

Passing

By Dipika Guha

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In the foyer on the way into the theatre several objects sit encased in transparent casings- they must be easy to lift and replace.

The objects include: a mounted rifle (unloaded), a small card reads "Lee-Metford Rifle 1890"

A deep teak wood bowl and spoon: a card reads "Native Bowl and Spoon, circa 1965"

A simple plastic ice tray, card reads "Ice Tray, circa 1960"

A child's mobile, colours faded, card reads " Mobile, Bates Family 1942"

A pair of baby shoes, faded, alongside a pair of men's hiking boots and a woman's high heeled shoes, card reads simply "Bates Family, 1946"

There are some objects of women's maternity clothing-faded cotton dresses that hang on hangers behind glass cases. Their labels date them between the years 1940-1960. Each dress is tagged with handwritten slips of faded paper that hang off the cuffs.

On the walls we also see paintings, drawings, sketches and etchings mounted.

The contents of the paintings may be determined by the director and the cast. They are all signed with the same name but we cannot read the signature.

A note underneath each painting :

"Untitled", by Matilda.

It wasn't until Father Graham asked Matilda to do these paintings that she began to remember herself.

The paintings are Matilda's true expression of who she is.

Matilda is self taught.

Our gratitude to the patrons of *Yale* University who have allowed Matilda's paintings to flourish and be displayed all over the world. They have allowed access to many people who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to witness her important artwork"

Characters:

Colonel Patrick-sixties, white, an English army Colonel, close to retirement, husband to an unnamed wife

Sidney Bates-mid thirties, white, an English a government official, Clara's husband

Clara Bates-mid thirties, white, an English housewife, Sidney's wife

Martha Highsmith-mid thirties, white, an English island wife

Matilda-late teens, a woman, unknown (this part must be played by an older actress in her early to mid twenties) Matilda is not white but must be able to 'pass'

MATILDA
I was born twice

The last time was in a church in 1998
The church of God is big and light
Like a giant hot air balloon
Only God is not like hot air
Hot air on your skin feels nice though, specially if you're cold....
Sheesh.. I've really messed this up haven't I?
Start again!
Hello. My name is Matilda
The church gave me some light
Some light with which to
You saw my artwork on the walls when you were coming in?
They're not for sale.

I like art to be, like, interactive?
So you can look at them and tell me what you feel
If you don't like to you don't have to say anything
You can just sit there
Like you're doing now
My paintings-
They're not like roses eh?
Never understood still life
No life is still

I'll leave in a bit so you can
So we can
Watch this play
I like plays. But
I like it better when there are more lights usually so you can see everything.
I'm not afraid to sit in the light anymore
Father Graham's a good man
He taught me lots of things
He talks a lot
No one talked to me so much before!
The sound of his voice
It's made me remember

Father Graham said it was okay if I didn't tell you all my last name
He jokes that they are overrated
Particularly if you've got a bad one
I knew someone called Rose Gardener once
Rose Gardener!
Sheesh she looked like a cactus

When she spoke her words would poke you, it would be like, ouch, ouch stop it!

I went to my first museum last year. I thought the artist was one of those people who sit by the paintings and try to look like they aren't there. So I walked up to one and said "why are you wearing a uniform then?". She looked at me, like, "don't be stupid." And I was like, yeah, I might be a bit stupid but you're not invisible.
She had a name tag on her. She was called Rose Gardener. No she wasn't. Just kidding.

When I go to a museum or a gallery, I like to see the artist
So that's why I'm here
So you can see me
That's all, I guess

On the walls outside, I'll just say this before I go, on the walls outside you might have read a little caption. If you didn't, I'll just read it to you, won't take a minute. It says, by Matilda, that's me—cool, yeah? So I'll just read this to you quick.

She reads

"Untitled" by Matilda. It wasn't until Father Graham asked Matilda to do these paintings that she began to remember herself.

She began to remember who she was before.

The paintings are Matilda's true expression of who she is.

Matilda is self taught.

Our gratitude to the patrons of *Yale* University who have allowed Matilda's paintings to flourish and be displayed all over the world. They have allowed access to many people who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to glimpse her important artwork."

Darkness.

Rifle shots.

Sounds of men running and breathing in excitement.

A lone dog barks.

Shoes scrape gravel.

Low voices of men.

Muffled male laughter fades into the distance.

MAKING HOME

A young, attractive English man sits in a garden chair in an open verandah. Behind him, we see a glass

window without curtains.
He smokes.

SIDNEY

No Englishman ought to die without knowing this.
It saddens me to think of them shivering in their bootstraps on that cold soggy isle.
No wife to gaze on.
No verandah.
No pleasant evening breeze.
There are some who'll never know what it's like to possess a thing before it knows it wants
to be possessed.
Before it knows that the kind of pleasure in being taken is truly unlike any
other.

This. Remarkable thing. This land of ours.

A young woman raps on the window.

Sidney looks behind to see her face. He turns back to his cigarette.

She raps again on the glass.

Silence.

THE COLONEL MEETS CLARA

The garden.
The sky is glowering. An island sky dented with rain clouds.

A bullish but charming elderly British man stands beside a young English woman.

CLARA

There used to be a mountain there!

COLONEL

Is that true?

CLARA

No.

But in front of the house there's a long beach that goes a mile out.

COLONEL

Oh?

CLARA

No!

Actually, if you look over there-across the way, south of where our garden ends, there used to be a small church with the skinniest steeple you've ever seen.

You could flick it with your fingernail. Can you imagine?

A church, right in the middle of the rainforest.

COLONEL

Really now?

CLARA

That one's actually true!

Silence

COLONEL

Hot eh?

CLARA

Hot.

The birds are dead.

Silence

COLONEL

So you're liking your new home then?

CLARA

I feel safe when someone..anyone..God or my husband has ordered the universe.

The fact that someone has given thought about where to put something and then actually put it there.
It makes me feel safe.
I look out of my window.
And the view is the same
The same view of the same garden.
That he planned.
I can feel his hands on everything.
Every shrub, every tree, every rose..
Like a ghost.
My little place at the window.
I've almost grown to like it. I sit right of the windowsill if you're looking in. On that cushion.
Mohair. What is mohair?

COLONEL

A type of wool I think. Lamb?

CLARA

Colonel what is your situation?

COLONEL

I don't have one.

CLARA

But you have things around you?

That you've

Placed where you'd like them?

COLONEL

Eh? Yes oh yes yes yes yes. I've 'put down', you might say, if you were to say, a home west of here, you'll come once you've settled, a little place for me and my missus of

CLARA

Fifty years

COLONEL

Yes.

CLARA

He said.

COLONEL

Fifty.

CLARA

Astonishing.

COLONEL

You wouldn't say so if you see her ha ha!
She'll kill me if I tell you but if you took our ages together and added them up, you'd get twice the age of this country.

CLARA

Isn't that strange?

COLONEL

Ah well,
Place keeps passing hands.
If it had wanted to, it could've been an old country by now.
Could've had a history to speak of and everything.
But oh no.
You ah
You took a tour?
He said you'd taken one?

CLARA

Our last tour stop was by the quay.
I saw this man. Tiny man with a crooked leg. He raised his arm and waved at me. And I forgot myself and waved back. And then the smell hit me.. like a wave. Twenty feet away and I still smelled him. I thought, that's a homeless man. And I felt happy.
I'd finally seen something authentic.

COLONEL

Good tour then eh, I'll recommend it.
And
And
Here you are! All young and fresh

CLARA

Placed.

COLONEL

Cared for.

CLARA

Kept.

COLONEL

Homed.

CLARA
Like a pup.

COLONEL
You're a bit of a pup.
With that hair in your eyes.
Quite lovely.

CLARA
I don't suppose you think about being lovely do you? Or good...

COLONEL
When you're doing God or your country's work, it's easy, yes, it's easy to be good. Lovely,
on the other hand, that's for the young.

CLARA
So if I had some work.

COLONEL
Work?

CLARA
If I had some work
Given to me by God, or my country.
I could move from my place at the window..

COLONEL
I should be getting on..The missus

CLARA
But I rather like my place at the window.
I press my nose right up against the glass.
When suddenly a face appears.
And I think the pane's going to crack like ice
But it doesn't.
The face has matted hair and I can smell that smell of the man by the quay
And I think who is that?
I pull back and..

COLONEL
And?

CLARA
Nothing. No one. It's just me.

COLONEL

You're tired.
You must be.
Very. Tired.
I'll send the missus round for you.
Let the old boy know will you.
That I came.

CLARA
I will.

COLONEL
Does he know?

CLARA
About how I feel?

COLONEL
Yes, quite.
Feelings.
They're things too for you women. Like objects to be moved around. With weight.
Oh yes I know.
Lived with a woman for

CLARA
Fifty years

COLONEL
Yes I know all about feelings. Good luck with yours my dear.

COLONEL
You too...Colonel.