

IN DISDRESS

By Marya Sea Kaminski

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CHARACTERS

ONE WOMAN. In a dress.

PRE-SHOW

Audience enters the theatre.

They see a very tall girl in the middle of the stage wearing a top hat and an enormous hoop dress. She is eating a cup cake, and reading People magazine.

Sometimes she hums 'Someday My Prince Will Come' or 'When Doves Cry' by Prince.

PART ONE: SATURN RETURNS

As Girl realizes that it's show-time, she puts the magazine away.

Lights, please.

Lights change for the show. Girl starts to say something then realizes her face is covered in chocolate icing.

Um, lights, out, please.

She pulls a wet nap out from somewhere inside her dress. Cleans up. She's ready.

Lights. Please.

Astrologers call the period between ages 28 and 30 the Saturn Return.

Gesture. SOUND: BLING.

It is the first time the planet Saturn completes its cycle through your birth chart and returns to the spot it occupied when you were born.

It is a very difficult transition of endings and beginnings.

Few people describe the Saturn Return as a pleasant period.

Gesture. SOUND: BLING.

You may feel alienated and lonely,

while family and friends feel as though you are shutting them out.

They say it is a line marking the end of youth.

And it is accompanied by a sense of urgency,

a desire for everything all at once,

a feeling that you must accomplish all the things you've ever wanted or planned to do now. Right now.

Right. Right? Right.

Gesture. SOUND: BLING.

She pulls a cupcake and trick candle out of her dress. She lights it through the following.

I never thought I'd live passed 27.

I mean, who'd want to?

I imagined a tragic car accident.

A widely publicized plane crash. A very dark alley. An anonymous mugging. A rock and roll overdose of ecstasy and red bull.

I thought I'd live hard and fast.

Really hard and really fast and now...

Now I'm really turning 29 and I cannot fucking stop. Living.

I cannot stop eating.

She wishes and blows out the candle. It relights.

I cannot stop smoking.

She wishes and blows out the candle. It relights.

Or drinking.

The same.

By myself.

She licks her fingers and extinguishes the candle.

In this apartment which I kind of hate and can barely afford.

A cell phone starts ringing from somewhere inside her dress. She is mortified and starts to frantically pull out all kinds of objects in search of it. She does not find the phone in time, but turns it off. Embarrassed, she tries to continue.

Sorry about that.

Right. Saturn. 182 years ago, Francisco Goya created a painting called Saturn Devours his Children.

The lights change and the girl becomes Saturn.

It belongs to his series of Black Paintings, generated after he'd gone deaf and it depicts this huge bug-eyed monster gnawing a bloody arm off a naked body.

She gestures as Saturn, then the lights change back.

14 years ago, my 9th grade Spanish class took a trip to Madrid and I saw Saturn for myself in the Prado.

Girl sees.

He was beautiful.

And when I get home, I make a photocopy of that dark grainy feast of blood and guts and scotch-taped it to the roof of an old top hat.

She removes her top hat to show the audience.

Wore it around the halls of my suburban high school.

Some academics say Goya was depicting his terror of mortality. That even though he was deaf, he wasn't blind and he was looking at Time, stretching before him and so far behind. And it had a bloody face and a ravenous appetite,

but if I had children,

I would eat them for my 29th birthday.

I would totally eat them.

SOUND: BLING. Blackout.

PART TWO: THE THING

Lights up on the girl playing with a Wonder Woman barbie doll.

The thing is, it should've happened already.

Lynda Carter had already been named Miss Phoenix, Miss Arizona, and Miss World USA. She had already become

SOUND: WHOOSH-WHOOSH.

Wonder Woman and had released a woefully under-recognized album called Portrait.

Molly Ringwald was already a member of the New Mickey Mouse Club and the Brat Pack, and had already dated at least one Beastie Boy.

Vivien Leigh had already played Scarlett O'Hara, married Laurence Olivier, and been diagnosed with bi-polar disorder.

Beat.

Anyways, it should've happened already.
Because Time is picking up speed, a bug-eyed monster with his eye on the prize. And my thighs. Expanding at the speed of Bud Lite.
And I can't decide whether to stay up late or get up really, really early.
To suck the marrow from the bones of youth or to take Calcium supplements.
I can't decide whether a keg party is really worth all the carbs.
I mean, I'm not the youngest belle at the ball anymore. And they've stopped checking my ID at the door.
I'm not the youngest anything. Anymore.
And I've become

SOUND: WHOOSH-WHOOSH.

powerfully predictable.
I order mushroom omelettes for breakfast. And rare hamburgers.
Also for breakfast.
I show up late.
I leave early.
I am in this dress every day.
I know what you're thinking.
Hot.
Right. Right? Right.
But it gets heavy.
And it can be awkward climbing in and out of my stationwagon.

She puts the doll away in her dress, pulls out a bottle of water and takes a drink, when she puts it back, she finds a photo of her family. Looks at it. Shows it to the audience.

My mother's 28 had a husband, a red convertible bug, a strict diet of grapefruit and peanut butter, three kids and a four bedroom house with a room just for her sewing machine.

My 28 has...

She puts the photo away and looks into the pockets of her dress.

In my 28, houseplants die.

She pulls out a dead houseplant.

Dirt collects.

She pulls out a bowl of dried pasta.

Pasta hardens. Money disappears. Boys come and then they go. We never got to that, I guess, my mom and me.

She puts the pasta away and pulls out an electric toothbrush.

We never had the 'this is how you care for living things' conversation.

She buzzes the toothbrush.

The 'just add a little cinnamon to the sauce' conversation.

She buzzes the toothbrush.

The 'don't max out your credit cards' conversation.

She buzzes the toothbrush.

We never had the 'boys birds condoms and bees' conversation.

The toothbrush won't work. She frustrates.

I figured that one out, though.

She waves toothbrush. SOUND: SHE-BANG! She is flooded with delightful memories. SOUND: PORN BACKGROUND MUSIC.

Ooh! I remember it so clearly. When I first found my parents' porn collection. It was so good. Such a good secret. Delicious. I became an immediate subscriber to their VHS and beta library. Deep Throat. Debbie. Emmanuelle. Jane Fonda's Thighs and Abs Workout.

Curious. Curious material. I saw them for myself. Men. Love. Bodies.
Baby oil. Vibrators.

Toothbrush starts to buzz. Girl turns it off and looks out, blinks, seeing something for the first time.

A symphony of 'No, I can't' peppered with the perfect dose of 'Please.'
Please. Oh. Oh please yes.
Yes right there. Just like that.

The skirt of the girl's dress raises to reveal a huge console television, decked out as a plantation.

I want you. I want you. Yes.
I want you to fuck me.
Yah. Fuck me.
Over. Fuck me over.
Fuck me over and over again.
Harder. Fuck me harder.
Yah. Right there.
In the head. Fuck me up in the head.
Yah. Just like that.
Just like this.
This
is how I learned everything.

Girl looks forward and blinks, seeing something for the first time. With each blink, the picture on the television screen changes to a new piece of information from porn or movies.

Blink.

Blink.

Blink.

Blink.

Blink.

Blink.

Blink.

I learned it from watching.

Girl looks down, realizes what she's been revealing.

Ooh.

Blackout.

VIDEO is revealed, showing clips from porn in the rhythm of the girl's lines.

WHEN HARRY MET, ORGASM
THELMA & LOUISE, BRAD
PITT SCENE

GONE W/ THE WIND, KISSING
PRETTY N PINK, KISSING
SAY ANYTHING, BOOM BOX
WONDER WOMAN, SPINNING
SINGLES, BOOB JOB
REALITY BITES, CAR DATE
INTO KISSING

PART THREE: FUCK SONS

Television comes on and shows a collection of beer bottle caps on a table. Onstage, the girl pulls a Bud Lite out of her dress, opens it, offers one to the audience.

VIDEO: two bottle caps on a table top. then three, the five.

I wish for daughters.
Fuck sons.
I wish for 28 daughters with dark eyes, webbed feet, and the giggles.
Okay, maybe just one. And I can show her the tapes.
Okay, maybe not all the tapes
but definitely
my prom
my graduation
and my escape hatch road trips.
I'll tell her about the night I got stranded in South Dakota and that cowboy who picked up my tab.
Show her how to pick a lock with a credit card
and shave her legs with a steak knife.
Moisturize.
Balance a checkbook.
Hand off scissors with the sharp points in.
Play Joni Mitchell on the guitar.
Finger knit.
How to hem pants with carpet tape.
How to load a dish washer.
Bat her eyelashes.
And parallel park.

PRETTY IN PINK, DANCE
REALITY BITES, SPEECH
GIRL, PACKING CAR
GIRL, STRANDED

GIRL, SHAVING LEGS

GIRL, MOISTURIZER
GIRL, CHECKBOOK
GIRL, SCISSORS
GIRL, GUITAR
GIRL, KNITTING
GIRL, PANTS
GIRL, DISHWASHER
GIRL, CLOSE UP ON
EYELASHES, PAN OUT TO A
FLIRTATIOUS AND
MIRACULOUS EXECUTION OF
PARALLEL PARKING

Make sure your rear bumper is parallel to his.
Put your signal on.
Turn your hips all the way to the left
and start backing in.
When you've got him
centered in your periphery,
straighten up and go all the way.
If you get bumped, scratched, or hit
pull away and start looking for another space.

GIRL, PULLING AWAY INTO
SOFT-FOCUSED DRIVING
FOOTAGE

I'll tell her about men and

Ben. With his green eyes. Black shiny soccer shorts. And born-again parents who called me a heathen.

And Kyle's gold pickup truck. Dirty fingernails. He bought my first tube of red lipstick and my first pack of cigarettes.

Peter. Shaved head. Buddhist tea ceremonies. His candles burnt holes in my favorite comforter.

Martin. Sweet breath. Nice suit. Bumps at the ATM on Ludlow. And then his girlfriend keyed my car.

Damien. Weezer glasses and a trust fund smile. A courtship of coffee dates and blow jobs. And then we stopped getting coffee.

And if you don't get it right the first time. And if you can never fucking get it right, learn how to fake it.

Girl starts to laugh, first softly then extremely. She stops abruptly.

That too. All that is really good to know.
I will read her very grim fairy tales and the transcripts of my adventures word for word.

And then I will eat her.
And she will be so good.

Blackout and video out simultaneously.

VIDEO OUT.

**PART FOUR: PUPPETS ALWAYS KNOW THE RIGHT THING
TO SAY**

Footlights up on two puppets (Barbie dolls on sticks) standing against a romantic night sky on the television set. The Ken doll is wearing a black tshirt and wrist bands. Barbie is wearing a red dress, similar to the girl's. VIDEO: A live image of a romantic night sky
SOUND: THE OVERTURE TO GONE WITH THE WIND.

BARBIE:
I've always depended on the kindness of strangers.

KEN:
Let's not be strangers. Anymore.

BARBIE:
Um. Okay.

KEN:
Okay.

BARBIE:
Okay.

KEN:
I'm not from around here.

BARBIE:
Yah. Me neither.

KEN:
But the sky sure is beautiful.

BARBIE:
Yes. It is.

KEN:
And so are you.

BARBIE:
Really?

KEN:
Sure.

Barbie attacks Ken and they start making out. Girl looks up and realizes she's being watched. Embarrassed, she clears her throat and the lights and television go dark.

VIDEO OUT.

PART FIVE: SIMPLE

In darkness.

I want this to be simple.

I want this to make so much sense.

I want to draw a straight line around the last 28 years, 11 months, and 14 days and follow it into something obvious.

Beat.

PART SIX: TEQUILA MAKES HER CLOTHES FALL OFF

The television plays footage of Girl getting ready for a date and eventually starts to mix with porn and movie stars putting on makeup. Girl pulls make up from her dress and applies it through the following.

Forearms. Rattlesnake belt buckle. Eyelashes.
He called me beautiful on our first date and
I am
so excited.
Anxious.
I hope...
I hope...
I hope he calls me on his cigarette break.
This is
the best part.
These first few phone calls, text messages, movie theatre arm rests, long
walks home, maybes, yesses...
Yes. No matter how far two people ever get,
this is
where I live...

Onstage, Girl takes one last look in the mirror before she puts her makeup away. At the exact same moment, the video freezes on Girl making the same face in her bathroom mirror.

You know I'm

SOUND: WHOOSH-WHOOSH.

powerfully predictable,

Girl makes a gesture, the lights change and club music starts to play in the background. SOUND: AT THE CLUB.

And I got no game.
So tonight I wait by the phone
and then I go to meet him at the club.
He's got me on the guest list.
I'm feeling funny
and a little nervous so I have a shot of Tequila. This is
nice.
I feel so young.
Not a day passed 26.
This is Saturday night and a warm April
and I do look hot in this dress.
I am laughing. So much.
I am getting all the jokes.
And I'm liking the look of him. So much.
Black tshirt. Leather wristbands. Electric guitar fingertips. Blurry tattoos.

VIDEO: Plays clips of Girl getting ready for a date. They are very slow at first and begin to gain speed. As they speed up, they are interspersed with clips of porn and movie stars dressing and putting on makeup. These images are not obvious, almost subliminal.

VIDEO: At the same time Girl looks in her mirror onstage, the video freezes on Girl making the same face in her bathroom mirror. THIS IMAGE SHOULD, VERY SLOWLY, BECOME BLURRY THROUGH THE REMAINDER OF THE SCENE.

SOUND: CAR ENGINE STARTING

And the club disappears and we're getting into his very shiny pickup truck.

We are at my house

SOUND: BOB DYLAN'S "JUST LIKE A WOMAN"

rolling around on my Ikea area rug.

We are lips, tongues, and teeth when he takes off his black tshirt and he wants me to take off this dress.

No, I can't.

Girl starts to slowly, almost painfully, remove her dress.

I don't

really like the look of me.

Without everything I need.

I am

nothing without all this weight and taffeta.

Girl stands, in her underwear and a red tank top, on top of the television. The image of her on the television should be completely blurred.

VIDEO: Image of Girl in the mirror should be blurred passed the point of recognition.

This is

nice?

We are listening to Bob Dylan and whispering about snaps and buttons when

What?

What?

My nose starts to bleed and I have to go to the bathroom for tissues.

When I come back, he is in my bedroom.

He is under covers and we're kissing and tugging at my cotton sheets.

Well,

this is happening

and well, I wish I'd shaved my legs

and I wish that my panties were fancy,

and I wish

when he rips off my underwear and suddenly I'm naked.

My legs are over my head and he's trying to go down on me.

No no no too soon. And I move away.

And then again and

No no no too soon. And I pull away.

And then again and

No. Too soon. And I get on top.

He gets one hand on my left hip and one hand between us and then

I feel him.

Without a condom or a conversation.

Time stands still, as the television furiously flies through all the porn and movie images we've seen, searching for a context or some advice for this moment. As the television's fury resolves to a white screen, Girl becomes Saturn for a moment and then...

Get out of my house.

As Girl steps off the television, the screen goes to static.

Get out.

What the fuck do you think you're doing?

You need to get out of here.

I can't find my bathrobe, I grab my winter coat.

Get out. Get the fuck out of here. And this is

Him turning into a guy.

He is suddenly acting like a guy.

He is indignant.

His hands are huge and pissed off.

He thinks he is right and I am wrong.

Right. Right?

Wrong. And right now you have to get the fuck out of my house.

Blackout. Video out.

VIDEO: As time stands still for the girl, we rush through all the images we've seen of men, women, and love. The television is searching for a way to help her. It cannot, and the images overload until the screen is entirely white.

VIDEO: *The moment the Girl is not touching the TV, the screen goes to static.*

VIDEO: *out.*

PART SEVEN: ON TWO FEET

Lights up on Girl downstage holding her top hat, she is thinking. The television plays VIDEO: Wonderwoman. footage of Wonderwoman. Without looking, the girl says

No.

The television changes to an image of Molly Ringwald waiting by the phone. Without looking, the girl says

VIDEO: Molly Ringwald waiting by the phone in PRETTY IN PINK.

No.

The television changes to Vivien Leigh in Gone with the Wind. The girl walks over and, for the first time, turns the television off.

VIDEO: Vivien Leigh in GONE WITH THE WIND.

No.

She looks at the audience. She starts to say something. Changes her mind. She looks at the painting of Saturn on the roof of her top hat.

In Goya's greatest scenes,
we seem to see the people of the world
exactly at the moment they attain the title
"suffering humanity."
They writhe upon the page
in a veritable rage
of adversity.
Groaning with babies

She places the top hat on top of the television.

With babies and bayonettes
under cement skies
in an abstract landscape of blasted trees
bent statues bats wings beaks
cadavers and carnivorous cocks.
And all the final hollering monsters.

They seem so bloody real.
It's as if they really still existed.
And they do.
Only the landscape is changing.
And Saturn's returning.
And I am
going to devour him.
And save his leftovers in tin foil.
For my daughter.

The girl takes a long stretch upward, as she flicks her fingers we hear

SOUND: SHE-BANG!

Blackout.

END OF PLAY.