

**Days
without
Nights**

*Aladdin's Electric Lamp
Madelín de Rumba*

Arthur Meiselman

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Aladdin's Electric Lamp

for Celice

The scene is light, airy. The setting is suggestive: a suspended window frame with a piece of curtain draped over it, a free standing door-frame, scattered abstract shapes such as cubes, half-spheres, and small pillars. The actors move these objects at will for quick scene shifts. The lighting is direct: shafts of pale blue and pale yellow. The mood is urgent, shimmering.

(HE steps downstage and leans against a cube. He speaks to the audience quickly, with urgent excitement.)

HE: Listen...when I first saw her, I closed my eyes so fast that my teeth clamped shut and I bit my tongue. Then I opened them wide and she wasn't there. But I could hear her, moving somewhere behind me. I could hear the whisper of her dress and the sun was so warm. Look at me... I sat there with my eyes like little white balloons and my mouth open with a little sticky dribble on my lower lip... a Venus Fly Trap and that butterfly just floated around my leaves.

(HE laughs. SHE appears upstage, moving quietly, lightly.)

Then I said to myself: Wait a minute! What the hell's wrong with you? It's 7 a.m.... 7 a.m. in the morning. Here I am out in the park at 7 a.m.! Me... breathing clean Spring air. Me... a New York Night-Owl finally going bananas with all the little hustly-bustly going-to-work people, the cleaning ladies and the bank guards. I haven't been out in this bright-simple-just-keep-moving-along time of day in... months, years, decades. Why shouldn't I be crazy? Why shouldn't I go bananas?

(HE chortles like a monkey. SHE dances around him, smiles at him, plays an invisible flute which he hears.)

I'm telling you I didn't know what to say. What do you say to...? How do you do? Do I know you? I bet you're...!

(HE sits.)

I just sat down and scratched my neck and mumbled into my other hand: I'll just ignore her. Some kind of kook, high on something.

(Jumps up.)

No, no, you see, it wasn't like that. It wasn't like that at all. Because I could feel her... around me and on me... you know? So I just got up and walked away. I mean, what would you do? And she followed me.

(SHE does.)

HE : And I, uh... stopped and looked at her. And she looked at me and smiled. And I took off. I just sort of jogged off, over a little hill. And down there by the trees... there she was. I almost ran right up to her and... but I didn't. Because I haven't jogged like that in years. I just stood there, puffing, holding my pants up. That was pretty strange.

I'm glad there weren't any cops around. So I closed my eyes again, got my wind back. Now my head was clear, I knew I could open my eyes. But when I did, she was standing right in front of me, looking at my face. And, and I was so shocked, I staggered off backwards and fell down.

(HE does. SHE comes over to help.)

Hey, no, no...I'm okay.

(HE stands.)

Now, just...why don't you just go on your way. Come on, let me...

(SHE begins to move around him in circles, gently touching him. HE turns with her slowly, becoming dizzy.)

What are you doing that for? Hey, stop that! Now look...

(SHE rubs up against him. HE moans.)

Do you know what she just did with her hand? Right up my back like a warm piece of fur. I had to sit down. I thought to myself: I'm having some kind of seizure. Cold sweat, can't breathe. I wish I could stand up and walk away. But I couldn't. I was shaking, my hands were wet. I thought... I'll talk to her. There's nothing wrong. I won't *do* anything. What'll I say? I can't get into trouble. I mean, it's a little strange just... hello?

(To SHE)

Hello?

(SHE props herself next to him.)

What's your name?

(SHE smiles. HE laughs.)

Why are you doing all... all of this? I mean, I don't mind, but isn't it a little strange, dangerous to come to someone and just... take up with him?

(SHE smiles.)

You haven't told me your name. Can't you talk?

(SHE touches his face.)

Is there something wrong? Can I help?

(SHE touches his hair.)

HE: Where do you live?

(SHE hugs him. HE jumps up. SHE looks at him. HE sits down again.)

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to... uh, jump like that.

(SHE puts her head on his shoulder.)

You're very lovely.

(HE jumps again and walks down toward the audience.)

I don't know why I said that. I didn't know what was happening. Look at me! I'm as particular and precise and pragmatic as any of you. And my eyes, my eyes blink... because I hear her and feel her and watch her move... right through me like air into my mouth. I didn't know what was happening, so I said... goodbye!

(To SHE)

Goodbye!

(HE walks away.)

And listen... she followed me.

(SHE does.)

All the way to my place. We walked 72 blocks. Can you believe it? That's 7 a.m. in the morning for you. Only a few people noticed us, but I didn't care. I don't really care.

(To SHE)

Do you? Aren't you tired? I wish you'd say something. I wish I could hear how sweet your voice sounds. I wish you'd stop following me. I wish you'd go away!

(SHE stops and looks at him.)

No, wait a minute. I'm sorry. I don't know why I said that.

(SHE begins to dance around him again. HE moans.)

She's doing it again. I do know why I said it.

(To audience.)

You see, I'm a man of the world, an entrepreneur of life. I know why I do everything. I'm a thinker and a man of action.

(To SHE.)

Look! See, I'm home. I--have--to--go--in--now. Understand? Ho-ome. This is where I live. You--have--to--go--home--now--too. Okay?

(HE moves upstairs. SHE follows.)

It was as if she were holding on to my coat and I was just floating into my apartment. So I closed my eyes again, unlocked the door, shot inside and slammed the door shut. Then I opened my eyes and looked around. Now wait a minute, don't laugh. You have to understand the mood. I really expected her to appear, to be right in my living room. She wasn't.

(HE laughs and sits.)

But I could still feel her warmth trailing across my lips as she danced around me. I could still hear her and smell her skin... her skin! So just for the hell of it I went back and opened the door. You're really still there.

(SHE is.)

You really don't want to go home.

(SHE runs into his arms, then dances into the room. HE quickly shuts the door and latches all four locks.)

You are very beautiful!

(Steps to the audience.)

There, see, I said it again. I couldn't help myself. Just think about what's happened and you'll understand the state of my mind. If you knew me well, you'd be amazed. Me...of the always-in-control-always-calculating-breed-of-successful-New-Yorkers...with fingernails of steel and a tongue of ice. Help me, try to understand. It's clear isn't it? I was walking in a mist and the shadows were friendly and loving. I was standing naked in Central Park and only she could see me. I was a reflection in a mirror looking out at myself. I thought-- so what? I thought--what the hell! I said--would you like something? Coffee, or maybe tea, a nice, organic, herbal tea? She just smiles at me, and touches me, and I want to kiss her. Let's sit down.

(SHE curls up next to him and helps him take off his coat.)

How about a drink? Yes...wine! A nice, easy, rosé wine.

(HE gets a bottle and glasses, pours the wine. SHE takes the glass and puts it to his lips. They laugh silently. Then SHE takes his hand and pulls him up. They begin to whirl slowly, holding the glasses high.)

It became delirious as if we were sipping wine from the moment we met.

(Singing out loudly.)

I know what's happening. I know what I feel. I know that you're taking me and I'm taking you. We're flying toward that bedroom...and soon that bedroom will be full of...

(HE stops.)

Mygod! The bedroom is already full!

(Steps to the audience.)

Did you know that the bedroom was already full of someone else? Full of Madeline! All-embracing, luscious, woman-to-be-mine Madeline!

(SHE is moving quietly in the background looking for him.)

No, don't worry. Wait for me. I have to tell them, explain to them while there's still time.

(To audience)

You see, Madeline is very satisfying for me and I satisfy her. There's always a kind of cup-runneth-over between us. I was married once before; she's never been married. She knows where I've been; I know where she's going. It's a meeting of the minds through the bodies, if that makes any sense to you. Let me tell it to you this way: I think it was the 17th night in a row we'd made love and I said to her... I hope we never have to talk about the way sex works with us. She said... There's nothing to talk about now, but we'll have to prove our compatibility as time goes on. I said... Well you don't prove it by talking about it.

(MADELINE appears at the side dressed in a robe.)

She said... Of course you do. You have to communicate. Do you realize that you never say anything when you're lying on top of... I shouted... There, you see, you've already started... to put it into words. She shouted back... There's nothing wrong with words...

MADELINE: If it means you can avoid tension, doubts and fears. There's nothing wrong with words if you can avoid arguments. It is communication that makes a relationship grow.

HE: We communicate, we communicate. I touch you, you touch me...

MADELINE: The problem with most people...

HE: Well we're not most people!

MADELINE: The problem with most people, Robert, is that they cannot talk to each other, explain their feelings, their desires.

HE: You know what my desires are.

MADELINE: No, I truly don't.

HE: Then lie down and I'll tell you again.

MADELINE: That is very crude.

HE: *(to audience)* I was very crude. So I said to her-- I'm very crude.

MADLINE: *(sarcastically)* All right, then, tear off my robe and drag me around the room by the hair. Tie me to the bed and then tell me if you love me or not!

HE: Before or after?

MADLINE: Robert, who is that girl?

HE: *(to audience)* Another time, we were having a drink at a little club on the eastside, when she reached under the table and began squeezing my thigh.

(They pull some pieces together and sit down at a table.)

I liked it, so I began reaching up her leg. She pushed my hand away, then shoved both her hands under the table and began squeezing both my thighs. I liked that too! So I swallowed the rest of my drink, pushed in closer, and loosened my belt. I figured I would body-language her into a hot sweat. She almost lifted the table right off the floor.

MADLINE: Don't move! I don't want you to do anything or say anything. This is all mine!

HE: I said-- Hey, baby, gimme a break...and then she screamed at the top of her lungs... Robert!

MADLINE: ROBERT!

HE: A lot of people looked around, but I didn't care. She was stapling me to the table like a paper poster.

MADLINE: *(whispering)* I want to give you a fantasy come-true. Here is this very public place, with you very nonchalant. And me, me, Robert, fulfilling your wildest, lustiest dreams.

HE: *(whispering)* This is your dream, not mine. *(to audience)* Now do you see what was happening to me?

MADLINE: *(purring, her eyes closed)* I can see you, Robert, and I can feel you.

HE: I mean, look at the picture. Here I am, frozen in my chair, staring at mad Madeline...

MADLINE: Can you feel how softly I sing to you?

HE: ...with her hands trying to bring the hot blood down between my legs.

MADLINE: Can you hear my fingers reaching into your bowels!

HE: Too much! Too much! I simply had to yell out to her: MADLINE DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE FIRST THREE LETTERS OF YOUR NAME STAND FOR?

MADELINE: AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE FIRST THREE LETTERS OF YOUR NAME DO TO ME?

HE: We got up and streaked out of that place, down 73rd street, me strutting in front, she keeping pace right behind.

(They do.)

MADELINE: Robbery, Robert, theft, grand larceny. You steal from me the greatest moments I find to share with you. You will not let me satisfy myself... Robert, who's that girl?

HE: *(to audience)* Was I wrong? Oh I know...you sit there smug, scarred, clucking your tongues, all-knowing in your lives full of disappointment. Just another half-baked man, shallow, emotionally stunted, still squeezing his adolescent pimples. Join us, you say. Give in, stop fighting, accept your fate. This is what it's all about, you say. I say, to hell with you!

(HE walks away. MADELINE drifts to the side brushing her hair. SHE remains upstage.)

HE: *(turning back to audience)* I'm sorry, please forgive me. There's so little time. I need you to understand, at least to know enough to understand that this wasn't a question of gender issues, of male versus female or any of that dope that keeps us sucking at the pipe of hope until our breath runs out. This was a question of First Times... the glory, the sweetness, the intoxication of a first encounter, a first kiss, a first seeing yourself in someone else's eyes.

(SHE comes down and puts her back up against his. As he moves, she moves with him, back to back.)

HE: *(turning slowly in a circle)* She mirrors my heartbeat. She makes everything I feel new and alive. She isn't becoming just part of me, she's becoming...me! And I'm becoming...me! For the first time...why does it have to change?

MADELINE: Who is she, Robert?

(HE steps to audience. SHE moves upstage.)

HE: Did I tell you about my first time with Madeline?

(MADELINE comes down and puts her back up against his. As he moves, she moves with him, back to back.)

HE: It was electric, like two pieces of metal welding together in a hot arc. I said to her... you make all the fluids in my body bubble and boil. she said... You make all of my hair melt. I said... I want to explode all over you. And then she said... Shhh! Don't tell me what you want to do...

MADELINE: Tell me what you are doing. Tell me what you feel, what you smell, what you taste. Tell me what you see and I'll tell you...

HE: Let's not talk!

(They clasp hands over their shoulders, turn in a complete circle until they are face to face. They stand for a moment staring at each other, shivering. Then they lunge in a loud slapping embrace and collapse on to a conveniently-placed, bed-shaped piece. It is all grunting, munching and breathing. As he tries to pull her on top of him, she pulls back and tries to force him on top of her. They struggle this way for a moment. Finally, she stiffens her arms and holds him at an angle over her.)

MADELINE: We have to decide.

HE: What?

MADELINE: What is right and what is wrong.

HE: I don't care!

MADELINE: What is best and what is worst.

HE: I don't care!

MADELINE: Who is the top and who is the bottom.

HE: Let me top your bottom.

MADELINE: Crude!

HE: Rude!

MADELINE: Stop!

HE: Drop!

MADELINE: Robert, who is that girl? What is she doing here?

HE: Her name is Celia.

(Stunned, HE jumps up and steps down to the audience.)

HE: Oh, oh, oh...I don't know how I knew that. It just came to me. Her name is Celia!

(SHE moves down and dances around MADELINE.)

I tried to pretend if I stood in front of her, **SHE** couldn't be seen. As a matter of fact, I pretended that if **SHE** stood in front of me, I couldn't be seen. But Madeline sees everything. Celia is her name!

MADELINE: So? What does that mean?

HE: A lot of people ask that.

MADLINE: It's a direct question.

HE: What do you mean by that? Say that again? They're questions tipped with their own answers, like arrows. They all stick in your throat.

(SHE moves away. HE kisses MADELINE on the cheek. She doesn't respond. HE steps back to the audience.)

That first time became a plunge, a helpless fall toward the last time. It was clear, it was bizarre, it was pure Madeline. She came over one day with a gift, a family of gerbils in one of those plastic see-through cages. It was fascinating. We watched them all the time. We thought about them and made up little stories about them. I even took good care of them... which was a first for me. Now get this, she was so thrilled with it all she decided that they were the children of our relationship.

MADLINE: They're so sweet... and they love us, the way we love each other.

HE: I said to her... They couldn't care less about us, and that's the way it should be. Gerbils are a lot more honest than we are. She said to me... Which means what? I knew we were sliding into one of those talks again. So I muttered something low and dirty, you know, the four-letter kind. Madeline didn't say anything for a long time.

MADLINE: I think we should separate them.

HE: Yeah? How?

MADLINE: I think the males should be separated from the females.

HE: What for?

MADLINE: Well for one thing, it keeps them from inbreeding. And for another, it gives them a chance to think about something else other than... mating!

HE: But they like to think about fu...mating. It's their religion.

MADLINE: Thirdly, and most important, if they aren't separated, they'll lose track of their individuality. They won't know who belongs to whom.

HE: *(to audience)* Is that modern psychosexual philosophy or isn't it? M-A-D, M-A-D...I didn't say that. Instead I said: Suppose it doesn't make any difference to them?

MADLINE: Of course it makes a difference. It takes two to communicate and only two. After all, there are differences between males and females.

HE: Which proves my point... I think!

MADLINE: No, no, male lover of mine. Those wonderful, furry creatures with the bright, brown eyes would forget those differences and then do it with anyone, male or female.

HE: Time for another four-letter word. She didn't hear me.

MADELINE: What did you say?

HE: I said... you don't truck with the Gay point of view?

MADELINE: To each his own! But we haven't the right to impose our moral adventures on other innocent forms of life.

HE: Mad! Something made my voice become loud and giggly, and I said... Well then, it's time for little desert creatures to share the humanoid burden of wayward eroticism. She said... What are you doing? I said... Climbing into that perfect, plastic environment to practice unbiased sodomy. She gurgled out a scream.

MADELINE: Ahh-gurgle-ahh!

HE: It was fascinating... to take it down to their little, innocent level.

(HE does.)

And when the cage toppled to the floor and all the little legs ran all over the place, Madeline looked like she was going to faint. Then for the first and last time, I knew her! Because instead, she made a strange whooshy sound...

MADELINE: Ahh-whoosh-ahh!

HE: And all the little, furry gerbils suddenly stopped running and stood up on their hind legs and listened. We both smiled. Then the little, furry gerbils smiled back at us, and took it as a hint, and began chasing each other and climbing on top of each other. They all squeaked and squeaked... and then we squeaked and took it as a hint and began chasing each other and climbing on each other.

(They do.)

HE: *(to audience)* Do you see it now? There we were...lying and rolling on the floor with all those innocent little creatures lying and rolling on us and around us. Madeline moaned! SHE MOANED! There we all were...doing it, doing it, DOING IT!

(HE jumps up and looks at SHE. MADELINE remains on the floor.)

MADELINE: Who is this Celia?

(The lights and music change. Scrims reveal another scene. The background is film sequences of the action that takes place in mime. The three characters portray a series of triangle-relationships each of which ends in confrontation and near-violence. The film sequences lead the live action in front of them. It all portends disaster, possibly horror. At the end of the last sequence, HE ends the entire display like a magician, with the wave of his arms.)

HE: *(to audience)* Now listen, listen... you must understand! I've got to make it clear! What was filling up my bedroom, what came out of that door in my bathrobe with a

squeak of shock on her face was the grandest, fullest, lustiest, most satisfying reflection of myself that I could imagine I ever wanted. So I answered Madeline's eyes, and saddening face and her GODDAMN QUESTIONS with the words: CELIA IS MY FIRST WIFE COME BACK TO ME! And Madeline fainted!

(She does. HE moves toward SHE. She plays the invisible flute, dancing around him. He takes her hand. She throws her head back and laughs silently, taking his other hand. They dance like this, slowly, sensuously.)

I think it's the music I hear from her fingertips and the slight fragrance of her hair just at the back of her neck. I think that's what tells me who she is and why she loves me. I think it's the soft wetness of her lips and the eyes... it's her eyes that tell me how we both fill the room, fill it up together. It was hard to see anything else. *(to SHE)* Are you tired?

(SHE smiles. MADELINE begins to crawl along the floor.)

MADELINE: You're turning me into a thief, Robert. I'm stealing our dreams.

HE: *(to SHE)* You're very beautiful. And your voice...

MADELINE: Our cup is empty. We'll never fill it again.

HE: ...there's so little to talk about, so few words.

MADELINE: I'll never satisfy you, and you'll never... with me... you're never, Robert... you were always... never! *(she leaves)*

HE: I said to Madeline: Goodbye! And don't forget to feed the gerbils.

(The robe comes flying back into the room.)

Those are the last words I ever spoke to anyone else.
(He picks up the robe and places it around SHE like a cape.)

It happened because it was...7 a.m. in the morning...and by the time it was Noon and the sun glowed like a shadowless white lamp... in that midday light, I was free. That's what we are...free!

(They slowly dance off as the light fades around them.)

Aladdin's Electric Lamp

[Production Note: Suggested music – *Sonate Pour Violin Et Piano - "Blues"* by Maurice Ravel

Madelín de Rumba

for Milli

The driving sound of Latin music. Madelín appears, colorfully dressed, dancing with a male mannequin, a soft, floppy dummy dressed in a tuxedo without the bow tie. His feet are strapped to her feet. She holds "him" erect by the arms... among other places.

They dance, she and her dummy, in frantic movements, huge sweeps to the floor, dizzying spins across the stage. Suddenly she stops, shifting her shoulders, rolling her hips, staring at her partner. Then she snaps her head to the audience.

Madelín. *(in a thick, mock Spanish accent)* I am exotique... no? I am passionata... eh? I am a mujer without hair... I am desire with fire... I am woo-mahn... I am love... *(hissing)* I am sssex... *(whispering)* I am crazy... muy loca!

(She dances off with her "man". At one point, she grabs his ass and makes his body bolt into the air. At another point, she drapes "him" over a chair and kisses "him" roughly, bites "him" in the neck, spreads her legs and his, and rhythmically pumps "him" up and back. She stops abruptly, whirls around, plops in the chair letting go of the dummy's arms. He falls over in a backward arch, his feet still strapped to hers.)

(With no accent) Crazy... and tired. Hey, am I tired... of all the bullshit dripping from their faces. The two-faced looks... the two-faced talks... the this-is-the-way-I-am-today, and tomorrow-is-another-day. Oh yeah... I'm tired, but not too tired to go on living, to go on dancing, to go on fu...

(She jumps up, lifts the dummy erect, and dances.)

You know, I got married once. He wasn't my first man and he sure wasn't my last. But I married him... tall, dark, handsome phoney-baloney who thought he was Orson Welles. No... that's not true. I thought he was Orson Welles. He thought he was god's gift to me. What a straight up married life we had. And there was some love in it. Then he got bored and I got boring. He was a dreamer and I was a sleeper. He was a rat and I was a mouse. He was smart and I was dumb. And when I got smart, he got numb. Ha! I got a life and he got a wife. Man, was I a stunner... can't you tell... a real stunner. So what's a girl gonna do. Hey, what is a man anyway? A hunk of meat, a stick of skin and blood? Does he make the sun come up? Hell no! But he sure can make it go down. Hey... how old do think I am? Pretty old? Older than you think? Yeah. The body wants to give up... wants to sag to the floor in a quiet mess. But not me. See... this is me inside. I'm in here kicking and juicing... I'm breathing hard and trying to breathe harder. And until this silly shell finally collapses, I'm a whirling, twirling, stomping, romping, kiss of a woman... a big, wet, kiss of a woman. Hey... want to know how to make time stand still? Keep moving!

(Sings)

Dancin', I'm dancin', my legs are in the air
 Movin', I'm groovin', there's color in my hair
 Isn't it exciting that I simply want your body dripping sweat
 You're panting.

Isn't it exciting that you simply make my body very wet
 I'm panting.
 We're dancin', we're dancin', your balls are in the air
 We're movin', we're groovin'... phew, your dust is in my hair.

(She stops and spits)

How old am I? I'm older than my father was when he died. Man, there was a man. A Latino man. Gorgeous, a Latin Lover. He had it, he knew it, they knew it... he couldn't keep his pants on. He took every woman that came his way. He gave them what they wanted and they gave him every drop of passion they could squeeze out of their tongues. He left them dry because he drank them up like they were banana daiquiris. He was a vampire, a banana daiquiri vampire who left each victim in a glass full of crushed ice, with a smile on her face and a maraschino cherry between her legs. He was gorgeous. My Latina mother was beautiful but she didn't kill him. I didn't kill him. He married another woman, another Latina woman, but this time a gray-faced woman and gave her a gray-faced daughter. So what did they do? They set themselves up like a firing squad. Words as bullets, they just shot at him and shot at him until they filled him with so many holes you couldn't see him any more. Why? Why did he take that? This Latin lover, this hunk of filet mignon, this woman's man. Why? Got afraid... that's what did it. Couldn't take his eyes off the clock. Stopped moving. But not me! I'm his first daughter but I'm a lot further along than he ever was. And the only hole in me is the hole of holies, the pit of purpose, the cave of candy, the mouth of mystery, this garden of liquid gold.

(Singing)

Chika, chika, boom, chika, boom, chika, chika, chika
 Chika, chika, boom, chika, boom, chika, chika, chika
 Chika, chika, boom, chika, boom, chika, chika, chika
 Chika, chika, boom, chika, boom, chika, chika, chika

Did I tell you I was married? Yes, I did! And when it was over, and he went on to another adventure, and the kids we had went on to theirs, I started moving again. I was free. A little sinus-drip of guilt now and then, but I was free. All that time... ten years later, twenty years later you turn around and say... What the hell happened to the last twenty years? It's like waking up in the middle of the night with your covers on the floor and the heat off. It's cold... and dark... and very lonely. Why lonely? Because you're finally left with the only person you can trust... yourself... and you don't know who the hell she is... because you never met her. Comprende?

What happened to the last twenty years? It's the Rip-Van-Winkle syndrome! Ha! It's the Night-Of-The-Living-Dead in the morning. It's gone and you're naked... ooh... and either you wrap yourself in a Walmart housecoat full of regrets or you run your hands over your body and say: I like this, ooh... this feels good. What happened? This is what happened. You just... honored your family... you just... respected your culture... you just... did the right thing. Bullshit! It's fear, woo-mahn... it's fear. Afraid not to go to college. Afraid not to take that job. Afraid to go on that date. Afraid not to go on that date. Afraid to fuck. Afraid not to fuck. Afraid to light a candle, close the bathroom door, look in the mirror and say: You... you're me. My eyes to your eyes, you're me. Fear... that's the train-ride that takes you through all of life's little PMS's until you reach the final stop: Sagsville. Everything droops, your mind droops and

you wonder what the hell it was all about. Hey Dr. Alzheimer, where were you when I needed you?

(She unhooks the dummy from her feet and carefully places "him" in a sitting position on the chair. Then she sits in his lap, drapes one of his arms over her shoulder, the other over her breast. It slips.)

Darling... don't be so coy!

(She moves his arm up again, it slips again. She grabs his arm, opens part of her dress, stuffs his arm in. Then she smooths her hair, crosses her legs, and smiles.)

(sings in a quaint voice)

Fear makes the world go round
 Fear lays your back on the ground
 If you will grieve that he will leave
 Fear makes... your world go round

It's fear... yes it is... indeed it is! Twenty-four hours a day... seven days a week... month in and month out... year over year. It's the lipstick and mascara of your mind. All the roads lead into you and then they're plastered shut on the inside. Fear... that's the enemy. Where did it come from? Who knows. But it's there, when you're awake, when you're asleep... poking you in the gut, making your mouth dry, making your pants wet. Shouldn't, wouldn't, couldn't, didn't, oh my! Fear... how do you get rid of it? You move, my baby, you dance and sing, bigger and louder until all you hear is your own voice, until all you see is the nose on your face and the light in your eyes. I did!

(She grabs the dummy and dances.)

You know I think it all unraveled when people stopped dancing together. What a shame. Just think about all the different scenes and reasons and times that people just... got up and danced together. It was a way to connect. I touch your hand, you touch mine. I hold your arm, you hold mine. Around your back, around mine. I see you, you see me. I smell you, you smell me. And then we move together, try out some rhythm, feel the energy, feel the... feel! Olá

(She stops abruptly, the dummy falls flat on his face. She reaches down pulls "him" up by the seat of his pants, drapes "him" over her shoulder and starts to walk off stage. Then she stops.)

So what did I do? I whined... I moaned... I even cried. Then I got a job. I got some money. I looked in that mirror and I got a life. Ha! I don't want to talk about all that junk, all that waste of time. I don't care how much money you stick in the bank. I don't care how many dresses you buy, how many tv shows you watch, how many trips you take. I don't care about how hard you try not to be bored. There's only one thing that counts... loving and being loved. Man, woman, whatever. You know it, I know it, everybody knows it. Wall Street, Rodeo Drive, Michigan Avenue, Champs Elysees... it's all the same when you're just standing around picking your nose. No more truth than that.

(All through the next, she punches the dummy into various shapes and sizes to illustrate her words.)

It's a journey, this life we live, isn't it? A long search for connections... a long search for him. For him!

(She places her hands on her face and closes her eyes.)

The first "him" was Manuel.

(She draws a shape in the air.)

A body like this with shoulders like this and it all came to a point... here. And what a point. We went out, we dressed up... it was dinner here, the clubs there, my bed here, his bed there. But after a few months, we were deaf and dumb... he was deaf and I had nothing to talk about. Besides, he drove a truck! Now Peter was different. Thin, wiry, very smart, very hip. He could talk... and sing. He also slept a lot and thought I was his live-in cook. He was divorced too, so he'd been there. After a while, when he got very comfortable and felt very safe, he started playing fantasies. You know what I mean? Muy kinky... I can get into that... but stinky kinky? You can believe we didn't have too many friends. So one night I created a fantasy... he was to be a dirty, old magician and me, a clean, little princess. When he began to conjure and slobbered out the magic words... I said "poof" and disappeared... for good. Ralph was rich. Awfully, terribly rich. And he was elegant (a rare commodity today), and kind, and gentle. He loved to give me gifts. He loved to take me out, take me on trips, make brunch on Sunday mornings, drink champagne on Monday nights. He loved to love me and I wanted to love him. I did, Ralph, I really did! But Ralph was 81 years old, and I was afraid I'd break his ribs. One after another... searching. Connect... then alone, empty. Manic-depressive, high and low, up and down. It drains you... it draws the blood to your feet and the fat to your hips. It makes you feel like a library book... good to read but always on loan. Check in and check out! Until one day... I found him. Him!

(She lets the dummy slide over head and drape behind her, his arms around her neck)

He was... como se dice... how should I say it... meant for my skin. He was passionate, as I was passionate. He was sweet beyond the taste of ripe mango. He was all the man to all of my woman. Quiere me mucho! We had both been there and back... know what I mean? We could look into each other's eyes and see the years that passed behind us... the good times and the bad, the pleasures and the pain, and we could laugh, oh how he could laugh and I could laugh, and we could love. It was... como se dice... how should I say it... muy deliciosa... delicious... we tasted each other hour after hour, day after day. And we danced, we danced until every inch of our skin touched. Muy peligroso! Dangerous and delicious.

(She slowly brings the dummy around her body and wraps herself with "him" as she slowly dances in circles to a distant, soft bolero.)

Not a bad word between us... not a mean moment. If we both had to die, then, right then, it would have been all right, all right, perfecto! Perfect!

(She turns in a long circle with the dummy and ends in a posed embrace. Suddenly she kisses "him" hard on his "lips." Then she pulls back and spits.)

(hissing) Either you need a shave or your face is falling apart!

(She turns the dummy so that his "back" is up against her. She folds her arms over his and glides off in a tango-like movement. She smiles at the audience.)

Why am I telling you this? Why do I care that you hear this? Because you are as poor as I am. Because like me, you were born bankrupt and we spend our time, our lives trying to break even, to get un poco, just a little bit of credit. So when one of us finds a piece of treasure, a piece of glowing gold... it must be shared. And I share this with you.

(She dances as if to leave, then dances back staring at the audience)

I share with you... my grand love, this two of us... this me, Madelín, and my Tomas... Lina and Tommy, a match, a couple, a hot, breathing, melting of two bodies and two minds into one beating heart. For all of the weeks and months and years (there were only two!) that we were together, it was as if we kissed for the first time, over and over again. Mira!... can you see it, can you feel it? Could you live it? I did!

(She stops dancing and collapses on to the chair, the dummy on top of her.)

Then where is he? Here? No. Back there? No. Gone? No. I'm gone! It ended, this glory of my life, because I went, left, walked away.

(She carefully places the dummy on the floor at her feet and lets "him" splay over like 'Raggedy Ann'. As she speaks, she walks around "him" in a circle, occasionally patting "him" on the head.)

How could this be? Like a caterpillar in a cocoon I broke free and kept changing my skin into a more and more beautiful butterfly. And when I finally found a shell and wings I could slip into, that made me feel exciting, and exotic and... expensive... That's where the trouble was. You see... my Tomas, my Tommy never changed. It was his shell I slipped into, but he never slipped into mine. He could have gone on forever (as long as his hormones held out). He danced in circles, from first time to first time... but for me, the rhythm would change and we had to change the way we moved. We had to!

(She falls to the floor and lifts the dummy's head.)

Ay, mi Tomi... you wanted everything, forever... so much for such a long time. One never-ending roll of the dice! And if our luck ran out, and we went round and round and never got the brass ring... and the merry-go-round stopped... and we were two strangers instead of one love... then it was all for nothing... only a memory that can't be touched or felt or tasted.

(She begins to cry.)

I loved you, mi Tomi, as I loved the air that I breathed. I wanted us to go on, like two flowers on the same tree. Blowing our pollen over each other... each with our own sweet perfume, each with our own faces to the warm sun. How could you want me to fold my petals into yours... forever?

(She cries softly for a moment, then stops. Suddenly, she slaps the floor hard and jumps up, throwing the dummy over her shoulder like a sack.)

Because you're like a goddamned snail... all you can think about is poking that hose up and out. Me... I'm like an oyster. I take it all in but I need to push it out again to keep it moving.

(She smiles)

I love oysters!

(She begins to stride with dummy over her shoulder.)

No more Tommys!

So where does that leave me? On my toes, sisters. Open to the world, my brothers. I hope I never see him again. He almost got me off the path. Not him and not my father and not my ex-husband, mi esposo oso. Ha! I've got my work, new things to learn, new people to meet, new living to live.

(Sings)

Dancin', I'm dancin', my legs are in the air
Movin', I'm groovin', there's color in my hair

What did I tell you... all that counts is loving and being loved. Man, woman, whatever. How can you go wrong? The last count I heard was seven billion people, persons on this Earth. And at least half of them are of the male persuasion. Here I am... persuade me. Olá!

(She flips the dummy upside down and dances with "him", his legs draped over her shoulders. After a moment, she pulls on the zipper of his pants and looks in. She smiles to the audience.)

Promising!

(Then she pulls on the top of her dress and looks down it. Smiles again.)

Very promising!

(Sings)

Chika, chika, boom, chika, boom, chika, chika, chika
Chika, chika, boom, chika, boom, chika, chika, chika
Chika, chika, boom, chika, boom, chika, chika, chika

She dances off with the dummy as the lights fade.

Madelín de Rumba