

Fairhaven

*a theatre piece from **Plays of Pure Land**
by Adrian Guthrie*

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FAIRHAVEN

from *PLAYS OF PURE LAND* by Adrian Guthrie

(At the extreme end of a spit of sand or with a still sea beyond to a horizon.)

Strindberg

The sea beats the drum skin
sand at Fairhaven.

This same Fairhaven which
was once a place of family holidays.

The same sky - bleached blue.
And the sea - a yellow blue surge.

That, over there, past the estuary
is Guiltbluff, with the lighthouse on it.

Perhaps I'll never leave this place now -
but always remain in my haven.

'Haven' takes on a new meaning
when your holiday is unending.
Could I move on if I wished?
Do I *wish, will, want?*

Bosse

I want to recall Summer hours
in the house by that same sea -

I want to listen to the sea
and feel the Summer sun

I want to remember other Summers
by the sea,
other times shared with
my daughter's father -
the writer, Strindberg.

I call that name -
I summon him:
August Strindberg,
writer of plays,
come and take your part.

(Strindberg turns, as if summoned. He assumes an obliging attitude. They still do not see

each other.)

Bosse Say your lines, now.

Strindberg May 31st, 1900
Froken Bosse visited me,
first time.

Bosse God, that's his voice!
He's reading from the diary -
The Occult Diary.

Strindberg At the dress rehearsal of
To Damascus -
an inexplicable scene with Bosse:
I went on stage to thank her -
there, surrounded by a lot of people
and talking to her seriously
about the scene with the kiss -
her face suddenly grew larger,
came closer, and became
supernaturally beautiful,
while her eyes enveloped me.

Then, without a word, she ran off,
and I stood there dazed -
intoxicated by this miracle.

After this she haunted me for three days -
I could feel her presence in the room.

Bosse So it was,
he imagined my presence
before we married -
and after I left him -
a renowned relationship!

Strindberg I fancied I had telepathic
relations with her.

Bosse So he did.
A renowned relationship
mine with Strindberg!
But there was more to it than that -
more poetry...

And the diary is only one version of it ...

Strindberg *To Damascus Part Three* is written with her

in my mind.
For we now “live together” telepathically,
and she has initiated me into a
sexual relationship
more intense than any in the flesh.

Bosse Look!
The figure over there, looking out
over the sea! Strindberg!
(She laughs.)

Now, he’ll walk away towards
the inlet, towards the light.

Then, he’ll stop
out on the furthest tip of the spit.
(She laughs.)

Strindberg February 12th.
Woke 2 am.
Possessed her when she sought me.
My telepathic relationship with her
has intensified alarmingly.
In my thoughts I live with her.
It threatens to bring about a catastrophe.

Bosse I dream I am here.
This is my dream.

By dreaming I secure a world
around myself.

I keep my imagination to myself.

Strindberg didn’t -
he wrote his fantasies
as if they were common currency.
He didn’t speak of them to me, however,
he *spoke* of his feelings in abstractions...

Strindberg Today I found myself choosing
the furniture of the bride’s bedroom
from a catalogue!

I feel myself to be engaged to her.

March 1st.
Woke feeling my fate had been decided.
Wrote a letter to Bosse -
it should be delivered at this moment.
I know nothing -

I have no presentiment of anything.

March 5th.

Wrote to answer her letter to me.

Despaired she would come.

She arrived at four o'clock.

At five o'clock I was engaged.

May 6th.

Married for the third time

after an engagement

full of marvellous moments

and brave struggles against the ugly.

May 8th.

She says I am the man for her.

Harmony. Jealousy.

She went to a masked ball.

I bought trunks and threatened

to go away.

Sleeping apart. Reconciled.

June 22nd.

Harried went to the country.

Two white pigeons.

25th.

Harriet home.

Reading my play.

26th.

Radiant morning, full of joy and hope.

In the evening she left

without saying goodbye

without telling me where she was going.

Loss, sorrow, despair.

August 9th.

She is pregnant.

Bosse

I love the sunsets here -

the descent into the womb.

Night moves in.

Strindberg Does *she* know I am here.

Bosse Just my self.
 Just this self.

Strindberg Does she know I stand here -
 in this hell,
 it looks quite cold -
 not like the fiery hell
 in the children's stories.

 It is stupidly cold -
 and my self possession
 disappears in fits of shivering
 convulsively.

Bosse I was his alchemical experiment.

 With our relationship he tested
 his work on transmutation.

 And I, the crucible,
 bore the base metal and produced gold -
 or, rather, did not.

 But if I was his vessel,
 I was also his Sphinx.

 I placed the riddle
 and he answered it.

 So it was,
 he had chosen me to do this.

 But he seemed uncertain of his
 own ability to answer -

Strindberg I answered her riddle

Bosse Don't say that,
 you didn't know where to begin.

Strindberg You do know I'm here!

Bosse I summoned you!
 This is my dream.

Strindberg No!

You are my mother!

Bosse Oh, a strange incestuous thing!

Strindberg *(Laughs.) The Mother!*

Bosse And me thirty years younger than you!

Strindberg The Terrible Mother.

Bosse Terrible in my appetite!

Strindberg Terrible in your table manners! *(They laugh.)*

So you bare me
in this alchemy -

an unfair thing I ask of you.

Bosse *(Reconciled.)*
Unfair indeed!

Strindberg I ask you to reconcile me to life.

Bosse And to women.

Strindberg Women preoccupy me -
but I cannot say I've done them justice.
Somehow, I believe they hold the key to life.

Bosse We bring life into the world.

Strindberg I though your skirts
emerge a whole man.

And you, through your labour
bare life itself.

While everywhere we create
an ornate culture
to substitute our creative labours
for *The Labour*.

Bosse We shared a dream -

Strindberg No.
Two people dreamed,
and in their dreams they met.

Bosse You cast me in a role

I could not play.

Strindberg You asked me questions
I could not answer.

Bosse Rest, now.

Strindberg Harriet,
may I still dream of you?

Bosse We may all dream.

But rest now.

Although only an actor in our play
you wrote a text which we then lived by -

Now I have summoned you
to answer what was left unanswered. -
now, you must rest.

While we may all dream,
we may all write,
we may all play the parts.
The sea at Fairhaven
beats the same
for each player in the play.

The waves drum -
our foot beats.

But the foot fall will be heard
when the foot's moved on.

The waves do not leave the sea
to beat the drum skin sand.
Rest now -
and I will rest.

Listen: the sea.