

Glassy

by

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. LAKE - MORNING

1

AGNI 35, ex-academic, now alternative crusty-punk-lite British Asian male, is pottering around near a deserted garbage and graffiti strewn artificial urban lake. The lake is near a flyover. There are traffic sounds in the distance. The weather is cold and grey.

AGNI
You're finished, you're finished.
(Whispers.)

He pauses for a second and then picks up something small. He frowns down at the thing (which remains unseen by the audience).

2 INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

2

MARLA 35, scientist, vaguely Arabic, Persian or Mediterranean, trendy - jeans, trainers, band teeshirt and BRIGHT GREEN EYES. She has a slight accent. Both she and Agni are in a small room with worn furniture. A few unpacked cardboard moving boxes can be seen in the corners and there is a tiny sad-looking Christmas tree on the coffee table.

AGNI
You're finished, you're finished.
(Whispers.)

MARLA
Uh?

Agni hands her a piece of BRIGHT GREEN SEA GLASS.

AGNI
I found this.

MARLA
Beautiful. Like driftwood, only glass. Washed in from god knows where. Evocative, don't you think?

AGNI
Evocative? Of what?

MARLA
Far, far, faraway places. You're the poet.

Marla grabs his hand and drops it back in Agni's palm.

MARLA
It's also a bit radioactive.

He flinches and she giggles.

AGNI
Hey!

MARLA

Only mildly silly. Where did you find it?

AGNI

Calstone.

MARLA

Bloody hell! It's freezing out there. Look at you. You're actually paler than me now. What were you doing at Calstone?

AGNI

Thinking, trying to take my mind off...

He shrugs.

MARLA

The writing? Oh wait, were you trying to get inspired?

AGNI

The writing? What's there to write about? Since Glastonbury, nothing interesting's happened. Nothing ever happens. Not here. Agni waves vaguely.

MARLA

Sorry.

AGNI

Inspired? I wish I was. Besides, two piece of poetry published since I started. Hardly a glittering literary career. Maybe I should be stacking shelves at the supermarket. Growth area for jobs you know.

MARLA

You need a project that doesn't involve freezing to death. Maybe you should, dare I say it, unpack. Again, how long have you been here? She points at the unopened boxes.

He stalks into the kitchen without replying.

3 EXT. MUDDY FIELD. DAY (PAST)

3

Flashback to Glastonbury Festival. Agni is slightly more conventional looking (he is in transition from being a recently made-redundant academic to a punky-looking poet. Both he and Marla are dirty, happy and stoned as they stagger around gracelessly to the music. On stage is a west African kora player. Agni collides with Marla.

AGNI

Ouch, sorry!

MARLA

Oof! Hey! Oh, hi! Marla gives Agni
a BIG SMILE.

AGNI

Er. Hi.
(1 beat.)

Agni replies with a small, awkward (stiff) smile.

Marla leans closer to Agni so that she can be heard more
clearly over the music.

MARLA

Marla!

AGNI

Um. Agni.

4 INT. TENT - NIGHT (PAST)

4

Agni and Marla are stoned and a bit drunk. They are chatting
and giggling in a small tent. The space is well-lit by a
camping lantern. There is some smoke in the air. It feels
cosy.

AGNI

So... Um... What do you do?

Marla chokes on her can of beer and giggles.

AGNI

Hey!

MARLA

Sorry, sorry. That's like "Do you
come here often?" Okay, serious for
a moment. I'm... Da, da daaa! A
theoretical fizz-fizzy, damnit,
physicist.

AGNI

O-kay.

MARLA

Maths, I do maths! How about you?

AGNI

I'm doing just fine thanks.
(Slurs.)
They both burst into laughter.

MARLA

No!
(Shouts.)
What do you do?

AGNI
You'd never believe me.

MARLA
You'd be surprised.

AGNI
What?

MARLA
Nothing. Go on.

AGNI
I'm a mus-muso-muss-muss.

MARLA
A "muss-muss"? More laughter.

AGNI
I am, I was a museum manager, a
curator.
(Slowly, deliberately.)

MARLA
Wow, that actually sounds
interesting.

AGNI
Was, was.

MARLA
Was?

AGNI
Oh yeah, I was fired a few months
ago.

MARLA
Oh dear. I'm sorry.

AGNI
No problem.

MARLA
Did they catch you snogging a
mummy?

Marla giggles and Agni smiles.

AGNI
No. Budgets. They closed the
museum.

MARLA
Sorry.

AGNI
'Sokay.

MARLA

What kind of museum was it?

AGNI

Sudfield University Museum of
Archaeology.

MARLA

Sod-?

AGNI

Sud- no, actually you're right.
Sod's the right word. Sodfield!
Where was I?

MARLA

You were telling me about your
museum - Sud-or-Sodfield...

AGNI

'Xactly, that was the problem. It
was a nowhere university. Heh, heh,
heh - Sodfield University of
Nowhere and No Money Museum.

MARLA

What kind of stuff did you have in
the museum.

AGNI

Actually pretty old. Neolithic,
Chalcolithic...

MARLA

Neolithic, I've heard of, that's
new stone age isn't it? But
Chalcolithic?

AGNI

It's the cross-over point when we
moved from stone to copper. It's
not usually associated with British
finds, except... Well in our-my
collection.

MARLA

Hey, have you been to the Brit-

AGNI

British Museum? Those bastards!
Where do you think my collection
ended up when they closed my
museum?

MARLA

Wait, I have an idea. Let's have a
toast.

She raises her can and Agni follows suit.

MARLA
British Museum bastards!

AGNI
British Museum bastards!

The smack their cans together, beer goes everywhere and they collapse laughing.

5 INT. TENT - NIGHT (PAST)

5

When we resume Agni and Marla are talking more quietly, almost conspiratorially.

MARLA
But if you could do anything?

AGNI
Anything?

MARLA
Anything.

AGNI
Something arty.

MARLA
What?

AGNI
Literature... Poetry. I would write poetry.

MARLA
Huh. What kind?

AGNI
Coleridge.. Stoned weirdo poetry.

MARLA
We're stoned right now.

AGNI
True, but I don't think Samuel Taylor Coleridge spent much time in a tent.

MARLA
Or Glastonbury!

The quiet is broken for a moment as they both shout: Glastonbury! They both laugh again.

MARLA
No, but seriously, if you could do anything...

AGNI
 Seriously, it really would be
 poetry. I used to write as a hobby.

MARLA
 Okay.

AGNI
 Wasn't that bad either, some of it
 was published. But that was a long
 time ago.

MARLA
 Hmm.

AGNI
 Hmm?

MARLA
 We'll have to see what we can do
 about that.

AGNI
 What do you mean.

MARLA
 Wait and see. Wait and see. Now
 drink up!

6 INT. STAGE - NIGHT (PAST)

6

Agni and Marla are in the wings of a small outdoor stage.
 There's a sign on stage that says "Poetry Slam". Agni is
 waiting to go next.

MARLA
 Go on, you can do it.

AGNI
 Are you sure?

MARLA
 Yes.

AGNI
 Maybe...

MARLA
 Go on!

Marla gives him a shove and Agni stumbles to the centre of
 the stage and stands behind a mic. There's a smattering of
 subdued applause. He fiddles with some papers.

AGNI
 Thanks, thanks. Um, I call this one
 "The Thin Veil".

7 INT. TENT - NIGHT (PAST)

7

After the reading, they are back in the tent. They are sitting comfortably against a big pile of sleeping bags. It is their last night at Glastonbury. They are talking - sober this time.

MARLA
That went really well.

AGNI
You are surprised?

MARLA
Actually no.
(Quietly.)

AGNI
Um, well, it could have gone worse.
Thanks for pushing me out... I
don't think I could have done it on
my own.

MARLA
Maybe you could.

AGNI
No, I'm pretty sure I have you to
thank for kicking me out there.
Marla looks down for a moment.

MARLA
Da nada.

AGNI
Marla?

MARLA
Hmm?

AGNI
Where are you from?

MARLA
Oh, lots of places. Some quite far,
quite...

AGNI
No, I meant here, where do you
live? In the UK, I mean?

MARLA
I am, how do you say it? "Between
places". I'm renting some hovel in
Cambridge. It's a pain.

AGNI
A pain?

MARLA

A pain. I work on two projects - one in Cambridge, the other in Oxford. I am literally an Oxbridge girl. But travel is... Pants.

AGNI

Um.

MARLA

What?

AGNI

Live with me.

MARLA

Whoa!

Agni holds up his hands.

AGNI

No, no, I meant I need a room-mate to help with the rent. You see where I live is half-way between Oxford and Cambridge. It would be...

MARLA

...Convenient? Oh, well, we'll see. You took me by sunrise.

AGNI

It was just a thought.

MARLA

No it wasn't.

AGNI

No it wasn't.

Agni looks away for a moment and then turns back.

AGNI

Smooth.

Marla snorts with laughter. She reaches up to her neck, removes the sea-glass pendant and holds it out to him.

MARLA

Here, this is for you. Agni makes no move at all.

AGNI

(1 beat.)

Um.

MARLA

Relax it doesn't mean we're married!

AGNI

Um.

MARLA

I saw you looking at it. It's just a present. You English!

She places it gently in his hand and he puts it in his pocket. She half-smiles (sad).

8 INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

8

Back to present and a few minutes after we first left them. Marla is buzzing round the living room, Agni in the kitchen from which loud tea-making noises issue - banging mugs etc.

AGNI (O.S.)

One lump or two?

MARLA

Hmm? Two.

Marla searches round for her cigarettes and finds them. Agni hands Marla a mug.

AGNI

Peace offering.

(1 beat)

Sugar, fags? Don't you care?

MARLA

Oh, life's too long-er-short? I always get that mixed up. Anyway, forget that and listen. Why don't you come to Cambridge? There's a Christmas do. You can be my plus one.

AGNI

Further east. I hate East Anglia, next thing you know we'll be in the Wash.

MARLA

Or Oxford? There's one there two.

AGNI

West? What then? Stuck up some mountain in rural Wales?

MARLA

I think your geography might be a bit off. You really are becoming a grumpy, old... Never happy.

(Trails off quietly.)

AGNI

Do I have...

MARLA

Yes you do! You can't stew forever.

AGNI

Marla... Fine, fine, I'll come.

MARLA

Great!

AGNI

Humph.

(1 beat.)

MARLA

Agni?

AGNI

What?

MARLA

You didn't say, Oxford or Cambridge? Your choice.

AGNI

Well, I've never been to Oxford.

MARLA

Oxford it is! Phew you really make this hard work.

AGNI

I know. Sorry.

MARLA

By the way, that sea glass you found is a bit weird, you know?

AGNI

Why? Isn't that just the sort of junk you'd find around Calstone?

MARLA

No, I mean the weathering.

AGNI

Weathering yeah...

MARLA

I used to live by the seaside. Did, I ever tell you that? Bottles would wash up and I'd wonder what exotic places they came from. One day I swore I would visit those places.

(1 beat.)

I wished so hard that I could visit those faraway places.

(1 beat.)

Marla shakes her head.

AGNI

And...

MARLA

And...?

AGNI

The point being about the weirdness.

MARLA

The weirdness? Oh, the weirdness being - you only find glass like this by the sea. It requires the mechanical action of tide, sea, pebbles and sand. Agni sighs.

AGNI

I know this. So?

MARLA

So how does that happen in a land locked lake?

AGNI

Obvious. It's jewellery or a souvenir. Someone must have dropped it.

MARLA

"Must have"? What kind of Indiana Jones museum curator are you?

AGNI

One from a small museum at a lesser tin-pot red-brick uni. Look, maybe it was wrapped in some of that silver wire? Like they do with all that fancy New Age crystal crap they were selling at Glastonbury. I might go back, see if I can find some more.

MARLA

Well, while you avoid working on your poetry, I'm off to Cambridge.

AGNI

Uh?

MARLA

Work. See you tonight. And wrap up if you go back to Gallstone.

She leaves.

AGNI

Calstone!

(MORE)

AGNI (cont'd)
 (Shouts.)
 Calstone.
 (Quietly.)
 Calstone.
 (Whispers.)

9 EXT. LAKE - DAY

9

WIDE-ANGLE ENCOMPASSING THE LAKE, TIGHTENING TO A CLOSE-UP OF AGNI'S SLACK, EXPRESSIONLESS FACE.

AGNI
 You're finished, you're finished.

10 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

10

Agni and Marla are on the sofa with bowls of soup on the coffee table.

MARLA
 Did you find any more bits of pretty glass?

AGNI
 No.

MARLA
 Well, it got you out, I suppose that's something.

AGNI
 Ugh.
 (Grunts.)

MARLA
 Hey, half-empty guy, have some soup!

AGNI
 Thanks. TV stopped working.

MARLA
 What? Oh god, I suppose that means we'll have to... Chat.
 (Laughs.)
 Seriously though, are you going to carry on with the poetry or get a job? I don't want my share of the rent creeping up, or find us both evicted.

AGNI
 I know, I know.

MARLA
 If you're interested I could ask around at the uni.

AGNI
Academic nepotism?

MARLA
Of course.
(Winks.)

AGNI
Then, of course yes, by all means
yes. Yes.

MARLA
So that's a yes then.
(Giggles.)
Okay, I'll see what I can do.

AGNI
I think I need a change, academic
to weirdo poet seemed like a great
idea at the time, but now...

MARLA
...your poetry is dark, depressing
and makes people want to kill
themselves?

AGNI
I was going to say that I don't
know what possessed me at the time.
I mean poetry?

MARLA
It's what you wanted.
(Whispers.)

AGNI
And, actually, ok, yes, so maybe it
is a bit depressing too, and maybe
I'm sick of it.
(1 beat.)
Marla looks down.

MARLA
I know, I know.
(Quietly.)

AGNI
You know, you always seem to know
exactly what I'm thinking. What I
want.

Touches his shoulder.

MARLA
Telepathy. Runs in the family.
(Brightly.)

AGNI
Er?

MARLA

Or I just read your so obviously cheerful disposition. Honestly, you've been walking round looking doomed - it isn't that hard reading you.

Marla looks at her watch.

MARLA

Well, it's getting round that time.

11 INT./EXT. CAR - NIGHT

11

Agni and Marla are buckling up in her car.

AGNI

Are you sure you want to take your car?

MARLA

I have to stay sober and butter up the faculty. Contracts to renew and all that.

AGNI

Thank god, I can drink.

MARLA

Yes, you probably should. It might cheer you up.

Agni flips down the passenger-side visor mirror and stares expressionlessly at this face.

AGNI

Let's go.

12 INT. FUNCTION ROOM

12

The Christmas party is in full swing.

MARLA

Don't look so glum, chum. There's wine. Go and have some.

AGNI

It's in a box. That one's actually called "Plonk". Look, you can see, it's right there on the side of it.

MARLA

Since when were you a wine snob?

Agni heads over to the the wine, while Marla waves and heads over to a nerdy looking group of her colleagues. Agni finds a spot not far from Marla, sips his wine and watches her.

MARLA

If I told you how I did it, you
wouldn't need me! Laughter from
the group.

Marla then goes to talk to an well-dressed, older and male.
The conversation is intent and the man touches and strokes
her arm. Marla returns to Agni.

MARLA

Just keeping the troops in-line.

AGNI

That bloke was all over you.

MARLA

Jealous?

AGNI

Wha- no, I mean...
(1 beat.)
Agni frowns.

AGNI

I'm not sure.
(Quietly.)

MARLA

Come on, let's get something to
eat. I'm hanking.

13 INT. PUBLIC HOUSE. NIGHT

13

Agni and Marla are seated with coffee at a corner table.

AGNI

They like you.

MARLA

People like me. You like me.

AGNI

What exactly do you do for them?

MARLA

It's pretty complicated.

AGNI

Oh, thanks!

MARLA

I'm helping them re-purpose an old
cyclotron.

AGNI

Er?

MARLA

I told you, but since you asked -
I'm using maths to tweak the energy
output of the clunky old thing.
Turn it into a mini LHC.

AGNI

Why?

MARLA

You really want to know?

AGNI

Atom smashing? Some sub-atomic
particle thingy.

MARLA

Basically, but that isn't the
reason. We're playing with atomic
fusion. On a tiny-scale. More of a
simulated model.

AGNI

Sounds complicated. How did you get
the job?

MARLA

Hm. Okay, look, you really want to
know?

AGNI

Yes, of course.

MARLA

I just pitched up one day and was
lucky enough to find that they
really needed my help. Happens to
me a lot. Right place, right time.
You should know.

AGNI

What do you mean?

MARLA

Look how we met. Right place, right
time to encourage you. That's me.
I'm helpful.

AGNI

Hmm.

MARLA

Hmm?

AGNI

I thought you were going to mention
quantum states.

MARLA

What have you been reading?

AGNI

There was something in the Guardian.

MARLA

Of course there was, there always is.

AGNI

The reporter said "at quantum states, reality bends" which is kind of funny.

A tourist group apologises for interrupting and takes some photographs over Agni and Marla's heads.

AGNI

Didn't you see it? The photo on the wall behind us.

MARLA

The pic of some old guys. You're rambling. Did you drink that entire box?

AGNI

This place. You don't recognise it do you?

Marla shakes her head.

AGNI

It's the Eagle and Child, it's where the Inklings met.

MARLA

Inky-who?

AGNI

Inklings. J.R.R. Tolkien? C.S.Lewis? A bunch of fusty old academics who wrote all this, fantastic-fantasy-er-fantastical magic stuff. Magic's a bit like quantum theory isn't it? Except without the unicorns.

MARLA

Unicorns. Typical. That's what everyone who isn't a physicist thinks. We're not talking about fairies. We're talking about much, much tinier things.

AGNI

Fairies?

MARLA
Forget the fairies! Stupid little
Tinker-Bells anyway.

AGNI
Fine, I wish I never asked.

MARLA
Your wish is my command.

Marla snorts with laughter.

MARLA
Change of subject.

AGNI
Sure.

MARLA
I never asked you before, but what
does "Agni" mean.

AGNI
"Agni"? Well, my mother told me it
was the name of a fire god. Spirit.
Something. Why?

MARLA
Fire spirit?

She stares at him hard.

MARLA
(1 beat)
Finish your coffee.

AGNI
I have.

MARLA
What?

AGNI
I have finished my coffee.

Marla frowns and fidgets.

AGNI
Y'okay?
(Slurs.)

MARLA
Hm. Yes, yes.

AGNI
'Sgood.
(Slurs.)

MARLA

I think you need more coffee. One
for the road?

Without waiting for an answer, she rises, turns and walks to the bar; each step accompanied by the graceful sway of her hips. Agni stares entranced as he watches her move.

14 INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING 14

The room is empty. Agni finds a note weighed down with the piece of sea glass. He reads from the note.

AGNI

"Visiting friends in London. Back
later. Marla."

Agni, frowning, turns the sea glass piece over in his hands.

15 EXT. LAKE - MORNING 15

AGNI

You're finished, you're finished.

16 EXT. MUDDY FIELD. DAY (PAST) 16

Flash-back to when Agni first met Marla at Glastonbury. They have just bumped into each other. But this time the CAMERA CLOSES on the same piece of BRIGHT GREEN SEA GLASS which is wrapped in silver wire and is part of a necklace tied around Marla's neck. The BRIGHT GREEN SEA pendant matches her BRIGHT GREEN EYES exactly.

17 EXT. LAKE - MORNING (PAST) 17

Flash-back to just before Agni first finds the sea glass at the lake. Agni takes the piece from his pocket and hurls it to the ground. (1 beat.) He straightens, stiffens and looks ahead in a rigid robotic manner. (1 beat.) He bends and picks up the sea glass. He looks at it wide-eyed. (1 beat.) He places the sea glass back in his pocket and walks away.

18 EXT. LAKE - MORNING 18

AGNI

It was yours. It was yours all
along.

(1 beat.)

It was you who pushed me out on
stage. It was you who came to live
with me when I asked.

(1 beat.)

I must have known. Deep down.

(1 beat.)

I'm finished, I'm finished.

Agni fishes in his pocket, takes out the piece of sea glass and drops it. Agni giggles.

AGNI
 Not fairies.
 (1 beat.)
 Agni giggles again.

The giggle freezes into a fixed, blank grin.

AGNI
 Glassy.
 (1 beat.)

AGNI
 Plonk.

Agni suddenly jumps into the lake.

CUT TO:

19 EXT. LAKE - MORNING

19

Marla, wearing mirrored sunglasses, is watching Agni from a distance. She looks away when he disappears under the water.

MARLA
 I'm so sorry. I liked you, I really
 liked you and that doesn't happen
 often, but it's what you wanted.
 (3 beats.)

A small boy approaches, he has something hidden in his hands.

MARLA
 Hello sweetie, what have you got
 there?

The boy shows her.

MARLA
 Is it the very last piece of my
 shiny bottle?

The boy shrugs and tries to hand it to her.

MARLA
 No, you keep it. It's a present.

The boy frowns at her, looks at down at the sea glass in his hand and then up at her again.

MARLA
 Just keep it safe for me.

The boy puts the sea glass into his pocket. Marla crouches down in front of him, removes her sunglasses...

REVEALING UNNATURAL BRIGHT GREEN EYES (FX)

, and smiles. She places her hands on his shoulders and looks into his eyes.

MARLA

My name is Marla and I'm going to
make all your wishes come true.
(1 beat.)

She looks away.

MARLA

(1 beat.)
We all get what we wish for. In the
end.
(Quietly.)

FADE OUT.

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