

Objects in Mirror...

Written by  
Melissa A. Bartell

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First Draft

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

*An empty stage lit by worklights. WRITER enters and takes position downstage center. The worklights dim until everything is black except for a single spotlight on writer.*

WRITER

Autobiographical saga. This late in the challenge. Really? As if everything I've written hasn't had some element of autobiography in it? Okay, I'm not really a mermaid, but I am a beach baby stuck five hours from the ocean in a house with a broken bathtub. The general consensus is that you're supposed to write what you know... but I guess I write what I am. Okay, I also write androids and monsters and serial killers, but... there's more than a little of me in all of those things. Even when I'm writing (*whispers*) fanfic (*normal voice*) my version of those existing characters has more than a little of me in it. But... I digress. You want a saga. So... why don't I give you one to illustrate my point.

BLACKOUT

SCENE TWO

*LIGHTS COME UP AS AN INSTRUMENTAL VERSION OF "BRAHM'S LULLABY" PLAYS OVER SPEAKERS*

*A bed is at center stage and white curtains hung from rigging in the ceiling form the walls of a CHILD's bedroom, around it. A row of stuffed animals is across the foot of the bed, and the CHILD is resting in it, propped against pillows, leaning against the headboard (may be just a brass frame). There is a nightstand next to the bed. A rocking chair is further stage left of the bed, canted toward it so the audience can*

*see that MOTHER is in the chair, holding a book.*

MOTHER

(reading - she does  
the voices  
accordingly)

"Tracks," said Piglet. "Paw-marks." He gave a little squeak of excitement. "Oh, Pooh! Do you think it's a - a - a Woozle?"

"It may be," said Pooh. "Sometimes it is, and sometimes it isn't. You never can tell with paw-marks."

With these few words he went on tracking and Piglet, after watching him for a minute or two, ran after him. Winnie-the-Pooh had come to a sudden stop and was bending over the tracks in a puzzled sort of way.

During the last paragraph the MOTHER's words fade into a soft hum, and a follow-spot starting from the Audience shows us the DREAMER entering the scene, though she pauses on the downstage fringe of it. Turning toward the audience, we see that she's wearing pajamas and that she has bunny slippers on her feet. She turns to address the Audience.

DREAMER

I used to love it when my mother read to me before bed. She stopped when I was five or six. I could read on my own by then, and she was taking too long to finish..

(She turns slightly  
toward the MOTHER  
and CHILD)

DREAMER

Keeping nightmares at bay is so much easier for children. Belief in magic may make you more receptive to the things that go bump in the night, but it also gives you a kind of power.

We think of bedtime rituals as a hokey routine, but if you pay attention, and follow all the Rules for Safe Sleep, you'll see why childhood nightmares are so easily beaten. Step one: Story time. In this step it's essential that you..

DREAMER AND CHILD

(as one)

... finish the story!

The spot on DREAMER fades out  
putting the focus back on the  
MOTHER and CHILD.

CHILD

Please, Mom? It's not that long, and it's important.

MOTHER

It's very late, sweetie, and we're only half-way through the  
book.

CHILD

But I have to know what happens, so I won't dream it wrong.

MOTHER

I'll finish the chapter. That will take us to the end of  
this adventure.

(resumes reading)

MOTHER

"I have been foolish and deluded," said he, "and I am a bear  
of no brain at all." "You're the best bear in all the  
world," said Christopher Robin soothingly. "Am I?" said  
Pooh, hopefully. And then he brightened up suddenly.  
"Anyhow," he said, it is nearly luncheon time." So, he went  
home for it.

(in her normal  
voice)

MOTHER

Alright, sweetie, time for sleep now.

CHILD

You have to check for monsters, first.

DREAMER has used this time to go  
around the outer perimeter of the  
curtains and sneak under the bed.  
As the MOTHER makes a show of  
searching all the corners of the  
room, DREAMER rolls out from under  
the bed, and sits up in the middle  
of the floor. Neither MOTHER nor  
CHILD react to her presence.

DREAMER

Checking for monsters before bedtime is just as crucial as a  
magician showing that there's nothing up his sleeves.

DREAMER (cont'd)

(aside, while  
demonstrating)

There's nothing up my sleeves.

(continues  
narrating)

DREAMER

There are three places that must always be checked: behind the curtains, under the bed, and in the closet.

CHILD

Don't forget to leave the closet light on, Mommy. Monsters hate light.

(MOTHER pulls the curtain back in the corner of the room, and DRACULA pokes his head out. Neither MOTHER nor CHILD react to him.)

DRACULA

(nonchalant)

It's true. We hate the light. Darkness is our friend.

MOTHER mimes pulling the chain on a closet light. DRACULA retreats behind the curtain. A soft light will glow behind that corner for the duration of the scene.

DREAMER

Leaving the closet light on is vital. The door should be closed though. You just want a crack of light around the perimeter of the door. After all, too much light could keep you awake. (beat) Step three. Arrange the stuffed animals.

(MOTHER and CHILD pick up each stuffed animal, a white tiger, a rag doll, a plush seal, a ragged-looking Snoopy, and a turquoise teddy bear. All but the teddy bear are lined up across the foot of the bed, with the tiger facing downstage. The teddy bear is given to the CHILD to hold.)

MOTHER

I thought you'd like to sleep with this one in your arms tonight.

CHILD

Yes, please.

DREAMER

To adults, stuffed animals are nostalgic, remnants of past innocence, but to a child, they're the best defense against nightmares.

MOTHER

Alright now, your water is on the night stand -

DREAMER

(interrupting)

Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate!

MOTHER

- so, let's get you all tucked in.

MOTHER helps CHILD slide lower in the bed and places the teddy bear in the crook of her arm. Then she tucks the blankets around CHILD up to her chin, ensuring that CHILD is completely cocooned, except for her head.

DREAMER

Step four - keep your hands and feet inside the ride - er - blankets... Keep your hands and feet inside the blankets at all times.

It's a little-known fact - though commonly held instinct - that monsters cannot penetrate a child's covers.

FREDDY KRUEGER pops up from behind the headboard. As with DRACULA and the DREAMER, neither MOTHER nor CHILD react to his presence. He leans over the bed frame and brings

his bladed fingers closer and  
closer to the CHILD's throat.

FREDDY KRUEGER

Alright, my little piggy it's time to di - WHAT! BLANKETS!  
Noooooo!

FREDDY KRUEGER tumbles backward  
away from the bed.

DREAMER

The last protection against nightmares is the simplest. It's  
the goodnight kiss. It can come from Daddy or Grandmom or  
Grandpop, or even a babysitter, but the most powerful ones  
come from Mommy...

MOTHER

(leans over CHILD  
and kisses her  
forehead)

Time for sleep now, my little love. Good night, sleep tight,  
and...

DREAMER, DRACULA, FREDDY KRUEGER  
AND MOTHER

(Together, the  
monsters popping in  
from the 'closet'  
corner and behind  
the bed, as before.)

Don't let the bed bugs bite!

MOTHER, DRACULA, and DREAMER all  
exit in various directions. FREDDY  
KRUEGER sits in the rocker.

FREDDY KRUEGER

(whispering)

Sweet dreams!

BLACKOUT

### SCENE THREE

*The front seat of a family car  
in the early 1980s. JILL (age  
16) and her mother LINDA (age  
36) are in the front seat).  
The radio is playing Jim*

*Croce's "Bad, Bad, Leroy  
Brown"*

LINDA

(singing)

"... he's the baddest man in the whole damned down. Badder than ol' King Ko-ong. Meaner than a junkyard dog..."

(nudges her  
daughter)

LINDA

Jilly-bean, why aren't you singing?

JILL ignores her mother, reclining her seat and turning her head away.

LINDA responds by turning the music up louder.

JILL

Do you have to do that?

LINDA

Do what? Sing? It's a good song. You used to like it, when you were little.

JILL

Yeah, well, I'm not little anymore. I'm sixteen. I'm the only one in my class who isn't driving yet. I'm the only one in my class who still wears glasses that look like safety goggles. I'm the only one in my class who still has a mother who does what you do.

LINDA

(confused)

What is it that I do?

JILL

You know.

LINDA

No, sweetie, I really don't.

JILL

Yes, you do. You do it all the time. Every time there's some dead-rock-star song on the radio, you do it.

LINDA  
 (growing  
 exasperated)

Jill, I honestly have no idea what you're talking about.

JILL returns her seat to its  
 upright position in as passive-  
 aggressive a manner as is possible.

JILL

You... were just doing it in the car, and you did it in the grocery store. You... you bop around and act cute, like you want people to see you, and it's horribly embarrassing and you do it on purpose!

LINDA  
 'Bop around and act cute?'

JILL

Yeah, you know... dancing to the radio while driving. Dancing to the music in the store. But never the good music. Like this station... seriously... dead rock stars is all they play...

BLACKOUT

SCENE FOUR

*Lights come up on a white tiled kitchen in a Spanish colonial home with blue accents. MOM and WOMAN are at the dining room table. They're each drinking coffee but they're sharing a single slice of cheesecake.*

MOM  
 (concerned)  
 You're moving in with him?

WOMAN  
 (confident)  
 Yes.

MOM  
 You've only known him for five minutes. You know nothing about him.

WOMAN  
Actually, it's been six months.

MOM  
Still...

WOMAN  
(ticking things off  
on her fingers)  
I know he likes strawberry-rhubarb pie and singing when he  
mows the lawn, and wearing socks during sex.

MOM gives WOMAN a gushy-mom look.

BLACKOUT

SCENE FIVE

*The waiting room of a county  
courthouse, outside a door  
marked REGISTRY OFFICE. A set  
of benches against the corner  
of the wall. Two women (MARGO  
and LAUREL) and three men  
(MAX, CHARLIE, KENT) are  
sitting, talking.*

MARGO  
So, now I'm not the only person I know who meets guys on the  
Internet and screens them for dating material. Solidarity  
Sister!

LAUREN and MARGO high-five each  
other.

KENT  
You're the only one not marrying one.

LAUREL  
Who wouldn't marry Max? He's sweet, he's kind, he's...  
(looks at MARGO)  
Why am I being your maid of honor instead of killing you and  
marrying him myself?

MARGO  
Because you're a woman who believes in supporting other  
women, or because I'm your weyrwoman on a virtual reality  
game where you really, really, really want a gold dragon  
someday... or because you've been secretly lusting after  
Charlie for a year and a half.

CHARLIE

The third one! Pick the third one!

MAX

I'm going to go see how much longer we have to wait.

Max wanders off to the window  
across the room.

LAUREL

So, what are my chances of a gold dragon, exactly?

MAX

(returning)

We're next.

(softly, to MARGO)

You ready for this?

MARGO

(grinning, madly in  
love with MAX )

I was born ready.

All five walk into the registry  
office.

BLACKOUT

ACT IISCENE ONE

*WRITER walks onto the stage again. This time she's carrying a mug of coffee. The mug has a green background and mermaids and mermen frolicking on it.*

WRITER

Are you beginning to see my point? Dreamer, Child, Jill, Woman, Margo... they're all different characters, but really, they're all aspects of myself. Oh, but, you think all my characters are just ordinary women. But they're not. Here. Look.

BLACKOUT

SCENE TWO

*Time: The night of the full moon, just before moonrise. Summer.*

*Place: A rocky outcropping or islet in the middle of the ocean.*

*At rise, Oskar, a thunder god, dressed like an ancient Scandinavian (think Viking, but softer) is standing on the rocks staring at the sea. When Oskar speaks it's in a vaguely Swedish accent, and his English is broken, choppy.*

OSKAR

Harmony... Harmony...

HARMONY's head surfaces from a pool of water. She is a mermaid.

HARMONY:

Oskar... I'm glad you called, but I feel bad. You're needed at home. Your people need you to make it rain.

OSKAR

I had to see you. Difficult in summer. Not enough moisture to make clouds solid.

HARMONY Well, I'm here now. *(smiles)* How long do we have?

OSKAR Not long. When moon rises, I must go.

HARMONY

*(reaching for the rocks, then falling back)*

I can't lift myself out of the water, here. The rocks are too sharp.

OSKAR

Is not matter.

*(he takes off his fur cloak and spreads it on the rocks)*

Come now.

HARMONY pulls herself out of the water and onto the cloak-covered rocks. OSCAR sits behind her, his legs on either side of her tail. He wraps his arms around her, and she leans back to rest against his chest.

HARMONY

I'd have picked a better place if I'd known you could spare the time. Usually you warn me you're coming; you send a storm.

OSKAR

Yes, but no storm tonight. Is... date, not... tryst. Also, this place is where I want.

HARMONY

You chose it on purpose?

OSKAR

Is best place on earth to watch the moon and stars come.

HARMONY

I had it on good authority that I was your 'moon and stars.'

OSKAR

(simple, honest)

No. You are breath and blood to me.

HARMONY

(touched)

Breath and blood? Really.

OSKAR

(stroking her hair)

Really. There is song... may I?

HARMONY

You know I love it when you sing to me.

OSKAR

(singing)

Allt jag är, allt jag har,  
till mitt sista andetag.  
Ska jag älska dig med  
hjärtats alla slag.  
Allt jag ber, allt jag vill,  
att få vakna tätt intill.  
Att få älska dig i alla mina dar,  
med allt jag har.

HARMONY

(translating slowly)

All I am, all I have... to my last breath...

OSKAR

(singing in English  
this time)

All I am, all I have,  
until my last breath.  
Should I love you  
the heart of all kinds.  
All I pray, all I want,  
to wake up close by.  
To love you in all my days,  
with all I have.

HARMONY

Oh... Oskar.

Harmony turns her head in an attempt to kiss Oskar, but he stops her with a gentle touch.

OSKAR

Kiss later. Now, watch.

As the two of them watch, the moon rises from the sea and rises to a point directly above them. Stars are already twinkling there. The moonlight makes the rocks glitter like a second sky full of stars.

HARMONY

Ohhhh! It's amazing.

OSKAR

Full moon, clear skies, stars above and below because we are together, but when we are parted all is dark again. Must remember this.

HARMONY

I could never forget this... Or you.

Clouds come to obscure the moon,  
and an arc of lightning illuminates  
their faces.

OSKAR

(sighing)

No time. Never enough time.

HARMONY

It won't be summer forever. When fall comes, and the air is cooler, we can be together longer.

OSKAR

I wish I were time god instead of thunder god.

HARMONY

(laughing)

But I'd miss your stormy presence, and your wonderful rumbling voice. (softer) When you're holding me, I can feel your songs inside me.

OSKAR

When I hold you, the sea is inside me.

HARMONY tries for another kiss.  
This time she succeeds. She turns

in OSKAR's arms, and places kisses  
on his face, his chest.

OSKAR  
(gently, stopping her )  
No time, Harmony. No time.

HARMONY  
(with surety)  
But I'll see you again.

OSKAR  
Next full moon. Is date. Go now, I watch you swim home.

Harmony slides back into the water,  
and disappears. OSKAR collects his  
cloak, holding it close, smelling  
her aquatic scent on his furs. Then  
he wraps it around his shoulders.  
There is a crash of thunder, a  
flash of lightning.

HARMONY  
(offstage, singing)  
Allt jag är, allt jag har,  
till mitt sista andetag.  
Ska jag älska dig med  
hjärtats alla slag.  
Allt jag ber, allt jag vill,  
att få vakna tätt intill.  
Att få älska dig i alla mina dar,  
med allt jag har

BLACKOUT

SCENE THREE

*An officer's suite on a  
spaceship. Upstage has the  
curved bulhead wall with a  
window showing space beyond. A  
sofa is centered under the  
window, with a coffee table in  
front of it, and two club  
chairs on either end. A  
sliding door stage left of the*

*couch leads to the 'bedroom' (off stage) . Stage left wall has a food slot with a small dining table. And another door. The stage right wall has a corner computer console.*

*Lights up on BASIL (wearing a space-y version of a naval officer's uniform, with the rank insignia of a commander) and ZOE, his girlfriend, in a domestic scene. She is significantly younger than his 30-ish years - likely a university student. There is something about BASIL - silvery skin tone, mannerisms, whatever, that implies he's not exactly human.*

ZOE

(at food slot )

This recipe is supposed to be pretty amazing. Are you sure you don't want some?

BASIL

I will never understand the organic tendency to consume the flesh of other animals.

ZOE

I may have ordered meatloaf, but it's still replicated meatloaf. You know as well as I do that it's not actually animal flesh, any more than you are.

BASIL

That is true, but..

ZOE brings her tray to the table and places a salad in front of BASIL. Both of them will eat their meals during the conversation.

ZOE

I know, it's the principal of the thing. From replicated meat to actual meat is a slippery slope you 'have no wish to encounter.'

BASIL

You are imitating me.

ZOE

Yes, but I do it out of love... speaking of which...

BASIL

(wary)

Yes?

ZOE

When were you going to tell me your mother was a Synth, like you?

BASIL

You know she is a Synthetic Being? How were you able to discern this when my colleagues - our friends - could not?

ZOE

I've been dating you for two and a half years, and living with you for almost half that time. Do you really think I can't tell a Synth from an Organic? Especially when so many of your mother's mannerisms are so much like yours?

BASIL

I have had the same set of colleagues and circle of friends for significantly longer than we have been in a relationship.

ZOE

True. But they don't see you without your public face. They don't see you in your off hours when you're not expected to be anything but your most basic self.

BASIL

My mother is not aware she is Synthetic.

ZOE

You're joking.

BASIL

While my base programming has expanded to include sarcasm, snark, irony, whimsy, and the occasional humorous anecdote, I believe you are aware that I would never attempt to 'joke' about such a thing. Indeed, I could not.

ZOE

Okay, that's valid, but... How can she not know? And how did you find out. Do you have some super-Synthetic equivalent of gaydar, or something?

BASIL

(giving her a  
reproachful look)

I have no such... sense. Rather, I noticed that her blinking pattern was the same as mine... exactly the same. That would not be possible in an organic being. As well, when she had the accident during the diving expedition -

ZOE

(interrupting)

I knew that dive was too deep, even for you -

BASIL

- her programming caused her to enter a state of unconsciousness until she could be reset. In the process, I discovered a comm-chip from my father.

ZOE

How is the old coot? We really should try to visit him, soon.

BASIL

It was not a real-time relay; merely a recorded message.

ZOE

If found, please return to Doctor Benedict Rathburn?

BASIL

Not as such. Rather, it was an explanation of what she was. It would seem that she was injured when she and my father escaped from the Slitheroid Invasion of Kestrin Blue thirty-five years ago.

ZOE

When they left you behind, you mean.

BASIL

(MORE)

BASIL (cont'd)

Yes. Mother was critically injured in the escape. Father could not stand to live without her, so he transferred her consciousness into a Synthetic body.

ZOE

Without her permission?

BASIL

Apparently.

ZOE

And she has no idea?

BASIL

She does not.

ZOE pushes her plate away in disgust. Then she crumples her napkin into a ball before dropping it on the table. She scoots her chair back, and stands up, but seems unsure where to go. Finally she goes and sits on the couch.

BASIL

Dearest, I do not understand your reaction. My father loved my mother so much that he found a way to preserve her life. She may be Synthetic, but she has been designed to live a human lifespan and then die of 'natural' causes.

ZOE

But she doesn't know, Basil. She isn't who she thinks she is, and she doesn't know.

BASIL rises from his chair, gathers their used plates and utensils, and piles them onto the tray. He returns them to the food slot, waits a moment, and then punches some buttons on the display. A few seconds later a new tray appears, this time with two steaming mugs.

BASIL

(bringing the mugs to  
the couch and  
offering one to ZOE)

I have made tea. You are sixty-seven-point-nine-two-four percent more likely to engage in rational conversation when you sip tea while we converse.

ZOE

(takes the offered  
mug and sniffs it )

Mmm. Peppermint.

(gives him a look)

But, Basil, darling, nothing I've said has been irrational. I get that your father was devoted to your mother -

BASIL

(interrupting )

- as devoted as I am to you, dearest -

ZOE

- but he changed the essence of who she was without her consent.

BASIL

You are aware that my consciousness was transferred into a duplicate body after I was critically damag -

(off a look from ZOE)

- injured - during a skirmish with the native population of Zithros Five. And yet, I am still the Basil whom you know and love, and who is looking forward to marrying you next year.

ZOE

Well, yes, but it's different. You've always been Synthetic. There was never an Organic being called 'Basil Rathburn.' Sure, you might technically be Basil, two-point-oh, but your essence is still the same.

BASIL

I do not believe it would benefit my mother to know the truth.

ZOE

It would probably do more harm than good.

BASIL

But that the same time, if she knew, then I would be less alone in the world.

ZOE  
You're not alone, Basil. You never have been, love.

BASIL  
It is not the same.

ZOE  
I guess not.

Zoe drains her mug and then sets it on the coffee table, then slides across the couch to snuggle against BASIL. He puts his arm around her, but there's something slightly mechanical in the gesture.

ZOE  
Promise me something?

BASIL  
You know I would do anything for you, dearest.

ZOE  
Promise me, no matter how old or sick I eventually grow. No matter if I succumb to some horrible disease or get hit by a bus, or whatever... Promise me that you will never, ever, transfer my consciousness into a Synthetic body without my permission.

BASIL  
I do not wish to lose you.

ZOE  
Well, you're like fifteen years older than me, so it's not like you're going to lose me anytime soon, but, Organics are meant to die, sweetie. It's part of our 'baseline programming.'

BASIL  
In a Synthetic body, you would be as immortal as I am meant to be.

ZOE  
I know that, but I wouldn't be me; I'd just be a copy. And death is part of life. You know that.

BASIL  
I dislike it.

ZOE

I'm not really a fan, either. But I need you to promise this.

BASIL

Very well, Zoe. I promise that I will not transfer your consciousness into a Synthetic body without your consent.

ZOE

You've considered it, haven't you?

BASIL

Not with any real aim.

ZOE

You love me that much?

BASIL

My love for you defies quantification.

ZOE reaches up to guide BASIL's head down so she can kiss him. They continue kissing as the lights fade.

BLACKOUT



## ACT III

SCENE ONE

*Writer returns to the stage, she's barefoot now, her blonde and green hair in a messy bun. It's still just her in a spotlight, but it's closer, brighter, and we can tell that she's small, curvy, and in her late forties, although she doesn't really seem old. Her energy is old and young at once.*

## WRITER

Okay, okay, I get it. Mermaids and androids and girlfriends in space are fantasy selves. But this is why we write fiction isn't it? To escape the mundane reality of normal life as normal humans? To explore life as something other than ourselves? Or just to expand our perspective. Or... maybe we do it - at least, maybe I do - because it's fun. Still, I guess at some point we have to face that we're not perfect. That aging is a thing. Although, if you read between the lines, that's what that last scene was really about even if one of the characters was immortal.

BLACKOUT

SCENE TWO

*A kitchen and breakfast nook combo; MAN and WOMAN are cleaning up after dinner.*

*This is the same WOMAN from the scene with MOM earlier.*

WOMAN takes a used filter out of a coffee maker and dumps it in the trash bin.

WOMAN

(wrinkling her nose)

There should be a super-villain who makes you forget to empty old coffee grounds from the filter-basket.

MAN

(moving toward the counter where the coffee maker is, sponge in hand)

He should also cause grounds to wind up all over the counter whenever you grind beans

WOMAN

And he shall be called..

MAN & WOMAN

(together)

The Grounds Keeper!

BLACKOUT

SCENE THREE

*A couple's (AUDRA & ROGER) bedroom, late at night. A storm is in full force, with lightning striking apparently inside the room. Their dog (FORTINBRAS) is present.*

AUDRA

(muttering)

Ozone. Tastes... tastes likes ozone.

FORTINBRAS whimpers.

ROGER

(sitting up)

That was close. *(beat.)* It'll move away soon, though.

Thunder rumbles and it sounds sort of like cranky old men.

AUDRA

(sleepy, altered)

Stop knocking. No, no, we're.. no, sorry, sirs. We're not interested in vacuums or blenders today. Maybe next year. Or never. Are your brains fresh?

Hon, wake up.

ROGER

Why?

AUDRA

You're doing it again. Talking to the thunder.

ROGER

It's trying to sell us stuff we don't need.

AUDRA

O - kay.

ROGER

AUDRA sits up in bed and ROGER wraps his arm around her shoulders. The dog lifts his head, decides it's not worth moving, and goes back to sleep. The storm continues.

How long has it been?

AUDRA

Fifteen minutes.

ROGER

Half-way to working. Can't they work faster?

AUDRA

Her face is pale, drawn. Her eyes are hollow, tired. She rests her head against ROGER's shoulder and lets her hand fall to rest on his thigh. He is grounding her against the storm outside and the one inside her head.

BLACKOUT

#### SCENE FOUR

*The loft that BELOVED and LOVER share. It is early morning and the large arched windows (think pre-war NYC) are letting in the light of a rainy day.*

*On a bed pushed against the upstage wall, LOVER lies tangled in sheets. BELOVED enters from off-stage right with a tray holding coffee and bagels. He is bare-chested and wearing loose pajama pants.*

BELOVED

(softly, seductively)

Morning... time to get up...

LOVER

(rolling over and sitting up, but keeping the sheets wrapped around her)

Do I smell coffee?

BELOVED

You do... Slide over...

LOVER

Ohhh... I *do* love you.

BELOVED

You say that to all the men who bring you coffee in bed.

LOVER

No... only to the ones who remember I like cream.

BELOVED

Ah, well, then I'm in luck.

Balancing the tray, BELOVED joins LOVER in the bed. He sets the tray between them and LOVER reaches for one of the mugs, sipping for it and smiling.

LOVER

Perfect.

BELOVED

Thank you, you're not so bad yourself.

LOVER

I meant the coffee.

BELOVED

Ah...

LOVER

But since you made it...

BELOVED

... and the bagels...

LOVER

And the bagels, I guess I'll keep you. For a while anyway.

BELOVED

Only a while.

LOVER

Well, musicians are fickle. You might get bored with me, move on to someone else... same way you might fall out of love with Bach and decide you want to obsess over... I don't know... Faure.

BELOVED

No one ever falls out love with Bach.

LOVER

Oh?

BELOVED

No. It's not possible. Bach is... you know the prelude I was playing last night? You can play it every day for a year, for two years, and you might think you've found every nuance in it, eked out every little flair in each note. Found every place where you can accent this or underplay that... and then you can set it aside for a decade and come back to it and it's like a whole new piece... you... you're the same.

LOVER

(mock-insulted)

I'm someone you want to put aside for a decade?

BELOVED

No. You're someone I want to learn every nuance of, someone I want to play -

LOVER

*Play?*

BELOVED

Worship. Delight. Entrance. Experience. Love. (beat, and then darkly) Play.

LOVER

Like Bach?

BELOVED

No. Like my cello. Only you're my lover and she's my mistress.

LOVER

You sure it's not the other way 'round?

BELOVED

(sheepish)

Well. Maybe. Sometimes. But you're the only human I share myself with. Me and you. Flesh and blood. Body and soul. Me and cello. Wire and wood.

LOVER

(teasing, flirting)

Wood, huh?

BELOVED

Hush. Eat your bagel.

LOVER

Bagels can wait. Rainy mornings should *not* be wasted.

BELOVED

Good point.

LOVER puts her mug back on the tray and BELOVED puts the tray on the floor next to his side of the bed. LOVER manages to rearrange the sheet so that it's over both of them without baring herself to the audience.

BELOVED

(whispering)

I love you too, you know.

BLACKOUT

#### SCENE FIVE

*A living room in a tract house. East coast. Built in the late fifties, but redecorated since. ESTHER is seated at the piano, playing. It's slightly out of tune but since she's just improvising, rather than playing 'real'*

*songs it doesn't really matter. EDWARD, a few years older, short hair, mostly gray, a round belly, is sitting in the red chair reading one of the magazines (either NEWSWEEK or MODEL RAILROADER).*

*BOTH are dressed in casual summer clothes. EDWARD in a short-sleeved button-down shirt and light khaki pants with leather 'work shoes.' ESTHER in a blue and white tennis shirt over white cotton pants, rolled up at the ankles, and white canvas espadrilles.*

ESTHER  
(stops playing)

Eddie.

EDWARD continues to read.

ESTHER  
(longer, sing-song)

Ed-die!!

EDWARD  
(still reading)

Yes, dear?

ESTHER  
The golden... something?

EDWARD  
Golden rule? The golden ratio?

ESTHER  
Yes, that! It has to do with shells.

EDWARD  
Nautilus shells have spirals that follow that ratio.

ESTHER gives EDWARD a look that encourages him to continue.

EDWARD  
They're nature's illustration of the Fibonacci number sequence.

ESTHER  
Oh, yeah? Who was he?

EDWARD  
An Italian mathematician.

ESTHER  
(pleased)  
Italian. Really?

EDWARD  
Yep.

ESTHER  
(tasting the word)  
Fibonacci.

EDWARD returns to reading his  
magazine and ESTHER resumes her  
playing.

ESTHER  
(humming with her  
music)  
Da, da, da de. Da da da, da da de da de. Da da da de da de  
da de...

Her random noodling resolves into  
the chords for "Somewhere my Love"

ESTHER  
(singing)  
"Somewhere, my love... there will be songs to sing..."

The music continues to the end of  
the verse.

BLACKOUT

SCENE SIX

*We're back to that blank stage  
with the single spot again,  
and the WRITER is back.*

WRITER  
So, you see what I mean? I'm in everything I write. All of  
it. And, okay, those last two people were literally my  
grandparents, but those are the people who helped make me...  
(MORE)

WRITER (cont'd)

me... so it's totally legit that they're part of the play, you know? Look. I could have written another monologue about my years doing celebrity interviews and told you about how George Wendt once sent me a pizza and John Barrowman taught me never to ask about favorites in interviews and how Marsha Mason told me that even if your story is similar to everyone else's it's still your story and so everyone should write, but name dropping is tacky, and you don't need to know that getting celebrities to engage with me on a human level is one of my super powers.

WRITER runs a hand through her hair  
messing up her already frazzled  
messy bun.

WRITER

But the thing is, Madeleine L'Engle was right when she said that the Judao-Christian God was literally MADE of Story, then if humans are made in God's image, we're made of Story too, so if you want to know me, the best way to know who I am, is through the stories I tell.

WRITER turns to leave, then pauses  
on the edge of the spotlight's  
circle of illumination and steps  
back into the light.

WRITER

Bribing me with dark chocolate and frou-frou coffee have also been known to work.

BLACKOUT

FIN