

FIONA (Continued)

And I can see by the look on your face that you do. It's the same look the dean had when he paid a surprise visit to class. They had a huge fight -- she stormed out and never came back.

(after a moment, a puzzling recollection)

A week later, I received a greeting card in the mail. Inside was the stick from a used home pregnancy test. And there on the tab was a little pink cross. Parse that one for me.

SHAPIRO

And that was the last time you saw her until...

FIONA

A little over a month ago. When I found her in the museum, standing stock still, staring at that painting. Like she wanted to climb inside.

SHAPIRO

Do you remember which painting?

FIONA

Of course. It was "Madonna and Child" by Bartolomeo Suardi -- a painter also known as Bramantino. Early 16th century. A very peculiar work -- at least to me. The baby Jesus is reaching out for an apple that the Virgin is keeping away. It's a common image; the apple represents Humanity's fall. But in this case, her left hand is over his you-know-what.

SHAPIRO

Out of modesty, no doubt.

FIONA

One would assume.

(after a moment)

I can't even say why I ventured upstairs that day. It's not like me to walk the galleries on my lunch hour. But there we were, the two of us. Together again. Do you believe in kismet?

SHAPIRO

Do you?

FIONA

Are you going to do that all the time? Answer every question with another?

SHAPIRO

(lightly)

Would you rather I didn't?

(SHE gets the joke and is not amused.)

SHAPIRO (Continued)

Not all the time, no.

FIONA

Good. Because I don't think I could stand it. It seems like the long way around.

SHAPIRO

I apologize in advance.

FIONA

And how did you two meet? The first time. It seems unlike her to seek help.

SHAPIRO

As a matter of fact, she came as a ward of the state. A museum guard found her staring at a painting and talking to herself. He contacted the authorities, and they, in turn, brought her to me.

FIONA

Is she insane?

SHAPIRO

I don't like to use the word "insane". I think of Ivy as "troubled". She suffers from what's called a "dissociative identity disorder". In laymen's terms, it means that there is more than one person inside her. She's inhabited by a number of "alters," and each one is distinct.

FIONA

Do they know why that kind of thing happens?

SHAPIRO

There are various theories. It's the result of trauma, usually. Some kind of event that causes a person to split off a part of themselves. Sometimes multiple events. And women seem somewhat more prone.

FIONA

I'm curious. How many others have you observed?

SHAPIRO

In Ivy? Four.

FIONA

Four. That seems like a lot.

SHAPIRO

There are worse cases in the literature.

FIONA

Let me see now. There's Naomi, the little girl, whom I reckon to be about six. And Olivia, the hateful shrew with a mouth that needs three bars of soap. And Ivy herself, of course. Who is the other?

SHAPIRO

I might have counted wrong.

FIONA

Or maybe not.

SHAPIRO

Meaning?

FIONA

(hesitantly, after a moment)

The other night, one showed itself; I'd never seen it before. We were having an argument -- and by "we" I mean all of us -- when this voice emerged at the end. Very... chilling. I'm tempted to say "sinister". It was almost as if it were watching, waiting. Observing us all from the shadows inside her. Then, at the end, it spoke.

SHAPIRO

What did it say.

FIONA

I don't like to remember.

SHAPIRO

It's okay, you don't have to.

FIONA

(quickly, nervously)

It said it was going to slit my throat.

SHAPIRO

(concerned)

It said--

FIONA

While I slept. It didn't, of course, or I wouldn't be here. But something about it, I'm pretty sure it wasn't bluffing.

SHAPIRO

Do you think you're in danger?

FIONA

From Ivy? Not hardly. She eccentric, but I don't feel threatened by her. The others, too. Even Olivia, she just sort of vents. This new one, though.

(a shameful admission)

I bought a gun.

SHAPIRO

You--

FIONA

I know. It frightens me, too. Sometimes I worry that she's forcing me to become someone I'm not. I never in a million years imagined I'd own a gun. But there you are.

SHAPIRO

Does Ivy know?

FIONA

Oh, goodness no. She'd be frightened. Ivy's like me; she hates guns. The others, too, I imagine. And this new one, I'm not sure I'd want her to know. I might find the gun missing one day. If that happened--

SHAPIRO

Where do you keep it?

FIONA

Under my mattress. It's safe there. Ivy, God love her, is a slob. She never makes her own bed, much less mine. The chances of her rooting around under there with no purpose, they're pretty much nil.

SHAPIRO

And is it loaded?

FIONA

I keep a box of bullets beside it. I feel them under the mattress when I sleep. It's like the Princess and the Pea, only in my case, the peas are made of lead. Isn't that strange? That things would come to this? I'm a girl who grew up in the country and went to church every Sunday and sang in the choir and whatnot. What am I doing living in this city with an old acquaintance I feel compelled to save and, on top of it, owning a gun? I mean, it's odd, isn't it? The moves we're forced to make with the hands we're dealt? It makes you want to shoot the cosmic dealer.

(Blackout.)

END OF SCENE