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When the Stars are Right
By William Anderson

Act 1, Scene 1

(The stage is in shadow. We see the outline of a couch, side table and lamp. There is a bookcase filled with books to the side. We see a figure sitting on the couch frozen in shadow. Spotlight on ELLEN as she appears from stage right)

ELLEN: It was unexpected, you know. Came right out of left field. A bolt of lightning out of the blue, as they say. I'm almost fifty years old. I can't change who I am. Can I? *(looking at the figure on the couch)* So unexpected. *(beat)*

My first novel was published twenty years ago, but it seems like only yesterday. I loved to write. I'd write day and night, and when I wasn't writing, I was thinking about writing. I've been a voracious reader since forever and writing felt like the natural evolution of that drive. My teachers always encouraged me. I remember in, grade five or something, being presented with a special certificate, a 'Budding Novelist' award. Just for me. I was bursting with pride. When my first book was published, the critics loved it. I was so raw, and undeveloped, but suddenly, there I was, thrust into the spotlight. I was invited to all the parties, hung out with all the pretty people. It seemed all my dreams were within my grasp. It felt so unreal, you know? Like a vision, bestowed by a cruel god to tease and titillate. I waited for it to be yanked from my hand, for everything to fall down. Like it all was built on sand and sooner or later a wave would come crashing down and wash it, and me, away.

Then I met Michael, and suddenly everything became solid and real, and that feeling of everything being transitory faded away. *(looks once more at the figure)* He was so magnificent; my breath was locked in my throat when he approached. It's so cliché, and as a writer I know to stay away from clichés, but I think, for the first time in my life, I fell in love. *(ELLEN moves to the couch and sits beside the figure. Lights up. MICHELLE is speaking)*

MICHELLE: ...I knew I recognized you. I can't believe I'm sitting here with THE Ellen Waters. Wow! I'm such a huge fan. I can't believe we're neighbors. It's just so incredible. How come you live here? I mean, with all the money you have you could be living in Beverly Hills, or some place. Don't you want a mansion? Servants to bring you stuff... *(MICHELLE is gushing on and on)*

ELLEN: *(Interrupting MICHELLE'S verbal diarrhea)* Would you like something to drink?

MICHELLE: Huh? What?

ELLEN: I asked if you wanted something to drink.

MICHELLE: Oh. Sorry. I get carried away sometimes. It's just...

ELLEN: You're a fan. I understand. It happens occasionally.

MICHELLE: Occasionally? It must happen all the time. Don't you, like, get mobbed at the grocery store, or something?

ELLEN: Not in a long time.

MICHELLE: You're just being modest. You're freaking brilliant!

ELLEN: That's nice of you to say but...

MICHELLE: *(bolting up and moving to the bookcase)* Wow, you got a lot of books. Have you read them all?

ELLEN: Yes, I have, a few more than once.

MICHELLE: I'm not a big reader. In school I found it pretty boring. I'd rather be outside, playing in the dirt.

ELLEN: So Miss...

MICHELLE: Oh! I totally spaced out and forgot to give you my name. *(moves quickly to ELLEN and sticks out her hand)* Michelle, Michelle Graves, but you can just call me Mitch.

ELLEN: Mitch?

MICHELLE: Yep.

ELLEN: Okay, Mitch. So... you just moved in next door?

MICHELLE: Oh, yeah. It's my first house. I was getting tired of small apartments. And don't get me started on landlords.

ELLEN: *(moves back to the couch)* What do you do for a living?

MICHELLE: Oh, this and that. I just love these little figurines. Where'd you get them?

ELLEN: They were gifts from my husband.

MICHELLE: Oh, I didn't know you were married. Where is he? I'd like to meet him.

ELLEN: He...died last year. Cancer.

MICHELLE: I'm so sorry. Stupid mouth! I didn't know.

ELLEN: It's...okay. I just assume everybody knows by now. It was in all the papers.

MICHELLE: I don't read the papers. *(Looks around)* Where are the pictures?

ELLEN: (*Lost in memory*) Sorry?

MICHELLE: The pictures. Where are all the pictures of your husband? I don't see them.

ELLEN: I couldn't bear to look at them after...everything so I put them away.

MICHELLE: You put them away? Why?

ELLEN: Because I... no, I'm sorry, but I don't have to explain myself to you.

MICHELLE: Sorry. I didn't mean to offend you.

ELLEN: You didn't. It's just...

MICHELLE: You miss him a lot.

ELLEN: I do. He was...he was the love of my life. We were together for twenty five years.

MICHELLE: He must have been something.

ELLEN: what makes you say that?

MICHELLE: Just, I don't know, a sense I have.

ELLEN: A sense?

MICHELLE: I don't know how to describe it. My Spidey sense is tingling? It's just something that happens.

ELLEN: well, you're right, he was something.

MICHELLE: He had to be, right? I mean, he married you.

ELLEN: (*Laughs*) Oh, I certainly wasn't a prize by any means.

MICHELLE: Why not? You're brilliant, and accomplished. Someone would have to be pretty awesome to keep up with you.

ELLEN: Yeah, he was that. Awesome. (*claps her hands*) Well, let's not get all maudlin, dwelling on the past. Did you want something to drink? You never answered me.

MICHELLE: (*moving back to the couch*) Sure. What do you have?

ELLEN: Pretty much anything you want.

MICHELLE: Oooo...that's a loaded question. How about a beer?

ELLEN: It's 11 o'clock in the morning.

MICHELLE: I know. It's pretty late for the first beer of the day. What do you usually drink?

ELLEN: Tea. Sometimes coffee.

MICHELLE: You rebel.

ELLEN: (*A small laugh*) I do, however, like a bit of wine.

MICHELLE: Now we're talking!

(*ELLEN exits. MICHELLE is once again at the bookshelf when she returns with a beer and a glass of wine.*)

ELLEN: Here you go. (*hands the beer to MICHELLE*)

MICHELLE: Thanks. (*Takes a big swallow*) Holy crap! That's the best beer ever!

ELLEN: Glad you like it.

MICHELLE: Like it? I think I'm in love with it. Where did you get it?

ELLEN: A friend has a brewery. He sends me a box every now and then.

MICHELLE: Wish I had a friend like that (*both return to the couch*)

ELLEN: So tell me a bit about yourself, Michelle.

MICHELLE: What do you want to know? (*looks at the beer again*) Amazing.

ELLEN: I don't know. It's been awhile since I've had visitors, even uninvited ones.

MICHELLE: I was uninvited? I am shocked. Shocked. Why, if this beer hadn't robbed me of my skeletal structure, I'd walk right out, and leave you to, to... whatever it was you were doing when I knocked.

ELLEN: The beer is pretty good, isn't it?

MICHELLE: (*moaning*) I didn't think anything could be this good. Your friend is incredible.

ELLEN: I'll pass on your compliments.

MICHELLE: Please do, and while you're at it, see if you can snag a box. Please?

ELLEN: I'll see what I can do. So, you seem to be quite adept at dodging my questions. We've known each other all of half an hour and you haven't said anything about yourself.

MICHELLE: I'm not that interesting.

ELLEN: Oh no, you're not going to escape that easily.

MICHELLE: Alright, ask me anything.

ELLEN: Okay, what brought you to my door this morning?

MICHELLE: Um...I was just being neighborly.

ELLEN: Try again. I'm a writer, remember? I know BS when I hear it.

MICHELLE: Okay, okay. A guy in town told me you lived here so I wanted to check you out.

ELLEN: Excuse me?

MICHELLE: I mean, you're such an inspiration for me that I had to see for myself if the guy was putting me on.

ELLEN: And?

MICHELLE: And...your house is amazing. I still can't believe you live right beside me.

ELLEN: C'mon, I'm not that much of a celebrity. Twenty years ago, maybe. Not now.

MICHELLE: You're the biggest as far as I'm concerned.

ELLEN: I'm flattered. Did you know the Murphy's?

MICHELLE: Who?

ELLEN: The Murphy's. The nice couple that used to own the house next door?

MICHELLE: Oh. No, I was just told they wanted a quick sale so I made an offer and, poof! It was mine.

ELLEN: I wonder why they sold it? They were there when I moved in, and I thought they'd be there until they died. Roger was really a fixture in the neighbor.

MICHELLE: Don't know, but their loss is my gain.

ELLEN: What do you do?

MICHELLE: You mean like, what I do for work?

ELLEN: Yeah.

MICHELLE: I am between jobs at the moment.

ELLEN: You're unemployed?

MICHELLE: I prefer to think of it as looking for opportunities.

ELLEN: How did you afford the house?

MICHELLE: My mom left me some money when she passed away a few years ago.

ELLEN: Oh, I'm sorry.

MICHELLE: It's okay. But I don't like talking about it.

ELLEN: I completely understand.

MICHELLE: (*visibly shakes off the memory*) what do you like to do for fun?

ELLEN: Fun?

MICHELLE: Yeah, you know, fun? Enjoyment?

ELLEN: I mostly stay in and read. Maybe do research for my next book.

MICHELLE: That sounds boring.

ELLEN: Not at my age.

MICHELLE: Pffft! Your age?

ELLEN: Says the twenty something.

MICHELLE: You're only as old as you feel.

ELLEN: What do you do for fun?

MICHELLE: I like to dance. I go to clubs. Hey, have you ever gone bungee jumping?

ELLEN: That's where you jump from a perfectly good bridge with a giant elastic band tied to your ankle, right?

MICHELLE: You're kidding? You don't know what bungee jumping is?

ELLEN: Of course I do. I'm not THAT old!

MICHELLE: (Laughs) Sorry.

ELLEN: No, I have never tried it.

MICHELLE: You really should.

ELLEN: Should I?

MICHELLE: Oh yeah, it's awesome. Hey, how would you like to come with me?

ELLEN: What? No, I don't think so.

MICHELLE: C'mon! It'll be fun!

ELLEN: Sorry, not interested. Besides, I just met you. It wouldn't feel right.

MICHELLE: It's not like I'm asking you on a date. C'mon, you'll like it, I promise.

ELLEN: I don't know.

MICHELLE: It's not going to kill you.

ELLEN: It might.

MICHELLE: That's ridiculous.

ELLEN: No it's not. It has happened.

MICHELLE: Okay, okay. I will acknowledge that people have died bungee jumping, but that's no reason to not do it.

ELLEN: Yes it is. I'm getting some more wine. Want another beer?

MICHELLE: Sure.

(ELLEN exits. MICHELLE is fidgeting)

ELLEN: *(Offstage)* Sorry, no more beer. What else do you want?

MICHELLE: Anything is fine.

(ELLEN enters, carrying two glasses of wine. She has the bottle tucked under her arm)

ELLEN: Here's some wine for you *(hands a glass to MICHELLE)*

MICHELLE: Thanks. I don't know much about wine. *(gingerly takes a sip, then makes a face)* Ugg. Isn't this where I'm supposed to say, this is a fine year or something?

ELLEN: I have no idea.

MICHELLE: I thought you were all upper crusty and stuff so you have to know all about wine, and what fork is set to the left.

ELLEN: The salad fork.

MICHELLE: Really?

ELLEN: No. I don't have a clue, and I am quite the distance from the upper crust. Where did you get the idea I was?

MICHELLE: I don't know. You just seem, well, I mean, you seem very well put together. Well dressed. Well groomed, like you have to be ready for a photo at any moment. Isn't that what the upper crusties do?

ELLEN: *(laughing)* I was born and raised in a small town in the northern regions of British Columbia. Last I checked, that's quite far from the *(giggling)* upper crusties.

MICHELLE: You just snorted.

ELLEN: *(still giggling)* I most certainly did not!

MICHELLE: *(starting to laugh)* Yes you did! You just did it again! Oh my God, you're drunk!

ELLEN: I am not!

MICHELLE: *(laughing)* You are too! Oh, Jesus! You're drunk on one glass of wine!

ELLEN: who says I've only had one glass?

MICHELLE: I can't believe it! The brilliant Ellen Waters, drunk at *(looks at watch)* twelve o'clock in the afternoon.

ELLEN: *(stifling a burp)* I am not drunk! I am...slightly inebriated. That's all. Slightly inebriated.

MICHELLE: This is definitely not upper crustie behavior.

ELLEN: Most definitely not!

MICHELLE: So I'll pick you up tomorrow morning at ten to go bungee jumping.

ELLEN: Okay.

MICHELLE: Great!

ELLEN: Wait, what?

MICHELLE: You agreed. There's no going back on your word, is there?

ELLEN: But...

MICHELLE: Is there?

ELLEN: *(stares at MICHELLE, then lets out a huge burp.)*

(MICHELLE is stunned for a moment, then both collapse into laughter)

ELLEN: *(breathless)* Oh my God! I am so embarrassed!

MICHELLE: Why? It's a perfectly natural bodily function. Even the upper crusties do it.

ELLEN: I know, but it's undignified.

MICHELLE: Who cares? There's no one around to worry about.

ELLEN: What about you? You're a stranger.

MICHELLE: Nah, I don't count.

ELLEN: Why?

MICHELLE: 'Cause I'm your neighbor.

ELLEN: Who I just met today.

MICHELLE: Exactly. I'm not a stranger.

ELLEN: Now you're just arguing semantics.

MICHELLE: No I'm not. I don't even know what that means!

ELLEN: *(On the verge of giggling again. She snorts)*

MICHELLE: That is so adorable.

ELLEN: What?

MICHELLE: Your snort. I think it's cute.

ELLEN: I told you, I don't snort.

MICHELLE: Of course you don't. I'm sorry.

ELLEN: You should be. *(lifts the wine bottle)* Hey, someone ate all the wine.

MICHELLE: That would be you.

ELLEN: I did not.

MICHELLE: Then who did?

ELLEN: You?

MICHELLE: *(makes a buzzer noise)* Try again.

ELLEN: *(has a look of concentration, then an eureka moment)* Ha! I know who did it! It was the gremlins! Yes, that's right. The gremlins. They ate the wine, those little bastards.

MICHELLE: Gremlins?

ELLEN: Yep. Gremlins. It's the only logical explanation. Gremlins. They like wine.

MICHELLE: They do? How do you know?

ELLEN: Ssssshhhhhhhh! Keep it down! *(whispers)* They don't like it when you talk about them. They're...listening.

MICHELLE: *(leans in conspiratorially)* How do you know?

ELLEN: *(leans forward until she loses her balance. She bumps heads with MICHELLE)* Owl What did you do that for?

MICHELLE: I didn't do anything.

ELLEN: You head butted me.

MICHELLE: No, you lost your balance and fell into me.

ELLEN: Nope, Not possible. I have perfect balance.

(ELLEN stands up, wobbles, then falls back onto the couch)

ELLEN: Ooookay. Maybe I'm just a wee bit dizzy.

MICHELLE: Told ya. You're drunk.

ELLEN: Am not drunk. In. Eeeb. REEE. Ated. That's what I am.

MICHELLE: Right.

ELLEN: Now, since the gremlins have eaten all the wine, I gotta ask you a question.

MICHELLE: Okay.

ELLEN: Are you ready? No evasion. You have to answer it. Okay?

MICHELLE: Okay.

ELLEN: Alright. Here goes. Are you, that's right, you, little miss, are you in-ee-bree-ated too?

MICHELLE: I can hold my liquor.

ELLEN: That's not...that's not right. Uh uh. Not right.

MICHELLE: You're funny when you're drunk.

ELLEN: No drunk.

MICHELLE: Sorry. Inebriated.

ELLEN: 'Zactly.

MICHELLE: I have to take you to a club. I like you like this.

ELLEN: Sorry. Music gives headaches.

MICHELLE: You just haven't gone to the right club.

ELLEN: Are you married?

MICHELLE: Well, that came out of left field, didn't it?

ELLEN: Are you?

MICHELLE: Do you see a ring?

ELLEN: I'm seeing four of you.

MICHELLE: No, I'm not married.

ELLEN: I am. I mean, I was.

MICHELLE: I know. You told me.

ELLEN: I did?

MICHELLE: Yes, you did.

ELLEN: Did I tell you about Michael?

MICHELLE: Only that he was magnificently awesome.

ELLEN: He was. He definitely was. I miss him. Miss him lots. It's not fair. He wasn't supposed to leave.

MICHELLE: I thought he died?

ELLEN: Taken away from me. It was too soon. I wasn't ready.

MICHELLE: No one ever is.

ELLEN: Want more time.

MICHELLE: *(quietly)* Me too.

ELLEN: He was a good man. The best.

MICHELLE: *(starting to choke up)* Yeah.

ELLEN: You know, when someone you love dies, everyone is just so, solicitous of your every need. It's sickening, because they don't know. They just don't know. They can't.

MICHELLE: I know.

ELLEN: *(looks at Michelle)* You know?

MICHELLE: I know.

(They stare at each other for a moment)

ELLEN: You know.

MICHELLE: I know.

ELLEN: I see it. A sadness. Like mine.

(ELLEN reaches up and caresses MICHELLE'S face)

MICHELLE: My mom.

ELLEN: Your mom.

MICHELLE: She went away. Left me alone.

ELLEN: Taken away.

MICHELLE: Taken, but not by disease. No, not disease. Would have been better if it had been.

ELLEN: Accident?

MICHELLE: No. No accident.

ELLEN: Murder?

MICHELLE: Yeah. Murder. By her own hand.

ELLEN: No.

MICHELLE: Yes.

ELLEN: Sorry.

MICHELLE: I am too. She was really funny, you know? My mom. She had a great sense of humour. I remember laughing with her. She had a musical laugh. Like wind chimes. It always made me feel loved. You know? When I heard that laugh, I knew, I KNEW! That everything was going to be okay. It wasn't fair to take that away

from me. Not fair! I was only twelve. What was I supposed to do? I didn't know she was sick. All I knew was, one day, the laughter stopped. And it was like, the entire universe, just hit the pause button. You know?

ELLEN: Yeah. Every time someone asked me if I was okay, I just wanted to punch them in the face. Anything to return the world to the way it was, the way it was supposed to be.

MICHELLE: What was he like?

ELLEN: Who?

MICHELLE: Michael.

ELLEN: Michael. I'm gonna need more wine for this, I think. *(She rises, and slowly totters off stage. She returns with a new bottle of wine.)* He was handsome, movie star handsome, with the kind of square jaw you only find on superheroes. He used to complain that it was a bitch to shave 'cause of all the sharp corners *(a sweet, sad smile)* And his eyes. Oh my God, his eyes! They were the deepest blue I had ever seen. You know what I'm talking about, right? The kind that peer so deep inside you that it leaves you breathless? I drowned in those eyes. And I don't think I've ever come up for air.

MICHELLE: Wow.

ELLEN: Yeah. Wow. Kissing him was like...oh, my head feels...funky...

MICHELLE: Like what?

ELLEN: Huh? What, what?

MICHELLE: You said kissing him was like...

ELLEN: Oh, yeah. Have you ever stuck a piece of metal into an electrical outlet? Remember that shock that travelled up your arm and felt like you had just hit your funny bone? It was like that, times a billion. And imagine it travelling across your entire body, bitch slapping every nerve as it went. It was like being struck by lightning, over and over again.

MICHELLE: Nice hyperbole.

ELLEN: I swear, that's what it was like. Every kiss was like being electrocuted, only you would do anything to do it again *(softly)* And for some reason, he chose me.

MICHELLE: What?

ELLEN: Nothing. It was...nothing.

MICHELLE: I can tell you're a writer. Your descriptions are so..

ELLEN: Descriptive?

MICHELLE: Yeah...no...what's the word? Vivid. Yeah that's it. They're so vivid.

ELLEN: Thanks *(she hiccups; it comes out as a squeak)*

MICHELLE: That was too cute. You snort when you laugh, and you hiccup like a mouse.

ELLEN: Oh, Michael. Why did you have to go?

MICHELLE: I've asked myself that question every day.

ELLEN: About Michael?

MICHELLE: *(laughing softly)* No, about my mom. I remember sitting in the dark, just staring up at the ceiling, asking over and over again, why? Why? Was it something I've done? Something I said? I'd swear to be good every day, if only my mom could come back. Please, God, bring her back.

(MICHELLE is crying softly)

ELLEN: It's okay. *(Ellen wraps her arms around MICHELLE)* It really is, you know. It really is okay.

MICHELLE: I know. *(She breaks out of ELLEN'S embrace and wipes at her eyes)* Look at me, blubbering like a baby at the neighbor's house. You must think I'm a total idiot.

ELLEN: *(Softly)* It's okay. It's okay.

MICHELLE: Ellen? Are you all right?

(Ellen has curled in on herself, chanting)

ELLEN: It's okay, it's okay, it's okay, its okay... *(continues)*

MICHELLE: Ellen? Hey, do you want me to call someone? Is there anything I can get you? I've never been here before *(looks around)* but I'm sure I can find something you might want.

ELLEN: It's okay, it's okay, it's okay, it's okay...

MICHELLE: Well, I think that's enough wine for you. You're cut off, young lady.

(MICHELLE gently cradles ELLEN on her lap. She slowly strokes her hair.)

MICHELLE *(cont'd)*: Ssshhh, everything is fine. There's nothing to worry about. Nothing will hurt you.

(She begins to rock, gently, They stay like that for a few minutes, MICHELLE softly whispers to ELLEN. Slowly, ELLEN relaxes, and we hear a gentle snore.)

MICHELLE: Adorable.

(MICHELLE leans over and kisses ELLEN'S lips, then gently extricates herself from under ELLEN. She lays ELLEN'S head on a pillow, and spots a blanket on the bookcase. She retrieves it and covers ELLEN. She walks towards stage right, then stops. She turns towards ELLEN)

MICHELLE: Don't forget now. Bungee Jumping. 10am.

(MICHELLE exits)

ACT I Scene II

(Lights up on ELLEN's living room. We hear laughter off stage, with snorting. ELLEN enters; MICHELLE is right behind her)

MICHELLE: I told you you'd like it!

ELLEN: (Her face is flushed, and she's out of breath) Stop it! Stop...making...me ...laugh. I can't...can't breathe.

MICHELLE: Don't you wish life came with a soundtrack? Wouldn't that be awesome? Imagine, the dramatic music kicks in, during all the terribly dramatic real life events, like, I don't know, running out of mascara, or getting a run in your stockings or something.

ELLEN: Stockings? No one wears stockings anymore.

MICHELLE: Well, maybe they should!

ELLEN: Maybe they should.

(MICHELLE begins to dance to music only she can hear. Slowly, the lights dim, until only ELLEN is illuminated. She watches MICHELLE, who has frozen, for a beat)

This. This moment. This small, insignificant event. Watching her dance in my living room, so free, so uninhibited. I desperately wanted to be like her. To be free of the burdens of the past, of the loneliness that had been the only constant since Michael died. I wanted...I wanted... her. This small, insignificant moment in time, that would reverberate through the rest of my life.

(Lights up. MICHELLE resumes her motion)

This moment, when I realized I had fallen in love.

MICHELLE: The whole world is made of music, you know.

ELLEN: What? Sorry. I wasn't paying attention. Got lost in my head again. It's a hazard in my profession.

MICHELLE: I simply said, the world is made of music.

ELLEN: It is?

MICHELLE: Yep. Everything in existence is made from vibrations, from sound. Science says so.

ELLEN: Well, vibration isn't music.

MICHELLE: Of course it is. Haven't you ever heard of the 'Music of The Spheres?'

ELLEN: (A quiet laugh) I don't think it means, what you think it does.

MICHELLE: It doesn't matter. Isn't it a nice thought? Everything is music. Everything. Nothing is really solid. It's all just a different pitch. *(She's getting excited. She is bouncing on the balls of her feet)* Nothing is really gone. Their key has just been changed.

ELLEN: Michelle.

MICHELLE: It is awesome to think of it that way, don't you think? Everything is music. *(starts humming to herself)*

ELLEN: Michelle.

(MICHELLE ignores her, and starts dancing again)

ELLEN (cont'd) MICHELLE!

MICHELLE: *(startled)* Jesus! You almost gave me a heart attack!

ELLEN: Sorry, I didn't mean to startle you, but you'll have to leave.

MICHELLE: What? Why?

ELLEN: I have some company coming over.

MICHELLE: Great! I love company!

ELLEN: Sorry, but you can't stay. It's confidential business stuff.

MICHELLE: Is it your publisher?

ELLEN: No.

MICHELLE: Your agent?

ELLEN: No.

MICHELLE: Oh, I know! It's your editor, right?

ELLEN: No.

MICHELLE: OOOOhhhhh, it's THAT kind of company. Why didn't you just say so?

ELLEN: What kind of company? What are you talking about?

MICHELLE: Oh, you know, the kind of company that leaves you breathless and covered in sweat.

ELLEN: What? NO!

MICHELLE: Hey, it's okay. We all need a little *boom chika wow wow sometimes*.

ELLEN: It's not like that. George is my best friend. We've known each other since school.

MICHELLE: I thought I was your best friend?

ELLEN: A person can have more than one, you know.

MICHELLE: They can?

ELLEN: Yes they can. Now, git.

MICHELLE: Why can't I meet George?

ELLEN: Because it's personal.

MICHELLE: So? You've told me personal stuff before.

ELLEN: Yes, but this also has to do with confidential business. George isn't just my best friend, he's my lawyer.

MICHELLE: What do you need a lawyer for?

ELLEN: I could tell you, but then I'd have to kill you, dismember your body and plant you in my rosebushes.

MICHELLE: You don't have any rosebushes.

ELLEN: I'd plant them just for you.

MICHELLE: Okay, okay. I get the point. Will you at least think about introducing me to George? I haven't met many of your friends.

ELLEN: Don't worry, you'll eventually get to annoy George as much as you annoy me, but just not today.

(MICHELLE starts dancing again. ELLEN watches her for a beat)

ELLEN *(cont'd)*: Michelle, what are you doing?

MICHELLE: I don't know. But is it working?

ELLEN: Great. Now you're quoting Broadway shows.

MICHELLE: I'm surprised you know the line.

(MICHELLE is still dancing, but she has noticed ELLEN watching. Her movements have slowed, become more purposeful.)

ELLEN: I was at the Tony Awards, when Martin Short performed it with Bernadette Peters.

MICHELLE: You were?

ELLEN: Uh huh.

MICHELLE: Is he cute?

ELLEN: What? Who? Martin Short?

MICHELLE: No, not Martin Short. George.

ELLEN: Oh.

MICHELLE: Is he hunky?

ELLEN: I don't know. I've never looked at George like that so I can't say.

MICHELLE: What colour is his hair?

ELLEN: Brown. Unless he's dyed it again.

MICHELLE: He dyes his hair?

ELLEN: Yep. Last year, he actually got kicked out of court because the judge was offended by his pink hair.

MICHELLE: That is awesome! I like this George already.

ELLEN: Good. Now vamoose, so I can get my paperwork ready.

MICHELLE: *(She stops dancing)* Okay, but are we still on for drinks later?

ELLEN: But of course. That's my MICHELLE time.

MICHELLE: Cool. See ya, what, around ten?

ELLEN: Yeah, ten sounds okay. George might still be here though so you might actually get to meet him.

MICHELLE: Awesome sauce. Peace out, bitches.

(MICHELLE exits, sauntering out in a really bad impersonation of a "gangsta." Michelle goes over to the bookcase and pulls out some files. She moves to the couch and spreads them out on the table. George enters.)

GEORGE: Hey, ELLIE.

ELLEN: You know, George, you really should try knocking one of these days.

GEORGE: I haven't knocked on your door in over thirty years. Why ruin my winning streak?

(GEORGE moves to the couch)

GEORGE (cont'd): So what's the big emergency?

ELLEN: Where do I start?

GEORGE: With the wine, of course.

ELLEN: Crap! I knew I forgot something. I was out this morning and...

GEORGE: With who?

ELLEN: What?

GEORGE: Who were you out with?

ELLEN: What makes you think I was out with someone?

GEORGE: Because you almost never leave your house, since Mr. Perfect died.

ELLEN: Don't call him that!

GEORGE: Sorry, Ellie. Since Michael died you only ever leave this place when you have a meeting at your publisher. Most of the time, you make them come here. Ergo, someone must have dragged you out.

ELLEN: Yeah, my new neighbor.

GEORGE: New neighbors?

ELLEN: She bought the Murphy's place.

GEORGE: I didn't know it was for sale.

ELLEN: Neither did I.

GEORGE: So this new neighbor somehow got you out of your funk, and dragged you out, probably by the hair, to do what?

ELLEN: You don't want to know.

GEORGE: Oh, I most certainly do.

ELLEN: No, you don't.

GEORGE: Yes, I do.

ELLEN: *(to herself)* What am I doing?

GEORGE: What was that?

ELLEN: Nothing. I was just saying how it was unlike me to go out.

GEORGE: I'll say! So what did you and this this miracle worker do?

ELLEN: Um...

GEORGE: *(Intrigued)* Oh, my! Why, Miss Ellie, I do believe you're blushing!

ELLEN: I am not!

GEORGE: Oh, you are indeed! A nice shade of red too, I might add.

ELLEN: Michelle and I went skydiving, if you must know.

GEORGE: Michelle? Skydiving? You?

(George starts laughing, great big belly laughs)

ELLEN: It's not that funny, George.

GEORGE: Yes it is! I just cannot picture you jumping out of a perfectly good airplane. How did she do it, this Michelle? Truly she must possess some great power to accomplish such a feat!

ELLEN: Okay, now you're just being facetious.

GEORGE: Uh oh. Now I know you're embarrassed. You're bringing out the big, pompous words.

ELLEN: Shut up, George.

GEORGE: *(still laughing)* What else has this Michelle person been able to accomplish?

ELLEN: Well, she took me bungee jumping last month.

GEORGE: Oh, dear God, will the wonders never cease?

ELLEN: It...was...enjoyable. Even though I was really hung over.

GEORGE: Probably painful too, what with hanging upside down and the blood rushing to your head.

ELLEN: My head hurt like you wouldn't believe.

GEORGE: I bet.

ELLEN: I...I'm going to get the wine.

(ELLEN exits. GEORGE glances over the papers scattered on the table.)

GEORGE: What's this?

(ELLEN enters carrying a bottle of wine and two glasses)

ELLEN: What's what?

GEORGE: These pages on the table? Working on something new?

ELLEN: Not really. It's just...just an idea I'm throwing around.

(ELLEN pours the wine)

ELLEN (cont'd): I've been jotting a few notes down.

GEORGE: Seems like more than a few notes. Is this what you wanted to talk to me about? This new idea?

ELLEN: No.

GEORGE: *(sipping his wine)* Then what?

ELLEN: I don't know how to begin.

GEORGE: That's pretty unusual for you.

ELLEN: a lot of what's been going on has been unusual for me.

GEORGE: So, start at the beginning. You're a writer, so write the story.

ELLEN: Okay.

(ELLEN takes a huge swallow of her wine and drains the glass. She pours another. George watches her)

ELLEN: *(takes a big swallow of wine)* It started a month or so ago. I was wallowing in my usual misery and...

GEORGE: Imbibing copious amounts of wine.

ELLEN: Don't interrupt, George, or I'll never get this out. Nice blue hair by the way.

GEORGE: Thanks. I think it really highlights my eyes.

ELLEN: What does the court think?

GEORGE: That I am such a damn good lawyer that I could win my cases wearing nothing but a speedo.

ELLEN: No judge has kicked you out yet?

GEORGE: *(smiling coyly)* Not yet.

ELLEN: You did something, didn't you?

GEORGE: What? Lil' ol' me? What could I have possibly done?

ELLEN: You have definitely been naughty. I can tell.

GEORGE: I take the fifth.

ELLEN: This is Canada. We don't have a fifth amendment.

GEORGE: Well, we should. But aren't we getting a little off track?

ELLEN: Not at all.

GEORGE: Oh, yes we are. It was a clever ploy, Miss Ellie, to get me talking about myself.

ELLEN: I know how much you like to.

GEORGE: When you're this good, who doesn't? But, your ploy will not save you this time. Spill it!

ELLEN: Damn!

(By this time, ELLEN has almost finished the wine)

ELLEN (cont'd): Oh, look at that. Someone has finished off all the wine. Guess I'll have to get another bottle.

(ELLEN gets up, and hurriedly exits. GEORGE gazes after her)

GEORGE: (*quietly*) Oh, Ellen. What is going on?

(*GEORGE starts reading the papers on the table. After a few minutes, ELLEN returns with another bottle of wine.*)

GEORGE (*cont'd*) Ellen, this is amazing.

ELLEN: you like the idea?

GEORGE: Idea? From the looks of it, you've already fleshed it out. Have you started writing it yet?

ELLEN: (*sipping her wine*) Not yet. Haven't had the time to sit down and do it.

GEORGE: Why not?

ELLEN: Writer's block?

GEORGE: (*refilling his own glass*) Ellen, you haven't had writer's block in your life. What's really going on?

ELLEN: This and that.

GEORGE: Stop evading. You brought me here for a reason, and it wasn't to bounce ideas around for your next book.

ELLEN: I'm scared, George.

GEORGE: Scared? Of what?

ELLEN: Of...of everything!

GEORGE: Ellen, this is me, remember? We've known each other since before the universe was made. You know you can tell me anything, and I won't judge. Well, I judge other people, but never you.

ELLEN: Okay. Okay.

GEORGE: Deep breath. That's it. Just relax.

ELLEN: Ever since Michael died, I've been...lost, I guess. Life just felt empty, like the colour was gone.

GEORGE: I know.

ELLEN: Well, this last month, it's like all the colour has come flooding back. In neon. Everything is brighter, cleaner.

GEORGE: That's great!

ELLEN: No, it isn't! I don't want it to! You don't understand. I liked the way things were. I liked my grey world. I liked staying in with my memories.

GEORGE: Okay, I'm with you so far.

ELLEN: With the colour returning, and the world resuming its spin, it feels like I'm losing Michael all over again.

GEORGE: Now you've lost me.

ELLEN: It's because of her.

GEORGE: Her? Her who?

ELLEN: Her. Michelle.

GEORGE: Michelle?

ELLEN: Yes! It's her fault!

GEORGE: Who's Michelle?

ELLEN: My new neighbor.

GEORGE: Oh, right. The one who took you skydiving.

ELLEN: Yes! And bungee jumping.

GEORGE: Right, and bungee jumping.

ELLEN: It's her fault. She did this to me.

GEORGE: Did what?

ELLEN: This! Everything!

GEORGE: She brought the colour back into your world.

ELLEN: Exactly!

GEORGE: I'm not seeing the negative in that.

ELLEN: who asked her too? I certainly didn't! I was content where I was. I was perfectly happy with my days, sitting around, drinking wine, remembering. Then she comes bursting in, and everything changed. Suddenly, I could hear the birds outside, and the laughter of the people on the street. I could taste my food again.

GEORGE: I still don't see the problem.

ELLEN: George!

GEORGE: I don't. I'm sorry, but I really don't. Ellen, this past year, I've been deeply worried about you. Sitting here, lost in your head for weeks at a time. Living in the past, not caring about the future. You barely spoke to anyone, even me. I couldn't get you to do anything. You lost all interest in the outside world. If this Michelle could get you to do something so far outside your comfort zone as skydiving, then all the power to her.

ELLEN: You don't understand!

GEORGE: I don't understand what?

ELLEN: I...

GEORGE: What's the problem?

ELLEN: (*softly*) I think... I'm in love with her.

GEORGE: What?

ELLEN: I'm in love with her, George.

GEORGE: Oh.

ELLEN: I don't know. Everything is just...upside down. I'm confused, and...lost.

GEORGE: Are you sure?

ELLEN: What do you mean, am I sure?

GEORGE: Are you sure you're in love with her?

ELLEN: I think so. I mean, how can you be sure? Is there a measuring stick I'm not aware of?

GEORGE: Well, how do you feel?

ELLEN: I...I don't know.

GEORGE: You don't know?

ELLEN: I feel...it's hard to describe how I feel.

GEORGE: You're a writer. Nothing is hard to describe for you.

ELLEN: I wish everyone would stop throwing that in my face.

GEORGE: Well, it's true. You have more words at your disposal than the Oxford dictionary, so try.

ELLEN: I don't...

GEORGE: Try.

ELLEN: (*takes a large gulp of wine*) Remember I said how it was like the colour had returned to the world?

GEORGE: Yeah

ELLEN: Well, it's like, it's like... she's the one holding the paintbrush. Wherever we are, everything around us is brighter, clearer. Remember those spring storms we got back home? The world is like that, and then, suddenly, the clouds part and the sun streaks down, illuminating everything it touches, making them glow. You know? When she leaves, it's like the clouds have once more covered up the sun, and left me in shadow.

GEORGE: That's...a pretty good description.

ELLEN: What am I going to do?

GEORGE: About?

ELLEN: About this! Why is this happening? I can't be in love with another woman!

GEORGE: Why not?

ELLEN: Because!

GEORGE: Because what? Because the world says it's not right?

ELLEN: No! Because it's not me. It's not how I am.

GEORGE: How do you know?

ELLEN: I'm almost fifty years old! You'd think I'd know by now!

GEORGE: Well, obviously, something is there, if what you said is true, about how you feel.

ELLEN: Why is this happening to me? Why now?

GEORGE: Those are questions without any answers, Ellie.

ELLEN: It's unfair!

GEORGE: To whom?

ELLEN: To me! To her! To Michael! To...everybody!

GEORGE: How is it unfair to Michael? He's gone, Ellie.

ELLEN: I know he's gone! Don't you think I know that? It's just...just feels unfair to his memory, you know?

GEORGE: How? I'm absolutely sure he'd want you to move on. He was that kind of man.

ELLEN: I know what kind of a man he was. I know he'd want me to, but...I can't. I just can't.

GEORGE: Yes, you can.

ELLEN: Well, maybe I don't want to. Not yet.

GEORGE: You're holding yourself back from your own happiness.

ELLEN: No, I'm not! I told you, I was perfectly happy in my dull, grey world. I didn't want this, any of this. She came into my life completely uninvited!

GEORGE: But you didn't make her leave.

ELLEN: I tried. I really did, but she just wouldn't leave me alone. What am I going to do, George? Tell me!

GEORGE: I don't know, Ellie. It's up to you.

ELLEN: You're the one that's supposed to have all the answers. You're the sage. You always have been.

GEORGE: Not this time.

ELLEN: You've never let me down before.

GEORGE: Sorry.

(They sit in silence for a while. ELLEN empties the last of the wine into her glass)

ELLEN: *(softly)* She's beautiful, you know?

GEORGE: Is she?

ELLEN: I think Michael would have adored her.

GEORGE: Probably. He had no standards. He liked everybody.

ELLEN: so true. But I think Michelle would have been something special. She's just...extraordinary. The enthusiasm, the energy, the...the very life she brings with her. I haven't experienced anything like it in a long time. Not since...well, not since Michael.

GEORGE: It's funny how their names are so similar. Michael and Michelle.

ELLEN: You're right. Strange how I never noticed that.

GEORGE: Yeah, I'm good like that.

ELLEN: George, what do you think I should do? Really?

GEORGE: I really haven't the foggiest, Ellie. Whatever you think is right for you, I guess.

ELLEN: Even if I don't know what that is?

GEORGE: Especially if you don't know what that is. Does she know?

ELLEN: What?

GEORGE: Michelle. Does she know you are in love with her?

ELLEN: I don't know.

GEORGE: You haven't told her?

ELLEN: Why would I do that? I haven't told anybody, except you.

GEORGE: Why not?

ELLEN: I don't know. Fear, probably. I'm scared. I've never felt this way about another woman before. I don't want to lose what we have. What if I scare her away?

GEORGE: well, it's up to you, but, in my opinion, you can't go around silently pining for her.

ELLEN: Why not? It's worked so far.

GEORGE: Has it?

ELLEN: Yes, it has. So why change it?

GEORGE: Change is good.

ELLEN: Not all change.

GEORGE: Yes, Ellie, all change is good. Eventually. It's just most people get caught up in the turmoil and never realize it.

ELLEN: I'm drunk.

GEORGE: Yep.

ELLEN: You?

GEORGE: Yep.

ELLEN: Good.

GEORGE: Yep.

ELLEN: So what now?

GEORGE: I don't know. More wine?

ELLEN: I don't know if I have any more.

GEORGE: Shouldn't you go check?

ELLEN: Okay.

(ELLEN gets up, wobbles, then falls back on the couch)

ELLEN (cont'd): Ooooh, I don't think that was a good idea.

GEORGE: You looked a little wobbly.

ELLEN: I feel a bit wobbly. Maybe you should go check.

GEORGE: Okay. A one...and a two...and...a THREE!

(George pushes himself to his feet. He wobbles, but remains upright. He gives a salute, then exits.)

ELLEN: I hate you.

(ELLEN starts shuffling the papers on the table for a bit, then stops. She reads.)

ELLEN (cont'd) "The universe is made from music. Everything in existence sings its own song, but all are part of the greater whole. Every pitch, every key, sings creation into existence, and when it stops, creation will cease to be. There are no discordant notes in the song, nothing is out of tune. It cannot be, for each and every thing, sings its own being into existence. When the stars are right, when the universe takes a breath, sometimes, if you are still, you can hear it."

(GEORGE enters with more wine.)

GEORGE: That's a nice thought, isn't it?

ELLEN: *(startled)* Oh! I see you found some.

GEORGE: It was way in the back, and it's covered in dust, so I guess it's been there awhile so I'm not exactly sure what it is, or if it's any good.

ELLEN: Only one way to find out.

(She picks up the glasses and holds them up for GEORGE to pour. His hands are a little unsteady.)

GEORGE: OOps.

ELLEN: Don't worry. It's just a carpet.

GEORGE: well, that's certainly a different attitude than usual.

ELLEN: yeah, well, why worry about something as silly as a carpet?

GEORGE: Do I have Michelle to thank for this change?

ELLEN: Maybe a little. *(She takes a sip)* Ick! It's vinegar. *(takes another)* But I'm sure it will grow on me.

GEORGE: *(sets his own glass down)* Yeah, like a fungus.

ELLEN: Just more for me then.

GEORGE: Don't you think you've had enough?

ELLEN oh, nowhere near enough. I want to forget.

GEORGE: Forget what?

ELLEN: Everything. I want to forget everything, at least for a while.

GEORGE: Are you going to tell her?

ELLEN: George, I'm trying to forget over here. Stop trying to remind me of stuff.

GEORGE: That's the job of the best friend, isn't it?

ELLEN: Well, stop it. Take the day off or something. Let me lose myself in the wonderful world of alcoholism.

GEORGE: Can't.

ELLEN: Why not?

GEORGE: It's against the code.

ELLEN: The code?

GEORGE: Yep. The code of the best friend. There are rules, you know.

ELLEN: Leave it to a lawyer to worry about rules.

GEORGE: So. Are you?

ELLEN: An alcoholic? Probably.

GEORGE: No, going to tell her?

ELLEN: Nope.

GEORGE: why not?

ELLEN: Told you. I'm chicken.

GEORGE: You've never been scared in your life.

ELLEN: Have too.

GEORGE: Not really.

ELLEN: What about that time when you dragged me onto that Ferris wheel, after I told you I was afraid of heights? I was scared then.

GEORGE: Yeah, and you were cracking stupid jokes so I wouldn't see how scared you were. But you weren't scared afterwards, were you? In fact, you wanted to do it again.

ELLEN: I was still scared.

GEORGE: Well, now, you have even gone bungee jumping, and plummeted to earth from a plane. After that, how can you be scared?

ELLEN: Easy.

GEORGE: C'mon, Ellie.

ELLEN: I don't want to embarrass myself.

GEORGE: You're old enough.

ELLEN: That's the point. This whole thing upsets everything I know about myself, about my life.

GEORGE: That's good. You don't want to be too comfortable.

ELLEN: says the guy who changes his hair colour every week because he doesn't like his natural hue.

GEORGE: I love my hair.

ELLEN: The why do you dye it all the time?

GEORGE: Because I want to.

ELLEN: Well, I don't.

GEORGE: You should tell her. It's going to come out sooner or later.

ELLEN: No it won't.

GEORGE: Yes it will. You suck at keeping secrets. It'll show in your behavior, in your face. She'll catch on, trust me.

ELLEN: I'll burn that bridge when I get to it.

GEORGE: She probably already knows.

ELLEN: Don't say that!

GEORGE: It's true. She probably already knows, if I remember correctly about how you react around people you like.

ELLEN: I deny that. She doesn't know. Hasn't a clue. And she never will. I'll keep it to myself until it goes away.

GEORGE: Until what goes away? Your feelings, or her?

ELLEN: (*plugging her ears*) Lalalalalalal! I can't hear you!

GEORGE: Stop it, Ellen. You're denying your own feelings.

ELLEN: SO?

GEORGE: So, it's not healthy.

ELLEN: Neither is drinking three bottles of wine, but that hasn't stopped us.

GEORGE: We're not teenagers, either, so stop acting like one.

ELLEN: I can act any way I want to. If I don't want to tell her, you can't make me.

GEORGE: You're right. I can't. But do you really want to go through the rest of your life, denying something about yourself? Do you really want to go back to that dull, grey world, you described? Wouldn't you rather stay in the brighter, clearer world, painted by the person you love?

ELLEN: you can shut up now.

(There is silence for a few beats)

ELLEN: (*softly, to herself*) Okay.

GEORGE: (*beat*) What?

ELLEN: Okay. I will tell her.

GEORGE: Really? You promise?

ELLEN: Don't make me hurt you, George.

GEORGE: (*hands up in surrender*) Okay, okay. (*beat*) When?

ELLEN: I don't know.

GEORGE: Sooner is better than later.

ELLEN: Don't rush me. I'll...I'll tell her tonight.

George: Tonight? Are you sure?

ELLEN: Isn't it always better to just get it over with? Rip off the bandage?

GEORGE: Do you want me to stay with you?

ELLEN: No. No, I think this is something I have to deal with alone, no matter how much I don't want to. You're right. There's no use denying it. I'm in love with her and I am an adult. Sometimes, anyway.

GEORGE: See?

ELLEN: Don't let it go to your head, the fact that you were right.

GEORGE: Perish the thought. I like your new story, by the way. The one you were reading when I came back from getting the vinegar.

ELLEN: Oh. You heard that? Thanks.

GEORGE: It's not your usual style.

ELLEN: No, it's not. I wanted to try something a bit different. I don't know if my publisher will like it though.

GEORGE: Who cares? Haven't you always told me you write only for yourself, not for the audience?

ELLEN: Yeah.

GEORGE: So don't worry about your publisher, your agent, your editor, or anybody else. Just write for yourself.

ELLEN: I really hate you.

GEORGE: I know.

(They hug)

GEORGE (cont'd) What time is it?

ELLEN: I don't know. 8 o'clock, maybe?

GEORGE: Crap, I gotta go.

ELLEN: Why?

GEORGE: I've got a meeting with a judge.

ELLEN: You're going to meet with a judge drunk?

GEORGE: Yes.

ELLEN: With blue hair?

GEORGE: Yes.

ELLEN: Okay. Good luck.

GEORGE: Thanks. To you too. Remember, no matter what happens, you're going to be fine.

ELLEN: I know.

(ELLEN kisses GEORGE on the cheek)

GEORGE: Let me know how it goes, okay?

ELLEN: Oh, you better believe I'll be calling you. Who else can I pin the blame on?

(Laughing, GEORGE exits.)

ELLEN (cont'd): I'm really in it now. Thanks a lot George.

(ELLEN briefly looks at the papers, then begins to gather them up. She returns them to the bookcase, then takes a swig from the bottle of wine, making a face. MICHELLE enters)

MICHELLE: Hey!

ELLEN: You're early.

MICHELLE: I know, but I just saw someone leaving so I thought you were free.

ELLEN: I am. George just left. He has a meeting with a judge.

MICHELLE: Oh. What did he do?

ELLEN: Oh, so many things. He's a lawyer.

MICHELLE: Ah.

(ELLEN moves toward MICHELLE, who has moved to the couch)

ELLEN: I'm afraid there's no more wine. George and I drank it all. You can have some vinegar if you want *(holds out bottle)*

MICHELLE: Vinegar?

ELLEN: It's what happens to wine when it gets really, really old, or is stored improperly.

(Michelle tries a sip)

MICHELLE: Oh my God! That's disgusting!

ELLEN: Told you. *(Ellen takes a swig)*

MICHELLE: How can you drink that?

ELLEN: Easy (*takes another swig*)

MICHELLE: You seem a little...

ELLEN: Drunk?

MICHELLE: That, and...something else.

ELLEN: Scared? Uncomfortable? Frantic? I've always loved that word. Frantic. It sounds like its meaning.

MICHELLE: I have no idea what you're talking about.

ELLEN: Good. Me neither.

MICHELLE: Is everything all right?

ELLEN: Oh, everything's fine. Just peachy keen.

MICHELLE: Are you all right?

ELLEN: Never better. Tip top. Fiddling fit.

MICHELLE: Are you sure?

ELLEN: Sure, I'm sure. Why wouldn't I be sure? Surely, I am sure.

MICHELLE: you're not making sense.

ELLEN: Nothing makes sense anymore.

MICHELLE: What do you mean?

ELLEN: Everything's changing. I'm changing. You're changing. The world is changing. Everything's changing. And I don't like it!

MICHELLE: Ellen, are you really okay? You're babbling nonsense.

ELLEN: Is it nonsense? Didn't some dead philosopher guy once say the only thing constant is change? Or something like that?

MICHELLE: Sure.

ELLEN: Well, the times, they are a'changin.'

MICHELLE: What are you talking about?

ELLEN: Have you ever thought of something a certain way? And this one way has been a constant in your life, like the sun? And then, one day, you suddenly wake up and find that this something, this something you considered unchangeable, had changed?

MICHELLE: Yeah.

ELLEN: Well, something in my life, something I once considered unchangeable, has changed. And it scares me more than I have ever thought possible. I'm almost fifty years old, and pretty much set in my ways. I thought it would be that way until the day I die. Then you come along, and screw it all up!

MICHELLE: Excuse me?

ELLEN: You! You screwed everything up! You threw off the curve!
You knocked everything out of place, tilted the axis!
MICHELLE: What are you saying? I'm lost.

ELLEN: Me too. I am so lost. And so confused.

MICHELLE: And drunk.

ELLEN: And drunk.

MICHELLE: Something's bothering you. What is it?

(MICHELLE reaches out and takes ELLEN'S hand. ELLEN stares for a moment.)

ELLEN: I love you.

MICHELLE: What?

ELLEN: I love you, Michelle. I am in love with you.

(MICHELLE releases ELLEN'S hand.)

MICHELLE: That...was...

ELLEN: I know, I know. Go on, say it.

MICHELLE: Say what?

ELLEN: Say, you never want to see me again. Say, that it's disgusting. Say, I don't know, say... (a beat)

MICHELLE: This is awkward.

ELLEN: Oh, my God!

MICHELLE: Relax, Ellen. It's no big deal.

ELLEN: No big deal? NO BIG DEAL? It just upsets my entire existence, that's all. No big deal, right?

MICHELLE: That's not what I meant.

ELLEN: Just what did you mean, Michelle? I'd like to know. I know I'm pretty drunk and all, but I just expressed something I'm very confused about, and all you can say is no big deal?

MICHELLE: What do you want me to say?

ELLEN: I don't know. Maybe act like a grown up for once.

MICHELLE: Excuse me?

ELLEN: Why? Why should I excuse you? Telling someone who is confused and hurt and freaking out to relax is the worst kind of condescension there is!

MICHELLE: Ellen, calm down.

ELLEN: Stop it! Just...stop it!

MICHELLE: Okay, okay. I don't know what you want me to say. This kind of came out of the blue, don't you think?

ELLEN: No...I don't know. Ah, Hell!

(ELLEN throws herself on the couch)

ELLEN *(cont'd)*: Don't you get it? Don't you understand what this means? All my life, every single moment of my time on this planet, I've known what I was, and what I wanted to be. Every moment. In school, I knew, I felt deep inside myself, in that dark place where dreams reign, that I am a writer. It's what I have always known, from the first moment I could string a few syllables together. I build stories. I nurture them. I guide them. And now, now, now, this story, the story of my life, has taken a turn in an unforeseen direction, and I don't know what it means. I don't know how to stop it.

MICHELLE: Isn't that what stories are supposed to do? Write themselves the way they want to be written?

ELLEN: No. Yes. I don't know. All I know is, sometimes, when I'm lost in what I'm creating, in the story that's unfolding, I can feel it bucking against me, wanting to run off on its own, and my job, my reason for doing what I do, is to gently move it in the direction I want it to go, not forcefully, but with tenderness and care. Now, I've lost control of my own story, and it's got itself all tangled up in the wilderness.

MICHELLE *(sitting beside ELLEN)*: A horse analogy. Nice.

ELLEN: You've completely changed my world, Michelle.

MICHELLE: I didn't mean to. I did not plan on that, I swear. You know me. I don't plan anything!

ELLEN: I know, but the fact remains, you did. After Michael died, the world, my world, was grey, and colourless, and I liked it that way. I liked sitting alone, wrapped in my memories of him, snuggling deep down inside myself. I never wanted to leave. I was content, and safe.

MICHELLE: But were you happy?

ELLEN: Happy? Who in this world is ever truly happy? I was... content. I wanted nothing more than to stay there forever. Then you came along, throwing paint on everything, and making it brighter, and more interesting.

MICHELLE: And making a mess.

ELLEN *(laughing softly)*: Yes, and making a mess. Now, everything is strange and confusing, and I feel like someone who started reading right in the middle. I don't recognize the characters, I don't know the plot. What I thought I knew, about myself, about the world, is wrong. Everything is wrong.

MICHELLE: So? Being wrong is alright. There's nothing wrong with being wrong.

ELLEN: I've always been the smartest person in every room I enter. I'm never wrong.

MICHELLE: I find that hard to believe. Everyone is wrong at some point.

ELLEN: Not me. Ask George. He'll tell you.

MICHELLE: I would, but he is conspicuously absent.

ELLEN: I forgot. I sent him away.

MICHELLE: Well, call him back.

ELLEN: Why?

MICHELLE: Why? Why not?

ELLEN: It was his idea, you know.

MICHELLE: What?

ELLEN: It was his idea to tell you how I feel.

MICHELLE: It was?

ELLEN: Yep.

MICHELLE: You didn't want to tell me?

ELLEN: Nope.

MICHELLE: Why not?

(ELLEN stares at MICHELLE for a beat)

MICHELLE *(cont'd)*: Right. Sorry. You are embarrassed and scared.

ELLEN: Uh huh.

MICHELLE: But you've told me. How do you feel now?

ELLEN: Drunk. Very drunk.

MICHELLE: I meant about me? About everything?

ELLEN: I feel...I feel like drinking more wine until I forget how I feel.

MICHELLE: That would be so unhealthy. Do we have any more wine?

ELLEN: Probably not. I ate it all. Or the gremlins did. Or George. Yeah, maybe George did it. He's bad. He's a very bad man.

MICHELLE: I can't believe you drank the vinegar.

ELLEN: Was tasty.

MICHELLE: Really?

ELLEN: No. It was disgusting, but I needed the courage.

MICHELLE: I don't think you needed anything.

ELLEN: Yep. A scaredy cat, me is.

MICHELLE: I think you're probably the most amazing person I know.

ELLEN: You must not know many people.

MICHELLE: Why do you do that?

ELLEN: Do what?

MICHELLE: Deflect compliments with self-deprecation.

ELLEN: I do not.

MICHELLE: Yes you do.

ELLEN: I don't know.

MICHELLE: You should stop it. It's annoying.

ELLEN: Sorry.

MICHELLE: You have nothing to be sorry for.

ELLEN: I screwed everything up.

MICHELLE: What do you mean?

ELLEN: I screwed everything up, between us. Our friendship.

MICHELLE: Um...no?

ELLEN: No? What no?

MICHELLE: You didn't screw anything up between us.

ELLEN: I didn't?

MICHELLE: No, you didn't. The truth is, I really did have ulterior motives for forcing myself on you that first day.

ELLEN: The day we met? When you barged into my life and upset the apple cart?

MICHELLE: Yeah. What I told you was true. I really did want to check you out, when I found out you were my neighbor, but that's not the whole of it.

ELLEN: No?

MICHELLE: No. I've been...kind of crushing on you for a long time.

(ELLEN stares for a moment then bursts into laughter. After a beat, MICHELLE joins in)

MICHELLE *(cont'd)*: It is pretty funny, isn't it?

ELLEN: You have no idea.

MICHELLE: Why were you so scared to tell me how you feel? I've known for a while. I would've had to be blind not to notice.

ELLEN: Notice what?

MICHELLE: The way you look at me, when you think I'm not looking.

ELLEN: Oh, God! I am so embarrassed. I'm going to curl into a ball, and die now, okay?

MICHELLE: Why?

ELLEN: Because.

MICHELLE: Because, what?

ELLEN: I've...never felt this way before, about a woman, I mean.

MICHELLE: We learn something new about ourselves every day.

ELLEN: Michelle, I'm almost fifty. There's really not much new to learn.

MICHELLE: Did you expect to fall in love with another woman?

ELLEN: No.

MICHELLE: There you go. You learned something new.

ELLEN: You're not...

MICHELLE: Not...? What?

ELLEN: I have no idea what I was going to say.

(MICHELLE takes ELLEN'S hand once more.)

MICHELLE: Ellen, you are not the first woman to tell me she loves me.

ELLEN: Oh.

MICHELLE: I am surprised you admitted it though.

ELLEN: Me too. It's George's fault. He made me do it.

MICHELLE: He did? Good for him.

ELLEN: I don't like him anymore. My stomach is in knots. I'm dizzy.

MICHELLE: that's the alcohol.

ELLEN: No, it's not. Because, this changes things, doesn't it?

MICHELLE: Only your entire life.

ELLEN: I don't understand.

MICHELLE: What's to understand? You can't control who you fall in love with.

ELLEN: You sound like George.

MICHELLE: He sounds like a smart man.

ELLEN: Too smart for his own good. I hate him.

MICHELLE: No you don't.

ELLEN: I do too!

MICHELLE: You're pouting.

ELLEN: So?

MICHELLE: Its adorable.

ELLEN: I hate you too.

MICHELLE: No you don't.

ELLEN: Yes I do.

MICHELLE: You just said you loved me.

ELLEN: I was wrong. I hate you.

MICHELLE: Okay.

ELLEN: Okay?

MICHELLE: Okay.

ELLEN: Okay, what?

MICHELLE: It's okay if you hate me.

ELLEN: I don't hate you.

MICHELLE: I know.

ELLEN: I hate me.

MICHELE: Why? Because you fell in love with me?

ELLEN: No...yes...Oh, I don't know. It's all jumbled up inside of me. I'm confused, and scared, and embarrassed, and...I'm almost fifty, God Damn it!

MICHELLE: what does that have to do with anything?

ELLEN: At fifty, everything is supposed to stay in its place.

MICHELLE: Says who?

ELLEN: Everybody.

MICHELLE: I don't think so.

ELLEN: That's the way it's supposed to be.

MICHELLE: Life is never what it's supposed to be.

ELLEN: I'm going to call you George Junior from now on.

MICHELLE: I like it. It's better than Mitch.

ELLEN: I've never called you Mitch.

MICHELLE: I noticed.

ELLEN: Michelle is much better, much more...you.

MICHELLE: I guess it is.

ELLEN: So. What happens now?

MICHELLE: Now? Life goes on just like it always does.

ELLEN: I mean, what happens with us?

MICHELLE: Us?

ELLEN: Yeah.

MICHELLE: I don't know.

ELLEN: Me neither.

MICHELLE: I guess we'll just have to figure it out then.

ELLEN: I guess so.

(Lights dim. MICHELLE freezes in place. ELLEN stands up.)

ELLEN (cont'd): These little moments. These little moments, and their ripples that spread out across the waters of a life and bring turmoil and with it, great change. My life has never been the same. The colours remained bright, no longer grey. Some people accepted the new me, and some did not. I didn't care. My publisher did not like the new book so I found another one. And it put me back on the bestseller list. Life is forever changing, and all you can do is go with it.

FINI

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