

Raison d'etre

by

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Cast of Characters

MARLO :

30's

SHARON :

30's

Place

Marlo's backyard

Time

Morning

2.

Setting: The play takes place in the backyard of Marlo's apartment. A small baby pool is filled and both Marlo and Sharon sit in lawn chairs with their feet dipped in the pool. The lawn is a mixture of grass and dirt. Behind them stands a deteriorating one foot high deck, which attaches itself to the apartment, where there is a single swing door to enter and exit from.

At Rise: The play opens with Marlo and Sharon drinking beers.

MARLO: Saw an ant carrying a dime on its back and thought, that little bastard has more money than me...probably has air conditioning, too. Kicks his feet up after a long day of work, cracks open an ice cold beer, farts till his heart's content in the lap of luxury. Makes it rain on his yacht with all his cronies. Makes complete sense for a bug to be happier than me, don't you think? (Beat.) I'm tired. Gifted at nothing and raving mad at..everything. The walls, the stars, the holes in my socks..stuck in this oversized arm pit I call home, with a landlady who wants to eat me for lust. Not that it's bad to be wanted, but let's face it, I have to be incapacitated for that. To think that I am alive and there is nothing on this planet that makes me happy. What's wrong with my brain? Some days go by and things get so damn quiet that I start speaking gibberish at the top of my lungs. Some form of emotional release. Just the other day I ran back and forth in my kitchen, until I slipped and went flying into the dish rack; had a fork sticking out of my forearm, deeply dangling there...(shrugs his shoulders)...I left it like that...took a nap, woke up and went to the corner store to get a smoked turkey on a roll with a little bit of mustard, some salt and pepper and the guy behind the counter said, "Hey man, you got a fork in your arm." To which I replied, "Yeah, I know." As if I'm a numb. A FORK is hanging out the side of my ARM, I KNOW IT'S THERE! What's the matter with people? Why would anyone think I wasn't consciously aware of the fact that a fucking fork embedded itself in my anatomy? Suddenly, EVERYBODY wants to be helpful and concerned. Yeah? Well, where were you when I DIDN'T have a fork in my arm? WHERE?! ...I didn't say that to the guy behind the counter, but you know, I wanted to...so it goes.

SHARON: You're a donkey.

MARLO: I think I have to do it.

SHARON: You're not doing anythin'.

MARLO: The spot is marked.

SHARON: It's under construction.

MARLO: Where?

SHARON: The place where you want to kill yourself.

MARLO: The cliff?

SHARON: Yep.

MARLO: But it's a cliff.

SHARON: It's inside a park and that section of the park is undergoing construction. I saw it in the papers.

MARLO: Why didn't you tell me?

SHARON: Didn't think it mattered.

MARLO: But what if I traveled there and couldn't get in? What would've I done?

SHARON: ...I dunno, you woulda found another cliff.

MARLO: Don't you see what a miserable existence this is?

SHARON: You're just down on your luck.

MARLO: Luck? I've never had the gene.

SHARON: Luck isn't a gene, Marlo. Luck is...good fortune.

MARLO: And I've never had any of it.

SHARON: Yes, you have.

MARLO: Never.

SHARON: You have so.

MARLO: I am the unluckiest twig in the history of the world.

SHARON: You can't prove that.

MARLO: It's true. (*Beat.*) The other day I took a walk through the park. It was a breezy night and after being trapped in my apartment all week, it was time to feel some fresh air on my skin. I walked through the woods, as far as the water fountain, when I heard somethin' rustling in the leaves nearby. At first, I didn't think much of it. I figured it was some squirrel looking for a nut...but, I heard what sounded like breathing..it was a low, baritone breath. Caused the hair on my neck to rise. So, I looked into the woods and observed this jacked-up, angry ass dog, had no collar, no owner, then growling, madly, as it began to move out from the shadows. That's when I thought I was dreamin' or I should say nightmarin'; Its head, was a head the size of a monster truck with a dead squirrel in its jaws. I was hoping it didn't see me, but when it dropped the squirrel, I quickly realized I was a goner. The beast zeroed in on me and BOOM, launched in full-bodied warrior charge! SO, I dove head first into the water fountain. Didn't even blink. It was the only move I had. When the animal reached the perimeter of the fountain it went nuts, barkin', growlin', foaming. I ain't ever saw such out of control savagery. The only saving grace I had, was that it wouldn't dare enter the water. This went on for an hour, until finally it went back to its squirrel and returned to the woods.

SHARON: Did that really happen?

MARLO: What? Why would I make it up?

SHARON: You like to exaggerate and dramatize.

MARLO: *(Stating.)* Verbatim!

SHARON: You're a survivor.

MARLO: Maybe that's my *raison d'etre*.

SHARON: Your what?

MARLO: Reason for being.

SHARON: You survived and that's positive.

MARLO: Cursed.

SHARON: No, I don't believe you are cursed. I think you're just overthinking, you're attracting all the wrong kinda energy. Break the spell.

MARLO: *(Thinking pause.)* A spell must have been put on me.

SHARON: *(Laughing.)*

MARLO: Don't laugh, I'm serious. Makes complete sense.

SHARON: Who would want to put a spell on you, Marlo?

MARLO: Myself.

SHARON: Huh?

MARLO: I know why...I was five years old...I fell down a flight of stairs, hence the scar on my head and it was then that I realized how unlucky I was and it was then that I accepted my fate of being unfortunate.

SHARON: That's not a spell.

MARLO: But it is! In that moment I rearranged my brain circuitry to think 'Unlucky' and here I am before you.

SHARON: Well, dial it back.

MARLO: We're talking years of getting kicked and shunned by all walks of life. Impossible.

SHARON: I once read that we have the ability to change our neurology, like, the way our brains are wired and stuff, we could tweak the connections for new connections and repurpose our brain. So, whatever it was that you did when you were five years old, it can be altered.

MARLO: It's not like I can go back in time, Sharon.

SHARON: Mentally, you can.

MARLO: I can't go back to being five and change my life.

SHARON: Circuitry. We can change your circuitry by rewiring your brain.

MARLO: Are you nuts?

SHARON: REIMAGINE. Go back into your mind and reimagine that what happened to you was simply an accident. It wasn't the beginning of a long string of unlucky hits along your life's journey. It was *one* incident, a stupid accident and that was all.

MARLO: But what about all the other shit that transpired after that day? I can't go back and reimagine everything.

SHARON: You don't need to. It was the impetus.

MARLO: The who?

SHARON: That one accident that set you off on the wrong path. If you recalibrate that, you might start living your life without thinking you're the unluckiest guy in the world.

MARLO: How do I do it?

SHARON: Close your eyes.

MARLO closes his eyes.

MARLO: And then?

SHARON: Vision yourself seconds before the event took place and instead of having the accident happen, replace it with a lucky thing.

MARLO: A lucky thing?

SHARON: Yes.

MARLO: What lucky thing could possibly have happened instead?

SHARON: Do you have a favorite food?

MARLO: ...Cupcakes.

SHARON: Bingo! Imagine your mom calling you for cupcakes.

MARLO: Really?

SHARON: Just as the accident is about to happen, you hear your mother calling your name telling you that your favorite cupcakes are waiting for you. They are warm, fluffy and smell soooo good.

MARLO: Okay, right, hold on, hold on...

MARLO takes a few seconds to reimagine what SHARON suggested.

I'm about to bite into the cupcake...

SHARON: What's it like?

MARLO: ...the filling is packed with absolute...ahh horseshit, I'm not going any further. My heart ain't in it.

SHARON: You're unbelievable.

MARLO: I'm not.

SHARON: This is your one shot at changing your life and you even refuse to make an effort!

MARLO: I think I like my life as miserable as it is...I mean, I want it changed, but no, I'm not willing to make it too damn perfect. I am going to ride this thing out into the sunset. Don't you see? It's more than a mental fix, this is, it's ME, this is who I am, who I've become and I am comfortable being what I've become...unpleasant. It pleases me, I'm content with my misfortune. Do I want to make a change? Certainly. Will I ever? Maybe not.

SHARON: You sure?

MARLO: You know in Shakespeare that whole, "To Be or Not To Be" thing?

SHARON: Yeah.

MARLO: It's like that. If I choose to be, I am fine, but if I choose not to be, I have no idea what will be. So, maybe rather than tryna change all this, maybe I gotta give in to it a bit. If I won't be what I won't be, it can be far worse.

END OF PLAY