



THE GIRL IN THE WASHROOM

BY

Bella Poynton

WHY I LIKE IT: *Drama Editor EZRA NEIGHBORS writes...There is this unique phrase “trauma-bonding” that has surfaced recently in conversations I’ve had with people in my life. It’s the idea that related traumatic experience can bring us closer together in relating to each other. It’s this connection that evolves out of traumatic experiences that amazes and captivates me. The Girl In The Washroom displays a haunting look into the possible realities of being a member of the LGBT community in pre-1970’s America. Jumping right into the action, riddled with psychic mysticism and the shortcomings of our police force, playwright Bella Poynton show great control of plot creation and suspense while giving a unique look upon a tragic story of persecution.*

The Girl in the Washroom

A Play in One Act

By Bella Poynton

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Cast Breakdown:

- Daisy – Female, 25. A woman of the moment. Wearing a party dress and pearls. Pretty, trendy, and likeable.
- Stanley – An androgynous presenting woman or non-binary person. 30. A drifter. Mysterious. Gentle. Wearing a trench coat.
- Drake – Male. Late 30's. A police officer.

Setting:

- A Hotel Room in New York City. Winter, 1961.

Requirements:

- The set requires a working door to another room. The door serves as the door to the hotel room bathroom. During the play, someone does enter from the actual hotel room door, but it is not imperative the audience actually sees this; however, it is imperative we see Daisy walk into the hotel room bathroom and shut the door at the end of the play.

Synopsis:

- Set in 1961 after an unfortunate event in a New York City alleyway, Daisy and Stanley decide to spend the evening recovering in a nearby hotel. The night quickly becomes one of confessions and realizations as the audience comes to realize that their situation is much more dire than originally suspected. Daisy and Stanley are forced to come face to face with their failures and unhappiness, as well as the unfortunate stigma of being an LGBTQ person in the early 1960s US.

Runtime:

· The play runs 45 minutes.

(At rise: A hotel room. New York City, 1961. The door opens, and in stumble two people. One is a very inebriated woman, and the other, helping her, is much more stable non-binary person. The intoxicated woman is wearing a very trendy outfit. The other is wearing simple black clothes. They are not very wealthy and wearing a long black trench coat. They have an American southern-ness about her. They help the drunken woman into the hotel room and towards the bed to lie down.)

STANLEY:

Watch your step.

DAISY:

I need to lie down...

STANLEY:

You're still dizzy?

DAISY:

No. I told you, it's not like that. It's like pictures—each one a flash, like a knife to the eye. It makes me dizzy sometimes.

STANLEY:

You have a photographic memory?

DAISY:

You could say that. Where are my cigarettes?

(She looks for them in her purse.)

DAISY:

Damn, I think I've run out. Can I have one of yours?

STANLEY:

I don't smoke, darlin. I'm sorry.

(She inspects the bed before throwing her things down and lying on the mattress.)

DAISY:

You don't smoke? Who the hell doesn't smoke? What's your name again?

STANLEY:

Stanley.

(Daisy catches sight of the window.)

DAISY:

My God look at that! Look at that tree. The snow all over the branches like that? Looks like a ghost with veins. Not often you see a tree like that in the city.

STANLEY:

The city is fine. The room is better. I love this room. I've stayed here before.

DAISY:

In this very room?

STANLEY:

Sure.

DAISY:

Where are you from? You don't seem like you're from around here.

STANLEY:

Does anyone seem like they're from New York? Someone once said New York is the only city in the world where anyone, no matter who they are, could be native. But you're right. I'm from Tennessee.

(A Pause.)

STANLEY:

There's still blood in your hair.

DAISY:

It's all right. I like it. Tell me about Tennessee?

STANLEY:

There isn't much to talk about. Let's get you cleaned up.

DAISY:

I can clean myself up, thank you.

(Daisy tries to stand but gets a sharp pain in her head. She seethes through her teeth and stumbles a little.)

DAISY:

Oh—damn it!

STANLEY:

Sharp pains again?

DAISY:

They'll pass.

STANLEY:

You know, you should really see someone about it. It's not healthy, migraines like that.

DAISY:

They aren't migraines. It's just how I am.

STANLEY:

You don't know that. You should see a doctor just to be sure.

DAISY:

I am sure.

STANLEY:

So, what do you see when it happens?

DAISY:

Pictures. Images. Of the future. Or the past. Sometimes I can't tell which.

STANLEY:

And which was it that time? The future or the past?

DAISY:

I don't know. Future, I think. It's still blurry. A man with dark hair. A little heavy. Someone

I've never seen before. It happens all the time. Then whoever it is mosies along into my life a while later, and I think "well *there* they are, huh!"

(Daisy walks to the hotel room bathroom door but freezes just outside the door. It's as if she's seen something terrifying. She does not go inside.)

STANLEY:

What's wrong, now?

DAISY:

Did you hear that?

STANLEY:

Hear what?

DAISY:

I heard a noise. From inside the washroom. Like a girl laughing. Or crying.

STANLEY:

I didn't hear anything.

DAISY:

I did. Behind the door! I swear.

STANLEY:

You've had a lot to drink.

DAISY:

Are you saying I'm lying?

STANLEY:

No, I'm saying maybe you heard something the rest of us can't.

(Daisy is still scared to go inside. Stanley sighs.)

STANLEY:

All right, all right.

(Stanley gets up and goes to the door. They press their ear against it and knock.)

DAISY:

Wait—Don't!

STANLEY:

If you're so sure there's someone in there, I have to check. It could be a cleaning lady who didn't know we were taking the room tonight.

(Stanley speaks to the door.)

STANLEY:

Hello? Anyone there? Housekeeping?

...See? Nothing.

DAISY:

You're wrong. There's a body in there. Some poor girl who decided to end it. I can feel her. As clear as day. Maybe she drew a hot bath and cut her wrists up. Or—no. No. She didn't have that kind of time. She did something much quicker.

(Daisy makes the motion of slitting her throat.)

STANLEY:

You shouldn't be thinking about those kinds of things.

DAISY:

I can't help what I think about. And if you can, you might be the first.

You know, if we do find a girl in there, they'll think we did it.

STANLEY:

We had nothing to do with—Ahhhha—look at this! You've got me talking like its real!

There's no dying girl in the washroom, Daisy.

DAISY:

But I'm sure of it. I'm sure. Please, believe me?

STANLEY:

All right, all right, listen. I won't go in there just yet. If she's dead she won't be coming out anytime soon, right? Let me make you some coffee. Or at least let me get you a cold glass of water.

DAISY:

Have a drink with me, first? Before the coffee?

(Daisy goes to get a bottle of liquor out of the room's mini bar. She gets two glasses. She pours for herself.)

STANLEY:

You've already had too much—

DAISY:

Just one drink?

STANLEY:

None for me, thank you.

DAISY:

Even for a toast? To me. And you. And to meeting new and exciting people!

STANLEY:

I'm sorry. I can't. I don't drink anymore.

DAISY:

...Oh. Sorry. I didn't know.

(Daisy takes a shot anyway.)

STANLEY:

That really should be all for tonight.

(Daisy pours one more for herself, holding out her hand to keep Stanley away from her.)

DAISY:

There. That's all...

(She drinks. Pauses. She is overcome with the need for more, then pours another shot.)

DAISY:

Just one more.

(She takes another shot.)

DAISY:

Oh, god...

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have done that last one. Is it hard for you to watch?

STANLEY:

...It's not easy.

DAISY:

Has it been long?

STANLEY:

Almost five years now.

DAISY:

Congratulations. So, if you were a drunk, why did I meet you at a bar?

STANLEY:

You didn't meet me at a bar. It's a hotel. A bar at a hotel. And we didn't meet. We... ran into each other.

DAISY:

Shouldn't you try to avoid places like bars?

STANLEY:

There's a lot of things I *should* do. I go there to smell it. I play a game with myself. "You can drink if you want to" I say. "Go on! No one is stopping you. No one will tell you not to." ...But then I choose not to. I try to trick myself into not wanting.

DAISY:

Seems dangerous. Does it work?

STANLEY:

No. I still want. But if there's no risk in life, what's the point? How long have you been a drunk?

DAISY:

I'm not a drunk. I'm a lush. There's a difference. I've never been addicted to anything.

STANLEY:

Sure, you have.

DAISY:

Oh, have I?

STANLEY:

Have you ever loved someone very much?

DAISY:

Hasn't everyone?

STANLEY:

No. Just the unlucky ones.

Have you ever loved someone so much you thought you might die of it?

DAISY:

I don't want to talk about that.

STANLEY:

Well, that's what it's like for me. Every day.

DAISY:

But you're so tough. Look at you!

STANLEY:

I don't feel tough.

DAISY:

But you are. And you should believe me. I'm always right.

STANLEY:

I just—don't feel that way. Sometimes I don't feel like anything, really. Just like... the wind, blowing across people's faces.

DAISY:

If it makes you feel any better, liquor doesn't love you back, you know? Or at least, it doesn't love me back. I'm just as miserable as always, with or without it.

STANLEY:

Who says we need to be loved back? Why is it that we're all so pre-occupied with being loved back?

DAISY:

Everyone needs to be loved back.

STANLEY:

No, no, no. Everyone wants to be loved back, but we don't need it.

See, I have the right to love anything I so choose without consequence—as long as I don't hurt anyone. My love is mine. No one can take it away from me. But there's no rule that says what I love has to love me in return. And really, in the end, it doesn't matter. Because you are what you love. Not what loves you.

DAISY:

That's ...so sad. Jesus, Stanley, that's the saddest God damn thing I've ever heard. God, I need a cigarette. Do you have one?

STANLEY:

You already asked. I don't smoke.

DAISY:

You don't smoke, you don't drink. You're no fun at all, are you?

STANLEY:

I suppose not.

(A Pause.)

STANLEY:

Your face is starting to swell.

(Daisy touches the mark on her face. She stands and goes over to look in the mirror on the wall near the door)

DAISY:

Wow look at that! Bruise almost looks like paint, it's so dark!

STANLEY:

That thing is going to be every color but pink in a few hours if you don't let me get you some ice on it.

DAISY:

I almost like it. It's pretty, like a Halloween costume or something.

Hey—will you do me a favor?

STANLEY:

What's that?

DAISY:

I have some cover up, in my purse. Will you put it on for me?

STANLEY:

You need to stop the swelling first.

DAISY:

The swelling doesn't matter.

STANLEY:

Doesn't matter? How do you figure? It's going to matter in the morning when you can hardly move. And why would you want me to put on makeup for you? I don't know the first thing about makeup.

DAISY:

I want to look pretty.

STANLEY:

You're already pretty. We'll put on the cover up tomorrow, once we're out of here.

DAISY:

No, it has to be now.

STANLEY:

Why, now? It's just the two of us. You don't have to look pretty for me. Don't waste your makeup. We're just going to go to sleep.

DAISY:

I'm not tired.

STANLEY:

You're exhausted.

DAISY:

Exhausted, maybe, but not tired. I wouldn't be able to sleep now, anyway. I have trouble sleeping sometimes.

STANLEY:

Because of your head?

(A Pause.)

STANLEY:

You know, if you saw a doctor, they might be able to he—

DAISY:

Stop that! No—no doctors. I've been to dozens of them, and they all say the same thing—there's nothing wrong with me. I'm making it up. I need to relax. Lay down a while, don't think so much!—but they're wrong. I'm not making it up. Do you know what happens to girls who are told over and over that they're making something up when they're not?

STANLEY:

What happens?

DAISY:

Something terrible, I think.

I thought maybe by the time you responded I'd have thought of something clever to say. But I promise, it's terrible.

STANLEY:

I believe what you told me about seeing things. Some doctors are just bastards.

DAISY:

Sometimes I think they're right, and I'm the crazy one. I've been told it's in my head so many times that I don't know what's true anymore. And if we don't know what's true, then what does any of it matter?

(Daisy takes her compact out of her purse and starts to put makeup all over her bruised eye. She does this gently and carefully, trying not to cause herself any pain. Stanley stares at her.)

DAISY:

What? You said I should get cleaned up, didn't you?

STANLEY:

That's not what I meant.

DAISY:

Please? I asked as a favor, and you said you would help me.

(She hands Daisy the compact. Begrudgingly, Stanley takes it.)

STANLEY:

Fine. If it makes you happy. You're just wasting it, but all right...

(Stanley starts to gently cover Daisy's bad eye with makeup.)

STANLEY:

My God... What did you do to piss him off so badly?

DAISY:

I laughed at his prick. It was tiny.

STANLEY:

Ah, the old tiny prick mishap.

DAISY:

Thanks for pulling him off me.

STANLEY:

Was I supposed to walk by and just pretend I didn't see anything?

DAISY:

That's what most people would have done.

STANLEY:

I'm not most people.

DAISY:

What were you doing in that alley to begin with?

STANLEY:

I was leaving the bar.

DAISY:

But—why out the back door?

STANLEY:

I like to wander.

DAISY:

Most people would have kept walking.

TANLEY:

Well, I didn't. And I think a lot of people would have stopped to help you. A pretty woman in trouble? Honestly, I do.

DAISY:

No, Stanley. I was attempting to fuck a stranger in the back alleyway of a cocktail bar at 2 A.M. It went wrong. No one's gonna help a girl like that.

STANLEY:

You shouldn't—you shouldn't do things like that, you know. You should make them take you out at least once or twice before you—erm—let them have their way with you in back alleys.

DAISY:

Oh, are those the rules?

STANLEY:

Or so our mothers told us.

DAISY:

My mother never told me rules like that. I wish she had. She never really talked to me much. I was raised by the help. Do you abide by them?

STANLEY:

Huh? Oh. Well. No. The rules don't apply to me.

DAISY:

Oooh, I see. You think you're above them? Because you're dark, and mysterious, and love liquor like a man? Tell me, what's your real name? It can't *really* be Stanley. That's a boy's name.

STANLEY:

It absolutely is my real name. My mother liked it. She thought she'd try to start a trend. Stanley as a girl's name. Like Alex or Chris. Didn't quite catch on the way she was hoping.

DAISY:

Why didn't you change it?

STANLEY

Because it's mine.

DAISY:

I don't have anything to call mine.

STANLEY:

Sure, you do. You've got a name just like I do.

DAISY:

But yours suits you so well. Like you said. Unique. Mine isn't really mine at all. I was named after some lady from a book.

STANLEY:

Which?

DAISY:

Daisy from *The Great Gatsby*. You know that one?

STANLEY:

Sure do. It's a great book. I remember it from school.

DAISY:

I never read it, and I never want to. Doesn't she die in the end?

STANLEY:

No, no. Daisy lives. She stays with Tom and lives. Gatsby dies.

DAISY:

Isn't that kind of the same thing?

(They've finished up with the compact makeup, and Daisy stashes it back in her purse. She then lies down on the bed for a moment, as if she might sleep. Stanley very tentatively sits beside her, and then starts to lay down as well, but ever so gently, so as not to touch or disturb Daisy in any way. Then, a moment later, Daisy quickly sits up, eyes wide, like she's just remembered something.)

DAISY:

Stanley, can I tell you something?

STANLEY:

What?!—what is it—what's wrong?

DAISY:

No, nothing, I just—I want to tell you something and I don't want you to make fun of me.

STANLEY:

I'm here helping you, aren't I? Putting make up on your face for no reason? Do I seem like I'd make fun of you?

DAISY:

No.

STANLEY:

Well, then?

DAISY:

When I was little, people used to say I was psychic. My parents don't like when I talk about it. It didn't bother them so much when I was little, but as I got older, they started to go all red faced and embarrassed when I talked about things that hadn't happened yet.

I'd go right up to strangers and say things only their nearest and dearest would know.

But then... slowly, it started happening less and less. Like the way they say little babies forget about knowing God right before they learn to talk. I was losing my gift. I've stopped remembering. That's what it's like—when I see the images. It's like remembering things you never knew to begin with.

STANLEY:

Like in a dream.

DAISY:

Yes, exactly, like a dream! Dreams where you feel like you've dreamt it before... but then you wake up and realize you haven't. It was like that. All the time. And I don't know how to get it back again. It was the only thing that made me special, really.

(Daisy lies there on the bed. She squirms in discomfort.)

STANLEY:

I'm going to go get some ice for your eye. You can't sleep like that.

(Daisy is alarmed by this, and reaches out, grabbing Stanley's arm.)

DAISY:

Don't go, please! Don't leave me alone! I can't be alone right now.

STANLEY:

Daisy, it's okay. I'll be right back.

DAISY:

How do I know you won't run off?

STANLEY:

Here—I'll leave my trench coat. And here—my wallet, too. I have to come back for that, now

don't I?

DAISY:

Depends on who you are.

STANLEY:

Well, I wander a lot. I need my wallet.

DAISY:

You don't have any painkillers, do you?

STANLEY:

I don't. I'm sorry. I'm sure they sell aspirin downstairs.

DAISY:

Could you buy me a bottle? I'll pay you back. No—no, on second thought. Cigarettes. Get me some cigarettes instead?

STANLEY:

No cigarettes.

DAISY:

Why not? I need them!

STANLEY:

You're said you were in pain. I'll get you Aspirin.

DAISY:

I'll pay you back. Please get me both!

STANLEY:

I'm sure I can manage to buy you a bottle of aspirin.

DAISY:

Are you sure?

STANLEY:

‘Scuse me?

DAISY:

I didn’t mean it like that. I mean, you just seem—like maybe you wouldn’t want to spend your money on aspirin if you didn’t need to.

STANLEY:

So, you think because my clothes are old and dirty, that I don’t have a red cent?

DAISY:

I’m sorry. I was trying to be kind. It came out funny. I don’t have much money anymore nowadays either.

STANLEY:

I know. That’s why I offered to buy you the aspirin.

(Stanley goes to the door.)

DAISY:

Stanley? Are you mad at me?

STANLEY:

Course not.

DAISY:

You believe me, don’t you? My story about when I was little?

STANLEY:

I told you I did.

DAISY:

But you haven’t seen me do it, yet.

STANLEY:

I believe in a lot of things I've never seen.

God for one. But—would you feel better if you could show me?

(Daisy nods.)

STANLEY:

Do you want to try?

(Daisy nods again)

STANLEY:

All right. Go ahead.

(Stanley stands passively, as if waiting for a blessing at church. Daisy takes a deep breath and closes her eyes. There's a long pause. Stanley opens their eyes... they think perhaps Daisy isn't going to say anything and leans forward, wondering if she is still deep in concentration. A moment later, Stanley glances at the door, thinking perhaps they should get back to their task of buying Aspirin, but then—)

DAISY:

When you were little, you were best friends with a girl named Shelby.

She was a little Italian girl with red hair. The boys teased her for being ugly on the bus to school. She wasn't ugly, but they liked to tease her because she was sweet and sometimes said Italian words instead of English ones. You beat them all up. Cut the meanest one with a switchblade. He was fine, but his ear hurt for a long time. You were suspended from school. After that, they called you Stanley Switchblade, but no one ever bothered Shelby ever again.

(Pause.)

STANLEY:

Sharon.

(Daisy opens her eyes.)

DAISY:

What?

STANLEY:

Her name was Sharon.

DAISY:

Where is she, now?

STANLEY:

She died. Drank herself to death. When we were much older, of course. Adults.

DAISY:

Sharon! Sharon! Oh god—See? I can't do it right anymore! I can't even get the names right!

STANLEY:

Stop that. You did get it right, almost all of it!

DAISY:

But names are important! Didn't we just talk about that?

STANLEY:

Sharon? Shelby? They're similar.

DAISY:

They're not similar at all. The only thing that was ever really mine was how I could see things and know things I shouldn't! And now it's all jumbled up and fading away!

STANLEY:

Daisy, you did fine. You got almost *everything* right. There were just a few letters off—

DAISY:

I used to be able to see everything! And now? Only little things here and there. I didn't even know you were coming. I didn't even see what was going to happen tonight. If I had known I wouldn't have gone out there, but I didn't know you were going to kill that man.

(Pause. Daisy realizes she has said too much.)

STANLEY:

Let's not talk about that until we leave the hotel, all right?

DAISY:

...I wasn't supposed to say that, was I? I'm sorry. He might not even be dead, you know. We didn't really—check.

STANLEY:

No, we didn't. You're right. He could be fine.

DAISY:

Please don't be scared.

STANLEY:

I'm not.

DAISY:

You are. Your face is all stern. You're nervous. Tell me what you're thinking?

STANLEY:

You aren't ready to know what I'm thinking.

DAISY:

I'm not some frail girl, you know. I can hear what you're thinking.

STANLEY:

You've only known me for an hour or two.

DAISY:

And you've treated me better in an hour than most people have in my whole life.

(Pause)

STANLEY:

Fine. I'll tell you exactly what I'm thinking. As soon as we get out of here. Get your things. We're checking out.

DAISY:

But we can't go, now.

STANLEY:

What—why not?

DAISY:

Because I have a feeling. Like right before something important happens

STANLEY:

Daisy, we can't stay here—not with the mess downstairs. We should have left right away but you were in bad shape.

DAISY:

A few minutes ago, you said we should stay and sleep a while, didn't you?

STANLEY:

Well, I've changed my mind.

DAISY:

You can't just change your mind about things!

STANLEY:

Of course I fucking can!

(Stanley is frustrated now. They turn away and slam their first on the hotel table. Daisy jumps.)

STANLEY:

Why did you have to say that, huh? Why couldn't you have left it alone? I had almost forgotten.

I couldn't have killed him, anyway. I couldn't have.

I only slashed his mouth. You can't die from a cut to the side of the mouth!

DAISY:

I'm so sorry. But he did.

STANLEY:

Stop!

DAISY:

I'm just telling you what I see!

STANLEY:

But you—you could be off, right? You could be wrong! If your gift is fading it might not be true!

(Daisy is clearly upset by this)

DAISY:

Oh. I see. You're just like one of them, aren't you? I look pretty, sure, but I'm all off up here.

(She points to her head.)

STANLEY:

No—No! How could you take it that way? I didn't *mean* it that way. I'm not taking joy in your disappointment, Daisy it's just—this is a bit of an unprecedented circumstance, wouldn't you stay?

(While Stanley is speaking, Daisy goes and grabs the liquor bottle on the nightstand and takes another huge swig.)

STANLEY:

Can you put the liquor away now, dammit?

DAISY:

But I'm drinking.

STANLEY:

I said put the liquor away—

DAISY:

I said I don't want to!

STANLEY:

Just put the damn liquor bottle away, I won't have you killing yourself, too!

(Shocked at the yelling, Daisy stumbles, looking for the cap to the bottle.)

DAISY:

Fine! Fucking fine, I will!—Where's the—I'm looking for the—Where's the—

(She finds the cork and plugs up the liquor, then hides it under an unused pillow on the bed.)

DAISY:

There!

(A Pause. Stanley sits.)

STANLEY:

I'm sorry I yelled.

(A Pause.)

STANLEY:

Why did you come up here with me? I'm a stranger.

DAISY:

Because you grabbed my hand and pulled me along with you.

STANLEY:

Is that the only reason?

DAISY:

Yes, but. It was... kind. You grabbed my hand. Not my arm. My hand. That's very different. It was... gentle. Human, somehow. It wasn't violent or aggressive. Like an invitation.

(Daisy reaches over and takes Stanley's hand like they took hands earlier that night. She leans in closer and closer. It looks as if they might kiss. They almost do, but Stanley is the one who pulls away.)

STANLEY:

I can't. Not now. Not tonight. You smell like the bottle. And your eye—

DAISY:

I'm ugly—?

STANLEY:

No! Daisy, you're *drunk*. And you're hurt. And I killed someone.

DAISY:

It's all right. Once, when I was 17, I slipped on a rock on the beach at our lake house and I hit my head. I had a concussion and was real sleepy for a while, but my boyfriend at the time—well, he—

STANLEY:

No, please. Don't tell me about that. No more stories tonight. I'm too tired.

DAISY:

Do you need to yell again? You can if you want.

STANLEY:

Not now. It wouldn't help. I used to yell all the time. No one screamed like I did.

DAISY:

Everyone was afraid of you.

STANLEY:

Back then? Yes, they were.

DAISY:

I remem—

I—can tell.

(Stanley gives her a knowing glance. A smile. Daisy smiles in return.)

DAISY:

Tell me about when everyone was afraid of you?

STANLEY:

There isn't much to tell.

I was tall, and quiet, and carried a blade, and everyone knew it.

There were a few men who tried to put me in my place, but they all wound up being clumsy and overconfident. None of them ever took the time to learn how to fight.

In the proj where I grew up, I tried to keep people safe.

The girl who babysat me when I was little—her daughter was being bullied on the way to school?—I stopped it.

A friend of my mother's—her son was being harassed on the bus?—I stopped it.

A woman across the street was being beaten up by her boyfriend?—I stopped it.

Never had any real friends though. Everyone was either afraid of me because I knew how to fight, or because—

(Stanley gestures to their outward appearance)

STANLEY:

They thought I was sick in the head a little.

You know...

Eventually, it was too dangerous for me to stay there.

I went on the road. Motels and truck stops. I realized I had to stop drinking when I blacked out and woke up on a cargo train headed out west. Don't even remember how I got there.

Drinking kept me going, I think. Gave me a reason to live from day to day when there wasn't anything else to live for. And when I stopped, it was like the world ended for a little while.

Everything went blurry, and I thought I'd never see right again.

I shook and cried and vomited. Saw the wildest colors.

Thought my head would split wide open and inside there'd be nothing but fire.

I cursed the world and slept for a long, long time.

And then one day, I woke up, and my head was clear. It ached from sleeping too much, not from the liquor. The pain I'd been drinking away wasn't as bad as I'd remembered.

I wasn't as bad as I remembered.

Fear is powerful, you know? Especially when you're afraid of yourself.

And then I came to New York. And met you.

DAISY:

Did you mean to kill him?

STANLEY:

The man downstairs? No. But sometimes when you think about something for a long time, it changes. You can't remember what really happened anymore. You can't remember if you're changing the story or if the story's changing you.

DAISY:

Like with me and my doctors?

STANLEY:

Yeah, just like with your doctors.

DAISY:

There's still one thing that doesn't make sense to me.

STANLEY:

What's that?

DAISY:

How did you know I was in the alleyway?

STANLEY:

I told you.

DAISY:

Tell me the truth this time

STANLEY:

I just knew.

DAISY:

You're a psychic too, then?

STANLEY:

No.

DAISY:

I know you're lying.

Did someone send you? To find me?

Are you a... detective, or a—

STANLEY:

No—no. I'm just a drifter, Daisy. I don't have anywhere to go, or to be, and I—

(Stanley sighs. They give up the rouse.)

STANLEY:

I saw a beautiful woman in a bar, so I sat there and watched her.

DAISY:

Me?

STANLEY:

Of course you. And then when you left with that man, I followed you.

DAISY:

But, why?

STANLEY:

Because I'm a glutton for punishment, I guess.

DAISY:

So—you—you were going to watch? Or listen?

STANLEY:

...Something like that.

DAISY:

That's terrible.

STANLEY:

I know.

DAISY:

Awful, really.

STANLEY:

I'm so sorry. I'll go.

DAISY:

It's also a little sexy.

(Stanley looks up.)

STANLEY:

What?

DAISY:

And I'm glad you did it.

STANLEY:

You are?

DAISY:

Of course. He was disgusting. Smelled like fish and bad cologne. Not even taking into account what he tried to do. You must have cut too high—up through his temple. Not much skin there. That's the only thing I can think of.

STANLEY:

Let's not talk about it anymore, okay?

DAISY:

Do you think they've found him yet?

STANLEY:

Daisy—

DAISY:

Do you think they'll arrest us both?

STANLEY:

Daisy that's enough, now.

DAISY:

I'd be an accomplice, wouldn't I?

STANLEY:

No. No, you're not an accomplice. You didn't know I had a weapon.

DAISY:

But I did. I knew the moment I saw you; I knew you had a switchblade .

STANLEY:

Yes, but no one else has to know about your gift, okay?

DAISY:

Is it still in your pocket? The knife?

(Daisy stares up at the ceiling with her eyes closed. Stanley goes over to her trench coat which she took off several minutes ago. It's imperative to the rest of the play that Daisy does not see this gesture.)

STANLEY:

Yes. Always on me.

(Stanley gently pulls the blade out of the trench coat pocket for a moment, flips it, and then puts it back in the pocket. Daisy is laying down this whole time with her eyes closed.)

DAISY:

Mm. Thank goodness. My gift is back. Maybe just for a few minutes. Let's play a game, okay?

STANLEY:

A game?

DAISY:

Yes. Just a little game. I make guesses, and you just tell me if I'm right. Okay?

STANLEY:

Easy enough.

DAISY:

You're... 32 years old?

STANLEY:

I am.

DAISY:

You... have a sister! Cheryl. You haven't talked to her in sev—no, six years!

STANLEY:

That's right.

DAISY:

You stopped drinking on July 12, 1956!

STANLEY:

It was July 21st.

(There is a silent moment as Daisy's happy expression fades when she hears she's gotten the date wrong. Her eyes well up with tears and she becomes extremely frustrated. She throws herself back down into the pillows and starts to cry.)

DAISY:

I knew it would only last a minute!

STANLEY:

Wait a minute, wait a minute! Don't get upset—what are you getting upset for?

(Stanley goes to try to comfort Daisy, but Daisy pushes them away.)

STANLEY:

Don't worry about the date! Come on now! Look at all the amazing things you knew. That's... incredible! It's magic! And how could you know such a tiny little detail like a date when no one ever told you?

DAISY:

Because I'm supposed to!

STANLEY:

No, you're not! You're not supposed to know things no one's told you.

Look at me. Look. Now, listen.

I don't know how many people you've told about your gift.

And I don't know how many people think you're crazy, or how many others are scared, or think you're just making it up, but I don't care about any of that. You need to hear this.

You're not *supposed* to know things no one's told you before. No one expects that from you. You aren't expected to do it, do you understand? So, I will never be mad at you for not being able to know something you were never supposed to know to begin with.

But what I will say is that it's amazing. Whatever it is you have.

It's incredible when it does happen, but nobody—not even you—can expect it to happen all the time, or to be perfect when it does. It's just not fair.

(Daisy leans in and kisses Stanley's cheek. It is chaste, but loving)

STANLEY:

Now get your things. We're leaving. We've stayed far too long.

DAISY:

We can't leave, yet. We're not meant to.

STANLEY:

Daisy, come on, now! It's too dangerous!

DAISY:

You just said my gift was amazing when it happened, didn't you! Well, it's happening now!

STANLEY:

Nothing's happening, now! You just don't want to leave because you're scared. But we have to leave the city! We'll get on the train and go out to Chicago. We'll be there by tomorrow and then we can finally sleep.

DAISY:

You're not listening. We're not supposed to leave, now—it's too late.

STANLEY:

Too late for what? Are you saying that if we leave now, something bad will happen?

DAISY:

I think so.

STANLEY:

Oh Jesus—are the cops already downstairs?

DAISY:

Something like that. If—if we leave, they'll find us for sure. But if we stay here and wait... they might just walk away.

STANLEY:

Might?

DAISY:

It's a 50/50 shot...

STANLEY:

I don't like those odds.

DAISY:

Better than the alternative.

STANLEY:

What are they doing, now? Can you see?

DAISY:

No. Not that clearly. I'm sorry.

(A Pause. Stanley paces. She stares at the tree out the window.)

DAISY:

Where will we go? If we leave? *When* we leave?

STANLEY:

We?

DAISY:

You don't want me to come?

STANLEY:

Of course, I do, but I didn't think you would want that. I thought you would just leave in the morning. Make your own way.

DAISY:

What way? I don't have a way. Maybe I could make a way—with you.

STANLEY:

I change my mind a lot, Daisy. I switch directions. I don't know if you would want that kind of life.

DAISY:

Well you're right about that. I'm much too high maintenance. There's got to be some compromise. Maybe you don't wander quite so much, and I'll... drink less. Deal?

(Stanley chuckles.)

STANLEY:

Deal. And where would you like to go?

DAISY:

I don't know. Somewhere beautiful? Paris? Rome?

STANLEY:

I don't have money for fancy places. I'm sorry.

DAISY:

New Orleans? Savannah? No—an apple orchard. Somewhere in the middle of nowhere, New York. With trees like the one outside the window all over the place.

STANLEY:

Sounds nice.

DAISY:

Yeah. You know, no one's ever asked me where I wanted to go before.

(There is a knock at the door. Both women freeze. Another knock. Daisy's demeanor sinks.)

DAISY:

I'm sorry.

STANLEY:

It's not your fault.

DAISY:

But—

STANLEY:

I said it's not. Your fault.

(There's another knock.)

STANLEY:

Who is it?

DRAKE (OFFSTAGE):

Police. Open up. I'm a detective with the NYPD. I just have a few questions for you if you don't mind. So sorry about the late hour.

(Whispering to Daisy.)

STANLEY:

Don't lay down. Don't get in bed. Just sit there.

DAISY:

What—why?

STANLEY:

He'll think we're together.

DAISY:

Aren't we?

STANLEY:

Just trust me.

(Stanley goes and opens the door. Officer Drake is about 35. He is in uniform, and very non-sense.)

STANLEY:

How can I help you officer?

DRAKE:

I'm here to ask you ladies a few questions if you don't mind.

STANLEY:

Is there a problem?

(Drake notices Daisy's black eye and stares for a moment before looking back to Stanley.)

DRAKE:

Not sure. Is there?

DAISY:

I've seen you before.

DRAKE:

I'm sorry? I don't think we've met, miss.

DAISY:

No, I guess we haven't, yet.

STANLEY:

Please excuse my friend, officer. She's had quite a lot to drink. I apologize.

DRAKE:

Earlier this evening there was a homicide out in the alleyway next to the bar. We saw you checked into this room around the time of the incident, so I'd just like to ask a few questions about anything you may have seen or heard coming into the hotel.

STANLEY:

We didn't see or anything, did we?

(Daisy shakes her head.)

DRAKE:

If you wouldn't mind thinking back—Did you see anyone you thought looked suspicious? When you were checking in or—having your drink at the bar?

DAISY:

How did you know we were at the bar?

DRAKE:

The tender gave a detailed description, miss. You're sure you didn't see anything?

DAISY:

Yes. I'm sure.

DRAKE:

That's quite a shiner you've got there.

DAISY:

Designed it myself.

DRAKE:

Heh. You think you're smart?

DAISY:

Brilliant.

STANLEY:

Officer—I'm truly sorry. Daisy here is a little drunk. We don't mean to be difficult.

DRAKE:

Well, Daisy... are you too drunk to tell me where you got that thing?

(Drake gestures to Daisy's black eye.)

DAISY:

Last night. At a bar in Chelsea.

DRAKE:

Looks pretty fresh.

DAISY:

I heal slowly.

DRAKE:

I see. And you two are...? Friends? Or...

STANLEY:

Yes. Friends.

DRAKE:

Right. Traveling together? Girl's trip?

DAISY:

Yes.

STANLEY:

No.

DAISY:

We met recently.

DRAKE:

How recently?

DAISY:

What does that have to do with your investigation?

DRAKE:

Any question I ask could pertain to this investigation. That's my judgment to make, understand?
Now when did you meet?

DAISY:

Last night—A bar in Chelsea. I can't hold my liquor and I started fighting with another girl over a game of pool. Stanley stepped in and made sure I got home. We met again tonight.

DRAKE:

Stanley?

DAISY:

That's her name.

DRAKE:

What's your real name?

DAISY:

That is her real name; what's wrong with you?

DRAKE:

I didn't ask you, miss.

STANLEY:

It is, officer. I can show you my ID if you like.

DRAKE:

Not necessary. Did either of you hear or witness anything out of the ordinary while you were downstairs? Or coming up in the elevator?

DAISY:

No stranger than any other night.

DRAKE:

What does that mean?

DAISY:

I saw a couple kissing back near the restrooms. It seemed... heated. That was all.

OFFICER:

Right.

DRAKE:

Maybe I should take the young lady here down to the station? She said herself she's had too much.

STANLEY:

No, thank you, that won't be necessary. She's safe here with me.

DRAKE:

With you, huh? I apologize—ma'am?—but you must know what this looks like...

DAISY:

Not really. Why don't you tell us what it looks like?

STANLEY:

Daisy, that's enough. Just let me do the talking.

(Drake ignores Stanley.)

DRAKE:

Are you all right here, miss? Do you need help?

DAISY:

Why would I need help? Do you think she's holding me here against my will?

DRAKE:

I'm simply trying to do my job.

DAISY:

Well, you're doing it badly.

DRAKE:

What exactly are you doing here with... her?

STANLEY:

I told you before, officer; we're friends.

DRAKE:

Sure. Sure, you are.

DAISY:

What's that tone of voice, supposed to mean? Seems like you need to learn some manners.

DRAKE:

Miss, you better watch your mouth. I'm trying to protect you from this—

DAISY:

This what?

DRAKE:

Let's not pretend like we all don't know what's going on, here.

(Daisy gets up and approaches Drake. She is unreasonably angry, and very, very drunk.)

DAISY:

Who's pretending? Why don't you tell us what it is you think is going on, here?

DRAKE:

Come on. Look at her. Don't play stupid.

DAISY:

You're sick, you know? You think she's some kind of degenerate because she's not wearing a dress and has short hair? I'm not tied up and screaming, am I?

DRAKE:

No, ma'am, but you are very drunk.

DAISY:

I got myself drunk, and she sure as hell didn't force me. She won't drink a drop! Most men would have slipped me something by now. Would you have slipped me something?

STANLEY:

Daisy, don't—

DAISY:

All she did was bring me water. What a monster! You think she's dangerous? You think she's some pervert who kidnapped me? It was that bastard downstairs in the three-piece suit who tried to drug and rape me. She was only one who—

DRAKE:

The only one who what?

DAISY:

Cared.

(A Pause. Drake speaks into his walky.)

DRAKE:

Standby. Room 317. We'll be coming down in a few minutes.

(He puts the walky away.)

DRAKE:

Look—I don't know what happened downstairs, but I do know what's going on here is also illegal. A misdemeanor in the stage of New York. Six months in prison.

DAISY:

You didn't see us doing anything!

DRAKE:

I don't need to. I've got three witnesses downstairs said they saw a woman in a party dress with a string of pearls and blood on her face being guided upstairs by a man in a trench coat.

I can see now that description was partially wrong...

Too much of a coincidence for me.

You perverts are all the same.

(To Stanley.)

DRAKE:

He see you pushing yourself on her? Tried to pull you off, so you killed him? Men get angry when they see that kind of filth. You can't blame them.

DAISY:

But that's not true! It was the other way around—Stanley got me out of there! Stop this—stop it—it's not fair!

DRAKE:

All right, little lady, that's enough out of you, now.

DAISY:

But I'm telling you what happened! He had me pinned on the ground. Stanley ran up and kicked him, but he wouldn't let up, so—she did what she had to do.

DRAKE:

She did a bit more than that.

STANLEY:

It was unintentional.

DRAKE:

Sure it was.

STANLEY:

Do I strike you as a liar?

DRAKE:

I don't know what you strike me as, ma'am. But the odds aren't looking good.

(Drake takes out his handcuffs and cuffs Stanley, who does not fight him.)

DRAKE:

You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney. If you do not have, or cannot afford an attorney, one will be provided for you.

DAISY:

Wait, what? Just—just her? Why not both of us? Wait—I want to go, too! I’m part of it, too! Aren’t I an accomplice?

DRAKE:

An accomplice to what? All I see is a dead body downstairs, a girl who’s been beaten within an inch of her life, and a dyke pervert with a trench coat that matches all my eyewitness descriptions.

(Daisy reels around and slaps Drake in the mouth. He turns away.)

DAISY:

How about that? Is that enough? Is that enough to get me arrested, too? ...Please?

(Drake checks his lip but shrugs it off, chuckling.)

DRAKE:

You’re one bad behaved little floozy, aren’t you? I should call your father. Or your husband. Let them know what crazy shit you’ve been up to, here.

(Daisy goes to Stanley and embraces them. They cannot embrace her back because of the handcuffs.)

DAISY:

I’m sorry! I should have been able to see, better! I was supposed to see! You saved me. I might have returned the favor.

STANLEY:

You’re not supposed to anything. No one expects it. Least of all me.

(Drake grabs Daisy by the shoulders and pulls her away.)

DAISY:

Wait—No!—don’t—please!

(Drake pushes Daisy away some force. She stumbles to the floor.)

DRAKE:

That's enough from you, you hear me? If you want to be brought in for questioning so badly, fine. My partner is just outside and he'll be in in a minute. Don't you dare touch anything. I've got men stationed at all the doors and elevators.

DAISY:

I'll come find you! I will! I'll call a lawyer, I promise! I'll come down to the station and I'll—I promise you, I'll—

STANLEY:

Daisy, girl. Don't make promises you can't keep.

(Stanley smiles at Daisy sweetly, a kind of gentle admiration that will go forever unreturned.)

DRAKE:

Jeeesus Christ. I'm trying to keep my dinner, all right? Let's go, bull. This is gonna make a good story for the boys.

(Drake leads Stanley away, out the main hotel door. Once Daisy is left alone, she starts to panic; she wanders around the hotel room unsure of what to do. Eventually, she finds the liquor bottle under the pillow on the bed, uncorks it, and takes a swig. Daisy then goes to her coat, and is reminded again that she has no cigarettes.)

DAISY:

God, dammit! No cigarettes! I just wanted a cigarette...

(A moment later, Daisy notices Stanley's trench coat still hanging over the back of the hotel room chair. A moment. She runs to it, and holds it close, almost reverently. Maybe she inhales the scent before starting to go through the pockets, looking for identification. Instead, she gently pulls out the still bloody switchblade that Stanley used to kill Daisy's attacker. Daisy stares at the thing for a long moment.

Daisy laughs. It's a sad, absurd laugh, somewhere between laughing and crying, as if she's making a realization. She then throws the trench coat on the bed, keeping the switchblade in her hand, and walks towards the bathroom door. She opens the switchblade carefully. Slowly, Daisy opens the bathroom door as if still afraid someone is inside. She peers in to make sure no one is there. Ideally, the audience should be able to see the no one is in the bathroom as well.

Finally, Daisy slowly walks into the bathroom, and turns towards the larger hotel room. She peers out and speaks as if Stanley is still in the room.)

DAISY:

See, Stanley? I told you there was a dead girl in the bathroom. And you didn't believe me.

(Daisy shuts and locks the bathroom door behind her. Blackout.)

End of play.

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS: *As a playwright, I often write stories about the unlikely lives of strong, or misunderstood women. When I was studying at the Iowa Playwrights Workshop, I found myself writing play after play about women who were mysterious, otherworldly, intelligent, and somehow knew more than they should.*

The story of The Girl in the Washroom actually starts with my mother, who grew up in a rough part of Buffalo, NY in the nineteen sixties and seventies. She frequently tells detailed stories about her time living in the Sheridan Housing Project with my grandmother, aunt, and her daughter (my older sister) who my mother had at 16. One of the stories I've always found particularly fantastical was about a young, quiet, mysterious girl who stood up for my older sister when she was being bullied on the bus to school. Allegedly, the girl boarded the bus, stood in front of the bullies, and brandished a knife. Nothing else was said or done, but the bullies were petrified and never bothered my sister again.

I've been moved by this story since I first heard it as a child. The mysterious girl's act was one of both kindness and terror, but I have always imagined her as a gentle, misunderstood, almost prophetic person. It stays with me because of its simplicity and selflessness blended with compassion and danger. This mythical person who lives in my mind only as character, seemed like the perfect jumping off point for a play. While the girl was never described to me as non-binary or LGBTQ, that aspect of the script developed as character traits were established and Stanley's relationship with Daisy developed. Everything else is complete fiction—the scenario, the hotel, the officer, the alleyway and Daisy herself—everything except my mother's story, which inspired my initial conception of Stanley.

While many of my plays are firmly positioned within the genre of science fiction, or other high concept, speculative categories, this is one inspired by collective memory, familial storytelling, and the creation of local myth and folklore. Enjoy.

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AUTHOR BIO: Dr. Bella Poynton (she/her) is a playwright, director, actor, and theater scholar. Her plays have been produced and developed at Great Plains Theatre Festival, 3rd Act Theatre Company, Alleyway Theatre, Road Less Traveled Theatre, First Look Buffalo, Theatre Viscera,

Otherworld Theatre Company, and the Sam French OOB Festival among others. Her creative work has been published with Concord Theatricals and can be seen in *The Best Ten-Minute Plays of 2019*, *The Best American Short Plays 2018-2019*, *The Weirdest Plays of 2020*, and *WE-US: Monologues for Gender Minority Characters*. Poynton is a co-chair of the Playwriting Symposium at the Mid America Theatre Conference, and director of the Playwrights Wing at First Look Buffalo Theatre Company. She is an Assistant Professor of Theatre and English at Medaille University, where she also serves as English program director.