

Strings

written by

CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
LUCREZIA "LU" COLLODI	Somewhat bitter, almost sad, and she has been through enough. Clothing serves as armor, must wear gloves.	Adult	Female
MATT MADUSKA	Young academic, somewhat excitable. Is aware of the fact that he can be naive. As armored as she is, he is as soft.	Adult	Male

Setting: A studio in a big city.

Synopsis:

After an impossible life, a woman straight out of a fairy tale, demands to have her voice heard over the story of her famous family.

The studio of LUCREZIA "LU"  
COLLODI. She stands, uncomfortably.  
She is armored, dressed in leather,  
wearing gloves. Her demeanor is  
that of one who doesn't want to be  
noticed.

With her, is MATT MADUSKA. He  
stares at her, bewildered. He holds  
a small video camera.

The room consists of a table and  
two chairs.

Silence.

MATT

That is the most remarkable thing that I've  
ever heard.

LU

You get used to it.

MATT

And it's true?

LU

Well, the way I remember it, anyway.

Silence.

MATT

No. It can't be. It's something out of a story  
book. Too much of a fairy tale.

LU

You're the researcher, you're the... What do  
you call yourself, again?

MATT

Folklorist.

LU

Folklorist. Anyway, I needed a "folklorist"  
because you'd know where to find the proof. A  
history like mine, it's not exactly written in  
the history books.

MATT

I suppose not.

LU

(over-simplifying)

When you don't age, you tend to want to stay  
out of the public eye.

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MATT

See? That! That's why I doubt you! No one talks that way!

LU

Women who are over one hundred thirty, that's who.

MATT

You're thirty-five.

LU

You're not even close.

MATT

Thirty five. Tops!

LU

(seductive)

Want to count my rings?

MATT

That's a little disturbing. A hundred and thirty, really?

LU

Over.

MATT

Are there many like you?

LU

Not really, not anymore. The grove that Master Antonio got the wood from burned not too long after.

MATT

Master Antonio?

LU

Yes. He gave the wood to my father. Pay attention, Folklorist. I'm here, still around. I don't know what ever happened to my brother, he got "real," and disappeared. He's probably dead.

MATT

I know the story...

LU

(interrupting)

...Not a story, truth...

MATT

(continues)

...Your father and brother, they are famous chara- people. All those stories, all the films, every retelling of this, pardon the expression, story. And not one, not one, mention a daughter.

LU steels herself to this conversation. She becomes a little more forceful, no matter how many times she's heard this, it still gets under her skin.

LU

Alright, Little Boy, you've been around the block enough to know this. So I'm surprised that I need to tell you. The woman that is behind every "successful man," she isn't behind him at all. She's in front, by quite a bit, doing all the hard work. She's laying the foundation for what will come later, and you don't even know her name. All of it, every time. Do you understand me?

MATT

So, you consider yourself a woman then?

LU

*Dio mio!* Yes, I am a woman, but not just because my father carved me that way.

MATT

Carved! You said carved!

LU

(exasperated)

Of course I said carved! What the hell do you think we've been talking about?

MATT

No, you can't blame this on me! I'm just trying to do the thing that you asked me to do.

LU

And what's that?

MATT

Believe you. I'm sorry, I'm truly sorry, but see things from my point of view. I'm sitting in my office and my phone rings. I pick it up and hear this... fantasy.

(MORE)

MATT (CONT'D)

But I'm promised that, if I just hear it out, if I just listen, your story will change everything. And here you are now, and you're telling me the most ridiculous malarkey that I have ever heard. You don't have the right to be short with me. If anything, I should be yelling at you for wasting my time.

Silence.

MATT  
(continues)

I'm a *folklorist*, all right? That means I study myths and legends. Stories. What your talking about is...

LU

What?

MATT

Impossible. Magic.

Silence.

LU

What do you need?

MATT

Probably the one thing you can't give me.

LU

What's that?

MATT

The thing you brought me here to give me. Proof.

LU nods and walks across the room, thinking.

LU  
(sigh)

You want proof? Here.

LU turns to MATT, lifts the hem of her blouse and shows her midriff.

LU  
(continuing)

Carved.

MATT

My God... You're...

LU  
Solid pine, yes.

MATT  
But, you're...

LU covers herself and turns away,  
not embarrassed, not comfortable  
either.

LU  
About as detailed as a mannequin. Made of the  
same stuff too. Funny story, I was a model for  
mannequins in the fifties. The irony was  
fantastic.

MATT  
But, if you're...

LU  
(helping)  
Wood.

MATT  
(processing)  
...Wood, from a tree... What happens to you  
come autumn?

LU  
My hair gets a little redder, but that's about  
it.

MATT's mind is spinning.

MATT  
But... But... If you're like... your brother,  
wouldn't you have...

MATT indicates marionette with his  
hands.

LU  
What are you trying to say?

MATT  
Your brother, he had, at first... So, do you  
have...?

LU  
No.

MATT  
You don't?



LU  
No, you can't see them.

MATT  
I'm sorry?

LU  
They're not something I show.

MATT  
(pleading)  
Please, I need to know.

LU  
(humiliated)  
Please, let me show you something else.

A moment.

Slowly, LU reaches behind her neck and under her collar.

As she fights the humiliation and tears, she pulls out a group of threads.

Long, one end is in her hands, the other remains in her jacket, attached.

LU  
(singing)  
I've got some strings on me.

MATT stares at the strings. Slowly, he reaches for them. LU is frozen.

MATT takes the strings from her. He steps behind her and pulls softly on a string. Softly, her arm flies out.

LU begins a silent cry.

MATT pulls on another string, firmer this time.

LU lets out a firm kick.

MATT starts pulling strings and LU begins a dance. Slowly at first, then faster. The motions stop being random, and slowly become more precise.

As the dance moves faster and faster, tears continue to fall from LU's eyes.

More frenzied, the marionette dance is about to reach its explosive conclusion, when LU slaps MATT across the face.

LU  
(screaming)  
I AM NOT YOUR PUPPET!

Silence.

MATT  
(taken aback)  
I'm sorry?

LU  
I didn't invite you over just so you could play with me, make me dance, and do whatever! Enough!

Silence.

LU begins to put her strings away.

MATT  
Fine.

LU  
Enough.

MATT  
Yes, okay. I believe you.

LU  
Do you?

MATT  
Yes. You, the story, all of it. I believe you.

LU  
You owe me an apology.

Silence.

LU  
(adamant)  
You owe me an apology.

MATT  
No. How? You gave me proof. I asked for proof and you gave it to me. How can I apologize for that? You brought me here, right? Now I have the proof you need.

Silence.

LU  
Rough proof.

Pause.

MATT  
(a realization)  
Why doesn't your face look like your torso?  
Shouldn't your face and neck be wooden as  
well?

LU  
Women wear make up.

MATT  
Yes, but why do you wear makeup? Just to make  
yourself look like a real woman?

LU  
(Struck)  
What did you say?

MATT  
It's a fair question.

LU  
(forcefully)  
What did you say?

MATT  
Do you wear makeup to look like a real woman?

Silence.

LU  
Are you saying that...I'm not a real woman?  
Okay. What is... No, I don't think you know  
either. Not a real woman. Okay. I was made in  
this image by my father. We spent hours  
together, he taught me things and showed me  
that the world is a beautiful and wonderful  
place. And then, then he became aware of all  
the other villagers. They began to talk, "Who  
did this old man think he was going on with  
the younger woman?" He became embarrassed. So  
what does he do? He put me on a shelf, and  
tried again. But this time, this time he was  
smart and carved himself a son. A little  
wooden boy to keep him company. Not a real  
woman! Do you know what a wooden girl does  
when she flees Tuscany in 1883? She runs. She  
goes to Austria, and hides in plain sight.

(MORE)

LU (CONT'D)

Right in the court of the Arch-Duke, just to fall in love with his chamberlain. And you consider yourself lucky, because he doesn't want children. But you know what he does do? He gets old. And you watch the man you love die. Not a real woman indeed! So you flee, right before The War, and you go to Paris. Then there's a second war, and you're found and passed around the Nazi officers like the toy you are. The war ends before long, and you are forced to exploit yourself. For money to go to another new place. And you think "Maybe, if I just keep quiet, no one will notice."

LU begins to take off her gloves.

LU

(continued)

But then, despite your best efforts, some kid jumps you in the alley. But this kid's smart. It's 1963 and this kid's all sorts of sophisticated. He figures out what you are. He's got it all figured out. And he's also carrying a lighter

LU holds up her hand, it is burnt and charred to the point where it resembles sticks more than a hand.

LU

(continued)

Some pain fades, some pain you can live with. But some pain burns you every day and will never leave you alone. So, let me ask you, Little Boy, what is your definition of a "Real Woman?"

MATT

I apologize. I'm sorry.

LU

I do not accept.

MATT

I know. You shouldn't.

Silence.

MATT

(continued)

What can I do for you? What do you want?

LU

I want you to help tell my story. Not my brother's, not my father's. I want it to be my time for a story.

MATT  
(picks up camera)  
All right.

LU  
Okay?

MATT  
Yes, whenever you're ready.

LU  
(suddenly nervous)  
Funny, I don't know where to begin.

MATT  
(starts recording)  
Take a breath, whenever you're ready. Start  
with your name.

LU  
(nervously)  
My name... Is...

MATT  
(reassuring)  
Hey, it's all right. You are all right.

Silence.

LU  
My name is Lucrezia Collodi. I was born in  
1883 in Tuscany. I am the first child, and  
only daughter of Geppetto the Woodcarver.  
Elder sister to Pinocchio.

Silence.

LU  
(continued)  
And I have something to say.

END.