

EMINENT DOMAIN

By Greg Cummings

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SYNOPSIS: Student teachers Marjorie and Ken rehearse a gender role-reversal play for their elementary school students who will arrive any minute. Marjorie wrote and cast Ken as the queen all because she has a crush on him. Initially miffed that he has to wear a wig and gown, Ken eventually acquiesces and he and Marjorie become very close, as their young audience arrives.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 1 male)

MARJORIE (f)..... Young elementary school student teacher.
Expressive. Subject: Language Arts. (23 lines)

KEN (m) Young elementary school student
teacher. Meek. Subject: Science.
(22 lines)

SETTING: A stage at the local elementary school. A set depicting a throne room.

TIME: The present. Minutes before a production of an original play. The set is a throne room with two chairs made to look like thrones center stage. A placard proclaims the play's title: *Eminent Domain: A Fairy Tale Without Pretense or Precedent*.

PROPS

- ☐ Script of play
- ☐ Scroll

COSTUMES

MARJORIE: pants, king robe, crown, costume beard

KEN: gown, queen robe, tiara, pencil-drawn "scrub beard"

Dedication

*Thanks Geva Theatre Center, Rochester, NY
(Jean Ryon, New Plays Coordinator)*

and

Writers and Books, Rochester, NY

AT RISE: Enter MARJORIE, stage right, hurriedly, dressed as a fairy tale king. She wears a beard. She acts in a stereotypically broad “children’s theatre” style. She reads a scroll.

MARJORIE: (Looking up from the scroll.) Oh no! Oh no, children, oh no! (Crosses to center stage.) Oh no! Oh no! (To off stage left) Terrible news! The dragon has escaped! I need your help, my queen! (No response, so she repeats exactly.) Oh no! Oh no! Terrible news: The dragon has escaped! I need your help, my queen! (No response, so she repeats exactly.) Psst. I need your help, my queen! (To offstage left.) That’s your cue!

KEN enters, uncomfortably, dressed as a fairy tale queen. He wears a gown and a wig. The dress barely fits him.

KEN: (Meekly.) I... can’t do this.

KEN removes his wig and tosses it to the floor.

MARJORIE: Ken! You promised!

KEN: I’m sorry, I can’t, I just can’t...

KEN starts to exit left, but trips over the dress, and falls.

KEN: (On the floor.) Ow! (Mumbling to himself.) Plus, where did you get this gown? This gown isn’t even my size. I’ve lost weight, or hasn’t anybody noticed?

KEN sits, miffed. A school passing bell.

KEN: (Suddenly frightened.) Oh my God!

MARJORIE: (Nervously checking her watch.) The students will be here in five minutes!

KEN: And so will all of the student teachers in our entire program!

KEN struggles to stand, but keeps getting caught in the gown.

MARJORIE: (Realizing.) I knew it!

KEN: What? You don't know! That's not it! Nobody knows! Nobody knows anything! It's this gown! It's not even my color! I need autumn tones! Or is everybody blind?

MARJORIE: You want to leave my play just because Bernadette, (*Mocking.*) "the love of your life," is coming!

KEN tries to crawl off left.

KEN: (*Lying badly.*) Bernadette? Bernadette who? Who is that person? I don't know her! I don't know people! I'm a scientist! Who is "the love of my life"? I'll tell you: Science is the love of my life! I'm a bio major, honey! And the only reason I decided to double major in elementary education was to bring the joy of science to the next generation! To gift the scientists of tomorrow with my deep desire for knowledge!

MARJORIE: (*Mocking.*) The only reason you decided to double major in biology and elementary education was to gift Ken with a deep desire for Bernadette! (*Beat.*) Don't be so shocked! Everybody knows! (*Beat.*) You're disgusting!

KEN: (*Standing and falling, standing and falling.*) Please! Help me! I can't let her see me like this! (*Gasping, realizing.*) I'm perspiring in here! (*Realizing.*) I'm perspiring... all over in here! All over! (*Beat.*) Marjorie! Get me out of this gown!

KEN struggles on the ground; MARJORIE peers down at him.

MARJORIE: Wait. You didn't even shave?

KEN: What?

MARJORIE: (*Peering, angry.*) You're trying to grow a beard? This is my play! Queens do not have beards, Ken! My queen does not have a beard!

KEN: (*Still on the ground, but defiant.*) It's a scrub beard, OK! This week Bernadette likes Josh Groban. And this week Josh Groban has a scrub beard! You do the math!

MARJORIE: Kenneth! Let me tell you something: You are no Josh Groban!

KEN: Oh, really? Well, Marjorie? Let me tell you something! You are no playwright!

MARJORIE: I am an artist with a social conscience!

KEN removes his script from his bodice.

KEN: *(Reads it, mockingly.)* *Eminent Domain? A Fairy Tale Without Pretense or Precedent?! Where a girl plays the king? And a guy plays the queen? And, clearly where the guy has a really handsome scrub beard coming in so how could he even play a queen anyway? (Beat.)* What were you even thinking?

MARJORIE: That our students need to learn about the relative fluidity of non-normative 21st century gender relationships!

KEN: Marjorie! Our students are in the third grade!

MARJORIE: It's never too soon! They've got to understand that relationships are never what they seem! That, in college, for example, if they smile at a boy five weeks ago in the dining hall, and then he smiles back at you, and then he even gives you two of the marshmallows from his own personal cup of hot chocolate, that maybe, just maybe you shouldn't immediately change your major from gender equality studies to elementary education just to be closer to him because he will never even call you! Or text you! Or even look at you when you wait outside his dorm every morning before class every day just trying to catch his eye! Or anything!

MARJORIE flops to the floor and mopes. KEN is still on the floor. Pause.

KEN: *(Stunned.)* Gee, Marjorie, I thought they were just marshmallows.

MARJORIE: Well, they were symbolic marshmallows, Ken! *(Turns away, wipes away a tear.)* Symbolic marshmallows!

KEN: *(Dropping his head in embarrassment.)* Well... I can see that now.

MARJORIE: *(Hopefully.)* Really?

KEN: *(Sincerely.)* I...think so, Marjorie. I think so.

They slowly regard each other, maintain eye contact, and fall in love. This is a new condition for each of them. Pause. They close their eyes and lean in to kiss each other. Suddenly, MARJORIE opens her eyes and pulls back.

KEN: *(Opening his eyes, embarrassed.)* I'm sorry, Marjorie. I guess I just got a little carried away. *(Turns away.)* Forgive me.

MARJORIE: *(Coyly.)* Oh no, Ken. It's not that. It's just... *(Beat.)* What about Bernadette?

KEN: Who? *(Beat.)* Oh.

KEN starts rubbing his beard.

MARJORIE: *(Concerned.)* Ken?

KEN keeps rubbing his beard.

MARJORIE: Ken? *(No response.)* Kenneth? *(No response.)* I... I didn't mean to upset you so much.

KEN stops rubbing; he has blended the "scrub beard" into his face.

MARJORIE: *(Surprised.)* Kenneth. *(Beat.)* Your scrub beard.

Smiling, he holds out his darkened hands to her.

KEN: *(Explaining.)* Number two pencil.

MARJORIE: *(Smiling.)* Oh, Kenneth!

She takes his hands in hers.

KEN: *(Shy.)* I don't know what I was thinking. *(Pulls away.)* I'm no Josh Groban, Marjorie.

MARJORIE: *(Trying something. Beat.)* You can be my Josh Groban, Kenneth.

KEN: *(Turning to her, hopeful.)* You like Josh Groban, Marjorie?

MARJORIE: *(Unsure, but not wanting to give up.)* Sure.

KEN: *(Believing her.)* Oh, Marjorie!

MARJORIE: Oh, Kenneth!

They close their eyes and lean in to kiss.

MARJORIE: *(Stopping them.)* Kenneth: wear the wig.

KEN quickly finds and puts on the wig. They continue to lean in to kiss. Sounds of elementary school children entering the auditorium. KEN and MARJORIE continue to lean in to kiss, unfazed.

Fade to black.

THE END

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