

Echoes of Another Man by Mia McCullough © 2006

Scene 8

LIGHTS UP on the hospital room. IRIS ENTERS the hospital room carrying a tray with oatmeal, juice and a banana.

IRIS

Bon jour, Monsieur, comment allez-vous? I see you have turned all your paintings around again. What's the matter? You don't like your own work?

PATIENT

Not really.

IRIS is momentarily shocked. She sets the tray down and gives him a good looking over.

IRIS

Parlez-vous français, aussi?

PATIENT

Oui. It sounds terrible though. I can't seem to get this tongue around it.

IRIS

Interesting.

PATIENT

Irritating. This voice is so flat and provincial sounding.

IRIS

(turning to go)

I must get Dr. Park.

PATIENT

(pleading)

Please don't.
It's so early.

Beat.

IRIS

For how many days have you been able to speak?

A few.

PATIENT

Decided to keep it to yourself?

IRIS

I was working some things out.

PATIENT

I see you have no trouble spitting out full sentences.

IRIS

I did at first.

PATIENT

You've been practicing.

IRIS

At night. Quietly.

PATIENT

Why keep it secret?

IRIS

I was trying to minimize the poking and prodding. It was finally tapering off.

PATIENT

Yes, I suspect there will be many questions, many tests today.

She puts his food in front of him and checks his monitors.

PATIENT

Do you have to tell Dr. Park right away?

IRIS

Yes.

(beat)

Is Ms. van den Hoven aware of your progress?

PATIENT

No. ... You don't like her, do you?

IRIS

I don't know. I think I like her better than you do.

Now that the shock has worn off IRIS resumes her nurses duties as she talks.

PATIENT

...What makes you say that?

IRIS

Several things.

PATIENT

I have so many memories of Raina to sift through. And there are gaps, I think. It's hard to remember how I feel.

IRIS

I wouldn't think you'd have difficulty remembering how you feel about someone.

PATIENT

Well, I do.

IRIS

Do you remember who to trust?

PATIENT

I trust you.

IRIS

(amused)

Why?

PATIENT

I didn't know you before. There is nothing I know about you that I cannot remember.

IRIS

That does not seem like a reason to trust someone.

PATIENT

I look at Raina, at photos of other people I knew before, and I remember them. Things we did together, conversations we had, but I don't remember what they meant to me. I can remember drinking, laughing, but I don't know if I was really enjoying myself. And some things, I remember them, doing things, but I can't imagine how I did them. And then there are things I don't remember. Or I think I don't remember. How do I know when I have all the pieces back?

IRIS

That must be very frustrating.
You should eat.

PATIENT

You give me too much. I've never had a big appetite.

IRIS

You have a bigger body now, you have to eat more. You've been losing weight since the surgery and Dr. Park is not pleased.

PATIENT

Where are you from?

IRIS

...I am from Haiti.

PATIENT

Why did you pause before you answered?

IRIS

Because I don't understand why everyone must know where I am from. It makes me tired.

PATIENT

It's because you have such a beautiful accent.

IRIS

I am not susceptible to flattery.

PATIENT

When did you come over?

IRIS

When I was eight, I believe.

PATIENT

Not one of those daring escapes by boat.

IRIS

(brusque)

I was flown here by a Rotary Club, so I could have surgery. I was a sickly child.

PATIENT

And then you convinced them to let your family come, as well?

IRIS

No. Then my family conveniently disappeared and there was no one to send me back to.

PATIENT

They abandoned you?

IRIS

Or liberated me. It depends on how you see it.

PATIENT

How *do* you see it?

IRIS

I had seven brothers and sisters, we were always hungry. This was probably better. If I was there, I would be poor and sick, or dead if I was really lucky. Here I got an education. I am a professional.

PATIENT

You know, I'm an orphan, too.

IRIS

(terse)

I'm not an orphan. I'm an exile. It is different. Eat.

PATIENT

It hurts when I swallow.

Beat.

IRIS

That is probably from the feeding tube. I can get you different food. Some jello?

PATIENT

I have all these aches and pains, these odd sensations, things I didn't feel a week ago. It's as if my brain is only now recognizing the skin behind my right ear, the muscles around my ribs. And I don't know if these pains are normal for this body or if they're side effects from the surgery....

IRIS

You are probably sore here and here.

(she touches the base of his skull)

This is from the clamps they used to keep your head in place for the surgery. And of course your skull is sore, where it's mending. Also, Mr. Hammond experienced some trauma in the accident that caused his brain damage, deep bruising in the muscles and the bones, so you may be feeling some residual pain from that.

PATIENT
What about this scar on my shoulder?

IRIS
It looks old. Does it hurt?

PATIENT
No.

IRIS
A childhood injury, perhaps.

PATIENT
It's strange not to know.

IRIS
Maybe it is better not to know.

PATIENT
What's this mark on my finger? It's all discolored and pale.

IRIS
That? I don't know what that would— oh.

PATIENT
What?

Beat.

IRIS
It is the mark from Mr. Hammond's wedding ring.

PATIENT
Oh.

IRIS
Eat.

She EXITS, a little unsettled. The PATIENT stares at his hand as the LIGHTS FADE.