

Rainbow Round the Moon

a play by Paul Baerman
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"Eternity is in love with the productions of time."
William Blake, Proverbs of Hell

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CHARACTERS

VICTOR, the first vampire. He wears a black or red cape, sweater, cardigan or fur, or carries a blanket.

HELENA, his teenage daughter. Being in the midst of her incubation period as she turns from mortal to immortal, she may have periodic intense pain.

SETTING

Helena's bedroom

MUSIC: Dies Irae. Helena is furiously packing a suitcase. There is a dresser with a jewelry box and a framed photo on it, and a chest. Victor enters almost apologetically. MUSIC fades.

VICTOR

I heard the screaming.

HELENA

Time's fun when you're having flies.

VICTOR

Becoming immortal doesn't make you smart, just more of a smartass.

HELENA

Yeah, look at you. By the way, I'm coming out as a vegan.

VICTOR

Love what you've done with the place.

HELENA

My room, my blood.

VICTOR

My blood. Wherever you go, whatever you do, my blood flows in your veins.

HELENA

That doesn't mean I want what you want. Bite me. Whoops--too late.

(Sings)

WITH A LITTLE BITE
WITH A LITTLE BITE
WITH A LITTLE BITE OF LUCK
SHE'LL GIVE RIGHT IN!

'Dear Amy, my daughter snacks on fruit flies, dangles from the light fixture, and can't see herself in the mirror. Do you think we should move to the lower east side? Like, of Romania?'

Beat.

No one said it would be so lonely. But hey, no sense crying over spilt blood, right?

VICTOR

You don't have to leave, you know. You'll feel a rush of power when--

HELENA

When I take my first victim.

VICTOR

When your incubation is complete.

HELENA

I'm scared.

VICTOR

I know.

HELENA

You don't know shit. I'm eighteen. I don't want to be immortal, I want to go to my prom! Where's my--? What was I looking for?

VICTOR

You're not going to need any of that, Helena.

HELENA

I will not be like you I will not be like you I will not be like you. And don't call me that. The girl you knew as Helena was weak, dependent, helpless. My name is Belladonna.

VICTOR

Belladonna. The changes are working in you. Good girl.

HELENA

(suddenly vulnerable)

Papa, what's it like being immortal?

VICTOR

You tell me.

HELENA

Being undead is like having PMS, only worse. Your feet are always cold. No fire can ever warm you.

Victor places his cape, sweater, or blanket over her shoulders and kneels to chafe her feet.

HELENA (CONT'D)

You have this silver ribbon that runs all the way from your guts up to your throat. That chokes you when you try to cry. So after awhile you stop trying. You have a tree that grows from your feet to your heart and out your arms to your fingertips; up your neck and out your head. The second you fall asleep it shoots out new buds, new foliage, new flowers. So after awhile you stop sleeping. Being immortal is like being maimed where no one can see. You have a lion, a hungry lion. Pacing, pacing.

VICTOR

Soon.

HELENA

Tell me about this girl Helena. Did she have dolls?

VICTOR

A whole treasure-chest full of dolls.

HELENA

Where are they now?

VICTOR

Her treasure-chest.

She checks, snatching up a doll.

HELENA

Did she have a favorite piece of jewelry?

VICTOR

An old, old cameo that she kept in a box on her dresser.

HELENA

What have you done with it?

Victor hands her the box. She snatches the cameo and clutches it along with the doll.

HELENA (CONT'D)

And did she have a brother?

VICTOR

So you do remember.

HELENA

What happened to him?

VICTOR

I turned him.

HELENA

And then? What happened then?

VICTOR

The thing that happens to us. The thing they do to us.

HELENA

They hate us.

VICTOR

They fear us. Because we know too much.

HELENA

We don't know anything. This ends here. I will not be part of this. I've changed my mind.

VICTOR

Too much is at stake.

HELENA

Yeah, we have a lot of stakeholders.

VICTOR

Listen to me. Human history is filled with inhuman slaughter. People killing people with everything from primitive engines of torture to the elegant machinery of genocide. Humans love to inflict pain. Not us. We cherish life, we cling to it, we take it seriously. We kill for food, not for pleasure. Either way, life is going to end life to live. Either way, there will be suffering. But for us it's personal, it's always personal. So you tell me who's the victim. Marginalized by the mainstream, misrepresented by the media.

(MORE)

VICTOR (CONT'D)

And when the chips are down, when mankind is on its ass and the plague has ripped through every monastery and castle and city, who puts the world back together? Who dares to rekindle the spirit of joy? Who nurtures that little, little flame of kindness? Who saves the books? We are memory. We are civilization. And they're going to need us again. So don't tell me you will not be part of this. Don't tell me you've changed your mind. You are privileged to serve, and you chose this path, and now you are part of a noble and ancient line. You have a job to do.

HELENA

I can't see his face. Helena's brother, I can't see his face.

Victor reaches for a photograph on her dresser.

VICTOR

That's the two of you when you were six sitting on the beach with plastic shovels. Building a sandcastle, see?

Helena puts down the doll and cameo, and touches the photograph.

HELENA

This is him?

VICTOR

And you with a red barrette.

HELENA

So who took the picture? Oh.

VICTOR

You and your mom, you were two creatures who loved the sun. People forget that every vampire was once a child.

HELENA

Every one except you.

VICTOR

Somebody had to be first.

HELENA

This girl Helena, she liked watercolors?

VICTOR

She painted flowers: these explosions of color, blue and green, yellow and violet. Wild things that could make you laugh and cry. We used to sit there painting together, making a terrible mess.

HELENA

When the sun shines on a watercolor, it fades. They become invisible.

VICTOR

Creatures of the night always love the things of the day. People like us, we make watercolors.

HELENA

And we marry mortals.

VICTOR

We marry mortals.

HELENA

You could have saved her. You could have turned her.

VICTOR

She chose to. Remain human.

HELENA

You didn't have to accept her choice. What's that mean, to choose to die?

VICTOR

I don't know. The death-wish was my gift to humankind because without it, renewal would have been impossible. But I don't know what it means.

HELENA

I think mortality must be a hard joy, like walking in fire. I think we--I think they pay for life with their bodies. Life consumes them. But in exchange they get to feel the sun on their face anytime they want.

VICTOR

I've held it in my hands. The sun.

HELENA

You were that big?

VICTOR

It was that small. I was there when God layed the keystone of the Milky Way. I attended the birthing of the Earth. Saw this continent rise from the slime, and the first human ancestor wriggling up from the ooze to become my worshipper. I was there when He made rainbows.

HELENA

Papa, do the undead feel pain?

VICTOR

When you turn, you forget everyone you once loved.

Beat.

HELENA

Why are you doing this to me?

VICTOR

Because you asked.

HELENA

You were supposed to protect me.

VICTOR

From what?

HELENA

You never told me there was a God.

VICTOR

You'll have life piled on life.

HELENA

I want to *remember*. Was that what happened to Helena's mother? She decided she'd rather die than forget?

VICTOR

No matter where you go, no matter what you do, you'll always be my daughter.

HELENA

I won't know it.

VICTOR

You can only go forward. Not back, never back. Let me help you, I can make it faster.

HELENA

You made me *this*. If Helena asked you, now, to drive a stake through her heart, would you do it?

VICTOR

Look, honey, the moon's coming up. There's going to be a ring around it--a halo the color of opals, or pearls, or abalone. A rainbow round the moon. Let's have a night on the town.

HELENA

Two vampires walk into a bar and the first one says . . . nevermind.

VICTOR

A little hunting expedition. The family that preys together stays together.

HELENA

Can I have the heart?

VICTOR

You have mine.

HELENA

Tell me your name again.

VICTOR

You can call me Papa.

HELENA

No I can't.

Bites her.

BLACKOUT.