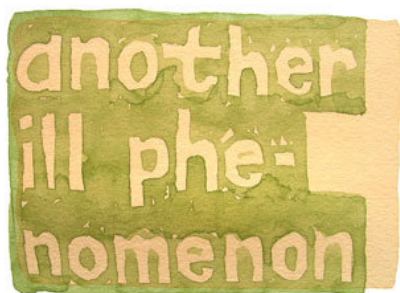


Story for performance #680  
webcast from New York City at 07:52PM, 01 May 07



Source: Stephen Erlanger and Isabel Kershner, 'Olmert rebuked by Israel panel on Lebanon war', *New York Times online*, 01/05/07.

Tags: death, ghosts, streets, intimacy

Writer/s: Peter S Petralia

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Dear you,

It's been a long time since I last saw your face or heard your voice. In the time since then, so many things have happened that I can hardly imagine where to begin. Necessity decrees that I should begin somewhere, however, so of course I start by saying hello and, now, wondering where in the world you are. Last time I saw you, you were in New York (somewhere on Broadway) in a strange little eatery where the wireless signal was inconsistent, weak. I remember walking in and seeing you sitting at the table near the back, hunkered down, eyes blazing with anger at your computer. I didn't say anything to you. I just wanted one last glimpse of you before you left for good. I wonder: did you know I was there?

You must be surprised to receive this letter after all these years (although you might wonder why I didn't respond sooner...but we'll get to that), and by now you might have heard from other sources that I've been abandoned by all but the most loyal of my compatriots. The business with the war and the trouble we had in putting things back in order have made it very difficult for me lately. For weeks I've been despondent, wondering how things would end. It could have been a beautiful world, I think. Instead it's been filled with darkness and regret. But that's not why I'm writing. No, this is a letter with much more finality and clarity than all that. What's gone is gone, as 'they' say (whoever they are) and I'm not here to dwell on the past too extensively.

I hope this letter finds you, and when it does, I hope you'll have a small smile on your face when you see my handwriting on the envelope. It has been a long time, so you must have forgiven me by now. Perhaps a lovely memory of our time together will come back to you as you're reading this. I do hope so.

Anyway, I have two main things to get across in this letter. First, I've left you something that you'll be glad to receive, I believe. In the brown-carpeted basement at 72 Greene Street, where we once fell in love, there is something you'll want to see. I always found something comforting about sitting in that brown room, listening to the sound of the lights buzzing overhead. I loved their dull, echoing hum and how it seemed to vibrate deep into my bones with its short-wave bursts of static electricity. Yes, when I was alive, I loved those lights and the strange orange glow they cast down on my pale, white, dusty skin. When I was alive I loved nothing more than hiding away in there watching the flies race to the lights, only to be burnt to oblivion.

You might think I'm a cruel person, or strange. But, that's too simplistic a response, especially for someone who, themselves, could be called cruel. I suppose I've gotten a bit ahead of myself, and ruined part of the surprise in the

way I've written this letter. Hopefully you can forgive my inability to adhere to the conventions of good, suspenseful writing. I wanted my death to be a surprise, but I just can't help myself sometimes. You must remember that about me, so I'm sure you'll understand my impatience.

You might want to know how I did it and what was going through my head at the time, but I think that's not very interesting at all. In fact, it will all be clear when you find me. I've seen the strangest things in my scattered, shattered life. I've had the best (worst) life anyone could have ever hoped for. I've been the leader of the free world. I've been a liar and a thief and I've been a criminal convicted of the oddest things. But none of it compares to the sight of you in that strange New York eatery, eyes blazing with anger at your computer. I hope I have left you an equally striking visual reminder of me, down below at 72 Greene Street.

This leads me to my second major point, and this one is more of a question that I suppose will remain unanswered to me forever. Since I'm gone, I'm not sure why I'm even asking, but I guess I'm hoping that I might hear your answer wherever it is I've ended up. I'm not sure I really believe in heaven or hell or any of that, but I've always believed in hedging my bets. I have nothing to lose by asking, especially now. (I feel that with all my build up to this second point, it will seem anti-climactic once I finally get to the point. Please don't hold this against me.)

My second point is, as I said, a question. About three months ago, I received an envelope (white with red, ball-point lettering) that was addressed in your hand. There was no return address, but inside was a small card that said 'another ill phenomenon'. I knew immediately that this was from you, but I couldn't understand why you had finally broken the silence between us and why you chose such a cryptic way of doing it. Another ill phenomenon. I've carried that card around with me since then but no matter how hard I try, I cannot imagine what it is you meant. So. What is it? What is this strange message and why did you send it to me? At my moment of greatest weakness, the last thing I needed was a cruel reminder of a life long since past.

That's all I really have to say.  
I won't get dramatic (have I already?).  
I won't carry on with questions.  
I'll trust you to respond and hope you aren't disappointed when you see me. I'm wearing your favourite shoes.

All my love.

Me.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Peter S Petralia.*