

DIDN'T HEAR IT COMING

A One-Act Play

By

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SETTING:

A bare stage, with very restrictive boundary lines, set about ten feet from one another and parallel to the edge of the stage continues endlessly in both directions. These boundary lines should only be discernable by the actors.

AT RISE:

The MAN is sitting within the boundary area facing exactly left. He appears to be waiting for something, though he is not watching for it. He sits in silence for awhile. Momentarily, he notices something below him. He stares down at it, following its movements until it is on his same level, off stage. That something is the GIRL, who finally enters and stops as if at an invisible barrier. She, too, occasionally looks down where the MAN was looking.

GIRL

Who are you?

(Both are silent for awhile.)

You know this is dangerous.

(Both are silent for awhile more. She finally points to a place in the distance behind him)

This time of day they come from over there.

(Both are silent. She courageously walks to him, and then sits down facing him. They sit in silence for awhile - longer than they should, probably, for a theatrical production. But we want the audience to know that these two have nowhere they need to be.)

MAN

(finally speaking)

You know this is dangerous.

GIRL

(laughs, shrugging)

Not for a girl like me, it ain't.

MAN

You been here before?

GIRL

I always come here. It's my - *spot*. Right here. Down there, actually.

MAN

So why are you *up here*?

(More silence.)

GIRL

You're not afraid?

MAN

I was going to ask you the same thing.

(A little more silence.)

GIRL

So, are you?

MAN

Are you?

(GIRL stands up, teetering a little. She turns as if on a balance beam, her back now to the man.)

GIRL

Nah. You're harmless.

MAN

How do you know? How can you know? Just looking at me. Am I that . . . pathetic?

GIRL

Since when was being harmless pathetic?

MAN

Oh it is. By God's holy light, it is.

(nodding his head)

It is.

(A bit of silence.)

GIRL

So are you?

MAN

Pathetic?

GIRL

(laughing)

Afraid. Are you?

(Both are silent for a bit.)

MAN

If I was afraid, would I be here?

(GIRL turning on "the beam" to face him.)

GIRL

You'd *have* to be afraid to come here. Like this.

MAN

(smiling for the first time)

And you'd *not* have to be afraid to come here.

GIRL

(walking away from him, heel to heel, keeping her balance well)

I was born here, you know. I did a paper in school 'bout tribes in Africa who bring their young into the world by clashing their swords against their shields. Make a helluva racket. Keeps the evil spirits away.

(GIRL hops off the beam, and turns to the MAN.)

Course, they leave out the whole part that the women don't have swords or shields. It's the guys making all of the noise. The women just lay there silently doing their jobs. You know, grunting out the kids, cleaning up the mess. That kind of stuff.

MAN

The women I know aren't so silent. They don't grunt out kids. They don't clean up the mess. And they sure as hell aren't silent. That's for damn sure.

GIRL

We ain't in Africa, either. Are we?

(MAN is stunned into silence.)

You must know some bitchy women.

(MAN shrugs. More silence.)

MAN

(finally)

Is that true?

GIRL

What?

MAN

You were born here.

(GIRL shrugs. After a bit of silence.)

GIRL

You should probably get below.

MAN

Oh. *Should* I?

GIRL

Suit yourself.

(GIRL walks back exactly the same way she entered. The MAN watches her movements as she goes below, unseen to the audience.)

MAN

(louder, so she can hear him)

I was down there once. I know what it's like. I know all about it.

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