

HARRIMAN-BAINES

We see before us a dark and seemingly barren stage without any life or animation about it. The curtain has been pulled aside throughout the entrance of the audience members into the theater. They would find little to examine or comment upon when glancing at the stage before them. The only objects noticeable include the slight silhouette of the furniture.

The play begins - silently, at first, with no sound, no rustle - perhaps making us wonder if someone has forgotten an entrance and the play has yet to start. Our doubts are addressed when we hear the intricate tingling of some orchestral pieces someplace off in the near distance. The tingling grows into a concerto of sorts - modern Classical in style - reaching carefully out of the darkness and flooding the stage with a frail majesty.

A WHIRRING SOUND of unknown identity is soon heard mingling uneasy with the Classical tune - but soon "mingle" ceases to be the correct word. The sound quickly turns guttural, mechanical, frightening, and then all too familiar - the maniacal steel of a speeding car. The sound grows and grows, the car coming closer... and closer... and closer... A faint reflection of HEADLIGHTS soon shines upon the stage and brightens alongside the car's growl - and then...

SWERVE! SHRIEK! The HEADLIGHTS swing jerkily and violently towards the wings as if fleeing a terrifying ghost - the stage is dark. The only residue from the brief illumination is the momentary glimpse we receive of a WOMAN'S SILHOUETTE on the stage - the silhouette of MELODY BAINES.

Then - CRASH!

The car-like shriek dies a sudden and foreboding death. All we hear is A HIGH-PITCHED CAR HORN that appears to be more a harmonic compliment to the music than the sound of a smashed skull on a steering wheel.

The HORN sounds... and sounds... and sounds... holding its note with the crescendo of the tune...

Silence. The song has concluded with appropriately deprecated aplomb. The HORN dies, too, with meticulous and respectful musical timing. It appears that everything on the stage has returned to normal, when...

CLICK! A door someplace opens and the LIGHTS abruptly rise. A rigidly Easter Island-like figure has just entered the stage through the front door of the house and turned on the lights - his name: CARTER HARRIMAN.

The new figure before us moves at a steady, relaxed pace - sufficient enough for us to examine him at ease. The first thing we notice is that HARRIMAN does not move "slowly," per se, but rather "methodically," as if a blind person so sure of his surroundings and his daily schedule that he requires no thought as to his next move. We also can't help but sense that our "blind" friend doesn't want to move too fast, too quick, too adventurously, for fear of upsetting some unknown balance that maintains his pre-set rhythm. The second thing we notice is that HARRIMAN is dressed (or well-dressed) as tidily and cleanly as he moves - crisp, sanitized, cool - a bit like a mannequin in a window display. The third thing we notice (or will soon notice) is that HARRIMAN perennially maintains a matter-of-fact bearing that appears to be unshaken and unscarred by any human emotion - warm, cold, or otherwise. The end result is a man whose social graces are almost nonexistent and who perpetually treats humanity as a third-party intrusion into his private world.

As we observe HIM, HARRIMAN enters the stage and proceeds to take off his coat and hang it up someplace. HE turns towards the photograph on the wall and nods a "hello" to the woman in the photograph. It doesn't appear SHE responds - but no matter: HARRIMAN exits into the kitchen and re-enters with a glass of water in his hands. HE sips the water gingerly, walks over to the piano, and is about to sit - but not quite. HE catches the glare of the woman in the photograph again and raises his glass to her. HARRIMAN takes another sip of water, moves closer towards the photograph, and stares intently at it. We sense that HE is somehow trying to speak to the woman with HIS eyes - or perhaps coax her to speak to HIM? A pause ensues. HARRIMAN slowly turns around like a figure on a music box and searches the room. HE is clearly sensing (or hoping?) that someone is watching HIM.

After a beat, HARRIMAN turns towards the piano and sits down before it. HE opens the drawer of a nearby table, takes out a voice recorder of some sort, turns on the contraption (we can tell by the red light), and puts it carefully on the side table. HARRIMAN gives another expectant glance around the room (perhaps daring something to make itself known), takes another casual sip of his water, turns to the piano, and proceeds to play a lilting tune of some sort - and play and play and play and play - until...

HARRIMAN stops playing the piano with abrupt horror. A red light from the voice-messaging system located on the coffee table has caught his attention. HARRIMAN visibly congeals before us, turns off the voice recorder, rises from the piano, tepidly moves towards the voicemail box, pushes a button, and listens as:

VOICEMAIL

You have reached your Voicemail Box. You have fifty-eight new messages. To listen to your new messages, press 1. To listen to

VOICEMAIL (CONT)

your saved messages, press 2. To change your voicemail greeting, press 3.

A long pause ensues - similar to one you'd find at an awkward date.

VOICEMAIL

I'm sorry - I did not understand your selection. To listen to your new messages, press 1. To listen to your saved messages, press 2. To change...

BEEP! HARRIMAN pressed the "1" key on the voicemail box.

VOICEMAIL

You have fifty-eight new messages. First saved message...

BEEP! HARRIMAN has deleted the message - but the VOICE mockingly continues:

VOICEMAIL

Message deleted. Next saved message...

BEEP! HARRIMAN has deleted another message - but the VOICE pushes on:

VOICEMAIL

Message deleted. Next saved...

BEEP! HARRIMAN has... BEEP!... deleted another... BEEP!... message and then... BEEP!... deleted another... BEEP!... and another... BEEP!... and another... BEEP!... faster and faster and faster... in a determined and perhaps even maniacal rush to quiet the mechanical voice... until - BEEP!

VOICEMAIL

You have no new messages.

HARRIMAN sighs in relief and begins to walk away from the voicemail box with casual comfort, when... RING! RING! The phone on the table is shrieking with the shrillness of a wailing cat. HARRIMAN freezes in dread and turns towards the phone. RING! HE doesn't move. RING! HE still doesn't move. RING! The phone goes to voicemail:

VOICEMAIL

Thank you for your call. You have reached the phone of...

A rustled sound - no recorded voice in the usual spot.

VOICEMAIL

You may leave a message at the sound of the beep.

And after an appropriately-placed pause... BEEP!

VOICE OF AXEL WHEEL

Hey again, Mr. Harriman - this is Axel Wheel from "Music Today." Did you think I was finished with you? I think by now you've gotten my fifty-eight messages - or were there fifty-four? I forget... It seems like forever ago since I was able to corner you into a telephone call. There are just a few loose ends I need to tape up and tie down before I finish my article. Oh, yes, and the good news this time is...

(A horror-movie voice.)

I know where you live.

The VOICE laughs as if making a prank phone call. HARRIMAN registers revulsion at the very thought that his address is exposed to this vermin - but how? HARRIMAN thinks. The VOICE waits. Then THEY both say together:

VOICE OF AXEL WHEEL/HARRIMAN

Andra.

VOICE OF AXEL WHEEL

Yes, sir, Carter m'boy, we had a little talk last night - your agent and I. One thing led to another. The bottle emptied fast. My wallet emptied faster. The next thing you know I'm finding your address tucked inside Andra's drawers. I've been staking you out ever since - what can I say? It's the sacred call of the journalist. Your public awaits - or is it my Pulitzer? I always get those two mixed up.

HARRIMAN - fed up - moves to pull out the plug of the voicemail box, when:

VOICE OF AXEL WHEEL

Oh, now, it wouldn't be smart to unplug me. You see? I know what you're thinking - because I know you. I know you're a hermetically sealed shadow of a man who is scared shitless of the outside world - a feeling that's probably mutual. I know you are ingenious, imperious, brilliant, but, perhaps, way too brilliant for your own good or for anybody else's either. I know you are clever, complicated, cruel, all-knowing, bland, clueless, and just plain stupid all rolled uncomfortably into

VOICE OF AXEL WHEEL (CONT)

the most unwholesomest of wholes. Oh, yes - and here's the best part - I know that your real name is Michael Horley.

HARRIMAN hurriedly presses a button on the voicemail box and answers the phone. AXEL is now on speakerphone.

HARRIMAN

If I recall, Mr. Wheel, the bargain framing your mini extortion was that I would provide you with information about my professional life with the explicit understanding that you would not have any further need to research my personal existence.

VOICE OF AXEL WHEEL

Yours, yes - but what about Melody Baines?

A brief pause. HARRIMAN appears struck by this question.

HARRIMAN

(Suspiciously.)
What about Melody Baines?

VOICE OF AXEL WHEEL

She's your collaborator... or was.

HARRIMAN

A brilliant observation - and?

Some RUSTLING on the phone indicates AXEL is unfolding a piece of paper - from which HE begins to read very loudly and very obnoxiously:

VOICE OF AXEL WHEEL

(Like an overly self-serious newscaster.)
"In this modern age of mass media, it may sometimes seem that no stone's unturned by the omnipresent glare of the public eye - until, that is, one considers Carter Harriman. A composer since the age of nine, Mr. Harriman rose to fame five years ago with his fortuitous collaboration with the late poet Melody Baines. Since that time, he has published four albums and his music has inspired five national and regional concert tours of the continental United States and Canada. Until recently, however Mr. Harriman eschewed his growing fame and wrapped himself in a splendid isolation free from interviews and public performances... but no more. The recent inclusion of Mr. Harriman's music in the Oscar-winning film "Stardust At Dawn" has pulled back the iron curtain and tossed the composer's name into the public arena. Blah, blah, blah..."

AXEL puts away the piece of paper and turns deadly serious:

VOICE OF AXEL WHEEL

Here's the problem, Mr. H... It seems a wee bit silly to write about you and your great career without having much juicy information about your dead-as-a-doornail partner.

(A beat.)

What the hell is a doornail anyway?

HARRIMAN

What if I refuse to cooperate, Mr. Wheel?

VOICE OF AXEL WHEEL

Well, Mr. Harriman, I look at this little situation we have here and I see two options for you. I really like it that way, too. It makes things simpler and easier - for me anyway. Option One: you fess up and help me find some information on your deceased collaborator. Option Two: I go ahead and publish what I already know about your personal life - all of it. There's still plenty of column space for me to slip in your real name.

HARRIMAN

Why should I worry about that, Mr. Wheel?

VOICE OF AXEL WHEEL

(Cheekily.)

Why did you worry about it before, Mr. Horley?

HARRIMAN

If you think you are frightening me, Mr. Wheel...

VOICE OF AXEL WHEEL

Hell, man, I know I am. I haven't even Googled "Michael Horley" or your family name yet to see what scandalous tidbits I might find there. Hey, if it comes down to it, courtesy of Uncle Sam and his oh-so-loose libel laws, I could always make stuff up, too, thanks to a few trusty "anonymous sources" - which, oddly enough, all happen to be me.

Checkmate. HARRIMAN stares absent-mindedly into the distance for a moment in monastery-like silence - then:

VOICE OF AXEL WHEEL

(Suddenly dead serious.)

Okay, Carter - you've dawdled enough and I have a deadline to meet. My boss wants to see some results from all my snooping "or else." I need a draft of an article by tomorrow night or I'll just have to fill in the blanks myself. Think fast, though - I'm on the way to your house now.

CLICK! AXEL has hung up the phone with grand finality. A loud DIAL TONE sounds with a mocking insistency. HARRIMAN quickly grows weary of it and angrily hangs up the phone. A tense pause of indecision fills the stage. HARRIMAN just stands before us like a cornered panther pondering his next move. HE then turns again to face the woman in the photograph on the wall. It appears as if HE is looking her way for some advice as to what HE should do next. Does she grant her approval? Does she register horror at the thought? We don't really know - and neither does HARRIMAN. HE tenderly approaches the photograph, kisses his forefinger, places his forefinger on the woman's forehead - and then pauses. HARRIMAN thinks for a moment, goes to the piano, sits, turns on the voice recorder, and begins to play, as:

HARRIMAN

I don't like people. I reached that conclusion when I was very young. I started to play the piano when I was four and I found my hands seemed to know the keys by heart. The next thing I know I see cousins, uncles, aunts, friends, acquaintances, then strangers watching me play. A few more years passed and I found my parents plopping me down in front of pianos in small theaters like some performing monkey.

HARRIMAN, reflexive, stops playing and ponders the memory:

HARRIMAN

One night, however, I refused to play - I tore off my bowtie and I threw it onto the floor. My mother was furious, because there was a paid audience waiting. She marched me out onto the stage to face the crowd and announced I wouldn't play for them. She then made me stand at the theater door and apologize to every audience member as they left the theater that night.

HARRIMAN thinks for a moment and then returns to playing the piano. HE plays louder and louder as HE continues his monologue. We sense a hidden fury (or fear?) welling up inside HIM:

HARRIMAN

Since then, I've never liked people. I won't say I "hate" them, because that implies a certain strength of feeling. I prefer instead to believe that I don't think about them at all.

HARRIMAN ends the piano playing on a sour note. A pause descends upon the stage. HARRIMAN then glances ever so slightly back at the photograph. HE has returned to a certain calm.

HARRIMAN

And then there's you... Yours are the only eyes that don't simply look at me for their own amusement. I need you and want you here with me - every day and always.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK! HARRIMAN hears the sound emanating from the front door and freezes. It seems for a moment that HE is too terrified to move - could that be the omnipresent and ever-persecutory Axel Wheel? KNOCK, KNOC, KNOCK, KNOCK! HARRIMAN rises, takes a breath, strides towards the front door with great gusto, crisply opens it, and freezes.

A small, squeaky, plain-looking little creature - about 30 or maybe a young 35 - is standing in the doorway: MINNIE BAINES. The woman herself reminds one in some indeterminate way of a drooping daisy in need of water and sunshine. SHE is cute and adorable, but not someone you'd particularly take seriously - not unless she held a gun to your head. One can't help but sense a certain Disney-Land-like sunniness about MINNIE that makes her appear plastically idiotic and superficial. Yet there is a certain depth of soul behind the happy-faced placards that appears to be oddly out of reach to human perception. The mundane rest of the woman can best be described as banal frumpiness - youngish-looking, chubby, fumbling... pointless.

Uncomfortably, HARRIMAN and MINNIE just stare at EACH OTHER for an embarrassed moment - until:

MINNIE

(Like a nuclear blast of sunshine.)
Hi there!

HARRIMAN greets this unwanted visitor with continued silence.

MINNIE

(Trying again.)
Long time, no see!

HARRIMAN

Until now. Why are you here?

MINNIE

(A little intimidated.)
Oh. Well. You said you wanted to meet up.

HARRIMAN

That was next week, if I recall - was it not?

MINNIE

Oh. Gosh. I'm sorry. I just... I thought...

HARRIMAN just stares - "yes?"

MINNIE

Is it... is it a bad time?

HARRIMAN

I'm afraid I'm expecting company.

MINNIE

(Surprised - "You? Company?")
Ah. Well. In that case... Company?

HARRIMAN

Yes. I had that reaction, too.

MINNIE

(Disappointed.)
If it's something private...

HARRIMAN

A reporter from "Music Today."

MINNIE

(Relieved.)
Oh! Neat. Is that all? I mean... not "all"...

HARRIMAN

You look nervous.

MINNIE

Relieved, that's all! I haven't seen you in six months. A lot can happen in six months. I just thought you were going to tell me you had met some woman online and were going to run away with her to Bermuda.

MINNIE laughs nervously. HARRIMAN
responds with a "not-likely" glower.

MINNIE

...Paris?

HARRIMAN

I am not the sort of person who has a tendency to "run" anywhere. I appreciate your stopping by and I will be happy to become reacquainted some other time.

MINNIE

(A chastised schoolgirl - thinking to herself.)
Oh. Yes. Well. I was kind of looking forward to checking up with you again - you know? But then I've already waited six months, so what's six more minutes? I'd love to get together some other time - this week maybe? Mom has a doctor's appointment at 9 Thursday morning and a meeting with friends at 6. Then she has a physical-therapy appointment at 5 Friday afternoon and then I have to inject her with her medication. Then she has her bridge night at the Women's Club on Saturday at 3 and - oh, yes - lunch with Betty and Francis the next afternoon.

(Aside, to HARRIMAN.)

Mom lost her driver's license after the stroke.

(Back to thinking.)

And then... ooo, let me see...

MINNIE has whipped out an appointment book and begins to flip frantically through the pages.

HARRIMAN

Thank you, but all this isn't necessary.

MINNIE

Ah! Wait. Here we go. I'm free at 3 next Tuesday. Or maybe it's 4... Wait a second...

HARRIMAN

I appreciate your visit tonight, but I'm afraid I have many things to do this evening.

MINNIE

Oh. I get it. I really do. I just want to get this scheduling thing down. Now, about Tuesday...

HARRIMAN

Can't it wait?

MINNIE

(With unexpected forcefulness.)

Can it?

MINNIE has just shoved some papers in HARRIMAN's direction. HARRIMAN freezes upon seeing the papers and slowly takes

them in his hand like an archeologist
handling an ancient artifact.

MINNIE

I found them with some of Melody's things. They're a little beat
up, but you can still read them.

HARRIMAN

(Almost accusingly.)
I thought there were no more.

MINNIE

(Sheepishly.)
I did, too, but... there are.

HARRIMAN examines the papers with a
subtle euphoria that only barely
manages to be detectable.

MINNIE

(Tentatively.)
There's something else, too.

HARRIMAN looks up: "what?"

MINNIE

She wants to speak with you.

HARRIMAN just stares at HER.

MINNIE

Did you hear what I said?

HARRIMAN

Yes, I did.

MINNIE

You're not saying anything.

HARRIMAN

I'm thinking.

MINNIE

Oh. Good. About Tuesday?

HARRIMAN

What's wrong with right now?

MINNIE

(With barely suppressed glee.)
Oh. I... don't know. Now is great. I love now.

HARRIMAN opens the front door in full
and gestures MINNIE to enter. SHE does

so with the pleasure of a child being ushered into some magical place.

MINNIE

Oh. Thanks. It looks... just the same!

HARRIMAN

Do you want to sit down?

MINNIE

Well, eh... do I have to?

HARRIMAN

It's your choice.

MINNIE

It's your carpet.

HARRIMAN looks at MINNIE with a perplexed condescension.

MINNIE

(Blabbing on and on and on.)

Sorry - it's just that my Dad used to have this thing about me walking on his carpets. He was a diplomat who traveled the world and he'd buy these really expensive carpets from China, India, Iran, and... eh... what's that other place...

HARRIMAN turns away from HER. MINNIE hurriedly follows HIM like a chirpy little bird.

MINNIE

Anyway, you see, my Dad would get upset with me walking on his carpets - I mean always. He just hated the thought of me pounding on the Orient with my big feet. Melody could always get away with it, but I never could.

HARRIMAN

I sympathize - but about the papers...

MINNIE

I used to dance - did you know that?

HARRIMAN

(Hating to respond and invite more conversation.)

No.

MINNIE

I had a few extra pounds on me, but I knew how to use them - at least for a time. Then one day I tore the side of one of Dad's carpets and he had a conniption fit. He refused to pay for my dance lessons after that. I wasn't really good at dancing

MINNIE (CONT)

anyway - but I might have been better with a few more lessons and a few less carpets.

(A beat.)

And another thing...

HARRIMAN stares back "what?"

MINNIE

She's... she's here.

MINNIE looks up and towards a mysterious FIGURE that has seemingly materialized onto the stage. It's the same FIGURE that we saw previously. HARRIMAN quickly turns around.

HARRIMAN

(Suddenly enlivened.)

Where?

MINNIE

(Nodding at the FIGURE.)

There.

HARRIMAN, entranced, looks at the spot with great intensity to see if HE can perceive the FIGURE in the shadows - but no luck. MINNIE continues to stare at the FIGURE as if afraid what threshold might be crossed by bringing her here and now into the world.

The resultant pause gives us a moment to examine the FIGURE itself - the ghostly presence of MELODY BAINES. SHE is a strikingly beautiful woman in her 30s - a little younger than MINNIE - with a certain sensual hardness about her nature. SHE appears rather confident in her poise - head straight and high, shoulders firm and back - and her clothes are immaculate and well-branded. There is nevertheless a distinct cruelty in the sharp angularity of the woman's form and in the Mona Lisa-like smile we can discern on her lips. We immediately sense that we are in the presence of some celebrity, some well-known fashion model, rather than being among the everyday banal. There is a self-knowing importance about MELODY BAINES that is attractive, revolting, and yet envy-

inducing - all rolled into one. There is definitely more of the panther in her than the pansy - and it uncomfortably shows.

Meanwhile, the pause onstage has lived an unbearable lifespan:

HARRIMAN

What is she doing?

MINNIE

Nothing. She's just staring.

MELODY smiles patronizingly and saunters with attractive confidence over to the posters on the far wall. MINNIE turns and watches HER and HARRIMAN follows HER in this - even though HE cannot see the spirit. MELODY casually begins to examine each of the posters one by one and stops upon seeing the photograph. SHE considers it fondly, then turns to MINNIE:

MELODY

I have missed him - tell him that.

MINNIE

(To HARRIMAN.)

She... she says she has missed you.

HARRIMAN

I missed her, too - very much.

An uncertain pause.

HARRIMAN

What... what is she doing now?

MINNIE

(To MELODY.)

She is looking at the photograph.

(During the below, MINNIE translates in pantomime to HARRIMAN, as MELODY speaks.)

MELODY

(Looking at her figure in the photograph.)

I look quite good here - that is, for someone who is alive. It's so much harder to stay thin when you're still eating. I think death is decidedly the best diet plan.

MELODY (CONT)

(Turning to HARRIMAN.)

The six months were unbearable. Were you... upset with me?

MINNIE

(To HARRIMAN.)

She wonders if you were upset with her.

HARRIMAN

Of course not. How could I be upset with her?

(Turning to face some unseen figure.)

... with you?

HARRIMAN is enlightened by some inspiration and goes to the piano. HE begins to play a lilting tune. MELODY smirks at the sound - but MINNIE is enchanted. Then HARRIMAN abruptly stops playing and turns:

HARRIMAN

(Out to MELODY.)

Do you remember?

MINNIE

She remembers, yes.

HARRIMAN

They were the first notes I ever wrote to your words - the very first. I remember them by heart as the glorious fanfare of our relationship.

HARRIMAN waits for a reaction. HE is straining to hear something in the silence. MELODY just smirks patronizingly at the scene. A small creak sounds from somewhere in the room. HARRIMAN quickly turns to MINNIE:

HARRIMAN

Did you hear that? It's her.

MINNIE

She didn't say anything.

HARRIMAN

Maybe not to you.

HARRIMAN proceeds to address his words to MELODY, who smiles broadly. MINNIE watches rather perturbed that HARRIMAN has turned away from communicating through HER.

HARRIMAN

I never thought I could survive six months without you. I only know that I cannot possibly survive six more. You cannot die for me and fade into dusk once all your poems have been read and all your journals have been unlocked. I depend on you and your thoughts for my art, for my life, for my humanity and I find myself lost in a gray desert without you.

(A beat.)

I want you to know that I was trying to reach you for the whole six months. I spoke to you wherever and whenever I could.

(A beat.)

Did you... hear me?

MINNIE uncertainly peers at MELODY for the appropriate reply to a subject that is evidently a sensitive one requiring a sensitive answer. MELODY smiles lightly and nods back a telepathic response:

MINNIE

She... she couldn't hear you.

HARRIMAN appears deflated.

MINNIE

(Quickly - a correction?)
... but she could feel you.

MELODY raises her hand and back-strokes it against the air. HARRIMAN shutters slightly as if being able to feel the touch. MELODY smirks cheekily and zeroes in on MINNIE like a well-directed laser. Her tone has become commandeering and caustic.

MELODY

So... you found the papers.

MINNIE

Yes. Yes, I did - in the attic.

HARRIMAN

What is it? What is she asking about?

MINNIE

(To HARRIMAN.)
She's asking about the poems I showed you.

MELODY

They're not me at my best - the poems.

MINNIE

She says the poems are not her best.

HARRIMAN

(Looking in the direction of MELODY.)
Everything she wrote was her best.

MELODY unfurls a silvery laugh.

MELODY

I like him - him and his compliments.

MINNIE

(To HARRIMAN.)
She likes you, because you compliment her.

MELODY

(Annoyed - to MINNIE.)
No, you fool - that's not what I said.

HARRIMAN

Tell her that she complements me, as well.

MELODY

(To MINNIE.)
There. You see? You're messing him up.

MINNIE

(Rushing to correct.)
No - sorry - she meant to say...

MELODY

(Glaring at MINNIE.)
It's very frustrating having to communicate with you through this... little shit.

MINNIE reacts as if feeling a knife run down her spine. MELODY smirks at this fearful reaction and begins to circle the room menacingly.

MELODY

Ah, but if I were here... What would I do? Would I laugh? Would I cry? Would I drink? Certainly, yes... Would I fuck? Now that's an idea. Yes, I think I would - deliciously. I would take him, here and now, if I could.

MELODY freezes and turns to MINNIE.

MELODY

(Pointedly - "I dare you.")
Tell him that.

MINNIE - embarrassed - cannot respond.

MELODY

(Threateningly now.)
I said: tell him that.

MINNIE is still frozen in discomfort.

MELODY

You know you want to.

MINNIE - devoid of words - shakes HER head desperately.

MELODY

No, of course - you're right. You'd rather tell him that while playing... yourself - wouldn't you? Now there's an idea - my sister using her own mouth for her own thoughts. You think I don't know them? I live inside that fucked up head of yours more than you do. Very cushy, isn't it? You can speak it through me, but feel it through you.

MINNIE stares back like a cornered mouse with both fear and fury in her eyes.

HARRIMAN

What is she saying to you?

MELODY

Tell him I admire his wit, his art, and his passion.

MINNIE

She admires your wit, your art... and your passion.

HARRIMAN

(His interest piqued.)
My passion? For what?

MINNIE looks uncertainly at MELODY, who nods insistently for HER to answer - which, gulp, SHE does:

MINNIE

(Hesitantly.)
For... for her.

HARRIMAN, despite himself, feels his heart skip a beat or two, as MELODY suavely continues:

MELODY

I know it has been a while, but I knew I had to see you again. I knew there were too many loose ends left on the fabric. You are cold at night with only half a blanket.

MINNIE, during the above, has been repeating the words spoken by MELODY to HARRIMAN. MELODY suddenly turns towards HARRIMAN directly and interrupts HER.

MELODY

I told Minnie that I needed to see you again after she last gave you a poem of mine. I so used to enjoy our little meetings together. I had wanted to come back and see you many times during those six months - but I couldn't. I'm afraid we're both just too dependent for our communication on... this.

MELODY is now standing right in front of MINNIE like the Empire State Building towering over a hot dog stand. MINNIE, terrified in her sister's shadow, abruptly stops translating in mid-translation. MELODY grins, casually walks over to HARRIMAN, and stops within an inch of HIS face. HARRIMAN can't hear MELODY and remains staring expectantly at MINNIE - but MELODY speaks to HIM as if HE can hear every single word and a mortified MINNIE can't help but assume the same.

MELODY

Oh, yes, Mr. Carter Harriman, it would be so much easier if we could just get rid of that putz in the corner. We have so much to say and she has so much to fuck - up. Every thought we want to share is always mangled by her mumbling. What a pathetic joke... You hate it - don't you? I know you do. I can feel it. You hate it and you hate her for it. She knows it, too - deep down inside. It kills her, because - you know what? She likes you. She wants you. Desperately.

(Grinning slyly - HER face up to HIS.)

I want you, too, but the similarity ends there - because I always win... always.

MELODY methodically and seductively moves to kiss HARRIMAN on the lips. MINNIE spies this from her spot afar and gasps in horror. HARRIMAN - curious, confused - jumps at this reaction and bolts over to MINNIE. MELODY - defeated, but amused - is left without her kiss.

HARRIMAN

(Annoyed by the delay.)

For God's sake. What is it now?

MINNIE
I'm just having trouble hearing.

HARRIMAN
(Not believing HER.)
Having trouble hearing?

MELODY laughs mockingly.

MINNIE
(Distracted - eyeing MELODY.)
What did you say?

HARRIMAN
That's not funny.

MINNIE
(Finding it hard to concentrate.)
I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. I suddenly feel very nauseous.
She's fading in and out. Could I have something to drink?

HARRIMAN sighs in annoyance.

HARRIMAN
I'll get you some water.

MINNIE
Do you have anything stronger?

HARRIMAN turns and stares glumly back.
HE then reluctantly exits into the
kitchen. MINNIE breathes a sigh of
relief. MELODY laughs at HER and
approaches with a swagger.

MELODY
Faker. You never drank in your life.

MINNIE
(Bitingly - a new side to HER.)
I wish I could say the same for you.

MELODY
(Clapping.)
Touche! Poor Princess Pointless... Are you upset because I'm
stealing your precious Prince Charmless away from you? I always
did take everything that was yours - but so what? Did you really
think death was going to stop me?

MINNIE
I know you'd take him, if you could... but you can't. Your dead
and I'm alive. You don't have the power over me anymore. You
can't take him away from me.