

EMILY WITHERS

Letters from God to the Civilizations

MATT, the new guy
MARK, the one in charge

Winter. Lights up on a disorganized office. MARK and MATT shuffle papers, pull drawers open, sort and trash various documents.

MARK

(rifling through papers)

Jesus...Jesus... Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!

MATT

God, it's hot in here.

MARK

Very funny.

MATT

What?

MARK

“God, it's hot in here”? Rub it in, why don't you.

MATT

I didn't realize it when I said that. But it's such a change from the snow—

MARK

If you're finished wasting time, I'm going back to my job of finding out what the hell happened to him.

MATT

Sorry.

MARK

Just finish sorting that pile, okay? *(beat)*

MATT

What's this envelope? It doesn't have a label.

MARK snatches it.

MARK

There's a key inside. I wonder...

MATT

Try the cabinets?

MARK

No, it's... ah! The drawer!

He pulls out a paper.

"A Letter from God to the Civilizations. My people, I write to inform you of my impending death. It is nearing the turn of the century—" How old is this, anyway?

MATT

Keep reading!

MARK

"It is nearing the turn of the century and I am dying. You must know this. My last will and testament indicates that I wish the people of the world to overtake my position as creator, sustainer, and destroyer of the earth and all its inhabitants. I cannot change time, it being a separate form all its own, and it has begun to wear me down. I made you in my own image, and thus, like you, I shall die. *(beat)* I never expressly told anyone, nor has it been recorded to my knowledge, that I am immortal, and as the civilizations of the world today seem to be getting along fine without me, I have concluded it is my time to go." Matt, this doesn't help us at all. We already know he's dead.

MATT picks up a second letter.

MATT

“A Letter from God to the Civilizations.” This one’s written in terrible handwriting.

MARK looks through the drawer.

MARK

Maybe he was pressed for time. He was a busy guy, you know.

MARK removes everything from the drawer. MATT skims the letter.

MATT

Blah, blah, history, blah, blah, art... oh this sounds interesting. Listen to this: “There are things that even I am incapable of. The human race is sick, and I cannot heal it. It is in your hands now. Research and technology have been my replacements in the past several years...” blah, blah... “I have complete faith that you will survive until you do not, and that science is the key to solving and creating all your problems.” (*musings*) I have complete faith that you will survive until you do not...and that science is the key to solving and creating all your problems.

MARK

Well what the hell does that mean?

MATT

I mean, I guess that he meant for us to go on after his...suicide! It must have been a suicide!

MARK

How does a god kill himself?

MATT

I don’t know yet, but it had to have been. Look at all the evidence. We are holding in our hands the very notes he wrote before he—

MARK

Get John on the phone, I want him to know about this.

MATT

(on the phone)

John, you should come down here. We’ve found something. Yes, yes! A locked drawer in his office...full of letters he wrote and never sent.—No, I don’t think that’s necessary...

MARK

Speakerphone, speakerphone!

JOHN

...to be there too. He's better at identifying handwriting—how do you know it's not a forge? You can't claim God left us a suicide note when it clearly wasn't intended for us, and you don't know if he even wrote it.

MARK

(to MATT) Does he want...? (to JOHN) Luke doesn't need to be here. Just come down and have a look at the thing will you?

JOHN

If it's as important as you say it is—

MARK takes the phone.

MARK

Look, John, we both know Luke likes to talk and I don't want him to record this before we've got all the facts. We haven't even figured out what it means... I don't know if people are going to laugh or cry at this kind of news.

MARK's conversation continues at a quieter level, and is overpowered by MATT, who reads a third letter.

MATT

"Tell Eve I'm sorry I dared her to eat the apple." (*beat*) "What can you expect of a child anyway? We're all guilty of some kind of mischief. Mine was just, well, a bit more detrimental. I only wanted to have some fun." Huh, this one is a lot more personal. I wonder what order these were written in...?

He looks at a fallen paper.

"That strange flower, the sun, / Is just what you say. / Have it your way. / The world is ugly, / And the people are sad. // That tuft of jungle feathers, / That animal eye, / Is just what you say. // That savage of fire, / That seed, / Have it your way. / The world is ugly, / And the people are sad." Hey, hey Mark! I think this is a Wallace Stevens poem.

MARK gestures for MATT to be quiet.

MATT

Well, it's certainly depressing. Hm.

He looks at the third letter.

“As I grew older, I saw the ruin in my great creation: humanity is poisoned with evil, an evil deep within me that sometimes escapes. An anger: the wind of a hurricane, the water of a flood. And all the ferocity of emotion, all the rage, that’s part of me, lodged into each person like a tumor.”

MARK finishes the phone call. MATT continues, tragically.

MATT

“Everything is my fault. Everything. Natural disasters, accidents, human tragedies. Sometimes I was just so angry and sick of the world I wanted to... well I don’t know what. But I can’t go on having everyone think I’m a forgiving, loving God if that’s how I repay them. I’ve fallen out of my own grace. I’m sick of lying. I’m sick of myself.”

MARK has found a tape recorder, presses play. A feminine, but not false, voice emits from it.

VOICE

When I was young, I created the world with two messy hands. I raised myself. I liked to shape things. I began with simple things—rings, balls, experimenting. You know. *(beat)* Those little clay experiments became the planets, and I threw excess clay into the whirlpool of space—that became asteroids, comets, the like.

The voice breathes heavily, as if making a grave decision.

MATT

(reciting)

‘Some part of our being knows this is where we came from. The cosmos is within us. We’re made of star-stuff.’ Sure, everybody knows that quote. Science meets the concept of the soul.

MARK shushes him.

VOICE

But my best work by far were the stars. And this is my true apology to the world. I loved, more than anything else, I loved to light them and watch them burn.

MATT & MARK exchange a look. The tape emits white noise, then stops. Lights down.

END OF PLAY