

Ellen Kaplan
from *Soul of the City*

ROBYN, IN DARKNESS: In a brick cage. In darkness, edged in pain. Clotted night. Lacerated night. Silence. Then: thrashing, she's in water. A snake, pumping, slashing, in the bath. Drowning. She. I. Can't scream. Can't breathe. (PAUSE) Then: Stillness. She's not there. (PAUSE) Then: she's tiny, she's an eyelash. Sings to me. Whispery sound, an eyelash. Then: big, grows big, a child. Sings to me: My Favorite Things. I'm here, she says. Whispers to me. Then: wake up. (PAUSE) She comes to me, five stars, an arc of stars. They wink at me. It's not a death. I see her.

LIGHTS UP. ROBYN IN BED. SEQUOIA, IN A ROCKER

SEQ: You were just running amok in the hallway, pippin.

ROBYN: I get... night terrors.

SEQ: Screaming on the stairs! Here. (OPENS A THERMOS) Help you sleep.

ROBYN: I'm ok.

SEQ: Drink, dearie! My special tea. Sheep sorrel, kelp, rhubarb root, blessed thistle. And rum. Drink up!

ROBYN: (GRIMACES) You learn this in fairy school?

SEQ: I'll tell you what I learned in fairy school: nightmares curdle your karma. Think what you're doing to that poor little bun you got baking. (PATS HER STOMACH; ROBYN RECOILS. SEQUOIA, OBLIVIOUS, NOTICES THE BRACELET ON HER WRIST) Kiss my little pinky! A prism! I keep prisms on my altar.

ROBYN: It's Ruth's.

SEQ: Piece of work, she is. (PROWLING AROUND) How lovely... an ivory comb! Let me comb your hair. Don't pull away, it will feel marvelous.

ROBYN: (RELENTS) My mother used to comb my hair. Wash it and comb it.

SEQ: Just think pretty things. Diamonds and roses.

ROBYN: Rust and ashes. (PAUSE. SEQUOIA COMBS) Ruth went looking for the dog.

SEQ: It's hideous, that thing.

ROBYN: She just found a trail. Spots of blood.

SEQ: Someone should kill it. Sit still. (COMBS) We're in a cruxtime of spiritual mutation. You're moving *up* the scale, or you're moving *down*. I can't keep surrounding myself with the injured, I'd be drawn back down the evolutionary ladder, spiritually speaking.

ROBYN: It was raining blood. In my dream...it was raining blood.

SEQ: That's her influence.

ROBYN: Ruth...?

SEQ: She's dangerous. Talk about plague! *Psychic* plague.

ROBYN: No. It's albinos. / Or birds...

SEQ: Contaminates you with her / Oh, no! They'd tell me.

ROBYN: (LAUGHS) The birds?

SEQ: Yes, the birds! They'd tell me. They're very wise.

ROBYN: You *talk* to *birds*? Ow!!

SEQ: You're tangled!

ROBYN: Enough. (TAKES AWAY COMB) You talk to birds at fairy school?

SEQ: Oh, yes! I got my *wings* there.

ROBYN: Bird wings?

SEQ: Fairy wings.

ROBYN: At fairy school.

SEQ: Changed my life. Stareagle, Inc. Up in Riverdale. Very nice. After the tumor...I still have a tiny bald spot, from radiation. (SHOWS HER SCALP) See?

ROBYN: But you're ok now?

SEQ: Kiss my little pinky, darling! I'm awake! Before, I'd get on the subway ...everyone was like cockroaches, bugs, I couldn't see! Then, these headaches, head-splitting migraines, I really couldn't see. What a metaphor! I got diagnosed: a brain tumor. My life – I thought – what a waste, and it's over. That's what they told me, that's what I believed. And oh, I struggled, 2 years of hell. But. Radiated, dizzy, clean. Clean start. And my Stareagle.

ROBYN: Now you poison your neighbors with spiked tea!

SEQ: My *dear*. Drink up. My life began because I almost died. I learned to harmonize with the universe. You know...You don't have a place, do you?

ROBYN: Goodnight, Sequoia. (GIVES BACK THE CUP) Thank you. Really.

SEQ: No, listen. She's bought a building, for a commune. We can share a room! Set up a nursery for the little bunny. (ROBYN TURNS AWAY) Now you just sleep on it! And let me tell you what a good momma witch I am. We'll talk tomorrow. Blessed be. (EXITS).

ROBYN SWITCHES OFF THE LIGHT. A FLUTE PLAYS. WIND BLOWS. DIM MURMERS OF VOICES. ABOVE, SHADOWS DIP AND CIRCLE. BELOW, FIGURES EMERGE FROM SHADOWS. BLEACHED, DEATHLY: DISJOINTED, BLOATED, UNFLUID. VINCE ENTERS, WEARING DARK GLASSES. SLOWLY THE VOICE - MR - SPEAKING QUIETLY :

The sun turns black.
The icy earth
Chills the eye.
We Fall.

AS MR SPEAKS, VINCE GOES TO THE BODIES. CLOSES THEIR EYES.

Cracking trees, bones
Of fire. Extinguished
In a crash of flood

VINCE RIFLES A POCKET. FINDS A KNIFE.

Skin blistered, dry eyed.
Ash in its mouth,
Each lay down and wept.

MAKES A CUT. THE CORPSE BLEEDS.

Monster creeps.
Into his cave.

VINCE EXITS, BACK INTO THE BUILDING.

LIGHTS OUT.