

The Millennium Arrives in Suburbia

A Play by Patrick M Brennan

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CHARACTERS

NATHAN, male, 30s

VAUGHN, male, 20s

AYESHA, female, ≤18

(The Scene : A parking lot, somewhere in Suburbia, USA. It is a warm winter night. A car, an anonymous white midsize four-door, with a shield and the legend "HGA Security" painted on the opened doors, takes up center stage. As the lights come up, we see NATHAN. NATHAN is in his early 30s, and has extremely short, spiky, receding hair, a high forehead, and large Coke-bottle glasses. He is very tall and skinny. He is wearing a blue security guard's uniform, a badge, a white shirt, a very narrow black tie, and black shoes. His jacket is both too wide and too short for him. His pants are also too short, and he wears white socks. NATHAN is permanently caffeinated nearly to a toxic level. He is holding his security guard gun, pointing it at the sky. He mimics firing the weapon, and he puffs out the syllables, whispering the mock report of the pistol.)

NATHAN

Pow, Pow, Ph-owwww, ... Come get some... Yeah, that's right. I'm your worst nightmare. Hasta la vista, baby... Ph-owwww, Ph-owwww...

(The sound of a helicopter passing; laughter OFFSTAGE. NATHAN looks in that direction, raises his voice :)

NATHAN

Come ON, already! Vaughn! We gotta finish our rounds here! Jesus.

(Enter VAUGHN, with AYESHA close behind. VAUGHN is in his mid-20s, has long straight black hair down to his shoulders, and a thin angular face. He has a more substantial build than NATHAN, but he's no athlete. He is wearing the same type of security uniform as NATHAN, and though his fits better, it's still not a good fit. Instead of the standard-issue black shoes, VAUGHN is wearing a pair of Doc Marten's. If Trent Reznor was a security guard, he might look a lot like VAUGHN. And he might have a girlfriend who looked like AYESHA. If she's eighteen, we can't tell. She is extremely skinny, with a shaved head and a nose ring. She also has piercings in her tongue and probably everywhere else. She wears bell-bottom blue jeans, platform shoes, and a black leather vest. She is carrying VAUGHN's gun, waving it around rather recklessly.)

VAUGHN

Hey Nathan! Keep your shirt on.

Somebody has to. AYESHA

Naughty little bitch. *(He laughs)* Come on. VAUGHN

Hey, Ayesha. Don't wave that thing around so much. Why don't you just give it back to Vaughn? NATHAN

Vaughn always lets me hold his gun. AYESHA

Vaughn? You wanna, uh... NATHAN

OK. *(He takes his gun from AYESHA, holsters it. NATHAN does likewise.)* Play time's over. VAUGHN

You told me I could shoot it at midnight. AYESHA

Right. But it's not midnight yet. VAUGHN

When is it midnight, then? AYESHA

When you hear the bells ring, it's midnight. VAUGHN

Happy New Year! AYESHA

You mean, *if* the bells ring. NATHAN

Oh man, don't start that again. VAUGHN

I'm telling ya, Vaughn. *Something's* gonna happen. NATHAN

Something? Like what? VAUGHN

I don't know. Something. NATHAN

AYESHA
You mean like that Y2K thing?

NATHAN
No, not that. But something's going on.

VAUGHN
Man, nothin's goin' on.

NATHAN
We're halfway through our rounds, right? And we haven't seen anyone.

VAUGHN
It's almost midnight! These people are asleep by ten PM.

NATHAN
And no lights on in any house. And no cars in any driveway.

VAUGHN
So what? There hardly ever are. They've all got two-car garages.

AYESHA
Maybe they're all partying somewhere else.

NATHAN
What, all of them?

VAUGHN
Look, what are you getting at anyway, Nathan?

NATHAN
It's not *just* New Year's Eve, Vaughn.

VAUGHN
Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's the end of the millennium.

AYESHA
(*Singing, badly*)
"So tonight I'm gonna party like it's Nineteen Ninety Nine."

NATHAN
It's the last ten minutes of the twentieth century, man!

VAUGHN
So what? There's nothing *real* happening. It's all just -- what did you call it?

AYESHA
It's only an arbitrary calendrical event.

NATHAN

A what?

AYESHA

It's just counting time since some guy in like, ancient times, said 'OK, this is year 1.'

VAUGHN

And now it's gonna be 2000.

AYESHA

Right. BFD.

NATHAN

Well, a lot of people think it's pretty important.

VAUGHN

Christ, Nathan, don't you ever stop pissin' and moanin'? Just relax. How does it get any better than this? I mean, here we are, at the end of the millennium, driving around, manning the graveyard shift at the Happy Gated Acres Residential Park. We got nothin' to do, nothin' to worry about, and nothin's gonna happen. Right?

AYESHA

Right.

NATHAN

You know, Vaughn, I had that dream again last night. It's what got me thinking about all this.

VAUGHN

Oh yeah?

NATHAN

I dreamed the most horrible thing I can imagine. I dreamt that I flunked out of college, and I had to repeat high school all over again. It was horrible, horrible. I woke up in a cold sweat, and for about a half hour after I was awake, I was still convinced it was really true. That sounds weird, but I really thought so, until I sorta shook myself and I said, wait a minute, it's just a bad dream. I still felt helpless and rotten and stupid all day long. 'Course, I *am* helpless and rotten and stupid.

VAUGHN

You're *not* helpless and rotten and stupid.

(The sound of a helicopter passing overhead, off in the distance.)

NATHAN

Aw, man, look at me! Here I am, pushing thirty-two, a god damn security guard. I guess I am helpless and rotten and stupid. That's what my father told me anyway, that's what he taught us all. I always knew I wanted out of that house, out of that rotten neighborhood. You know, when I was a little kid, maybe six years old, and I would sit with the family and watch TV, my parents would point at the credits on the screen, at the names on the screen and say, "see? Jews! They control Hollywood." And I knew that was wrong, and I despised them for their hate.

VAUGHN

How could you know that? Six years old? How?

NATHAN

How? I don't know. I just didn't accept the things they taught me. See what I mean? I knew already. And when I sat in church with them, and they told their stories of how the world was made, I couldn't accept any of it. And when I had more ambition than to be a factory worker like my dad, or my brothers; when I wanted to go to college and become something else, I kept wondering, why? Why do I have this spark, and they don't?

AYESHA

Maybe you weren't really their kid.

NATHAN

Right! I was thinking the same thing. And you know, sometimes I would run away from that rotten house, run away from his drinking and beating us up, and I would look up at the stars. And I knew, somehow I knew, that I didn't really belong here.

VAUGHN

Well, yeah, water over the bridge, huh? Anyway, you went to college, man. You got the hell out of there. *(To AYESHA:)* Hey, maybe I should go to college.

AYESHA

You could. Your dad's loaded.

VAUGHN

Yeah, but I don't know. I'd have to study and shit.

NATHAN

Fuck, what am I doing in this job anyway? Why did I have to lie to CompuChrome?

AYESHA

Who?

VAUGHN

The joint he was working at before he picked up this gig. *(To NATHAN:)* Hey, you needed the work, man. Like all the rest of us do.

AYESHA

You don't need to work. How come you're a security guard?

VAUGHN

Well, I do this because it's fun. But what the hell. He needed the work.

NATHAN

It was a good job. Programming. You know, computers. A good first job for a guy right out of college.

VAUGHN
(To *AYESHA*)

Did you ever want to go to college?

AYESHA

What the hell for?

NATHAN

It was a simple little thing. They asked me if I had a bachelor's degree.

VAUGHN
(To *AYESHA*)

He didn't have a bachelor's degree.

AYESHA

How do you know?

VAUGHN

He's told me this story before. About a hundred times.

AYESHA

But I thought you said he had a degree.

VAUGHN

He went to college, yeah, but never got a degree.

NATHAN

I dropped out. And I don't know how they found out, either.

VAUGHN

But you did all right. You lied, but you were still competent. You still did your job.

NATHAN

That didn't matter to them. I lied, so they fired me.

AYESHA

What a bunch of tight-asses!

NATHAN

I told a friend of mine at work about it. I thought I could confide in him. He must've told them. He must've told them, and they called up the registrar's office to see if I was lying.

VAUGHN

Which you were.

NATHAN

Yeah.

AYESHA

Some friend.

VAUGHN

You don't know geeks. They make lousy friends.

NATHAN

So that's how I found myself filling out a fucking security guard psychological questionnaire. To make sure I'm not some kind of unstable mental case.

VAUGHN

Oh man, that was half the reason I applied. When I heard about the screening process!

NATHAN

Yeah, like anyone who wants to walk around in the middle of the night in a stupid uniform like this, carrying a phony badge and a gun, is perfectly normal.

VAUGHN

Great questions, though. "Answer I Agree or I Disagree. Sometimes I hear voices in my head."

NATHAN

Gee, which answer do you suppose will help me get the job? Eh, fuck it. I Agree.

VAUGHN

Very good. "People talk about me behind my back."

NATHAN

Well, they *do!* I Agree.

VAUGHN

Excellent.

AYESHA

People talk about *me* behind my back.

VAUGHN

Of course they do, honey. You scare them.

AYESHA

I do? Cool.

VAUGHN

Next question. "I have strange and unusual thoughts."

NATHAN

That's the one that always got me! I mean, I really resented it. You know, only a complete moron never has strange and unusual thoughts. And I think, the smarter you are, the stranger and more unusual your thoughts will be!

VAUGHN

And my very favorite. "I have often thought about shooting my gun."

NATHAN

Hey, ain't it the truth? I Agree. Only not *before* becoming a security guard, right? Only since I started patrolling this fucking compound, filled with these fucking rich people treating me like I'm just some lowlife in a uniform. Like I'm beneath them, like I'm scum. Where the hell are these people, anyway? Where'd they go? Hey, you people! Where are you?

(NATHAN suddenly fires his gun OFFSTAGE. VAUGHN and AYESHA are taken aback.)

VAUGHN

Jesus, Nathan!

NATHAN

(Shouting)

I have often thought about shooting my gun!

(NATHAN fires again and again, in different directions, at the houses around them.)

NATHAN

(Shouting)

I have strange and unusual thoughts!

VAUGHN

Nathan!

NATHAN

What?

VAUGHN

Calm down, dude.

(NATHAN considers what he has done for a moment, then sheepishly returns his gun to his holster.)

NATHAN

Sorry.

VAUGHN

It's OK.

NATHAN

Sorry.

AYESHA
Wow! I was pretty scared for a moment, but now I'm like all shaky. I like it.

NATHAN
I don't know what's wrong with me.

VAUGHN
Nathan -- it's cool.

NATHAN
But you know, I have a pretty good idea.

VAUGHN
Yeah -- what's that?

NATHAN
Hey Vaughn. Have you ever heard of Fermi's Paradox?

AYESHA
Fermi's What?

NATHAN
Heard of Enrico Fermi?

VAUGHN
I think I've heard the name. Wait -- Isn't he one of the Three Tenors?

NATHAN
Not even close. They said that sometime after the War --

VAUGHN
The war?

NATHAN
The War.

VAUGHN
What war? When? Which war?

NATHAN
World War Two. Don't you read?

VAUGHN
Oh, that's who he is!

NATHAN
Right. Three Tenors. So after the war, there's this dinner with all the physicists --

Physicists? VAUGHN

Yeah! NATHAN

Didn't they put him in prison or something? VAUGHN

What for? NATHAN

I don't know. Wasn't he the ruler of Italy or something? VAUGHN

No! How come I know so much more about your history than you do? NATHAN

Because you watch the History Channel and listen to NPR while I'm out having a good time. *(He Kisses AYESHA, they laugh)* VAUGHN

Well, he was a nuclear physicist. He helped make the Bomb. And after the war, they're all at dinner, see. It's a discussion group on postwar issues and what the scientists can do with their new political power. It's quite a wide-ranging discussion. NATHAN

Oh yeah? Exciting. VAUGHN

But right in the middle of it, Fermi suddenly POUNDS the table, and SHOUTS, "Where are they?" NATHAN

Who's they? The caterers? VAUGHN

The caterers! *(She laughs.)* AYESHA

I slay me! *(He laughs.)* VAUGHN

He said, "Where are they?" NATHAN

All right, I'll bite. Who are "they"? VAUGHN

NATHAN

The aliens, of course.

VAUGHN

Naturally.

NATHAN

I mean, the lifetime of a star is pretty short compared to the lifetime of the universe. And the lifetime of a civilization is pretty short compared to the lifetime of a star. So civilizations should be forming all the time. They should be all around us.

AYESHA

I knew he was gonna kill my buzz.

NATHAN

But we don't see them. We don't see the aliens!

AYESHA

Nuh-uh! People get abducted all the time, Nathan!

VAUGHN

Oh yeah, drunken hillbillies with names like Travis.

AYESHA

My aunt got abducted. They didn't keep her, though.

NATHAN

We don't see them. The sky should be fulla flying saucers, so everyone can see them. Unless, (a), they're really not there, and we're wrong about how many there should be.

VAUGHN

Nah. I agree with you. They're all over the place. If we're here, they're here, too.

NATHAN

Right. That leaves (b), they purposely stay away from primitive civilizations like ours.

VAUGHN

Cause we're like, idiots to them, huh? Not worth the trip.

AYESHA

If I was an alien, I'd go visit the primitive planets. So I could be like a goddess or something. A goddess to them. And they'd worship me.

NATHAN

Right again. So we're left with (c). They're already here among us. But secret. And waiting for the right time to reveal themselves.

AYESHA

Like midnight?

NATHAN

Right. That's what I'm tryin' to tell ya. All these people, they're all gone. They've all gone because they've heard the news, and they're scared.

VAUGHN

What, they're not the aliens?

NATHAN

No, of course not! These people? These people are the people who've got it made! They're the ones who are plugged in to the system! Hey, Vaughn: how come they knew to head for the hills, and we didn't get the word, huh? The fuckin' security guards?

VAUGHN

Fuck. I don't know.

NATHAN

It's because they're not the aliens, Vaughn. *We're* the aliens!

VAUGHN

We are?

NATHAN

It's like I was tryin' to tell ya. I was different. Growing up, I knew it. Looking up at the stars. And I knew, somehow I knew, that I didn't really belong here. And then I knew where everything came from. It was so obvious. I was ... I mean I am ... an alien. Not a human being at all, but cleverly disguised to look like one. It's why I never fit in, why I could never make it work down here. It's all because really, inside, I am one of them. Not one of *them* (*pointing at the houses*), but one of *them*. (*Pointing at the sky*)

AYESHA

Them?

NATHAN

I am an alien. Not of this Earth, not human. (*A beat.*) And I know something else, Vaughn.

VAUGHN

What's that?

NATHAN

The first day of this new millennium is what we've been waiting for. We're going to appear to all of humanity at midnight. The ones who are gathering above us, they're going to come down, and finally accept me as one of their own. Accept us all. The three of us.

AYESHA

Really?

VAUGHN

Whoa, wait a minute. I'm no alien.

NATHAN

Of course you are, Vaughn. You're just like me. You're just like Ayesha.

AYESHA

Yeah!

VAUGHN

No, no, no... I'm not like you at all, Nathan. This? I don't have to do this. I'm not supposed to be here. And I'm *not* different.

NATHAN

What are you saying, Vaughn? You saying you're human?

(VAUGHN and NATHAN draw their guns, point them at each other tensely. AYESHA backs away.)

NATHAN

You're saying you're not one of us? You saying you're not going with us?

VAUGHN

I'm not gonna get abducted with you or anyone else.

NATHAN

Are you spying on us, Vaughn? Trying to get intelligence? You an infiltrator or something?

VAUGHN

No, man, I just don't want to go.

NATHAN

You can't stop us, Vaughn. We're coming to save this rotten planet, and you're not gonna stop us.

(The sound of bells fills the air. AYESHA, NATHAN, and VAUGHN all look up to greet the sounds.)

NATHAN

Midnight.

AYESHA

Midnight!

(A white spotlight appears from overhead, enveloping them all.)

NATHAN

They're here. I told you, they're here.

VAUGHN

Holy shit. Holy shit, Nathan! I don't believe it!

(VAUGHN lowers his gun, NATHAN does the same.)

VAUGHN

You were right, Nathan!

AYESHA

I want to go! Come on!

VAUGHN

(Looking up into the light)

Holy shit!

(NATHAN turns to the source of the light, raises his torso and spreads his arms. The sound of a helicopter is heard. Some wind from the blades.)

NATHAN

We welcome you! We, the advance party, welcome the new masters of the Earth!

VOICE OFFSTAGE

(As through a bullhorn, from above)

Drop your weapons and kneel down on the pavement, hands behind your heads. This is your only warning.

(VAUGHN and AYESHA immediately comply. NATHAN is not moving.)

NATHAN

Now we assume our rightful place as rulers of this planet!

(A shot rings out. NATHAN is unhurt but gets the message, and promptly gets down on the pavement. The wind is picking up.)

NATHAN

Now do you believe, Vaughn? They're here! They're really here!

VAUGHN

I can't believe this is really happening.

AYESHA

Happy New Year, aliens!

NATHAN

I'm so happy. They're really here, and they're gonna take me away with them.

AYESHA

Please take me with you! I want to be an alien, too! Happy New Year!

(Slow fade on the sounds of the bells and the helicopter.)

BLACKOUT

PERFORMANCE HISTORY

The Millennium Arrives in Suburbia (1.3) had its first public reading on November 12-13, 1999, at the Arlington Center for the Arts / Firedog Theatre New Theatre Works Play Reading Series 1999 in Arlington, MA.

Director: Kim Anton
Nathan: Joe Montagna
Vaughn: Ross Carey
Ayesha: Daniella Boucher

The Millennium Arrives in Suburbia (1.5) had its first public performance on July 8,9,10, 2000, at the Playwrights' Platform 28th Annual Summer Festival of New Plays in Boston, MA.

Director: Thelonius Griffin
Assistant Director: Kim Anton
Nathan: Randal Milholland
Vaughn: Patrick M Brennan
Ayesha: Rose Carlson

The Millennium Arrives in Suburbia (1.5) had its second public reading on January 6, 2001, at the Theatre Cooperative's Ritalin Readings in Somerville, MA.

Director: Paula Caplan
Nathan: Dan Wilson
Vaughn: Sam Young
Ayesha: Libby Ricardo