

Keep Me a Fool

by

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Cast of Characters

FIONA:

30's

JULIAN:

30's

Place

Loft Apartment

Time

Present. Late Evening - 10 PM

The action of this short play takes place on a stormy evening in early April on the inside of a large loft apartment in lower Manhattan. The place is spacious with large windows overlooking their wet and quiet cobbled streets.

Fiona, a novelist in her early 30s, graceful, somewhat beautiful but almost gaunt in appearance, is sitting and resting against the windowsill, watching the torrential rainfall on to the pavement outside. Her fiancé Julian, a handsome and successful journalist in his late 30s, is cleaning and putting away dishes after cooking a meal in the kitchen.

JULIAN: You should have eaten with me.

FIONA: I will tomorrow.

JULIAN: Alright.

FIONA: You know I don't like eating late.

JULIAN: Alright, but you didn't eat anything earlier.

FIONA: I will Julian, don't worry about me, I will tomorrow.

Julian finishes cleaning up, the place grows quiet, the rainfall outside rapidly picks up strength. In the same room, Julian moves toward his desk and sits, a large box of books takes space on the corner of his desk and he places it on the floor. He begins to write in his notebook.

FIONA: ...I feel a lot calmer watching the rain out there...it's how my mind has been these last few weeks...like a violent rushing waterfall. And all those dreams I had, vivid. Those parallels, there were so many of them Julian but I only mentioned a few to you, don't you think they were strange? They've still been bothering me, not so much as before but sometimes I just, I want to shut them all out...I want to be left alone. Why is it, that no matter what we do, no matter how much we all will ourselves to focus on our endeavors, life still finds a way of trying to intrude between all these things? I think I'll try to write again, now that I'm feeling better...*(Pause)* I was thinking about that film we watched the other day. Cinema can be so perfect, can't it? I wonder what it was like to be that actress, what do you think she was thinking in that ending scene? There was something about the look in her eyes, I couldn't quite understand it..I couldn't figure it out...

Julian is halfway in his own thoughts, reading from his notebook on his desk.

JULIAN: *(Looking down at his notes.)* Not sure...why don't you read tonight? You just spent almost a month's earnings on books last week. And you haven't taken them out their boxes yet. *(Pause, he looks up at Fiona.)* Fiona..? *(No reply. Fiona appears distracted again, looking out of the window.)* Fiona are you listening to me?!

FIONA: What?

JULIAN: Why are you always doing that?

FIONA: *(Vaguely.)* Doing what?

JULIAN: Ignoring me. I'm asking you...where are we going to put all these *books*?

FIONA: Oh. I don't know, we'll - we'll fit them in the kitchen, in those cupboards...

JULIAN: Okay. I'll let you take care of it when you can. Just don't leave them in those boxes like that for days. You'll end up forgetting about them, mistake them for trash or something...

FIONA: No. I wouldn't do that.

JULIAN: You would if you end up forgetting about them.

FIONA: *(Slightly disturbed by this.)* Why would I do that?

JULIAN: *(Gently.)* Just don't forget about them.

FIONA: Since when have I treated literature like shit?

JULIAN: Not implying that you do.

Fiona gives him a look...

FIONA: Not the one who sold our books...

JULIAN: Let that go, will you.

(Pause.)

FIONA: It is true though, isn't it?

JULIAN: What is?

FIONA: The fact that you sold those first editions.

JULIAN: Fiona! Don't start up again with me on that, we'll get those books back. (*Julian reverts his attention to the papers of notes on his desk.*)...You've mentioned it enough times already.

FIONA: But why did you do it behind my back?...I don't know where you're looking but I've reached the finding, that some of those books we'll never see again...

JULIAN: I had to sell those books because we didn't have the money at the time. I sold my camera too. And I sold pretty much everything we had.

Julian and Fiona exchange looks, both are willing to put up a fight if neither backs down. Fiona senses this and resorts to composing herself.

FIONA: Oh well. I wish we had money then, even if it was just enough to have gotten us through...

JULIAN: We're okay now.

FIONA: After all these years.

JULIAN: We got through it, didn't we.

Fiona walks to the kitchen counter and pours herself a glass of red wine. Julian holds out a glass and she pours him one too. She goes back to sit by the windowsill, Julian walks over to the couch nearby.

FIONA: We would have done things differently back then, if we had the money.

JULIAN: ..Wasn't our time then.

FIONA: (*Subtly sarcastic, slightly laughing to herself.*)...Yes that's funny isn't it? Life's timing. (*Steadies herself.*) The wine's good, thank you for getting it.

JULIAN: What exactly would we have done different?

FIONA: What exactly? Probably everything Julian. (*Pause.*) ...You remember that first night? When we tried all we could to be together but we couldn't afford the night off or the train fare. We would have met on the beach that night, I would have followed you there, without anyone in the world knowing, we would have avoided all those months of separation. To think of it, we were probably better off being poor, money makes you do stupid things. But it's sad when I look back...we wouldn't have fought the way we did if we had money. Right? All those horrible fights we could have avoided. (*Fiona goes quiet.*)... I was so young then...and those fights.

JULIAN: You weren't easy to deal with Fiona.

FIONA: Yes I know, I know. But, isn't it sad when something taints love? Love should be left alone.

JULIAN: *(Softly)* That's life sweetheart, if it were that easy, we'd all be living the dream.

FIONA: The dream? *(Laughs gently.)* I don't think anyone *lives* the dream. I don't think there's one person out there in the world that is content, if they are, it's only for a short while, till their entire world comes crashing down.

JULIAN: *(Teasing.)* Does sound like you're feeling better.

FIONA: You can't say it isn't entirely true. I do wonder though, when we look back, do you really think it was just me who was *all* to blame?

JULIAN: Course not. It wasn't all you...I had a lot of stuff I was dealing with...had to grow up myself.

FIONA: If I could erase those fights completely, I would.

JULIAN: Me too. *(Julian saddens, he watches her.)* Why are you bringing this up? We're past it Fiona...we're not kids anymore.

FIONA: *(Pause.)*...You're right, It's stupid to bring up. I know there were a thousand moments I wouldn't ever change!...*(Looks out the window.)* - I can't get over this rain, it's so heavy out there...

JULIAN: I know that somewhere in you, you think that it changed us. But we never lost each other Fiona.

Fiona doesn't respond.

Fiona remains silent. She continues staring out of the window as she fights to conceal an ache that stirs in her.

JULIAN: There are so many things I would have done differently Fiona, you know that. But you can't take away the time when we first made love, or that time after our first disagreement, when I was calling after you and you turned around and walked back to me, when I held you in my arms on the rocks and we talked all night. I still fought for you then, I fought for you with everything I had. Those aren't moments that last seconds, they stay with us. You can't just remember the bad times. We didn't have much but I still remember the nights we went out, like that time we danced at O'Henry's, when Kieran played the bagpipes, the way your hair touched your shoulders as you moved, I knew then, I'd love you forever.

FIONA: You did?

JULIAN: Yes.

FIONA: ...What was that line in the film, about how love is like the ocean...it moves in waves. It does move in waves, doesn't it?

JULIAN: I think it does.

FIONA: *Sometimes* I love you.

JULIAN: (*Laughs gently.*) Thank you!

FIONA: (*Seriously.*) And sometimes I don't want to love you.

JULIAN: It's okay, I always love you...

Fiona looks at Julian, she gazes at him for a while, almost as if she loses herself in his eyes and suddenly smiles before shifting her attention back on to the streets outside.

FIONA: Look at that rain, it's flooding the streets! (*Pause.*) I feel better Julian, better than I've felt in weeks. I'm sorry you've had to put up with any of it, I just couldn't explain it, this temper I had, this rage, I couldn't shake it off, my chest was a landfill and those visions wouldn't stop. I thought I was going mad since I left the publishing house, when Arnold looked at me like that and handed me back the manuscript, I thought I'd never be the same. I spent years toiling over it and he just threw it back at me as if it was some kind of first draft that a mediocre writer had spent a night of their life on. That feeling struck as sharp as a knife. I trusted him, I really trusted him. I never thought he'd treat our work like that...or our friendship (*She turns away from Julian and becomes distracted by a vision*)...But time has a way with us, doesn't it? I think I am going to write again. I can feel it, it's just starting to take stance within me. If that happens, It'll erase everything with Arnold, It'll be a new piece of work and I won't ever have to worry about what he thinks of it, he'll never see it. But the way we worked together, that will never be again...his edits were always right, weren't they? Just the tiniest fractions made all the difference. Never thought we'd part the way we did. It hurt me Julian, I know you've warned me about this...this trust I endow people with, I often think too much of them and not so much of myself. There's the problem. Well, he's gone and I'll just have to carry on. I'll write till the new words dissipate those feelings, maybe they'll no longer suffocate me then, not when they're replaced.

Fiona gets up and walks toward the coat rack, wherein she grabs a rain jacket.

FIONA (cont'd): If you don't mind, I need to take a short walk, I must think about this.

JULIAN: Fiona - It's pouring out

FIONA: It'll just be for a bit, you know that I always think better in the rain.

JULIAN: Why don't I accompany you?

FIONA: No - *(Abruptly.)* No, that's okay.

JULIAN: Alright -

Julian gets up to grab an umbrella from the hallway cupboard. He hands Fiona the light blue umbrella.

Well, just bring this with you then.

Fiona takes the umbrella and heads toward the door, before opening it to exit she turns back again to face Julian. She places the umbrella on the floor as she reaches to embrace Julian's face with her hands.

FIONA: Julian...*(She kisses him softly.)* Thank you. *(Pause, she takes a deep breath of relief.)* I think I'm ready for something different...

JULIAN: Another novel?

FIONA: Maybe my best work to date.

JULIAN: That's exciting to hear.

FIONA: I don't think it will take long to form. It might even be the best year I'll have! Can you imagine? Only a few weeks ago, I thought I wouldn't be able to ever write again. I'll be so happy if I could write for a while!...We're lucky aren't we? I couldn't imagine my life any other way, it doesn't matter if things don't always work out the way we think they should have, none of it matters...

All that matters is that I'm here with you. The past means nothing now. And you've understood me, I couldn't have asked for anyone better to have understood me, like you have. I'm not perfect Julian, but I haven't ever hurt you, have I?

JULIAN: *(Julian kisses her softly on the forehead.)* No.

Fiona opens the door.

FIONA: *(Pauses and decides not to turn back to him.)* Well, hopefully I'll have some ideas when I get back. Do you think we'd be able to set up my desk again? I might get to work when I return -

JULIAN: Will you need it tonight?

FIONA: I'm pretty sure I will.

JULIAN: It's in the top closet, but I'll set it up if you need it.

FIONA: I won't be long...

Fiona exits. Julian listens after her footsteps as she hurries down the hallway stairs and on to the city streets. For a moment, he is lost in thought, but then becomes distracted by pouring himself another drink and attending to opening the boxes of Fiona's books, putting them away in the kitchen cupboards. As he picks up a box near the front door, he notices the umbrella Fiona left behind, he picks it up, walks to the window, he looks out on to the streets, then back to the front door...

THE CURTAIN FALLS

END OF PLAY