

MADISON, a boyish 28, sits alone with his drink beneath a NO SMOKING sign. An unlit cigarette behind his ear.

SARAH

Madison, this is my best  
girlfriend. I just know you two'll  
love each other. She's a writer.

Madison half rises. Takes her hand. Genteel.

MADISON

(Virginian accent)  
Very pleased, I'm sure.

SARAH

Madison teaches at the University.  
English.

Sarah dances back into the crowd.

DAUGHTER

I'm impressed.

MADISON

I'm just a T.A.

DAUGHTER

Still. Working on your Masters?

MADISON

(correcting)  
Doctorate. What do you write?

DAUGHTER

Screen plays. These days. And no,  
nothing you'd have seen.

MADISON

No.

DAUGHTER

And some poetry.

MADISON

(his eyes wander)  
Of course. Poetry.

DAUGHTER

Whatever form fits. Career wise  
not so good, but...

MADISON

...but you linger on the outside,  
writing your alienation.

DAUGHTER

No. I stand both feet in the  
margins writing the hope I'm unable  
to forsake. And you?

MADISON

None of the life of quiet  
desperation for you, then?  
(careful of her feelings)  
Even with your lack of success.

DAUGHTER

I've always thought reading  
desperation into it, however quiet,  
deepens the blindness to our part  
in nature's vibrant wonder.  
Contrary, perhaps, to Thoreau's  
intent.

He speaks over her head, at some imaginary class, perhaps.

MADISON

No. Thoreau puts himself back in  
nature, argues against the artifice  
of civilization.

DAUGHTER

So like man, to disdain what he's  
sacrificed all of nature for.

MADISON

Can men outlive their origins?  
(quoting)  
A wild man; his hand will be  
against every man, and everyman's  
hand against him.

DAUGHTER

But Melville carries his Ahab down  
persistent crazy for revenge  
strapped to a creature with no  
memory of the maiming, poor thing.

His eyes flicker over her. She's caught his reference.

MADISON

The brutal fight for survival.

DAUGHTER

Learning the laws of nature not to understand but to overcome - to force nature's carry of our shame - in some inside out projection that gives permission to destroy.

A wisping link of energy spun from their shared knowledge drifts from Daughter toward Madison.

MADISON

Man must press on, exterminate the wilderness within.

DAUGHTER

Until the conversation stops again on the single theme, can we save the earth from ourselves?

MADISON

(quoting, again)

Madame, all stories, if continued far enough, end in death; and he is no true-story teller who would keep that from you.

DAUGHTER

Ernest?

Madison nods, rewarding a promising student.

DAUGHTER (CONT'D)

Hemingway killed himself!

MADISON

It's true, after such a hard fight that sad retraction at the end.

DAUGHTER

Leaving us? Abandoned! By the very writer who narrowed to tissue the gap between self and the miracle. We're left to wonder, are his tales life giving sustenance? Or a eulogy to meaning's scattering ash!

A wisping link of energy crackles off Daughter electric.

MADISON

(taken aback)

Pardon me, but that's easy for you to say. Your critical stance carries no weight. As you yourself say, no one's listening.

DAUGHTER  
(still trying)  
I have lived my life surrounded by  
stories that do not speak for me.

MADISON  
Would anything? Speak for you?

A woman, KIMBERLY, 28, appears. She and Daughter smile at one another. She sets a drink in front of Madison.

KIMBERLY  
Here, darling.

Small wisps of energy flow from Kimberly toward Madison.

MADISON  
(re Kimberly)  
You made me lose my train of  
thought.

KIMBERLY  
(playful)  
Oh dear, not again. So sorry.

MADISON  
(introducing)  
My wife, Kimberly. This is...a  
writer.

DAUGHTER  
We were discussing the end of the  
male narrative. Join us?

Madison blinks. What?

KIMBERLY  
Thanks, but I think I'll dance.

She makes eyes at Madison. Twirls away.

MADISON  
(at DAUGHTER)  
I'll tell you a story.

DAUGHTER  
I'm all ears!

MADISON  
You are a boy, not near grown. Sent  
from your family, from a mother  
dear to you, to a military academy.

DAUGHTER  
 (interrupting)  
 I've always felt so for that child.  
 (off his annoyed look)  
 Even in the name of a fine  
 education.

MADISON  
 The school is housed in a tower  
 turned in on itself. All around  
 are high windows with one-way  
 blinds. Behind them the Master  
 sees all.

Madison holds Daughter with his gaze.

MADISON (CONT'D)  
 You never know when you're the one  
 he's watching, so you learn the  
 lesson of the perfect prisoner, to  
 guard yourself. You, the boy, are  
 bound inside this construct all  
 your formative years, your chance  
 time. A system touted for passing  
 on the achievements of man instead  
 steals your dreaming. The promise  
 of exchange, betrayed.

Daughter is unable to contain herself any longer.

DAUGHTER  
 Oh! That makes Foucault so real!  
 (off his deflated look)  
 That was your reference, right?

MADISON  
 That was my youth!

He defiantly lights his cigarette as he walks out.

Daughter looks to Kimberly, watching from the dance floor.

4 INT. DANCE FLOOR

4

Kimberly shrugs, what's to be done? She continues to dance.

EXT. HO-DOWN TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

Madison smokes. Daughter comes around corner to join him. He  
 does not acknowledge her presence. Perhaps he does not  
 recognize her, here in the changed light of the outside.

DAUGHTER

Our dramas spin a cycling return  
but narrative, how the meaning is  
passed on, evolves. A cultural DNA.

She waits for Madison to recognize her.

DAUGHTER (CONT'D)

Perhaps I don't value highly enough  
how difficult it is marking turf on  
that exhausted soil where men tell  
their stories. I apologize if I  
hurt your feelings.

MADISON

(focusing on her)

Oh. It's you.

DAUGHTER

Your tale of self imprisonment  
while truth, runs us in circles.  
For me, the juice would be in the  
out forced by the betrayed promise.

MADISON

The out's a fight.

DAUGHTER

Fighting's for boys. Look more at  
the scar and how the tissue breaks.

MADISON

Are you saying I'm in danger of  
becoming the tower?

DAUGHTER

That tower? Emptied. We're in the  
remaking now and stand unarmored on  
the body littered field in a tight  
fisted shouting match over who is  
heard. And what gives meaning.

MADISON

You think I'm a collaborator.

DAUGHTER

I think you're a good son trying to  
make right on the wager your  
presence is so unique it will bring  
change.

MADISON

And you?

DAUGHTER

My faith the same as all shutouts.  
That a knowing will come for what  
we are and not for the shine our  
capture lends. And that our  
inclusion will heal. Like your  
beautiful Kimberly.

MADISON

What's my wife to do with it?

DAUGHTER

You feel for her that upturned  
force we name love but find mostly  
framed as threat. At least in the  
stories of men.

She opens her palm as if from it energy emanates.

DAUGHTER (CONT'D)

There, in love's delicate keep lies  
our chance to practice the let of  
loss. Perhaps your interest in  
towers would benefit from a study  
of our ancient impulse to imprison  
those we love.

Kimberly appears from around the corner. The women nod at one another.

KIMBERLY

(at Madison)

Ah, here you are.

Relieved, Madison throws away his cigarette, puts his arm around Kimberly's waist as if a pulsing energy spins with his embrace.

MADISON

Let's dance, my darling.

He leads her back the way they came.

Alone, Daughter smiles.