

**In Other Gardens**

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© November 2016

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**Characters:**

Woman/Autumn  
Man/Francis  
Younger Woman  
Younger Man  
Other Woman  
Other Man

**Setting:**

A used-to-be white house.  
A tree stump.  
A broken oven.  
A pitched tent.  
A clothesline.  
A garden or a graveyard.  
Two suitcases.  
Two porch doors.  
Picket fence.  
Blue tarp that covers.  
Dirt. Glass. Cherry pies.  
Utilized remains of a playscape.  
  
Everything is in need.

**Time:**

Dawn.  
Almost too late.

**Notes:**

Francis can't see the house or look at Autumn.  
The Other Woman can't look at the Other Man.  
  
Seeing and looking are different.  
  
There are two kinds of leaving.  
  
Pretend that after 50 years ovens break.

**Prologue**

*A Man runs across the stage.*

*A Man runs across the stage again.*

*A Man runs across the stage and pauses in the center.*

*He whistles.*

*No, that's not it.*

*He hums.*

*No, that's not it either.*

*He pulls an old handkerchief out of his pocket. Embroidered with some red letters.  
Traces his finger on them. Smiles.*

*He blows his nose into it violently. Stuffs it back into his pocket.*

*He starts up his chase again.*

*A Younger Woman, on a lower level,  
She stands on two stacked suitcases reaching to the sky.*

*A Younger Man, on a higher level,  
He concentrates on each previous step walking backwards.*

*His step. Her reach. They collide. He trips. She slinks. They look.*

YOUNGER MAN:

Two deer caught in the perfectly wrong pair of headlights.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

I'm sorry.

YOUNGER MAN:

I found you.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

I'm sorry?

YOUNGER MAN:

Reaching for your little piece of light.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

I was just stretching.

YOUNGER MAN:

I heard you. Cooing wishes of find me and wishes of don't.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Don't.

YOUNGER MAN:

Wishes of cloaks and alarm clocks and tidal waves.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

I don't wish at all.

YOUNGER MAN:

You got a lot of spare space down here.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Well, I was trying to fill it, but -

YOUNGER MAN:

But, me.

YOUNGER WOMAN

But, you.

YOUNGER MAN:

You know the person you fall for. I mean fall face first into the earth for has to be the most interesting thing you've ever seen.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

I'm not interested.

YOUNGER MAN:

In?

YOUNGER WOMAN:

This. I have a method going, can't you see?

YOUNGER MAN:

I see you.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

I've been waiting for light. I've been waiting four days. Four days and four feet of broken shovel, broken pinky, broken -

YOUNGER MAN:

Which pinky?

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Left.

YOUNGER MAN:

Suitcases. Two of them. Are you?

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Leaving. Yes. Left. Yes.

YOUNGER MAN:

But, you were?

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Left. Yes. Leaving. Yes.

*The Younger Woman struggles to push the Younger Man up and out.*

*She gives up. The Younger Man sinks back in with delight.*

YOUNGER WOMAN:  
You always smirk like that?

YOUNGER MAN:  
Well always is -

YOUNGER WOMAN:  
Something else.

YOUNGER MAN:  
Where you headed?

YOUNGER WOMAN:  
Doesn't matter.

YOUNGER MAN:  
Does to me.

YOUNGER WOMAN:  
Where you headed?

YOUNGER MAN:  
Ladies first.

YOUNGER WOMAN:  
Four feet under. You?

YOUNGER MAN:  
Four feet under too.

YOUNGER WOMAN:  
Wanna bet?

YOUNGER MAN:  
Yes. Everything I got.

YOUNGER WOMAN:  
You got a lot of nerve.

YOUNGER MAN:  
You got two suitcases.

YOUNGER WOMAN:  
One of them is.

YOUNGER MAN:  
And the other?

YOUNGER WOMAN:  
Not.

YOUNGER MAN:

You're the glow of a wound, aren't you?

*The Younger Woman takes a deep breath.  
She pulls a handkerchief from her breast. Embroidered with some red letters.  
She shows it to the Younger Man.  
She shows him a hole torn in the left side of it.  
She takes another breath.  
She pulls on the hole until it rips.  
They take a breath together.  
She begins to unravel it in front of him. When it is finally a mess of thread,  
She picks it up from the ground and gives it to him.  
The Younger Man puts the thread in his left breast pocket and lounges back.  
The Younger Man goes to hold her. She points to his breast pocket.*

YOUNGER WOMAN:

I don't trust that.

YOUNGER MAN:

Why?

YOUNGER WOMAN:

I'm the glow of a wound, aren't I?

YOUNGER MAN:

Aren't you. I'll make you a deal.

*The Younger Man holds out his hand. The Younger Woman reluctantly goes to shake it.  
He pulls her close and wraps their hands into a thumb war position.*

YOUNGER MAN:

I win we leave. Fill the ditch behind us.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

And if it's me.

YOUNGER MAN:

I'm certain of it.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

I mean if it's me who wins.

YOUNGER MAN:

You win I leave. Fill the ditch behind me.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

You're married.

YOUNGER MAN:

No.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Tanline. 4th finger.

YOUNGER MAN:

Staring contest. You win, I leave. I win, we leave. Deal?

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Where's the ring?

YOUNGER MAN:

Lost.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

But, you were looking for it.

YOUNGER MAN:

But, now I've found it.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

It's not fair to her.

YOUNGER MAN:

She threw it. I threw it. Lost now.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Still.

YOUNGER MAN:

Still. In our wedding pictures there was something missing in our smiles.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Still?

YOUNGER MAN:

Still.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

I was left.

YOUNGER MAN:

I won't leave.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Unless I win.

YOUNGER MAN:

Right.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

But, you do leave. You left her. He left me. And that's that.

YOUNGER MAN:

And now is now. And then was then. And you and me.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Fine. But, if I win. I leave. Got it.

YOUNGER MAN:

Got it.

*She holds out her hand. The Younger Man holds out his. They begin the brawl. The Younger Man wins.*

YOUNGER MAN:

You've opened the core of my earth.

*The Younger Man wins.*

YOUNGER MAN:

You've split spliced open my sky.

*The Younger Man wins.*

YOUNGER MAN:

You've ripped out my heartsichord.

*The Younger Man wins.*

YOUNGER MAN:

I love -

*The Younger Woman wins.*

*The Younger Man frantically kisses her deeply.*

*Lips locked for as long as possible.*

*They come apart for air.*

YOUNGER WOMAN:

But what if you go.

YOUNGER MAN:

You'll come with me .

*They both climb out of the ditch silently and walk away hand in hand.*

Act I

*A little pitched tent downstage left they wish they didn't call home. A clothesline traces in front of it. Further down, a tree stump. Badly backed at, but usable as a seat for those who don't remember how it all came about. Two suitcases are scattered. One open with dirt and wilted flowers. Another closed sitting next to the stump. Underneath the line, a makeshift bench made out of the remains of a children's slide. Holds the typical household items, spoons, spatulas, saran wrap, et cetera.. A fence to the left of the tent. Further up, a fluorescent blue tarp covering a tall and lanky object - pushed up, reaching and branching for another chance. The Man is pacing, cursing the sky for all that it's worth. The Woman is watching.*

MAN:

It gets me. Every time. Every time! I never thought...I planned, you see, I planned it out - perfectly. To the point. To the detail. To the every tooth and nail, right? I'm not wrong. I planned. You saw me, didn't you?

WOMAN:

I see you.

MAN:

It was genius. Genius, wasn't it?

WOMAN:

You are.

MAN:

Every time.

*The Woman notices his nose dripping. She grabs a handkerchief from her breast pocket and approaches him. As he starts up again, she gives up. He stops. Looks at the house momentarily. The Woman notices. Goes to approach him. As he starts up again, she gives up.*

MAN:

Two strangers. I sometimes forget. Two complete strangers - lit by the heavens, tossed into this - this essence of being and...Wham! Kerplunk! There they are — Fate. They say people are made out of stardust. Have you ever heard that? Something in our blood veins is an elastic band, you know. Have you ever heard that? Draws us together like a slingshot - like a wedding band - like a pale pink pacifier.

*He stumbles to the tree stump. Sits. Looks to the sky. She wipes his nose.*

MAN:

Do you think she'll like it?

*He jolts. She retracts her hand.*

MAN:

The moon's a good home to have, you know. People can be homes, you know. This is true for she is mine to burrow in. But, people, even those who are homes themselves, still need places to stay. So, you see, we both have this commonality between us. This lack of placement. Don't you think? This common thread, this direct correlation is stewing tomatoes in the oven so that I can smell it cooking. So that I know that it knows all her secrets. All of them. Everything I don't know about her it knows. It knows. It knows. It knows. It knows. I know it does - and I. I don't.

WOMAN:

I know.

MAN:

It carries a satchel you know. Have you ever heard that? A messenger bag with a two buckled belt. It's a good hiding place, don't you think?

WOMAN:

Depends what you're hiding from.

MAN:

Anything else.

WOMAN:

I see.

MAN:

Everyday its been a trick.

WOMAN:

I know.

MAN:

Everyday its been a cloud or the sun or -

WOMAN:

I know. I've been here.

MAN:

Everyday I lose it just the same.

WOMAN:

I know. I've been here too.

MAN:

And the night before, Wednesday, her favorite day -

WOMAN:

How would you know a thing like that?

MAN:

Love doesn't hold secrets too well.

WOMAN:

Love holds.

It doesn't hold back

Love always holds back.

Not my love.

My love is an arrow.

Mine's a bow.

They're both meant to aim.

MAN:

Wednesday is her favorite day because the mailman is a mailwoman. I heard her say she likes mailwomen. They have words. Books. Satchels. On Wednesdays they meet. She misses that. I'll try to get it back for her. The moon will know. The moon will remember.

WOMAN:

I'm sure it will.

*The Woman cries.*

MAN:

Now listen, the moon that night...I remember it vividly, I remember it like Baryshnikov remembers plies, I remember.....you're crying.

WOMAN:

Yes.

MAN:

Oh...so...so it's true you are crying?

WOMAN:

Yes.

MAN:

Oh....but, but I haven't finished my story.

WOMAN:

Yes, I know.

MAN:

And you know how I am, once I begin I have to...you know.

WOMAN:

Yes, I know.

MAN:

Oh...I see...well. The moon that night two days ago Wednesday, her...her favorite day...I remember it vividly like Monet remembers lily pads, I remember my gloves were stiff leather boards, I had to grease my hands to get them on. I remember I was sure. I remember it wearing away...the moon has phases, just like me...and you. I suppose you may have phases I'm not sure.

*She cries harder.*

MAN:

Oh please don't cry I - I'm not sure of anything.

WOMAN:

Anything?

MAN:

Anything with you that is.

*She cries harder.*

MAN:

Oh...that didn't soothe you did it? See, I was hoping it would. All I was talking about, well I should say my story ended with me having a loose grasp on the whole thing.

*His nose drips. Her nose drips. He pulls a handkerchief from his pocket and blows his nose loudly.  
She wipes her eyes herself.*

WOMAN:

It can't always be full now, can it?

MAN:

Well, I suppose you're right!

WOMAN:

Sometimes the moon needs a fresh start too.

MAN:

I suppose so! And there's always another day, right?

WOMAN:

Right.

*She gets up and begins taking the laundry off the line.*

MAN:

We have my favorite conversations...her and I, I mean.

WOMAN:

She's never said two words to you.

MAN:

No, but I listen anyway.

WOMAN:

You eaves drop.

MAN:

I resent that.

WOMAN:

She's a stranger. She couldn't possibly know, she couldn't possibly feel -

MAN::

When you feel something so massive and miraculous for someone. Something so deep and lodged. They feel it. They just have to. They don't possibly have a choice.

WOMAN:

So, the target knows?

MAN:

Better than the shooter.

WOMAN:

Then what do you feel?

MAN:

I feel as if someone has grabbed me by the fist -

*He grabs her by the fist.*

MAN:

And has slowly but surely pried open each fingertip from my palm's grasp.

*He pries open her fingers.*

MAN:

I feel like a deep breath. I feel like a dish of rinsed cherries.

WOMAN:

I feel like a drain. I feel like a gun without a trigger.

MAN:

They say love's like a bullet made of clay, have you heard that?

WOMAN:

I try not to listen.

MAN:

All I do is hear.

All I want is here -

All I have is here -

But -

And -

I somehow always need -

Want -

More.

*She fixes the collar on his shirt, then goes back to the laundry.  
He starts up again. She brings the clothes into the tent.*

MAN:

She's got a slingshot fisted hold on my neckband. She's got me on the cusp of something so sweet and savory and how how how is it possible. We meet in whirlwinds, did you know that? We meet in tsunami tides and cemeteries. In earthquakes and Mexican standoffs. There's 64 katrillion people, and we manage to find them. Those little lightning rods with sad brown eyes that electroshock your arteries and send you to the moon and back, and sometimes you feel like you're so high up on that glass ball looking down at all your worries, looking down at the way she tucks her hair behind her ear, and sometimes it's so familiar you would think you've done it all before. I've noticed now. Noticed the importance of those moments now. After camping under the night sky for a couple of months.

*The Woman laughs.*

WOMAN:

Months? It's been years. We have been out here - we have been camping out here in our backyard like school children for years. You just never remember.

*They freeze.  
The Younger Woman comes bursting out the porch door with her arms stretched to the sky.  
The Younger Man follows skeptically.*

YOUNGER WOMAN:

This is it.

YOUNGER MAN:

Oh no, I'm not quite sure you know what that means.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

We'll paint it white.

YOUNGER MAN:

White gets dirty.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Because we're new.

YOUNGER MAN:

We're getting old.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

We're full and ready.

YOUNGER MAN:

I'm not sure we're -

YOUNGER WOMAN:

See over here we can plant a garden -

YOUNGER MAN:

Vegetable patch.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Tulips and tansies-

YOUNGER MAN:

Tomatoes and turnip-

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Lilacs and lavender -

YOUNGER MAN:

Leeks and lettuce -

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Golden chrysanthemums.

YOUNGER MAN:

Purple cabbage.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Roses.

YOUNGER MAN:

Potatoes...I like potatoes.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

I like this.

YOUNGER MAN:

We don't have the-

YOUNGER WOMAN:

We could have a-

YOUNGER MAN:

No.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Pool.

YOUNGER MAN:

No.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

A deck.

YOUNGER MAN:

No.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

We could get a dog.

YOUNGER MAN:

A fish maybe.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

One of those tiny toy terriers.

YOUNGER MAN:

Goldfish. Standard. Classic.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Named Rover.

YOUNGER MAN:

Eh. Maybe a hermit crab.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Because you can't call a dog home if you don't know its name.

YOUNGER MAN:

Because they have sturdy shells as houses and don't need much soothing.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Oh! And we can put a super stocked mini bar over here next to the fire pit, and a grill next to the jacuzzi and -

YOUNGER MAN:

Oh no that's dangerous.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Oh we'll wear oven mitts and make sure to use lots of SPF 30.

YOUNGER MAN:

Over here we'll build a treehouse with a four foot long slide. Swing set. See saw. Training wheels.

*The Younger Man is finally satisfied. The Younger Woman is finally not.*

YOUNGER WOMAN:

I'm not sure I want a treehouse.

YOUNGER MAN:

We'll just stick to the slide then.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

I'm not sure I want to slide.

YOUNGER MAN:

Into this?

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Yes.

YOUNGER MAN:

Too soon?

YOUNGER WOMAN:

I don't want to lose you to something else.

YOUNGER MAN:

You won't.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Someone else.

YOUNGER MAN:

Ours to grow.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

Grow?

YOUNGER MAN:

We'll build from the ground up.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

I don't have the foundations, I don't have the -

YOUNGER MAN:

Fresh start. Clean slate. White house. You said so.

YOUNGER WOMAN:

I don't think I'll make a good -

YOUNGER MAN:

Then maybe we should look -

YOUNGER WOMAN:

No.

YOUNGER MAN:

Somewhere else.

YOUNGER WOMAN:  
No - this is it.

*The Younger Woman latches onto the Younger Man.*

YOUNGER MAN:  
I just want a garden.

YOUNGER WOMAN:  
I just want a home.

YOUNGER MAN:  
That can be arranged.

YOUNGER WOMAN:  
Really?

YOUNGER MAN:  
Sure.

YOUNGER WOMAN:  
I can try...to grow to -

*The Younger Man kisses her. Carries her inside. They laugh.*

*The Man stands on the tree stump. The Woman inches closer to him, holding a folded handkerchief in her hand, needing at his pant leg.*

*The Man jumps.*

MAN:  
Tomorrow! We have to plan tonight for tomorrow. I need to - I need to figure out - how to get a better grip this time. This time, it won't trip me. Without fall. Without fail. We're going to, we're going to, we're - Why are you staring as if I had six eyes? Don't you know what tomorrow is?

WOMAN:  
The 6th.

MAN:  
Exactly.

WOMAN:  
Of May.

MAN:  
Exactly!

WOMAN:  
Her birthday.

MAN:  
The last one.