me. I can feel your hand in my guts. You've infiltrated my spirit. I can't stop thinking about you. Since you first wrote to me a year and a half ago. That's why I never answered your letters. I need to make my decisions freely.

*Man:* To be a slave to love is to rule the world.

*Judy:* It's not love.

*Man:* Love is to be obsessed by an unscratchable itch. I have surrendered to mine. It's huge. I want to eat you, to devour every cell of you. To die in your arms.

*Judy (Feeling the pull, resisting):* Stop. Please. We have to stop now, before I won't be able. I know you think I'm a coward.

*Man:* No, just typical. Same thing. Everyone fears love more than death. It's the age we live in.

*Judy:* You make me do depraved things that aren't me.

*Man:* Oh, but they are you. You are them, and more, darling. We'll journey beyond that, beyond ourselves, to innocence.

*Judy:* Sex is not the way.

*Man:* It's our way. My way. To lose myself in your contours. To travel the length of your wilderness and know the terror of discovery, and the sweetness of home, to kiss you everywhere and nowhere, in ways you've never imagined, and find myself in your thighs, renewed.

*Judy:* Stop. Saying these things. (*She turns hard*) Leave now. Don't ever call me, write to me or try to see me again.

*Man:* I don't recall ever causing you any pain.

*Judy:* That would come, sooner or later. I know your type.

*Man:* Your "pain" would just be the wounded vanity of the Homecoming Queen entering the Real World. Another form of ignorance. My intentions are beyond the scope of your vision. And you have no "self" to protect. You're nothing more than the sum of your defenses against an unjust world.

*Judy:* Wow! You're incredible! Just too good to be true!

*Man:* Say that with an attitude change. *(No response)* Say that with an attitude change.

*Judy:* What is this, one of your “acting exercises”? FUCK YOU AND YOUR ACTING EXERCISES.

*Man:* You're afraid to repeat that sentence without a pre-set attitude.

*Judy:* So what. According to you, I'm afraid of being alone, of being with someone, of giving birth, of being barren. You name it, I'm afraid of it. Satisfied now?

*Man:* Say the sentence.

*Judy:* I forgot it. *(Beat)* No, that's a lie. *(She looks at the man point blank, says the sentence three times, each time differently)* You're too good to be true. You're too good to be true. You're too good to be true.

*Man:* See, that wasn't so hard. I ask you, what kind of a world do we live in where a man who aspires to conscience and self-mastery is judged deformed and dangerous? You, you're afraid if you surrender to me—or rather, to your own desires—that I—but really you—would soon judge you unfit and abandon you. The enemy is you, not I. I've accepted you.

*Judy:* That's not true.

*Man:* So you say no to me first. That way, you stay clean. And ignorant. You and your kind call it “bliss.”

*Judy:* My “kind”?

*Man:* Your kind. The kind that need to see my kind driven down. There's always more of your kind. You're everywhere. You sell us real estate and cheat us in the fine print. Your kind delivers the milk, drives the buses, fills out insurance forms, takes our confessions, grades our papers. Your kind has made the world a rotting corpse alive with maggots. Your kind.

*Judy:* Why me? Why this maggot?

*Man:* Maggots have their function. They're God-created, after all. They clean the world of debris. No. That's unfair. *(Beat)* Because I'm lonely.

*Judy:* It's lonely at the top, huh?

*Man:* I'll ignore that. *(Beat)* Fate has sent me to you to reveal that your “limitations” are nothing more than repression. You been socialized, babe.

*Judy:* What's in this for you?

*Man:* I have a need to love a beautiful woman that shrieks within me and leaves me no peace.

*Judy:* No can help. Fate's gonna send you outta my life.

*Man:* Nothing is demanded of you. Not yet. Beyond acceptance of whatever happens. Do you trust I wold never knowingly hurt you?

*Judy (Sincerely weighing the question):* Yes. But hey, I'm just not ready, okay?

*Man:* We're never "ready." But some moments demand action. You must submit. Now. There are consequences either way. Does your present life satisfy you?

*Judy:* It's my life. I deal with it.

*Man:* It's not "your" life. The shadow of a ghost lives a truer life than you in your world of sprout sandwiches and cheap tippers.

*Judy:* You don't know my life.

*Man:* Nor you mine. You're set to reject me because of my "violent past." Do you trust the information you have?

*Judy:* I waited on you one day. You said you'd write me from South Africa. You said you were a mercenary. The way I see it, you subjugated a race of people, for money and thrills.

*Man:* For self-knowledge.

*Pause.*

*Man:* How do you know that stuff's all true? How do you know I didn't write all those letters down the street and mail them to some friend in Johannesburg who put South African stamps on them and mailed them to you? And what difference does our "past" make, anyway? It's a palace. It's a dungeon. It's a fiction. A palimpsest. Even your acupuncturist'll tell you: Be Here Now. Right? Pretty cosmic, huh?

*Judy:* I am my past.

*Man:* Now you sound like me.

*The man removes a pen from his jacket's inner pocket and writes on a napkin. He rises, walks behind the seated waitress, leans over her shoulder, and places the napkin before her. From behind her, as he speaks, he removes a length of rope from his jacket pocket.*

*Man:* That's my permanent address. For whenever you change your mind.

*Judy reads the paper and rips it up. The man slides the rope over and around her with practiced speed and precision. Before Judy can struggle, or is even aware of her situation, she is bound to the chair.*

*Man:* Don't scream. Be silent, my pet. Corrective measures are called for. An inoculation of sorts. As painless as a trip to the dentist. Or your acupuncturist.

*Judy starts to struggle The man covers her mouth with one hand and removes his tie with the other. He wraps her mouth shut. He goes to the curtains and pulls them shut. He turns off the main lights. He picks up the chair with Judy, in her Princess costume, lashed to it, and carries the package to stage front, placing her in a ¾ profile, under an overhead light. As he circles her...*

*Man:* You'll notice I've left your lower half free. Little sparrow. I only want to love you. To imprint you with my spirit. I know what you're thinking: As a dog would pee on a hydrant. No, my lovely. As a cloud would kiss a sunset. *(Breathing heavily)* O, spread your legs. We'll have such fun together. Have you been to Kilimanjaro? The wilds of Kenya? Sweetness. I know a Venetian cafe on the Grand Canal.

*The man kneels before Judy. He touches her knees and runs his hands along her thighs. Judy's legs stiffen. The man massages them. They relax.*

*Man:* I am going to remove your slippers. May I remove your slippers?

*Pause. Then Judy nods. Her legs relax further and fall open. She closes her eyes. The man, with utmost delicacy, as though handling an object of fragile antiquity and priceless value, removes a slipper.*

*Lights down.*

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May 1980 On a Greyhound bus from Mill Valley to Ukiah***