

BRIMMING

By Marya Sea Kaminski

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CHARACTERS:

ONE WOMAN. In a bathtub.

THE PLAY: PART ONE

SOUND CUE (in Blackout): Track One, "Don't Cry by Etta James"

Don't cry, don't cry baby
Don't cry baby
Dry your eyes
And let's be sweethearts again

LIGHTS SLOWLY UP

And oh, cause you know
You know I didn't mean
To ever treat you so mean
Come on come on sweetheart
And let's try it over again

And wooh
(There's a pounding offstage. A neighbor who wants her to shut up.)
Don't cry, don't cry baby

(She reaches out of the tub and shuts off radio. SOUND CUE OUT. She finishes the rest of the song a cappella.)

Don't cry
Don't cry
Dry your eyes
And let's be sweethearts again

Don't cry. Dry your eyes.
Here they come, those two little guys.
Patrick Stewart dressed as Jean Luc Picard
here with Han Solo kickin it hard
from the bathtub, bathtub
oh yeah, from the bathtub.

Loddi doddi. We like to party.
We don't cause trouble.
We don't bother nobody.
We're just some men that's on the mic,
and when we rock it on the mic we rock the mic right.

Goin on and on, keeping yall in health.
Just to see you smile and enjoy yourself
in the bathtub, bathtub

oh yeah, in the bathtub.

Rubbadub. One girl in the tub
soaking in vinegar and Epsom salt.

She looks at floating thermometer.

Maintaining 107 degrees Fahrenheit, Captain.

Did you know that if you dissolve two tablespoons of Epsom salt in a dead car battery, the battery will take a charge? No shit. Something to do with the magnesium. That's what I'm needin, some recharging.

I need me some... magnesium.

I can hear my neighbor on the other side of the wall. In his bathroom. God, he's hot. He's the reason I rented this apartment. Well, him and the walk-in closet.

I think he's getting in the shower.

We always seem to be bathing at the same time. It's very suspicious.

I'll bet he's naked.

Sometimes I panic in the shower.

I think of Psycho or the showdown scene in Fatal Attraction,
and I get nervous that someone has snuck in
a shadow on the dry side of the curtain.

So I start moving really fast
lather rinse scrub lather rinse scrub.

Inevitably I get soap in my eyes and then I'm really fuct.

I can't think of a worse way to die,
blind and naked and totally unprepared,
unable to defend myself
beyond a pink plastic razor and an old pumice stone.

It's kind of tough to be alone.

Chimchiminee chimchiminee

Chim chim chiree

I feel as lucky as lucky can be.

Chimchiminee chimchiminee

Chim chim chiroo

Good luck will rub off when I hold hands with you.

Uh, I probably should get out of here,
but where is there to go?

What is there to do?

I can't dig a hole deep enough to
hide

from dysfunctional talk shows, fatalistic newsstands,
the Clear Channel digital press.

I've been feeling a little powerless,
so Patrick Stewart, Han Solo and I are staging a protest
until we know what to do next.
About the world. The wars. Iraq. Afghanistan.
Man oh man,
we got our guys working union overtime
in two Mideast theaters
while the WMD production company is
busy in a prop room in North Korea.

Let's see, uh...
I've already been in this tub for...
I don't know how long.
I just keep adding hot water.
Trying to maintain a balance
between what I add and what I drain.
What else is there to do?
Patrick? Solo?
Because right now I'm just laying low,
waiting for it to pass.
Everything. And the wars.
More than seventeen hundred American soldiers
have been killed since the war in Iraq was officially declared over.

And I know it's not simple,
but isn't that the fucking problem here?
I feel like I can't get anywhere near to how complicated it all is.
I mean, we kinda dropped the ball.
Even if we wanted to end it all, we couldn't. We can't.
We can't pull out without
leaving an entire part of the world to collapse.
And all I can do is take too many naps.
And read the paper. Keep up with the casualties,
the hits and misses.
Listen to NPR while I do the dishes.

Well, I'm not doing the dishes again. Until I understand.

But man, for now I'm staying in the bathtub.
The bathtub, bathtub
oh yeah, in the bathtub.

BLACK OUT.

AFTER A COUNT OF THREE, LIGHTS UP.

PART TWO

Tick tock you don't stop
To the tickticka you don't quit.

From where I sit
I can reach the q-tips, my cell phone, and the radio.
All I need is a microwave in here and I'd be good to go.

Do you know it's physically impossible to lick your elbow?
Really. Try it. I won't laugh.

A few weeks ago
I was at this scenesterhipster club opening in Portland
watching all the patent-leather
feathered players drink vodka tonics
and make their entrances and exits
on the tiniest stages you ever saw.

And me sitting here raw
material unpolished unsmoothed
unclaimed freight
on the move.
I mean, get a load a this place.
Let's cut right to the chase.

Is anyone here planning on going home with me tonight?
I'm a catch!
Twenty-two.
Actually I'm twenty seven.

I look over and he's talking to
some skinny pretty girl who's looking up at him
from the bottom of her eyelids
batting a thousand.

My dow jones crashes
with my blood sugar.
I've been on this stupid low-carb, high-protein diet
and it's left my stomach whimpering and my heart dried out.

Atkinsfatkins Maker's Mark
Without bread and liquor my days are dark.

Well, here's to trendy bars and green-eyed romance!
Hey there! This is your chance.
The last one to fall in love is a rotten egg-headed jerk.

God, I just want to crack him open and scramble him.

I enjoy peeling things.
Hard-boiled eggs,
thick-skinned oranges,
those ragged little edges of fingernail.
I like to see how it separates.
See what's hiding underneath.
I like to get closer to the center of the thing,
I think.

They peeled me open when I was twelve and a half,
along the length of my back and across my ribcage.
Removed a rib, collapsed a lung,
to get nearer to the center of me.

They attached these metal rods to my spine to keep my aligned
and to make sure my scoliosis didn't grow in on itself,
leaving me a hunchback.

Someday I intend to wear strictly backless dresses to show off my history.

You wanna see? The scars?
Well, I'd show you but I really don't think I'm ready to get out of the tub just yet.

she starts to shave her legs.

I've actually got quite a few. Scars.
Some old and some new.

Last week, my doctor at the no-health-insurance-free clinic
found a lump under my left nipple.
Just a little marble, a ripple, a pebble,
a rebel cannonball lodged
between my heart
and you.

The last time they found a lump in my breast I was twenty-two
and just graduated from college.
I'm 27 now and freshly finished with grad school.
It might just be coincidence, but just in case
I don't think there will be
anymore school for me.
It's a terminal degree
anyway. I can't wait to see

the biopsy,
so we can all agree
on just how terminal it might be.

Pause. She tries to lick her elbow. Then shaves the other leg.

Twiddly dee twiddly doo

I guess I can't keep courting death like I used to.
Fast-driving chainsmoking doublevision.
One night stands for weeks at a time.
Now that I'm in my late-20s,
flirting with death has become serious business.
Because all my friends are getting hitched and if I'm not careful
my flirtation with disaster is going to whirlpool into a deep love affair.
We'll stare
deep into each other's eyes, I'll Windsor knot his ties,
we'll go the movies and text message late into the night,
I'll bring death home to meet my family, we might
move into a belltown one bedroom or a Fremont walk-up.
Then death will knock me up.
Or out.

Boy. He's been in the shower a long time. I wonder what he's...hm.

BLACKOUT.

AFTER A THREE COUNT, LIGHTS UP.

PART THREE

she emerges with goggles on.

I think there's a family of spiders living down the drain of this tub.

she submerges again.

I find one every so often,
and subject it to a cast iron porcelain death.

They remind me of that terrible movie Arachnophobia
that came out during the first gulf war.
I remember the cross-marketing
the buttons and tshirts
Iraqnophobia
with a big red slash through Saddam Hussein's face.
Remember when he was disappeared? Without a trace?
Not a cast iron porcelain death though,

just living with his family down some drain.
And now he waits
for a very special tribunal
to figure out his trial dates.

she starts making helicopter noises.

shot down over Iraq
16 American men, boys die
an Iraqi man on the radio sighs,
reluctantly, I'm not sure who should apologize.

I guess I survive.
Soaking in a bloodbath.
I wish it was a bloody mary bath,
and that I had some celery.

To distract me from the reality tv and vh1 party lines,
high protein diets and did you know landmines
are still manufactured in Minneapolis?
By a company called 3M.
You know, the same people who make scotch tape.

I mean, what am I supposed to do?
Boycott adhesives?
Then what will I use to put the pieces together
after all this tears me apart?

I cried the other day.
Sitting in Elliot Bay Bookstore, I happened upon the speech Jimmy Carter gave when he won the Nobel Peace Prize.

And I am so glad you're all here, because I've asked Patrick Stewart if he would be kind enough to recite a bit of it for us.

Let me getcha a little soapbox here...

LIGHT CUE.

PART FOUR

Your majesties, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I am not here as a public official, but as a citizen of a troubled world.

When I served as President of the United States and Commander-In-Chief of our armed forces, I was one of those that bore the sobering responsibility of maintaining global stability during the height of the Cold

War, as the world's two superpowers confronted each other. Both sides understood that an unresolved political altercation or a serious misjudgment could lead to a nuclear holocaust.

The world has changed greatly since I left the White House. Now there is only one superpower, with unprecedented military and economic strength. The coming budget for American armaments will be greater than the next 15 countries combined.

Instead of issuing in a millennium of peace the world is now, in many ways, a more dangerous place. The greater ease of travel and communication has not been matched by equal understanding and mutual respect.

To suggest that war can prevent war is a base play on words and a despicable form of warmongering. The objective of any who sincerely believe in peace must be to exhaust every honourable recourse in an effort to save the peace. The world has had ample evidence that war begets conditions that only beget further war.

In order for us human beings to commit ourselves personally to the inhumanity of war, we find it necessary first to dehumanize our opponents.

From a great distance, we launch bombs and missiles with almost total impunity, and never want to know the number or identity of the victims.

War may sometimes be a necessary evil. But no matter how necessary, it is always an evil, never a good. We will not learn how to live in peace together by killing each other's children.

It is clear that global challenges must be met with an emphasis on peace.

LIGHTS CHANGE BACK.

Thank you, Patrick.

Now, if someone could just teach me how to get some of that peace for myself before I bring it to the globe.

You know?

I mean, my heart hurts for the world and my head spins,
but I can't even convince myself to be at peace when I'm alone for a moment.

I try not to show it.

How dismal my own company can be to keep.

PART FIVE

Look at this stuff. Isn't it neat?

Wouldn't you say my collections complete?

Wouldn't you say I'm a girl,

I'm a girl who has everything?

I've got gadgets and gizmos a plenty.

I've got whoozits and whatsits galore.

You want thingamabobs?

I've got twenty.

But who cares? No big deal.
I want more.

I want the world.
I want the whole world.
I want to lock it all up in my pocket.
(The neighbor knocks again to shut her up.)
It's my ball of chocolate.
Fuck you...
Give it to me now.

I can't tell you how I manage it.
I manage to keep me away from myself.
I'll do anything.
Hours in the library studying friendster and myspace profiles.
Entire afternoons wandering grocery store aisles.
I mean, I'll do anything.
Drink til dawn and then map out a long
to do list of very important distractions.
I'll play with action figures.
Sometimes I'll change my clothes three times through the course of a day.
I'll go see play after play and after a movie another play.

Before I sit in a room by myself
and take an inventory of my own mental health,
and ask why I can't sleep alone
or look too long in the mirror while I'm at home.
I can't stand what I see sometimes,
tracing edges and lines of what I might never be.
Thin.
Rich.
Nestled into a niche.
Not the hand I've been dealt this round.
But when the sound of my own voice is carefully manicured nails against a chalkboard,

How can I possibly resist
all of our luscious cultural sedatives?
Infomercials, Ipods, camera phones, daily blogs, credit card incentives?
I mean, I am an easy target.
My high-functioning self-loathing will keep me buying
whatever they're unloading off the back of their corporate media truck.

Fuck it.
I'm staying in this tub.

God, I think he's still over there. Is he blow drying his hair?

No.
Yah. I think he is.
Huh. Big date or something.

Roses are red and violets are blue

God, I wonder who he's going out with.
Strange bird, that guy.
But throws a mad party.
Last Halloween, he wore a diaper.
And a tshirt with a picture on it of himself as a child wearing a diaper.
Hey, different strokes for different folks.
What can I say?

I surprised me today.
I realized that I might want to have kids maybe.
Which is astonishing considering I just recently decided that
I don't hate them.

I realized I might want to grow up.
Grow old.
Raise fuct up wonderful children with their own defects
and see if any of them resemble my dad.

He died really young.
And I've always assumed that would be my legacy.
But we'll see.
Maybe I'll grow old instead.

PART SIX

I know won't choke on this lump in my throat.
Or have a heart attack over the mess in Iraq.
Or lose my breath over this crescent moon in my left breast.
Not the death of me yet.
It'll be fine
or almost fine
or not fine at all
and they'll peel me open one more time and remove it.
My breasts will be smaller and my thighs will keep getting bigger.
The wars will resolve
or not.
Someone someday will weld together
a slow and steady exit-strategy.
Congress and the rest of us will all
breathe out a small
sigh of relief, and maybe regret.

As for me,
I don't have an exit-strategy yet,
although I bet
getting out of this bath will be a good start.
I suspect
that time will leave her watermark
on my profile, a ring around the bathtub.
Like a tree aging, I'll widen with wisdom.
Deep roots. Crow's feet.
My days will get longer and the years will go faster.
I'll map out my life in seasons. And scars.
Charting a long, long living
brimming with color and laughter.

Yah. Maybe I'll do that
after all.

LIGHTS FADE.

SOUND UP on Beck's "The Golden Age."

END OF PLAY

Prop List:

bathub
soap and water
plug
2 action figures
shower cap
goggles
pink razor
shaving gel
pumice stone
bar of soap
thermometer