

HAM AND EGGS

A Play in One Scene

by

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Cast of Characters

MAN:

Mid- to late-forties. HE is unshaven and wears a white T-shirt and boxer shorts.

WOMAN:

Mid- to late-forties. HER skin remains youthful except for the small lines around the eyes and mouth. Although SHE wears a tattered smock, SHE takes pride in being well-groomed.

Scene

A small kitchen with dining table.

Time

Present.

SETTING: A small kitchen. Dinette appears CS. Two rod-iron chairs are set around dinette, facing each other. All appears very erect and very old; the drapes, the sink, the wallpaper all carry a yellow stain from many years of smoking and simple neglect.

AT RISE: MAN enters and sits at dinette. HE looks around, obviously worried, obviously tired. WOMAN enters and sets plate with a heaping portion of ham and eggs in front of HIM. MAN looks at plate with contempt.

I can't. MAN

Of course, you can. WOMAN

I told you I can't. MAN

It's just a phase. WOMAN

A phase doesn't last this long. MAN

Just try. You said you'd try. WOMAN

No more. MAN

Why? WOMAN

I don't know. Too tired to try. MAN

Nonsense. You used to love ham and eggs. You always will. WOMAN

I know! Don't you think I know?! MAN

(pause)

MAN (continues)

Sorry. Just tired.

(WOMAN turns away and nervously tidies up. MAN plays with food trying to understand HIS intolerance, trying to understand HIS hatred toward the breakfast. WOMAN turns and stares at MAN.)

MAN (continues)

What do you want me to say? Do you want me to feel ashamed? Because I do. I really do.

WOMAN

Shame doesn't change one damn thing. Shame doesn't take away the pain.

MAN

What do you want me to say?

WOMAN

You can start with what's wrong with the ham and eggs.

MAN

Nothing. It's me.

WOMAN

You can't even look at them, can you? I'm not blind!

(pause)

How do you think that makes me feel?

MAN

I don't know. How does it make you feel?

WOMAN

I don't know what else I can do.

MAN

(slamming fist on table)

Don't! Don't do this to me!

WOMAN

(startled)

I'm sorry!

MAN

Look, it's just that . . . I don't like them that runny. Why do my eggs have to be runny all the time?

WOMAN

(aghast)

They've . . . always been like that. You wouldn't have eggs any other way. Remember that little bistro in Paris? The little dive around the corner of our hotel near the Centre Pompidou that everyone told us to keep away from? We ate there every morning. You wouldn't try any other bistro. You raved to our waiter about how the French eat their eggs. You were almost gushing when he served us every morning. You said they must've invented eggs because that is exactly—

MAN

I know what I said to him! I remember clearly. And it wasn't near the Pompidou. It was right outside the Odeon metro. Remember?

WOMAN

Really?

MAN

You think I'm lying about that too?

WOMAN

Sometimes I think you're lying about everything! It just doesn't make any sense.

MAN

I guess I just . . . I don't know!

WOMAN

I remember how you used to crave ham and eggs all the time. I had to call that chef at the bistro and plead with him in broken French to walk me through how they made the eggs. After all that... Now, the thought of them just disgusts you. That's not fair.

MAN

(defeated)

I can't help that it's not fair. I just can't pretend anymore. I'm just not hungry. Is that easier for you, if I tell you I'm not hungry?

WOMAN

You'll regret this. You know you'll regret this. The day will come when you're going to sit all alone, wondering how you could have given up ham and eggs. You'll think of all the times I woke up early to make you breakfast, of all the times I surprised you with breakfast for dinner. But it will be too late.

MAN

You're probably right.

WOMAN

Well, I love you too much to let that happen to you.

MAN

You love me too much, period.

(pause)

I admire your perseverance. But can't you see that I just can't do it?

WOMAN

Please just try. Think of it as something else if you want. I don't mind. Close your eyes. Take this fork and pretend it's the fabulous Moules-frites we had for brunch all the time. Can't you taste the shallots from farmer's market? Just think of something else. That's fine. Close your eyes and go back. Think you're having breakfast at our little dive right outside the Odeon metro. Let's pretend it's still there. Always empty, just waiting for two American suckers to grab a bite. Think of Paris and it will all come back to you.

MAN

I can't. It hurts too much to remember. I don't want to think of Paris.

WOMAN

Then think of Bolzano! I don't care! Think of that summer in Bolzano. That summer when the heat wave was so unbearable we were all drinking Aperol spritzes for breakfast! Even the locals couldn't stand the heat. But we found a little bench off a cliff outside one of the abandoned castles. We called it our little bench and we sat there when it got too hot in the valley. We sat there sipping our Aperols. At our little bench!

MAN

That was a wonderful trip. Our little bench. How can I forget? I remember the mushrooms and zucchini blossoms were in season. That's what we ate at every meal. I thought the deep-fried blossoms stuffed with ricotta cheese would upset my stomach.

WOMAN

But they were just right. They weren't greasy at all. I'd go back in a second.