

THE PROCLAMATION

a happening by Iva Martirano

A woman

A man

A flute

The three actors come out from the dining room, without stopping, go down center steps, across the aisle, up onto stage. The Flute is wearing a black suit or if possible a coat of tails. He is carrying a flute, a music stand and his music. The woman is wearing leotards and she is heavily made up. She is carrying in one hand a pair of ballerina slippers and in the other hand a make-up case and a dark cape thrown over one arm. The man is wearing black leotards and a "Dracula" make-up. He is carrying a chair in one hand and in the other a tiny ~~XXXXX~~ bell.

When on stage the Flute goes on the right side of the piano, puts down the music stand, lays down the flute and the music on it and silently studies the other two. When the woman reaches the stage, she walks two steps, makes a half turn on the right side, faces the Flute and freezes.

The Flute puts his right hand to his mouth, while, with left hand holds his right elbow, assuming a pose of "let me see". He is still for a few seconds then removing the right hand from the mouth, points with the index finger to the Man, gesturing for him to put the chair down. The Man unfreezes, puts the chair in front of himself and waits. The Flute after few more seconds of pondering, motions to Him to pick up the chair again and to walk away. The Man picks up the chair, makes a complete and stiff turn about, walks one step in front toward stage left, then turns his back to the audience, and takes another step, places the chair right behind the Woman. Then he stiffly turns to face the Flute. The Flute nods approval emphatically with his head, then turns his attention to the Woman, and goes through the same routine of pondering. The Woman keeps her frozen pose but does not wait long enough and lets herself go very stiffly on the chair. The Flute, taken aback by this breach of etiquette, claps his hands three times to call her back to reality. She very promptly gets up and waits. The Flute stares at her for a few seconds shaking his head in disapproval, then switches his attention back to the Man, who in the meantime has somewhat relaxed. When the attention of the Flute is upon him again, the Man snaps right back in his previous frozen attitude. The Flute, with his right arm, motions to the Man to start moving. The Man takes three steps toward stage left, walking backwards. When the Man reaches the left stairs, the Flute motions for him to stop. The man stops frozen, the Flute motions to him to turn around and to go up the stairs. The Man executes. When the Man is on top of the stairs he turns around to face the Flute, waiting. The Flute motions to the man to walk all the way up to center. The Man executes and stops. The Flute motions to the man to walk all

go behind the second pillar on the left of stage center. The Man turns, goes to the pillar, hesitates~~xx~~ turns again, facing the Flute who motions again to the man to go behind the pillar. The Man turns, looks at the pillar and does not move. The Flute motions agin, but this time imperiously, then starts walking toward the left stairs.

When the Flute reaches the botton of the stairs, the Man goes quickly behind the pillar. The Flute turns and goes back to his place on the stage and motions to the Woman to go to the ledge. She obeys, turns, the Flute motions to her to put down the make-up case on top of the ledge. She executes, then the Flute motions her to put the slippers on. She turns around and first with the right foot on the ledge, keeping her left leg very stiff, ballerina-like, executes, then does the same with the other slipper. When she is finish^{ed}, she turns around waiting. The Flute motions her to sit down on the ledge. She obeys. The Flute walks to the center of the stage, looks up to the Man, and with painter-like gestures, tries to have the Man completely hidden by the pillar. After a few vain efforts on the ~~xxxxx~~ man's part, the Flute walks back to the music stand, looks to the audience, goes off smiling to the front row and creates a disturbance. When this is finished, he walks back on stage, takes the flute, opens the music book, looks at the two actors. The ~~xxxxx~~ woman jumps to her feet ~~xxxxxx~~ and the man, who during the disturbance has lost his poise, recovers ~~xxxxxx~~ it quickly. The Flute puts the instrument to his lips ready for the "go" signal. The Woman unfreezes, takes the cape in her right hand and the play begins.

WOMAN

(throws the cape up to the man) ¹⁴ [^{7 sec} Ole! Ladies and Gentleman. My partner and I.....]

(The Flute has been playing, but, when she says "I", he accidently glances toward the audience, puts down the flute on the music stand, walks up to left stairs up to the disturbance, preferably a lady, makes her get up from her seat, puffs up her pillow, helps her to be seated again, looks for an ash-tay, gives it to her and walks back to the stage and picks up his playing at~~the~~ the exact/spot where he was interrupted.)

Woman

(During the previous scene she has frozen, mouth open on the word "I". As soon as the music starts): [...are here this evening not to provoke but to e-n-ter-tain--you-. The stage is set, just a touch here and there, it is all the creation of my inventive imagination. See? no script, no props, no fantastic tricks of light or sound. All we need now is your uncontestable attention. (she goes to the chair and sits down) Oh how the creative process weakens me. But how the feeling of doing a tremendously good job stimulates and sharpens my senses. (she gets up from chair & looks at Man) Well, are you coming or what?]

50-5 1 min

(The Man, at the beginning of the scene, comes out from behind the pillar, catches the cape, wraps himself with it with "Dracula" gestures; then goes to the edge of the ledge and while the woman goes through her lines he throws the cape over his shoulders and makes movements as a prizefighter getting ready to step into the ring. When the Woman summons him, he dashes on top of the left stairs eagerly but is stopped by the woman)

WOMAN

Wait one moment

(the Man slouches down, sits on the steps like a broken marionette.)

WOMAN

You cannot come in here like that, too eager my dear, you are too eager. Dignity becomes an actor. Hold your head high, move slower, with feline grace, one hand on your hip, superior smile (She is showing to him how to strike a pose) And above all, my dear man, do not run, but stride, gait----- 2 min
Now then, come down. (She walks back to the piano, waiting for him.)

(The MAN gets up in slow motion and goes down the steps, trying, ~~ind~~ing so, to give a rendering of the pose she has suggested to him.)

WOMAN

(She turns from the piano, impatiently) Well? Are you coming or what? What in the name of hell are you doing? Well, I guess this is the best you can do.. Did you bring the ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ proclamation?

(The MAN approaches slowly, stops in front of her, puts a hand inside ~~xxx~~ of his upper leotards, searches around)

WOMAN

(Sotto voce, aside) Come on, come on, what did you do with it? Please hurry, the public is getting restless, oh come on. 3 min
(She turns to the audience and smiles at it. Then again turns to the man, at the end of her rope) Why they gave me you for a partner, couldn't they have sent Ladislav-----

(The MAN finally brings out a roll of paper heavily ~~xxx~~ribboned. He holds it up with a triumphant expression in his face.)

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WOMAN

Allright, lets have it.

(the MAN still holds the role, looks at her intently, and sways his body back and forth. Pause)

WOMAN

into key
clues 4min
Listen, I can do very well without you, do you hear? I can always fish something from my repertoire, like Lady Macbeth or Ophelia, you never heard my Ophelia? (She turns toward the audience, strikes a pose for the mad scene in Hamlet and chants) "This is the rue for remembrance and this is the basil for thinking" - (she snaps back suddenly, turns to the man) See what I mean? I do not need you, I can hold an audience - I can enchant it, charm it, and they, my dear boy, love me! 5min
But, tonight they send you here with me and let me tell you, you better get on the ball and start producing something..... or you'll drive me out of my mind! I don't know why I care so much about you, you are just another poor son of a bitch of a damned beginner. (She turns her back to him petulently. She rests her elbows on the piano, supporting her chin with her hands, bends over and shakes her tail at the man.)

(The MAN bends over her without touching her, with the roll in his left hand, offers it to her with a slow and ~~sweeping~~ gesture.)

WOMAN

(Sops her shaking, looks at the roll avidly, but plays coy. She does little gestures as to powder her nose, smooth her hair, then lifts her pony tail, flipping it right into his face.)

(The MAN, when she hits his face with the pony tail, straightens himself up and in so doing, lifts his left arm to his face as if to protect himself).

WOMAN

6min
(without turning, she lifts her right arm quickly and grabs the roll and begins to tear away the strings) Finally! I'm so curious to read it, they made such a mystery over it. I hope you don't mind me too much. I mean, after all, we are bound in this scene together and we must carry it through to the bitter end (She turns to the Man, with flaring eyes) And if you don't like to work with me, you know what you can do, you can get the hell out of here! Mr Edmund Kean! (She stares at him from head to toe, then turns back and goes on with undoing the strings.)

(The MAN, holding the previous pose makes big silent show of sobbing during her tirade, then when she turns her back to him, he peeps at her with one eye.)

WOMAN

Like I said already, I can always give my Ophelian or my Juliet... O Damn! Why did they tie it so tight? (She tears at the strings with her teeth while talking) Do I have to do everything? Havent you learned your lines? I gave you your cue "Damn". Well? "Damn" is your cue. (She turns to him, as to a child) Let's start all over again. Damn.n.n.n.n.

(The MAN at this point, uncovers his face opens his mouth widely, as if to speak, but is stopped short by the Woman. He will hold his mouth open)

WOMAN

(Stopping him short) Wait a second. Are you a method actor? Do you lisp your lines and run short of breath? Are you a realist or a surrealist? Do you pick your nose and belch to rend the idea of real life, or do you leap around a stage and assume a vacant expression in order to convey your inner pathos? Are you from the east or west coast school? Do you simply adore Beckett, Albee, Genet or are you a summer stock Shakespeahearean? Well, answer boy, answer, because if we must work together, I must know how you perform so I can work with you, because you know I can do everything. I am versatile! Well?.....

8 min

(The MAN very slowly closes his mouth, then very discouraged, sits on the chair with outstretched legs, sloughing his shoulders forward, arms between legs, hands touching the floor of the stage, and head down.)

WOMAN

(She surveys him for a few seconds, then shakes her head sadly. doing tsk, tsk sounds. She walks to the proscenium, strikes a dramatic pose a la Duse, ~~xxxxxxxx~~ clears her throat and gives the lines from Lady Macbeth. When she is finished, she puts her arms down along her body as a great tragedean, exhausted by the greatness of her rending of the lines. Then she switches back to the normal pace of the play, smiles at the public, throws a few languid kisses and goes back to the piano, picks up the roll, and goes on with the untying of the strings, while so doing she talks to the man over her left shoulder) Do not feel so bad, dear boy. I suffered from stage fright many times in the beginning of my career but now.....

9 min

(The FLUTE is playing a coloratura)

WOMAN

(She turns toward the FLUTE and starts humming with him.)

(The FLUTE, while playing, looks at the woman, nods his head, creating an obbligato)

WOMAN

(As quickly as she has started, she stops, returns her attention to the roll on the piano) ~~MAN~~ I'm dying to see what it says. (she turns toward the man) Who gave it to you?

(The MAN, at this question, pulls himself to a sitting position, opens his mouth again as to speak, but is interrupted by the WOMAN)

WOMAN

10 min
(She interrupts him with a gesture of the hand) I know, you can't tell because you don't know anybody here. (She approaches the man, stands right in front of him) But don't you see dear man, that you must start doing something? I can't carry on all by myself. Can't you at least ad lib?

(The MAN closes his mouth slowly, looks up to her)

WOMAN

(She looks down at him, waits a few seconds, then loses her temper, stamps her foot) Welll.....? (with a sudden change of mood) Do you know that you are cute? Sort of clumsy but cute.

(The MAN pulls himself up from the chair, standing very erect, swelling his chest)

WOMAN

(She puts her hands on his upper arms and feels his muscles) Yes, very cute, not too strong maybe, but terribly romantic-looking. Ohhh, I can just see you in Hamlet. (She places herself in front of him, facing the audience with open arms and speaks in a dreamy voice, working herself up into a frenetic crescendo) ~~MAN~~ You'll wear a blond wig, black velvet corset

extremely pale face. Now the audience is holding its breath, the lights are dim, here it is, the great moment "Yorik, ~~you~~ poor Yorik, I knew thee well"

(The MAN, during this scene, is in back of her and gets sexually aroused by her. He ~~licks~~ his lips, rolls his eyes goes very very close to her)

WOMAN

And I, my dear, I'll be your Ophelia, We'll be famous, famous! (She turns to hem, her body outstretched toward him) I'll be your mentor, your guiding light, your muse and your most adoring admirer..... *11 min*

(The MAN grabs her)

WOMAN

(She opens her eyes, struggles to free herself, beating his chest with closed fists)

(The FLUTE stops playing, goes to the right stairs, sits down, looks at them with the "I've seen this millions of times before" expression.)

WOMAN

(Frees herself, runs up the left stairs all the way back towards center, shrieking)

(The MAN leaps from stage up barring her way, leering)

WOMAN

(She screams, runs back down the left stairs on stage and hides under the piano)

(The MAN, very calmly, but decisively, jumps downstage, goes to her, grabs her and carries her away from stage right toward the right stairs. There he sees the FLUTE, and suddenly, all his ardors are spent. He goes back to the chair and slumps down, panting heavily.)

WOMAN

(The woman is very outraged) Now what do you call that? RAPE,

thats what I call it! RAPE, you brutal rapist. Oh you men are all the same, one-track minded, all of you, dirty ~~swine~~ swine. / A woman tries to make you great, immortal, she sacrifices herself, she's ready to give up all her lines for your benefit. / And you, how do you repay us? What is the only scene that you can ad lib? The cave man bit! / Oh you know that very well, don't you? Dirty son of a bitch! (She goes back to the piano, takes the roll, untyes it finally, goes to the man, taps him on the shoulder) Come on now, the least you can do is to help me untoll this.

(The FLUTE, during her last lines, gets up from the steps, walks back to the center, and plays a very long and shrill note, holding until the end)

WOMAN

(She takes the beginning of the roll, walks up the right stairs)

(The MAN, with the rest of the roll, goes up left stairs unrolling)

In big black letters

T H E E N D

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