

shatterings

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CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS:

MARIE—Has often considered herself the intelligent one in her previous groups of girlfriends. That said, she has always felt that she gets along better with men. Looking back, she wishes this weren't true. Her maternal grandmother played the violin. Marie never met her, but has seen many pictures. Late forties. Either slightly too thin for her age or slightly too large in the way that most people are.

MARK—Wore glasses in middle school and early high school. Does not wear them now. He grew up in a home close to a pond deep enough to swim in. Was never directly made fun of as a child. He attended a large state university and finally met a group of "others" to which he belonged. He has not spoken to any of them for years. Fifty. Looks either healthy or cute in a way that is under-represented on t.v.

KATHERINE---A smart ass despite herself. Gets most of the jokes she makes, but doesn't think that they are funny. No older than twelve. Quite thin. Does well on school tests without trying.

A WAITER

Scene 1

(Marie and Mark are in an industrial toy store with their daughter Katherine. As Mark and Marie play out the scene, Katherine dances, ignoring the events taking place. When her lines are said she freezes and looks at her father, says the line, then continues dancing.)

MARIE

Katherine Braenard. Katherine Braenard, you get back here right now young lady.

MARK

Leave her alone.

MARIE

Katherine, you ignore your father immediately. That's an order.

KATHERINE

Dad?

MARK

We're leaving Marie.

MARIE

You never loved me.

MARK

That's right. I never loved you. Katherine never loved you. I doubt that your parents ever loved you.

MARIE

Now is not the time for your sarcasm.

MARK

Now is not the time for your drama.

MARIE

(raises the back of her hand to her forehead and moans)

MARK

Okay.

MARIE

(raises the back of her hand to her forehead
and moans)

MARK

Right, so we're leaving.

KATHERINE

Dad?

(Mark and Katherine start to leave.)

MARIE

No!

(Mark and Katherine exit. Marie limply
knocks a toy onto the ground.)

Scene 2

(Mark and Katherine sit at a table in a
hookah bar. Some time passes. Mark fiddles
with the hookah on the table, trying to figure
it out.)

KATHERINE

Dad?

MARK

My sweet.

KATHERINE

Dad, what are we doing here?

MARK

I want to expose you to eastern philosophy.

KATHERINE

I want to be a princess.

MARK

Oh sweetheart.

KATHERINE

Why?

MARK

Why what?

KATHERINE

Why eastern philosophy?

MARK

Sweetie, in the east they understand complex notions of self and identity that we in the west haven't yet....

KATHERINE

Why eastern philosophy when you know that I want to be a princess?

MARK

Well Katherine...

KATHERINE

Princesses are hardcore. No one tells them what to do.

MARK

You'll have to understand many things about the world, both western and eastern, to control your minions.

KATHERINE

What's a minion?

MARK

An obsequious follower or dependent: a sycophant.

KATHERINE

What does that mean?

MARK

A minion is someone who does what you tell them to.

KATHERINE

Am I your minion Daddy?

MARK

No sweetheart. That would make me a princess.

KATHERINE

What if mom were a princess?

MARK

I suppose that in that case you could be considered a minion honey.

KATHERINE

What if Mom were the king of the whole world?

MARK

She would probably be very happy that way.

KATHERINE

Why?

MARK

Your mother can be very controlling.

(a waiter carrying two plates with broken glass on them comes to the table.)

MARK

Ah, here we are. (to Waiter) Thanks very much.

(the waiter nods and exits.)

KATHERINE

Daddy, I want to be a princess.

MARK

Yes sweetie I know. Maybe you can be a princess tomorrow.

KATHERINE

What happens tomorrow?

MARK

I don't know. You might become a princess.

KATHERINE

I have hopes and dreams.

MARK

You have hopes and dreams.

KATHERINE

Do you want to know what they are?

MARK

Yes.

KATHERINE

I want to balance an elephant on my nose.

MARK

Oh sweetheart.

KATHERINE

And grow flowers out of my ears.

MARK

Katherine honey, if you want too much, you will never be satisfied.

KATHERINE

And be a dolphin.

MARK

I want you to be whatever you want.

KATHERINE

Maybe a mule..... because they can pull heavy things.

MARK

A mule is the sterile hybrid offspring of a male donkey and a female horse, characterized by its long ears and a short mane.

KATHERINE

Maybe I could be some kind of combination...

MARK

(poking with his fork at the glass)

This is broken glass.

KATHERINE

Dad, this is stupid.

MARK

I can't believe they served us broken glass. Excuse me, waiter! Waiter!

(The waiter approaches the table and nods curiously.)

MARK

Hi. Yes. I'm sorry to disturb you, but our plates have broken glass on them.

(the waiter nods)

MARK

Yes, well, maybe there is something that you can do about that?

(the waiter nods)

MARK

You see, it isn't much good to us as is. It's used.

(the waiter nods three times)

MARK

Take it back and bring us something new.

(the waiter takes their bowls while nodding. He exits. Mark and Katherine briefly sit in silence.)

KATHERINE

Dad?

MARK

My sweet.

KATHERINE

Why did you bring me here?

MARK

Eastern philosophy.

KATHERINE

why?

MARK

Citta: "Ordinary consciousness" in Hindu Yoga, as contrasted with *Purusha*: "our inner transcendent self."

KATHERINE

You know everything.

MARK

No. It's written on the napkins.

KATHERINE

Napkins?

MARK

Look, Honey, look at the paper by your plate.

KATHERINE

Am I learning?

MARK

That's a question that only you can answer sweetheart.

KATHERINE

Then I say yes, I'm learning. "It's a wonderful world."

MARK

Who taught you that?

KATHERINE

A wonderful world with elephants, flowers, and mules. It's on the napkins.

MARK

I don't believe someone would write such a thing on napkins.

KATHERINE

But, it's right here.

(The waiter carries two plates with unbroken glass on them.)

MARK

Much better, thank you.

KATHERINE

Dad, do you think mom is a princess?

(Mark takes his piece of glass and breaks it on his knee. Katherine's mouth drops when the glass breaks and she screams silently.)

(pause.)

KATHERINE

Ow.

Scene 3

(Katherine sits on the stage making a beaded curtain. The beads are broken pieces of glass. Throughout the scene, her focus stays on building the curtain. Mark's voice is either pre-recorded or he is staged in the background.)

KATHERINE
Dad

MARK
Katherine

KATHERINE
For years I didn't realize that your name is Mark.

MARK
That's my name sweetheart.

KATHERINE
It rhymes with spark, Dad. You can teach me one thing. Go.

MARK
It's important to take a conscious role in building yourself.

KATHERINE
Thanks, Dad.

(Katherine stands up and stretches.)

Scene 4

(The setting is the same as scene 1. This time, we see the scene from a different, skewed point of view.)

MARIE
Katherine Braenard. Katherine Braenard, you get back here right now young lady.

MARK
Leave her alone.

MARIE
Katherine, you ignore your father immediately. That's an order.

KATHERINE

Dad?

MARK

We're leaving Marie.

MARIE

You never loved me.

MARK

That's right. I never loved you. Katherine never loved you. I doubt that your parents ever loved you.

MARIE

Now is not the time for your sarcasm.

MARK

Now is not the time for your drama.

MARIE

(raises the back of her hand to her forehead and moans)

MARK

Okay.

MARIE

(raises the back of her hand to her forehead and moans)

MARK

Right, so we're leaving.

KATHERINE

Dad?

(Mark and Katherine start to leave.)

MARIE

No!

(Mark and Katherine exit. Marie limply knocks a toy onto the ground.)

Scene 5

MARIE

I was going through some old boxes that never got unpacked from the move 8 years ago, and I found this. You remember this? It's the essay that you wrote before Katherine was born. The paper is all faded now. "Man's best attempt at being God." Anyway, I think that you should write more. It makes you feel God-like. You say so right here. "I have always considered writing to be the closest that I could come to creating life. Now finally, a daughter will be born. And I will be a Father, a Creator."

I want you to keep writing. I really did love you. I really do. It's more important to me that things work out for you than it is that things work out for us. So please, don't stop writing. I know how important it is for you.

One more thing. If you take Katherine from me, I'll kill you. She's half mine.

Scene 6

(This scene takes place in the past. Katherine and Marie sit in the living room of their house. Marie is stretching and dancing. They are listening to Cuban Jazz from the early 60's.)

KATHERINE

Mom?

MARIE

Katherine, this is it, this is it Katherine.

KATHERINE

Mom?

MARIE

Do you dream about beaches Katherine? Do you ever dream about emerging from a body of water into pure natural heat, yellow and sweaty? Glorious sunshine that dries you before your body hits the towel?

KATHERINE

I like to bundle mom.

MARIE

What's that sweetie?

KATHERINE

I like sweaters and scarves and intricate knitting patterns that play.

MARIE

Okay, come on sweetie, here is the best part. Everybody up. (*singing*) Ba Ba bam! Asi Asi! You'll remember this later honey. You have to dance while you can. Those legs won't last forever.

(pause.)

KATHERINE

You're beautiful Mommy.

MARIE

C'mon Katherine, up up, this is what I want to give you. Give me my motherly-moment. You can make fun of me later to your friends.

.....

There you go. This is reality Katherine. You can't buy music, only attempts to capture it. You can't buy reality sweetheart.

(Katherine stands awkwardly as her mother dances with her arms. Katherine smiles as Marie tries to get her to dance.)

MARIE

Ah. I see that. I knew you would love it.

KATHERINE

(awkwardly) I'm a dancing machine!

Scene 7

(Mark and Katherine are sitting in an ice cream parlor. Some time passes.)

KATHERINE

Dad?

MARK

My sweet.

KATHERINE

Dad, what are we doing here?

MARK

I want you to learn about goodness, morality, and the conventional appropriation of gender.

KATHERINE
What's gender?

MARK
Well, it's a process really....

KATHERINE
Penis?

MARK
Katherine. Don't say that. Maybe it would be better to talk about this when you're older.

KATHERINE
If you don't teach me, I'll just learn it on the streets.

MARK
Where did you hear that?

KATHERINE
On the streets.

MARK
What?

KATHERINE
The streets Dad, where some serious shit goes down.

MARK
Don't say shit sweetheart.

KATHERINE
They say the damndest things out there in the world.

MARK
Excuse me?

KATHERINE
I think you know what I'm saying Daddy. It's a dog eat dog world out there, and I don't want to be anybody's bitch.

MARK
Calm down Katherine.

KATHERINE
Being calm in for the feeble minded. I need to raise some hell.

MARK

All right honey, let's get something to eat. What'll you have?

KATHERINE

Something made of bats and firecrackers.

MARK

This is an ice cream parlor. It's not the place for a revolution. Please try and think of some way to be happy in these surroundings.

KATHERINE

Smoothies and non-fat yogurt be damned. This country was founded on milkshakes!

MARK

What?

KATHERINE

You heard me.

MARK

Where did you come up with that?

KATHERINE

It's written on the napkins.

MARK

I need you to pay attention to me when I talk. I'm trying to help you.

KATHERINE

But, Dad, look what's written on the napkins.

MARK

Katherine.

KATHERINE

Read the napkins.

MARK

"Smoothies and non-fat yogurt be damned. Morality is forever. Right and wrong are forever. Choose to be good. Choose right. It's what America was founded on!" T-M Parlor to Parlor incorporated.

KATHERINE

Right and wrong are forever?

MARK

Maybe we should get a milkshake.

KATHERINE

Sounds gross.

MARK

You mean “delicious.”

KATHERINE

They look like something that fat people eat. I don't want one.

MARK

Katherine. C'mon, we'll split one.

KATHERINE

I don't want that. I've changed my mind.

MARK

You can't throw away everything that our parents taught us.

KATHERINE

The Qur'an says:

“When he said to his father and his people: ‘What are these idols to which you cling so passionately?’

They replied: ‘We found our fathers worshipping them.’

He said: ‘You and your fathers were in clear error.’”

MARK

Where did you learn that?

KATHERINE

Eastern Philosophy Daddy. What's appropriation?

MARK

It's when something is granted for a definite purpose: grant, subsidy, subvention. When did you start reading the Qur'an?

KATHERINE

I'm not telling.

MARK

Why not?

KATHERINE

It's a secret.

MARK

It seems like just yesterday you were reading the three little pigs.

KATHERINE

Oh, to be a pig!

MARK

Excuse me?

KATHERINE

You wouldn't understand.

MARK

Why not?

KATHERINE

Secret.

MARK

Just a minute. Waiter!

(the waiter comes forward and nods.)

Hi. I was wondering if we might trouble you for a milkshake and two straws.

(the waiter nods)

One milkshake, two straws, my good man.

(the waiter nods twice and leaves)

MARK

What were you saying?

KATHERINE

I was talking about the Qur'an.

MARK

What a book that is.

KATHERINE

Yes. Dad?

MARK

Katherine?

KATHERINE

I need to ask you a question.

MARK

Anything.

KATHERINE

Are you and mom separating?

MARK

You shouldn't worry about things like that sweetie.

KATHERINE

Why?

MARK

You're young. Big problems are for big people.

KATHERINE

Why?

MARK

Your mother and I are just experiencing some difficulties.

KATHERINE

Why?

MARK

Yes, I think that we might be separating. Whatever that means.

KATHERINE

Can I still be a princess?

MARK

I don't see why not.

(the waiter arrives with the milkshake.)

MARK

Thank you.

(Mark opens two straws and puts them in the glass. For a minute the two sit and drink from the milkshake together.)

KATHERINE

Daddy, I feel that I don't know who I am anymore.

MARK

Why?

KATHERINE

Everything is broken. I can't piece anything together.

MARK

Why?

KATHERINE

I think I'm separating.

MARK

How could you say such a thing?

KATHERINE

I don't know how to make sense of myself.

MARK

Katherine, don't be ridiculous. Someday you will be a grandmother and see everything from a different side. You'll work it out.

KATHERINE

I think I'm separating.

MARK

With age you will know who you are.

(the two drink again from the milkshake, pause, and look at each other.)

Scene 8

(Earlier in time. Marie and Mark are still together. They are sitting in their living room while Katherine is playing in the corner. Mark is setting up a lounging chair.)

MARIE

Why are you doing this?

MARK

What do you mean?

MARIE

I mean this is ridiculous, and I don't understand what's happening.

MARK

I'm getting older. It's as simple as that.

MARIE

Simple as what?

MARK

I'm getting older.

MARIE

This is ridiculous.

MARK

(Mark pulls at the skin on his face.)

Look. Look at me just for a minute. I'm getting older.

MARIE

So what? You've been getting older ever since you were born. What happened that is making you act differently all of a sudden?

MARK

Do you see my face Marie? I'm an old man. I can barely look in the mirror without crying anymore.

MARIE

You're being ridiculous.

MARK

A man reaches a point Marie, where all of the things that he has done up to that point seem insignificant.

MARIE

Don't give me that man bullshit.

MARK

You should know...

MARIE

Maybe this is some bullshit conservative concept that you are carrying around from before or something...

MARK

People's opinions change

MARIE

You used to be fresh and unconventional.

MARK

People's opinions change Marie.

MARIE

That doesn't mean that everyone turns into some emotional fart when he gets older. Why are you doing this?

MARK

I'm fifty. I'm fifty years old. I have reached a certain point. I cannot be the dreamer I once was. I've run out. I'm tired.

MARIE

So you are going to put this chair in my living room?

MARK

I'm building a den.

MARIE

Why?

MARK

I'm building a place to read, and watch t.v., and think and do nothing. Every man should have one. That's what Thomas Edison said.

MARIE

What?

MARK

Thomas Edison said that every man should have a den.

MARIE

You're trying my patience.

MARK

Get used to it.

(Katherine enters eating bread.)

KATHERINE

Dad?

MARIE
Thomas Edison?

MARK
Things move quickly around here Marie. I've run out of energy. (to Katherine) What is it?

MARIE
We'll see about that.

KATHERINE
The t.v. is busted again. Is that a new chair?

MARK
I'll come upstairs to fix it in just a minute. Your mother and I are busy right now.

MARIE
You're father is losing his mind Katherine.

(Katherine walks over to the chair and sits down.)

KATHERINE
I want to play too.

MARK
Katherine, please don't start.

MARIE
This is a very important moment in your history Katherine. Surely there is no way that you can understand now the importance of the first time that you saw your father as a feeble, weak, old, pasty-faced man—his oldness circling all of us as it lingers limply in the air.

(Mark stares at Marie.)

MARIE
I'm kidding! I'm kidding you jackass! You're not old. Get over yourself already.

KATHERINE
(to Mark) Get over yourself pasty-face.

MARK
Katherine.

KATHERINE

Excuse me.

MARK

Katherine, you have to leave now. Your mother and I need some time to sort through some things.

KATHERINE

The t.v. is broken!

MARIE

Honey, come give Mommy a kiss goodnight.

MARK

(to Marie) Can you please just leave me alone tonight?

KATHERINE

Mommy, I want to stay in the chair.

MARIE

What?

KATHERINE

I like the chair.

MARK

Sweetie, this is Daddy's den. Go to Mommy.

KATHERINE

I like the den.

MARIE

Katherine.

MARK

Get out of the chair.

MARIE

(to Mark) Looks like you don't have to be all that old to enjoy the den after all. (to Katherine) C'mon honey, Mommy'll put you to bed now. Your father wants to be alone with Thomas Edison.

(Mark stares at Marie.)

KATHERINE

I want to stay.

MARIE

(walks over to Katherine and takes her by the hand.)

Let's go.

KATHERINE
Goodnight Dad.

(Mark waves.)

KATHERINE
Will you fix the t.v. after I go to sleep?

(Mark waves again. Katherine exits with Marie. Mark sits in the chair with his head in his hands.)

KATHERINE

(As they walk offstage)

What's wrong with Dad?

MARIE

He just thinks he's an old man honey. You know how men are.

KATHERINE

Tell me about it.

If you'd like to read the rest of the play, please send me an email – todayavidmyers@gmail.com.