Wake In Progress

Ralph*

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WAKE IN PROGRESS

“I have of late, and wherefore I know not, lost all my socks . . .”

a dada drama

CHARACTERS

SCREAMING MAN
HOUSE MANAGER
MAN
ELLEN
NARRATOR

lights up

a man, dressed normally, enters upstage left and crosses down to center stage. He looks out into the audience and then his eyes fix on nothing. There is a beat, and then he begins to scream, softly at first but building into a great and terrifying howl. As this cry grows, so do the man’s body motions; he tears his shirt open at the neck, his limbs twitch spasmodically, and he falls to the floor.

Twenty seconds after the man’s screaming has gone on too long, the house manager enters stage right, comes down to the edge of center stage, and says:

HOUSE MANAGER: um. There is a beige LTD license plate number SBS 375 with its lights on. um, That’s SBS 375; a beige LTD with its lights on. Thank you.

(either the previous line should be changed to name a real car in the theatre’s parking lot or a plant should get up and leave as though it were his car with the lights still on)

a beat, and the house manager turns straight up stage. He walks a couple of steps and speaks without
turning around.

HOUSE MANAGER: Every day each of us is confronted by madness, bombarded, so much so that no one of us is even sure what madness is. (turns) The Question: Who is mad?

The lights go black and for the first time since the play began, the screaming stops. after a time no longer than the pause between the end of a segment of a television program and the beginning of the first commercial, the lights come back up.

There is a small cafe table center stage and sitting at it, having a romantic late evening cup of coffee are a very well dressed couple.

MAN: I’m really excited honey; if I get this promotion, and I know I will, I’ll be able to get married.

In fact, I bought you this. (takes a ring box out of his coat pocket) Ellen, will you marry me?

ELLEN: (with all tenderness) John I’d-

She is interrupted by the entrance of a dirty man in dirty clothes. This is the DIRTY OLD MAN. Behind him, one half step back and one half step to his left is The NARRATOR. As much as possible, The NARRATOR stays in this close position, relative to the DIRTY OLD MAN, throughout the entire scene.

NARRATOR: (DIRTY OLD MAN clutches his hands to his head like a monkey in a vice-grips, falls to the floor thrashing his crotch against the woman’s chair) (NARRATOR speaks in a great booming voice. He is the thoughts of the DIRTY OLD MAN, who is, in actuality, Jack Kerouac) ok carlo here’s the letter I’m in a frame of mind you would like-right, green fire teahead— Dean and I burned Mrs. Green tonight and we’re stoned the finish line
being crossed and the prizes, first and second, being totally
handed out. (beat) Where was I? who knows...I’d like to
let you know that at this very moment Dean is on the phone
to his mother and If you don’t believe me you can’t do
anything about it. IT’S BURNED INTO

DIRTY OLD MAN: (he stands at attention for a
moment, then slackens, as if an officer has just looked
away from him) WHY’D YOU TAKE THE HOSE
OFF?!!!!!!!!? this light totally sucks. oh it turns out the air
pump is my mom. (beat) Your bed just isn’t comfortable
enough. Ahh! this is totally cashed- had you only one hit?
( a twisted incredulous look wrenches his face)

MAN AT THE TABLE: hahahahahahi guy died I
didn’t say that baby, one man typing does not an interesting
conversation make—

ELLEN(WITH BIG TITS): ahh..ahh I’d love-

DIRTY OLD MAN: I appear to be sucking at a
hose, do I not ? (he does not) I just let go, head rush,
whips, eternity; we’re losing the seal here. (makes kissing
leaps in the air) it’s so good right here, i love you right here
my head swells with love (falls to his knees with a crack of
bone) I SAY RIGHT HERE I LOVE YOU MARCUS
LIKE A PADLOCK WITH JESUS CHRIST.

MAN AT THE TABLE: Where the honeysuckle
wine winds itself around the leg of the table, my heart does
whistle through its hunger. (whipping his head around
to look at an imaginary waitress) Can I see your dessert cart?
(whipping his head around to look at an imaginary haberdasher)
Do the tall black boots come with that? (whipping
his head back to the imaginary waitress) Well then I’ll just
have the hashbrowns. (whipping his head to an imaginary
borrower) Have it back by the third or you’ll be fined an additional fifty cents/day. (his head begins to snap around spasmodically, like a robot with an overactive undercontrolled motor) Do you need to apply for a card then? Are you sure you wouldn’t care to try on a pair of the black ones? I really think you’d look good in those. Chocolate, not vanilla. Uggpht.

ELLEN: Yes! Yes! I will! Yes!

DIRTY OLD MAN: (Begins clutching the curtain or the proscenium and humping against it) **Huayna Capac**, wi’nä k‘i’päk, c1450-1527?. Inca ruler of Peru 1493?-1527?, father of Atahualpa and Huacrar. Also, **Hai’na Ca’pac**. VAGINAL DISEASE!!

NARRATOR: ...witness the flight of the red-bellied frozen cliff swallow (he demonstrates).

ELLEN: Don’t you know? I’m already engaged!

MAN AT THE TABLE: (he is finally looking at ELLEN on the above line, and is astonished by it) But don’t you realize that the Promethean subplot precludes any such interpretation! How can you even approa— I had a drippy once; she was really gross— approach it from that point of view? (A five hundred thousand watt halogen light beacon suddenly comes alive from the shadows at the back of the stage, pointed directly at the audience, blinding them, showing the actors and set in extreme silhouette, and giving everyone present a slight sunburn. The light shuts off a moment later and soft music wafts into the room.) I just don’t believe it...

DIRTY OLD MAN: (now immobile on the floor with ecstasy, shouting, incomprehensible) One! Five! Under! White! TWENTY-SIX!!

NARRATOR: (his voice low, chanting) sex, sex, sex, sex, sex, uh-hu, uh-uh (he is breathing very hard, doubled over, but has had no exertion) soft, white
thighflesh...nipples erect, lolling tongue, dreamy eyes, hot, wet, wetness, pump, thrust, drain, drained, just . . . lie . . . back. Huhhhh. (the light goes down on the narrator, who is, at this point, somewhat apart from the others. The dirty old man lies still where he is on the floor.)

ELLEN: Oh, I’d love to! Of course, I’ll be your wife!! (she squeals with glee and makes as if to rush at the man at the table and kiss him, but reverses her inertia midway over the table and lunges into her food voraciously, throwing it down her gullet) Gulph, glorph, hrrumph.

THE MAN AT THE TABLE: Oh, I totally needed that ice on my balls.

(fade to black.)

(as the lights fade out, the sound of an Emergency Broadcast System test commercial fades in until the room is pitch dark and the noise is loud far beyond painful.)

EBS noise:

(eeeeee)

(after a too long amount of time has passed, the house lights come up) -

(and 100 randomly painted pieces of paper fall from the ceiling, onto the audience)

VOICE: Will those audience members holding the _______ coloured pieces of paper please rise and approach the stage. Thank you.

(men enter stage left and clear the stage. They return, randomly placing seventeen large Ionic columns on the stage and then exit)

MAN: (enters stage left, jogging a Slalom course through the columns, more or less at random) Why am I here? (beat)

( Ellen steps out from behind one of the upstage columns and begins to stretch) I’ve know you and
Thelma for twelve years. She’s been a good friend to me. You and Mel are...

ELLEN: Why?! Because I asked you here, that’s Why! (slightly garbled) I’m very fond of you. (clearer now) Look, why don’t you sit down and relax, I’ll go get drunk. (she begins to jog in place)

MAN: (calmly and still jogging) I don’t find you physically attractive.

(DIRTY OLD MAN enters, jogging randomly around the columns, from stage right. He is followed by the NARRATOR, as before)

MAN: You knew that, didn’t you?

DIRTY OLD MAN: My restaurant destroyed by fire and you never worry about you life. I told you that the other night.

NARRATOR: My only concern is that whatever happens between us will never go beyond these four walls.

DIRTY OLD MAN: My hands get cripple with arthritis and you never even think.

NARRATOR: I don’t even know what I’m supposed to do. I’m not very good at this sort of thing. It was not easy for me to come here today.

ELLEN: No! No, I didn’t know that! ... It doesn’t surprise me ... It’s not mandatory. (starts to jog)

MAN: I think you’re basically a good person. I just don’t particularly enjoy sex.

(ELLEN, still jogging, begins to sob uncontrollably. She may even collide with a few of the columns but none of the other characters pay her any heed)

ELECTRONICALLY ALTERED RECORDING OF THE VOICE OF THE HOUSE MANAGER: The Question: Who is mad?

(the four on-stage actors transform until it is as if they are jogging in quicksand)
HOUSE MANAGER: (from the catwalk, directly above the stage) The Question: Who is mad?

(the actors begin to accelerate and do not stop until they are going very fast. This is also true for the pace of the dialogue between the HOUSE MANAGER and his ELECTRONICALLY ALTERED VOICE, which further increases in pitch, volume and distortion)

ELECTRONICALLY ALTERED VOICE: The Question: Who is mad?

HOUSE MANAGER: The Question: Who is mad?

ELECTRONICALLY ALTERED VOICE: The Question: Who is mad?

HOUSE MANAGER: The Question: Who is mad?

[and this goes on until the ELECTRONICALLY ALTERED VOICE OF THE HOUSE MANAGER has become an insane cacophony; at which point it suddenly snaps off and the four on-stage actors come into a skipping circle down stage center.]

ELLEN, MAN, DIRTY OLD MAN, NARRATOR: (together, singing)

We are!
We are!
We’re the crazy ones!
You’re the crazy ones!
Looney!
Batty!
Nuts!
Bonkers!
We’re off our rockers and out of our heads,
Send us off to the funny farm!
Madness, Madness, We all fall down!

(at this last line they all do indeed fall down, motionless. There is a moment of silence and then a rope falls down into the center of their circle. A moment later the
HOUSE MANAGER descends, holding a lit cigarette lighter)

HOUSE MANAGER: I am the Promethian subplot, and mad too. It’s something we have to live with, every day.

the curtain falls, the house lights come up, and everyone goes home.

Ralph