

Dogs Beyond There

Curtain call - like many had done before them, red velvet drapes rose to greet a scene. It felt breathless. Several beats took hold - the lookers looked, and those revealed by the stage's drapes (you could hardly call them performers) awaited a sign. A spotlight shone towards the back of the theatre, tracing the lookers. Truly, no one knew what was about to happen. Especially not those staged.

Four days ago a film was made. To many of the crew it was a slow burn. To performers of the like, it was the time of their lives. A young woman, struck by grief, decides to save her twin sister from a well after she steals her boyfriend. In the film, that is. Such a story definitely hangs in the actual-factual world though. The slice of life that the film presents is but metonym for something softer on the outside. A love story, suppose. Such a story could be a faulty syllogism for a twin-hate disguised as twin-love (not to be confused with twincest, both a very popular pornhub category and a magnificent play on words). The film was made and now it rears its ugly head to post and then marketing and then distro where it won't matter if the story's a slow burn or if its players learned something important about themselves.

All that matters is the review. The review is the metric of impact, the critic is the supreme architect. Not God, we won't use his name in vain. But like, the Milo Baughman of reviews, of impact. An icon, whose designed, cultural fixtures are quickly remade and sent to Wayfair, to be fixed on someone's wall, placed in a corner, or something like that.

This critic definitely has at least three pieces of Wayfair furniture in his home. His hairline recedes in a way that distinguishes him. He wipes a bead of sweat from the shiny dome of his head - the show is starting.

Somehow simultaneously the film was adapted to the stage. The players are the stage bound, hung in a wreck of linen and muslin. Draped, if you will, alike the curtains that revealed them. This is the context of possibly the most important night of the world's life.

~

It's still red it hurts on the inside. I'd like to go there someday. A wanton brush of a stare, or memorizing your gait. This was the year I became an oaf. This was the year I took my sister's boyfriend.

I don't really think I'm that fun to hangout with. Sometimes fill is necessary and I can't seem to fill anything out. As in landfills or drum fills, not anything else. Get your mind out of the gutter!

(Holding for applause)

All around the world I've memorized gaits and fills, like when you talk for too long or think you can walk in shoes you definitely can't walk in. What I'd give to -something. Once an informal thought and now something to talk about. I can have him if I want him bad enough.

Monica was always better than me even though she was the fat twin. We really are identical except for that. People compare Beyonce and Solange like the cheerleader and the weird girl who carries Allen Ginsberg photos around in her binder - they're both pretty cool in their own respective circles, but one has more mass appeal than the other. Monica is both Beyonce and Solange. I never even got an audition for Destiny's Child. I don't really have much to say about myself beyond that, these are all very juvenile assumptions that I used as the cornerstone of my personality when I was underage. As my own adult contemporary, I'm brave enough to admit that I'm still jealous of my twin, my sister.

He had me on the terrace of our Hampton's house. It reminded me of the beginning of Lady Gaga's Paparazzi music video where that one Skarsgaard throws her off of the roof. We were a gang of fingertips and lips when I heard the dinner bell - our call to action. Our call to family, my family. His teeth chipped mine right as he pulled out - Monica was coming (I was no where near coming). We left our shoes and ran across the lawn, forgetting about Lyme's disease and any other logic apart from getting caught and getting our rocks off. I slowed to catch my breath, He slung me over his shoulder like a potato sack and ran for the both of us until we came across the well. He set me up on the lip, diving back into me, while my mind raced thinking about the game Monica and I would play, where we would balance on the edge just like this, dancing around the lip of something forbidden, almost daring one another ...

“GRACE!”

~

The players had been standing there for the past ten minutes in complete silence. The room was an unnecessary 82 degrees Fahrenheit - sweat dripped down their fronts. As if a timer went off, they struck a unified pose as a spotlight whirred a giant fan to life. It stopped one second later.

“GRACE!”

The players looked around, not like they knew this was a contrived part of the play itself, but like they were feigning interest.

“GRACE!!!”

The confusion continued, bleeding into the audience. Maybe this wasn't planned....

“GRACE YOU SIDEWAYS FUCKING FLOOZY!!!”

It was a girl voice, screaming the story of Grace and her infidelity through neck-breaking streams of expletives. The spotlight rubbernecked along with the audience, looking for the perpetrator.

“HEY I'M TALKING TO YOU, CUNT!”

The spotlight stopped and froze to the leftmost door feeding into the theater. A pocket rocket-sized girl with short brown Rosemary's Baby hair wearing a white tee shirt that read 'MONICA' in very clear sans serif font stood in the frame, screaming her head off again to further extremes, she pushed everything out of her diaphragm with such vitriol that when she breathed in, audience members swore they saw paint slowly begin to peel off the walls. The little woman ran up to the front of the stage to face her attackers - she still wasn't sure who to take her anger out on, her sister was nowhere to be found, and so many people watched her with bated breath. Somewhere in between players and watchers, she started living.

~

Grace. Grace was the one. I'm sorry I couldn't be her but you left me here to eat rubber chicken and dry vegetables alone and die. Why would you leave me here alone with your mother and my mother and everyone we know together? This was supposed to be the worst weekend of my life and you had to betray me and make it worse. I knew you would take her there. That's where all earthly tests happen, at the mouth of that well. The epicenter of where all fabled missing children are never found, and where people wish on their fantasies as if God takes donations in the form of loose change. The epicenter of clean water for those who lived in our second house before our second house was our second house. I wish you could have seen us playing that game as girls. Maybe then you wouldn't have fucked my sister there.

Maybe you went there because it meant something. Maybe somewhere subconsciously you wanted to stab my memory in the fucking neck. I have everything to say to you because I have nothing to say to you. I hope you remember this forever. I hope you, I hope you see me and her differently, I hope you choose me now, even if you end up with her. I need to have this too.

When we were little, we'd dance on this lip. Grace was always better than me though I know she thinks I was better than her. Of the few things we did together this was the one with no competition. It was our calling. Why here? Why him here? On our lip, on the lips? On everywhere...

~

Monica stared down the audience and the players, her posture perpendicular to theirs, shoulders facing the very wall her shrieks peeled paint from.

“GRACE I KNOW YOU’RE IN HERE.”

Monica took another vocal, deep breath and chased ghosts through the aisles of the audience, who remained stoically engaged with the performance. The players began to sway rhythmically, allowing their muslin to bubble around them like putting fresh sheets on the bed. Whispers emerged asking for a sacrifice, asking for Grace.

The rightmost door slammed open, revealing a plume of smoke.

~

*I don't know why I did it, to be honest. I don't have a kink for twincest (it is a *very* popular category on pornhub), I don't even know Grace other than the fact that she's like a skinny Monica. I don't really think either of them are pretty. I just feel like being with Monica to begin with was the right thing to do. I feel like there's some plan that I'm not a part of, some plan that even God doesn't know about, that made me the scoundrel here.*

The dogs came out at twilight. Two of them, just beyond the fence protecting our house. They were a lightish grey in the blue of the evening, with mangy fur, and eyes that looked like they'd been scooped out and replaced with marbles. They just stood there, still, until the sun phased to gone. I must've fallen asleep in my nightly bourbon - I woke to a black sky, and they were gone. I will take my punishment as anyone sees fit. I'll let Monica kill me if she wants.

~

An identical to Monica blew through the smoke, tossing her long mousy brown hair behind her un-confidently. Her shirt read 'GRACE'. She slowly met Monica to the front of the pulpit. The twins reached for a hug - all of a sudden they pointed beyond the audience, and then above. The theater went dark.

~

DOGS BEYOND THERE - DIRECTOR'S CUT

We open on the pinhole of a camera. Slowly dilating, like a birth or that first eye test you go to when you're a kid, and suddenly can't read at the same pace as your class because you really can't see. A camera eye opens wide for us, slower than the pace a human eye can interpret as movement. A shot so good it feels like sex. We stay here for 11 minutes, because it's one more than ten.

Her eye is open to receive me, the walls of her iris revealed a skilled masonry, old brick – from the 19th century. Earlier people used to rely on her for water. We begin to interpret the darkness as dampening the mossy walls of her opening eye – we actually are moving slowly, the pinhole widening to a small, gleaming white hole of light at the end of this tunnel vision. Blue eyes hollow into a soullessness – the bottom of the well, filled with an empty –

“HELP!!!”

~

I grit my teeth to feel a new gap. You'd left it in our clashing. I was slipped behind a couple of books, hit a blind spot in my own reasoning. I have to go. These are Monica's books. I should be here – it's genetic, unlike the gap between the grating of mouths, you're the gap. In everything. You're the mutation between me and my twin.

These were the last things I thoughts before I fell into the world's mouth. It felt like seeing into your eyes, I never trusted people with blue eyes.

I'm not dead yet, just maimed. That's why we're here in the first place, right?

~

Beams of light shelter in from above the hole in the theater's ceiling. They focus, like individualist spotlights, on the center of each player's chest, right at the sternum, where the most important breathing happens. A drone slowly emitted from the beams of light, the players moved so slowly no one could tell, it was as if they hovered in this new ether.

Several audience members were now sweating profusely. No water was offered, leaving a human smell of the filtered sweat and halitosis of people pushed to the very edge.

Monica and Grace met in a hug. On the other side, it sounds and smells exactly like this moment, like forgiveness, like the forgiveness from the bottom of a defunct well.

~

I'm at the edge of my seat, really. A treatise in how not to be treated. A strange smell of vindication. The sounds of her little broken legs. My boy, my deer in headlights. He pushed her.

I don't remember if he saw me first, and let my twin into the dim for my favor. You have a strange look of affinity for death, for someone who looks like you, all spindly and engorged in the middle. Your dystonia, genetic, made you the anomaly we both need. Maybe I don't mind sharing after all. Maybe your genetic fucked uppedness is the sweetness of this moment, on the brink of my sister's death where she didn't die. This is my rationale for why you didn't do it.

~

The players move faster, and faster through the smoke that remains billowing through Grace's door. She and her sister rip away from the pinholed light in the ceiling, they embrace, staying there for many moments, leaning into each other so strongly you'd think this was real life proper, and not their real life played out in real time, for others to patronize.

They began rocking in their hug, a cadence that carried their feet off the very ground of the aisle they stood on. The audience's mouths fell agape in synchronicity – flying twins. Grace and Monica floated up, in a straight line, up toward the pinholed light above. The smoke billowed harder.

~

I saw her, the bigger one. And I did it anyways. I could feel grace slipping away from me, and I let her down gently into dim. It was kind of an accident, and I do feel really bad. I don't not want you, or her. I'm not a real person, and neither are you. Neither are any of us, not here – not on Earth. I pushed her to join her. You can come, too, if you want to enough, if you embrace sweetness as I have, if you go where many men (probably) have gone before, if you may give way in the same ways I know mankind can.

~

Coughs began to rip through the audience as they choked on smoke. A large plume entirely swallowed the sisters, still slowly ascending through the pinhole. The players were now flailing beyond comprehension within the comfort of the smoke, which began to quickly blur real from performed, pain from pleasure, story from fable from spiritual. Fists and arms and legs and joints cartoonishly poked out of a cloud of smoke that had settled on the stage every now and again, like in a Tom and Jerry fight scene.

Everything was disoriented, so much spectacle, that the wires that held up the story, that held up the sisters, couldn't be seen, and even if they could, no one would care. Sweaty audience members nodded off, peaking in all the splendor of the moment. Grace and Monica reached the top of the ceiling, and it was over.

~

Dogs Beyond There was the most interesting piece of experimental theatre I've seen in my days as a patron of the arts. My review is in four parts, which happens to be four sentences.

1. *The film was adapted to the stage in four days to preserve the raw energy of the story, an inspired choice.*
2. *GRACE and MONICA's story is timeless and hot, one that we all need in this age of imminent death.*
3. *The temperature of the theater put us in a literal hotseat, watching all but a sweaty hug in all its brilliance - sometimes it is that simple.*
4. *The actors on stage were stupid, as the only way they should be.*

It is rare to watch a play that knows what it is, and simultaneously moves with the pace of something its not. Dogs Beyond There is nothing, and doesn't try to become an oxymoron for "everything."

~

The one review established the film, the play, and the rest of arts to follow. No one ever did anything again.