

I KISSED DASH RIPROCK!!!

MONOLOGUE #1 - HOLLYWOOD

(On the verge of hysterical excitement.)

I am sitting on a plush, paisley sofa in a luxurious hotel suite. Picture oak trim, rich, dark colors, burgundies and forest greens. My feet are up on the coffee table. The lights are dim. There is a fire neatly raging behind an ornate screen. There is a bottle of champagne on the coffee table next to a stack of magazines. In my right hand, a delicate flute. And to my left, just inches away...

Dressed in a light blue chamois shirt...

His wavy, black hair in damp ringlets from his recent shower...

Looking so much like a cliché off the cover of a romance novel that it is almost perverted is...

Internationally renowned star, celebrity and eligible bachelor, you're not even going to believe me... DASH RIPROCK!

(Screams)

How did I get here? Argh! I need to calm down. Breathe. Sip my champagne. Maybe count to ten. One, two, three--FUCK IT!

I met him on his current film. He's the star; I am a featured extra. Yeah I am way out of my league...he lives on a multi-million dollar ranch in Montana, and I live in a basement apartment with no windows and no kitchen in North Hollywood. Anyway, his current film is a police drama, which means any time they shoot a scene at the police station, they use the same extras for continuity, and there I am in my blues, with my badge and my fake gun... like, I am so tough! He has nicknamed me "Pepper," you know, Angie Dickinson in *Policewoman*? And I've nicknamed him "AARGHHHHH!" Because I think he is just so cool! That's not to say I have a David Cassidy star-struck kind of crush on the guy. Okay, I do. But it's not just that. All right, some of it is that. But HE IS JUST SOOOOOOO COOL! I mean really cool! Not like big star, rich guy cool. But like wicked-pissah funny cool. Easy to talk to, spazzy guy cool. Talented!!! Talented!!! Did you hear me say talented? I mean, did you see him in the *Subterraneans*? Oh my God! And yeah, we are working on *Hollywood Cop III*. But! He is doing this to raise money to produce his own adaptation of THE SUN ALSO RISES. He keeps pulling me aside and telling me all about it. I have never had conversations like this in my life! I want to *be* him when I grow up! That is the kind of crush I have on him. And I am sitting on a couch, alone with him in his hotel room. HELP ME! Where is that champagne?

See, he called me last Thursday. Yeah he called me. I had finally gotten up the guts to give him a flyer because I'm performing some of my own writing at a coffee shop in Culver City, and he called to apologize that he was going home to Montana on Tuesday and was disappointed he could not see me perform.

"Well, aren't you cool?"

"And," he continued, "it's a shame we couldn't have hung out. I should have asked you, but you know us actors, we are so shy."

He was too shy to ask me out? But he is sooooo amazing! And I am soooooo fuckin' single. And he is soooooo cute! And just two days ago, I was on this same phone dumping my most recent romantic adventure, the lead singer of a thrash band called *Chlamydia*. He was also a bartender from my sucky day job.

He said, "Come and see the band play."

And I found myself, after the set, in the green room being hit on by everyone in the band *except* my "boyfriend," who was too busy wearing the 19-year-old blonde groupie to notice when the bass player – a hairy-backed heroin addict freak named Friggar – grabbed me from behind, stating, "you got a fine ass girl" and started to dry hump me in public. This, was my cue to leave... alone...walking to my car, in a bad neighborhood, by myself. Not one of the freaks, including my supposed boyfriend, offered to escort me. Which was probably for the best, as these are the kind of people you try to avoid on dark lonesome streets. Lesson: Never date anyone in a band named after a STD.

Anyway, anyway, anyway! Talk about turns of fortune; that was last week. And this week I have Dash Riprock on my phone saying it is a shame WE couldn't have hung out? Hello.

"But wait, you're not leaving until Tuesday, right?"

"Yeah, but I am away for the weekend."

"But you're back on Monday?"

"Only for Monday. To shoot my last scene. I leave Tuesday morning."

"Letting you know, if you call me Monday night after the shoot, I will have a drink with you. I think it is a shame we didn't hang out...I think you're dreamy. I think you're neat. I think you're swell." By now he's giggling like a schoolgirl from my shameless accolades. This is a very good sign.

And he says, "Ditto right back at you!"

I immediately call my best friend Dot in Boston to tell her.

"GUESS WHO JUST CALLED ME!!!"

"Freak from the band?"

"No! Dash Riprock!!!" Silence....

"That's great. You just woke me."

"Oh! Go back to sleep."

"No! Did you say DASH RIPROCK? Okay, I'm waking up...I want to hear all of this!"

Well, that was Thursday. Friday, I watched him on *Leno*. He was so cool! Actually, I kind of experienced that twice, Dot called from Boston when it aired – three-hour time difference – and held the phone up to the TV. She is such a good friend!

So, Monday, here I am at home. I have rented several movies to distract myself from the love/hate relationship I have with my phone that never rings when I want it to. But by 11:00 I had run out of movies, and the phone was still quietly mocking me. In retaliation to its silence I called Dot. She was still up.

"Why aren't you out with Dash?"

"He hasn't called."

"You know what hotel he's at; you call him!"

"No, we had a nice talk. We left on very good terms. I left the ball in his court."

Beep. "Oh, call waiting."

"Arghh!"

“Calm down, it’s probably my mother...Hello?”

“Hi, Pepper!” My mother doesn’t call me Pepper. It was him! I love him.

“What are you up to?”

“Long day, lots of bullets and fake blood.”

“You up for some company?”

“How long will it take you to get here?”

“Twenty minutes, including parking.”

“Cool.”

“Hi, Dot.”

“Was it Dash Riprock?”

“Please, Dot, I’m on a first name basis with the man. I call him Dash.”

“Was it him?”

“And by the end of tonight I am hoping to be able to just call him D-.”

“Arrggghhh!!!” Dot said.

“Arrggghhh!!!” I replied. It is a primal, patent woman response to such statements as, “I’m getting married!” (to audience) You can scream with me if you want. “I’m getting married!” “I’m having a baby!” “I’m meeting Dash Riprock at the Beverly Hills Hilton!!!” That’s so good!

I jumped into my 1984 Rabbit; beige... lot of dents...drove across Laurel Canyon, right onto Sunset Boulevard, and right into the 90210 zip code, where I found the front desk concierge.

“I’m here to see Dash Riprock.”

She gave me a warm, knowing, California smile. “Yes, he’s waiting for you.” I glanced about, wondering if he was waiting in the lobby or in the bar.

“Suite 1110.” Her smile got bigger. “Elevator bank is to your left.” I immediately wondered if this woman thought I was being paid to be there. I then wondered why was I projecting this onto her? I then began contemplating that perhaps I had done too much therapy, because I was definitely over-analyzing.

By now I realized I was so enmeshed in this tunnel of self-indulgent soul-searching that I had walked right past the elevator bank. Turning around I threw as much caution as I could find to the wind and entered, hoping the doors would shut before the caution boomerang would come back and smash me on the head. And I pressed the button way, way at the top, Number 11. Then I decided to press some other buttons in between. 8 looked good. Then 4. Then – fuck it! – I pressed them all. Because, hey, I did not expect to be meeting him up in a hotel suite! Sure, it was in my mind, how could I get up to his hotel suite, I just didn’t think it was going to be this easy, and Christ, I have never been able to do a one night stand. All those years teaching HIV awareness to teens, putting the fear of God into them. Well, I certainly have managed to put the fear of God into myself. Every time I do anything vaguely close to spontaneous I get this wave of images, it’s adolescent faces staring up at me with apple cheeks and too much eyeliner. “You’re our role model!” they cry. And the guys in LA don’t seem to understand why I don’t wanna put out on the first date. I just wanna take my time, make sure I’m not getting involved with an IV drug-using, promiscuous, deviant-mass-murdering, psycho-nut. And that usually takes two dates. And... I mean Dash oh Dash, what was HE thinking and what was HE expecting me to be, I had been so bold over the phone...was this really a wise idea? WHY IS SEX SO HARD?!?!

I was quite proud that none of this inner squabbling stopped me from strolling down the short hallway to his door. I fixed my posture, took a breath, and knocked.

“Hello, sweetheart!”

He called me sweetheart. That's so cute. He is so cute! I stepped into the room. A big room. A plush room. It even had a kitchen. Fire, dim lights, champagne.

“Would you like some champagne?”

“I would love some champagne.” I needed some champagne.

“Have a seat.” I took a seat. And here I am strapped in and ready to enjoy the ride.

“So how was your weekend?”

“Have you ever waited on tables?”

“Not in years.”

“Well, Mighty Morphin Power Rangers were doing a live show down the street. Wall to wall kids. It was insane. What did you do?”

“Oh, private screening of one of my films at the *WHITE HOUSE*.”

“Cool, let's talk about your weekend.”

The weekend was fascinating, and so were the details of his next film, his family. And the film he's writing, and there we are talking about art and we are OFF. I mean we are GONE! He's saying... and I interrupt him with... and he says you're right because... and then he asks what I am writing. So I am telling him that I have this idea for this one-woman show thing – this thing that doesn't make sense yet. And I say, “I'm sorry, I must be boring you with this.”

And he says, “No, no go on...go on!”

So I go on. And he follows me. Which is rare. But there he is, nodding through my spastic, passionate tirade. Even as I mangle the English language, because I can never think of the right ...

“...word”

“Yes!...” And he adds to what I am saying using words like arc and catharsis and I follow him, and we go... we go up, we go under, we jump hurdles, do pirouettes and intellectual handsprings! Take a glance at the ozone problem and then back down to earth. Carefully we cross the street. Onto a bus, cross-town, into scuba gear, underwater, back on land, but what country? The conversation is athletic. I am hyperventilating in agreement with the last brilliant heartfelt point that he has made, and I am screaming “YES! YES! YES!”

Then, suddenly, there is silence. The kind of silence that says, “Let's continue this conversation without talking.” And I'm trying to catch my breath as he begins to inch over across the sofa.

“It's hypnotic,” I ramble, “the fire.”

“The champagne.”

“The champagne,” I echo. “Lucite sandals,”

“The Lucite sandals,” he whispers in my ear.

And I say, “Hey, while you have your nose in my ear, it may be a good time to ask if you are involved, because I don't like getting involved with people who are already involved with people...already.”

“Well, don't you have a lot of integrity.” Which is not the answer I was hoping for.

“Ummmmm...uhhh...gee...no. I am not...involved.” Did you notice the whiny guilt-ridden stammer that came out as he said it? I didn’t know what that meant. Sounded vague. Sounded weird. Sounded like he was lying.

“I was. It is, it really is over, It’s only been....10 days. It’s not public information yet...you know....arghhh....see ...

“It’s okay,” I tell him. “I’m sorry you’re going through something so painful.”

“Thanks. It’s not....that bad, it’s just....it’s sad. How about you. Are you involved?”

“No!”

“Why?”

“Why?” And I don’t want to be telling Dash Riprock about my sad and pathetic love life.... Eventually I resort to shrugging....and he smiles and lightly kisses me on the lips. And I kiss him back, really, really hard for a good 5 minutes before I notice that I am clinging to the champagne flute in my right hand for dear life.

“Look, ahhh, I’m sorry, I’m just not very good at casual stuff. ”

“I’m not all that good at casual stuff either.”

I find that very hard to believe, I want to say, but I don’t. “Its not that I don’t find you dreamy, I do. It’s just that I don’t know you. And I’d like to! But you leave tomorrow.”

“I wish I didn’t have to leave tomorrow.”

I smile at him.

“Don’t laugh at me.”

“I’m not laughing at you. It was a nice thing to say. You made me smile.”

“Oh. Oh...Well...then, I know! You and I, we are just going to have to get to know each other better. You can visit me at the ranch in Montana, how’s that?”

How’s that? That is clearly a carrot! I wasn’t expecting a carrot. I hate carrots! Because most people who offer you carrots want something in return. Most commonly oral sex. By the by, they don’t usually have any carrots to give. No, If I had a carrot for every carrot that has been dangled in front of me like a ripe fucking carrot, I would have a lot of carrots. I am not what I would call a carrot person. I would say that my life is 100% devoid of carrots.

But the thing that surprises me the most about this shiny, Montana travel option that he has chosen to dangle in front of me like a ripe orange vegetable known for its Vitamin A content, is that solidly mixed in with my annoyance and plummeting sense of disappointment at this sudden, manipulative, and tacky tactic is... how sparkly... how shiny... how...my God! I find my mind overtaken with robust images of Montana. It is like my own personal beer commercial! I see snow-capped mountains and hills with pine trees, crystal lakes and a river runs through it all. Sunshine verily bursting through the clouds like the straight fingers of God, pouring down on the overripe, lush green terrain, making everything wholesome and good. I want to sing “They Call the Wind Mariah.” I don’t know why; we sang it in chorus when I was in fifth grade, and I know all the words.

Montana! Montana! What I want most in life is to go to Montana! It is my homeland! Except, until this moment I just didn’t know, I didn’t know how, I didn’t know how...how...how much I had come to like this guy over the last few months. I mean, I didn’t expect him to call, I didn’t expect to be in his hotel room, I didn’t expect...

I didn't expect THIS! I want to burst into tears and scream, directly in his face, "DON'T FUCK WITH ME!"

But something holds me back. It is weird and primal and it has a voice. A voice, that if it ever played in my head it was quieted so long ago it is a stranger unto me. It is a 14-year-old, adolescent, ingenue, Romeo-and-Juliet voice. And it says:

"Umm... But what if he means it? Seriously, I mean what if he means it? I mean what if you are, so used to being lied to, because you have been lied to...a lot...but maybe, he's just as lonely and scared as you are. And maybe you've become such a pessimist that you can't see the good things in life when they're put in front of you anymore? You know pearls before swine? Maybe he's a pearl, so don't be a swine! What if he really means this, really?"

I am staring at him all this while, waiting for my brain to quiet. He is staring at me. Probably watching my eyeballs shake. Clearly waiting for some response. I answer, "You call me, I'll go."

"Then it's settled!" He chirps, all cute and perky.

I'm not. "Yeah, you call me, I'll go."

He leans forward to kiss me.

Instinct: I pull away.

"Have you ever been to Montana?"

Instinct again: "No."

"Montana is beautiful."

And every time he says "Montana," the idea of kissing gets even less fun. He would have had a better chance if he didn't bring up Northwestern states...I look at the clock. It's almost 4, and I realize I should leave before I say something I might regret. I make mention of the time. "Would you mind walking me to my car?"

Chivalry is not completely dead, and he throws on a coat, "What kind of guy do you think I am to let you walk to your car alone this time of night?"

I don't answer; I just smile.

He walks me to my car, which is a bit embarrassing. The Dentmobile, whoo! – she's impressive.

"Thanks for inviting me."

"Thanks for coming."

"I'm glad I did. Thank you for incredible conversation. Really thank you, just..."

"I'll call you."

"I'd like that. It's been a real pleasure meeting you. It's..."

"I'll call you."

"Okay."

"I'll call you," he calls out a third time; I smile back and wave. He walks away as my engine revs. He is wearing an expensive black leather jacket, sort of a mod 60's cut. My final image is him lighting a cigarette and slowly sauntering back to the elevator bank, a cloud of smoke dancing above his head, so cool, like Arthur Fucking Fonzairelli. I fight the urge to jump from the car and call out, "Don't go!"

Instead, I put the car in gear and drive away fast, thinking, I have his address; I should send him a Christmas card. Because I am going to get to Montana, oh, yeah. He offered three times.

"There is magic in three's." My father always told me that.

I am going to get to Montana, with or without him! And I drive out of the lot into the morning, following the rays of the newly risen sun, verily bursting through the LA smog like the straight fingers of God, pouring down on the overripe manmade lushness of Beverly Hills. Making everything wholesome and good.

MONOLOGUE #2-BOSTON

Okay, so it's six months later. I'm in Davis Square, Somerville, Massachusetts right outside of Boston with my best friend Dot, taking her out for her birthday, when she grabs my arm screaming, "LOOK, LOOK, LOOK, Dash Riprock!"

And there he is...on the marquee of the Somerville Theater – it's Dash Riprock in *THE GREEN HORNET*! And a poster in the window! I turn to Dot and say, "Look Dot, Dash. Dash, Dot, Dot, Dash, Dash, Dot, Dot, Dash....! It is he! The big scary monster that been haunting my dreams like a big dream-haunting monster thing, he's here, he's here!"

And Dot says, "Sweetheart, it's only a movie."

And I say to Dot, "Why hasn't he called? Doesn't he know we are meant to be? I will not marry him if he doesn't call me!"

And Dot says, "There, there, you wild, flailing groupie, you."

And I declare to Dot, wild and flailing, "you don't understand, you weren't there that night...that night...that...ooooh! That one should have called.... Sigh, Dot, sigh."

And this put me in this weird Dash Riprock week.

First of all I want to make clear – I do have a whole other life that I spend most of my time focused on. So in the last six months, I had moved back home to Boston; Hollywood was making me nutty. I finished writing that one-woman show. Performed it as part of this feminist theater festival in Boston and got great reviews. Meanwhile, I was also working three sucky part time jobs to support this artistic habit of mine, and pay the rent on my new divey dank basement apartment. A living space with so many spiders I was thinking about putting a sign out front reading, "SPOOKY WORLD TICKETS: FIVE DOLLARS."

But seeing his name on the marquee of the Somerville Theater. There in Somerville, the streets where I live...It felt like an omen. A reminder that the conversation I had started with him was not finished. And the reminders of this continued all week. A psychic barrage. Everywhere I turned ...there he was again! Hosting a re-run of "*Saturday Night Live*." The Romance Channel dedicated all of Tuesday to him as part of their series, "*Men We'd Love to Love*." He was staring out at me from the magazine racks at the supermarket and the drugstore, which could be proof of nothing more than he has a good publicist. But it wasn't just that. It was weird and spooky coincidences that only I could appreciate. The same week, a new ad campaign started for a new yuppie truck thing called "*The Montana Sport*." From my car radio came this authoritarian, Patrick Stewart voice telling me about the "rough and rugged terrain of Montana," and telling me how "...life gets exciting, you must be prepared!"

I start a new temp job. My supervisor's name is *Batista*! In the film I met Dash on his character's name had been *Lieutenant Batista*!

I do my laundry, and folding it back home I discover an orphan shirt has adopted me, and it is a light blue chamois shirt. Just like the one Dash was wearing that night...that night...

It was eerie... 'cause I was doing my best not to think about him. It had been six months! I sent him a Christmas card and a note from Boston with my new address and phone number. No response.

“Well maybe he’s really busy!”

“Juliet, six months – nobody’s that busy.”

“Don’t be a swine!”

“Don’t be an idiot!”

Anyway, its the end of the week, I’m in a car with a friend of mine Dott, this is not my best friend Dot this is a totally different Dott. And she is trying to set me up with one of our co-workers from the catering company and I am saying,

“Dott, he’s 12!”

“He’s 21.”

“Same difference.”

“Who are you saving yourself for?”

And timed perfectly, timed from the car radio, I hear, “*The Montana Sport...*” NOOOOO!!!! I can take it no longer! And overcome, I scream to Dott, to the radio, to the heavens, “Dash Riprock! That’s whom I am saving myself for! Dash Riprock!” I scream it loud! “Dash Riprock!” I scream a third time.... I am Scarlet O’Hara, Dash is Tara and I will never go hungry again!

“Yeah, and has he ever called?”

“No.... It’s been six months. I should get over this, shouldn’t I?”

“Duh!”

And she is right. And I hold back, but once alone on my front lawn a single glassy tear does fall. And Juliet drinks an elixir of romantic fantasy dissolving serum declaring “I cannot stay in a world without love!” and drops down dead.

And I walk down the stairs into the clammy chill I call home, empty out the dehumidifier, and check my answering machine.

-My mother

-Acceptance into the New York Fringe Festival. With the one woman show! Yeah!

And...

-Dash Riprock.

ARGH!!!! I stare at the phone at disbelief.... Juliet had just committed suicide! But quicker than you can say “Quicker than you can say,” Juliet is prancing about my frontal lobe, arms flailing in gay abandon, screaming, “Fuck you, all you pessimistic brain voices! Fuck you, Fuck you, and FUCK YOU!”

It can’t be, but it is...“Hello, it’s Dash Riprock. I...I have no idea what time it is. But it’s April. And I’m sorry, I’ve been meaning to call you since December and say thank you for the card – although it is cards at this point – and see how you are doing with the show and the move and your life but you aren’t there. Well, I’ll call you again and hopefully you will be there. All the best, pal, bye-bye,”

Pal...he called me “pal.” That is so cute, he is so cute! I am going to marry him some day!

Why is it the only guy I have *ever* felt the desire to say “*I’m gonna marry him*” has got to be an international celebrity with a messy personal life? You would not believe what I have read about him on riprocktemple.uvm.edu – and by the by, if you ever want to really know the trash on someone, it is most helpful if they have an obsessed, gay, college boy fan with an unauthorized web page.

But anyway, he called! What to do? He’s on my answering machine tape! It’s a holy relic! So I dig through my cassettes for a replacement tape, record a new outgoing message. I have the tape of my dreams in the palm of my hand. What to do! I haven’t had a David Cassidy crush on anyone since well...David Cassidy...and if David Cassidy called YOU and left a message on YOUR answering machine calling YOU pal....I know – I’ll hang it from my lucky silver chain and dangle it atop the picture of him I have on my wall. My therapist gave me that picture; she ripped it out of *People* magazine. She’s such an enabler.

So there I am, feeding the silver chain through the little hole of the cassette – I know, very Freudian – when I am interrupted by my ringing phone.

“Hello?”

“Hello.”

“Who’s this?”

“Dash Riprock.”

ARGHHHH! The power of my lucky silver chain – I have conjured him!

I immediately want to hide from him what I am doing. I then realize he is on my phone – he can’t see what I’m doing. I then realize, wouldn’t it be funny to tell him what he caught me in the middle of doing? I then realize he’d say, “Oh I’m sorry, you’re a big obsessed psycho-nut, didn’t know, gotta go, bye-bye.”

So instead I ask, “What’s up?”

He was in Montana, resting after a promotional tour. And he asked about me, and I told him how LA had proved too much for the gal and I took a midnight plane to Boston, where everybody knows my name. How well the feminist festival had gone and the acceptance into the New York Fringe!

And he says, “So, you’re going to take New York by storm!”

And I laugh. But he stops me “Don’t laugh it’s possible. You got to think of it that way, It is possible.

And I say “Yes you’re right, I am going to take New York by storm.

And he says, “Yes, you are!”

And then he starts telling me about this screenplay he is writing.

I am panting and hyperventilating and drooling as I am trying to keep up with his rambling, brilliant, heartfelt train of thought. And I am screaming, “Yes! Yes! Yes!” And then there is silence. And I say, “It is such a thrill to talk with you again!”

And he says, New York I might be in New York this summer, I am in negotiations for a play.

And I say, “Yeah.”

And he says, “I’d really love to see your show.”

And I say “Yeah?”

And he says, “Actually I’d just love to see you.”

I try to respond but I find that I am not even capable of grunting. I kind of manage a hiss.

“Because I think of that night we spent together at the Hilton you know...”

“Hiss...”

“Actually, I think of it often.”

“Hiss...”

“Actually, I think fondly of the whole experience of meeting you.”

I thump my chest with my fist. In a healthy baritone I answer.

“Me too.”

“You do!” He sounds relieved.

“Yeah, I do. I think you’re great. Great is the word I would use. You’re great.”

“Well then, I guess the only thing to do is to jump on a plane and visit you. How’s that?”

How’s that? Okay, by the way, this is not a carrot. This is a big testosterone-filled I-know-you-want-me tease-fest.

What do you say? (To audience member) You’re a guy...ahhh... “Seeing you again would make me the happiest girl you have ever met in your life.”

“Really?”

“Really!”

And then there is silence.... Eventually we say an awkward, “Goodbye.... Goodbye....no you first...no you...okay...1...2...3...goodbye!”

Arghh! What to do... must call Dot. Both of them!

MONOLOGUE #3-NEW YORK

I am in New York. I am in the diviest theater space available in New York. It’s even skankier than my apartment. It’s a three-floor walk up over a Marxist bookstore. There is no Marquee, just a hand-painted sign over the door that reads “*MARX-R-US --NEW YORK’S SOURCE FOR COMMUNIST LITERATURE.*” It is hot up here. There is no air conditioning. There are dust bunnies from the Paleolithic era; there is graffiti that reads, “I HEART TROTSKY!” Welcome to the New York Fringe. I am here with the one-woman show. I am on in less than five minutes and Dash Riprock is out in the audience.

I was told HE was here about a half-hour ago – my immediate reaction was to vomit. I have retched three times in the last half-hour. You know, Shakespeare never wrote a sonnet about this dynamic: “You are my sun and moon, and now I puke.”

God, I have got to breathe...

You would not believe what has been going on in the last week! The show is going well. Eerie-like “take New York by storm”-like well, and it’s weird. I have been painstakingly perfecting the show for just this moment at hand, just in case Dash might show! Which, okay, I will admit it’s not the most logical goal to be setting my hopes and girlish dreams upon, but what if he did...Arghh! It would have to be brilliant and perfect!!! And boy, did that ever work as a motivator! Every time I got a little overwhelmed or discouraged, or thought maybe tonight I will just watch ER...I could

simply combat it with a mental vision of the dark and dreamy Dash, sitting in the blackened theater, watching the production.

AARGH! It had to be brilliant and perfect! HE became like my Quest!

Now, it's moments like this that I get all quiet and start believing in something. And realize he, she, or it on occasion will put people or things in our lives for just this very purpose: a light to swim to when we feel lost or overwhelmed. Because the eerie thing is that months passed with no word from Dash and certainly some very discouraging episodes in my personal and professional life. But I decided, I did not want to focus on the negative, No! It worked for me to focus on preparing to impress the person whom I most was impressed with for no other good reason than, hey, it could happen! Anything is possible! And thank you, God, I was so well prepared...because do you know who else has showed up in the last week? There was a CNN producer who came with cameras and did a national story, There were newspaper critics and scouts, and then Thursday...out of nowhere...it was British screen legend, Blake Barton...Sir Blake Barton. Who stayed after the show to say British things at me like "Brilliant!" and "Well done!" and "Would you like to come out for a pint? Is this your first show? This is your first festival! Have you ever considered the Edinburgh Fringe Festival? It's the largest arts festival in the world. It would be perfect for you. If you ever decide to try the UK, get in touch."

And now Dash. It's not a complete surprise, I sent him a flyer; actually I had sent him a couple of letters, post cards, photos, and a flyer. Two weeks ago, he called.

Juliet did pirouettes and Flamenco-like stomping. Christ, it was a performance art interpretive dance piece she entitled "I Told You He Would Call!"

He said he was going to be in New York...and that he wanted to see the play. And that we should get together for dinner. And then he called again two days later to tell me he was back with his girlfriend and felt that was something I should know...oh...okay how good of him, how above board...and I don't really don't have to marry him. I really need to get over that marry him thing. I could be his friend...we always need more friends...I've got to go on!!

Two hours later I am escorted to a shiny black sedan with real white leather seats and a driver in uniform who resembles the Incredible Hulk, Dash Riprock is to my left, and we are off to the Four Seasons cocktail bar. Now you should know, since his last phone call, I had been giving myself a series of well meaning lectures. "I don't have to marry him...right? He couldn't possibly be as amazing and perfect as I remembered him, nobody could! It would be inhuman! Come on, at this point I was using him as a motivating muse thing. It's not like he's supernatural. He does not have magical powers. He is just a guy, right?"

And we sit down, order drinks, begin to talk and, we're gone! We are back in Montana – we go up, down, over...through the woods... quick stop at the North Pole with Santa and his elves ...then off again. We walk amongst the Dragons of Komodo...we find the lost city of Mu...we raise Atlantis...

And then he says, "how sexy you look in that dress..."

And I say, "So tell me about this girlfriend of yours."

It was a long story. "Look, just because I am involved, doesn't mean we can't get to know each other better. I meet so many people in this business but I never get to know any of them really. You remind me so much of me about 15 years ago. I would just like to get to know you better."

“Thank you,” I said. “I’d like that,” I said. “You fascinate me. You don’t call often, but when you do, man, these conversations are amazing!”

And he’s staring at me in horror. I realize either I have just said something terribly wrong, or maybe Godzilla is outside the window doing an Al Jolson impression. I look behind me. No Japanese monsters in black-face; what had I said...

He turns dark. “I may not call often, but there are few young performers that I do call at the drop of a hat.”

Young performers. He’s only three years older than me.... Hey! He just pulled rank on me. And a moment ago he was waxing poetic about his Ramen Noodle days! WHAT? I don’t say this. I say, “I’m sorry.”

And we sit, breathing in the silence. Waitress brings refresher drinks. A complementary tray of weird stuff. Olives the size of grapefruits and almonds with chunks of salt on them the sizes of olives. Red slithery things that are either pickled red peppers or night crawlers marinated in Kool-Aid. I’m not hungry. Sip...sip... and we’re recovered. Good! People don’t always recover from these little misplaced aggressive brain fissures. I am relieved we seem to be past this. And he asks about my goals, and I start talking career, and he says, “No, your goals in your personal life. Look, just because I am involved doesn’t mean we can’t get to know each other better.”

“And I am beginning to wonder, just what does *getting to know each other better* mean...to him?”

“I mean, we could get a room and I am sure it would be very....but it’s not going to go there!”

“No.” I agree.

“I mean it doesn’t have to go there!”

“No.”

“I mean it’s not going to...”

And why is fighting with me on this? I am not arguing with him. And then I realize, he’s arguing with himself. So I sit back and watch the show, ‘cause it’s very entertaining. I mean, I am not planning on going up to any room alone with him. That would be stupid!

“You want to see the really hideous condo the Broadway people put me in?”

“Sure!” What was I up to, and why do I always do these things behind my own back!

And, the Incredible Hulk drove us to The Plaza.

When we got up to the 16th floor, I said, “Wow! This is pink!”

“Yeah. I think it was decorated by Jane Mansfield.” And then he adds, “Now that we’re alone is it okay if I just do this?” And he leans forward to embrace me and his hair is so soft, my goodness, and how overwhelming! And I pull back, and as my legs are a bit wobbly I attempt to sit on the closest thing I can find, an end table...which immediately falls over, leaving me sprawled out on the floor.

Dash finds this very entertaining and suggests, “Why don’t you try...oh...a chair?”

We sit down on the big pink leatherette sofa. He asks me some stupid question, and I am off on some stupid answer, and he is slowly inching himself over to me, which is making these squeaky noises and this is making me giggle. And then he does this move, this quick and final slide, where he gently slams into my right hip, and like a well choreographed tango, before I even realize what I am up to, my left leg has swung up across and wrapped itself tightly about his waist. Neither of us moves. Neither of us

quite knows how we suddenly ended up in this position. Slowly I detach my rebellious limb and place it back on the floor where it belongs and promptly start having a chat with it.

“Bad leg! Bad! Down! Stay!”

Meanwhile, he has bent forward and around, and finding my turned away face, kisses me gently on the lips.

I think of that long talk we just had about his girlfriend.

He kisses me again. I have chills running along my spine, every hair is on end, and my imagination responds by parading in front of me a chorus line of adolescent girls with apple cheeks and too much eyeliner. “STOP! DON’T! THINK!”

I leap to my feet “We have to go!” I try to walk. But my feet won’t move. He stares amazed at my reaction.

“We have to go. Now!”

“Really?”

“Really!”

He stands. We walk to the door. He opens the door; he closes the door and says, “I have to do this one more time.” And suddenly I am slammed up against the wall in an embrace. And I am gone. I am destroyed; I am a quivering mess.

And he says: “Okay, we can go now.”

And – I say, “No! No! Now I have to...regroup.”

“Okay,” he says, “Regroup.”

“You have no idea how hard this is for me,” I tell him. “Aside from thinking you are brilliant and funny, I...I...I...I...I...” and I am speaking dolphin or woodchuck, “I...I...” and he is trying to follow me as I stammer. “I...” And I notice his smug little smile has dissolved into a look of concern. “I...” He doesn’t know me all that well; for all he knows, I might be having a seizure. “I...just think you’re a really nice guy!”

It’s clearly not what he expected. “Thank you.”

And I am worthless as I try to explain myself. “On the set, you...morale was so bad. Except when you were around! Like that day you took the water bottle and kept squirting people in the face. And everyone was laughing. You just spent your time cheering people up! It was a beautiful quality. Whenever you were there everyone was so perky.”

“So I have the power of perkiness.”

“Yeah. Shut up, we have to go!”

The Incredible Hulk drove us to Harlem, to where I was staying with my friend Anne Marie. In the car Dash takes my hand in his and I start clawing his hand with my nails... And we drive like this to Anne Marie’s. Where I get out of the car, Dash gets out of the car, and the Incredible Hulk gets out of the car. And there we are standing on Anne Marie’s decayed crumbling stoop... just the three of us. What do you say?

“Thanks for coming to the show.”

“Thanks for coming out for drinks.”

“Call me.”

And he said nothing. Did not shake my hand. Did not kiss me goodbye. Just got back in the black sedan with the Incredible Hulk, like a couple of secret agents, and drove away, fast.

Six months later I am in New York. Lying on a portable cot in my friend Anne Marie's one-room apartment. I like Anne Marie's place. It has a window. Granted, it has bars and a view of a brick wall, but it is a window. I have awoken to the sound of Anne Marie's voice. She's in the kitchen nook quietly working on a soliloquy from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She looks so cute with her arms flailing like that! She has an audition today. I should get out of her hair.

I am in New York performing my one-woman show as part of a feminist theater festival. Three shows in two days. And there were *Village Voice* and *New York Times* reviewers and producers...and now it's over, and I am done, and I am completely out of Chi. What I want to do is sleep. But I can't. What I really want is just someone to hold me. I am not going to ask Anne Marie. It's not her job.

So, I get myself dressed and take myself to Starbucks for a nice big frothy cappuccino. On the way back I get caught in a downpour of March rain, and I stop into a church.... And the candles, they look so friendly, and there is this statue of the Virgin Mary...And I say, "Hey Mary, one nice Jewish girl to another...."

"THE THING THAT SEPARATES YOU FROM DASH IS YOUR UNWILLINGNESS TO SIN."

"Mary, I know that...That is a non-issue. There is a whole bunch of other stuff going on..." The New York Fringe was six months ago. And it had gone really well. I had won an award and gotten great reviews, and I decided to take Sir Blake Barton's advice and looked into the Edinburgh Fringe Festival thing. It's almost making sense – I have managed to book myself into what I have been told is a very respectable venue in Scotland. I have to get a passport; I have never been out of the US. I have no clue what I am doing! And it's going to cost a lot of money. So I took another job. Waving at traffic outside a Quickie-Mart while wearing a giant milk carton suit...it pays \$25 an hour. I am telling you this Edinburgh thing; it's like trying to do a jigsaw puzzle in the dark!

I called Sir Blake Barton for advice. *Sir Blake Barton*. If you are a maiden in distress you're supposed to go to a real knight, right? He said,

"Brilliant! Well done! Good on you! Good Lord, it's been decades since I've done anything on the Fringe...but I am sure it's going to go brilliant for you! And mark my words someone is going to invite you to perform in London, and when you get here, you and I are going out for a pint!

Um...wow. How enthusiastic how encouraging how vague! I don't know the difference between a pound and pence! Do I need a visa or a green card? I feel that when I get to Scotland the flight attendant is going to hand me a parachute and tell me to "Jump!"

And Dash says his life always feels like that. Dash is still here in New York. His name in lights ten feet tall. His play is brilliant. It's going very well...and I know this because he's been calling often. I'd categorize it as often. And with everything I am doing he gives the best pep talks of anyone I have ever known! And my other friends are disappearing, and I don't know why. Dot says they just can't handle my new success, but this doesn't make sense; I am a giant milk carton by day, how much of a success can I be.

Anyway, Dash is a real comfort these days. Things make sense when I talk to him. Everything is possible when I talk to him. And it's not so much that he just believes in ...me, I think he believes in everybody....I want to learn how to do that....he's just

so...And in the middle of it all; my sister was diagnosed with cancer. She's fine now; but you know with all the friends I have, Dash was the only one who remembered the day her test results were coming back. He was the only one who called to check up on me and my family, and then he called again two days later just to make sure we were still coping well. I mean how thoughtful, how kind. He's just soooo.... I mean soooo...

ahhhhhmm... And we are supposed to get together today. He told me to call him when I got into New York. I called Friday, it is Monday. He hasn't called back...and maybe it's for the best.... The phone calls lately well the conversations start with art and they just keep turning to sex and I don't know if it him or me that starts it.... But he has a girlfriend. "Mary. He has a girlfriend. Mary, Mary, Mary...." My cell phone rings.

"Hey...I was at a morning meeting. I'm back now. You want to get together?...Why are you whispering? You're a Jewish girl, what are you doing in a church? Well, tell Mother Mary I say, 'hi.' So how long will it take you to get here?"

"Mary, Mary, Mary... I...I...I...I...I..."

I run back out into the rain, grab a cab and rush right over to the Plaza, riding up on the elevator I catch my reflection in the mirrored paneling, I look like some wet, tired, underfed waif thing out of Dickens. I find my way to his door, fix my posture and my mascara and knock.

"My god....look at you...ha...you look... beautiful."

"Then why are you laughing?"

"I'll get you a towel." He walks away, still giggling.

I look around the room. He has placed votive candles on teacup liners about the place, and they look so friendly, and I wonder is this something he does when he's alone? I take the towel from his hand, "Thanks. How you doing?"

His smile suddenly doesn't look genuine. "Okay.... Beer or coffee?"

"Coffee."

I watch him disappear into the kitchen. Something is up with him. "Want to see photos of the house in Montana?"

He is so proud of Montana. I find one of him sitting on a horse and laughing. "That's a happy man."

"That's my horse. I miss my horse, I love Montana. You don't have to sit so far away."

I get out of the plump, pink armchair and walk over to the plump pink sofa. Same sofa, same test, take two. And he smells like cigarettes and cinnamon. He is explaining the photos and spreading them out in front of me, and I can't hear a word he's saying.

"Look. You know, it is hard for me to sit this close to you."

And he says, "Could I just...hold you?"

And he leans forward to embrace me and he is so solid and vivid and warm. And as my pulse is racing not just a little bit, I say, "You know, I should probably move back to the chair." I pull back, de-tangling my limbs from his, and as I do I get his eyes in clear focus, and shit! I am gone. Montana; it is midnight in Montana and a lonely owl calls out in the distance. A summer breeze blows against my skin or a ghost walks through me or something that makes the hairs on my neck stand up. I have never seen anything so vast. My eyes begin to sting; I close them before he catches me crying.

"Wow," he says.

"Yeah, that was neat."

“Neat! That was neat.”

“Yeah,” I say. Getting up, I move to the chair. “I think we are both a bit silly here, stretching the boundaries of what is right and wrong.”

“We were only hugging.”

“I don’t want to be part of a betrayal.”

“I know...Look...mmmm.”

“It’s...It’s...It’s...I...I...I...” I watch amazed as he turns into a dolphin or a woodchuck.

“My goal in any of this is just to be happy you know.”

“I know.”

“It’s...just... I feel I can be myself around you. I don’t expect you to understand this, but when you are in my position it is hard to do that, it’s hard...to find people you can just BE around...it’s very...very...” And a shot of electricity jolts him off the sofa.

“Hard. Most people expect me to be happy all the time. And people can have very little empathy when they think that you have everything that would make them happy. And it’s important sometimes to be allowed whole days where you sit there trying to figure out why you’re such an idiot. Not that I think of myself as an idiot all the time. I don’t know. You just seem to understand that and...I am going off on a horrible tangent...”

“And I say, “No....that is one of the most beautiful things I have ever heard.”

And in one graceful lunge, he has leapt across the room and jumped onto my lap. He is straddling me on his knees. “Would it be that wrong to kiss you just once?”

He looks to my face for permission. Finds it and lightly kisses me on the lips, tasting sweet like maple syrup.... And I am feasting like some deranged French-toast-eating vampire. Whatever I was praying for in that church I am finding it here! Hallelujah!! And in the middle of it all he jumps off me and back onto the couch.

“That was neat.”

“Neat is a word.”

He says “We don’t have to stay, we could go out to dinner,”

I am about to say, “Yes. Let’s go...” when something holds me back. Again, it’s weird and it’s primal and it has its own voice; a voice I have never heard before in my own head. This time it’s a 90-year-old wheelchair-bound nursing home senior rasp, and she says,

“Umm...for crying out loud, youth is wasted on the young! I could use some good memories to keep me company when I’m this old. For goodness sakes. Would it kill you to have had a good time once in your life!!”

“Are you okay?”

I get out of the armchair and walk back over to the sofa. “Most restaurants in this town deliver.” And I sit down next to him.

We order out for Thai.

The afternoon was lovely...it was a lovely afternoon...it was....ahhhmmm...It was warm and fertile and green and mossy and human and easy. And I couldn’t remember the last time anything felt so easy. My ride was leaving at 8 pm, so at 7 he walked me to the train. Mostly in silence. When we get to the station, he says,

“I’ll call you.”

“I’d like that,” I say.

“Look,” he tells me. “I want you to know that...attraction aside, I am your friend.”

I say “I want to be your friend. I understand being a friend. This other stuff, I don’t understand. But I do understand friend.”

And he says, “I’ll call you.”

And I say, “Okay.” And I turn to go, aware that he is watching me leave. I turn back and he is still watching me, and I smile and he smiles back and I wave and he waves back and I walk onto the escalator and turn back; he is still watching me, and then I can’t see him any more.

MONOLOGUE #4 – LONDON

I am in London, in a posh, professionally-decorated flat in London...picture white on white. White walls, white furniture. White-washed paneling...I am naked and in bed with a Space Alien...how’d I get here?

I am in London with the one-woman show. I was invited to perform it here as part of a feminist theatre festival, because as Sir Blake Barton had predicted, Edinburgh had gone happily well.

Edinburgh was so amazing; sold out audiences, great reviews...but more important, I met all these people I could talk to! They were insane and driven and rabid, brilliant and...

My mother came to visit. She is 75. She has tried so hard my entire life to understand me and has never been able to. One day she turns to me and says, “My God, everyone here is like you!” God bless Sir Blake Barton for suggesting it! I sent him a thank-you card. I didn’t want to head back to Boston...

Ah, Edinburgh! Edinburgh! I was living the musical *Brigadoon*. Away from the madness that is America, and the bagpipes had gotten into my blood! Gene Kelly constantly danced through my imagination, singing, “Why, it’s almost like being in love,” and it was almost like! I had even met this guy in Edinburgh... another actor guy. His name? Well lets just call him...Handsome Goodbody and he was the star of a British sitcom called *Space Men Are From Mars* and he kinda reminded me of Dash. Different coloring, different build, different accent, plus he was a space alien from Mars – he had gills.... But he had the same subtle sense of something smart! And he was single! And I had not heard from Dash in months...he had called a couple of times after the New York state of mind thing but then, poof! Like any good fantasy he dissolved into a fine and shimmering mist. One sad day it happened Jacque Paper came no more. He was my muse, my light, my Romeo, my Yoda.... You know, Luke Skywalker never had to deal with this:

“Mmmm...Sexy you are....Mmmm Kiss you I want!”

Ehhhh! Screw it! By August I was in Edinburgh and there was Handsome Goodbody, and he was bright and funny and an intergalactic space warrior! It was whirlwind and amazing, and when he walked me to the train the day he was to leave for London he said good bye with...okay it might have been the wind but...there was a single shimmering tear in his eye! WOW!!

And then a call came from London. A feminist theater festival. Didn’t pay well, but fuck the money. It was three more weeks in the UK! And I called Sir Blake Barton who confirmed it was a very respectable venue for a London premiere, and Handsome said,

“When? That coincides with the London film festival; I’ll take you on the town and make a fuss of you, how’s that?”

“Juliet, how’s that???”

“I want a pink heart-shaped tombstone inscribed with the words, *“Gonna roll myself in a big ball and die!”*”

Okay! And so I jumped on a plane from Edinburgh to London. I was staying with Handsome. My first night I went to watch him shoot his sitcom, which was a trippy event. VIP treatment, walking the back halls and bowels of the BBC; framed pictures on the walls of stars I’d never seen before...except...Benny Hill, I know him. Handsome, of course, was brilliant and virile and sexy and funny. The show was fun. The plot: there was a new girl at the space station and the crew was taking bets on whether or not she was real...

ACTOR 1: When Cyborgs jump up and down their breasts don’t bounce. Hers don’t bounce.

ACTOR 2: She’s wearing armor, you git. We all are! Your codpiece is made of titanium.

Big laugh in London.

After the show, Handsome was post-show hyperactive, and talking a mile a minute. It was the 100th episode and reason to celebrate, there was a party in a conference room with toasts and speeches and balloons and Brie. Then we left, cabbid it over to a ritzy private club where Handsome was a regular and ordered the regular from his regular waiter...they were very chummy. Meanwhile, he started pointing out all the rich and famous people who surrounded us, and he did not have a nice word to say about anybody. And I asked him how HE had become soooo rich and famous... do you know he had never had to hold down a sucky day job!

“I was 19 when I graduated drama school, a fully trained Shakespearean actor. And I looked 12. I worked non-stop from the moment I got out of school. I’ve been very lucky.”

WOW!!!!

I was very tired. The kind of punchy tired where you begin to experience your R.E.M. State even though you’re still awake. We called for a cab, and as we left, we were attacked by a small gaggle of Paparazzi (Click-click-click.). Handsome explained,

“My girlfriend and I broke up in May. Ever since then they try to photograph me with every girl I go out with.”

We cabbid back to his flat and made love. It was nice, it was quick, and there was no time for lollygaging around in the morning. He had a Spanish lesson, because was planning a trip to Cuba. OLE! And he made me coffee, which was very chivalrous, as he only drank tea, kissed me goodbye. I watched him leave; I wanted to say in bed, but I had planned a morning visit with Sir Blake Barton on the film set of *Henry and Beckett*. And then a tech-through of my show, and then I met up with Handsome at yet another posh and private club where there were more autographed photos of people I didn’t know...more people for him to point out and say nasty things about...

..And then there was silence. You know that silence that says there is nothing left to say? And I felt bad. I liked Handsome. And he was obviously trying to be entertaining.

It's just at that moment I felt I had no room for entertainment... It was like someone trying to force-feed you bonbons when what you really need is a plate of mashed potatoes and meatloaf. What I needed was sleep.

And Handsome breaks the silence by saying,

"It's very kind of Blake Barton to invite you on the set...how well do you know him?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean...how close friends are you...?"

"...oh my God. No it is nothing like that, He's married. You're jealous!...It's so cute..."

"What are you laughing at?"

"...I just...YOU have nothing to worry about. I can't tell you how much I enjoy your company, and I am so glad we're going to have a couple of weeks to get to know each other better...you know...get to see what's going on between us and..."

And he is staring at me in horror. And I realize I have just said something terribly wrong or maybe...Godzilla is outside the window ...

He turns dark. "Don't go there. I haven't even allowed myself to go there. You live in a foreign country. It's not possible. Two weeks of fun; that's what we have here, fun."

...That didn't sound like fun....

And he continues, "I know this country and this business better than you. What I can offer you is a safe haven where you can relax and get some good advice...I think you need that."

Did he just pull rank on me? I think he just pulled rank on me. It was subtle, but it was rank.

I smiled "Thanks." Sipped my wine. Sip...sip...

But we never did recover...people don't always recover from these little aggressive misplaced brain fissures. After that speech he stayed hard. Put on armor. He became...

INSENSITIVE MACHO JERK MAN!: "Nothing you do can effect me! My codpiece is made of titanium!"

Well maybe... Maybe it was me, I really was soooo overtired... We went back to his place and made love. It seemed like the thing to do...I thought I would find comfort in it. But, did not. He was forceful, and not in a fun way. Holding me down, wouldn't look me in the eye, and when he was done he rolled over to go to sleep.

At which point the ghost of Juliet rises from the grave and points a long, bony, skin-drippin' finger at me and says "GET THE FUCK OUT OF HERE, NOW!"

"And where do you suggest to go at 2 am in a foreign country, oh Ghost of Romance Past?"

"I DON'T CARE. GET OUT!!!"

And here I am. Naked. And in bed with a space alien...

And Handsome rolls over and asks me "Why are you so jangly?"

"I wouldn't have the words to explain it," I try not to explain.

"Well try, because if you don't, I am going to be lying here sleepless imagining what's going on in your head."

...Okay that is fair...umm...God...how to start...so I take a deep breath, line my little ducks up in a row and say “Well, I think right now my feelings are hurt because you don’t seem to care that I’m not satisfied.”

Well, that was well phrased. Wasn’t it. Honest, authentic, direct. My therapist would be so proud.

He says, “Where the FUCK is this coming from!”

Oh! Second thought...people don’t like to hear “*Was it good for you? Cause it sucked for me.*” Which was not what I was trying to say, but was clearly what he heard. Next thing we know... he’s trying hard not to scream...I am trying hard not to cry...neither of us knows how our two weeks of fun turned into this. This was going to be a safe haven? Yeah, this was about as comforting as a lead brick to the head!

The following morning I was informed that, “...this was one of the most disturbing displays of emotions I have ever experienced. Clearly we should never sleep together ever again!”

I apologize for being so disturbing. Made some phone calls, and by noon had booked myself into a youth hostel with a single room...It was barren and ugly but that was okay; it reminded me of home. And I crawled into bed, finally slept. For 12 hours.

From then on things went ...actually things went fine. The problem was me. The meltdown with Handsome stuck to my subconscious like a bad case of emotional poison ivy...and I found myself itchy at the concept of trusting anyone else. And, my God, so many people were making so many kind efforts – coming to the show, bringing other friends and industry.... I tried my best to at least appear gracious... but my heart was no longer relying on the kindness of strangers. And I never know what to do when I start feeling this way. All I know is it’s based in fear...and I never know what to do. Here I was in London... but I couldn’t enjoy it and I didn’t know why.

The only place I comfortable in my own skin was backstage at the theater, with the other female solo performers. We were all exhausted, cranky and bonding (bla-bla-bla!) in the dressing room we discovered that all of us had managed to piss off a romantic partner in the last few days.... And so all of us feminist performers types, gay and straight, took a moment of silent meditation to ponder...why is sex so hard? And so we got through the run...and my final night my stage manager gave me a huge hug and said, “Thank you; you are so easy to work with.”

I said, “You’re welcome.” Walked into the ladies’ room into an empty stall, locked the door and sobbed; much to my chagrin I was homesick for Boston! I wanted to sleep on my own futon on the floor, eat American food – Jen’s microwave pizza rolls. I wanted to feel the familiar smooth vinyl surface of my milk carton suit. I went to sleep that night at the hostel and dreamt that I was back with Dash, sitting on that silly pink sofa and he puts his arms around me and says,

“Can I just hold you?”

And I woke up pissed off at my subconscious. I didn’t need to be reminded of this now! Actually, I never needed to be reminded of this ever again! I was no longer accepting comfort from anyone but myself! And I certainly didn’t want to want comfort from some guy I couldn’t have! Well. Having told me...I had a final meeting with my producer at 10 am. Before leaving, I checked my answering service back in Boston found this.

“Hi, it’s Dash! I’ve just checked my e-mail and there is one from you, it’s a couple of weeks old but it’s saying your show is going up in London. Are you in London now? I’m in London. I was doing a promotion for the film festival. Look, I’m staying with friends just out of town. I’d love to see you...I hope it’s all going well and that you are very, very happy! Sending you lots of love...pal.”

Pal, he called me pal.

I went to my meeting and was on a train by noon.

The train pulled out of London about fifteen minutes ago...and the magic has already started. And I don’t get it. As we head into the English countryside the gray clouds burn away, revealing a perfect robin’s-egg-blue sky. And as we clip along there are little houses and horses, cows, and gigantic trees. Tiny rivers laughing and giggling all along the way, and then comes the mist. It steams up from the ground, clinging to the earth like the Angel of Death sequence in *The Ten Commandments*. It begins to collect in the little valleys of the uneven terrain, creating an unreality of smooth flatness; an alternate universe, a magic fairyland is oozing up all around me, demanding to be acknowledged. Images of sweetened condensed milk sinking heavy into a glass of Thai iced tea collide with memories of smog-filled music videos from the 80’s. Mostly from the band Heart and Bonnie Tyler...a sound track of songs I have never found that appealing is added to my experience and it pisses me off! Here I am witness to something truly sublime and all my reference points are pop culture exploitations created by capitalist Hollywood pigs! Marx was right, REVOLUTION! NO...no...no that is not what I want! What I want, What I want, What I want...is here...I have walked through a wardrobe and into Narnia. I am in Montana. With a piercing blue sky above me, a bright glassy autumn sun, the clarity is unnerving. And in my mind’s eye is Juliet pink-cheeked and fat, staring straight into my soul laughing...cause she hadn’t really been dead, “Just been sleeping!” And I get off the train at the station and there he is in a yuppie truck thing, that looks like a *Montana Sport*. With long, blonde hair extensions from his latest money-making effort, a neo-gothic rock opera action extravaganza.

And I say, “It is so good to see you!”

And he says, “Your hair has gotten so long.”

We drive off into what has become a dense and mystical fog. The house...my God it’s a castle, it’s amazing and so what...I haven’t seen him in months! And he lights a fire, typical, and gets me a glass of wine. And we try to catch up, and God, he looks so tired and old, and I want to do something to make that go away, but I feel so tired and old and don’t know how to make that go away for myself. He tells me all about all he’s doing. The money is finally in place for SUN ALSO RISES, pre-production starts in a week” and he is panicked, and thrilled, and panicked, and everything, all at the same time. And I laugh, because my life always feels like that...and I am so happy for him! And he keeps asking about the details of my adventures, and I am so embarrassed for me – at this point I feel like such a...loser. But he asks all these little questions, pulling the whole story out of me. More horrified by everything that is demoralizing me...than I’d ever allow myself to be.

“No...then what happened?? Fuck the space warrior!!! Then what happened??? A youth hostel!!! Your producers allowed you to live at a youth hostel! My God!!!!!!” Until he’s got me laughing, thinking, *here* is a safe haven. And I find myself saying “You

know... nothing is really wrong. It's just...like...I am finally learning how to get everything that I have ever wanted...you know but I'm too stressed out to enjoy it."

And Dash says, "Yup!"

"Ahhh, you know that one...?"

And Dash says, "Yup!"

"Figured out any solutions?"

He meets my gaze and smiles. "Nope."

And then there is silence.

And he says, "Could I just hold you?" And he leans forward to embrace me.

And he is so solid, so vivid, so warm.

And slowly I melt, I dissolve, and I lean back and our lips, they don't even meet, they just barely touch, and we stay like that for a good five minutes before we find the courage to kiss. And I do not stop. Although I am thinking, GIRLFRIEND! He has a GIRLFRIEND! HELLO!!

But try as I might to cling to this reality, it won't stick. All I know is this feels so healthy and I want to know what this feels like, I want to know what this is. It is too much for me to fathom and I am trying to sink my hands into his skin and get inside his veins, but I can't. I want to kiss past whatever this barrier is between us, or at least name it. But I can't and I say, "I STILL DON'T KNOW YOU!"

And he says, "But it feels like I have known you my whole life, doesn't it? It feels like we're just connected. Do you feel that?"

And I tell him, "Yes."

"This is not my place. Someone could come through that door any moment; we shouldn't be caught like this. Do you want to go upstairs?"

I open my mouth to answer. And like a Greek chorus they appear: the apple-cheeked eye-lined girls, Juliet pushing the little old lady in her wheelchair... They all stare at me expectantly...

And he asks, "Are you okay?"

And I say, "Lets go upstairs."

He leads me up the stairs and to a very large guestroom with a very large bed. And I help him off with his shirt and he helps me out of my dress. And we begin to kiss again, bare skin on bare skin. And he feels so solid and vivid and warm, and I have my hands on the back of his head and I drag my nails firmly down his neck. And he gasps and says, "You can't leave any marks."

I examine the long pink lines that I just made. "Sorry; I think it'll fade quickly. I'll try to be careful, promise, no marks." And he smiles and kisses me on the forehead and sits, kisses me on the lips, and then more aggressively; he flips himself on top of me taking the dominant position, kissing me again. My hips rise to meet his, and he pulls back with a deep intake of breath and whispers, "I can't be doing this...Oh my God, oh my God..." and he leaps from the bed.

"Oh my God, oh my God..." He begins to pace. Running his fingers through his long, weird Palomino hair.

"Sweetie, it's fine...Really, sit down."

"No, we need to go back downstairs."

"Okay, okay...uh...you can make me a cup of tea."

He meets my gaze, "A cup of tea?"

“Yes. Tea is good. Would you make me a cup of tea?”

“You’ve been in this country too long.” And we walk down the stairs laughing.

Once in the kitchen, he finds everything he needs: kettle, cups, sugar, tea, infuser – he seems relieved to have a project. And I am proud I thought of this so quickly. But then I realize I quite forgot to give myself something to do, so suddenly I burst into tears. He drops the sugar bowl loudly on the counter, rushes up behind me, putting his hands on the back of my neck.

“Breathe,” he says.

“No, I’m okay.” His hands are cool and wet. It feels good; it makes me stop. “I’m fine,” I say. “It’s just ...uhhh. I always thought in the back of my mind that one of the things you like about me is that I’m the kinda gal that says ‘no’ to things like this, and I didn’t say ‘no’ this time; I didn’t even try...”

“Please don’t!”

“...let me finish. It’s just...I wanted to get as much of you as I could remember so I don’t forget what you feel like, because I do forget what you feel like, and I don’t want to forget. There is a part of me that I found when I met you...I don’t know how to hold onto...it when you go away...”

“I don’t understand this connection,” he says, trying hard. “And Christ, I have a girlfriend who I care deeply, deeply about, who, yeah, I barely see. But, I can’t do this with you and honestly work things out with her now, can I?”

And I say, “No, you can’t!”

“What went on up there, it’s been so long since I felt.... I forgot I could feel...that I...I...I ...I...I...” And he turns into a dolphin or a woodchuck...

And I say, “I know.”

And he says, “I am so sorry; I am so sorry to have caused you any pain.”

And I say, “I know.”

And we walk back to the fireplace as he continues to figure it all out. “What’s going on here? Is all of this a sign that what I am doing with her isn’t...real? Or is it something more? Or is it something else? And you don’t know how often I think of you. And how easy it would be to just jump on a plane to Boston? And I didn’t know if on seeing you any of these feelings would really still be there. But you got off the train and there they are? And I don’t understand. We have such different lives, you and me. There is no reason why... I don’t know why... But...You do feel that?”

And I say, “Yes.”

And he asks, “What are you doing here in London now? Why now? And I am so sorry that this friendship has been so one-sided. You don’t know how much you trying to stay in touch has meant to me. You don’t know....with everything I have seen, I have so little faith in the longevity of anything. Especially... But look at us! It’s been over two years... And you are here. You don’t know how much hope this gives me.”

And I stare at him, wondering, “hope” for what? And wishing he would let me know him better so I could understand what it is he is trying to tell me.

“This is, it is, I...it...it...it’s...”

“It’s big,” I say.

“It’s a great... Passio....sh...passio...n”

“It’s Big,” I say.

“And this is just the tip of the iceberg”

“I know,” I say.

And then there is silence.

And he says...

...“We better go.”

The drive home is awkward and weird and long, due to traffic. We keep falling into a heavy silence that I am comfortable in, but he is clearly not. He starts asking me stupid questions,

“Did you ever have any pets?”

“What is the capitol of Uruguay?”

“Do you ski?”

And I find myself prattling on about the mundane almost pathologically. And his life is so cool, there are a gazillion really good questions I could ask him, but I can't think of one that feels genuine. The silence feels genuine. I like the silence; it is warm, it is fertile, it is green, it is mossy. Things could grow there. But every time I settle into it, he breaks it with another stupid question. And I follow his lead, gushing stupid prattle. Reminding me of when my father was dying. I was in a hospital waiting room and it was a relief to distract myself by watching TV, only I couldn't bear anything that would make me feel anything real or strong. It was a quest for the truly vapid. Even the Flintstones theme song was too abrasive. And I finally settled gratefully on two episodes, back to back, of *“The Love Boat.”*

When we finally got to the youth hostel, he had turned to ice. “Goodbye,” short hug, “Travel safe,” not a mention of keeping in touch. His codpiece was made of titanium. And I never know what to do when people start pulling this. All I know is that it's based in fear. And I never know what to do. I try to find some lame excuse not to get out of the car. “Think I dropped something; nope.” Try another quick embrace. No response. “I'll be in touch.” No answer.

I get out of the car and he drives away fast.

I watch the tail lights until I can't see them any more.

And I think, “What to do?”

And the old lady says, “Well, It's only 7:30; there's a cast party at Soho House! It would nice be able to see the gals again before you leave. I think you should go.”

And Juliet says, “That might be fun...come on, it's your last night. Can we have some fun before we leave!”

And I say, “We could try.”

And I walk down the street towards the Chalk Farm Tube Station. Following the light of the street lamps, pouring down through the London fog like the straight fingers of God onto the glittering asphalt. Making everything wholesome and good...

And then there is silence...

THE END