

BABS/PROFESSOR

ACT II • THE MUDDLE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

↓START

2.0 MY WIFE

[Late that night THE PROFESSOR and BABS are drinking. He's in some pain, maybe in his joints or his body overall. It is hard for him to get comfortable...]

PROF My wife. My third wife...

BABS Yes...

PROF This *fascinating... this captivating... this insanely alluring* creature...

BABS ... yes?

PROF *Hates me.*

BABS Oh?

PROF *And loves me...*

BABS Of course...

PROF I mean, she must love me a little, or she wouldn't have married me, right?

BABS Absolutely.

PROF But, no, beyond any question, she hates me now, too. As only a wife can... A kind of... *glacial... long-simmering... cat-footed* little hatred... a glowing-embers-long-into-the-night kind of hatred.

BABS Gosh...

PROF I don't know what she was thinking. I mean, look at me...

BABS Ummm...

PROF No, seriously, look at me. This is what I look like. Exactly this. This is me.

BABS Yes it is.

PROF And, if you'll recall, I didn't look much better when we met, in case you were wondering... or *excusing... or judging...*

BABS I wasn't...

PROF No, maybe not. Maybe that's why I can talk to you. You don't judge, do you?

BABS Not much, no.

PROF Why is that?

BABS Oh...

PROF No, seriously, why?

BABS Oh, my 20's, I guess. After a certain quantity of unnecessarily stupid choices and thoughtless acts—some with real consequences—I decided one probably ought to relinquish the right to judge others for anything...

PROF I see. *[Quick beat]* Were these... indiscretions of—?

BABS Oh shhhh. No stories. Besides, you're asking for the wrong reasons. Anyway, you were saying? About you and your wife and how you look...?

PROF Oh. Oh, yes... Well, here's the thing. Here's the odd little lacuna of my life...

BABS Lacuna?

PROF Umm... unfilled, unknown space. Puzzle. Gap...

BABS Gotchya.

PROF Ready?

BABS Astound me.

PROF I don't look like this in my mind.

BABS No?

PROF Not even close.

BABS Really?

PROF Absolutely.

BABS So... what do you look like in your mind?

PROF Better. Much better. ~~My self-image is... amazingly better than the reality.~~

TEND

Even as I speak to you, at this precise moment, when I picture in my mind what you're looking at, though I know for a fact that you are seeing... *this [gestures to himself]...* what I imagine is something much closer to... *oh, Sean Connery circa *The Untouchables*, maybe... or Alan Rickman in *Sense & Sensibility*... rather than... a slightly bloated, badly-aging Bill Maher.

Whereas—and here is the oddest part of my much-maligned married life—I'm afraid my wife's self-image works unrelentingly in the opposite direction.

BABS Really?

PROF Absolutely. Shockingly, her self-image leads her to perceive herself much less like the near-*Kate-Blanchet*-like siren that she really is, and more like a... sweaty, disheveled *Lena Dunham* after 10K charity run for Africa...

BABS You are such—

PROF *[Ignoring her, going on...]* And what I think happened here is... well, I think her self-image somehow fell in love, ass over teacup, with my self-image. So when people see us together they tend to think "What the fuck?"— which I have to tell you is not a great deal of fun when you see it play so rampantly across the faces of people you are being introduced to for the first time over and over and over again. But... if they could see us as we so oddly see ourselves... then they'd probably think: "Hmm. Seems about right."

BABS Well, that's... that's quite a—

2.1 CHANGE!

ELLA *[ELLA enters, sees him...]* Oh, hey... You're still awake? Hi Babs.

BABS Hi. *[Getting up right away...]* And bye...

ELLA You don't have to go.

BABS Oh, yes I do. It's late. Nighty-night you two love birds. See you in the morn.

ELLA Good night. *[BABS leaves slightly awkwardly...]* What were you two / talking