

Falling Out

Morgan Springsteen

[Dim lights on an empty stage. HUSBAND and WIFE enter from opposite sides. Both cross downstage to their respective corners. They speak only to the audience and are unaware of the others' presence.]

WIFE: We've been married twenty-two years.

HUSBAND: She stopped loving me twenty years ago.

WIFE: I stopped loving him fifteen years ago.

HUSBAND: I spent five years trying to win her back.

WIFE: He knew. He just never bothered to try and win me back.

HUSBAND: After that I started screwing the neighbor's wife.

WIFE: He was too busy screwing the neighbor's wife.

[HUSBAND exits. WIFE crosses downstage, left of center, kneels, looks up, crosses herself, and begins to pray. As HUSBAND and WIFE speak in the following sequence, lights remain dim, and spotlights turn on and off on their faces as they speak. WIFE's spot is tinted red. HUSBAND's is tinted blue.]

WIFE: I'm sorry I forgot you. Did you forget me? What's it been? Seven years? Eight? Where...where did you go? Are you screwing the neighbor's wife, too? Doesn't that go against one of the rules you wrote? I guess Christianity's full of hypocrisy, though, so I'm not that surprised. [pause] Can I speak with your wife? I just feel like she's get the situation better than you.

[WIFE bows her head in silent prayer, frozen. HUSBAND enters and stands beside her, addressing the audience.]

HUSBAND: When we got married, she was a real looker. I mean, I know you wouldn't believe it now, but back then? Damn. Bombshell. You could bounce a quarter off that ass. The neighbor's wife? [whistles] She's skinny as a rail. Never had kids. Her tits are still all...up...and perky...

[HUSBAND freezes. WIFE looks up, addresses God.]

WIFE: I hate him. I only started actually hating him about five years ago. I think it was more about having something to do with my days. Hating someone with a genuine passion is a real time consumer, ya know. I can sit for hours, just thinking about how much I hate him. I know that goes against your teachings, but what the hell did I do to deserve this? Where did I fuck up so badly, pardon my language, that you thought I deserved...him? I never missed a day of Sunday

school. Not one. Not even the week I had my appendix taken out. I mean, what the hell, God?

[WIFE freezes, looking upward.]

HUSBAND: She hates me so much. That bugged me for a while, but you learn to get over things with her. She'll probably poison me eventually, but hey, for now she keeps the house clean while I pay the bills. She keeps the kids fed and dressed. She's better at that stuff than I ever was. I love our kids. I do. To be honest, they're probably what's kept me around. Maybe not, though. Maybe it's just because I hate change even more than she hates me. This may not be happiness, but it's not that tough to convince yourself that numbness is the same as comfort.

[HUSBAND freezes.]

WIFE: I fell out of love with him. Then I fell out of love with our children, because I look at them, and I see him. Their eyes crinkle in the corners when they smile, just like his. Those are the kinds of things I would find sentimental and endearing if my life was like a Hallmark special. [pause] I just realized something. If I left, I wouldn't miss them. If I hadn't been there the whole nine months I was pregnant with each of them, I'd never believe they were mine. Isn't there some pheromone that should make me love them? Must be I gave birth to kids with faulty pheromones. Or maybe my senses are just defective. [stands, brushes off knees, looks up] I probably won't be back for another eight years, so don't get your hopes up. I thought one of these times you might actually pipe up and say something useful. But nothin'. Eight years and still nothin'. [looks at watch] I gotta go. The children I gave birth to and don't love need to be picked up in twenty minutes, and social obligation dictates that I be there to feign interest in macaroni art and junior high boy drama.

[Blackout. White spots up on both HUSBAND and WIFE, standing face to face, profiles to the audience.]

WIFE: I'm leaving.

HUSBAND: No, you aren't.

WIFE: Did you hear me?

HUSBAND: You tell me you're leaving once a year. Have you ever even packed a bag?

WIFE: No. Never before. This time I'm leaving.

HUSBAND: Go.

WIFE: You don't think I will.

HUSBAND: Nope.

WIFE: Could you survive?

HUSBAND: Do you honestly care?

WIFE: No.

HUSBAND: Then go.

WIFE: I know you're screwing the neighbor's wife.

HUSBAND: I know you know.

WIFE: I hate you.

HUSBAND: I know that, too.

WIFE: Do you hate me?

HUSBAND: No.

WIFE: Fuck you.

HUSBAND: I don't hate you.

WIFE: Liar.

HUSBAND: I'm indifferent to you.

WIFE: That's why you started--

HUSBAND: Screwing the neighbor's wife? No.

WIFE: Then why?

HUSBAND: Because you stopped loving me.

WIFE: Not true. I stopped loving you because you screwed the neighbor's wife.

HUSBAND: She has a name, you know.

WIFE: No she doesn't. Not to me.

HUSBAND: Fair enough.

WIFE: Indifference is worse than hate.

HUSBAND: Is it?

WIFE: Definitely. At least I have the courage to have an emotion. You're an apathetic pit.

HUSBAND: You're not going to leave.

WIFE: [thoughtful pause] I know.

HUSBAND: I'm not going to change.

WIFE: Coward.

HUSBAND: Absolutely.

[long pause]

WIFE: Do you think we're average?

HUSBAND: Yes.

[Blackout.]