

ELLA/PROFESSOR

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

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

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 Mamer.*

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.

↓ START
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~~

PROF Nothing.

ELLA Oh, God, were you really talking about us?

PROF No, no, I was just

ELLA Robert...

PROF I just can't— I can't quite believe that it's come to *this*. It's like everything I touch eventually turns to shit, I / can't catch

ELLA Well, that's awfully sweet of you...

PROF a break, and I end up feeling horrible most of the time, trapped in an insupportable, perdurable miasma / of lost

ELLA Oh, please just *talk*! Don't... *write it*! Just say it!

PROF This is me! This is how I talk. This is who / I am!

ELLA Then change! Try to change for the better! For me!

PROF You change! *You try*! Try— you know— *LIKING ME*, for instance!

ELLA Oh, Lord Almighty, not again, I love you, you fucking idiot, but that doesn't mean you automatically get a free pass on / every annoying

PROF So you don't like the way I *talk*? You really want me to change how I *talk*?!?

ELLA Yes! I *do*. I really do. You don't talk to people any more, you talk at them, or or or through them, or... or *over* their heads in order to humiliate them.

PROF Oh, please...!

ELLA [*Going right on...*] What was that with Vanya today, with the Virgil quote?

PROF That? That was a perfectly apropos reference / that was appropriate

ELLA Oh please! You did it to shame him. You rubbed your Virgil in his face like an old dead fish! You've gotten meaner, you have.

PROF That's a stupid thing to say.

ELLA It's not! When did you become such a flagrant prick? You weren't always this way, were you? Or were you, and I just couldn't see it?

PROF *[Truly taken aback...]* I have no idea how to answer a question that asinine.

ELLA There's contempt in your voice, Robert, and that can't be a good thing! Vanya can be as annoying as it gets, but he's not an idiot and he's not the devil, and we're trying to make nice here, / not piss everyone off.

PROF *[Agreeing sheepishly, perhaps...]* I know, I know, you're right, you're right...

ELLA And I'm sorry if your whole life has "gone to shit", but I'm still part of that life / and I'd appreciate it

PROF That's not what I meant...!

ELLA if you'd pull your head out of your ass and make a fucking effort!

PROF Oh, God, I don't feel well.

ELLA *[Having tread this path before...]* No, no of course not...

PROF It's not my fault. I'm all achy...

ELLA Did you have dinner?

PROF No. I couldn't bear the idea...

ELLA Oh, great, now I get the Trifecta: Sick, tired *and* hungry. Now you'll be cruel on top / of being cranky and pouty

PROF Oh, I'm so sorry if my pain is inconvenient to you!

ELLA so you'll be *completely* unbearable.

PROF I thought I was *already* completely / unbearable. Aren't you--

ELLA *More* unbearable, *extra*, *super-duper* unbearable why in God's name would you choose *that* to pick a fight about / in the wee hours...

PROF Go to bed, then, go / to bed..

ELLA You go to bed! You go!

↑END