

PLEASURE & PAIN

A play by
Chantal Bilodeau

PLACE

A small college town.

CHARACTERS

PEGGYMid-20s to early 30s. Intense.

RUTH 6 or 8 years older than Peggy.
Small town girl.

ROBPeggy's boyfriend. Slightly older
than her. Sweet.

THE DEANMid to late 40s. Mid-life crisis.

THE MANA dangerously sexy and playful
man.

*Sometimes it is harder to
deprive oneself of a pain
than of a pleasure.*

- F. Scott Fitzgerald

SCENE ONE

A woman. She's holding some papers
in her hands.

PEGGY

A hot summer day.
Me.
Him.
Torture is what I have in mind.

A man. In a cage.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

(to the man)
Take off your shirt. Please.

A beat.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

OK, that wasn't very--... Let me try again.
(with more confidence)
Take off your shirt.

He removes his shirt.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

He is glistening with sweat, attentive, docile.
(to the man)
Uh... kneel.

He kneels.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

I tie his hands behind his back?

He crosses his hands behind his
back.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

He's mine.
(to the man)
Now...
(to the audience)
(MORE)

PEGGY (CONT'D)

Anticipation written on his face.

Desire in his eyes.

(to the man)

Tell me how you want to touch me.

(to the audience)

A brief silence.

A suspension in time, like that moment before dawn where Nature seems to gather its strength for the impossible task of giving the world another day.

Then a sound.

He whispers.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

Then another sound.

With my hand, I follow the road he traces for me.

Over my lips.

Down my neck.

Around my breasts.

Guided by his words, two fingers travel south and disappear into a jungle of tangled hair.

(to the man)

Like this?

He moans.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

Yes, like that.

Back and forth.

Like the swelling of the ocean.

A look at his own territory--39° North, 82° West-- reveals some volcanic activity but there will be no eruption until I say so.

Under his eyes I give to myself what he is not allowed to give me.

And I watch him be both the driving force and the excluded element of my pleasure.

THE MAN

Let me touch you.

The mood is broken.

PEGGY

Who said you could talk?

THE MAN

If I don't talk, we'll never get there.

PEGGY

That's not the point. The point is how we get there.

THE MAN

Maybe but this is turning into a fairy tale.

PEGGY

And?

THE MAN

I don't do fairy tales. Let me touch you.

PEGGY

(to the audience.)

He asks again.

He begs.

Begs and begs and begs.

To touch me.

Somewhere.

Anywhere.

She approaches the cage.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

(to the man)

A single point of contact.

No more.

(to the audience)

In one sweeping motion, all my internal rivers converge to the anticipated point of impact.

His lips close around the engorged delta.

Slowly, dutifully, like a bee extracting pollen from a flower, he sucks all the desire out of my body to later transform it into honey.

Just as he's about to touch her,
she moves away.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

(to the man)

No.

(to the audience)

(MORE)

PEGGY (CONT'D)

Like a slap in the face.

(to the man)

Are we far enough from fairy tales?

A beat.

THE MAN

Bitch.

PEGGY

(to the audience)

Oh my God.

(to the man)

Say it again.

THE MAN

(seductive)

Bitch.

PEGGY

(to the audience)

The word turns to liquid and drips along my legs.

I close my eyes, ready to surrender to the most rapturous feeling--

THE DEAN (O.S.)

Peggy?

She freezes for a moment, then
throws herself at the cage and rips
off the Man's clothes.

PEGGY

The urgency increases, reality collapses. I gather all my strength and leap into the void, willing to die for a piece of infinity, for that split second where souls brush against one another in the most mysterious and exquisite of encounters--

THE DEAN (O.S.)

Peggy?

The Dean enters. Lights out on the cage.

PEGGY

Hi.

THE DEAN

Did you make the copies for the meeting?

PEGGY

Uh, yes.

She gathers the papers she was holding at the beginning of the scene and hands them to him.

THE DEAN

Are you OK?

PEGGY

Yeah.

THE DEAN

You look a little flushed.

PEGGY

I'm fine.

THE DEAN

Are you sure?

PEGGY

Yeah. Thanks.

THE DEAN

You're not getting sick I hope?

PEGGY

No. I'm never sick.

THE DEAN

You're really red.

PEGGY

It must be the moo-shoo. It was too spicy. I'm not used to spicy food.

The Dean keeps staring at her.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

Well uh... I better get back to work.

SCENE TWO

At home. Rob assembles invitations.
Peggy enters.

ROB

So?

PEGGY

It went well.

ROB

You like it?

PEGGY

I love it! But I don't think they're going to keep me. I don't even know why the Dean hired me. Maybe Ruth didn't tell him I never finished my undergrad.

ROB

You don't need a fancy degree to be a good secretary.

PEGGY

An administrative assistant.

ROB

I'm sorry. An administrative assistant.

PEGGY

It wouldn't hurt. I mean--this is the College of Fine Arts. I'm supposed to know about opera and post-modernism and--

ROB

Peggy, he hired you. If he hired you, it's because he thinks you're qualified. Plus, look at me. I didn't go to college but I'm still the manager of my store.

PEGGY

That's true.

ROB

Come on. Help me with the invitations.

She does.

PEGGY

But what if I mess up?

ROB

Mess up how?

PEGGY

I don't know, like--... Mess up.

ROB

Sweetie, you're the most reasonable and together person I know. You couldn't mess up even if you wanted to.

PEGGY

You don't know that.

ROB

Yes, I do.

PEGGY

No, you don't.

ROB

When is the last time you drank too much? Or spent too much money? You have way too much control to allow yourself to mess up.

PEGGY

That doesn't mean I couldn't. I'm capable of being something other than reasonable, you know.

ROB

It's a compliment.

PEGGY

Picasso wasn't reasonable. Mozart wasn't reasonable. What kind of person am I if I'm nothing but reasonable?

ROB

You're someone people can count on. And that's why I like being with you.

PEGGY

Don't change the subject.

ROB

I'm not. I'm being sincere.

PEGGY

You're just trying to make me feel good.

ROB

Is it working?

PEGGY

No. And that's not how it goes. The response card goes inside the invitation under the translucent paper.

ROB

It's not that big a deal.

PEGGY

Yes, it is. If we're going to get married, we should do it right.

A beat.

ROB

Come here.

PEGGY

What.

ROB

Isn't today a nice day? You have the job you've always wanted, you just finished your first day and everything went well, no?

PEGGY

Yeah.

ROB

Then why don't we celebrate instead of arguing?

PEGGY

I'm not arguing. I just--

ROB

There's a bottle of sparkling wine in the fridge. Would you like a glass?

PEGGY

You got sparkling wine? For me?

ROB

Not for you. For the new Administrative Assistant of the College of Fine Arts.

PEGGY

Rob, you're so sweet...

ROB

I know.

She kisses him.

ROB (CONT'D)

And I'm sure you're going to do just fine. Even without a degree.

PEGGY

If I don't mess up.

ROB

You won't mess up.

PEGGY

I hope so.