

DESPERATE FOR UNFETTERED

by JENNIFER MAISEL

CHARACTERS

GINNY – junior pr girl, black suit

RAVI – pierced, lemon hair, tattooed, wearing a headset

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- wanting to know what's inside -

one piercing streetlight -

unsteady night silence -

Ginny holds an egg to the light, hoping something is illuminated –

- desperate for unfettered -

hypnotic lights-

pulsating electronica -

a rave

Ravi dances fiercely –

- in for the kill -

Ginny stunned by the sensory overload

Ravi circles

Ravi studies

Ravi pounces

RAVI

(over the music)

You think you're in the wrong place.

GINNY

What?

RAVI

You think you're wrong –

GINNY

Huh?

I know I'm –

But if I leave –

Then –

I don't know

I'll be on the street

alone

in the middle of everything

and this –

RAVI

What?

GINNY

I am, I am in the wrong place. Obviously.

Do you have the egg?

RAVI

What?

GINNY

The egg.

RAVI

*-Ginny pulls an egg out her delicate purse –
-Ravi cracks the egg and a butterfly flies out of it.
It flutters towards the lights –*

It'll –
Oh no.

GINNY

- the withered butterfly falls to the floor –

Fried.
Sketch didn't think of that part.

RAVI

Sketch?

GINNY

You probably called him Scott.

RAVI

Umm, yeah?

GINNY

Yeah, you seem Scott.

RAVI

I'm sorry, do I -?

GINNY

Who knew burnt butterfly stench could make your stomach growl?
Surprising. He was so into the details. The effect. He'd have kicked his own ass for that
fuck up. I don't even have to guess. High School.

RAVI

How did you know?

GINNY

RAVI

You're obviously not present tense.

GINNY

We starred in South Pacific together. I saw the obituary in the Times and –

RAVI

Dried up.

GINNY

What?

RAVI

Reading the obits. That's parental.

GINNY

No.

RAVI

You use sunscreen on a daily basis, don't you?

GINNY

Don't pull that shit.

RAVI

What?

GINNY

Forever young superiority syndrome.
You squat, Obviously.

RAVI

You have health insurance.

GINNY

You revel in worrying people who love you.

RAVI

401 K. Roth IRA.

GINNY

You have yet to realize your brain cells are finite.

RAVI

Direct deposit. (*beat. She's done. He's triumphant.*) You're Ginny.

GINNY

He talked about me?

RAVI

Late at night, under the covers, we'd amuse each other with tales of the miseries of high school.

GINNY

You –

RAVI

He had more facets than the hope diamond sweetheart. Cut through hearts like glass.

GINNY

I never really thought.

RAVI

He played Curly and the Pirate of Penzance and Captain Von Trapp.

GINNY

You don't think about people you loved in high school in that way. In their future. I just didn't project his future.

He's trapped under the ice of my mind not returning my calls after the prom.

My mom has this theory that they all come back, old loves, they rise to the surface like tires buried under the dirt and that's how you live with the heartache because you know in 8 years, in 80 years, you'll get stitched up with inevitable closure. And then I saw the obituary and all I could think was fuck you Scott, you have obviated the necessity for me to look really fucking good at our high school reunion in 4 months which I've already lost 12 pounds for by giving up everything enjoyable to put in my mouth and I could sell my fucking soul for white flour and you asshole, you're not even giving me that moment, that moment when you see me across the setup of tables at Villa Victor and what flickers across your eyes is "what if? What if I hadn't?" And now, I don't get even that.

So I go to the funeral home and they hand me this egg and I have to search for a Korean market that has one of those UV light things to detect counterfeit bills and buy a supersize muffin that represents everything I have vowed not to eat to get them to let me hold the egg under the UV light so I can make out the address. And here I am. That's fucking closure for you.

RAVI

Casket's descending at midnight. Open.

GINNY

I'll wait.

(a shower of sparkly confetti comes down on just them.)

RAVI

No no no –

GINNY

What?

RAVI

(into the headset)

Confetti mal-fuck-tion in the southwest quadrant.

Don't blame me.

(he rushes away)

I told you using that cut-rate guy from Williamsburg was a bad idea.

(Ginny is left standing there. She raises her hand to catch some of the confetti-rain.)

- the hunger inside -

-Ginny stands under the lights

She can't let herself move to the music

She looks at her watch

She takes a super-size muffin out of her purse and begins to eat it in greedy gulps

It doesn't help-

- sometimes things get away from you –

RAVI

(into the headset)

Things are not exactly going according to plan.

Well I'm sorry if you're –

Don't say that –

- disappointed -

I don't care if you are, it's a just a word that brings back –

No, it's not that I don't care if you are, of course I care if you are, I try to be sensitive to your feelings, I FUCKING TRY OK? Trying doesn't always mean accomplishing, trying means trying and trying ought to be good enough, because -

GINNY

(approaches)

Hang up.

RAVI

What? Not you – Did you understand what I was saying before?

GINNY

Hang up.

That's the best part about a world where most intimate conversations take place in the ether.

The disconnect.

RAVI

(into headset)

What? No, someone is – you'd better - I know that you –

(Ginny reaches out to the ear piece pulls it off him, disconnecting it.)

GINNY

Click.

RAVI

I can't believe you did that.

GINNY

I can't believe you didn't.

(she hands him back the headset. He puts it on.)

RAVI

Testing. Testing. Sorry about that -

(she starts away)

Wait.

GINNY

What?

RAVI

Are you having a good time?

GINNY

A good time.

RAVI

Scott wants, would want - it was important to Scott.

GINNY

Sketch.

RAVI

- that you, that people, mourners, find some joy, some solace here. And if you don't guess I didn't do my job right.

Hors D'oeuvres might have helped.

GINNY

Hors D'oeuvres?

RAVI

Finger food? Pigs wrapped in blankets. Stuffed mushrooms. Crab dip. Grief makes people ravenous. You don't even have any peanuts.

GINNY

Pigs wrapped in blankets?

RAVI

You know, the little hot dog things.

GINNY

I just think – I know – Sketch –

RAVI

Oh, now my grief food of choice has to undergo a hipster critique?
(she starts away again)

GINNY

You want to dance?

RAVI

What?

GINNY

Dance.

RAVI

I've been ridiculed enough.

GINNY

No, really.

RAVI

You never said –

GINNY

Said what?

RAVI

GINNY

How he...?

You know...

Went kicking and screaming into the good night.

Usually it's in the obituary, not the lengthy juicy explanation we all want, but there are concise phrases or clues. Of cancer, unexpectedly, longtime companion. The less said the more horrific you imagine it to be.

Did he know?

He must have known if he had a plan. If he had a party.

An escape –

Did he...?

RAVI

I won't –

GINNY

What?

(he gestures to the headset.)

We starred in South Pacific together.

RAVI

(into headset)

Some enchanted evening?

GINNY

Did I tell you that?

RAVI

(into headset)

I don't know the tune.

GINNY

Or did he tell you that?

It was the spring musical our senior year and we'd get to that point, that scene. And it would be as if the audience would fall away. I wasn't the most beautiful girl in high school – maybe the girls in drama club never are. I was kind of wrapped up tight and I was sure there would be a moment where the bindings would crack and I would break free. And boys – my interaction with them was much heavier on the stage than anywhere else. So Scott –

RAVI

I don't know it.

It is not prerequisite. For anyone.

GINNY

We'd be two, caught in our own musical, me and Scott and it was only natural that we continue on through senior week and the prom, which was on my birthday. I mean, how could it be more perfect? At the prom, they would never have made us King and Queen, but they insisted we perform a medley of all the songs we'd done together and he gave me a cupcake with a candle and afterwards he took me back to the green room behind the stage, and he lowered me down on the couch that smelled like gym shoes and greasy makeup and old pizza and he undressed me and looked at me for a long long long time before he folded his tuxedo pants gently over the costume rack and pushed at me with his penis for a while in a way I thought was truly my deflowerment, truly my time to come bursting out, fully colored, fully formed, no longer hiding behind the costumes and the lights in order to not care what anyone thought of me because I cared what everyone thought of me, and that he was the person I had the most special, the most intimate...connection in the world with how we would transform on that stage and he was sharing the defining moment of my life with me and then later I heard...I heard.... that for him the performance was really still going on.

- and then he never called back.

Come on. You know you want to –
You know he wants you to -

RAVI

What?

(She sings)

GINNY

“Some enchanted evening....”
Come on.

(She leans in and grabs the headset off of Ravi's head)

RAVI

Hey!

GINNY

(into the headset. Loudly)

“Some enchanted evening...
You will see a stranger...
You will see a stranger....across a crowded room...”

We did Cyrano too. That had slipped my mind.

(she sings, louder and louder, as if finally letting go of something.)

GINNY

“and somehow you know, you know even then,
that somewhere you'll see her again and again!

Some enchanted evening, someone may be laughing
you may hear her laughing across a crowded room,
an' night after night as strange as it seems
the sound of her laughter will sing in your dreams!”

You don't even have the courage to be really dead you fucker.

(she takes off the headset.)

RAVI

He's calling it a metaphorical death.

GINNY

And when the casket descends at midnight?

RAVI

Rebirth.

GINNY

As?

RAVI

S.

GINNY

S?

And where do you fit in in the reincarnation?

RAVI

What?

GINNY

You still gonna be cruise director?

RAVI

It hasn't...come up.

(a beat.

Ginny looks at her watch.)

GINNY

“Once you have found him, never let him go, once you have found him never let him go.”

S.

What a crock.

Of course if the stage manager never calls the cue, Cinderella might miss the ball altogether....

(she hands him back the headset.)

Thank you.

(She goes.

He watches her.

(He takes the headset. Puts it on.)

RAVI

(into the headset)

Is he in the casket?

OK.

Ready.

Ready sound, ready light spectacular, ready casket.

Ready doves. Ready rain.

Ready rebirth.

OK.

On my cue.

(A moment. He doesn't give the cue. He takes off his headset and leaves.)

end play