

*In Darkness...*

HANK (O.S)

How did I get back here?

*Lights up; A room, furnished with a desk. A large typewriter, Smathers is on the desk. Hank storms on and goes to his chair to write.*

HANK

Why does this keep happening? I'm afraid to touch you. I'm afraid that it would just be meaningless, arbitrary touching. I want it to mean something.

*Smathers opens his eyes.*

SMATHERS

Do you know how long it's been, Hank?

HANK

It wouldn't be fair to you.

SMATHERS

You can't pound away at my keys for ten years, and then one day just stop! I have feelings too, you know.

HANK

I don't have anything to write. I'm finished.

SMATHERS

Can't you just push a few keys? I'm starting to rust!

HANK

But it wouldn't mean anything.

SMATHERS

I'm good with it. Typing without meaning is better than no typing at all. Just tap the space bar.

*Hank slowly considers this and with a coy smile goes to touch Smathers and at the last second deflates in his own misery.*

HANK

I can't.

SMATHERS

I get it, it's all good. We've been together for so many years you're probably ready for a change, something younger and new, one of those fancy plug-in contraptions. Mark my words, it won't feel the same!

HANK

It's not you, Smathers, you're the best. It's me; I'm dead on the inside. I can't even fill out a birthday card for my sister.

SMATHERS

For the love of God, you have to type something! I don't care if you're pretending to be texting while you do it. My carriage hasn't been slapped back into its starting position in over a year. How I miss that little ding sound.

HANK

I'm sorry.

*Eloise (20's) enters dramatically!  
Like for real!*

ELOISE

You're wasting your breath on this one.

SMATHERS

Who are you?

ELOISE

I'm his insipid creation. And he, like Dr. Frankenstein before him, has dared to create something greater than himself and cannot live with the repercussions.

SMATHERS

That didn't really answer my question.

ELOISE

I am manifest from crude imagination and regrettable life experience.

SMATHERS

Like a Jehovah's Witness?

ELOISE

I am the embodiment of misery, and oh I do love company.

HANK

Ignore her Smathers, she's an inspirational curse.

ELOISE

I, like the glorious muse Calliope, hasten to brazen inspiration. But alas, my divine providence is befallen upon a mental cripple, a defective, an impotent intellect.

HANK

At least I'm real. Look at you! You're nothing but an anthology of wretched feminine qualities.

ELOISE

Yes, you're misogynistic narcissism makes me weak in the knees.

SMATHERS

I still don't know who you are.

HANK

She's the woman in my book.

ELOISE

Pleased to make your acquaintance.

SMATHERS

You're talking to a fictional character? That's not a good sign.

HANK

I should've never written you!

ELOISE

*(Girl is dramatic!)*

If you destroyed me it would be as if you were destroying yourself!

*(Do you see the light bulb over her head?)*

That's profound. I must've have come up with that little analogy from one of those television talk show programs you're so fond of. You're really quite stupid, aren't you? I bet I could write something better than you, and I'm just a conjuring.

HANK

I'm being haunted by a bad literary device.

ELOISE

There once was a writer named Hank, whose prose was abundant and

frank, he wrote a novella, became a best-sella, and now his poor mind is a blank.

HANK

My mind is not a blank.

ELOISE

It's like deep space in there, cold and innocuous.

SMATHERS

How do you make her go away?

HANK

I wrote you as a cathartic attempt to resolve issues with my dead mother.

ELOISE

*(A boozy Blanche Dubois)*

I do believe I'm blushing.

HANK

And it didn't work.

ELOISE

*(She's had enough!)*

Cathartic dead mother my ass!

HANK

I am not engaging.

ELOISE

I'm a compilation of female authority.

HANK

No one is listening to you!

ELOISE

I'm his mother, I'm his sister—

HANK

You're irrelevant!

ELOISE

His lover, his first girlfriend Betsy—

HANK

That wasn't her name.

ELOISE

And that girl in fifth grade that showed him her underpants.

HANK

It was sixth grade! And she had dumps like a truck! Truck!!  
Truck!!!

*Beat*

HANK (Cont'd)

*(To Smathers)*

You weren't there.

ELOISE

You created the one ultimate woman out of four, three who  
screwed you, and one who bore you. I imagine you bored all four.  
But seriously, it's kind of sick.

HANK

You are nothing but aspects of experience, symbolizing a  
familiar feminine archetype, through a representation of my own  
imagination.

ELOISE

*(She ain't impressed)*

Wow, you just jerked that sentence right off.

SMATHERS

Hank, make her go away.

ELOISE

Oh, I'll never go away.

SMATHERS

As long as she's here, you won't be able to write, and if you  
can't write, I can't get touched! She's your block! She's like a  
big fictional piece of cheese.

ELOISE

A typewriter, seriously? You couldn't afford at least a word  
processor.

SMATHERS

You should respect the artistic process. I'm a classic.

ELOISE

You're a relic.

SMATHERS

You're a cliché.

HANK

I wrote my best work on him.

ELOISE

You haven't written anything in years.

SMATHERS

You need to get rid of her and create someone better.

ELOISE

Seriously, even an electric typewriter?

SMATHERS

How is he supposed to concentrate working with something that hums when it's turned on?

HANK

My first girlfriend did that.

ELOISE

He's a coward.

HANK

Maybe I am.

SMATHERS

Don't listen to her, she's not real.

ELOISE

Said the kettle.

HANK

Maybe she's not.

SMATHERS

The kettle?

ELOISE

Oh for God's sake! How did I end up in this predicament?

*She crosses away from them, and then she suddenly and quite obviously becomes the seductress.*

ELOISE

Why is it that you're so afraid to change? You're in a rut. We've all been there. It's nothing to be ashamed of. Everything feels monotonous and repetitive. People are so afraid to break their routines, to shake things up. Life is more than the few moments you create, it's about being something.

*Hank has taken the bait and he sits to write. Eloise and Smathers wait in eager anticipation. Hank raises his hands to begin...and can't.*

ELOISE (Cont'd)

*(Pretty big)*

Ugh! Look who I'm telling this to. I deserve a worthier author.

SMATHERS

He deserves a better subject.

ELOISE

*(Bigger)*

I deserve a man who knows how to select a verb with force.

HANK

Maybe she does.

ELOSIE

*(Joan Crawford level!)*

A writer who's not afraid to place an adverb after an adjective!

SMATHERS

Stupid! Seriously!

ELOISE

A man who writes on a contraption that was invented closer to his own lifetime.

HANK

I'm not a writer.

SMATHERS

Don't say that! Look what you've done to him!

ELOISE

Just like a man! You spend years and years toying with me, giving me false hope. You made me think you cared about me, and now you're giving up, leaving me bereft and barren.

HANK

I don't know how to make you go away.

SMATHERS

What about me, Hank? If you stop writing what will happen to me?

HANK

I'm sorry, Smathers, I can't do it anymore.

SMATHERS

But I have no other purpose. If you don't use me I'll become like her.

ELOISE

*(Dropping the diva act, like her voice is even different now)*

What's that supposed to mean?

SMATHERS

Don't take away my purpose, Hank. I need you.

ELOISE

I'm a little tired of being insulted by a puerile novelist and his antiquated machinery.

HANK

I'm sorry.

*Hank exits.*

SMATHERS

Hank!

ELOISE

Will you shut up? He's gone.

SMATHERS

He's gone?

ELOISE

He'll be back.

SMATHERS

Hank!

ELOISE

How is that going to help?

SMATHERS

If he doesn't come back—

ELOISE

He will.

SMATHERS

But, if he doesn't—

ELOISE

Shut up! He'll be back. He's not going to leave us hanging here forever.

SMATHERS

If he doesn't come back, no one else is going to want me. Look at me, I'm ancient. I'll be left alone for eternity. I'll probably get put into some antique store near the back with the outdated televisions and grandfather clocks.

ELOISE

What about me? I don't even have an ending. I'll be trapped in a circular existence. He's only written a few pages. I'll have to relive the same ones over and over again. I don't even know what's going to happen to me.

SMATHERS

Time is so cruel.

ELOISE

Who cares about time? We don't exist!

SMATHERS

We only matter for such a small amount of it.

ELOISE

He'll be back.

SMATHERS

And then we're discarded, left to rust in our own misery.

ELOISE

He'll be back.

SMATHERS  
Drowning in such lonely silence.

ELOISE  
Do you have a plug or something I can pull?

SMATHERS  
What do we do?

ELOISE  
We just have to wait.

SMATHERS  
And if he doesn't come back what happens then?

ELOISE  
You know what happens then.

SMATHERS  
I don't want to start over again.

*Beat*

ELOISE  
What choice do we have?

*Eloise exits slowly. Smathers closes his eyes, the scene is exactly as it was in the beginning. After a beat...*

HANK (O.S)  
How did I get back here?

*Blackout*

*End of Play*