

Things Have Changed

(A 10-minute play)

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This is an experimental piece. It's the telling of a story which is illustrated by the actors as it is being told. The narration jumps around, so the stage image put forth by the actors must be clear.

There are three narrators who each have a different focus on the events they are narrating. They aren't named during the course of the play, but in the script they will be called THE NARRATOR, THE CURATOR, and THE GOSSIP. The Narrator usually narrates the parts which advance the present day plot. The Curator delves into the background of events and history, sometimes of a very tangential nature. The Gossip talks of bits of personal trivia of the characters. The narrators do not usually interact with the actors who portray characters, and each has a different demeanor. The Narrator has an urgent, dispassionate delivery, like a news anchor. The Curator speaks in a way that is too grandiose for the words he is speaking. The Gossip is casual, sarcastic, and snarky.

The scenes in this play take place over the course of a week.

At rise, PAMELA, a woman in her late 20's, watches television. She nervously grips a remote control. While the narrators speak, she tries to watch but she is very uncomfortable.

On the TV, a woman named DAISY, also in her late 20's, carries a bowl. This may be recorded footage or the actress acting it out live. She looks concerned as she talks to someone off screen.

DAISY: Do I have to eat all of this? OK.

ALL NARRATORS: Thursday.

THE NARRATOR: On Thursday evening a woman tries, and fails, to watch an hour of television. The television functions perfectly well, as does the woman, but the viewing is incomplete. The woman is named Pamela.

THE GOSSIP: So this TV is one of the new flat screen high definition TVs. It's like the most expensive thing she's got.

THE NARRATOR: The show that is not viewed completely is named *1 Million Reasons to Sell Your Soul*.

THE GOSSIP: You know, the show where the "S"'s that begins "Sell" and "Soul" are spelled with dollar signs.

PAMELA: Oh my God. Oh my....

Pamela hits the remote control. Daisy stops. Pamela holds her head in her hands.

THE NARRATOR: It is Pamela's function to write about the show for a web site. The show depicts a group of participants who try to win one million dollars by enduring a series of humiliations and embarrassments.

THE GOSSIP: This they call "Reality TV".

The Curator stands and gets ready to speak for the first time.

THE CURATOR "Thursday" is named in honor of Thor, the Norse God of Thunder.

Pamela presses a button on the remote control, rewinding the scene.

THE NARRATOR: Pamela hits the rewind button on her TiVo. A thunderstorm strikes Pamela's city on Thor's day, pouring four and a half inches of rain onto the streets of Boston.

THE CURATOR: That is equivalent to 11.43 centimeters.

THE NARRATOR: 19.7 million Americans watched the show that night. They witnessed a painter from Las Vegas as she tried to eat live earthworms from a bowl.

THE GOSSIP: She calls herself a painter. It's easier to say that than it is to describe her real job of fitting video game characters with realistic looking hair and clothing made out of pixels.

THE NARRATOR: The woman's inability to eat all of the worms resulted in her elimination from the show. She is being flown to New York to talk on television about this. The woman's name –

PAMELA: *(To the TV)* Daisy. Daisy. It's really her.

Pamela presses play on her remote.

DAISY: Do I have to eat all of this? OK.

THE NARRATOR: Over the course of the next week, both of their lives will change.

ALL NARRATORS: Friday.

Daisy mimes being interviewed on a morning talk show by an unseen host.

THE NARRATOR: On Friday in New York, early in the morning, Daisy discusses on one TV show the significance in her inability to ingest 1.3 pounds of earthworms on another TV show. She is followed on the show by the secretary of defense.

DAISY: ...I didn't mind the taste so much, Lisa, but 1.3 pounds is a lot...

THE CURATOR: The measurement known as "Pounds" is from the English measuring system, which has been replaced in England by the metric system.

THE NARRATOR: Daisy has traveled many kilometers to discuss the implications of eating 1.3 pounds of earthworms.

Daisy moves from the "interview" and moves to a party setting.

THE NARRATOR: In the afternoon, Daisy travels further eastward to her home town in Massachusetts. She grew up in the town of Salem on the north shore.

THE CURATOR: In colonial times, Salem was the site of a series of infamous trials which convicted certain citizens, mostly females, of witchcraft. 19 of these people were hanged after their conviction, with one pressed to death under a heavy weight. None, however, were burned at the stake as is popularly thought.

THE GOSSIP: Today, this dark period in American history is used to fuel tourism.

THE NARRATOR: In the present day, Daisy's parents are holding a small party to honor their daughter's new fame, such as it is.

Pamela enters as Daisy is talking to someone. Daisy does not see her.

THE NARRATOR: It is there that Daisy meets the writer Pamela for the first time since they were both in high school together.

Pamela taps Daisy on the shoulder.

PAMELA: Daisy?

DAISY: Hi, I'm-

They stare at one another intensely.

DAISY: Pamela. Oh my god.

PAMELA: You look-

DAISY: Different?

PAMELA: No. You look just like I remembered. Just like I remembered. I hope you don't mind my surprising you. I mean your mom and my mom still talk-

DAISY: I don't mind at all. Really.

THE NARRATOR: Daisy and Pamela look at one another for a long time before either of them speaks again. They have not seen each other for ten years.

ALL NARRATORS: Saturday.

Daisy carries a few printed pages and reads it while pacing the stage. Pamela does the same.

THE NARRATOR: On Saturday, Daisy reads an article on the online version of a newspaper that she used to read everyday. She prints it out to read it.

THE GOSSIP: Yeah, when Daisy was growing up, her family had the paper delivered to their door every morning, and they each read it together like a ritual. The way things are these days, none of them have bought a newspaper in months.

THE NARRATOR: Daisy finds the article Pamela wrote about the show Daisy appeared in. She reads it aloud to herself. At that exact moment, Pamela is doing the same thing.

DAISY: "The woman eliminated at the end of the episode is a Massachusetts native, an artist named Daisy."

PAMELA: "...in a better era, someone as striking and beautiful as Daisy would be a star of stage or screen."

DAISY: "These days, we find ways to shove bowls of earthworms in her face."

PAMELA: "I guess that counts as progress."

ALL NARRATORS: Sunday.

Daisy takes a package and gives it to a narrator.

THE CURATOR: The post office does not deliver packages on Sunday. To have something delivered on Sunday, one must use UPS or FEDEX.

THE NARRATOR: On Sunday afternoon, the day before Daisy is scheduled to return to Las Vegas, a UPS driver delivers a package to Pamela's Boston apartment. The address to her apartment was found by Daisy by using a web search engine, google.com.

The narrator gives the package to Pamela.

THE CURATOR: A google is a number that is expressed by the digit 1 followed by exactly one-hundred 0's.

Pamela opens the package.

THE NARRATOR: Pamela opens the package. It contains an antique silver hairbrush matted by wispy blond hair and a scrap of paper with the words "I'm Sorry" written on it.

THE GOSSIP: Pamela knows who sent it. She knows it immediately.

Pamela exits the stage.

THE NARRATOR: Pamela gets in her hybrid car and drives to Salem.

THE CURATOR: Pamela uses the tunnel recently completed as part of the Big Dig, named after the last player to bat .400 in the majors. Ted Williams. The Big Dig is highly controversial, marked by delays and cost overruns. Now deceased, Mr. Williams' head is cryogenically frozen and preserved. This is also controversial.

Pamela reaches the part of the stage where Daisy is standing. They freeze and stare.

DAISY: You got my package.

PAMELA: Of course I did. I was waiting for it. *(Pause)* I was waiting for you.

DAISY: Really?

They kiss.

THE GOSSIP: While they kiss, Pamela tries not to think about all those earthworms that Daisy ate not so long ago.

ALL NARRATORS: Monday.

Daisy appears holding a suitcase. She is met by Daniel. Daniel happens to be a minority, while Daisy happens to be Caucasian, though the fact of their interracial dating is not commented on by any of the characters.

THE NARRATOR: At the Las Vegas airport, Daisy is met by Daniel, her fiancée.

DAISY: Hi.

DANIEL: Hi, sweetie.

They hug and kiss politely.

THE GOSSIP: No, she hasn't told him yet.

THE CURATOR: The fiancée Daniel was born and raised in New Orleans, a city that was almost washed into the sea some months ago, but moved to Las Vegas, a city built from nothing but desert sands, to begin a career as a professional online poker player.

DANIEL: I saw you on TV.

DAISY: Oh, yeah? How did I do?

DANIEL: OK, I suppose.

They walk off stage.

THE CURATOR: During their relationship, Daisy had been perfectly content with Daniel's companionship. Daisy had mentioned to Daniel of an incident in high school with her best friend, and the emotions it stirred.

THE GOSSIP: He didn't mind. It kind of turned him on, truth be told.

THE NARRATOR: Daniel had always heard this as a harmless story. But over a dinner that is at first awkward and then even more awkward, Daisy tells Daniel of her meeting with Pamela, and everything that it entailed.

THE GOSSIP: They eat at this Italian slash Chinese all night buffet with an Egyptian pyramid décor scheme. [*Shrugs*] Vegas.

DANIEL: So that's it then.

DAISY: Daniel-

DANIEL: You don't want to be with me. Is that what you're saying?

DAISY: I don't know what I'm saying.

DANIEL: I don't want to throw away everything we've built. You know? We've been together too long to just, change everything just like that.

DAISY: I know. I just want- I don't know what to do. I don't know. Just let me sleep on it.

ALL NARRATORS: Tuesday morning.

Daisy and Daniel sleep.

THE NARRATOR: On Tuesday, Daisy has a dream.

THE CURATOR: The human dream state occurs during the REM state. That stands for "rapid eye movement". Cats experience REM sleep, but dogs do not.

THE NARRATOR: Daisy suddenly awakens from her dream.

Daisy awakens suddenly, sitting upright in her bed. Daniel does not move.

DANIEL: (*Groggy*) Whas' wrong?

DAISY: I just had a dream. I was, I was in our apartment, and... I had to keep moving aside these piles and piles of hairbrushes. Antique hairbrushes.

On the other side of the stage, Pamela brushes her hair with the silver hairbrush.

THE NARRATOR: In the dream, each hairbrush is exactly the same, exactly like the one that Pamela gave her in high school.

DAISY: I mean, the front door is blocked by this gigantic mound of hairbrushes, so many I can't get out. Eventually I tell myself it's just a stupid dream.

THE GOSSIP: She's disappointed by the level of symbolism of her dream, which is a little cliché for her tastes.

DAISY: Daniel? Did... Are you awake?

THE NARRATOR: Daniel is awake, and he hears every word, but he pretends not to. He now knows what her decision will be, perhaps before she knows herself, without her having to say it.

THE GOSSIP: The man plays poker for a living. Of course he knows how to read people.

ALL NARRATORS: Wednesday.

An animated Pamela and Daisy act like high schoolers. Pamela leaves a note on a locker, which Daisy soon opens and reads.

THE GOSSIP: When they were in high school, Pamela and Daisy used to pass notes which they put in each other's school locker. The future writer and the future artist, they invented this series of complex symbols, signs, and references that they could quickly scribble on a scrap of paper to say what was their mood. Two or three times a day, they would leave each other these notes.

Pamela walks by the spot where they left notes, and looks at it sadly.

THE GOSSIP: When they stopped speaking to one another, they missed that the most.

THE NARRATOR: On her 16th birthday, Pamela gave Daisy a gift. A beautiful antique hairbrush, which Daisy immediately adored. Pamela then tried to give Daisy a kiss, and nothing was quite the same after that.

THE GOSSIP: She kept the hairbrush, though.

Daisy takes a piece of paper and draws on it.

THE CURATOR: In Massachusetts, marriage between people of the same sex was declared to be legal. In eleven other states, laws were passed to make it explicitly illegal.

THE GOSSIP: Things ain't like they used to be.

THE CURATOR: Things have changed.

THE NARRATOR: On a piece of fine stationery, Daisy draws from memory a rendering of an antique hairbrush. Her lines are practiced and precise.

THE CURATOR: As she draws, she reflects on the chain of events that led up to this moment, and how the things that happened could only have happened the way it happened.

THE NARRATOR: Satisfied with the drawing of the hairbrush, she writes three words next to the sketch. She folds the paper, puts it in an envelope, and seals it. As she puts the letter into the mailbox, her heart skips just a little. That is the point where her decision becomes irrevocable. She walks away. The words that she wrote on the paper are these:

THE GOSSIP: “Things have changed.”

THE CURATOR: “Things have changed.”

THE NARRATOR: “Things have changed.”

The End