

The Altruist

A One Act Play

John Hayes

Characters:

Stewart -- the altruist

Eleanor -- a married woman

Set description:

The set is simple. A row of expensive townhomes should be depicted. Center stage requires a door frame and a door that will open. Eleanor is on one side and Stewart is on the other.

A table should be upstage next to Eleanor. A large book is also needed.

Setting: An exclusive neighborhood of townhomes.

At Rise: A forty-year-old man wearing a pinstriped grey suit, blue shirt and red tie enters from stage left. He carries a large book and a note pad. He matches the address on the note pad to one on a house and walks to the door and knocks. An attractive woman in her late thirties opens the door. Her red housecoat is tied at the waist with a violet belt. Dark glasses cover her eyes.

Stewart

Good morning lovely lady. My name is Stewart. I represent the *Brothers and Sisters of Jesus*.

Eleanor

Never heard of them. (*Tries to shut door*)

ALABAMA LITERARY REVIEW

Stewart

(Blocks door with his foot) I am surprised to hear that most lovely lady. Everyone I have talked to in this block has heard of Jesus.

Eleanor

I've heard of a Jesus. But if he's the one I'm thinking about he didn't have any brothers or sisters.

Stewart

Many people share your ignorance of his glorious family. The truth is, he has a sister, Mary, and two brothers, Luke and Duke.

Eleanor

I thought Mary was his mother.

Stewart

This is what the entrenched church would have you believe. But the true truth as explained in this magnificent volume, *Open Your Eyes and See True Truth*, proves conclusively that Mary was a virgin and could not have been his mother. *(Offers her book)*

Eleanor

(Ignores book) You may be right. I'm very busy, if you'll excuse me I have a talk show to watch. *(Starts to push door closed)*

Stewart

(Pushes back on door) Those glasses you wear seem extremely dark. Is something wrong with your eyes?

Eleanor

There is nothing wrong with my eyes.

JOHN HAYES

Stewart

Are you certain?

Eleanor

There is nothing wrong with my eyes.

Stewart

Lady, are you certain? If something is wrong with your eyes, the *Brothers and Sisters of Jesus* can help.

Eleanor

There is nothing wrong with my fucking eyes. See. (*Removes glasses*)

Stewart

You have a black eye. Something is wrong with your eyes.

Eleanor

Nothing is wrong with my eyes. There is mild discoloration around my left eye. Nothing is wrong with my right eye. It is fine. Therefore nothing is wrong with my eyes. Actually, they're rather exotic. Look.

Stewart

(*Looks into her eyes*) Lady, I stand corrected. Please accept my apology. There is nothing wrong with your eyes. They are truly exotic. However, *The Brothers and Sisters of Jesus* can help with the discoloration around your left eye.

Eleanor

I don't give a fuck for the *Brothers and Sisters*. I don't give a shit. Do you fucking understand? I don't give a shit that my eye is discolored. And don't call me lady again. My name, not that it's any of your damn business, is Eleanor Shirley Ann Hartly-Jones.

ALABAMA LITERARY REVIEW

Stewart

Eleanor, the queen of the Nile, the mother of Jesus, I bow to you. (*He kneels, takes her right hand*) How soft it is, how smooth, how supple. (*Kisses her hand*)

Eleanor

(*Extends her other hand*) You may kiss my left hand also. (*He kisses the back of her other hand*)

Stewart

(*Looks up*) It is true, as written in this unprecedented volume of *Open Your Eyes and See True Truth*, in your eyes flows the wisdom of the Nile.

Eleanor

What?

Stewart

Eleanor, queen of the Nile, mother of Jesus, in your eyes I see your ancient wisdom. You are the reincarnation of all that is good, all that is true, all that is beauty.

Eleanor

What?

Stewart

It is written. Written in this magnificent volume. No home should be without it.

Eleanor

You cheap hustler. Get to the price. I'm busy.

Stewart

Lady.

JOHN HAYES

Eleanor

Eleanor, not 'lady', fuck head. (*Extends her palm*)

Stewart

(*Kisses her palm*) Your majesty. Eleanor, I am your slave. *The Brothers and Sisters of Jesus* are your slaves.

Eleanor

I don't see any one else here. Have you got any references? What about identification? Are you in the phone book? (*Rubs the side of his face*) You need a new blade.

Stewart

Alas, most valued lady.

Eleanor

My name is Eleanor, fuck head. Alas what?

Stewart

Eleanor, queen of the Nile. Most lovely queen of all.

Eleanor

I thought Cleopatra was loveliest.

Stewart

You beat her in a beauty contest.

Eleanor

I did! Really? When?

Stewart

April 11, 49 B.C.

ALABAMA LITERARY REVIEW

Eleanor

Is that in the book? *(Takes book from him and opens it)*

Stewart

Where else? All truth is written in the book.

Eleanor

The book tells about my past lives? *(Flips thru pages)*

Stewart

Absolutely.

Eleanor

My beauty? My wiles? Forgotten lovers? It's all there?

Stewart

Absolutely.

Eleanor

It tells of my charm? Men who killed for me? Were there many?

Stewart

Your charm permeates the volume. Strong, glorious men, all.

Eleanor

(Closes book and hands it back to Stewart. Flashes her diamond ring)
Four karats, my husband insisted. He adores me.

Stewart

(He is uncomfortable holding the book and shifts it from one hand to the other. Finally gives it back to her) Who hit you last night?

JOHN HAYES

Eleanor

Are you from the police?

Stewart

I am from *The Brothers and Sisters of Jesus*.

Eleanor

You got identification? Show me. (*Places book back on table*)

Stewart

My card. (*Extracts card from pocket and hands it to her*)

Eleanor

(*Reads*) Stewart Anthony Scythe, Co-founder, *The Brothers and Sisters of Jesus*.

Stewart

That should be proof enough for you. I'll have my card back, please. (*Extends hand*)

Eleanor

(*Puts card inside her housecoat*) Don't you have any other cards?

Stewart

Alas, the printing order was delayed.

Eleanor

Delayed, really?

Stewart

Really.

ALABAMA LITERARY REVIEW

Eleanor

I don't remember there being an address or phone number on the card. You should have an address and phone number.

Stewart

The phone number and address are shown on the cards at the printer. Delivery is next week.

Eleanor

If you're going to be out saving you shouldn't use old cards. People won't think highly of you.

Stewart

I agree most precious Eleanor.

Eleanor

Then why are you?

Stewart

Why am I what?

Eleanor

Out saving with an old card.

Stewart

Most majestic Eleanor, to you I will speak only truth. I did take off from my virtuous duties until such time as my cards were printed. But last night in Kelly's Brasserie I saw someone hit you and knew I must act. I followed you here. I returned this morning. When your husband left, I knocked. It was your husband?

Eleanor

He left late.

JOHN HAYES

Stewart

Your eye is discolored.

Eleanor

A little make up and it's gone.

Stewart

As you left Kelly's last night you vomited on my shoe.

Eleanor

I thought you looked familiar. I am sorry.

Stewart

Madam, I must help you. *The Brothers and...*

Eleanor

(Finishes for him) Sisters of Jesus want to help me.

Stewart

Yes, madam.

Eleanor

I prefer 'lady' to 'madam'.

Stewart

Lady, you hurt. You hurt physically, I can see that; you hurt emotionally, I can feel that. Let me help you. Let *The Brothers and Sisters of Jesus* help you.

Eleanor

You are from the police aren't you?

ALABAMA LITERARY REVIEW

Stewart

Did you call the police?

Eleanor

No, why would I call the police? My husband adores me.

Stewart

Precisely. Then I am not from the police. I am from...

Eleanor

The Brothers and Sisters Of Jesus. You want to help me.

Stewart

I must help you. The book will help you. Take it in both hands. Feel its power embrace you.

Eleanor

(Warily picks up book) Maybe I could use a little help. Yes, touching the book helps. I feel succor. My heated blood swirls.

Stewart

Lady, I am going to save you from any further emotional or physical harm. It's your husband, isn't it, who abuses you.

Eleanor

Yes, he forces me to drink with him in sleazy bars.

Stewart

Sleazy bars?

Eleanor

Like last night, Kelly's, a real bumner.

JOHN HAYES

Stewart

(Cringes) How often does this happen?

Eleanor

Once, maybe twice a month.

Stewart

Drinking is evil ma'am, no person should do it. Since I found the true truth, I do not drink or smoke or cuss. You must pray.

Eleanor

I doubt that will do much good. Why were you in Kelly's Brasserie if you don't drink? *(Offers book to Stewart)*

Stewart

(Ignores book) Sitting in bars is my form of penance.

Eleanor

Mine too. *(Places book on table beside her)*

Stewart

There is something I must do for you.

Eleanor

It's taking you long enough.

Stewart

When the time comes I will act. But now pray, seek forgiveness, you must pray.

Eleanor

I pray you get the fuck away from here.

ALABAMA LITERARY REVIEW

Stewart

(Touches her swollen face) My touch will heal your bruise. *(Removes hand)*

Eleanor

(Takes mirror from pocket. Looks at face) It looks the same to me.

Stewart

Perhaps a kiss.

Eleanor

Do you really think a kiss will help?

Stewart

The brothers do. I kiss for them. *(He kisses her mouth. She grabs and kisses his eye, his mouth, his ear)*

Eleanor

Why did you kiss my mouth? It's my eye that hurts.

Stewart

I thought it was the area around your eye.

Eleanor

It was, but now I have something in my eye.

Stewart

Where? Let me see.

Eleanor

Don't look at it. Kiss it.

JOHN HAYES

Stewart

(Kisses her eye) Is that better?

Eleanor

It's the other eye.

Stewart

(Kisses her other eye) Better?

Eleanor

Much better. But my navel hurts.

Stewart

Are you an inner or an outer?

Eleanor

Inner, I think. Check for yourself.

Stewart

Probably lint. *(He removes her housecoat and takes his card from her black bra as she drops his trousers revealing pink boxers with black dots. He places the card in his left coat pocket)*

Stewart

Your beauty is unsurpassed.

Eleanor

I know. Maybe you should come inside. *(He waddles in, closes door)*

Stage slowly darkens. Then slowly lightens. Door opens. Stewart steps outside, turns to face Eleanor.

ALABAMA LITERARY REVIEW

Stewart

The Brothers and Sisters of Jesus thank you.

Eleanor

I wish more of them had been here.

Stewart

It might have been too much for you.

Eleanor

Not if they all are as quick as you.

Stewart

What did you decide about the book?

Eleanor

I'll need to sleep on it. I hate making impulsive decisions.

Stewart

A queen must learn to act on impulse.

Eleanor

A queen does as she damn well pleases and I prefer to move with caution.

Stewart

If I acted with caution, my virtue would wither.

Eleanor

I thought you said you quit smoking since you learned about the true truth?

JOHN HAYES

Stewart

I did quit but it would have been rude of me to let you smoke alone.

Eleanor

You came alone.

Stewart

It is my failing. Did you enjoy the smoke?

Eleanor

I've had better.

Stewart

The coffee was very good.

Eleanor

Yes it was, it was instant.

Stewart

That explains it. Doesn't it?

Eleanor

Yes, come back when you get new cards. Are they embossed?

Stewart

It may be awhile before I get them.

Eleanor

Are they embossed? You should let me design them.

ALABAMA LITERARY REVIEW

Stewart

I need to order them.

Eleanor

After you get them embossed, come back.

Stewart

It may be awhile.

Eleanor

Why?

Stewart

I'm really not certain.

Eleanor

You could always lie.

Stewart

I never lie.

Eleanor

Then it is all true. I am the reincarnation of that broad that beat out Cleopatra in a beauty pageant.

Stewart

Absolutely.

Eleanor

And the mother of Jesus? How can that be?

JOHN HAYES

Stewart

It was a rapid series of reincarnations.

Eleanor

The delivery was difficult.

Stewart

Also his sister.

Eleanor

Both?

Stewart

All three. Do you want me to kill your husband for you?

Eleanor

(Beat) Are you from the police?

Stewart

No, but I have a tomahawk.

Eleanor

You didn't mention it before.

Stewart

There was no reason to until now.

Eleanor

Did you really like the coffee?.

ALABAMA LITERARY REVIEW

Stewart

Yes, very much.

Eleanor

Is it very sharp?

Stewart

Sharp enough to slice a pubic hair.

Eleanor

Before or after?

Stewart

Before. After, I would need to resharpen.

Eleanor

I think my talk show has started.

Stewart

You won't want to miss it.

Eleanor

I don't know if you really should. It seems so (*Beat*) conclusive.

Stewart

It's seldom I have the opportunity to use my tomahawk for such a good cause.

Eleanor

I've always supported good causes.

JOHN HAYES

Stewart

I know. It's in the book, page 191.

Eleanor

Maybe I support too many causes.

Stewart

Don't change. Your charm will fade, your beauty wither. Page 63.

Eleanor

Wither, really? That seems so *(Beat)* ghastly. Page 63 you say. *(Takes book from table)*

Stewart

Whatever you do, don't wither. It's horrible and very painful.

Eleanor

He'll be home around ten. I'll be at the tobacconist. *(Leans forward and shoves book in Stewart's hands. As he awkwardly takes it, she removes his card from his coat pocket and places it her bra)*

Stewart

(Moves book from hand to hand) Does he have Turkish cigarettes?

Eleanor

Not he, she. The owner is a woman, Mable, Mable Bodtower. She's an ardent feminist. So am I. I try not to flaunt it, though.

Stewart

I didn't realize. Does she have Turkish? *(Offers her the book)*

ALABAMA LITERARY REVIEW

Eleanor

(Ignores book) She's very modern. I could ask.

Stewart

American is fine. *(Turns, walks toward stage right)*

Eleanor

(Calls after him) Don't forget your sharpener.

END OF PLAY

