

"Staying Awake For You"

by
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A very short play about a depression
(15-minute play in three parts)

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STAYING AWAKE FOR YOU

CONSULTATION I

HIM:
What seems to be the problem?

HER:
I keep staring at walls

HIM:
What is on these walls?

HER:
Nothing

HIM:
And you find yourself staring at them?

HER:
Yes

HIM:
How often do you find yourself staring at these walls?

HER:
Quite often actually

HIM:
3, 4 times a day? After mealtimes? Before bed?

HER:
Yes

HIM:
Sorry?

HER:
All of the above

beat

HIM: .
Would you say there is a particular wall you tend to stare at?

HER:
No, no just the one. I mean, yes just the one. It's the one I find myself sitting in front of

HIM:
And is this a wall where you live?

HER:

Oh yes, the lounge room mostly, though I have to say sometimes I end up staring at a piece of carrot on the kitchen floor

HIM:

A piece of carrot?

HER:

Yes well you know, having peeled it, dropped it, I then find myself staring at it.Sometimes I sink down in the corner of the kitchen staring at the carrot

HIM:

I see.....

And does it do anything?

HER:

The carrot?

HIM:

Yes

HER:

No, its just carrot peel.

beat

HIM:

Right. Tell me, do you have a relationship?

HER:

A partner? That I relate to ? on a regular basis?

HIM:

Yes

HER:

No.....should I have one?

HIM:

Well, I think you will find the world turns on the feet of those chasing love.

HER:

It does?

HIM:

Oh, yes... like the stone and wheel-less Flindstones car, we are like the little feet that push the globe, all of us running after love. Say "Ah" -

She opens her mouth, he begins to look into her throat for signs of trouble.

HER:

AHHH

HIM:

Ah yes, all of us searching for it, even if we don't know it, even if we doubt it, even if we believe we have it already. And all this searching, all this hefty forward hull -

HER:

Is that like pushing? Hull?

HIM:

Yes yes and all this this steely ambition this human perseverance, -

HER:

I thought 'hull' was the bottom of boat-

HIM:

Close your mouth please - why all this perseverance, it propels the sun to rise! If everyone found love we would have no need of the sun! (*she is not sure she understands*)

Well, run, I say, run run run!

pause

HER:

You think I should run?

HIM:

Well, yes, you should get up , get out, go go go!

HER:

I used to do pilates?...but all that focusing on my pelvic floor -

He is standing quite close to her.

Beat

HER:

You know,..now that you mention it, I think I do want one

HIM:

What?

HER:

This relationship

HIM:

Lets just say a lot of people want one...

HER:

And you think this will help the staring?

HIM:
 Absolutely. Try staring at someone, instead of
 something
beat

HER:
(she is staring at him)
 Right.

Lights snap to blackout.
Pause

HIM:
(whispered)
 What are doing?

HER:
(whispered)
 Just looking

CONSULTATION II

*Lights up, they are in the same
 spot*

HER:
(Loudly)
 I am relating to someone on a regular basis!

HIM:
 Good! I am so proud of you!

HER:
 Yes.
Pause

HIM:
 And ...how is it?

HER:
 The relating?

HIM:
 Yes, yes.

HER:
 I think the carrot peel was more used to being
 stared at.

HIM:
 Of course, but you are spending more time now on *the
 move?*

HER:
(she misunderstands)
I don't really feel like it

HIM:

Well, you just have to kick that in the butt, get up get on with it-

HER:

Oh we get on with it, its gets up and all, but I just don't - I guess, well, my libido it's just like a pancake these days..... minus those little bubbles you get on the top, when it's ready, yes, minus those and probably minus the maple syrup too....it's a very thin pancake, you know?

HIM:

And the wall?

HER:

Oh, it's still there. We spend a lot more time together, which is why it's hard to fit in the relating to people business, cause I lose track of the time when I am staring at the wall.

HIM;

and what goes through your mind when you are staring at this wall?

HER:

Oh.... nothing.

HIM:

Well, there must be something, even if it's 'Oh, dear, I'm staring at a wall'?

HER:

No, it's more like my thoughts areskipping, like a CD....the thought sticks,

HIM:

Well, how long are you stuck for?

HER:

Oh, I could grow a tree in the gap I reckon.

HIM:

You simply must try to be positive....I'm sure its not that long....

Are you still crouching in a kitchen corner?

HER:

(*positively*)

No! No, I don't do that anymore!

HIM:

Good. Good.

HER:

- can't seem to cook, which is fine by me, I take-out or order in, or wait for something to present itself-

HIM:
That's why you're staring!!! You aren't eating well enough!

HER:
It's my diet?

HIM:
Oh, yes, are you eating lots of coloured food, the glorious greens, the pumping red pepper?

HER:
Ah..

HIM:
The crispy yellow capsicum, the bold butternut? All of these, and some tofu kombu miso soup, yes, should set you straight...oh and fruit plenty of fruit...water.....

HER:
I drink water

HIM:
Not enough obviously - and here -

hands her a bottle of tablets

HER:
Vitamins?-

HIM:
Supplements.....*(she looks at bottle)* Yes, take those, in fact take a big handful to begin with,

HER:
It says two a day

HIM:
Got to get you up to speed, and remember to watch your tongue for toxins

HER:
What about....pasta?

HIM:
No. Definitely not. Do you drink soya milk?

HER:
No

HIM:
Milk?

HER:
Mostly red wine, really.

HIM:
Well enough. Enough of that. You'll never get better
if you keep yourself drunk.

HER:
Really?

HIM:
So I've heard

HER:
Ok. Ok. I'll try

*Blackout. A brief moment of
silence, a sigh, and then the
sound of the 'vitamin' bottle
popping open. We hear her take
just a few tablets, gulp it down
with a glass of water. (stage
swallow). We hear the lid
replaced on the 'vitamin' bottle.*

CONSULTATION III

*Lights up. She is looking a lot
worse, perhaps a dark smear under
the eye done in blackout.*

HIM:
You look awful.

HER:
It's the fruit queues...for the fruit and veges.
People are scavengers. I can't think straight when
I'm in there. All those bright lights and
.....vicious trolleys....and people. Picking, all
of them picking, people choosing and picking and
choosing and picking and then lining up to be let
out.... and then all those plastic bags..I can never
get the darn thing to split....you know, those
little ones, I'm always the one rubbing them and
nothing happens, you know, tearing it off the roll
and then rubbing one end to open it, I lose interest
in the veges when I can't even get the bag open....I
have a cupboard full of them, they keep falling
out....in stuffing them in, they keep popping out,
someone told me I had to fold them, but fold them?
..

Beat

The celery sticks just go floppy anyway

HIM:
And your- (all) the love making?

HER:
I am supposed to have sex between staring at walls
and grocery shopping?

he nods

HER:

No, no that happens late at night when I don't notice it

HIM:

You've lost all feeling haven't you?

Beat

HER:

I can't tell

Pause

HIM:

Here

HER:

What?

HIM:

Let me give you a hug

HER:

A hug?

HIM:

It may help

HER:

Oh, OK, yeh.

(they hug, she is suppliant, then drops down again. He proudly awaits her regeneration. She isn't any better. She is still staring)

HIM:

Oh for goodness sake, no one can help you if you don't help yourself! God , I just want to shake you! Do something !

Beat

For Christ's sake, just do something will you? Fight it! You've got to pull yourself out of it! I can't do it for you!

HER:

I'm sorry.

HIM:

Well you've just got to - to -to pull your socks up you know?

(she wonders how to act on this advice, and doesn't move immediately)

HIM:
PULL YOUR SOCKS UP!!!!!!

(into her ear, but she doesn't flinch)

Pause

HER:
I thank you for the hug.

(she leaves)

Blackout. He sits in the dark. We hear him get up and go to check on her. He paces. Hits something, with his fist. Sits back down).

She takes the 'vitamin' bottle and takes a huge handful. The lid is not replaced, the bottle is thrown down. She swallows.

CONSULTATION IV

Lights up.

He is seated, staring ahead, occasionally laughing at something, some thought perhaps, and occasionally dropping the smile suddenly and sighing

She enters with socks up to her ears, or at least her upper thigh. Maybe she looks like a school girl. He collects himself. He is defensive, having had his hug rejected

NB: She still looks tired and throughout the scene becomes more and more drowsy. The suggestion is that she has taken a whole lot of sleeping pills, which isn't clear until the end.

HER:
Hi

HIM:
Hi

Beat

HIM:
Well?

HER:

Well indeed! Oh YES, captain! The socks have helped! Yes! You wouldn't believe it, but these socks have done wonders for my sex life! Oh yes! How about a hug, hmmm? Do you want a hug? Hmmm? come on, let me give you a hug.....come on then!

(She offers herself, tries lifting him, he folds his arms instead and she tries to cover her disappointment)

HER:

Oh, aren't you a genius, yes socks good idea, my word, sex sex sex, what a wonder it is, this jiggy jiggy thing! Oh yes!

HIM:

Please don't humour me.

HER:

Fresh! Or at least I can see how I could feel like someone who sees it as fresh!

HIM:

There is no point in covering.

HER:

No, no, I'm not. I mean, not really, well, the thing is, he seemed to like it. Seemed to get off on it. I wear them every morning, and I make sure I keep them up. If they ever drop down, I reach down and pull them up straightaway. I'm always pulling them up. I make sure they stay up. As long as my mind stays in the room, these socks stay up! And if I do lose my mind, well it always has these socks to come back to!

HIM:

You haven't managed to fix it yet, have you?

Beat

HER:

Uh. No.

HIM:

And you are drinking soya, not skim?

HER:

Yes

HIM:

And you are still doing the gym?

HER:

I do it at home, yes. In front of a video. It's the pilates one. Its just as good.

HIM:
You're lying

HER:
I am?

HIM:
I'm very good at spotting them, lllllieesssss.
(matter of factly) You must be straight with me or
we can't possibly work past this ...this apathy.

HER:
Apathy?

HIM:
Like laziness, yes, only stretched out, into a
pathetic state of inertia, a rut, a stop, a
standstill:

HER:
And the carrot?

HIM:
Apathy. Inability to finish a task. Lack of focus.

Beat

HER:
I did try, you know, to give you a hug.

HIM:
A bit late for that, isn't it?

HER:
Fuck you.

HIM:
It's reciprocated.

but his arms unfold, he sighs

Beat

HER:
Listen, Josh, I don't do pilates. I don't want to
lie to you. But I am beginning to see you
understanding this is impossible.

HIM:
(earnest, explosive)
I have been doing nothing but understanding this
whole time! I have put everything into trying to
work this out with you! And you know what? I think
you like staring at walls! You take some sort of
perverse pleasure in it!

HER:
See! you don't understand -

HIM:
How can you sit so still all the time?

HER:
You can't help me.

HIM:
I would move heaven and earth for you

HER:
Wouldn't help.

Pause

HIM:
(coldly)
If you think so.

HER:

sighs
Its like trying to hold on to barbed wire, staying
awake for you

HIM:
If you say so. I'm not really a consultant, wouldn't
know.

HER:
Right. So I'll get goingthank you
anyway....I'll be on my way.

HE may get up. SHE remains seated

HIM:
Way you go, then. GO! If you don't want to be
helped-

(she is still staring)

HIM:
Home you go, home

*He flops down on the sofa, defeated.
Staring ahead with her. All they can do
is try to refresh their relationship.
He tries starting from scratch, he has
just arrived home.*

HIM:
Home! Honey? I'm home.

HER:

*She notices his change in tactic, but
she is too tired now to react too well.*

Hi

HIM:
Hi.....hey. Look like you could use a hug.

*(She is becoming more and more
delirious as the scene
progresses)*

HER:
Yeh.

HIM:
Yeh....

*(they don't, he joins her on
couch, stares with her forward,
he is watching TV)*

HIM:
.....Oh look they're all on the sofa now. Who's
been evicted?

HER:
Ah, not sure. Beenout.

HIM:
Ahh
(still looking forward)

HIM:
We should eat something.

HER:
Yeh.

HIM:
Are you hungry?

HER:
Not really

HIM:
I am . I'm ravenous.

Beat

HIM:
(pointing at the tv)
Oh I hate this guy!

Beat

HER:
Yeh.

slight smile and almost laugh

HIM:
I might make a carrot salad, hey? Would you like
that?

HER:
(a little high, excited)
 Oh yes!

HIM:
 Have we got any?

HER:
 Oh yes!!

Beat, neither of them move

HIM& HER:
 How was work?

HIM & HER:
 Good, yes.

pause

HIM:
(not to her)
 Good.

*(she is staring at the wall, he
 at the tv)*

Silence.

Lights very slowly dim on them.

HER:
 Went to the ..the...optometrist

HIM:
not really listening
 Oh yeh?

HER:
 There's nothing he can do

HIM:
not really listening
 Oh yeh?

HER:
 No. Yes

HIM:
 Mind if I flick?

the tv channels

HER:
 No (*giggles softly*)
 Flick away, flick, flick.....flick.

(she is asleep)

*Lights have dimmed to blackout by
 now*

HIM:
 Honey?
 Are you hungry? Honey?

*(she is limp, falls forward on the
 couch in blackout)*

HIM
 HONEY??? Oh shit!

*(A scramble in the dark, then
 lights snap up to reveal him
 holding her , open sleeping pill
 bottle in his hand, a few tablets
 on floor)*

HIM:
 Fuck!

(he tries slapping her awake)

HIM:
 Jennifer? Jennifer!

*(This is not the first time, he
 stares ahead at the TV, for a
 moment considering whether or not
 to phone for help. Drops her arm.
 It hangs limp)*

HIM:
 Fuck.

*(we hear very faintly the sounds
 of a Big Brother eviction, the
 cheering as they lead the
 contestant to his prize car)*

(he looks at his watch)

HIM:
to the television
 Just lost a mill, whats he smiling for?

Beat

softly
 Fuck, Jen.

strokes her hair

*(He gets up to phone. Dials.
Pauses. Looks like he might
replace the handset. Pauses)*

Blackout.