

MORMO

A Play by T. Michael Vest

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BIO: T. Michael Vest is a playwright and lyricist with a penchant for humor and provocative theatre. His works have been performed in London, New York, Beijing and Quebec. Plays and musicals include: Perfect/Imperfect (Philly Fringe), Who Are You? (MITF), 再见 Goodbye (Tristan Bates Theatre), Pandora (Union Theatre), Foreign Exchange ('My Fengcai' Intl. Partners' Dance Showcase). Mr. Vest is a founding member of the London-based Divergent Theatre Collective. He has a MA from Goldsmiths, University of London, and is a proud member of the Dramatists Guild of America.

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What's keeping you positive? The love and humor of friends.

I have a few questions about the details of publishing. But open to discussing it!

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Cast of Characters

MORMO: 40-50s. Tall, lanky, ominously calm. Her clothes are patched but tailored. Her eyes deep but cruel.

BASTILE: early 20s. A beautiful young man. Reticent by necessity but ebullient at heart.

AMON: 30S-40s. A well-dressed gentleman

MARIKA: early 30s. Fiery and young, like a blaze of unruly fire.

MAN: 40-50s. Tall, lanky, ominously calm. His clothes are patched but tailored. His eyes deep.

CHILD: under 13. Small but robust. A purity in its eye.

Scene

A porch somewhere in the sweltering South.

Time

The recent past.

Notes

'-' indicates an interruption
'...' indicates a trailing off
'/' indicates overlapping dialogue

(A sweltering day in a macabre Southern town. Heat radiates from the ground - you can see it quivering when you peer into the distance. A lavish porch stretches across the stage - once painted jade or fuchsia or some vibrant hue. It is decrepit now, a shadow of former glory, paint peeling, boards creaking. On the porch stands MORMO - tall, lanky, ominously calm. Her clothes are patched but tailored. Her eyes deep but cruel. She holds a rusty gold trumpet and thrown on the floor before her is a battered old cap. Empty. Beside her sits BASILE - a beautiful young man, tied to the porch with rough twine. He is worn, beaten, bedraggled, and yet dressed in a glistening white tunic. The contrast between his appearance and his clothes is inexplicably harsh.

MORMO begins to play. BASILE remains motionless. The song grows louder. BASILE remains motionless. MORMO stops playing.)

BASILE

I am weary, Sir.

MORMO

Ah. Weariness.

BASILE

I have no spring in my step. No grace in my motion.

MORMO

Pity, that.

BASILE

Not pity, Sir. Rest. I ask only for rest.

MORMO

Ah. Rest.

BASILE

But of course you may play.

MORMO

Thank you. For the permission to play. As you rest.

(MORMO approaches BASILE and kicks him in the jaw.)

You are to dance, scum. Dance.

(MORMO walks back to his perch and BASILE rises.)

BASILE

It will not be good.

MORMO

It will be good.

BASILE

I really don't think it /will.

MORMO

/It will be good.

(MORMO begins to play again. This time, BASILE dances. Slowly. Cautiously. The tunic flowing with his every move.

AMON, a well-dressed gentleman, approaches the porch to listen. He stands for a moment, taking in the scene. BASILE's movements become shaky.)

AMON

Your dancer is damaged.

(MORMO continues to play. AMON draws close to BASILE to examine him.)

Such a beautiful dancer should be better cared for.

(MORMO stops playing. BASILE stops dancing.)

MORMO

Will you put money in the cap or not?

AMON

Money to you? Absolutely not.

MORMO

Ah. Absolutely.

AMON

You wouldn't know how to make use of my money.

MORMO

I see.

AMON

But I would pay you for him.

MORMO

Buy the boy?

AMON

If you could part with him.

MORMO

How much?

(AMON opens his satchel and takes out a large purse.)

AMON

What would you accept? 300? 500?

MORMO

How much do you have?

AMON

Oh, a gentleman doesn't disclose his finances.

MORMO

But a gentleman buys boys?

(AMON's eyes flicker a glint as cruel as MORMO's gaze.)

AMON

I can fix him. And reform him. You're killing him.

MORMO

I know.

(MORMO and AMON lock eyes. Then MORMO pulls out a pistol and shoots AMON in the heart. Money goes flying.)

BASILE watches, as one familiar with horror. He is shattered, but it all feels too normal for shock.

He dutifully attempts to move the body.)

Leave it. Gather the money.

(BASILE does so. Slowly. Painfully. A few notes have scattered beyond his reach. He looks to MORMO for direction.)

Does the dog want its freedom?

(MORMO takes the rope as a leash, allowing BASILE to retrieve the remaining money.)

The wealth of but another captor. Did you find his intentions nobler than mine? Why? Because he saw you? I saw you. I saved you from yourself.

(As MORMO speaks, MARIKA catches sight of the scene and storms towards it. She is fiery and young, like a blaze of unruly fire.)

MARIKA

You goddamn woman with your cunning eyes and black heart. I have seen you before. You and your creatures, the fearful ones, kidnapping beautiful souls in the taverns. Tying them up to perform, to act, to dance for you again and again and again. We all see you, you know. And the secrets you hide. Wolves in sheep's clothing. Snakes with the poise of doves. I want to ask you what you think you contribute to this world? Is this your corrupt idea of order? Or... Could it be so dark as to... Do you find yourself righteous?

(MARIKA has arrived at the porch.)

BASILE

(in a whisper)

Oh, you speak so well. You speak so well.

MARIKA

I should just fucking kill you.

MORMO

Ah. Obscenities.

MARIKA

This world would be better rid of your smugness. You are much worse, but it all begins with fucking smugness.

(MARIKA pulls out her pistol and shoots.)

BASTILE

Oh! No, no. You can't. It won't-

(The bullet whizzes through MORMO and into the wall behind.

MORMO is unfazed.)

MORMO

Try again, sweetie.

(MARIKA does try again. And again. And again. And again.)

May I tell you what I find funny, darling. This brash behavior. You say smugness is the worst thing out there. Maybe. But brashness. It has all the potential with none of the reward.

(MORMO knocks MARIKA down and stands over her, pistol cocked.)

And then it ends. And all anyone remembers is shouting.

BASTILE

Please...

(MORMO shoots MARIKA in the heart... then turns to BASTILE.)

MORMO

Please? Like asking for an ice cream?

(BASTILE hangs his head in shame.)

Are you crying, scum?

(MORMO gives him a smack.)

Don't waste tears over false heroism. She didn't look at you once. Not once. To her you were scum as to me you are scum. You were simply elusively significant. And why? Because of me. Because I am a cause and to assault me takes courage. No. I don't even grant her that. To assault

me, you have to be an idiot. Because I am not a cause. I am the trumpeter. The exactor. You are not rescued from me, you are taken by me. And you are not altered, you are preserved.

(MORMO forces BASTILE to look him in the eye.)

The lies they tell you. That I am destroying you. I destroy you as you destroy yourself. I hate you as you hate yourself. I am the mirror. I tried, but I can't help it if you chose this torture for yourself. Can I?

(MORMO roughly pushes BASTILE aside and stands. He picks up the trumpet and turns to glare at BASTILE. BASTILE rises for the dance.

The song begins. BASTILE dances.

A MAN and a CHILD approach the porch. The MAN is a male version of MORMO, tall, lanky, ominously calm. His clothes are patched but tailored. His eyes deep. The CHILD is strangely calm as well, but there is a purity within its eyes. They stop to watch the performance on the porch.

They wait in silence until it ends.)

MAN

So it is you.

MORMO

Ah. Ambi/guity.

MAN

/Mormo.

(MORMO is vexed by the MAN.)

MORMO

Where have you heard of Mormo?

MAN

Around. They tell tales.

MORMO

You would bring a child here? Amidst my kills?

MAN

You underestimate me.

BASTILE

Sir-

MORMO

Shut up.

(MORMO examines the MAN.)

Why have you come?

MAN

I think you know.

MORMO

Enlighten me.

MAN

Must you be so obtuse about it?

MORMO

I can give you riches. Money.

MAN

Really? Tsk. Tsk. You've been around mortals too long, my friend.

MORMO

I'm not ready.

MAN

I don't care.

MORMO

I have more to do.

MAN

(indicating BASTILE)

Clearly not.

MORMO

He is an example. What would you do? Leave it up to the people? They're base but they make mistakes.

MAN

He's so sickly.

MORMO

What did you expect?

MAN

That you would make your point more convincingly.

(MORMO reaches for her pistol, but the MAN is too fast for her. He shoots MORMO in the heart and she falls down dead.

BASTILE is shocked this time.)

BASTILE

What have you-? Who are you? What is this?

MAN

The changing of the guard.

(The MAN picks up the trumpet and smashes it against the porch.

He then picks up the money and turns to go.)

BASTILE

Sir... Would you, can you untie me?

(The MAN turns.)

MAN

Do you know who I am?

BASTILE

The next Mormo.

MAN

I am the new Mormo.

(The MAN picks up a pistol.)

And I have no time for you.

(The MAN fires his pistol, but right before he does, the CHILD - who has been patiently biding its time - slices his heel with a pocketknife. The MAN screams and falls, the shot firing into the air. The CHILD then takes the pistol and cuts BASTILE free.

BASTILE stands, unsure of what to do.)

CHILD

Run!

BASTILE

I... can't.

CHILD

You can! You must run.

BASTILE

But it's been so long. I can't, I can't remember the last time I saw the world.

(The child gathers some money, warding off the MAN with his pistol. It then takes the money to BASTILE.)

CHILD

Take this and run! Go! Be free! My Great One will find you. He is good. He will help you be free.

(BASTILE looks back.)

BASTILE

But Mormo.

CHILD

Mormo is dead.

BASTILE

And him.

CHILD

You need only remember them for strength. For where you have come. I will deal with him. Now start anew. Go!

(BASTILE goes for a bit. Then looks back again.)

Go!

(BASTILE runs away. Free.)

END OF PLAY