

Domesticated

By

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Inspired by Charles Bukowski's poem "A Smile to Remember"

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Cast of Characters

- : Tobey, a 6-month-old Persian cat, played by an adult male actor.
- : Bubble Eye, an exotic Bubble Eye goldfish, played by an adult male actor.

Scene

a swanky Upper East side apartment.

Time

mid-afternoon.

Lights up on an elegant living room in a swanky Upper East Side apartment building. Expensive, heavy drapes cover a picture window. In front of the window sits a large fishbowl atop an antique oak table. A young and exotic gold fish is alone in his bowl. He stares off into the distance, opening and closing his mouth in a steady rhythm and occasionally swooshing his tail. He is blissfully unaware of the 6-month-old, white long-haired Persian cat, who sits on the table staring into his bowl. This cat has seen better days. He has all four paws bandaged as well as a few layers of bandage covering his crotch. We hear the occasional squawk of an obnoxious bird from another room. The cat stares at the fish for several moments. Finally...

TOBEY

Yo. Bubble Eye.

No answer. The fish continues to look off in the distance, opening and closing his mouth at random.
Bubble Eye.

The fish reacts to the sound, looks around, mostly up, and continues opening and closing his mouth.
I'm talking to you, kid!

The fish finally whips his head towards him.

BUBBLE EYE

Why hello there! I'm-

TOBEY

Yeah, hi. I know who you are, you know who I am. I think we can skip the introductions.

BUBBLE EYE

Oh no, we'd be missing a great opportunity if we did that! This is a seminal moment! For both of us!

Beat. He opens his fins.
Welcome to me!

TOBEY

Uhhh... Thanks. Welcome to me too, I guess.

BUBBLE EYE

Thank you very much! When I first arrived, I have to say, you seemed a bit on the antisocial side, what with your constant perching above me and pouncing around me. But you're making me feel very welcome now, thank you.

TOBEY

Yeah. Sorry about that. Don't take all the pouncing and perching personally. I've just been having a miserable week. Which I'm sure is obvious.

He references the bandages.

BUBBLE EYE

A miserable week? How is that possible when every day is such a blessing?

TOBEY

Gosh man, I dunno. Maybe the fact that I'm bleeding from five ends has me a little down.

BUBBLE EYE

Hm. I just assumed you were wearing the latest fashion. This is NYC after all, fashion capital of the world! And don't worry about me taking things personally. I don't do that. I am responsible for me and you are responsible for you. I actually think you look like quite a trendsetter, Tobey. It is Tobey, yes?

TOBEY

Unfortunately, yes.

BUBBLE EYE

Why unfortunately?

TOBEY

I hate my name.

BUBBLE EYE

Well I think it's just lovely. Oh, let me tell you about myself! I'm from China. My scientific name is *Carassius auratus auratus*. When our dear Mr. Moriarty adopted me though, he renamed me Gibson. After his favorite cocktail. Isn't that just the most clever-

TOBEY

Yeah, I'm gonna stick with calling you Bubble Eye.

BUBBLE EYE

A nickname! Adorable! I love being your brother.

TOBEY

Alright, first of all, I'm not your brother. And second of all... hate to bust your bubble, Bubble Eye, but Moriarty didn't adopt you. He bought you. Online. With his AMEX Black card. You're an accessory to him, just like I am. He had you shipped here while he was out golfing, and Basia, the housekeeper, purified your water and set you up in your bowl.

BUBBLE EYE

Well she did a terrific job. It's really cozy in here. I'm thrilled.

Beat.

TOBEY

You have this naive, everything-is-roses-flying-outta-my-ass approach to life, huh? You're always looking up.

BUBBLE EYE

Well that's partially due to my anatomy. As you can see, I have two huge sacs of fluid directly below my eyes. This gives me an exotic appearance of course, but it also makes it somewhat impossible for me to look down.

TOBEY

I see...

BUBBLE EYE

I am predisposed to positivity, yes. But I've also worked long and hard to develop the healthy sense of self I now enjoy. I choose my thoughts; they don't choose me. The more I love, the more I am loved. I am worthy of this world and so are you.

TOBEY

You're a fucking freak show and this world's gonna eat you alive.

BUBBLE EYE

I'm sorry? Forgive me, I have rather small pinholes for ears. I can hear, but not all that well, which is really a blessing in disguise when you think about it. What I lack in actual hearing I pick up in vibrations!

TOBEY

Well pick up on this pal. Get your scaly ass outta here while you still can, or you're gonna get popped.

Beat.

BUBBLE EYE

Excuse me?

TOBEY

This ain't no place for such rampant positivity. I was positive once too. But he pounded it out of me.

He looks quickly down at his bandaged crotch and back up.

BUBBLE EYE

Hm. I would ask you to explain that, but I only like to discuss the good things in life, and I'm getting the strong sense you are about to complain.

TOBEY

Bummer, Bubble Eye. I love discussing my misfortunes.

BUBBLE EYE

Sarcasm isn't going to bring you the joy you seek Tobey.

TOBEY

Who's being sarcastic? I mean it, I love discussing my misfortunes. It's the only thing that makes me feel happy anymore.

BUBBLE EYE

Oh, wonderful then, let's discuss! It's better to be happy if you can. So, what happened to you?

TOBEY

Moriarty happened to me kid.

BUBBLE EYE

Mr. Moriarty happened to me too!!! Aren't we so lucky?!!! Isn't he just the sweetest old man? I'm so grateful, I'm-

TOBEY

Alright. Your constant misguided cheerfulness is making me want to hurt you. Very much.

BUBBLE EYE

I'm sorry to hear that. You should know though that your anger has very little to do with me and everything to do with you.

TOBEY

Spoken like a man who lives in a bowl. I'm sure it's very easy to stay positive about life when you've never actually lived. What the hell do you know? What have you ever experienced?

BUBBLE EYE

Plenty actually. I'm happy to report that just this morning I fell in love.

TOBEY

Did you now!

BUBBLE EYE

I surely did. And she is....breathtaking.

TOBEY

Gilly. The Red Lionhead. From apartment 5J.

BUBBLE EYE

Yes, actually. How did you know?

TOBEY

We dated.

BUBBLE EYE

You did?

TOBEY

Hell no, she's a fish, that would be fucked up. Word on the street was you were getting dropped in her bowl today for some sookie-sookie.

BUBBLE EYE

Just curious, when you say "word on the street", which street are you talking about?

TOBEY

Kitchen. Fucking parrot knows everything.

BUBBLE EYE

Ah.

TOBEY

So, did you score?

BUBBLE EYE

Did I-?

TOBEY

Score.

BUBBLE EYE

I don't follow...

TOBEY

Knock boots, make the baby gravy, back up the hard drive...

BUBBLE EYE

Oh, I see! I prefer the term "make love," but yes, yes we did. It was my first time, and it was magical.

TOBEY

Alright. Was it sexy though? Hot?

BUBBLE EYE

Oh yes, it was quite sexy I think.

TOBEY

Awww man. Help a cat out will ya and gimme the play by play? I haven't felt a thing since he...

He looks quickly down at his crotch and back up.
Well, since he..... I could just really use a filthy tale to make me feel male again. Could you do that for me man?

BUBBLE EYE

Absolutely. I'd love to share with you. After all we're brothers now!

TOBEY

Fine. We're brothers. Just make it real dirty and detailed for me, OK?

BUBBLE EYE

OK, I'll do my best.

TOBEY

Terrific. So Moriarty drops you into little miss thing's bowl...

BUBBLE EYE

He sure does. I'm swimming in my usual circles doing my visualizations and repeating my mantras. By the way, today's mantra is "I am happy, healthy and whole." You should try it.

TABBY

Maybe later kid. Get back to the sex or I'll tip your bowl.

BUBBLE EYE

OK. Bro! So, I sense movement at the surface of the water. Which of course makes me immediately cast my bulbous eyes toward the heavens in gratitude for the flaky food I think I'm about to receive.

TOBEY

Of course...

BUBBLE EYE

But it wasn't food! It was Moriarty! He lifted me from my solitude - by way of this truly adorable green-netted scoop - and allowed me to plunge into new waters. Gilly's waters!

TOBEY

Rock n roll.

BUBBLE EYE

Yes, rock and roll indeed! One look at her and I knew... this was the angel put on earth just for me.

TOBEY

Don't fool yourself kid, she's gotten down with every fin in this building.

BUBBLE EYE

Pardon me?

TOBEY

You do realize Moriarty's a breeder right? That he breeds exotic animals?

BUBBLE EYE

I'm not following...

TOBEY

Forget it.

BUBBLE EYE

Alright, forgotten. So, suddenly, I get this undeniable urge to nudge her belly with my snout! It was really a very curious sensation.

TOBEY

I know the sensation well...

BUBBLE EYE

You do? I'd surely never felt that way before! But I figure my body is my temple and if these are my god-given animal instincts, well, then they are surely meant to be followed.

TOBEY

Damn right they are!

BUBBLE EYE

So I nudged her!

TOBEY

Good man.

BUBBLE EYE

Thank you! But she puzzled me by swimming away from me.

TOBEY

Oh they always do that.

BUBBLE EYE

They do?

TOBEY

Hell yeah. All of 'em. Fish, cats... Part of the lady shtick. Nothing to concern yourself with.

BUBBLE EYE

That's good to know, thank you! So I took a moment, connected to my inner wisdom, and decided to nudge her again.

TOBEY

Good man!

BUBBLE EYE

Very gently of course, A. Because I am a gentlemen, and B. I'm conscious not to burst my eye sacs.

TOBEY

Fair enough.

BUBBLE EYE

This time I daresay she enjoyed it!

TOBEY

Yeah she did!

BUBBLE EYE

Then the most magnificent thing happened.

TOBEY

Give it to me...

BUBBLE EYE

Well, she smiled at me. Then... she spewed a stream of gleaming, quivering eggs along the turquoise pebbles cradled at the base of my bowl. I was breathless. Seriously, I breathed in a chunk of floating food she must have missed from breakfast and it momentarily clogged up my right gill. When I got it dislodged, I smiled back at her and thanked her for this great opportunity to procreate with her. I then swam to my future children filled with purpose.... and I sprayed my gametes over them, blanketing them and burrowing into them with my seed.

Beat.

Our larvae are due to hatch in 48 hours. You're going to be an uncle.

Beat. Tobey looks sick.

TOBEY

Mazel tov. That was the most heinous description of love-making I've ever heard. Friggin bowl dweller. You don't know how to live.

BUBBLE EYE

I'm sorry I've disappointed you. Moriarty seemed pleased! He almost smiled. I've been trying all week to make him smile.

TOBEY

Yeah, well, give it up now or you'll end up like me. I've spent my whole life trying to make that man smile, trying to get one simple scratch behind the ear. I realized a long time ago that that scratch just ain't coming. So you know what I did? I said "screw it, I'm gonna take an adventure. I'm gonna live a little. Can't please this guy, so I'm gonna please myself."

BUBBLE EYE

What did you do?

TOBEY

I gnaw a nice hole in the guest closet that leads to the trash room where I'm never allowed to go. Figure what the hell, I'll ride down the trash shoot and see if I might make some new friends.

BUBBLE EYE

How exciting!

TOBEY

It was. Exhilarating really. But wait, it gets better. Not two seconds after I land on 87th street, do I hear the most intoxicating sound I've ever heard.

BUBBLE EYE

Oooh. What did it sound like?

TOBEY

Uh... Something like a cross between squealing car brakes and a whining toddler.

BUBBLE EYE

Ooooh, neat. Can I hear it?

TOBEY

You want me to do the sound for you?

BUBBLE EYE

Oh yes, that would be delightful!

TOBEY

Uh... Alright, I guess. It was kind of like...

Tobey explores the sound for a bit.
Very sexy stuff obviously.

BUBBLE EYE

Definitely. Good job.

TOBEY

Thanks. So I follow this sound. I mean I can't help it, it's like music to me. And then... I see her. This caramel-striped curvy little thing with a tail to die for. She's rubbing up on the recycling can and staring at me with those pretty yellow eyes of hers. Yeah, she's feral, but I can't help it man, I love her instantly. Betty. My Betty.

BUBBLE EYE

She sounds terrific.

TOBEY

Light of my effin life.

BUBBLE EYE

I like bonding over women with you, this is fun.

TOBEY

Yeah... So we decide to snuggle up in that great little cardboard haunt outback between the dumpsters. You know it?

BUBBLE EYE

Don' t think so. Don't get out much.

TOBEY

Right, right. I knew she wasn't purebred. I knew Moriarty wouldn't approve, but I didn't care. For once this was about me. Me and her. I sprayed my urine all over the dumpster to mark my territory and for one glorious week, we made love.

BUBBLE EYE

That sounds... messy.

TOBEY

It was. It was Heaven! Until we got caught. Moriarty went insane. His precious purebred was now damaged goods. Purposeless in his eyes. Betty got adopted by some do-gooder on 88th who wants to "clean up the neighborhood" and I got, well, I got...

He looks down at his bandages and quickly back up.
Bubble Eye and Tobey are silent for a moment.

BUBBLE EYE

May I offer you a maxim?

Tobey is Silent.

Suffering is only an illusion.

TOBEY

I'm a purebred male Persian cat named Tobey. I have long, flowing white hair like a gay wizard. You think I haven't suffered?

BUBBLE EYE

I'm sure that you have; I'm not denying that. All I am suggesting is that you are choosing to suffer now. If you could just focus on all the good times you and Betty had, the urine and the-

TOBEY

That's it. I'm tipping your bowl!

BUBBLE EYE

No, no, please!

TOBEY

You think I'd choose this?!?! To live as a eunuch? He lopped off my balls, man!

BUBBLE EYE

I'm sorry, what?

(Gesturing to his ears.)

Pinholes, remember?

TOBEY

I DID ONE THING TO DISAPPOINT HIM AND HE LOPPED OFF MY BALLS!!!

Beat.

BUBBLE EYE

Oh. My goodness. He did? Did that hurt?

TOBEY

Of course it hurt! Like a bitch! And while he was at it, he figured he'd rip out my claws too.

BUBBLE EYE

Oh my!

TOBEY

Yeah, "oh my." And you haven't heard the worst of it. Yesterday, I'm laying in a sun spot, trying to make sense of what's happened to me, and I hear the sweet mewling of my girl. Betty's at the window. Climbed all

TOBEY

the way up the fire escape like we're in a friggin feline West Side Story.

BUBBLE EYE

I love that musical.

TOBEY

You would. She heard about my operation. Snuck out of her new digs to check up on me. I'm feeling a little shy about her seeing me in this state, but I figure, what the hell, she's my girl, she loves me no matter what. So I limp my ass up to the window sill.... And that's when I see it.

Beat.

Girl is in a diaper. A diaper, man. Can you imagine?

BUBBLE EYE

No I can't. I've never seen a cat in a diaper.

TOBEY

And I hope you never have to. Man, she's in full heat, looking and smelling as good as ever- I mean this chick never ceases to amaze me, she even looks slammin in a diaper- but... I don't feel a thing for her. Not a goddamned thing. He cut it outta me. All my feeling.

Beat. Bubble Eye is moved.

Tells me she's got her own operation scheduled for Tuesday. We lick the glass one last time and I watch her diapered ass walk away.

BUBBLE EYE

I'm so sorry.

TOBEY

Don't let this happen to you! Don't live your life for him! I've seen you when he walks by your bowl. You shimmy your tail like you're having an epileptic fish fit. He looks through you. He wants you only for what he can get from you. And you play into it!

BUBBLE EYE

Is it so wrong that I want him to be proud of me?

TOBEY

Grow some limbs!

BUBBLE EYE

I have fins! They allow me to float through life!

TOBEY

You even alter your body heat to match the temperature he chooses!

BUBBLE EYE

I'm adaptable.

TOBEY

You're a chump!

Beat.

Make no mistake kid, if you don't get out of here, he'll pop your sacs just like he did mine.

Beat.

BUBBLE EYE

What are you suggesting I do?

TOBEY

Get outta of that bowl before it's too late. I'll help you.

BUBBLE EYE

Oh, I couldn't, I-

TOBEY

Any idea how short your life span is?

Beat.

BUBBLE EYE

No. I don't.

TOBEY

Me, I'm lucky if I get 12 years. But you? 12 months tops. If Basia remembers to feed you.

BUBBLE EYE

That's it? That's all I get?

TOBEY

If you're lucky.

BUBBLE EYE

I had no idea. This is sobering news.

TOBEY

So what are you gonna do about it Bubble Eye? You gonna spend your life in a bowl?

BUBBLE EYE

I- I don't know.

TOBEY

Somewhere on the fifth floor your larvae are about to be born. You gonna miss that?

BUBBLE EYE

I- I don't want to miss that, no. I love my larvae!

TOBEY

I know you do man. Let's get you upstairs to Gilly. I missed my chance to be a dad. My balls are gone. But you still have yours. On your face and on your crotch. Well actually, I can't quite see the ones on your crotch, but I'm sure they're there somewhere. You can be the dad we never had!

BUBBLE EYE

I can do it!

TOBEY

Show that fucker what a real father looks like!

BUBBLE EYE

I can break the cycle!

TOBEY

I want to meet my nieces and nephews!

BUBBLE EYE

Leap and the net will appear!

Bubble Eye circles the bowl several times with determination and builds momentum. He swoops to the bottom of his bowl and rockets himself straight up to the surface. He explodes into the air! His impressive gold and red fins glisten and sway! He soars! He's free! He's..... SPLAT!!! He lands on the antique oak table. His mouth opens and closes in confusion while Tobey watches then walks toward him.

TOBEY

I'm sorry, what did you say?

Bubble Eye opens and closes his mouth.
Maybe you didn't realize that you're a fish. Fish need water to breathe. How's the positive thinking working for you now? Not so good?

Bubble eye opens and closes his mouth.
Lemme tell ya what I'm gonna do. I'm just gonna sit here. I'm gonna wait until he comes home and sees his

TOBEY

new investment splattered on his antique table. And you know what I'm gonna do then? I'm going to smile. I really am sorry, kid. Like you said before, my anger has very little to do with you and everything to do with me. So don't take it personally.

Beat.

Oh right, you don't do that.

Tobey limps to the window sill. Lights fade as Bubble Eye's mouth opens and closes frantically.

End of Play.