

THE CLIMB
by C.A. Johnson

About the play (from the playwright):

Marge is a photographer, and her wife Tiffany has been her sole photographic subject for seven years. When Tiffany goes on a month-long hiking trip to get away from it all, both women are forced to question everything from their professional and personal past to the true meaning of a moment captured in time.

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TIFFANY—Female, 30s, Black

About the scene:

In a flashback, TIFFANY is presenting a photography award to her wife, MARGE, accompanied by a slideshow of their work together. Before this moment, she and MARGE had a serious fight about their collaboration and TIFFANY feeling invisible.

TIFFANY

The first time my wife photographed me was seven years ago. I was sitting Indian style in her New York studio looking over a stack of negatives. I was 22 and madly in love. I looked up because she said my name. And there was the camera . . .

I've spent so much time in rooms like these. With lovely people like all of you. And you all show me such respect, sometimes adoration, and sometimes a level of such focused inquiry that I squirm a bit. But I guess what I'm trying to say, is that I understand you. Because it's not me you see in photos like these. It's the psychological blank space I offer you. I'm a canvas and you can paint me with whatever suits you. Desire. Youth. Innocence. Deviance. One size fits all, really. And my wife . . . she saw this potential in me all those years ago, and she harnessed it for good. Maybe even for greatness.

But what I've never told her, and what I've decided to share with all of you tonight, is that I see a blank space too. I look at a photo like this and I see so much possibility. So many me's. And I'm in love with that question mark. I'm in love with the idea that her camera imagines so much for me and demands so much at the same time.

It's a scary thing, seeing yourself like this. Open. Unassuming. Hungry. But I loved it almost instantly. Because it gave me a narrative. And I think that maybe, I never had one of those before.

[1:35]