

STUMPS

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*This is not poetry spoken like a conversation. This takes place in a world where conversation is poetic. The line breaks and what punctuation there is, is significant.
Some of the stage directions are stage directions. Some of them are questions, or suggestions.
They are all ignorable and mockable.*

Stumps

Scene 1

One:

I saw you quite on accident
In a coffee shop.
That'll happen sometimes:
Eye contact.

I heard an artist say that with just one look, you can say so much
But this one just said,
"Oops."

My eyes flicked from latte foam
to a face that I saw quite on accident
In a coffee shop.
That'll happen sometimes.

Like being dunked in cold water
It was surprising and sobering and a little
Exhilarating.

Your eyes are still
Striking.

You did not say hello.
That'll happen sometimes
When people hurt each other badly

You just thanked the barista,
And the bell rang when you left.
That'll happen sometimes.

Scene 2

They are in a coffee shop. One has a mug, Two has a paper cup.

One: I've noticed, we're the same
The same stumps on one side

Two: I grew up lopsided

One: Like a tree in front of my childhood home
Where the branches stuck out into the street

Two: The city decided

One: But I didn't

Two: The city decided they were hazardous
Nothing but stumps where the rest of me

One: Could have been. Could be again.

Scene 3

They sit on the opposite sides of the table. They are still holding the coffee cups. There's a new table or bouquet, or something to imply a new location.

One: We always have to do this. Our kind.

Two: It's all very by the book

One: I don't have to ask yet, if you're not ready

Two: But that's how it starts

One: How did your parents take you being what you are

Two: It was never a problem
Unless someone had a problem
Then the problem was mine
How did your parents take you being what you are

One: It was never a problem
Until I was honest
Then it was many things
I was many things
A problem, a pitfall, a pity, a misguided girl growing green in the wrong direction.

How did your parents take you being what you are

Two and One: Not well enough, I suppose

Two: one of our stumps

One: All on one side

Two: But it grew no matter how they cut it

One: The city decided

Two: but we didn't

Scene 4

Door slam

Lights come up

They stand in front of the door, either present or imaginary.

Two: She wants me out

One: Of your childhood home

Two: Where I grew all those branches

One: Where she cut them all off

Two: yes, but-

One: Where she cut them all off.

Scene 5

This is pillow talk. They are snuggled up on a couch, bed, pillow fort, whatever.

Two: When we aren't kissing, my body laments

One: Our kisses ferment like

Two: wine

One: Like moonshine

Two: Like spiked coffee far too early in the day

One: Now how am I supposed to focus

Scene 6

They are existing in the same space, but doing separate things. The way comfortable couples do.

Two: She wants me back

One: but she wanted you out

Two: She thinks I could fit if only my limbs were smaller
Easier to bend

One: Like a wicker basket

Two: To hold all the ideas she has about me

One: But you're not going to go?

Two: no.

They look at each other. Is she lying?

Scene 7

Two is having a panic attack

They start on two separate parts of the stage. Separated by light. They are on the phone.

One: Find the words you need, then tell me what you're thinking

Two: He didn't ask me, He didn't. He didn't ask me, I didn't

One reaches two

One: thoughts swim so quickly through your head,
you can't catch them

Two: I couldn't

One kneels down to meet Two

One: They slip right through your hands and you have to hand me shreds of them

Two: I didn't say anything

One holds Two's hands

One: Take a shower, brush your teeth
You'll feel better
You'll feel new

Maybe you can get the taste of his tongue out of your mouth

TWO: it feels like it might never wash off

One: You were a deer in headlights
Trying to be kind to the car

Get the paint chips out of your antlers
Take a shower
Brush your teeth

You'll feel better.
You'll feel new.

Scene 8

One and Two are on a picnic. One has her head resting on Two's lap. It looks idyllic, but One does not seem happy to be there.

Two: You're angry

One: always

Two: at me

One: Just everything else

Two: and me

One: just the way that you're not angry

Two: I never get angry. It's never been a problem

One has to look at Two.

One: don't you ever--?

Two: Not when the city decided

Not when he decided
Not even when--

One: It makes me worry about you
And Me.

One walks away from Two. .

Either I am a weed choking out so many things that have a right to grow
Or you are made of nothing but soft green branches
Bent into shape by whoever's hands decide they have the right

What shape do my hands live in

Two meets her. Wraps her arms around her.

Two: All plants put down roots.
we have small white tendrils wrapped around each other under the soil
We grow together

One: side by side

Two: Equals in the sun

One: Same height, reaching for the sun.

Scene 9

Two: He drove me home this afternoon

One: Why even get in the car

Two: with him

One: He's driven you so many places you didn't want to go

Two: I took a shower
Brushed my teeth
And maybe

One: maybe he has too?

Two: Can't people change