12-1-1993

All the World's a Stage

Tim Benton

Concordia University - Portland

Follow this and additional works at: http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean

Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation

Benton, Tim (1993) “All the World’s a Stage,” The Promethean: Vol. 2 : Iss. 1 , Article 9.
Available at: http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol2/iss1/9

This Story is brought to you for free and open access by CU Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Promethean by an authorized administrator of CU Commons. For more information, please contact libraryadmin@cu-portland.edu.
All the World's a Stage by Tim Benton

"Do you have to go away again so soon?" Marie's voice slipped from pleading to grating whine. The sound drove Harry Mitchell crazy. And it was getting worse lately.

How could she expect him to enjoy being around her, let alone choose to postpone an important business trip when she sounded like that? A guy could hardly finish his breakfast.

"I really do have to go, honey," he said, getting up from the kitchen table and walking over to her at the stove. He ran his hand down her side and let it rest on her hip. She turned around and he had to look into her eyes.

Oh, God, she's going to try tears this time. Too bad, but that's not going to change my mind. No way I'm going to pass up this trip. Not with Sandra withing for me in Atlanta. No way I'm missing out on that bit of southern hospitality.

"Harry! Why are you smiling? Do you think it's funny that I'm going to miss you?"

Marie sobbed and covered her face with her hands. "Oh, honey, I'm sorry. No, it's not funny."

He drew her close, but she didn't lower her arms and her elbows dug uncomfortably into his chest.

"It's very, um...sweet," he went on. "I...it's just...I was thinking of how um...pretty you look and how lucky I am to have you..."

"Really? You really think I'm pretty?" She pulled her hands down a little and peeked up over her fingertips at him. Her eyes were puffy and black streaks of mascara were starting down her cheeks.

Geez, not right now, he thought. But he smiled and said, "Sure, you're still the prettiest girl I know. Haven't I always told you that?"

She looked down and picked at a button on his shirt. "Well, I guess so..." She was actually blushing! "But you must see so many pretty girls when you travel. I always worry..."

Harry pulled her hands down and held one gently in each of his. "Oh, yeah, you bet." He arched his eyebrows and rolled his eyes to be sure she understood that this was just a joke. "A paper products sales rep runs into mostly movie stars and fashion models out on the road. So don't be surprised when Julia Roberts calls, okay?"

Marie ducked her head and looked like she was trying not to grin.

"And you'd better not open all those perfumed envelopes I keep getting from Hollywood," Harry continued. "Those x-rated love letters will just make you feel worse."

Marie looked up at him, unable to hold back her smile. She threw her arms around his neck and hugged him hard. Well, he thought, there's something she doesn't do very often.

"You're such a tease, Harry," she laughed next to his ear. "Is that why I love you so much?"

"Could be, Julia. I mean Marie."

"Oh, you!" she giggled and hugged him even more.

He folded his arms around her and stared over her shoulder at the spice rack above the stove. Is she acting strange, he wondered, or am I really good at this?

Marie pulled back for a second, then leaned close again and gave him a kiss that made him stop wondering.

After a moment she pulled away and looked at the clock on the wall.

"Well, you better finish your breakfast if you have to catch that plane." She pulled a Kleenex from her apron pocket and dabbed at her eyes as she watched him sit back down. "But...are you sure your have to...oh, I'm sorry, Harry. I must sound like such a baby."

"No, no. That's okay."

He started to get up, but she waved him back.

"Better finish eating, sweetheart," she said.

He nodded and sat again, then reached across the table and slid the sports page out of the morning paper. "I'll miss you, too, you know," he said. "And besides, aren't you going to be busy with that class you're taking?"

She hesitated, looked down at her feet and said, "Well, yes, it does take up quite a lot of my time when you're away."
Harry shook his head muddled over another report of a baseball millionaire signing a new contract.

"It's a drama course," said Marie. Harry glanced up. "What? Oh, Shakespeare and all that stuff, huh?" He turned a page and checked to see how the Mets had done against the Cardinals over the weekend.

"Well..." Marie started to say more, but saw that Harry wasn't listening. She began to clear the breakfast dishes from the table, a hint of a smile playing across her lips. "Something like that," he finally said.

"Huh?" grunted Harry, looking up. "Oh, your class... pretty dry is it?"

"It's... not bad, actually." "How's the teacher?" he asked, his eyes going back to the sports page before she started to answer.

Gooden had thrown a one-hitter through eight and the Mets had still managed to lose. "I think you'll like it. I'll be right back. I'm going to love this one, he thought." Harry glanced up blankly then smiled back and said, "Uh, great." He looked back down at the package he'd already taken out of his suitcase.

"You don't mind spending a little extra time together, do you?" she asked, tossing her jacket over the back of a chair next to the round table in the corner of the room.

Harry grinned at her. "No, no. That's great. Say listen. I brought you a gift." He pointed to the package he'd already taken out of his suitcase. It was propped up against a pillow on the bed. "Why don't you try it on while I finish cleaning up. I think you'll like it. I'll be right back out." He ducked into the bathroom, picked up the blow dryer, flipped it on and began working frantically on his hair.

A few moments later he thought he heard a knock and answered, "Sandra?" There was no answer.

"Sandra?" Still nothing. Harry opened the door and walked out into the bedroom. Sandra was gone.

The opened package lay on the bed. He walked over, flipped back the tissue paper and stared at the contents of the box. It was a picture of him and Marie. Their wedding portrait! With shaking hands Harry picked up the picture. He stared at the two smiling young faces and sank down on the bed.

Now, how in world did this get in here? He shook his head trying to straighten his thoughts. Then it hit him.

Marie. No. Marie! It had to be. He slid over, grabbed the phone and dialed their home number. It rang, but there was no answer. He tried for hours to reach her. Finally fell asleep around three. Still no answer.

The house was dark when Harry arrived home the next evening. He threw open the front door, switched on the light and immediately spied the note on the small table in the foyer. A second piece of paper was clipped to it. The note was short: "Harry": My Attorney will contact you soon. Matt and I will be back in the area in a couple weeks. (School's out you know.) Hope you understand now about the way I've been acting lately. Marie.

"Who's Matt?" thought Harry. And "School's out?" What's that supposed to mean? He looked at the second piece of paper and then he understood everything.

He slumped onto the hard backed chair next to the table and stared at the words swimming on the paper in his hand: Putnam County Community College, Quarterly Grade Report. Student: Marie Mitchell. Course: Drama 252, Being Your Character/Convincing Your Audience. Instructor, Matthew Ferris. Grade: Yeah, sure, thought Harry, it had to be.

Marie had earned an "A."