

Swimming in the Undercurrent.

A Short Play

By

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A Play in One Act.

Setting.

A bar on Oaks day.

A dream.

A lounge room.

Characters.

WOMAN.

MAN.

Set.

2 swivel chairs, 2 small coffee tables and a clothes rack behind the chairs.

WOMAN sits on a swivel chair in one space, slightly forward from the man, dressed in a red skirt, a black top, fishnet stockings and black stilettos. She has a large black hat with red roses on it placed on a table next to her. She primps and postures at the beginning of the scene; perhaps putting lipstick on, looking at herself in a hand mirror etc. She is sipping a glass of champagne.

MAN sits on a swivel chair in the other space, slightly back from woman. He is dressed in a business suit, white shirt and grey/black tie. MAN sits quietly watching her for a few seconds. He is sipping a whiskey and coke. He seems nervous. He loosens his collar and tie before speaking.

MAN: Did you have a bet at the races today?

WOMAN: I put \$20 on a horse in the Oaks. [Beat] I picked the winner!

MAN: What was she called?

WOMAN: New Horizons.

MAN: [Pause] That's a very attractive red skirt!

WOMAN: It's quite bewitching, isn't it?

MAN: It makes a statement!

WOMAN: A statement! About me!

WOMAN stands up and bends over with her bottom towards the audience. She pulls her red skirt up and strokes the back of her legs.

WOMAN: I don't think it was my skirt that you were first attracted to. I think it was my stockings. You know what they say about a girl who's wearing fishnet stockings.

MAN: I didn't even notice them! [Beat] Well; not at first. The bar was too dark.

WOMAN: But then when you did you were mesmerized by them.

MAN: You made sure that I was!

WOMAN: How did I do that?

MAN: You deliberately drew your red skirt up above your knees and crossed your legs.

She turns towards him and pulls her skirt up. She crosses one leg over the other.

WOMAN: Like this?

He looks across at her.

MAN: No, you pulled it up higher than that.

She pulls her skirt up further.

WOMAN: Like this?

MAN: Yes! Like that!

WOMAN: Is that when I became irresistible?

MAN: I don't know what you mean!

WOMAN: Well you couldn't resist the temptation to reach across and touch my leg!

MAN: You were inviting me to, weren't you?

WOMAN: No! You misinterpreted my intentions.

MAN: What were your intentions?

WOMAN: I don't know!

She pulls her skirt down and turns away from him.

WOMAN: I just remember that it made me feel uncomfortable when you did that.

MAN: I'm sorry that I made you feel that way.

WOMAN: I think that I just wanted you to look at me.

MAN: Like a voyeur?

WOMAN: Maybe? [Beat] Or perhaps like a buyer; admiring a precious commodity.

MAN: Oh!

WOMAN: So what else did you like about me?

MAN: I admired your beautiful hat!

She twirls her hat and places it on her head.

WOMAN: The sole purpose of a hat is to draw attention to a lady's eyes.

MAN: I remember being drawn in by your blue eyes.

WOMAN: You said that they were like looking into a crystal pool.

MAN: They were. Clear, warm and inviting. I just wanted to dive into them and lose myself .

WOMAN: Eyes are the windows to the soul.

MAN: I wasn't really that interested in fathoming the depths of your soul.

WOMAN: Why not? [Beat] Was the undercurrent too threatening?

MAN: I don't know! [Beat] I can't define what was happening to me. All I know is that I was attracted to you.

WOMAN: Perhaps it was my essence?

MAN: Your perfume?

WOMAN: No!! My essence! [Beat] You know.

MAN: Oh! Yes! That's what it was. It was the essence of you!

They turn away from one another.

WOMAN: Did you think that I was leading you on?

MAN: A woman is always in control of a man in these situations. I think you were deliberately being provocative!

WOMAN: I don't want to hear that!! [Beat] I like to believe that I enchanted you.

MAN: You did!

WOMAN: Transported you away from the banality of your life.

MAN: I had absolutely no control over what I was doing! I nearly lost a hold on my reality.

They turn away from one another for a moment. MAN turns back toward WOMAN.

MAN: Do you often indulge in meaningless pursuits like Oak's day?

WOMAN: Just once a year. It's a chance to escape the monotony of my life.

WOMAN turns toward him.

WOMAN: Do you always spend your nights going to bars picking women up?

MAN: Never. I always go straight home after work. But that night, I was feeling..... restless.

WOMAN: You felt like having some fun, being frivolous!

MAN: Yes! I wanted an adventure.

WOMAN: [Pause] Were you disappointed?

MAN: Not at all.

WOMAN: Why did you panic and leave when you realised the time?

He shakes his head.

WOMAN: And why did you give me an incorrect phone number?

MAN: What excuse did you use for staying out all night?

WOMAN: I didn't need one. I always stay at my girlfriend's on Oaks day. And you?

MAN: [Pause] I didn't have an excuse.

He turns forward and recites his next lines as if in a dream. As he speaks WOMAN goes to the clothes rack and peels off her red skirt and fishnets and puts a pink coat/frock and hat on.

MAN: Whenever life threatened to drown me in its mediocrity, I just thought about the woman in the delirious red skirt. Although I knew that I was being reckless, I went back the next year. I thought that if I could just capture that vision of passion and seduction one more time, the fantasy would sustain me forever.

She sits down. They move their chairs closer and turn toward one another for the next dialogue. They are still in their separate spaces.

WOMAN: Were you disappointed when you saw me wearing pink?

MAN: No!

WOMAN: Pink doesn't offer the promises of red? It's the colour of the heart. I wear it when I'm feeling vulnerable.

MAN: Why were you feeling vulnerable?

WOMAN: I was confused. I couldn't define what I was feeling. I didn't know what I wanted.

MAN: Vulnerability in a woman can be very attractive.

WOMAN: Do you always intellectualise your emotions?

MAN: It's the only language I know. I don't have a dialogue for my dreams.

They turn toward the audience.

MAN: My memory of her in that red skirt is imprinted on my mind forever.

WOMAN: Sometimes I think reality is just a series of shifting images.
She turns toward him.

WOMAN: I think you became disenchanted when you saw me wearing pink.

MAN: I didn't! [Beat] I still saw myself reflected in your eyes.

WOMAN: And what did you see in the reflection?

MAN: I saw a man who was drowning.

WOMAN: Did you want me to throw you a life raft?

MAN: Did I answer the phone when you called?

Man goes behind the clothes rack and takes off his jacket, tie, shirt and shoes.

Woman goes to the clothes rack and takes off her pink coat and hat.
She puts on a black skirt.

Woman sits down.

Man staggers from behind the clothes rack. His hair is disheveled. He moves his chair into WOMAN'S space and sits beside her.

WOMAN: Where have you been?

MAN: I've been swimming.

WOMAN: You like swimming don't you?

MAN: I plunge in every chance I get.

They both laugh.

WOMAN: What colour would you like me to wear next year darling?

MAN: It doesn't matter what colour you wear. Your eyes will still be the same. [Pause] I would like to see you in those fishnet stockings again though.

WOMAN slaps him playfully on the chest.

WOMAN: You know what they say about a woman who wears fishnet stockings?

Blackout.