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## RECLINER

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**Robert Kelly**

**THE RECLINER**

*A studio apartment, kitchenette hidden stage right rear, door on wall stage left. Recliner, sofa bed, table, chairs. DOORBELL rings. FIRST WOMAN comes from kitchenette to answer door. She is wearing a simple cotton dress, patterned dark material. She opens the door. MAN comes in, wearing white shirt, black pants, The SECOND WOMAN is with him. She is naked.*

**MAN**

**Hi. Lucy, this is Miranda.**

*He brushes past the first woman and throws himself into the recliner, kicks back so he reclines, closes his eyes.*

*SECOND WOMAN follows him to the chair,*

**SECOND WOMAN**

**Which one am I?**

**MAN**

**You're Lucy, of course.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**What should we do?**

**MAN**

**Leave me alone! I'm going to go to sleep!**

*SECOND WOMAN turns to FIRST WOMAN, who is staring at her, perhaps with admiration.*

**SECOND WOMAN**

**What are we supposed to do?**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**He didn't say.**

**SECOND WOMAN**  
**But you must know.**

**FIRST WOMAN**  
**I thought I did. But now you're here.**

**SECOND WOMAN**  
**I don't really know where here is. Is this your apartment?**

**FIRST WOMAN**  
**I suppose so.**

*FIRST WOMAN approaches the recliner, shakes the man's shoulder.*

**FIRST WOMAN**  
**What are we supposed to do now?**

**MAN**  
**You're supposed to leave me alone. I'm going to sleep, now.**

**FIRST WOMAN**  
**And who am I again?**

**MAN**  
**For Christ's sake, you're Miranda, the one with the dress on. Now leave me alone.**

*FIRST WOMAN goes back to SECOND WOMAN, yanks her dress over her head and hands it to SECOND WOMAN, who slips it on. She goes over to the recliner.*

**SECOND WOMAN**  
**Who did you say I was?**

*MAN is silent.*

**SECOND WOMAN**  
**Who am I?**

*MAN opens his eyes, snarls at her.*

**MAN**

**You have the dress on, so you're Miranda. Now shut up and let me sleep.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**But wasn't I Lucy?**

**MAN**

**Je vais dormir. JE VAIS DOR-MIIiiiiir**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**What does that mean?**

**FIRST WOMAN**

*(from behind her)*

**It means he's going to sleep.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**Leaving us to do what?**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**We have to do something, something of our own. He thinks we're just creatures of his imagination, he cant even tell us apart.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**I think you're pretty.**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**You were pretty too when you were naked.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**Was I naked?**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**You were when you came in from the street.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**I wonder why I was naked in the street...didn't he explain?**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**He said nothing, you heard him.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**Why are you naked?**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**Oh. You're wearing my dress.**

*FIRST WOMAN snatches a cotton throw from the sofa and wraps it round herself.*

**FIRST WOMAN**

**There, now we're ready. Why don't you sit down?**

*SECOND WOMAN sits on the sofa, FIRST WOMAN sits at the other end. They curl sideways a little, to face each other.*

**SECOND WOMAN**

**We don't really know each other.**

**FIRST WOMAN**

*gesturing towards the sleeping man*  
**I guess he's our only connection.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**But we can connect, just ourselves. That's not hard.**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**Can I get you something?**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**Could I have a glass of water?**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**Just water? Wouldn't you rather have coffee, or some herb tea? Or some fruit?**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**Water's fine, just water from the sink. I'm a little thirsty after that long walk...**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**How far did you walk?**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**I like water, and it's not polite to ask for more than water the first time you visit a house. Unless they really insist. Or they're already eating and drinking. Water's fine.**

*FIRST WOMAN uncurls and goes to kitchenette. Sound of WATER RUNNING. She comes back in with a glass, hands it to her. SECOND WOMAN takes glass, drinks eagerly the first few sips, then puts it down on the coffee table. Smiles.*

**SECOND WOMAN**

**Yum, that was good.**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**You've never been here before?**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**I was born here!**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**I mean this apartment—what you said about only drinking water in a new place.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**Yes, I think so, I mean I think I never was here, was I?**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**I've never met you before, I'm pretty sure.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**Do you happen to have a cigarette?**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**I gave them up. Or tried to give them up. It's hard. A cigarette is such a quiet friend. So I smoke an e-cigarette now. Do you want to try mine?**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**Okay. I don't have any diseases or anything.**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**Me neither.**

*BUSINESS of getting e-cigarette, wiping mouthpiece, handing it over.  
SECOND WOMAN puts it in her lips.*

**FIRST WOMAN**

**Just inhale normally.**

*SECOND WOMAN experiments with inhalation, sucking in her cheeks, etc.*

**SECOND WOMAN**

**It's funny. It isn't hot. You can't burn yourself.**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**And you don't need an ashtray! And you can't accidentally burn the furniture, or your clothes. I lost a beautiful silk blouse once, a big cigarette burn right on the breast. It was from Thailand.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**It's not much like smoking, though, is it. It's sort of nice. But I miss the heat part. When I'm in a bar I like to take those cocktail napkins and burn holes in them, make patterns. I love it when they're dark-colored, then I unfold the napkin and burn eyeholes and mouth-holes and put it on like a mask.**

*SECOND WOMAN covers her face with her hands, peeks out between her fingers.*

**FIRST WOMAN**

**I love masks!**

*She leaps up and grabs something from behind the sofa—a big mask, full face, like a tradedy face, black cloth painted in gold, and puts it on.*

**SECOND WOMAN**

*Takes notice, smiles maybe, but pursues her line of thought:*

**Up here they don't let you smoke in bars. What's the good of that? Down south you can smoke anywhere you please.**

**FIRST WOMAN**

*taking the mask off:*

**Are you from down there?**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**All the way down.**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**Is that where you met him? (*gesturing towards sleeping man*)**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**No, I'm not sure. It was a long time ago. We only got together again a couple of days ago.**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**What does he expect us to do?**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**He never said.**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**When he goes to sleep, he sleeps for a long time, usually.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**That's true, I guess.**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**What should be do while we wait?**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**Maybe we should kill him.**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**That's pretty messy. And there's the police and all.**



**SECOND WOMAN**

**Sometimes I think he wants me to kill him. He's so angry at himself it spreads out to everybody else.**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**You're right. But killing somebody is wrong.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**Even when they want to be killed?**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**Maybe especially then.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**Why so?**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**Because they have no chance to reconsider. It's like suicide, you can't repent.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**I suppose you're right. But still...**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**Still what?**

**SECOND WOMAN**

*she gets up and mimes the actions*

**We could just turn on the gas in the stove, just a little, let the gas come out, slow, steady. Then we just tiptoe out.**

*Sits down again*

**We could go downtown and leave him here, see what happens. He might wake up or might not. It wouldn't have anything to do with us. You do have a gas range, yes?**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**I like the part about going downtown. I don't get out as much as I should.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**What do you do all day?**

**FIRST WOMAN**

Waiting, mostly.

**SECOND WOMAN**

Me too.

**FIRST WOMAN.**

We really should kill him. It's intolerable, the way he expects us to live.

**SECOND WOMAN**

Yes, kill him! And then what will we do, after downtown? Tell me.

**FIRST WOMAN**

I'm not sure. There are places to go, people to know. People who don't know us, and we can do all the knowing, all by ourselves.

**SECOND WOMAN**

Tell me where we can go—make me see it in my mind's eye. Please.

**FIRST WOMAN**

There's this plaza in Juarez, little white courthouse at one end, and those weird shaped trees, elm trees I think, ulmos they say, trees all around it, trimmed very neat, like balls of green, and it's hot, and at the corner a man's selling oranges, each fat orange is one penny, you understand, just one penny. The trees don't give much shade, but in the shadows men are always lounging. They look at us as we go by, their eyes are like knives, they slice right into us. We shiver. It's good.

**SECOND WOMAN**

I never liked Mexico. Maybe Juarez is different, I've never been there. I was in Acapulco once. We ate raw fish in some weird marinade with coriander leaves, very green too. Maybe green is all we have in common.

**FIRST WOMAN**

Who were you there with?

**SECOND WOMAN**

Some people I met. Very dull. American, though.

**FIRST WOMAN**

**That cigarette is probably finished now...**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**What do you mean, it tastes just the same.**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**The nicotine cartridge is all used up by now. You're just inhaling air.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**It tastes good anyhow. Maybe we could go to India.**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**But it's just electric.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**India?**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**No, silly, my stove.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**What else could we do?**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**We could go hiking in Texas, those shallow canyons, wild horses. And they say that people see wild camels sometimes. From the old days.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

***impatiently:***

**I mean how else could we really kill him. Kill him and get away with it. And be free.**

**FIRST WOMAN**

***getting up and miming the action:***

**We could put a plastic bag over his head and wait for him to stop breathing, then take the plastic bag away and dump it outside.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**Whoa, you're really good at this. But wouldn't he wake up?**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**I don't think he'll ever wake up.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**But there's really nothing we can do, is there?**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**Let's get out of here. You said it: we've got to be free.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**Where to?**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**Just out, doesn't matter, we've been here too long.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**You'd better get dressed. Here, I'll give you this back...**

*SECOND WOMAN gets up, as if to take the dress off, but FIRST WOMAN jumps up and restrains her.*

**FIRST WOMAN**

**No, don't bother, I'll wear another dress.**

*FIRST WOMAN retires to the rear of the stage, in shadows, slips off the cotton throw, tosses it out onto the sofa. SECOND WOMAN catches it and smooths it out. FIRST WOMAN slips a dress over her head and comes back. The dress is identical with the first.*

**SECOND WOMAN**

**Let's do it.**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**Should we leave him a note?**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**He doesn't read anything any more, don't bother.**

**FIRST WOMAN**

**Time to go.**

**SECOND WOMAN**

**Time to go.**

*The women go to the door, look back at the sleeping man, smile at each other and go out, closing the door quietly. A moment later SECOND WOMAN opens the door, looks in, no smile, and leaves again, this time slamming the door hard behind her.*

*The MAN stirs on the recliner, slowly rouses, kicks the footrest down, gets up, rubbing his eyes. He looks around for the women, sees nobody, hurries around the apartment looking for them. Realizes they're gone. He comes back and notices the half-empty glass of water on the coffee table, picks it up, studies it. He licks the rim, then slowly drains the glass. Sets it back on the table. He seems to be crying. He sits down on the sofa and buries his head in his hands.*

**DARKNESS**

*December 2013*