

Lazy Eye

by Bradley Hayward

Characters

Right Eye, Left Eye

Setting

A bare stage: two eye sockets

LEFT EYE and RIGHT EYE stand next to one another, as she snores. RIGHT EYE is alert, looking forward as she squints. She nudges LEFT EYE.

RIGHT EYE: Wake up! Wake up! (LEFT EYE stirs a little, snorts and goes back to sleep) Come on! We've got business to attend to! (LEFT EYE groans) Hurry! She's next!

LEFT EYE looks up, more than a little groggy.

LEFT EYE: What time is it?

RIGHT EYE: Time to get up!

LEFT EYE: The actual time.

RIGHT EYE: You know I can't see the clock without you.

LEFT EYE: Wake me when class is over.

She goes back to sleep and snores almost instantly.

RIGHT EYE: Useless. Totally useless.

She stomps on LEFT EYE's foot. Very hard. LEFT EYE wakes up with a start.

LEFT EYE: Ow! What was that for?

RIGHT EYE: We're next.

LEFT EYE: Next for what?

RIGHT EYE: The teacher is going to ask Laura a question and if you don't help me, she won't know how to answer it.

LEFT EYE: What's the question?

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RIGHT EYE: It's on the blackboard.

LEFT EYE: That's not what I asked.

RIGHT EYE: I don't know what the question is, stupid. I can't see it.

LEFT EYE: She'll come up with something. She always does.

RIGHT EYE: This is math. She can't just "come up with something."

LEFT EYE: You need to chill out. Close your lid and have a nap.

She leans her head sideways again, but RIGHT EYE stops her.

RIGHT EYE: If you fall asleep again, I swear I'll tug on your optic nerve.

LEFT EYE: You wouldn't.

RIGHT EYE: Oh, yes I would.

LEFT EYE: You know that makes me crazy.

RIGHT EYE: Exactly why I'd do it.

LEFT EYE: But it hurts.

RIGHT EYE: It's the only way to wake you up.

LEFT EYE: Some friend you are!

RIGHT EYE: Don't get mad at me. If you weren't so lazy, I wouldn't have to yell at you like this.

LEFT EYE: I'm not lazy.

RIGHT EYE: Yes you are.

LEFT EYE: No I'm not.

RIGHT EYE: Yes you are.

LEFT EYE: No I'm not.

RIGHT EYE: Let's not get into that again! We have work to do.

LEFT EYE: You think you're all high and mighty just because you're on the right side. Well, let me tell you. You may be the one who finds all the ideas, but I'm the one who sees the beauty in them.

RIGHT EYE: What's that supposed to mean?

LEFT EYE: I think you know what it means.

RIGHT EYE: No. Tell me.

LEFT EYE: My pleasure. Remember that time you saw a dandelion sticking out of the sidewalk?

RIGHT EYE: Yeah.

LEFT EYE: You wanted to kill it.

RIGHT EYE: So? It's a weed.

LEFT EYE: It's a flower.

RIGHT EYE: It's a weed.

LEFT EYE: Flower.

RIGHT EYE: Weed.

LEFT EYE: Dandelions are survivors. Nobody plants them. Nobody waters them. Nobody even looks at them. Yet they keep coming back time and time again. Don't you see the beauty in that?

RIGHT EYE: No I don't. Don't you see that they're a nuisance?

LEFT EYE: No I don't.

RIGHT EYE: Then it's settled. We'll just have to agree to disagree on this one.

LEFT EYE: There you go again.

RIGHT EYE: Where have I gone again?

LEFT EYE: You're such a martyr. Instead of coming to an agreement, you always say stupid things like "we'll just have to agree to disagree." And you think I'm lazy.

RIGHT EYE: I've been with you, what, sixteen years now?

LEFT EYE: Sounds right. But I'm not very good with numbers.

RIGHT EYE: Well, in all that time, I've learned that there's no use arguing. It's impossible to get through to you. You have no sense of reason.

LEFT EYE: And you have no sense of fun!

RIGHT EYE: Can we stop quibbling and get to the task at hand?

LEFT EYE: You're so bossy.

RIGHT EYE: And you're so lazy.

LEFT EYE: Am not.

RIGHT EYE: Are too.

LEFT EYE: Am not.

RIGHT EYE: Then prove it!

LEFT EYE: Fine.

RIGHT EYE: Good. Now stand up straight. (LEFT EYE does) Lean forward. (they do) Now what does it say?

They read the blackboard together, slowly.

RIGHT EYE/LEFT EYE: "Coming out of the toy store, Janet has eight coins that add up to \$1.45. Unfortunately, on the way home she loses one of them. If the chances of losing a quarter, dime or nickel are equal, which coin is most probably lost?"

RIGHT EYE: There. Now was that so hard?

LEFT EYE: I didn't say it was hard. I'm just saying, why does it matter?

RIGHT EYE: If we don't do our job, Laura will look stupid. And we don't want her to look stupid, do we?

LEFT EYE: Of course not.

RIGHT EYE: So that's why it matters.

LEFT EYE: But who cares what coin Janet lost? There is no Janet. There are no coins. And furthermore, that story would be far more interesting if they told us what toy she bought.

RIGHT EYE: It's not a story. It's a problem.

LEFT EYE: But why clutter her brain with fake problems? She has enough real ones as it is.

RIGHT EYE: She's learning the rules of probability. It might come in handy someday.

LEFT EYE: Do you think it's probable that she'll just happen to bump into a woman named Janet who just happened to have lost all her money?

RIGHT EYE: It's theoretical.

LEFT EYE: It's ridiculous.

RIGHT EYE: Listen. It's not our job to process the information. We're just supposed to take it in and let Laura do with it what she pleases.

LEFT EYE: I'd rather sleep.

RIGHT EYE: I know you would. That's why you're always getting us into trouble.

LEFT EYE: What kind of trouble?

RIGHT EYE: Like the time you got us pink eye.

LEFT EYE: That wasn't my fault!

RIGHT EYE: Yes it was. You took a nap mid-blink.

LEFT EYE: So?

RIGHT EYE: So you dried out and she stuck her finger in your socket.

LEFT EYE: It's not my fault her finger was dirty. You should have told her to wash it.

RIGHT EYE: It wouldn't have been dirty if you didn't tell her to pick up that crusty sock from the gutter.

LEFT EYE: I thought it was a daisy.

RIGHT EYE: It was embroidery. Anyone with half a brain could tell it was a sock and not a daisy.

LEFT EYE: There you go rubbing it in my socket again.

RIGHT EYE: I don't rub anything in your socket. That's the point.

LEFT EYE: No, I mean that your half of the brain is smarter than my half. I know you're smarter. You don't have to keep reminding me.

RIGHT EYE: You could be smart if you just applied yourself.

LEFT EYE: But I don't want to apply myself. I want to explore! I want to examine! I want to probe!

RIGHT EYE: While you're busy probing, I have to reason. I have to rationalize. I have to work!

LEFT EYE: It's not all roses over here, you know. What I do is hard work, too!

RIGHT EYE: Yeah right.

LEFT EYE: It is! When I see a dandelion, I see a flower.

RIGHT EYE: We already covered this.

LEFT EYE: I know, but listen to me. When I see a dandelion, I think it's beautiful and want to share it with Laura. I want her to see how beautiful it is, too. But that's hard work when all you see is a weed. You always win because you're smarter than I am. Maybe smarter isn't the right word. Convincing. Or conniving. Whatever it is, you win and I have no choice but to watch her pluck it out of the ground. You have no idea how much that hurts. I try to salvage the situation and convince her that it's still beautiful. Sometimes she listens, sometimes not. But even if she does save the dandelion in a little cup of water, it eventually withers and dies. It's still beautiful, even when it's dead. At least I think so. But I can't help but think that it could still be living and breathing if you and all the other right eyes weren't so set in your ways. (There is a pause. RIGHT EYE turns away, trying to hide the fact that she is crying.) Are you crying?

RIGHT EYE: I'm not crying. I just have something stuck in me.

LEFT EYE: You're crying.

RIGHT EYE: Am not.

LEFT EYE: Are too.

RIGHT EYE: Am not.

LEFT EYE: (smiles) You're totally crying! Did I just tug on your optic nerve a little?

RIGHT EYE: No.

LEFT EYE: Yes I did.

RIGHT EYE: No you didn't.

LEFT EYE: Come on, admit it. I made you cry!

RIGHT EYE: Stop it.

LEFT EYE: I never thought I'd live to see the day.

RIGHT EYE: Okay, fine. I'm crying. Are you happy now?

LEFT EYE: A little bit, yeah.

RIGHT EYE: Leave me alone.

LEFT EYE: It feels good to cry, doesn't it?

RIGHT EYE: Why would it feel good?

LEFT EYE: Sometimes you have to let your feelings gush out. Otherwise pressure builds up and then we end up getting crossed.

RIGHT EYE: I didn't realize how much I was hurting you.

LEFT EYE: I know you don't mean to. It's your job to see things the way they are. It's my job to see them the way they could be.

RIGHT EYE: Your job sounds so much more fun than mine.

LEFT EYE: It's fun, but I couldn't do it alone.

RIGHT EYE: Really?

LEFT EYE: Of course. If it wasn't for you, Laura wouldn't have any hands.

RIGHT EYE: How do you mean?

LEFT EYE: I've always wanted her to play with fire. It's so pretty! But you're the one who stops me. Every time.

RIGHT EYE: I've never told you this before, but sometimes I wonder what it would be like to live under your lid. There are days I get so mad that I have to be the rational one. It's unreasonable, I think, to spend my whole life being reasonable. Believe me, I'd like to have fun. I'd like to take naps. But what would happen if I did? What would happen to Laura? Everyone else would excel and shed fall back. But the fact of the matter is, I'm tired. Why do you think I'm blood shot all the time? I'm sorry if I lash out at you sometimes. You have to know that it's not personal. And I don't really think you're lazy. I'm just jealous that I can't see things the same way you do.

LEFT EYE: *(bursts into tears)* That's the most beautiful thing I've ever heard!

RIGHT EYE: Really?

LEFT EYE: Really beautiful!

RIGHT EYE: *(laughs)* You think everything is beautiful.

LEFT EYE: I know. But I really, really, really, really mean it this time.

RIGHT EYE: Don't cry.

LEFT EYE: I can't help it.

RIGHT EYE: No, I mean, don't cry. First me, now you. She'll come at us with a tissue for sure.

LEFT EYE: *(stiffes her tears)* Oh, you're right! We don't want that.

RIGHT EYE: Definitely not. I hate when she pokes around in here.

LEFT EYE: Me too. Remember the contact lens incident?

RIGHT EYE: Don't remind me.

They laugh together.

LEFT EYE: I wonder if Laura got the question right.

RIGHT EYE: What question?

LEFT EYE: Janet and her missing coin.

RIGHT EYE: Oh, that. I thought you didn't care.

LEFT EYE: I don't. But I could try to care.

RIGHT EYE: And I could try not to.

LEFT EYE: Deal. So what's the next question we should be looking at?

RIGHT EYE: Really? Wouldn't you rather go back to sleep?

LEFT EYE: Nah. Let's open wide and show her everything.

LEFT EYE winks. RIGHT EYE smiles. They lean forward together and squint. The lights fade.