



Moire
Attachments

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"Yes Mother"
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"YES MOTHER"

Erica Stocking

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST - DAWN

1

A path leading into the forest is visible from its edge. A carved wooden sign which reads: BRETTON is visible near the path.

YES (A young woman)
You said yes is for a very young
man, yes this time I do
disappear.

MOTHER (The mother of Yes)
Can I tell them you are coming
and that you will do everything.

YES
Yes, listen, you make me sick,
yes listen, listen, listen.

MOTHER
Near hours are made not by shade
not by heat not by joy, I always
know that not now rather not
now, yes, and I do not stamp but
I know that now yes now yes now.

YES
Yes can be said too often.

MOTHER
And in a way, yes, in a way,
yes, really in a way, in a way,
really in a way, it is useful to
be right.

YES
But anyway, anyway, what does it
matter.

MOTHER
It does what it does, if you are
right.

2 **EXT. FOREST**

2

Walking alone.

YES

(Muttering)

Bah, aristocrats make me sick,
everything makes me sick,
everything.

3 **EXT. FIELD**

3

Walking alone.

MOTHER

(Musing)

Antagonizes is a pleasant name,
antagonizes is a pleasant word,
antagonizes has occurred, bless
you one and all.

INTERCUT BETWEEN YES and MOTHER

YES

Bah, it is the unsuccessful
people in the world who want to
discipline everybody.

MOTHER

That is to say politeness is
agreeable.

4 **EXT. FOREST – DAY**

4

YES and MOTHER meet at a tree. MOTHER holds a mouse in
her hand.

YES

Do you think that your Mother is
really poor.

MOTHER

I am talking about a mouse.

YES

It is queer how he heard about
it.

MOTHER

I have never been mentioned
again.

5 **EXT. FOREST – DUSK**

5

Walking together.

YES

It is all so strange tell me
more, did you suffer.

MOTHER

All right I never fight, nobody
will know it's me, but what can
I do if I am not she and I am
not me, what can I do, if a name
is not true, what can I do but
do as she tells me.

YES

There is no difference between
defeat and victory then.

MOTHER

You only have the name, you have
not got the game.

YES

My knuckles are broken but my
father is avenged.

MOTHER

A name can only be a name, my
name can only be my name.

YES

You are just being silly,
earning a living, and killing
potato bugs just has to go on.

MOTHER

Women are women, soldiers are
soldiers, men are not men, lies

are not lies, do, and then a dog
barks, listen to him and then a
dog barks, a dog barks a dog
barks any dog barks, listen to
him any dog barks.

Dogs bark in the distance. Yes and Mother pause to
listen.

YES

(Resignedly)

Oh I am so tired, all this fuss
and trouble and oh dear, I ought
to be taking potato bugs off the
potato plants.

6 INT. BEDROOM

6

MOTHER lies in bed. YES stands at the bedside.

MOTHER

The right to sleep is given to
no woman.

YES

Yes, Mademoiselle we can.

7 EXT. GARDEN - DAY

7

MOTHER is taking potato bugs off the potato plants.
YES lounges nearby with an unidentified book.

MOTHER

Do we do what we have to do, or
do we have to do what we do?

YES

You are nothing but a boy,
Ferdinand, why should I listen
to you, just a boy.

MOTHER

Yes but, what is man, what are
men, what are they.

YES

Well, one thing they are and one
thing they are not, they are

lovers and they are not obedient.

MOTHER

Well let them deny it, all the same they do.

YES

Are they, no perhaps not, perhaps they ask less and they give more, perhaps they do, why do you want to know about American men, why do you ask, you are not interested, why do you ask.

MOTHER

There is a devil creeps into men when their hands are strengthened.

YES

Oh dear that does make me feel funny.

MOTHER

By that time it will do them no good because having the vote they will become like men, they will be afraid, having the vote will make them afraid, oh I know it, but I will fight for the right, for the right to vote for them even though they become like men, become afraid like men, become like men.

8 INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

8

YES

Yes, listen, it is all so unreal, Constance is it unreal to you, it seems less unreal to you than it is to me, to us, is it because you are more practical.

MOTHER

I fight and I am not afraid, I
fight and I am not afraid.

YES

I know it is alright but you see
feeling the way you do, well it
makes me sick, you don't want
the reward of your work, you've
worked well but you don't want
the reward of your work, the
reward of your work is vengeance
so you don't want the reward of
your work, what is the use of
working if you do not want the
reward of your work.

MOTHER

I fought for you that you could
vote, would you vote if they
would not let me?

YES

(Dismissively)

No of course not, poor cousin
William they did not know which
bones were which and it would
have been awful to bury the
bones of one of those terrorists
instead of poor dear cousin
William.

MOTHER

He digged a pit, he digged it
deep, he digged it for his
brother.

YES

(Agitated)

Did you, well one does and one
does not but one mostly does,
did you.

MOTHER

You do not and I do not.

YES

Not once without twice not twice
without thrice, you hear me.

MOTHER

But I, I have been, I have been
married to what you have been to
that one.

YES

Almost, not altogether but
almost, yes almost.

MOTHER

I love the sound of these, one
over two, two under one, three
under four, four over more.

YES

(Confused)

Does that mean more than you
say.

MOTHER

I am not married and the reason
why is that I have had to do
what I have had to do, I have
had to be what I have had to be,
I could never be one of two, I
could never be two in one as
married couples do and can, I am
but one all one, one and all
one, and so I have never been
married to anyone.

YES

No I don't understand no I don't
understand, Denise is right, I
don't understand.

MOTHER

No.

YES

I always say no.

MOTHER

No, no.

YES

You should love to think of me
as no.

MOTHER

No, no, no, you may be married
to the past one, the one that is
not the present one, no-one can
be married to the present one,
the one, the present one.

YES

Yes and it is no to me.

MOTHER

Yes, yes, I think so.

YES

It is all just commencing you
know, how well you must know
that it must commence with no,
and go on with no and end with
no, my poor Ferdinand, it must
be so.

9 **INT. A WHITE OCTAGONAL ROOM** 9
Each wall of the room is a door. It is brightly lit.

MOTHER

I enter into a tabernacle, I was
born a believer in peace.

YES

Perhaps but I had better go.

YES moves to leave then pauses, unsure which door to
open.

MOTHER

They looked for me and they
found me, I like to talk about
it.

YES

It is their duty, their duty,
their duty, it is their duty.

MOTHER

I open any door, that is the way
that any day is today, any day
is today I open any door every
door a door.

YES

Yes I too was about to go, to go
not somewhere but anywhere and
one of my neighbours, a farmer
said to me, mademoiselle, go
where, I am an old man and I
tell you in time of danger stay
where you are and you are there,
if you live through it, you are
still there, there where you
are.

MOTHER

I say fight for the right, be a
martyr and live, be a coward and
die, and why, because they, yes
they, sooner or later go away.

YES

What am I going to do, what can
I do, I am going to stay.

MOTHER

Do they?

YES

He is not, nobody is going back
to his old ordinary life.

10 EXT. GARDEN - DAY

10

MOTHER enters. YES doing something with potato bugs.

MOTHER

We may pretend to go in good
faith but there will be no faith
in us.

YES

There you are Constance, yes how can you hate, how can you when you have never suffered, that is to say when your country has never suffered.

MOTHER

I am blind and therefore I dream.

YES

My God, Denise, everybody's side, no you are right, Denise, I don't take anybody's side, of course I don't take anybody's side.

MOTHER

The harvest of neutrality had been great, but we had gathered it all.

YES

Denise, every day is going to be so long, in a defeat, the days are short and the weeks are long and the year, oh the year, once it is over, but is a year ever really over, a whole year, a whole year of defeat, it is all so long.

MOTHER

Men want to be half slave half free. Women want to be all slave or all free, therefore men govern and women know, and yet.

YES

Well, I suppose my mother was wise, she, well, they started rich and after the last war they became poor, so poor, they have to take their own potato bugs off their potato plants.

MOTHER

I understand you undertake to
overthrow their undertaking.

YES

I often wonder whether mother
did it just to keep father being
always with her.

MOTHER

You are entirely right, only I
disagree with you.

YES

But can there always be
potatoes.

MOTHER

I wonder.

YES

My hat, that woman, potato bugs,
that woman.

11 INT. BLACK ROOM

11

The room is empty except for a rectangular object with
bars in the centre of the room. It looks like a mashup
between a crib, a manger, and a cage.

MOTHER

We, hush, dear as we are, we are
very dear to us and to you we
hush, we hush you say hush, dear
hush.

YES

Alright, whose baby did you see,
anybody's baby you know.

MOTHER

It is so beautiful to meet you
all here so beautiful, so
beautiful.

YES

I don't know what he means, I
don't know whether he knows what

he means, I don't know, I don't know what he means, I don't know whether God knows what he means, I don't know.

MOTHER

I do not know whether I am asleep or awake, awake or asleep, asleep or awake.

YES

Yes, I know, and so it is all over.

MOTHER

I know.

12 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

12

MOTHER lies in bed. YES sits at bedside.

YES

You love me.

MOTHER

I know anybody would.

YES

Do I love you.

MOTHER

I should believe, what they ask, but they know.

YES

Yes, one has to be alone sometime.

MOTHER

I am not loved anymore, I was loved oh yes I was loved but I am not loved anymore, I am not, was I not, I knew I would refuse what a woman would choose and so I am not loved anymore, not loved anymore.

YES

I mean that if I was strong enough to stop your saying yes completely and forever then I was strong enough to eventually make you say yes completely and forever.

MOTHER

Dear me, if it was not so early I would be sleepy.

YES

Yes, of course you silly, come and let us be alone together.

MOTHER

I am not well.

YES

What is it, is it the peas.

MOTHER

I have no hope in black or white in white or black in black or black in white or white, no hope.

YES gets into the bed with MOTHER.

YES

I know what I'm homesick for, I am homesick for a roast chicken and I am homesick for the quays of Paris, often and often I am homesick for the quays of Paris, and a roast chicken.

MOTHER

Don't forget, they come again.

FADE OUT:

Note:

The dialogue for this screenplay has been lifted from two of Gertrude Stein's late works. YES's words are taken from *Yes Is For A Very Young Man* (1944-1945), a melodrama about a family navigating the German occupation of France. MOTHER's lines come from *The Mother of Us All* (1945- 1946), a Libretto about the American suffragette Susan B. Anthony.

The writing of this screenplay is inspired by Stein scholar Sarah Bay-Cheng's suggestion that these two texts, which differ greatly in their dramatic technique and sentiment towards the future, be read against each other as an oscillation between despair and hope Gertrude Stein expressed at the end of her life in 1946. Through Stein's words this play holds space for a conversation about gender, hope, and despair for those who carry it in their bones.

This screenplay is written for my mothers and my daughters. I am also indebted to my father's family who through their actions remind me that the desire to communicate is more important for the maintenance of relationships than the content communicated: side by side, activating different stories with only the intention of feeling together apart.