

The Stars in our Faults
My Tom Moran

Setting

The time: The present

The place: two apartments and a suburban home

Characters

MARVIN, 50's. A father and astronomer.

SCORPIO, ageless. Marvin's astrological sign. Costume and behavior suggestive of a scorpion.

JOSH, 20's-30's. Marvin's son.

TAURUS, ageless. Josh's astrological sign. Costume and behavior suggestive of a bull.

SAGITTARIUS, ageless. Josh's subsequent astrological sign.

A centaur, he carries a crossbow or a bow and arrow.

PATTY, 20's-30's. Josh's fiancée.

PISCES, ageless. Tracy's astrological sign. Costume and behavior suggestive of a fish.

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Scene 1

(Stage left, PATTY and PISCES are frozen. Stage right are JOSH and TAURUS. JOSH shaves, dabbing with a red towel.)

JOSH

So what have you got for me today?

TAURUS

Are you going to listen to me this time, Josh?

JOSH

(shrugs)

Probably not. But I'll keep an open mind.

TAURUS

Your relationships should be warm and comforting today, Taurus.

JOSH

Ooh, like a Snuggie!

TAURUS

(reads)

You may get a surprising and unexpected proposition. Don't be afraid to accept it.

JOSH

You mean like kinky?

TAURUS

I mean unusual.

JOSH

So, kinky. Sweet.

TAURUS

But also, beware of bad tidings, and.. and..

(He snorts angrily and advances toward JOSH. JOSH notices.)

JOSH

Something wrong, man?

TAURUS

Do you have to use that color towel?!

(JOSH briefly mimics a bullfighter, waving it in front of Taurus. TAURUS advances, and JOSH tosses it away in alarm.)

JOSH

Okay! Why do you have to be so - you-headed about things?

(They freeze. PATTY and PISCES unfreeze.)

Patty

So what's in store for me today, fishy?

Pisces

You stand at a crossroads, Pisces. Don't be afraid to take the path less traveled by. It's time to make that call. It could make all the difference.

PATTY

You mean like, a phone call or a decision call?

PISCES

What about a booty call?

PATTY

Hey!

PISCES

Just kidding, this isn't that kind of horoscope. Today is your day to step out of your bounds, Patty. You won't get whistled for a foul.

PATTY

Hmm.

(PATTY suddenly sees JOSH across the stage. PISCES and TAURUS exit. PATTY walks toward JOSH, who turns toward her. She pulls out a ring box, opens it and gets down on one knee. JOSH takes the ring out and puts it on. They kiss. PATTY exits, MARVIN enters, and JOSH

and MARVIN sit down at a table stage center. A newspaper sits on the table.)

MARVIN

So she just-

JOSH

Asked me, yes.

MARVIN

On her knee.

JOSH

Yes.

MARVIN

A woman. Asking a man. Just like that. And you said yes. Because you're a pushover.

JOSH

No I'm not!

MARVIN

Yes you are.

JOSH

Okay, yes I am. But it doesn't matter because we love each other.

MARVIN

And where'd she get a cockamamie idea like proposing to you?

JOSH

She said it just felt right.

MARVIN

Felt right, my tuckus. (picks up newspaper and rifles through it.) What's her birthday?

JOSH

March 8.

MARVIN

(reads)

Yep. Here. (tosses paper to JOSH, who scans it.) Son, you just got engaged to a girl who makes her major life

decisions based on something they run right below Funky Winkerbean. Please don't tell me you buy her crap.

JOSH

Well...

MARVIN

I didn't think so.

JOSH

Who's to say? I mean, this is what brought us together.

MARVIN

What does that mean?

JOSH

It means, she only agreed to go out with me in the first place when she found out I was a Taurus. They're the most compatible with Pisces.

MARVIN

Right, fish and bulls. Go together like a horse and carriage.

JOSH

Look, whether I happen to put much faith in it or not, it's the foundation of our relationship.

(PATTY enters.)

MARVIN

That's what I'm worried about.

(PATTY runs her hand affectionately across JOSH's back and sits at the table.)

PATTY

What are you worried about?

MARVIN

Josh, your mother asked me never to tell you this, but, well, I think she'd want you to know. Both of you. You were adopted.

PATTY

What?

JOSH

Shut up.

MARVIN

We got you from a nunnery.

PATTY

Nunnery?

MARVIN

Or whatever they call them.

JOSH

I'm - oh my god. You're not my...? But I have your nose!

MARVIN

And I have Ryan Gosling's chin. That doesn't mean he and I are related.

PATTY

Then who are Josh's parents?

MARVIN

(shrugs)

No one knows. (to JOSH) You were one of those kids they found left in a basket on the front porch. Nothing but your swaddling clothes. Oh, and a note written in an indecipherable language on a slab of meteorite.

JOSH

Really?

MARVIN

No! Except for the porch part, that's all true. Which brings me to my point: We don't really know what your real birthday is.

JOSH

Oh my god.

PATTY

Oh my god. (stands.) I have to go.

JOSH

What?

PATTY

I'm sorry, I have to go.

(She exits. JOSH runs after her.)

JOSH

Wait!

(JOSH exits. MARVIN looks after him. SCORPIO enters, grabs the paper, and begins to read.)

SCORPIO

Today will be a day of doubt. You will question whether you made a mistake. You may want to wait before uttering any words that may hurt someone.

MARVIN

Good thing I don't believe in you.

(MARVIN and SCORPIO exit. PATTY enters and sits on a bench. JOSH enters, sees her, and sits beside her.)

PATTY

Your dad. Your stupid dad!

JOSH

He does have a PhD in astrophysics, sweetie.

PATTY

I wish he had an associate's in keeping his damn mouth shut!

JOSH

You mean you'd rather not know?

PATTY

You could be anything. You could be a Gemini or a Capricorn or a - (horrified) or a Sagittarius. Oh my god, you're a Sagittarius. It explains so much!

JOSH

Wait. Ten minutes ago you thought I was a Taurus and that was why we're perfect for each other.

PATTY

Was. But not now! I just proposed to a sajj! (pronounced 'sadge')

JOSH

Could you please not call me that? It's like a cross between 'sag' and 'vajj' and I don't really aspire to either of those things.

PATTY

Typical sajj comment.

JOSH

Patty. We're the same people we were this morning. Are you really going to get upset over this?

PATTY

Everything happens for a reason, Josh. And that reason is in the stars.

(She takes off her ring, hands it to him, and walks offstage. SAGITTARIUS enters.)

JOSH

What's with the horse butt?

SAGITTARIUS

Centaur. I am the stuff of legend.

(He gently fires the bow, making a sad "pew!" noise as he does so. The arrow falls limply. [this can be mimed.]

JOSH

Great.

SAGITTARIUS

But you can just call me Sajj.

JOSH

Yeah, I'm not gonna do that.

(Blackout.)

Scene 2

(SAGITTARIUS, PISCES and SCORPIO play poker at the table. They silently look at their cards and at each other for a few seconds, hamming up their animal guises as appropriate.)

SCORPIO

(to SAGITTARIUS)

I can see your cards.

SAGITTARIUS

Centaur-shit.

SCORPIO

King, Queen, three, six, two.

SAGITTARIUS

I fold.

PISCES

I'm in. (throws chips.)

SCORPIO

(to PISCES)

You have a terrible poker face.

PISCES

Fish don't have facial expressions.

SCORPIO

I know. And yet I can still tell you got nothing. Call.

(SCORPIO throws in chips. They lay down cards. SCORPIO laughs and rakes chips in.)

SCORPIO

Scorpio's rocking you like a hurricane! In your face, fish and horse-person!

SAGITTARIUS

We prefer Equine-American.

PISCES

So, question. How do we even know Josh is actually a Sagittarius?

SAGITTARIUS

That's beside the point. He's whatever he thinks he is.

PISCES

Wait. But does that mean our existence is solely based on what people believe? That we're not the result of the relative positions of the sun, moon, and other celestial objects at the time of a person's birth?

SCORPIO

(snorts)

Duh.

PISCES

Well. This is an eye-opener.

SAGITTARIUS

Yeah, really makes you think. You gonna deal?

PISCES

So we can just tell people whatever we want?

SAGITTARIUS

We're supposed to tell them whatever *they* want.

PISCES

I say we make an exception this time. These kids belong together, don't you think? It's written in the stars.

SCORPIO

No it isn't, that's exactly what we've been saying.

PISCES

Would you rather they be star-crossed lovers? Because we know how that turns out. And anyway it doesn't seem fair that they should break up because of a lie.

SCORPIO

A lie? What lie?

SAGITTARIUS

Please. A bundle at the nunnery?

SCORPIO

I just didn't want their marriage to be based on false pretenses.

PISCES

So you engineered a breakup on false pretenses.

SCORPIO

(pause)

Touche. So what do you suggest we do?

(The three look around the table at each other. JOSH enters and stands stage right, TRACY enters and stands stage left, MARVIN enters and stands stage center. The three astrological signs approach and address their respective humans.)

SAGITTARIUS

A recent rejection may have you downhearted.

PISCES

You are feeling more conflicted than you know.

(Pause. SAGITTARIUS and PISCES look at SCORPIO.)

SCORPIO

Yeah, I got nothing.

SAGITTARIUS

This is not the time to accept your limitations.

PISCES

A recent decision may rankle at you.

SCORPIO

Okay, wait. How about this: The sun is 93 million miles away. The farthest star is at least 55 million light-years away. There are maybe 10 trillion galaxies in the universe and each one has maybe 100 billion stars. The notion that these stars have any effect on the personalities and behaviors of people on one measly planet is patently absurd.

SAGITTARIUS

Do not let choices be made for you.

PISCES

You have always followed your heart and you shouldn't abandon it now.

SCORPIO

But you know that. You also know that without these stars, certainly without our star, life is impossible. Their light and heat and gravity lead to plants and grass and ocelots and pad thai and Samuel L. Jackson. And love. They are responsible for love, and maybe you shouldn't try to use them to stand in its way.

SAGITTARIUS

You are too quick to accept what you are told.

PISCES

You are too quick to accept what you are told.

SCORPIO

So you can go ahead and show off your (mocking tone and hand-wave) PhD from MIT. But you and your potential future daughter-in-law happen to agree on one fundamental thing. Everything happens for a reason, and the reason is in the stars.

SAGITTARIUS/SCORPIO/PISCES

Don't let yesterday stand in the way of tomorrow.

SCORPIO

Bam!

(The THREE SIGNS back toward the edge of stage and clump together to one side. They react excitedly to the following scene. JOSH and PATTY approach each other. MARVIN hangs respectfully back.)

PATTY

I've been thinking.

JOSH

Lot of that going around.

PATTY

Yeah.

(JOSH pulls out an engagement ring.)

JOSH

You, um, gave this to me. Which I thought was kind of weird, because actually it's your ring in the first place.

PATTY

Yeah, I know. Heat of the moment and all.

JOSH

You know, you really hurt me.

PATTY

I'm sorry, Josh. I was a cosmic fool. It all just threw me for such a loop I didn't know how to react at first.

JOSH

And now?

PATTY

I realized knowing who you are makes up for not knowing what you are.

JOSH

Do you want the ring back?

PATTY

You mean, both of them back, or just the one?

(JOSH kneels on one knee and offers
PATTY the ring.)

JOSH

I thought I might hang onto the other one.

(She takes the ring and looks at it.)

PATTY

I was reading up on Sajjes. Sorry, uh, Sagittarii...?

(JOSH glances at SAGITTARIUS, who gives
him two thumbs-up.)

JOSH

Okay.

PATTY

One of their big traits is that they chase the impossible.

JOSH

Oh.

(She slips the ring back on.)

PATTY

So I guess maybe you aren't one after all.

JOSH

Oh. (Pause.) Oh!

(SAGITTARIUS and PISCES rib and high-five each other. PATTY and JOSH glance their way. Then they kiss.)

JOSH (cont.)

About that.

PATTY

Yes?

JOSH

I went to see my dad this morning and told him I wanted to see my birth certificate. Turns out he was full of crap. April 28. Taurus.

PATTY

Really!

JOSH

Yeah.

(He looks at SAGITTARIUS, who tosses away the bow and arrow and makes bull horns with his fingers [or puts horns back on if that's a costume accent] and does snorty bull things. MARVIN approaches JOSH and PATTY.)

MARVIN

Really. I owe you both an apology and my blessing. What I did was shameful.

PATTY

Yep.

JOSH

Yep. Don't tell me you believe in astrology now.

MARVIN

Do you?

JOSH

I'm starting to see the merit in it.

MARVIN

Not me. But I'm not going to deep-six your happiness because of what you believe.

PATTY

Hmm. Protective, controlling, and forming binds that are built to last. You're a Scorpio, aren't you?

(SCORPIO waves or makes another emphatic gesture at MARVIN.)

MARVIN

I wouldn't know.

(Blackout. End of play.)