

A DELIGHTFULLY SORROWFUL EXIT

by  
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Current Revisions by  
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INT. THEATER STAGE - AFTERNOON

Open on an theater stage. Everything is shrouded in impenetrable darkness except for two single bright spot lights illuminating the extreme LEFT and RIGHT of stage:

On stage LEFT is a small car with its passenger doors open. Two men in their mid-twenties have gotten out and stand nearby. They are LOWELL and TOM. They're dressed like missionaries, except they carry no Bibles. They wear black pants, neatly pressed white shirts tucked in and simple black neck ties. Lowell has a briefcase.

On stage RIGHT are three MEN in work clothes, working construction. There is a door frame. They BANG and HAMMER on something half-finished on the floor and talk amongst themselves in quiet, hushed voices. These Men go on about their task, ignoring Lowell and Tom.

The camera sweeps in from the back row toward the stage. As it does, the house lights come on, dimly illuminating rows of seats where a few scattered people are watching the stage.

LOWELL

A lovely day.

Tom looks into the rafters as though they represented all the heavens and sky above him.

TOM

Are you sure?

Lowell looks around the dark stage. He sniffs the air.

LOWELL

Sure I'm sure.

(checks his pockets)

A man knows a lovely day when he sees one.

Tom looks at Lowell with playfully quizzical expression.

TOM

Define this "lovely day" you're referring to.

LOWELL

(ponders)

A lovely day starts full of possibility, and ends in pleasant exhaustion.

Tom hesitates, considering then nods with satisfaction. He understands what his friend means.

Quickly though, he shows the signs of feeling a great burden. He leans over and closes the car doors with two great SLAMS.

TOM  
Well by that, today might be a  
lovely day--  
(looks out toward  
auditorium)  
But things have changed.

CUT TO:

CAMERA FACING AUDIENCE:

Amid the seats we see a creative crew working: a female DIRECTOR, a male PRODUCER and a few scattered PEOPLE standing around and comparing notes although we cannot hear a word they're saying. Everyone is in period wear, consistent with the 1930's.

At the moment, they are unconcerned with the actors on stage.

CUT TO:

CAMERA FACING STAGE:

Lowell and Tom start to walk slowly from stage LEFT to stage RIGHT, talking as they go. They are completely unaware of the audience and workers.

LOWELL  
Things have changed since?

TOM  
Since the last time I was here.

LOWELL  
How so?

Tom rubs his palms on his pants, an action he repeats sporadically throughout.

TOM  
I don't know. Things were different then, *he* was different.

A spring comes to Lowell's step.

LOWELL  
I'm different each time we meet and so far, its not been so serious.  
(leans in on Tom)  
Details Tom, details.

Tom hesitates, deep in thought.

TOM

I've been thinking since we got in the car and I'm still not sure I know how to describe him.

Lowell rubs his chin and grins.

LOWELL

I've found that most people can be defined by triviality.

TOM

Like?

LOWELL

Like--

(searches for an example)

What is his favorite day of the week?

TOM

(without reservation)

Sunday.

LOWELL

Now why do you say Sunday is his favorite day?

TOM

He always sleeps late on Sundays. Past noon. On warm days, he'll sleep the entire afternoon away.

Lowell rubs his chin more deeply as a wildly curious look overcomes him.

LOWELL

You based your answer on which day he sleeps the latest?

TOM

It implies an ease with time.

(beat)

Besides, didn't you say something about the value of triviality?

LOWELL

I did. However, once you opt to define someone with triviality it ceases to be one.

TOM  
A definition?

LOWELL  
No. It ceases to be a triviality.

Tom grimaces in frustration. He isn't quite up to Lowell's speed of wit.

TOM  
You're making it impossible for me to give you an informed answer.

LOWELL  
Observations, anecdotes. They would be valuable assets right now.

Lowell and Tom reach a mark one third of the way across the stage. They stop abruptly. A light at floor level goes on, illuminating a street where there was once darkness.

They wait, presumably for a row of invisible cars to pass.

TOM  
He was my roommate Lowell, not my science project. We lived our separate lives in a big house.  
(laughs)  
More than a house, we lived in a museum.

Suddenly, the black and white image of a large, white Victorian house flashes on the back curtain. Again, no one on stage or in the audience reacts as it vanishes in an instant.

TOM (cont'd)  
I couldn't possibly make note of behavior with any degree of accuracy. There were people coming and going all the time: artists, grifters, musicians. It got so hectic that Katarina couldn't stand coming over anymore.  
(beat: thinks)  
So what if he trimmed the hedges to obscure our view from the porch, or eyed passing cars secretively. Those things are observations sure but in the moment, they didn't seem to be indicators of anything beyond domestic preference.

LOWELL

But here we are, going to see what has changed as you say, and doing so armed with only Sunday morning.

TOM

What's wrong with saying he slept late on Sundays?

Together they dart across the street, Lowell first then followed by Tom.

CUT TO:

CAMERA FACING AUDIENCE:

The DIRECTOR and PRODUCER feverishly compare notes on separate clipboards. The others have moved on. Behind them stand two additional ACTORS who look eerily similar, and are dressed in an eerily similar fashion to Tom and Lowell. They bide their time on the stage, waiting for something.

Still, no one appears to be directly attentive to the actors on stage.

CUT TO:

CAMERA FACING DARKNESS:

Lowell and Tom continue crossing the street.

Once Tom is across, the light on the floor goes off. Where there was once a street returns to its prior darkness.

LOWELL

It is something of an outdated road sign Tom. Like reading that there are two miles to go to a town that's long grown past its borders.

They continue to walk and talk.

TOM

You're eloquent when you're being condescending, you know?

LOWELL

That's deliberately misleading.

TOM

How?

LOWELL  
I'm merely pointing out to you  
where this becomes an intangible  
pursuit. I have no such intent.

TOM  
(defensive)  
He slept late on Sundays,  
particularly on warm Sundays. It's  
my gut assessment.

LOWELL  
(thinking)  
We need more than your gut.

Lowell and Tom are half way across the stage when they stop.

TOM  
I was simply answering a question.

A bird SINGS in the dark distance, something they both take a  
moment's pleasure in. It is a song with something of an  
otherworldly effect on them. It is the song of a nightingale.

LOWELL  
What sort of man is he Tom?

TOM  
What sort?

They resume walking and talking. Tom thinks.

TOM (cont'd)  
He's a tall man, awkwardly built.  
His shoulders slump like a long  
eroded horizon line.

LOWELL  
Mathematics or music?

TOM  
Music, definitely.

LOWELL  
Is he contentious or mechanical?

TOM  
(beat: thinks)  
He's deliberate.

LOWELL  
That's rather broad. Deliberate?

TOM  
Its accurate.

LOWELL  
So he's neither contentious or  
mechanical?

TOM  
I didn't say that. We're talking  
about being as tangible as  
possible, and to that I'd say  
deliberate.

LOWELL  
Examples Tom?

Tom claps his hands together. He's onto something finally.

TOM  
He's beyond the reach of metaphor.

LOWELL  
That's interesting--

TOM  
Really Lowell. He doesn't grasp  
metaphor at all. Not even a little.

Lowell and Tom have reached a mark two thirds across the stage. Suddenly, Tom stops in his tracks; Lowell looks like he's missed his cue and stops abruptly at Tom's side

Tom looks around, momentarily conscious of his surroundings. Its as though he senses something in the air.

Lowell nods sheepishly, batting his eyes in the direction of the Director and Producer.

CAMERA FACING AUDIENCE:

The DIRECTOR and PRODUCER are aghast. They point to where Lowell missed his mark. They're filled with animated expression but still, we can hear nothing they're saying.

CUT TO:

CAMERA FACING DARKNESS:

Lowell has recovered. He looks at Tom closely who draws him in with a pointed stare.

TOM  
You want definition?

Lowell nods assertively.

LOWELL  
Please--

TOM  
Five weeks ago, when he and I still spoke on a regular basis, we were talking about weather. Really in depth too, like you've never talked about weather. An extraordinary conversation, really.

LOWELL  
Conversations about weather, however unseasonable are not in and of themselves, oddities.

TOM  
I said, rather whimsically, that there is always a week in February to plant peas.

LOWELL  
That's a very interesting remark.

TOM  
It is. My Mom used to say it about unseasonable weather.  
(beat: leans in)  
Do you know what his response was though?

LOWELL  
I couldn't even hazard a guess.  
I've never met him.

TOM  
He said, I am not a farmer.

Lowell and Tom reach stage RIGHT where the three Men are still working. Lowell and Tom stand close by, talking in closer proximity to each other than they've been before.

LOWELL  
Exactly? This is important. He opted for 'I am', rather than the conjunction I'm?

TOM  
Exactly. He said 'I am not a  
farmer.'

LOWELL  
Well he isn't, is he?

TOM  
No. Pretty far from it.

LOWELL  
So he's deliberate, but not  
obstinate?

TOM  
No.

LOWELL  
Nor is he contentious.

TOM  
No.  
(beat)  
He is my friend though.

Lowell rubs his chin thoughtfully.

LOWELL  
We're not here because of an  
extraordinary conversation about  
weather.

TOM  
We're not.

LOWELL  
Tell me why are we here Tom?

CUT TO:

CAMERA FACING AUDIENCE:

The DIRECTOR and PRODUCER have moved a few steps closer to the stage. Their arms are crossed and they listen intently to the conversation on stage. They are no longer working on the play, they are engaged in it.

You could hear a pin drop in the seats its so quiet.

CUT TO:

CAMERA FACING DARKNESS:

Lowell and Tom remain standing close together.

TOM  
Two weeks ago, we found tapes.

LOWELL  
Tapes? And who is we?

TOM  
We were visiting, Katarina and I.  
She went into his recording studio.

LOWELL  
Why?

TOM  
She was playing with the house cat.  
It got scared, so she chased it  
down the stairs.

LOWELL  
(practically shouting)  
And?

Tom is suddenly flummoxed, unable to articulate.

TOM  
There were these tapes, piles of  
them. They were--  
(shudders)  
I don't know. They were strange.

LOWELL  
Katarina lifted them?

Tom shakes his head 'no' adamantly.

TOM  
They were playing on a loop while  
we were upstairs. I think we  
interrupted his work. Katarina saw  
that there were hundreds.

LOWELL  
Tom, talk to me. Were they  
contraband, snuff films--?

Tom shakes Lowell off and then centers him.

TOM  
They were confessionals.

LOWELL  
A last will and rites?

TOM  
Perhaps, but they certainly weren't  
for the end of his life. They  
weren't for things he'd done.  
Katarina heard a good portion of  
one while looking for the cat.

LOWELL  
Jesus Christ Tom, what was he  
confessing?

TOM  
I don't know. She described them as  
confessions, pleas for forgiveness.  
(shakes his head confused)  
They were apocalyptic, they were  
Biblical.

LOWELL  
And you think--?

TOM  
I don't know, that's why I want to  
talk to him. Katarina wouldn't come  
with me, so I thought--

LOWELL  
Why me? I've never even met the  
guy.

TOM  
Because I do know him, don't you  
see?

LOWELL  
I'm missing some part of the point  
here--

TOM  
Because he's deliberate, not  
contentious. He'll talk, but only  
if we work with him. We need two  
people there--

LOWELL  
(points to Tom)  
One person to decipher meaning.

Tom nods emphatically. For the first time, the burden of proof is lifting from his shoulders.

TOM

And the other to impress upon him the potential gravity of the situation. Perhaps you'll need to say nothing at all.

The Men begin to hoist from the floor what is quickly revealed as a sign. The camera does not immediately pick up what it says though. Lowell and Tom do not notice it.

LOWELL

(sighs)  
I'll do my best.

TOM

Let me talk.

Lowell nods.

TOM (cont'd)

So much for your lovely day, eh?

LOWELL

Perhaps.

They begin to pass through the doorway.

TOM

Can I ask you something Lowell?

They stop. Lowell puts a hand on Tom's shoulder.

LOWELL

You're behaving like a concerned friend Tom.

TOM

Not naive I hope?

LOWELL

Not in this matter. No, I don't believe so.

Lowell and Tom pass through the doorway and EXIT stage right.

CUT TO:

CAMERA FACING AUDIENCE:

The DIRECTOR and PRODUCER shakes hands and part, one going one direction and the other opposite. The other Actors stay and watch an additional beat before following the Director

CUT TO:

CAMERA FACING DARKNESS:

The Men turn the sign and lift it above the half-finished door frame that Tom and Lowell have just left through. We can finally see that it is fashioned similar to a highway sign and reads: ONE DELIGHTFULLY SORROWFUL EXIT.

FADE TO BLACK.

Title Supers:

THE END