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Writer's Block

Elizabeth Bergman

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Character One

I know! I KNOW!

Character Two

I can't stress this enough. What you've got here just isn't going to cut it. Do you understand? Publishers won't touch this! Give me something else. Soon.

Character One

I told you Sam, I'm trying! I really am; I just can't come up with anything at the moment. I've got major writer's block and I can't figure out a way to work around it.

Character Two

Well you had better find a way around it, and soon. I'm not going to jeopardize my career on a writer who doesn't write. I mean, think about if you were in my shoes and you promised a major publishing company an extraordinary script...that's what you called it right? Extraordinary?

Character One

Yeah. And it was...in my head, but when I started writing it just, it didn't work out as well as I thought it would.

Character Two

Do you realize you have put me at a great risk here? That my career is on the line, my reputation is at stake? My friend over at Simon & Schuster said he heard a few guys laughing about us. Laughing, Mike. Said they'd seen it time and time again where an agent and a writer think they're going to make it big and they...I've worked too hard for this! You need to get it together now! You've got five days or I'm dropping you. I'll give someone else a shot. I've let you extend time and time again, but we don't have anymore time. Time is up. Now is the time to get to work.

Mike is asleep at his desk. Phone rings. He jumps with a start, but doesn't answer it.

Sam

Hey Mike, it's just me, Sam. Again.

Mike

Sam? Oh no!

Sam

Haven't heard from you in a while. I'm just checking up on that manuscript. You know it was due on my desk over two weeks ago? Yeah. I can't wait for it much longer. I made a promise to my friend Rob we'd have something in on Monday. So you've got two days to show me something. Understand? You impressed me earlier kiddo but its time to step up and give me something real. No more playing dodge the agent. So listen, I need you to call me as soon as you get this message. Okay? If I don't hear from you I'm going to have to come over there. I'll be waiting to hear from you. Alright...bye.

Mike

Two days? She's got to be kidding, I told her I'd have it to her on the...oh no. It's the fifteenth already? The fifteenth? Oh no!

The two characters talk to themselves. Mike doesn't notice their presence.

Character Two

What is 'oh no?'

Character One

I think Rip Van Winkle over here just realized what day it was. Took him long enough. I was getting bored playing him over and over in his stupid dreams while he slept the days away. Lazy bum. I was born to be a star, not some freakin' literary flop with a temper.

Character Two

He can't help what he dreams. He's just worried about getting the script finished.

Mike flips through pages on his desk.

Mike

Oh no!

Character One

Do you know how excited I was when I learned I was assigned to a writer? Great, I thought, I'll never be bored! Writers have all sorts of imaginative thoughts placed in exotic worlds with heroic characters. I'm going to be one of those heroic characters! Like, like Romeo Montague or Fitzwilliam Darcy or Robinson Crusoe! People are going to look to me for inspiration for centuries, play me in movies, and write essays on me in college! But no, instead I've been sitting in this room that smells like feet and cheese for months playing the dull re-run dreams of an unimaginative bum with no ideas! Fantastic!

Mike ruffles through the garbage can.

Mike

Oh no!

Character One

You see? Even his speech is repetitive. That's it! I've had it! I've got to intervene.

Character Two

But he's not supposed to know we're here! Be careful with him, he doesn't know we exist!

Character One

Of course he doesn't. He hasn't written a word in days how would he know we're here? Now shut up...I've got to concentrate.

Cracks his knuckles and takes a deep breath. Mike begins to speak but Character One slaps him in the back of the head before he gets a chance.

Character One

I swear to God if you say 'Oh no' one more time I'm leaving.

Character Two

But you can't leave you're...

Character One

Will you shut up! He doesn't...he *didn't* know that!

Mike

Who are you?

Character One

We are, unfortunately, assigned to be characters in your non-existent works of literature. It is our duty to unselfishly slave away the inner workings of your creative, or in your case monotonous, mind and help you realize and accomplish your dreams. Literally. The stuff you see going on in your head...that's us. That's our job.

Character Two

You're never really actually supposed to see us outside your head, but someone here decided to go and break the golden rule.

Character One

Desperate times call for desperate measures.

Mike

Wait, wait...what? What's going on?

Character One

I can't believe my luck with this one...geesh! It's a wonder we ever escaped that thick cranium!

Character Two

Now now...how would you feel if someone just popped up in front of you and started yelling about how insignificant and pathetic you are. My apologies Mike.

Character One

He probably doesn't know what 'sorry' means.

Mike

Are you guys like my muses?

Character Two

No, we don't inspire you we just...we just act out whatever comes into your mind.

Character One

Which hasn't been all that much lately as I'm sure you already know. So, here we are. And yes, *I* like to think I'm taking the place of a muse you clearly never had.

Character Two

Oh please don't upset the muses! You can mess with Mike all you want, but I don't want a bunch of muses on our backs! They can be very testy you know. You have to watch out for the fingernails on those things...

Character One

Enough. He doesn't need to know. We're here illegally remember?

Character Two

Right.

Mike

So are you here to help me? Is that what you are trying to say?

Character One

And finally the lightbulb shines! I told you he'd get there eventually. Yes Mike. We are here to try our very best to help you out of this creative well you seem to have fallen into and back into the light. And if I heard correctly we don't have much time to do that. Two days?

Mike

Well, really it's got to be finished before then because I've got to have it in.

Character Two

I see.

Mike

The biggest problem I'm having is that I don't really know where to begin. Sam, my agent, she's promised this 'extraordinary' work to the publishers and I'm having difficulty living up to that expectation I guess. I don't know what is extraordinary.

Character One

I sensed that.

Mike

Really? How did you...

Character One

I live in your head. Remember? I know what you know and probably a lot more besides. But we're getting off track let's get back to work. Let's think about what you consider extraordinary literature. I for one am moved to figurative tears anytime you pick up one of the Bard's masterpieces. His stories have it all; love, mystery, murder...

Character Two

Storms, fairies, witches, mistaken identities!

Character One

And the language! Such poetry as I have never seen! If you could write like that Mike, you would be able to retire early! I would have my leading role and you would be set for life!

Mike

So you want me to write Shakespeare?

Character Two

Not write Shakespeare so much as write *like* him! Create a classic! Weave together elements of intrigue and romance with poetic language and I'm sure the publishers would eat it up!

Mike

I guess we could give it a shot. Alright! Places everybody! Places!

Mike makes his way to his writing desk as the Characters take their place onstage. Mike writes and reads his stage directions as the characters say the lines.

Mike

Curtain rises upon a weeping maiden in a garden.

Character Two

O! Antonio, Antonio! Where art thou Antonio! What wouldst my father say if he could but see these shining tears painted upon my features with the strokes of cruelty. Thou who wouldst kill thine own blood for a crown of gold and a desperate people at your mercy art not the brother I once knew.

Mike

Enter Fabrizzio in the bushes.

Character One

Who art thou lovely creature whose heart doth shower the Earth in salty rain? Be still my heart! For never saw I such a lady challenge Venus on her throne above and come away the victor. I must needs know her name!

Character Two

Me thinks I behold a shadowy figure amongst the rose bush. Mayhap is Antonio come to spill more blood. I must away!

Mike

She tries to get up from the grass but keeps tripping over her dress.

Character Two

Woe is me! Mine clothing has rendered me prisoner to mine own treacherous brother. Come night! Come darkness! I must away to my ghostly father!

Mike

Cordelia takes a vial of poison from her dress and uncorks it. Fabrizzio enters and trips on a tree root.

Character One

Treacherous is the garden of Eden!

Clearing his throat.

Thou most splendid of creatures waste not that bitter liquid upon thy tongue! How hast thou come upon such a potion? Hast thou not heard of Juliet and the nectar that denied her true love? I am that Romeo come in time to claim his Juliet.

Character Two

Thou art not my brother Antonio!

Character One

Thou hast eyes I see, for thou art correct. I...um...I art...not Antonio?

Character Two

Who art thou who darest sneak into my Eden like the serpent of Satan, unannounced and unwelcome!

Character One

I...I art...No! My name is Fabrizzio. Fabrizzio Ronaldo Alfredo Miguel Harreras del Garcia Loco.

Character Two

Fabrizzio...I have heard of thou. Thou art fond of the ladies.

Character One

I art...fond...okay wait a second. Wait a second. Mike? Are you sure it's 'I art'? I'm not sure that's right.

Mike

I don't know. I think we'd better scrap this and start over; I can't keep up this Shakespearean talk for much longer anyway.

Character One

But it was going to be a heroic part for me! I could feel it! Come on you've got to keep going Mike! Let's try again! Come on, let's go!

Character Two

Let him be. If he can't write it, he can't write it. We gave it a shot, but he's not feeling it. We should try something else.

Character One

But it was great really! I've never had a cooler name than Fabrizzio ever! Ever!

Character Two

You can't write something well if you aren't feeling it, if you aren't emotionally connected. Okay? Let's just drop it. I'm sure we can come up with something else. Right Mike? Shakespeare didn't have the only 'extraordinary' voice.

Mike

I'll tell you who had an extraordinary voice, Audra McDonald in Ragtime. Did you ever get to see that show? Well, I guess you must have from inside my head, but boy does that woman sound like an angel!

Character Two

She has one of the best muses of her day.

Mike

Those writers had a lot of talent too. Can you imagine not only writing dialogue, but song?

Character Two

I think it would be fun!

Character One

Wait, wait. So are you telling me you want to write a musical?

Mike

It's always been a dream of mine to have my characters dance across the stage voices climbing and echoing off the balconies. I thought maybe I would start small and work my way there, but maybe I just need to jump right in!

Character One

I don't think that's a good idea.

Character Two

Why not? I think it's a wonderful idea! I've always wanted to sing, but you know Mike your dreams aren't very musical. Oh, I'm so excited!

Character One

You're right Mike you should start small and work your way up. No need to rush into anything.

Mike

Actually, I think I might like to give it a shot. I mean why not? I've got nothing better right now.

Character One

I don't think you realize what beasts musicals can be. I'm just looking out for you. I don't want you getting hurt when you realize that you can't write a good musical in two days.

Character Two

Is somebody scared of singing and dancing?

Character One

...No...

Character Two

I think he is! Haha! He's scared of musicals!

Character One

I am not!

Character Two

Are too!

Character One

I am NOT!

Mike

Well, we'll see about that!

Mike walks over to writing desk. Character Two skips gleefully to the stage, while Character One seems to be battling invisible hands that are dragging him onstage.

Character One

I will not do this! This is completely unfair! I'm going to contact my lawyers under article 12 section four the unethical treatment of mythical creatures!

Character Two

You made that up!

Character One

Oh, will you just shut up...

Mike

Clears his throat.

Lights come up on two college kids sitting in a messy dorm room.

Character Two

I can't believe graduation is next week. I don't know what I'm going to do. What are your plans after school?

Character One

I don't know. More school I guess, I got accepted at a graduate program in North Carolina. That'll give me some time to think of something else. What about you?

Character Two

Job hunting I guess.

Character One

What do you want to do?

Character Two

I want to eat, and keep driving my car. So I'll probably just take anything I can find.

Character One

Yeah, that's how my sister was. She graduated with degrees in business and computer science and she's been working as a waitress at Garnet Bar and Grill down the road for the past three years.

Character Two

I just feel so lost right now, you know? It's like I've been planning for when I grew up since I was a kid and right now nothing is turning out the way I saw it in my head.

Character One

I know it's like everything I've ever dreamed of has dissolved in front of me and there's no way I'm going to get the pieces back to put it together again.

Character Two

You are a real life Humpty Dumpty.

Character One

What?

Character Two

You can't put the pieces together... You know, all the kings horses...and all the kings men...

Character One

Couldn't put Jeffrey's life back together again... Yes I see what you mean. It just makes me angry though!

Character Two

What does?

Character One

The way they set up this fairy tale world and leave you to discover the truth..

He sings.

*When they told me I could be anything I wanted
I looked at them with open eyes and pictured in my heart
Swimming with the asteroids and surfing in the stars
Discovering the aliens and landing home on Mars.
But what they didn't tell me, and what I didn't know
Was that I'd need money, and money doesn't grow.*

Character Two

*When they told me I could be anything I wanted
I looked at them with open eyes and pictured in my heart
Living in Los Angeles and partying past dark
Filming motion pictures and leaving my mark.
But what they didn't tell me and what I didn't know
Was that I'd need money, and money doesn't grow.*

Character One and Character Two
*Yes that we'd need money and money doesn't grow.
No money doesn't grow.*

Beat.

Character One
Are you sure you want to do a musical?

Mike
Not anymore.

Character Two
It was fun...

Character One shoots her a look.

Character Two
Sort of, but I think you can do better. At least you're
figuring out what won't work right?

Character One
True, the story wasn't bad, but the music...definitely not your
cup of tea my friend. We were all over the place, just like
your mind, Mike, when you're trying to focus.

Character Two
Do you always have to be so mean to him?

Character One
Sometimes the truth hurts. Just ask Oedipus.

Mike
It's okay, I can take it. He's a billion times better than Sam
when she's angry. And boy will she be angry if I don't get this
thing finished. Okay, let me think...we've ruled out Shakespeare
and we've ruled out musicals. I think for good.

Character One
Couldn't have said it better myself!

Mike
You can be very hurtful you know.

Character One
How? I'm not even real remember? I'm in your head; maybe
you're the mean one.

Character Two

Don't play mind games with him right now. He's got enough to boggle his brain as it is.

Character One

Oh right, he's the one who has got it tough. Not me being stuck in the tedious repetitive thoughts of a man who was supposed to help me achieve all my dreams. The disappointments of a lifetime are nothing compared to the problems he is facing right now. You're right, I'm sorry.

Mike

Hey! Have you ever tried to come up with something from scratch? No, I didn't think so. All you have to do is take your cues from someone else and hope to ride the waves of their successes. Well hey, buddy life is full of ups and downs and I'm sorry if you can't always get what you want and be happy all the time.

Character Two

Whoa, Mike calm down.

Mike

I am calm! Just frustrated...mostly at him.

Character One

And I'm offended!

Mike

This is absurd! I'm yelling at frickin' figments of my imagination!

Character One

Oh no pal. You never imagined *anything* as cool as us.

Mike

I think I'm losing my mind.

Character Two

Well we know at least two parts of it already escaped.

Mike

This is absurd.

Character One

Yeah, just like everything you write.

Mike

You know what pal, I've just about had it up to here with your...

Character Two

Wait, Mike! What about absurdism? Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Harold Pinter; they all wrote absurdist works that have been cherished for decades!

Character One

I certainly haven't cherished them...

Mike

I wouldn't even know where to begin an absurdist piece.

Character One

It's okay, I don't think you have to.

Character Two

Oh enough from you! Mike, do you have any strong feelings about the way the world is headed? Do you have any fervent opinions on issues in our world or questions about society? These are all great places and beginnings for absurdist works!

Phone rings.

Mike

Don't pick that up! It's got to be Sam.

Beat.

Sam

Hey Mike, it's Sam. I'm just calling to see if you're home. I hadn't heard from you in a while and I was thinking about heading over there to see you. We need to seriously talk about a few things. Um... I guess I'll talk to you soon. Bye.

Mike

Oh no!

Character One

Would you please stop saying that! 'Oh no' is not going to make anything better!

Mike

You're right. You're right. Okay. Strong feelings, strong feelings...um...how about the pace of life in today's world? We are

living too fast nowadays, always having to meet deadlines, expectations...It's too much! We need to slow down, but can't!

Character One

I don't know...

Mike

Well let's just give it a chance. Who knows, Sam may be on her way to wring my neck right now!

Retires to his writing desk. Characters walk to stage.

Mike

Lights come up on two strangers on a train stopped for maintenance.

Character One

I can't believe this! I just can't believe this! How long are we to be stopped?

Character Two

Who knows? I've never stopped before.

Character One

Yes, but how long this time? We can't wait forever!

Character Two

How long is forever?

Character One

I believe a little longer than now, but I'm not sure.

Character Two

Where are we?

Character One

We are here. Stopped.

Character Two

We are stopped or here is stopped?

Character One

We are both stopped I believe, but I'm not sure. Let me check my phone.

Character Two

This is longer than forever I think. What is longer than forever?

Character One

I don't know, my phone doesn't say. Say, who are you?

Character Two

I am me, still the same as yesterday. And you are you right?

Character One

Yes. I feel I've seen you before.

Character Two

Yes. I was on your phone.

Character One

Interesting. Say, do you know how long are we to be stopped?

Character Two

Who knows? I've never stopped before.

Mike

Stop, stop, stop!

Character Two

Yes, that is what we are! He's got the hang of it!

Mike

No, this. I can't write this. We've got to do something different. I've got to write something fast!

Character One

I believe the word you are looking for is good, you have to write something *good*.

There is a knock at the door.

Mike

Oh no!

Character one shoots him a look.

Mike

That would be Sam...and my cue to leave.

Character Two

Leave? What do you mean leave? What are you going to do, jump out of the window or something?

Mike

You know, that's not a bad idea!

Pounding at the door.

Mike

Actually, I think jumping is a really good idea. It's been a pleasure working with you two, really, but I'm not ready, the script is not ready. Sam will tear me to shreds!

Character One

Don't you think you are overreacting? You can't jump out that window! It's like a jillion feet down! You jump, I jump remember?

Mike

You don't have to go with me.

Character One

I'm a part of your head! Of course I'd have to go!

More pounding. Sam yells for Mike.

Sam

Mike? It's Sam. I can hear you in there! Let me in! Is everything okay?

Mike

Oh no! Oh no! What should I do? I don't know what to do!

Character One and Two speak simultaneously.

Character One

AAAAHHHH! Stop saying that! Stop saying that! If I counted the number of times you said that STUPID phrase...

Character Two

Whatever you do don't jump! Don't jump! You wouldn't do that to us would you...

Mike

I just...

Pounding at the door. Sam yells.

Sam

Michael! I know you are in there! Get over here and answer this door immediately! Michael? MICHAEL!

Mike

Oh geez. I think I'm going to be sick. Guys, give me a minute.

Crosses to his desk and puts his head down. Pounding on door continues.

Character Two

...Come on we've got to let her in.

Character One

Are you sure that's a good idea?

Character Two

We have to. Come on.

Character One and Two exit. Pounding stops. Long beat before they re-enter.

Character One

I know! I KNOW!

Character Two

I can't stress this enough. What you've got here just isn't going to cut it. Do you understand? Publishers won't touch this! Give me something else. Soon.

Character One

I told you Sam, I'm trying! I really am; I just can't come up with anything at the moment. I've got major writer's block and I can't figure out a way to work around it.

Character Two

Well you had better find a way around it, and soon. I'm not going to jeopardize my career on a writer who doesn't write. I mean, think about if you were in my shoes and you promised a major publishing company an extraordinary script...that's what you called it right? Extraordinary?

Character One

Yeah. And it was...in my head, but when I started writing it just, it didn't work out as well as I thought it would.

Character Two

Do you realize you have put me at a great risk here? That my career is on the line, my reputation is at stake? My friend over at Simon & Schuster said he heard a few guys laughing about us. Laughing, Mike. Said they'd seen it time and time again where an agent and a writer think they're going to make it big and they...I've worked too hard for this! You need to get it together now! You've got five days or I'm dropping you. I'll give someone else a shot. I've let you extend time and time again, but we don't have anymore time. Time is up. Now is the time to get to work.

Characters One and Two exit. Mike is asleep at his desk. Phone rings. He jumps with a start, but doesn't answer it.

Sam

Hey Mike, it's just me, Sam. Again.

Mike

Sam?

Sam

Haven't heard from you in a while. I'm just checking up on that manuscript. You know it was due on my desk over two weeks ago? Yeah. I can't wait for it much longer. I made a promise to my friend Rob we'd have something in on Monday. So you've got two days to show me something. Understand? You impressed me earlier kiddo but its time to step up and give me something real. No more playing dodge the agent.

Mike answers the phone SR. Sam appears SL.

Mike

Sam? Hey it's me! You know you really don't need to call me from outside my apartment.

Sam

I'm sorry?

Mike

You were just...Weren't you just knocking on my door?

Sam

Um,no. I try not to make personal visits at six in the morning.
Mike are you okay? Do you need me to come over?

Mike
No, no. Could you give me just a second?

Looking for the characters.

Mike
Psst! Hey guys...where did you go?

Beat.

Mike
Guys? Hello?

Beat.

Mike
Where did they go? Huh.

Mike picks up the phone.

Mike
Hey Sam?

Sam
Yeah?

Mike
I know this is going to sound weird but do you know today's
date?

Sam
Sure it's the fifteenth. Are you sure you're okay?

Mike
Hallelujah!

Sam
Mike?

Mike
Yeah, yeah I'm here! I'm great! I'm more than great! I just got
an idea for the script! I had the weirdest dream, but it felt
so real!

Sam
That's great Mike! Congratulations!

Mike
Thanks! This is amazing! You're going to love this Sam.
Absolutely love this.

Sam

I'm sure I will! I can't wait to see what you've got in mind.

Mike

Okay, well I'll get in touch with you in a little while okay?
I've got to start writing before this dream fades.

Sam

Alright, but just real quick before I let you go. I found out about this young playwright's competition that I thought you would be great for. It has to be an original piece I can send a list of the other requirements through e-mail. The piece you're writing right now won't qualify though, because we've got a publisher looking into it. What do you think?

Mike

Sounds great! Thanks Sam.

Sam

Great! I'll let you go then! Can't wait to see the scripts!

Mike

Alright thanks! Bye!

Hangs up the phone. Begins to write. Beat. Characters One and Two enter. Mike doesn't see them at first.

Character One

So what are you going to write about?

Mike screams.

Mike

You scared me to death! Stop creeping up on me like that!

Character One

I wasn't creeping. Was I creeping?

Character Two

No, and we didn't mean to scare you. We were just curious about what you were going to write.

Mike

What do you mean? You already know what I'm going to write.
You were there.

Character One

Seriously. You have a REALLY THICK CRANIUM and the slowest synapses I have ever seen.

Character Two

Would you leave him alone already? He's got a lot on his mind. My apologies Mike.

Mike

That's okay...but what exactly is he talking about?

Character One

The script moron! The second script! What are you going to write for the competition?

Character Two

Oh why don't you just come out and say it! Mike, he wants to know if he's going to get his heroic part in your next script.

Mike

Oh. My next script...I...

Character One

Come on...use your words. What's it going to be?

Mike

Oh no!

Character Two

What is 'oh no'?

Character One

I think our friend over here just realized he agreed to do another script and has no idea what he's going to write about. Am I right?

Mike

I...oh no!

Character One

I'm right. Okay listen. Here's what we're going to do. I think we should do a piece set in Georgian England. I'll come riding in on a black stallion...

Lights slowly fade to black as the arguing voices of the Characters are heard once again and then fade with the lights.

Character Two

Let me guess, I'm the damsel in distress and you save me.

Character One
Good idea! And then it begins to rain..

Character Two
I don't like that idea.

Character One
Why not?

Character Two
It's been done. Jane Austen ring any bells? I think we should do a musical about pioneer life in America.

Mike and Character One speak simultaneously.

Mike
No more musicals please!

Character One
I'm not doing a musical! For the last time...