

PERUSAL SCRIPT

REFLECTION

A Short Play by
Mahonri Stewart



Newport, Maine

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REFLECTION

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LBT ORDER #3322

CAST (1m, 1f)

MAN

WOMAN

SET: single interior location

COSTUMES: could be modern, or before the Classic Age of Greece

REFLECTION by Mahonri Stewart. RUN TIME: 20-30 minutes. CAST SIZE: 2 (1f, 1m) In this tragic retelling of the story of Medusa, Medusa's traumatic backstory is revealed and her traditional role as a villain and a monster is challenged. An intentional companion piece for another of Mahonri Stewart's one-acts, "The Death of Eurydice."

ORDER #3322

Mahonri Stewart is an award winning writer and educator. He has written over two dozen plays, most of which have been produced throughout the U.S. and Europe, including productions in Los Angeles, Scotland, and Switzerland. In 2004, his premiere play *Farewell to Eden* won the Kennedy Center's American College Theater Festival's National Playwriting Award (Second Place) and their National Selection Team Fellowship Award. Since then he has also received numerous other awards and honors and continues to expand his writing into various mediums, including screenplays, graphic novels, poetry, and novels. He received his MFA degree in Dramatic Writing from Arizona State University, where he wrote both the stage version of *Jimmy Stewart Goes to Hollywood*, as well as a screenplay version. He received his Bachelors degree in Theatre Arts from Utah Valley University. He's a former Playwright in Residence at the Noorda Regional Theater for Children and Youth.

REFLECTION

A WOMAN sits, staring down in quiet for a moment. Her hair is put back in some sort of bandana, scarf, or hat, unseen. Behind her, silently, a MAN enters with a large pack, wet with rain and in traveler's gear. He holds aloft a lantern. The Woman's head raises slowly, staring at the audience.

WOMAN: You can't be here.

(The WOMAN scrambles to her feet, goes to a box, rummaging through it.)

MAN: I'm sorry, I came in from the rain. I thought this was just a cave...

WOMAN: You have to get out.

(The MAN holds his lantern up and the WOMAN recoils, looking away.)

My eyes...

MAN: Oh, I'm so sorry.

(The MAN draws the lantern back and puts it aside.)

Do you... do you have some sort of... condition?

WOMAN: Yes.

(The WOMAN wraps a scarf around her eyes.)

MAN: There are stories of a woman who lives up here...

WOMAN: I'm sure there are.

MAN: I wasn't sure whether they were true.

(beat)

Aren't you cold?

WOMAN: Yes. I am always cold now.

MAN: If you have any wood, I can make a fire.

WOMAN: No, not any wood.

MAN: Well, I suppose it is better than getting drenched out there.

WOMAN: No, it is better out there. Please, leave.

(The MAN takes off his coat, shaking off the water.)

MAN: I'm sorry, but there is no way that I'm going back out there.

WOMAN: This is not a safe place.

MAN: If you can handle it, I'm sure I can too.

WOMAN: It's not about that...

MAN: It's the Monster. You're talking about the Monster.

WOMAN: They tell stories about the Monster too, then?

MAN: That is why I'm here.

WOMAN: What are you, some sort of big game hunter?

MAN: Of a sort, I suppose.

WOMAN: And you are just going to mount the Monster's hide on your wall?

MAN: No. It will be a wedding a present.

WOMAN: That's a pretty gruesome wedding present.

MAN: It's what was asked for.

WOMAN: I see. Poor creature.

MAN: You don't understand.

WOMAN: What does it matter if I understand? The Fates will inflict what they will, their weave allotting us our thread line.

MAN: I made an oath.

WOMAN: And an oath is like Fate, isn't it? Once made, you're bound.

MAN: Yes. You do understand.

WOMAN: The Monster's life for your honor. No, I don't understand.

MAN: Oh, you're some sort of radical then.

(The MAN sits and takes off his shoes.)

WOMAN: How quick you are to affix labels. Radical. Monster.

MAN: Indecisiveness is a fault. You have to size up a situation quickly if you want to survive.

(The MAN takes out a pair of sandals and puts them on.)

WOMAN: On that we can agree.

(The WOMAN takes off the scarf from her eyes, looking back out into the audience.)

I have another title, I suppose. Artist.

MAN: Yes, I saw the statues outside. Very life-like.

(The MAN takes a hat [or helmet] out of his pack and puts it on.)

WOMAN: Not very life-like at all, I'm afraid. Have you heard the story of Pygmalion?

MAN: I'm afraid not.

WOMAN: I guess that doesn't surprise me. You really don't seem the cultured sort.

MAN: Who is affixing labels now?

WOMAN: Fair point. Pygmalion was an artist, a sculptor. He had no interest in women...

(The MAN snickers. She gives him a disapproving look.)

Very open minded. Will you just listen? It's not what you think.

MAN: All right. I'm listening.

WOMAN: He was too invested in his work, you see. That is where his heart lay. There was one particular statue he made that he loved, a woman of great beauty. She was not modeled after any living person, but she was so life-like that you would expect her to breathe, if you saw her. She perfectly fit all his concepts of the ideal woman and he would just stare at her night after night, enraptured. So he prayed to Aphrodite to make his work come alive. Imagine that, stone to life!

MAN: Yes, imagine your statues outside, alive...

WOMAN: Aphrodite granted his wish. When he came home from Aphrodite's temple, in his desire he kissed the statue and instead of cold marble, he felt flesh. And she responded in turn, fell in love with him. They were married, had a child... lived happily. It's my favorite story.

MAN: I can see why. It's very... sensual.

(The WOMAN laughs.)

WOMAN: I guess it is. Erotic is not what I was going for, though.

MAN: I like the story very much.

WOMAN: Hopefully for the right reasons.

MAN: It's not often you get a happy ending in those stories.

WOMAN: No, I suppose not. Why is it that the Fates seem to favor some over others?

MAN: Perhaps that's the operative word: "seem."

WOMAN: Meaning what?

MAN: Meaning you are only seeing one moment. One triumphant moment. What came before? What came after? Same with the tragic stories. What came before? What came after?

WOMAN: Interesting.

MAN: Anyway, they're just stories.

WOMAN: They're never *just* stories.

MAN: Can I see your eyes?

WOMAN: No.

MAN: I didn't think so. Your... condition.

WOMAN: Yes.

MAN: That must be hard.

WOMAN: Very.

(beat)

I'm going to sit over here, if you don't mind.

MAN: Oh, I didn't mean...

WOMAN: Once burned, twice shy.

MAN: What?

WOMAN: I'm sure you are a very nice man, but we know nothing about each other.

MAN: Then let's change that.

WOMAN: To what purpose?

MAN: Aren't you lonely up here?

WOMAN: Of course I am. But that doesn't mean... it doesn't mean...

MAN: Mean what?

WOMAN: That I can do anything about it.

(The WOMAN places back on the scarf over her eyes.)

MAN: Yes, the thread of Fate tied at our heels. Circumstances boxing us in a cave.

(The MAN comes over and takes her hands. SHE immediately draws them away.)

WOMAN: What are you doing?

MAN: You don't have a condition with your hands, do you?

WOMAN: What are you doing?

MAN: You said you were cold.

WOMAN: I can handle it.

(The WOMAN moves away.)

MAN: So cold. Your hands were as cold as stone.

WOMAN: Experience is cold.

MAN: What sort of experience?

WOMAN: Not ones casually shared with strangers.

MAN: Everyone starts out as strangers.

WOMAN: I don't like feeling manipulated.

MAN: I'm not...

WOMAN: So you say.

MAN: I... I want to understand you. Understand what you have experienced here.

WOMAN: Why? Go find your monster. Leave me alone.

MAN: I could. Certainly. That would be so easy. Such an easy choice.

(The MAN starts to grab his things.)

WOMAN: Wait.

MAN: Yes?

WOMAN: A more difficult choice...

MAN: Understanding someone else is never easy.

WOMAN: All right. But becoming acquainted is a two way street.

MAN: It's like we're tied together, isn't it?

WOMAN: Sure. Attached by a thread.

(The MAN puts his things down.)

The wedding present. Who is getting married?

MAN: My mother. And the king.

WOMAN: Oh. It has to be a royal gift then. Are you and your mother royalty too, then?

MAN: Once upon a time. Not anymore. But the marriage has to do more with... the King's desires.

(The MAN takes a sword out of his pack, looking at it strangely.)

WOMAN: I know something of men's desires.

MAN: Well, it's not my desire. Nor my mother's. It's his. His desire. His lust.

WOMAN: And you have no choice. His hand holds the sword, does it?

(The MAN pauses, alert to the mention of the sword.)

Metal makes a very particular sound. It has that high pitched ring when it moves in the air.

MAN: Yes, it does. You have very good ears.

WOMAN: I've been in the dark for a long time. You have to learn to rely on all your senses. Including your sixth sense. Your intuition.

(beat)

Maybe you should leave after all.

MAN: I'm going to kill him. He is going to force her to marry him, if I don't do something.

WOMAN: Does your mother not want to marry him?

MAN: She says she does. But I know she is being coerced. She is constantly being watched. Her eyes were wide with terror when she told me. A person's lips may tell one story...

WOMAN: ...but the eyes can tell another. Yes.

(beat)

Or you could just be paranoid. Or worse: possessive. Maybe that's your condition.

(The MAN puts the sword down. The WOMAN visibly relaxes.)

Come sit by me.

(The MAN does so. The WOMAN takes his hands.)

Still cold?

MAN: Very.

WOMAN: Let me tell you why. I didn't want to serve flesh. I wanted to choose something nobler. I wanted to serve spirit. So I was a priestess in her temple.

MAN: Her?

WOMAN: Wisdom.

MAN: You served Athena?

7 MORE PAGES TO THE END