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# Melodrama

de  
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*(fragmento en inglés)*

A one act play for two actors, a woman and a man.  
(one of the “episodes” of the play Happily Ever After  
Published in the book  
New Plays From Spain, Martin Segal Theater Eds.)

*(The stage is completely dark. We hear the sound of a camera taking a picture and a flash lights the part of the stage where She is, completely still, smiling with an uncomfortable expression. The first flash is like a strong light that seems to burn her. Then the lights stay up on her while the rest of the stage is dark. She is seated very formally posing for a photo. During the monologue the different flashes make her change her posture a little: her hands, her arms, her face. She seems to be very uncomfortable with her own body, as if she wouldn't know what to do with it. After some seconds of complete silence and stillness she starts to talk holding the posture.)*

SHE

I can't smile, I'm trying but I can't. My hair is perfect, I'm wearing make up and the dress he likes, but something is missing: the smile. I can't do it. I remember other pictures, years ago, when he used to take photographs all the time and I was young and pretty and he liked me. But that was a long time ago. Now it's different. We are old and tired, and bored. I try to smile but I feel pain in my jaw. It hurts. There is something rigid in my bones, my teeth are clenched, my mouth closed, tense.

*(Another flash and the sound of a camera interrupts the monologue, burning her)*

Anyway he doesn't say "Smile" anymore when, behind the camera, he is looking at me. He only pushes the button and "Click". As if I were a mountain or a cow in the middle of the farm. Maybe I am. I probably am. Sometimes I feel like this. And actually, when I see myself in the mirror, I can only distinguish some kind of animal, a stupid expression on its face, an ugly and fat body... I probably look like a cow. Pounds and pounds in my butt, in my belly. Those arms that are flabby now, my dull skin... I guess that when he looks at my back in bed, he imagines a kind of giant tenderloin sleeping next to him, maybe that's why he doesn't touch me anymore. I put him off. I know.

*(Another flash and the sound of the camera.)*

He is standing in front of me, hidden by the camera, taking a stupid picture in which I pretend to smile. I am sitting on the new bed, the splendid, and very expensive, new set of furniture for the bedroom that our daughter Olivia gave us for our anniversary. Thirty years. She lives in California, she didn't even see it, she paid for it, but we went to the store to choose it. It was completely different from that time when we went together there before our marriage. I was so nervous walking with him around that bed where I was going to lose my virginity... so silly I was! Now we only use the bed to sleep, and some nights not even that. I stay there just waiting for the clock to ring, pretending to be asleep. He doesn't sleep either. He doesn't snore, and I know that it's because he is awake, probably doing the same thing I'm doing: looking at the wall, just waiting for the day, and then, the breakfast, and the housework, and the cooking, and the shopping, and the things to fix in the garden, and the clothes to iron, and the dinner to cook... and later the TV, watching Jay Leno in the living room, or maybe baseball or football, or a stupid show. Whatever. Only something that makes noise to avoid the silence, that deafening silence, and when the show is over, sleep again. Or not.

*(A flash, camera sound.)*

Happily ever after. And after, and after... day in and day out. Sometimes I wonder what we'd do if we didn't have a television, so many hours to fill... with what? But again, smile, just a little bit, so that nobody notices. It's weird when someone doesn't smile in a picture. It's sad... So relax your jaw, try to feel younger, and pretty... and smile. Then when you see it years later, you could think that you were happy, or at least people will believe it. Olivia and the children will like it, they will see grandma with the beautiful new bedroom set. She paid a lot of money.

*(The final flash lights the entire stage and He enters with a camera, he sits beside her and continues touching different buttons of the camera while they talk, as if trying to figure out how it works, curious like a boy.)*

HE

OK, it's done. Tomorrow I'll go to the mall and I guess that we'll get the pictures developed by Friday. I'll send them to Olivia, then.

SHE

I hope she comes next summer; I'd like to see Toby and little Lorrie. We haven't seen them in 2 years; they must have grown a lot.

HE *(not paying attention)*

I've been thinking we could buy a TV for the bedroom, we could put it right there *(He points in front of him)*

SHE

On the vanity?

HE

Yes, there, I guess that's the best place, right in front of the bed.

SHE

But it wouldn't be nice, it has the mirror and I had planned to put flowers on it, maybe some pictures of the children.

HE

It's not very practical, a TV is better.

SHE

I'm not sure I want to have a TV in my bedroom, it's not nice, I don't like it.

HE

Look, it's more useful. Think about it, we could see the shows here, in bed.

SHE

I don't like it. It wouldn't look nice.

HE

Who's going to come see our bedroom? We are the only people who will see that it's not nice, and, to tell the truth, I don't care.