

DRAW A LION

by Dan O'Neil

Original production at the Brooklyn Winery, August 26th, 2012.
Featuring Erin Mallon (Marcy) and Tara Westwood (Lynne)
Directed by Dan O'Neil

CAST LIST

Marcy, female, tall and eager to please, early 30's.

Lynne, female, a former model, elegant, late 30's or early 40's.

PLACE & TIME

Lynn's apartment, one day before Mother's Day.

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MARCY & LYNNE both stare long and hard at a small cardboard rectangle - a handmade card. MARCY starts out hopeful, but slowly deflates amid the long silence that ensues.

MARCY

Let me start by just saying that I'm *not* a visual artist, like at all, I hardly know how to sign my *name*, Lynne, I am flattered that you asked this, commissioned - I've never *been* commissioned to do anything at all ever and so but it's okay if you don't like it, it won't hurt my feelings-

LYNNE

You've never been asked to wash dishes?

MARCY

People have asked me to wash dishes.

LYNNE

That's a commission.

MARCY

Well this is *different*.

LYNNE

Yes, I can see that now.

MARCY

...What's wrong with it. See? How easily I asked that just now? I'm not afraid of your answer at *all*, not in the least bit, oh my god please don't tell me I'll just get you another one at the store, we can just forget this ever happened-

LYNNE

I don't want a store bought card. I want a handmade card. It's Mother's Day tomorrow.

MARCY

So - but I also only bring this up with emphasis on my appreciation for your having asked me in the first place, for involving me in this intimate affair between you and your - but wouldn't it be just fine to write "Happy Mother's Day" on the outside, just get a like nice piece of heavy paper from the paper store and just write something small and semi-personal on the other side and send it?

LYNNE

No.

MARCY

Does it have to be of a *lion*?

LYNNE
Yes.

MARCY
A picture of a lion.

LYNNE
Yes.

MARCY
Identifiably so.

LYNNE
Yes and no.

MARCY
Well, that clears things up.

LYNNE
You didn't draw a lion?

MARCY
No. No, I did. That... is... a lion.

They stare again at the card.

LYNNE
Yes.

MARCY
See, the, uh- the outline is - I WENT TO THE ZOO FOR THIS! I was like, oh a lion, no problem, that's funny that she wants a lion on a mother's day card but okay I don't need to know any details, and I thought about lions and realized I don't see them very often and perhaps inspiration would be useful so I went to the zoo. But. I couldn't SEE any lions. They were all hiding or something. I stayed there until it was about to close. I cried in the monkey house.

LYNNE
Maybe you should have refused this commission.

MARCY
Yes, maybe you should have just wandered out into the street and asked any wayward person to draw you a lion, some child selling lemonade could have done a better job, I know, it's just-

LYNNE
I don't know any children.

MARCY

You would've asked a child? Over me?

LYNNE

Yes.

MARCY

But you don't know any.

LYNNE

Yes.

MARCY

Well *that* is comforting.

LYNNE

Children are very talented. In their drawing.

MARCY

If by talented you mean they draw *weird shit*-

LYNNE

Marcy? That's not what I mean.

They draw without fear.

It doesn't need to be good or representational.

It just needs to be.

I thought-

Here's why I commissioned you, I know you've been wondering.

You are the only person I could think of who struck me as capable of drawing without fear.

MARCY

Wow.

LYNNE

The reason I asked you to draw a lion is that my mother is a terrible person.

She will and has critiqued every card, every phone call, practically every utterance I make, and so I have committed myself to abstraction. The problem with this card as I see it is that it looks TOO MUCH like a lion. My mother will recognize it. She will say something like, "A LION, Lynne? Really? Is that really what you think of me?" And I will get sucked into a conversation I'm not interested in having, namely the type of conversation which includes raised voices, first inadvertent and later not-so-inadvertent comparisons to various carnivorous animals, perhaps escalating to shark - she'll call me a whale, playing on my former body image issues which she expertly instilled in me in the first place - I think you can see why it's vital to me that while *I* know this is an image of a lion, *she* will have no way of articulating what's right or wrong with it or even what it actually is.

MARCY
So I did too good?

LYNNE
If you'd like to think of it that way.

MARCY
Well, I *would*.

LYNNE
Then do.

MARCY
Lion's too good.

LYNNE
Yes.

MARCY
Hmm.

LYNNE
Would you be willing to-

MARCY
To draw it again?

LYNNE
Yes, but this time, unafraid, make your lines bold, shade with certainty, obliterate the image only by accident. You *need* to think of it as a lion, or else it won't be. My mother's confusion will be legitimate, and I will be forced to forfeit the moral high ground, which I am unwilling to do.

MARCY
That sounds quite difficult.

LYNNE
Which is why I asked you.

MARCY
Oh, Lynne.
That's such, just, a nice thing. To think that I could do a difficult thing, I mean.
Thank you Lynne.

LYNNE
You are very welcome, Marcy. I have always regarded you as one of the least socially developed people that I know.

MARCY

The problem is, you're wrong about that. I'm not as childlike as you might think. I've grown up a lot since... I don't know, yesterday, last tuesday, I grow every day. I grow more afraid. Every day. I'm thirty two years old. I can't draw a lion that doesn't like a lion while still believing that I'm drawing a lion. I've aged.

LYNNE

Oh dear.

MARCY

Yes.

LYNNE

May I...
Suggest something?

MARCY

Okay.

LYNNE

I want you to repeat some words after I do.

MARCY

Sure!

LYNNE

We'll start with very grown-up words-

MARCY

We'll start with-

LYNNE

No don't repeat it yet, those aren't the words. The words I want you to repeat are:
Mortgage.

MARCY

Mortgage.

LYNNE

Pregnancy.

MARCY

Pregnancy.

LYNNE

Self-worth.

Self-worth. MARCY

Instigation. LYNNE

Litigation. MARCY

No, instigation. LYNNE

Oh. Sorry. Investigation. MARCY

Interesting. We'll just go on -
Alienation. LYNNE

Alienation. MARCY

Butterfly. LYNNE

Oh that's nice. MARCY

Repeat it, please. LYNNE

Butterfly. MARCY

Ketchup. LYNNE

Ketchup. MARCY

Mayonnaise. LYNNE

Mayonnaise. MARCY

Yes please.
LYNNE

Yes please.
MARCY

Playground.
LYNNE

Playground!
MARCY

Cloud.
LYNNE

Cloud.
MARCY

Red.
LYNNE

Red.
MARCY

Happy.
LYNNE

Happy.
MARCY

Good night.
LYNNE

Good night.
MARCY

Close your eyes.
LYNNE

Close your-
MARCY

Actually do it, close your eyes.
LYNNE

MARCY closes her eyes.

LYNNE

Your bedroom is on the northeast corner of the house. Outside the window is a spruce tree. It smells like leaves and paint in your room. There are teddy bears above your pillow. On the wall, there is a painting. It is a painting that you made two years ago, when you were three. Can you describe the painting, please?

MARCY

It's... sort of blue. And, like, a kaleidoscope? It's fragmented. It's... Sad. I'm proud of it. I feel good when I see it. It's on cardboard. It's not framed.

LYNNE

What is it?

MARCY

I don't know.

LYNNE

Is it a lion?

MARCY

It could be.
I don't know.
It's whatever I want it to be.

LYNNE

What if your mother said to you, after you finished painting it, "Oh what a lovely lion!"

MARCY

I guess it would become a lion.

LYNNE

But if she hadn't said that?

MARCY

It could have been anything. It just was. It was a thing. It was unnamable.

LYNNE

Were you afraid then?

MARCY

No! I wasn't!

LYNNE

Are you afraid now?

MARCY

Well I'm afraid of lions.

LYNNE

Yes. What else?

MARCY

Uh, failure, stains, the subway, bugs, relationships, and, uh, hair growing where it shouldn't, aging, what other people think, uh, money, of money, not enough or too much, either way, of what I look like when I first wake up, um, status I guess, personal gain and I don't know, loss, loss of, yeah, loss of years, of ability, of aging, of growing up, of my naked body, of neglecting my dental health, of going to my job, of losing my job, of... global warming, terrorists, madmen with guns, also not having the right to own a gun even though I don't but what if I did one day! Of not knowing. Also, of knowing too much. Lions.

LYNNE

Yes. Me too. Now open your eyes?

MARCY

Okay.

MARCY opens her eyes.

MARCY

Okay.

LYNNE

Here's a crayon.

MARCY

Thank you.

LYNNE

Here's a canvas.

LYNNE hands her a piece of cardboard.

MARCY

It's cut out of a cereal box-

LYNNE

It's a canvas.

MARCY

Yes.

LYNNE

I want you to draw.
Just, right there, now, on this canvas.
Marcy.
If you would.
Draw me a lion?

MARCY starts drawing.
LYNNE, over her shoulder, watches, breathless.

END.