

MARSH LIGHT

Characters:

Lillian Walcott Weiss	A photographer – 30 and 47
Max Weiss	A painter, Lillian's husband - mid-30's, early 50's
Stewart Walcott	Lillian's father - 50's, 70ish
Marjorie Walcott	Lillian's mother - 50's
Bill Koerner	A gallery owner - mid-30's, early 50's
Josh Weiss	A musician, Lillian and Max's son - 17

Act I

Time: Spring-Autumn, 1951

Place: The Weiss apartment
A summer cabin, Wellfleet, MA

Time: Fall, 1968

Place: The Weiss apartment
The Hudson River Psych Institute

Act II

Time: Autumn-Winter, 1968

Place: The Weiss apartment
The Hudson River Psych Institute

Note:

In Act I Scene 2 Josh's guitar riff is in a Blue's Project/John Mayall mode. In Act II Scene 4 tape is same genre. In Act II scenes 5 and 6 the music is in the mode of Eric Anderson's early music e.g. *I shall go unbounded*, or Tom Paxton's, *Last thing on my mind*.

ACT I

SCENE 1 - March 1951. The Weiss Apartment

The living room of a cramped apartment way upper way east side in a walk-up building. The walls are hung with abstract sketches of nudes in varying degrees of completion. The room holds a table, a couple of chairs, and a couch. There's an entry hall closet. Paintbrushes and oils take up the small dining table. A phonograph is on playing Muddy Waters. MAX is seated on the floor painting a large canvass. LILLIAN, naked save from some drapes here and there, is his model. She lies quietly for a few moments as he paints. MAX sits back to look at his work.

I like it.

MAX

Good. *(beat)* How much longer?

LILLIAN

Little more.

MAX

Cause my leg is going to sleep.

LILLIAN

Uh huh. *(beat)* Were they able to fix the shutter problem?

MAX

I think.

LILLIAN

You didn't check when you were there?

MAX

Yeah. Sort of.

LILLIAN

What does that mean?

MAX

Mostly.

LILLIAN

The song ends. It is the last track on the record and the needle scratches along on the final groove for a few beats.

Turn it over?

LILLIAN

In a sec.

MAX

I'll do it.

LILLIAN

She starts to get up.

Stay still. I'll do it.

MAX

He goes to the phonograph and flips the record. "I Just Want to Make Love to You" comes on. He settles back into. LILLIAN moves a little in time to the music.

Are you trying to provoke me? Because I'm/ trying

MAX

I have an itch.

LILLIAN

Yeah. *(regarding her full on)* You messed up the fold.

MAX

He begins to move toward her to replace the material. She puts her head back languidly, then reaches rapidly to the side of the couch, pulls out a camera, and takes a couple of quick shots of him. He ducks, simultaneously amused and camera shy.

I guess it works.

LILLIAN

She laughs, trapping him with a leg as he moves to replace the fabric. He caresses her with increasing passion. The stage goes dark and the music comes up.

END SCENE 1

SCENE 2 - Late November 1968. The Weiss Apartment

The room has become a combination living room/dining room and bedroom. Dominating the wall stage right is a landscape of a marsh. A couple of abstract black and white photographs of the marsh hang on the wall. The living room windows are wide open. JOSH WEISS is seated on the couch, playing a blues riff and taking a last hit from a joint. He continues to play the riff over and over on his guitar. The doorbell rings loud enough for the audience, but not for JOSH – who is in a musical reverie – to hear. The third ring is protracted and corresponds with a break in his music. He jumps up, stashes the ashtray under a pillow, and rushes to answer the door. LILLIAN enters, struggling with groceries.

LILLIAN

Damn it, Josh.

JOSH

Sorry, Mom.

JOSH puts a bag on the counter and returns to playing. LILLIAN puts the groceries down and closes the window.

LILLIAN

Don't you have a test tomorrow?

JOSH

Thursday.

LILLIAN picks up groceries, exits to kitchen.

LILLIAN (OS)

Do you need to study for it?

JOSH

Uh huh.

LILLIAN enters. JOSH keeps playing.

So. What happened to you today?

LILLIAN

JOSH is still playing.

Not much.

JOSH

That's informative.

LILLIAN

I went to school.

JOSH

And? Anything interesting happen?

LILLIAN

It's school, Mom.

JOSH

Things have been known to happen there.

LILLIAN

I don't know. (beat) Oh yeah...there was a debate.

JOSH

He keeps playing.

About?

LILLIAN

The war.

JOSH

And...

LILLIAN

JOSH

They had two guys from the War Resisters League. One dude started out like he was all gung ho, big patriot. Military family. Purple heart and everything. Then he went over there and he changed his mind when he saw what was going on and now he does all this anti-war stuff. And there was this other dude on his way up to Canada, right...but when he got to the border, he wanted to make a statement. There were all these people there and...he burned his draft card in front of them all, but he was stupid because he was on the American side when he did it and he got arrested. He's out on bail now, and he's completely fucked.

LILLIAN

Josh.

JOSH

His goose is cooked.

He returns to playing.

LILLIAN

Where was the debate part?

JOSH

Oh yeah. They had this one army recruiter guy. A jerk.

LILLIAN

So....

JOSH

Nothing. It was good.

JOSH goes back to playing. LILLIAN exits to kitchen.

LILLIAN (O.S.)

What's the status of your applications?

JOSH

What?

LILLIAN (O.S.)

Applications.

JOSH

Stable.

LILLIAN (OS)

(Exasperated) Did you even start them?

LILLIAN enters.

JOSH

My gig starts on Saturday. I need to practice.

He's back to playing.

LILLIAN

And you have three applications, with essays, due in one week.

JOSH

Why don't you do them for me? You'd do a good job.

Still playing.

LILLIAN

Do you want something to eat? Dinner won't be ready for a while.

JOSH

(goofing) Milk and cookies?

LILLIAN

That a no?

JOSH

That's a no.

LILLIAN tussles his hair, sits, to listen to him.

LILLIAN

That sounds nice.

JOSH stops playing.

JOSH

The guy who burned his draft card, he said they were going to change the whole draft thing. There's going to be like, a lottery. Every birthday gets assigned a number and then they draw lots and your number comes up, you go.

LILLIAN

Not if you're in college. You'll be deferred from the lottery until you graduate.

JOSH

I can go to Canada.

That shuts LILLIAN up. JOSH keeps playing.

LILLIAN

Is that for your gig?

JOSH

Yeah.

Long pause as JOSH plays.

LILLIAN

I thought we settled the college issue.

JOSH

Not we. I'm a musician. No college necessary. Do you understand?

LILLIAN

I understand you're a good musician.

JOSH

I don't think so. How many kids my age do you think get asked to gig with an established band?

LILLIAN

I know you're talented. Of course I do. And that your friends recognize/that too.

JOSH

Friends? That's how you think I get invited to play at the Bitter End?

LILLIAN

There are so many things you can do, Josh. I want you to have the opportunity to explore all of them.

JOSH

Why is that, Mother?

LILLIAN

Music isn't an easy life. The colleges we picked...

JOSH doesn't buy "we."

LILLIAN (*cont'd*)

You liked Oberlin. You can do your music and get an education there that leaves other avenues/ open.

JOSH

Got an avenue.

JOSH is looking at the painting of the marsh

JOSH (*cont'd*)

He wouldn't want me to waste my time going to school.

LILLIAN

He's not relevant to this, Josh.

JOSH

He's never relevant according to you.

LILLIAN

He's gone, Joshie. That's all I mean.

JOSH

Yeah.

LILLIAN

What?

JOSH

(*angry*) Nothing.

LILLIAN

I'm glad you think about him.

JOSH picks up the guitar and begins to tinker with it again. The music now is jazzier, chaotic.

JOSH

I'm going to play a little longer. Okay? Then I'll study.

JOSH stands up with guitar, starting to leave.

LILLIAN

Can you stay here while you play? That way I can hear you while I make dinner. Spaghetti.

JOSH

Cool, Mom.

LILLIAN exits. JOSH begins to play in earnest.

END SCENE 2