

Excerpts from
MASCARA FOR THE EYES OF GOD

By Cass Brayton

CHARACTERS

SHE: Woman, mid- to late-50s

HE: Her son, the drag queen

SHADOW: Male.

S C E N E 1

(A woman sits in darkness before a vanity mirror. A bird caw-caw-caws in the distance. Lights up as SHE leans toward the mirror applying mascara. As she considers her reflection, SHADOW enters behind her, puts his arms around her, hugs her, kisses her on the neck. SHE savors the memory.)

(Lights up on her as SHE leans into her mirror, but she can't see clearly enough. She picks up a hand mirror, examines her face closely and tries on different looks: pensive, regal, coquettish – all unsatisfying. She holds the hand mirror closer. A bird again caw-caw-caws in the distance. Her shoulders slump.)

SHE

The issue—
The issue—
The PROB-lem
has evolved beyond the merely cosmetic.

(She smashes the hand mirror.)

I shouldn-a done that.
(sighs)
There's a lotta things
I shouldn-a done.
When has the time come to stop?
When did certainty evaporate?
How long ago did it disappear,
along with that look,
a look you had that once whispered
"Come hither"—
maybe all husky and Bacall,
but still, you know,
a whisper.
But now
you find yourself saddled with a look that shrieks
"Flee!
Flee!
Flee for your life!"
Eye of the beholder,
I suppose.
Is it too much?
Over the top?
Excessive?
Hunh!
Don't you love excess, though?
For me?
Excess is the one thing
I never get enough of.
They've always said—
They've always said that I'm too much.

A wa-a-ay wa-a-ay wa-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-ay
 too much.
 THEY said.
 "Hell yes!" I say!
 Hell yeah! yeah! yeah!
 I am, Babe.
 I am too much.
 And if—
 if that's what you think—
 if you think that I'M too much,
 then chances are, Babe,
 chances are that for you?
 I am.
 I AM too much.
 One gone chick.
 That's what they always said.
 One real gone, far out chick!
 And look—
 you won't get an argument outta me.
 Not outta me.
 Nuh-uh.
 'Cause I'm a lover, Babe,
 I'm a lover, not a fighter.
 Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha.
 R-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!

HE (*from the darkness*)

Are there any more Pop-Tarts?
 I don't see none.

SHE

Keep looking!

HE

Can't find none.

SHE

Then someone musta ate them all up.
 Who coulda done that I wonder?
 Hunh?
 (*softly*) I'm putting on my war paint.

HE

Hungry!

SHE

Then masturbate or something!
 (*softly*) Be normal, why dontcha!
 For once.
 "Take care of me!
 Help me!
 Help me!
 Help me!
 Me! Me! Me! Me! Me!"
 God damn broken record.

Just like his old man.
 Most likely.
 Whichever one that was...
 Having a kid,
 let me tell you,
 that's where—
 I think that's where it all begins,
 the long, long, long decline.
 You start out tripping, right?
 tripping on the possibilities.
 "Wow!" you think.
 "Babies, man!"
 "I could—
 I'd like to have one of those."
 Wrong!
 You don't have babies,
 they have you.
 Forever more.
 And more and more and more, and still more!
 They want this!
 They want that!
 They need! They need! They need!
 Is there no fucking end to it?

HE

Hungry!

SHE

Eat some baloney!

HE

No bread!

SHE

Impediments! Impediments!
 -- (to HE) Improvise! Have some escargot! --
 Little geniuses of obstacle.
 That's what kids turn out to be.
 You find out ...
 there's no end,
 no fucking end
 to those bliss-filled nights you spent
 with The Stones 'n' The Beatles 'n' The Animals,
 boffing,
 boffing,
 boffing till the sun comes up.
 You roll over, you go to sleep
 then one day there you are,
 scrounging around,
 trying to figure out
 what happened to the god damn Pop-Tarts!
 Yeah, Babe.
 You can kiss those pretty nights goodbye.

(SHADOW enters, mimes The Boyfriend)

SHE

You wanna put out a fire?
 Look into his eyes
 when you tell your boyfriend
 you are pregnant.
 Watch how fast a spark'll turn to ice.
 No more flame, no more ember,
 and surely no smoulder.
 If you could squeeze that look into a jar,
 you'd have a flame retardant
 you could make a killing by selling to Monsanto.
 Before your very eyes
 your dreamy adolescent rebel studmuffin
 shrivels as he watches his future dissolve
 from hunter into gatherer.
 The light in those eyes disappears
 as surely as he will some day.
 It may take weeks, it may take years,
 but he is already gone.
 Gone, gone, gone.
 You grab for a life preserver
 as the slow-mo sinking of your ship unspools—
 it'll all work out,
 this blessing in disguise,
 these mysterious ways...
 But no one hears this soundtrack.
 Not him. Not you.
 The fetus? You wonder.
 The close-up on the eyes
 tells you all you need to know,
 all you never want to know,
 all you refuse, refuse to know.
 Blinds on the window of his soul
 —I need you!!!—
 now shut tight.
 Whatever he's thinking he keeps to himself.
 No more fumbling and groping of hungry hands
 under your sweater,
 his cool probing fingers in your hot, sticky panties,
 at least, not without you dropping hints,
 inviting him, cajoling him.
 That doesn't last either.
 You,
 once his succulent cherry pie,
 now his poison apple.
 That's you, Babe.
 That is now you.
 Now you stand alone
 among The Lonely,
 an orphan from
 the grace of God.

(S C E N E 2 "MYSTERY GUEST")

S C E N E 3

(SHE lies in a hospital bed, groaning the groans of childbirth.)

SHE

What is it
 you ate or drank or smoked or shot
 that could possibly turn
 a normal fetus so gloomy?
 Nurses should not be standing there
 telling you
 "It's a boy.
 And it's morose."
 "It's not my fault" you cry.
 "Understand!
 I am a happy person!
 I never cared for the Existentialists!
 I never cared for Edith Piaf!
 I like Dylan!
 I like Chaka Khan!"
 No matter.
 You hear their guarded whispers
 behind the curtain scrim
 before white wingcaps poke on through,
 warily approaching the bed,
 not really wanting you to hold
 this not-really-bouncing
 little bundle of woe
 lest you make him even sadder.
 "Here" they entice.
 "See?"
 And they hold him at an angle
 like they're about to entertain bids
 on the Home Shopping Channel.
 "This is what came out."
 You reach for it.
 "No, no, no" they say.
 "Let's wait till you get back
 some of your strength
 before you try to hold him.
 You must be oh-so tired."
 "No.
 Not really."
 "We'll just put back him in the nursery for now."
 And through choked back semi-sobs
 you manage to stutter
 "But...
 But...
 But...
 I - am - so - freakin' - happy!
 Honest!
 I like Runt!
 I like Tommy James and The Shondells."
 No matter.
 They've already yanked the curtain closed,

shutting you back in the alone
of their antiseptic universe.
A place so unfamiliar.
While out in the hall you hear
the recessional incantation
of departing nightingales:
"Oh you poor little thing.
You poor poor poor little darling."
Then some hapless drone
drops off your post-partum breakfast.
"You got any escargot?
In France they give you
escargot."

(S C E N E 4 "VOID TO A VOID")

S C E N E 5

(Lights up. HE is kneeling beside SHADOW and leaning on him, one arm around SHADOW's legs.)

HE

Nothing says "I love you"
like a blowjob.
Nothing else can show
how very much you care.
Or say it so succinctly.
Nothing's more effective
at letting him feel
that he's the top banana
than sucking him off.
Let him know you are
one hungry carnivore
and he's got just what you want.
On your knees
you move beyond the profane,
you enter the realm of the sacred.
Let him feel you.
Let him feel your feast of adoration
as you take
as you eat
of his flesh,
of his body.
Let him know
that he is lord,
he is master.
Let him know
he's the one you idolize.
And he'll never forget
that you are the one.
You are the one who knows
exactly what it takes,
to blow his cares away.
You don't do this for just any guy.
No.
You do this for him.
Only for him.
Promise him anything.
Just give him head.
Blowjobs.
It isn't sex.
It's worship.
Let - us - pray.
This has been a public service announcement.

(S C E N E 6 "SING SING IS FOR LOVERS")

S C E N E 7

SHE

MEN ARE FUCKERS!
MEN! BOYS! WHATEVER!
THEY'RE ALL JUST FUCKERS!
THEY CARE ABOUT ONLY ONE THING—
NO— NO—
THEY CARE ABOUT THREE THINGS:
THEIR COCK AND THEIR BALLS!
NOTHING ELSE!
NO ONE ELSE!
ESPECIALLY NO ONE ELSE!
YOU THINK THEY CARE A SPIT ABOUT YOU?
YOU THINK THEY APPRECIATE
SOMEONE WHO THREW AWAY THEIR WHOLE LIFE,
THEIR WHOLE GODDAMN LIFE
TO TAKE CARE OF A BRAT?
TO TAKE CARE OF THEM AS A BRAT?
HELL NO!
WHAT KIND OF FUCKING FAIRYTALE WORLD
DO YOU THINK THAT WOULD BE?
HOW FAR WOULD YOU HAVE TO
TWIST AND DISTEND
THE TRUE NATURE OF EXISTENCE?
WHAT WOULD IT TAKE
TO END UP WITH ONE SHOT OF APPRECIATION
THE SIZE OF A GOOBER OF SPIT
FROM AN UNGRATEFUL BRAT.
A PUNK YOU SPEND PRACTICALLY YOUR WHOLE LIFE
PROTECTING AND WORRIED ABOUT,
OBSESSING OVER,
NURSING—
NURSING HIM!!—
LIKE SOME MOTHER HEN OF A BIRD
WITH NO BETTER PURPOSE TO YOUR LIFE
THAN DROPPING WORMS
INTO THEIR ENDLESSLY GAPING MAW!
FEED ME! FEED ME! FEED ME!
CAW! CAW! CAW! CAW! CAW!
YOU TRY!
YOU TRY SHAPING THE LITTLE FUCKER'S LIFE.
YOU TRY FROM THE TIME HE'S A SQUIRT
IN SOME UNKNOWN ASSHOLE'S CUM
UNTIL HE TURNS INTO HIS OWN PARTICULAR KIND
OF AN UNGRATEFUL LITTLE FUCK!
TRYING TO TEACH HIM WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT LIFE
ALL THAT YOU'VE LEARNED
AND DECENT MANNERS
AND CARING ABOUT THE FEELINGS OF OTHER PEOPLE
AND HOW TO GET ALONG IN THE WORLD
AND HOW TO TRY TO BE A SUCCESS INSTEAD OF A FUCK-UP!
A MISERABLE EXCUSE FOR A—
BUT IT'S HOPELESS! HOPELESS!
IT'S HOPE-LE-E-E-E-S-S-S-S!
WHAT YOU OUGHT TO HAVE DONE—

WHAT SHOULD HAVE HAPPENED IS
 THAT INSTEAD OF ALWAYS CODDLING HIM
 INSTEAD OF TRYING TO BE THE PERFECT PARENT
 LIKE OUT OF SOME BOOK BY DOCTOR SPOCK.
 WHAT YOU SHOULD HAVE DONE
 IS LET HIM KNOW
 THAT YOU ARE FOR REAL.
 LET HIM FEEL EXACTLY HOW REAL
 YOU CAN BE.

That is what you ought to have done.
 Maybe then you'd have let him know
 there are feelings in this world.
 There are people in this world
 who really do have some feelings.

AND FURTHERMORE!
 MEN HAVE NO *SAVOIR FAIRE*—
 EXCEPT FOR THE FRENCH!
 WHATEVER HAPPENED TO *JOIE DE VIVRE*?
 WHATEVER HAPPENED TO LIVING A LIFE FULL OF JOY?
 AM I THE ONLY ONE WHO EVER THINKS ABOUT
 THE PLEASURES OF THE QUOTIDIAN?
 EXCEPT FOR THE FRENCH—
 THEY KNOW HOW TO TREAT A WOMAN—
 THEY KNOW PLEASURE IN ALL THE SENSES—
 NOT JUST THE GONADS—
 EXCEPT FOR THE FRENCH,
 MEN ALL STINK!

(S C E N E 8 "I'D LIKE TO BUY A VOWEL)

S C E N E 9

SHE

There are moments
you can look at someone
and he feels so unfamiliar,
as if you do not know him,
never knew him,
that for all these years
it has been some mask
you've been watching.
But now,
suddenly,
something unfathomable
presents itself,
some quality you never even remotely dreamed
was part of his make-up,
has softly insinuated itself,
has reconfigured
the submerged fascia of emotion,
has tilted his head a degree,
widened his eyes,
and on this lips
painted an almost-smile.
A smile?

(HE fondles himself as he speaks on the phone.)

HE

I'm looking at a cock.
I'm looking at a cock
and it has your name written all over it.
Peter.

SHE

And yet,
and yet it seems so natural,
seems to belong,
as though it had been there all along.
You could be looking at a stranger.
You could.
Is it a part of him
he reveals to society
to the world beyond us,
but always turns off in the vicinity of you?
Or are they facets of him always there
that you chose not to see?
Is it a hunger that has burned
deep, deep, deep inside of him,
waiting all along
for one to arrive
who will feed him?
Perhaps a harbinger that appears
as you are about to lose him,

a farewell reveal
 so you get to see
 how he will move out in the world,
 how he will look without you.
 How the world will view him in flight,
 when he gets to fly all alone.
 Could it be the absence of you
 making space in him
 for some happiness he could not feel
 until now?
 Or
 is it an entire world you see
 that has a life beyond you,
 a solemn reminder
 that if you are no longer there,
 that WHEN you are no longer there,
 the world simply continues on,
 on and on and on and on,
 will not even notice
 most of the time
 that you were once a part
 of all that is?
 All that has been?
 Will there remain not even a void,
 no indelible tattoo of regret,
 no flesh feeling hunger
 for the absence of your touch?
 Will no furrows remain,
 no impression left in the shadows
 where once you moved,
 where once you trod upon the land?
 Is this the promise you now read
 upon his face?
 You're supposed to hope
 they have a better life than you.
 But what if your life
 never got underway?
 What do you hope it's better than?
 He thinks GOD is keeping an eye out for him.
 Well, I hope that eye
 is more pretty than the world
 he's watching over.
 'Cause if we're it...
 If we're the best that God can do...

(S C E N E 10 "BODHISATTVA BY LAGOON)

END