

Diana Senechal
Closure

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A one-scene play

by Diana Senechal

Characters

Iliana, may she speak for herself.

Ruffergardt, may he speak for himself.

The Chorus, whoever else happens to be there.

Scene

A grey evening, verging on black, in Washington Square Park, New York City. Trees wailing this way and that. Iliana and Ruffergardt have a bench to themselves, but not much privacy. The Chorus is listening in.

Iliana. I gave grave heed to your most recent words.
They are my lanterns, guiding me through scary
Alleyways, where beasts shriek, and broken bottles
Sneer, jagged, at th'integrity of skin.
Thanks to your guidance, from the blindest fever
Emerging, circling I return to you,
Although it seems my brain curves on its own,
Fashioning sticky dialogues, like pasta,
Under-olive-oiled, looping lumpily.
I prayed for this encounter, that we might
Craft a remorse appropriate to my
Wrongdoings and my wrongness overall.

Chorus. Heed this fine damsel's words, yet mindful be
Of flipsides to her sweet nobility.
The most God-fearing tower hides a face
Of moblèd sex, and legs of rippèd lace.

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Ruffergardt. What have you come to say?

Iliana. I love you still,
So much, in fact, that should you bid me leave,
I'd walk away in silence. No I wouldn't.

Ruffergardt. How, now....

Iliana. Is that your wish? For me to leave?
Please tell me. Share your difficult enjoinders,
For what you wish is dearer than the winds
Of fall, dearer than waffles or the eggs
Cracked into them.

Ruffergardt. Do you have more to say?

Iliana. Only that, should I leave, it will be harder
Than steel, heavier than a moving truck
Filled to the cracking point with furniture,
Crunching my tender breasts, from Albuquerque
(Sprawl and strip malls!) to upwards-squeezed Manhattan.
(Sorry to mention breasts—I realize
That may be rude of me at this tense juncture.)
And yet, if this, of all possible courses,
Is most pleasing to you, well, then, I'll do it.

Ruffergardt. Perhaps I am distraught and overworked,
But I am somewhat at a loss for words.

Chorus. Although shortage of words becomes a man,
Beware, lest you conceal a murky plan.
The "silent type" may seem strong and romantic,
Yet, by all counts, you look a little frantic.

Iliana. Man, they're obnoxious. Could we move
to a quieter place? This drab concord
Is irking me.

Ruffergardt. I rather like the rhymes.
They bring sleep to my brain, like wafting fields.
I have a headache. This has not been easy.

Iliana. Whatever you are fielding in your gut,
Tell me. Your needs are sacrosanct to me.

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Ruffergardt. I think I'm mainly tired. Lackluster, sluggish.
A bit ragged and harried.

Iliana. So am I.
Bad musings have been messing with my sleep.
I have withheld them from you, wishing not
To bring you more distress than you can bear,
Yet, scared to the skull, wavering between
Two human errors, ill opposing ill,
I grow dizzy with the desire to speak.
Silence is virtuous, but sometimes deadly.
An impropriety can save a life.

Ruffergardt. Your hints alarm me.

Iliana. In that case, I'll speak.
I'll do away with hints.

Ruffergardt. If you prefer
To hold some things inside, I will not press.
Please know, however, that these dark suggestions
Burden me like stones in a froggèd lake.

Iliana. A froggèd lake?

Chorus. That choice of words is good.
A froggèd lake is good. The man speaks well.

Ruffergardt. In any case, think of yourself, not me.

Iliana. No, no, I'll speak! I will not make you suffer.
I'll burp it out!

Ruffergardt. Only if you desire.

Iliana begins to speak, but at that very moment a siren rolls by. Ruffergardt can hear what she is saying, but we can't. When the siren fades and Iliana's gesticulations abate, we can hear Ruffergardt sighing deeply. The long versatile pause brings out the shrieks of children; hip-hop booming from a box; a long honk; a cell phone real estate business transaction. Then, one by one, the noises fade away.

Ruffergardt. Perhaps New York is not the place for you.
Consider Mississippi.

Iliana. Your advice,
Dearer than all else, hits me in the gut,

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Ruffergardt. Well, hey. I agree,
We probably have talked enough for now.
Unless there's something else you'd like to add.

Iliana. Only if you have time.

Ruffergardt. With due regrets,
I am inclined to say I don't right now.
It's getting late, and, though I hate to say it,
I have to be at work tomorrow morning.
As much as I detest the early chirpings,
Cheery birds heralding th'insensate day,
I'm happy in a way with my grim lot.

Iliana. I'm sorry. This is sad. I guess the point
Of leaving is just that. It's sad. It sucks.
But thank you for this evening, and I hope
We can resume this conversation later,
When we're more up to it.

Ruffergardt. I guess we could,
Though "up to it" is not the phrase I'd choose.

Iliana. Not that I want to whirl around the bog
Ad nauseam. I'd rather have a quiet
Evening with you, with ne'er a vowel splashed.

Ruffergardt. I'm not sure
That would be helpful. Maybe you should think
About what might be most helpful to you.

Iliana. Oh, thank you, thank you!

Ruffergardt. Nothing to thank me for.

Iliana. Thank you so much!

Ruffergardt. Your gratitude is strange.
I have given you nothing.

Iliana. You don't know
How much you've given me.

Ruffergardt. Well, then, I'm glad.

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Iliana. And I am glad as well,
Thoroughly, deeply glad, like a soaked washcloth.
Oh, memories of washcloths! Shall we soap
Each other one more time?

Ruffergardt. I'm out of soap.
In fact, I have a few errands to do
Before I hit the sack.

Iliana You're not alone.
I have some errands of my own to do.
Appearances aside, I need to bathe.
And sometimes it is best to bathe alone.

Ruffergardt. Well, soap it up, and have a happy bath.

Iliana. The bathtub is the temple of my tears.

Chorus. And what's the siren to your sleek fantasia?
Oh well. We now pronounce you moon and grief.
If lingering is painful, go to Asia,
Where, tapeworms notwithstanding, there's relief.
Or, if you choose to linger, linger low
And slow, let no one rush you or impose
Preemptive emtyings. Where goblets glow,
There glow you too, and silv'ry songs compose.
Then cry, and drop your dress. Tears wash away
False nudities of skin, that, truly naked
For the first time, you may rejoin the fray,
Ascending, trembling, jewel-footed, wakèd.
This water-speckled spiral staircase knows you're
Game for that never-ending climb to closure.
But once we see the castle has no turret,
We can at last enjoy the reaching f'r it.
There's stainèd glass, mischievous creatures leaping
Hither and thither, and evening sun, seeping
Through cracks of centuries. We'd go there too,
If only....

(the ending's up to you.)