

Rachel + Margaret

Act I

23

Rachel puts the candle down, and walks slowly, almost wearily, to sit down on the sofa. She speaks blankly, almost without emotion, as though what she is saying is no surprise

Rachel Upstairs . . . on our bed . . . there is the skeleton of a child . . . I presume it's a child. It's only about three feet long, and the head bones are rather fragile.

A stunned, uncomprehending pause

Edmund What?

Rachel (continuing in the same grey manner) That's why I asked if you heard the music . . . Of course, you don't believe me . . . It's not just my eyes. I touched it too . . . There's a dead child lying on the bed.

Pause

Edmund (quietly) Come with me, Dan, will you?

Dan For confirmation, or support?

Edmund Both.

Edmund and Dan take a candle apiece, and exit up the stairs together

There is a silence as the two women listen. Rachel is still sitting in the same position, and hasn't moved. Margaret crosses to sit near her

← From here

Rachel You heard the music then?

Margaret Yes. We heard it.

Rachel I hoped it was in my head . . . Did you recognize it?

Margaret Yes.

Rachel Did it come from the instrument?

Margaret No. It didn't seem to come from anywhere. From the walls, almost. Quadrophony. (She smiles weakly at her own joke)

Rachel doesn't react at all, remaining still as before

Rachel That means it's something to do with me.

Margaret Why do you say that?

Rachel I know it is. The music came to me first. I played it before I knew it. I'm the one.

Margaret I don't see why. We all heard it.

Rachel I'm very frightened, Margaret. Are you?

Margaret I was frightened by the pain. I really thought it was poison and I was going to die. But I'm not frightened now. Interested really. Mystified.

Rachel I can feel something . . . I can't describe what it is. But it's something dreadful.

Pause. Margaret gets up, consciously breaking Rachel's mood

Margaret Well, I've always been a sceptic. I don't see any good reason to change yet.

Rachel You will.

Margaret When you think about it, it's a bit like a sideshow at a fair. All those cheap tricks and stunts catch your emotions easily enough. But if

you go round the back, and see the wires and pulleys that make them work, then they just make you laugh.

Rachel No, this isn't like that, believe me. It's terror. It's a black hole, beginning to open inside me. I can't control it.

Margaret Well. I don't feel at all like that, and it's no use pretending that I do. What has happened has happened, but I refuse to be bludgeoned by a series of stunts. Whatever it is, I'll be convinced when I understand it, and not before.

Dan and Edmund enter. They look at the two silent women. Dan closes the door

Edmund Rachel . . . ?

Rachel Yes?

Edmund Rachel, there's nothing in the bedroom.

Pause

Rachel Nothing.

Edmund Nothing at all. Everything's just as usual.

Dan There's been nothing on the bedspread. It's quite smooth.

Edmund We even put our hands on it, to be sure.

Rachel My eyes saw it and my hands touched it. It still had some milk teeth, with the new ones growing underneath.

A long, unresolved silence. They all look at each other

Edmund (*deliberately flatly*) What's going on, Dan? Margaret?

Dan Something very strange. I feel quite all right now though.

Margaret So do I . . . but not hungry any more.

Dan No.

Edmund No trace of the pain?

Dan No, none.

Margaret No.

Dan What about Rachel? Did you feel it?

Rachel Yes, I felt it. A terrible griping pain in the stomach.

Margaret But it went quite suddenly.

Dan Yes, that happened to all of us. But none of us tasted blood, except Edmund.

Margaret No.

Rachel No.

Edmund I can hardly believe it myself.

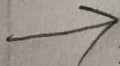
Dan And then, this upstairs.

Rachel I definitely saw it. I didn't imagine it. I looked for quite a long time to make sure. And then I touched it, on the head. It was a child's skeleton, about three feet long, with bits of clothing, lying on the bedspread. I promise you, I really did see it!

Dan No-one has suggested you didn't. Equally though, we didn't see it.

Margaret But we've all felt or seen something, haven't we. Edmund the blood, the rest of us the food, the pain that just disappeared, and the music; and now Rachel, this.

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Act I

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