

Eurydice
&
N-I-M.

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EURYDICE

Scene 7

The sound of a door closing.

The Interesting Apartment – a giant loft space with no furniture.

Eurydice and the Man enter, panting.

MAN. Voila.

EURYDICE. You're very high up.

MAN. Yes. I am.

EURYDICE. I feel a little faint.

MAN. It'll pass.

EURYDICE. Have you ever thought about installing an elevator?

MAN. No. I prefer stairs. I think architecture is so interesting, don't you?

EURYDICE. Oh, yes. So, where's the letter?

MAN. But isn't this an interesting building?

EURYDICE. It's so – high up.

MAN. Yes.

EURYDICE. There's no one here. I thought you were having a party.

MAN. I like to celebrate things quietly. With a few other interesting people. Don't you?

She tilts her head to the side and stares at him.

Would you like some champagne?

EURYDICE. Maybe some water.

MAN. Water it is! Make yourself comfortable.

He gestures to the floor.

He switches on Brazilian mood music.

She looks around.

EURYDICE. I can't stay long!

She looks out the window. She is very high up.

EURYDICE. I can see my wedding from here!

The people are so small – they're dancing!

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There's Orpheus!

He's not dancing.

MAN. *(Shouting from off-stage)* So, who's this guy you're marrying?

EURYDICE. *(shouting)* His name is Orpheus.

MAN. *(as he attempts to open the champagne, off-stage.)* Orpheus. Not a very interesting name. I've heard it before.

EURYDICE. *(shouting)* Maybe you've heard of him. He's kind of famous. He plays the most beautiful music in the world, actually.

MAN. I can't hear you!

EURYDICE. *(shouting)* So the letter was delivered – here – today?

MAN. That's right.

EURYDICE. Through the post?

MAN. It was – mysterious.

The sound of champagne popping.

He enters with one glass of champagne.

MAN. Voila.

He drinks the champagne.

So. Eurydice. Tell me one thing. Name me one person you find interesting.

EURYDICE. Why?

MAN. Just making conversation.

He sways a little, to the music.

EURYDICE. Right. Um – all the interesting people I know are dead or speak French.

MAN. Well, I don't speak French, Eurydice.

He takes one step toward her.

She takes one step back.

EURYDICE. I'm sorry. I have to go. There's no letter, is there?

MAN. Of course there's a letter. It's right here.

Eurydice
&
Orpheus¹²

EURYDICE

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EURYDICE. I don't need to know about rhythm. I have my books.

ORPHEUS. Don't books have rhythm?

EURYDICE. Kind of. Let's go in the water.

ORPHEUS. Will you remember my melody under the water?

EURYDICE. Yes! I WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER YOUR MELODY! It will be imprinted on my heart like wax.

ORPHEUS. Thank you.

EURYDICE. You're welcome. When are you going to play me the whole song?

ORPHEUS. When I get twelve instruments.

EURYDICE. Where are you going to get twelve instruments?

ORPHEUS. I'm going to make each strand of your hair into an instrument. Your hair will stand on end as it plays my music and become a hair orchestra. It will fly you up into the sky.

EURYDICE. I don't know if I want to be an instrument.

ORPHEUS. Why?

EURYDICE. Won't I fall down when the song ends?

ORPHEUS. That's true. But the clouds will be so moved by your music that they will fill up with water until they become heavy and you'll sit on one and fall gently down to earth. How about that?

EURYDICE. Okay.

They gaze at each other.

ORPHEUS. It's settled then.

EURYDICE. What is?

ORPHEUS. Your hair will be my orchestra and - I love you.

EURYDICE. I love you too.

ORPHEUS. How will you remember?

EURYDICE. That I love you?

ORPHEUS. Yes.

EURYDICE. That's easy. I can't help it.

ORPHEUS. You never know. I'd better tie a string around your finger to remind you.

EURYDICE. Is there string at the ocean?

ORPHEUS. I always have string. In case I come upon a broken instrument.

He takes out a string from his pocket.

He takes her left hand.

ORPHEUS. This hand.

He wraps string deliberately around her fourth finger.

ORPHEUS. Is this too tight?

EURYDICE. No - it's fine.

ORPHEUS. There - now you'll remember.

EURYDICE. That's a very particular finger.

ORPHEUS. Yes.

EURYDICE. You're aware of that?

ORPHEUS. Yes.

EURYDICE. How aware?

ORPHEUS. Very aware.

EURYDICE. Orpheus - are we?

ORPHEUS. You tell me.

EURYDICE. Yes.

I think so.

ORPHEUS. You *think* so?

EURYDICE. I wasn't thinking.

I mean - Yes. Just: Yes.

ORPHEUS. Yes?

EURYDICE. Yes.

ORPHEUS. Yes!

EURYDICE. Yes!

ORPHEUS. May our lives be full of music!

Music.

He picks her up and throws her into the sky.

EURYDICE. Maybe you could also get me another ring - a gold one - to put over the string one. You know?

ORPHEUS. Whatever makes you happy. Do you still have my melody?

Father

Scene 2

The Father, dressed in a grey suit, reads from a letter.

FATHER. Dear Eurydice,

A letter for you on your wedding day.

There is no choice of any importance in life but the choosing of a beloved. I haven't met Orpheus, but he seems like a serious young man. I understand he's a musician.

(The father thinks - oh, dear.)

If I were to give a speech at your wedding I would start with one or two funny jokes and then I might offer some words of advice. I would say:

Cultivate the arts of dancing and small talk.

Everything in moderation.

Court the companionship and respect of dogs.

Grilling a fish or toasting bread without burning requires singleness of purpose, vigilance and steadfast watching.

Keep quiet about politics, but vote for the right man.

Take care to change the light bulbs.

Continue to give yourself to others because that's the ultimate satisfaction in life - to love, accept, honor and help others.

As for me, this is what it's like being dead: the atmosphere smells. And there are strange high pitched noises - like a tea kettle always boiling over. But it doesn't seem to bother anyone. And, for the most part, there is a pleasant atmosphere and you can work and socialize, much like at home. I'm working in the business world and it seems that, here, you can better see the far reaching consequences of your actions.

Also, I am one of the few dead people who still remembers how to read and write. That's a secret. If anyone finds out, they might dip me in the River again.

and

I write you letters. I don't know how to get them to you.

Love,

Your father

He drops the letter as though into a mail-slot.

It falls on the ground.

Wedding music.

In the underworld, the father walks in a straight line as though he is walking his daughter down the aisle,

He is affectionate, then solemn, then glad, then solemn, then amused, then solemn.

He looks at his imaginary daughter; he looks straight ahead; he acknowledges the guests at the wedding; he gets choked up; he looks at his daughter and smiles an embarrassed smile for getting choked up.

He looks straight ahead, calm.

He walks.

Suddenly, he checks his watch.

He exits, in a hurry.

Scene 17

ORPHEUS. Eurydice!

Before I go down there, I won't practice my music. Some say practice. But practice is a word invented by cowards. The animals don't have a word for practice. A gazelle does not run for practice. He runs because he is scared or he is hungry. A bird doesn't sing for practice. She sings because she's happy or sad. So I say: store it up. The music sounds better in my head than it does in the world. When songs are pressing against my throat, then, only then, I will go down and sing for the devils and they will cry through their parched throats.

Eurydice, don't kiss a dead man. Their lips look red and tempting but put your tongue in their mouths and it tastes like oatmeal. I know how much you hate oatmeal.

I'm going the way of death.

Here is my plan: Tonight, when I go to bed, I will turn off the light and put a straw in my mouth. When I fall asleep, I will crawl through the straw and my breath will push me like a great wind into the darkness and I will sing your name and I will arrive. I have consulted the almanacs, the footstools, and the architects, and everyone agrees: I found the right note. Wait for me.

Love,
Orpheus

Scene 18

EURYDICE. I got a letter. From Orpheus.

FATHER. What did he say?

EURYDICE. He says he's going to come find me.

FATHER. How?

EURYDICE. He's going to sing.

*She remembers the pen and paper in the breast pocket of
her father's coat.
She takes them out.
She holds the pen up to show the stones*

EURYDICE. A pen.

She writes a letter.

EURYDICE. Dear Orpheus,

I'm sorry. I don't know what came over me. I was afraid. I'm not worthy of you. But I still love you, I think. Don't try to find me again. You would be lonely for music. I want you to be happy. I want you to marry again. I am going to write out instructions for your next wife.

To my Husband's Next Wife:

Be gentle.

Be sure to comb his hair when it's wet.

Do not fail to notice
that his face flushes pink

like a bride's

when you kiss him.

Give him lots to eat.

He forgets to eat and he gets cranky.

When he's sad,

kiss his forehead and I will thank you.

Because he is a young prince

and his robes are too heavy on him.

His crown falls down

around his ears.

I'll give this letter to a worm. I hope he finds you.

Love,

Eurydice.

She puts the letter on the ground.

*She dips herself in the river.
A small metallic sound of forgetfulness – ping.
The sound of water.
She lies down next to her father, as though asleep.*

The sound of an elevator – ding.

Orpheus appears in the elevator.

He sees Eurydice.

He is happy.

The elevator starts raining on Orpheus.

He forgets.

He steps out of the elevator.

He sees the letter on the ground.

He picks it up.

He scrutinizes it.

He can't read it.

He stands on it.

He closes his eyes.

The sound of water.

Then silence.

The end.

Eurydice
+
Father

EURYDICE

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Scene 9

Time shifts. Drops of water.

Eurydice and her father in the string room.

EURYDICE. Teach me another.

FATHER. Ostracize.

EURYDICE. What does it mean?

FATHER. To exclude. The Greeks decided who to banish. They wrote the name of the banished person on a white piece of pottery called ostrakon.

EURYDICE. Ostrakon.

Another.

FATHER. Peripatetic. From the Greek. It means to walk slowly, speaking of weighty matters, in bare feet.

EURYDICE. Peripatetic: a learned fruit, wandering through the snow.

Another.

FATHER. Defunct.

EURYDICE. Defunct.

FATHER. It means dead in a very abrupt way. Not the way I died, which was slowly. But all at once, in cowboy boots.

EURYDICE. Tell me a story of when you were little.

FATHER. Well, there was the time your uncle shot at me with a bee-bee gun and I was mad at him so I swallowed a nail.

Then there was the time I went to a dude ranch and I was riding a horse and I lassoed a car. The lady driving the car got out and spanked me. And your grandmother spanked me too.

EURYDICE. Remember the Christmas when she gave me a doll and I said, "If I see one more doll I'm going to throw up"?

FATHER. I think grammy was a little surprised when you said that.

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EURYDICE

EURYDICE. Tell me a story about your mother.

FATHER. The most vivid recollection I have of mother was seeing her at parties and in the house playing piano. When she was younger she was extremely animated. She could really play the piano. She could play everything by ear. They called her Flaming Sally.

EURYDICE. I never saw grammy play the piano.

FATHER. She was never the same after my father died. My father was a very gentle man.

EURYDICE. Tell me a story about your father.

FATHER. My father and I used to duck hunt. By the Mississippi River. He would call up old Frank the night before and ask, "Where are the ducks moving tonight?" Old Frank, he could really call the ducks.

It was hard for me to kill the poor little ducks, but you get caught up in the fervor of it. You'd get as many as ten ducks.

If you went over the limit - there were only so many ducks per person - father would throw the ducks to the side of the creek we were paddling on and make sure there was no game warden. If the warden was gone, he'd run back and get the extra ducks and throw them in the back of the car. My father was never a great conversationalist - but he loved to rhapsodize about hunting. He would always say, if I ever have to die, it's in a duck pond. And he did.

EURYDICE. There was something I always wanted to ask you. A story - or someone's name - I forget.

FATHER. Don't worry. You'll remember. There's plenty of time.