

Split Brain :

A love story

Abigail Nutter

Our Cast

The Right Brain.....played by Her, a.k.a She

The Left Brain.....played by Him, a.k.a He

The Mind.....played by His and Her Apartment

Love and Loss.....played by the lost Lover, a.k.a Them

So many thoughts.....played by the Noise

Anyone New.....played by the Guest or the next Guest

And a dog

Act I

The weather is arguably perfect (even though She prefers rain or snow), so He and She go on a walk.

She runs ahead on the trail, leaving Him behind.

He watches her go for a moment as She runs back and forth, stepping three or four feet off of the trail at times before backing out of the brambles again.

At first He finds Her amusing and watches her darting back and forth, and now She's falling behind Him. She and a squirrel are having a staring contest. She loses, and She's off again.

He starts to think about how slow their progress is on this path.

He can't help but compare Her to a dog off its leash. Running back and forth, covering itself with dirt and thorns and dying flowers.

It feels like sandpaper is grating against the highest part of his ribcage as She keeps running, She won't stop running and stumbling around like some child, and He can't bear to look anymore.

He drops his eyes with a heat on his neck and his palms.

Love me, He thinks he can hear Her say from up the path.

I'm so sweet, gobble Me up.

He can't even look at Her.

Act II

She doesn't like the way that He thinks.

When She tells Him her best joke, He looks at Her with a quiet mouth and a loudness behind his flat eyes. She can hear the grinding of the gears in his head even through his bedroom door, always grinding, grinding, grinding bone to dust to make bread, so late one night, She slips out of their Apartment down a ladder of stars and tree bark. She runs underneath a path of constellations until She can't hear his gears any longer, only the buzzing in her own head.

She finds another on the boardwalk by the endless lake a mile from Her Apartment. As soon as she sees Them, she knows They are a Lover, like Her.

The Lover can hear her mind buzzing with a billion bees when She sits next to Them. She and the Lover look out over the black water, over the silver streak smeared straight out from the boardwalk to the moon. The two stare at the path and wonder about where it could take them if only they had faith.

Act III

The Lover has two eyes with a million colors each.

She looks at the Lover until she can't find any new colors. Then the Lover blinks, and She is lost for an hour more until she recognizes the Question in their eyes.

She dips a humming hand beneath the neckline of her silky nightgown, drawing the Answer with a fingernail just below her collar bone. Red syrup as sweet as strawberries and cherries spills out with the best piece of Her, and She holds it all out in her open palms to the Lover.

The Lover reaches up to the sky and snatches a constellation of stars, elbow still bent. They fashion the string into a thin, gold chain, and sprinkle her heart with stardust that still clings to their palms.

Then the Lover leans over the dark lake, holds Her close, and coaxes the image of the two of them from the water's face onto a sheet of film. They slip the photograph into her new locket. She bows her head forward and They brush her neck with their fingers as They clasp the locket around her throat, a promise, settled right on top of the slit on her chest.

Act IV

The Lover loves Her until Their fancy ends, and then They leave Her sitting, staring at the black lake that was only ever water.

Act V

She wears the picture of Her and her lost Lover around her neck in a metal locket shaped like a fool's heart.

It weighs heavy on Her, pulling her posture over into a curved question as her hair hangs over her face and collects twigs and leaves from the ground it sweeps with her every step.

When She sees the moon across the black lake, She clings to her locket, the only heart She has left, and cries.

She challenges the lake and drowns herself in pity and the past every day until bedtime.

But She dreams that her lost Lover is lying in bed next her, holding her hands to their beating heart.

The salty water drains out the cracks in the floorboards as the moon lazes across the starry garden, resting on the roof of Her and His Apartment.

Act VI

Her lost Lover is no guest of His.

Every day, He analyzes her daily routine until He synthesizes a plan to break it.

One night, when She is sleeping next to her dream of her lost Lover, He sneaks to her bedside and lifts her locket from her neck, past her lips, past her reddened eyes, past even her tangled hair.

He snicks the clasp open with his neat nail and inches the picture out of the metal heart, watching her blue-tinted face carefully in her sleep. Still.

He takes the small photograph and rips it right in two pieces, 56% and 44%.

He swallows the 56% with her lost Lover and the right side of her face.

The picture was smaller than a nickel. He couldn't have helped but to rip a bit of her as well. She is resting now, in his gut, next to their decomposing dinner.

Still, He reasons, a new cycle will be better than this one. Or at the very least, it will be different.

He slides the photograph back into the heart and clasps the metal around her neck, resting just under the neckline of her slip, two and a half inches out from the hole in her chest cavity.

Act VII

She doesn't cry at all during the next day.

The floorboards of their Apartment are dry, but they have been weakened and made musty by weeks of floods.

The right side of face is softer. It doesn't tighten with tears. It doesn't lighten with laughter. She moves slowly,

softly,

so she doesn't fall through the floorboards.

He watches her and notes the improvement in her posture with a protractor leveled on the kitchen counter.

He goes to his bedroom and sleeps easy tonight, knowing that He has broken the cycle.

She goes to her bedroom and fights off the empty space next to Her with breathing exercises. She ignores the ladder of stars and bark outside of her window, taunting her again.

Act VIII

He wakes up in the middle of the night with a wild cough. He turns over in bed, bracing himself against his mattress with his forearms, barking a cough until a scrap of paper roughly half the size of a nickel drops out through his teeth with a chunk of yellow phlegm. He stares down at it for a moment before slipping out of bed.

He enters the hallway.

He inches her door open, sees her back to window, sees half of her face staring at Him in the doorway, sees the dark and the stars and the bark behind her. He sees it through the right side of her face.

He closes the door again and sits at their computer in the kitchen and Googles "Symptoms of depression" and "Would a dog help with depression."

Act IX

They decide to have a Guest over on Friday, for the first time in many Fridays.

They clean up around the Apartment, hiding the dirty laundry under the bed in his bedroom, stacking the broken bowls in the dusty cabinet, slipping the rotten food in the trash, covering the starry window in her bedroom with a beach towel.

She finds a yorkie dog hidden with her pillows in her bedroom.

He peeks into her room to see if She likes it. He clings to a blue collar.

It smells like dog, She says, but she takes the collar from his hands and clips it around the dog's neck gently.

They cut up flowers from the windowsill garden and stick them in a blue vase on the counter.

They put the good, overstuffed chair facing the door and dust the bookshelves.

He and She sit side by side on the love seat with their hands in their laps, and wait.

Act X

The Guest rings the doorbell.

She glances at Him and bites at the dirt under her nails until He gets up and opens the Apartment door. The Guest comes in and looks around, nodding in short staccatos with each glance around the room. The Guest takes a seat in the oversized chair and settles in.

After a moment, She moves to the rocking chair next to the Guest, staring everywhere but the eyes.

He brings a plate of cheese and crackers from the kitchen to Her and the Guest. The Guest devours the whole plate in an instant and starts to look under the couch cushions for more crumbs. He and She follow the Guest with their eyes. He studies the Guest and begins to play with the clasp of his chain link watch and listens to it ticking. When the Guest lifts up another cushion, She starts to laugh to herself in short, private bursts.

After approximately ten minutes and 36 seconds, the Guest asks to use the bathroom. He and She glance at each other before pointing down the hallway. The Guest only makes it a few steps before landing on a sour board and falling through to the waist. The Guest is fazed at first, but looks up when She starts laughing again. Laughing and crying, shaking the house, waking up everything hidden in the cracks and under the bed and behind the beach towel. Clouds of must rise from between the planks of soft wood.

The Guest scrambles out of the floor and scurries for the door.

The visit is over now, He reasons.

Act XI

When He opens the Apartment door, the Guest runs out. The Noise bundles out the front door after the Guest. The tiny yorkie dog follows in excitement.

The roar of the television, the running sink, the flushing in the bathroom, the dying of the flowers, something crying in a bedroom, a bowl tipping out of the cabinet and shattering on the green tile floors. The stars singing from behind the beach towel.

His ticking watch.

Her laughing.

The Noise blows the Guest right off of the front porch and into the quiet yard. The Guest lies there, unmoving, as the yorkie dog licks their face with her sweaty pink tongue.

He and She look at each other, shrug, and close the door again.