

Lights Up on a Bare Stage

A short play

By Mark Chrisler

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LIGHTS UP ON A BARE STAGE

In darkness:

MAN

Where do we begin?

WOMAN

Well, it's a play...

MAN

It's a play...?

WOMAN

It's *sort of* a play.

MAN

It's... *play-like*.

WOMAN

Yes. So, I'd think... lights up?

MAN

Lights up!

WOMAN

Lights up!

(pause)

On...

MAN

Lights up on... a kitchen?

WOMAN

A kitchen?

MAN

I think maybe a kitchen.

WOMAN

Not a kitchen.

MAN

That's what I've pictured.

WOMAN
What's what you've pictured?

MAN
In a kitchen. That it would happen there.

WOMAN
But we're not trying to...

MAN
I know, I know...

WOMAN
It's not about *where*.

MAN
You're right.

WOMAN
It's about *what*.

MAN
What it feels like.

WOMAN
Looks like, too.

MAN
But not literally.

WOMAN
So, maybe you're right. Maybe it would be in a kitchen.

MAN
But it's beside the point.

WOMAN
A kitchen with hardwood floors long worn.

MAN
Two chairs at a weathered table...

WOMAN
Left at an angle...

Left at a distance... MAN

Left with a feeling that says... what? WOMAN

That they have no secrets left. MAN

As of? WOMAN

Oh, some time ago. MAN

Recently? WOMAN

Not necessarily recent, I don't think. MAN

What was that moment? WOMAN

Who's to say? Can they say? MAN

Maybe he caught her, in the bathroom, backing out of the shower. WOMAN

And he noticed, on her left side... MAN

Just beneath her waist... WOMAN

A freckle he'd never seen before. MAN

And that was the last thing before... WOMAN

Total knowledge. MAN

I don't like that phrase.

WOMAN

Spitballing.

MAN

It's not right. "Total knowledge." That's not how it feels.

WOMAN

If there were words for how it felt...

MAN

What would be the point of staging it?

WOMAN

Exactly.

MAN

But anyway, they're out of lies.

WOMAN

Is that what we're saying?

MAN

Or... obfuscations. There are no longer any shadows between them.

WOMAN

And so... lights up.

MAN

On...

WOMAN

Maybe they *are* naked.

MAN

In a sense.

WOMAN

No, no. I mean... lights up on... *them*. *Naked*.

MAN

Naked.

WOMAN

It could work...
MAN

Except... isn't that a bit vulnerable?
WOMAN

Very vulnerable.
MAN

But I don't think they are. It's... under the microscope. Nudity.
WOMAN

And for them...
MAN

They've put the microscope away.
WOMAN

No longer anything to inspect.
MAN

Anything to pour over.
WOMAN

All of it laid bare.
MAN

And put away in a closet.
WOMAN

In an attic.
MAN

In a basement.
WOMAN

Not out of shame.
MAN

There's no shame, no.
WOMAN

Out of apathy.
MAN

Out of boredom. WOMAN

Out of atrophy. MAN

Out of avolition. WOMAN

Out of maladroit familiarity. MAN

A freckle near her waist. Or is it a mole. WOMAN

Doesn't matter if we know. Only that he does. MAN

The last of the stories he could tell for the first time. WOMAN

Most she's heard a hundred. MAN

Well-worn floorboards. WOMAN

Scuffed from the chairs. MAN

Left at odd angles. WOMAN

The realization: MAN

They have nothing left to discover in one another. WOMAN

Lights up. MAN

Lights up. WOMAN

Lights up... on...
MAN

Lights up on...
WOMAN

It's heartbreaking.
MAN

It's the realization that comes from the realization.
WOMAN

The realization that without secrets...
MAN

Without mystery...
WOMAN

Without lies...
MAN

There can be no...
WOMAN

In a sense, that those things *are*, in fact...
MAN

Love.
BOTH

Lights up.
(pause)

Lights up on a bare stage.

A long moment.

Black out.

End.