

Mellon

by

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Mellon, on the run for centuries now. Mellon is an androgynous figure that can be played by either man or woman, and is gendered both or neither. In either case, Mellon is thin, with high cheekbones, a parched look, dry skin, dark hair. Like a fallen angel fallen on bad times.

Farley, Companion, Fool, & Clown. Farley follows most of the time, leads occasionally, and understands Mellon better than Mellon. Farley is old, moves old, breathes old. Farley can be played by a man or a woman, and is gendered the sex of the actor.

Tia, once a human, now a nanotech God. Tia can be played by a man or a woman, but is gendered woman.

The desert. The light is white and hot. Throughout the play sounds of buzzards, the scuttling sounds of reptiles over tiny pebbles. The wind. All these sounds should create a constant, if almost subconscious, aural picture of the world of the play. There should be no moment without this soundscape until indicated at the very end of the play. There are several rocks on stage. Heavy, ponderous rocks good for sitting on. MELLON appears on stage, carrying a duffel bag, faded and grey and patched. Mellon has been walking a long, long time. Mellon sits on one of the rocks, takes out an apple from the bag, a knife from his/her pocket and begins to slowly skin the apple. Mellon whistles a soft tune, a gypsy tune. There is power in the melody.

When Mellon finishes peeling the apple, Mellon holds the ribbon of apple skin up to the sky. FARLEY enters. Farley carries a pink, Hello Kitty backpack in one hand, an old transistor radio in the other and is dressed in motley. The radio plays a constant static that seems out of place in this desert. Farley sits, heavily, dropping the backpack and stares at Mellon. Mellon is still examining the apple peel.

FARLEY
Whatcher doin' that fer?

MELLON
Finding our position.

FARLEY
Withen an apple peel in the sun?

MELLON
No.

FARLEY
Looks liked an apple peel in the sun.

MELLON
It does.

FARLEY
So iffen it ain't an apple peel in the sun, whatcher doing that fer?

MELLON
Magic.

He pops the apple peel into his mouth, chews surprisingly loud and grotesque. Farley grunts, takes off his/her boots and rubs his/her feet. Mellon begins to cut chunks of apple and pop them into Mellon's mouth.

MELLON

There was a time before the current time, when all the sky was pink and a serpent encircled the world in tender loving mercies. A fallen rabbit, with a twinkle of dark lightening in his eyes masturbated the snake until the snake came, collected the snakes seed in a series of acorn seed tops, buried them underground in his warren, pissed on them for water, then watched them grow. One by one. But the snake, she had been told of this by the old, tired Water Buffalo--

FARLEY

She? Thoughts you said twas a he I mean seed an' all?

MELLON

Seeds and sexes were very different back then, old friend, very different.

FARLEY

Don't sees why theys should'uh been. Perfectly all right with men as men an' women as women.

MELLON

But Men and Women hadn't been invented yet.

FARLEY

Still.

Pause.

FARLEY

Still an' all.

Mellon finishes the apple.
Examines the core. Places it,
gently, behind one of the rocks.

Pause.

The radio static starts to crackle and break into distinct voices - the RADIO VOICES are clear, but very far away and tinny and it is not necessary that every word be understandable to the audience.

RADIO VOICE 1

When Tiamat had thus lent import to her handiwork, She prepared for battle against the gods, her offspring. To avenge Apsu, Tiamat planned evil. That she was girding for battle was divulged to Ea. As soon as Ea heard of this matter, He lapsed into dark silence and sat still. The days went by, and his anger subsided, He went to Anshar, his fore father.

(MORE)

RADIO VOICE 1 (CONT'D)

When he came before his grandfather, Anshar, He repeated all that Tiamat had plotted to him.

Farley hits at the radio until it fuzzes back into static.

FARLEY

Them's better.

Pause

Mellon takes out a cheap ukelele from the duffel bag and begins to tune it.

MELLON

May I--

FARLEY

Finish. Yeah.

Farley takes out an old, battered water bottle that contains a brownish, thick liquid and starts drinking.

MELLON

The old, tired, but wise Water Buffalo had seen the dark, ruby orbs growing out of the ground above Rabbit's warren and thought to herself "Snake should know about this." So she set out with her friend--

FARLEY

Lawds no, no digressin' inter a story 'bout Water Buffalo and Lily Pad and fewking Frog as theys travail the country searchin' fer this that and th'other before theys get to Snake. As me old grandpappy said - stay the fewk on target.

Mellon, having finished tuning the uke, puts it back, gently, in the bag. Pulls out a pair of dark sunglasses, puts them on, and lies on the ground, looking up at the sun.

MELLON

Snake found out, ate all the ruby orbs but the one that Fox had stolen and that's where all the apples in the world come from.

Long Pause.

FARLEY

Humph. Not very satisfyin' when you puts it like that now is it.

MELLON

No.

Mellon lays on the ground.
Farley sits and drinks. The
sky burns. Snakes rustle.

FARLEY

My Mam used to tell me stories, back in the day. She was shite at it though. Forgettin' all the details, mixin' up the names, making things up one night contradicted the night befer.

Pause.

FARLEY

Shite at it I tells ya.

Pause.

FARLEY

Miss my Mam's stories though. Miss her eyes when they told 'em. Shinin' blue like a day you can never see the end of, those eyes lookin' down 'pon me in my wide-eyed and innocence.

Farley swigs the vile liquid,
chokes a little.

FARLEY

Funny that then. Must be . . . oh, centuries gone now. Dead inter dust by now. Dust maybe's you an' I breathed. Ha. Funny that. Breathing my Mam.

Farley takes a deep breath.
Coughs. Swigs again.

MELLON

Sometimes stories need to be told wrong. So we can remember them right.

Pause. The radio static creeps
back into words:

RADIO VOICE 2

Sharp of tooth, unsparing of fang. With venom for blood she has filled their bodies. Roaring dragons she has clothed with terror, Has crowned them with haloes, making them like gods, So that he who beholds them is overcome by terror, Their bodies rear up and none can withstand their attack.

(MORE)

RADIO VOICE 2 (CONT'D)

She has set up the Viper, the Dragon, and the Sphinx, The Great-Lion, the Mad-Dog, and the Scorpion-Man, Mighty lion-demons, the Dragon-Fly, the Centaur--Bearing weapons that spare not, fearless in battle.

Farley twists the knob on the radio violently and is shaken and uncomfortable by the words from the radio. Static resumes. Farley slowly relaxes.

FARLEY

You think we lost 'em?

MELLON

Her.

FARLEY

Her is a them.

MELLON

Not always.

FARLEY

Near enough for goddamned government work.

MELLON

Do you even know what that saying means?

Pause.

MELLON

She is "she" enough to be a her. I think.

FARLEY

Cause'n you slept with *her* I reckon.

MELLON

And you lay with *them*?

FARLEY

Not lay - twas 'gulfed. Interpen'trated. Liken seven millions three hundred fifty seven thousands two hundreds and thirteens tiny ants with sharp li'le mindables burr'in inter me and chomping my soul.

Pause.

FARLEY

Spit me back out after a time. Nevers known why.

MELLON

Mandibles.

FARLEY
Huh?

MELLON
Mandible. Not "mindables."

FARLEY
Whatever.

MELLON
Yes.

Pause.

MELLON
I remember her, white as snow that night. Her eyes like liquid amber. Her breath hot and laced with cinnamon. Listen. Close your eyes. I can feel her now. Feel her coming out of them, binding, finding. Like a song you half forget and half get wrong and half just plain misremember.

Pause.

MELLON
I'm tired of movement, Farley. Tired to my core. Think I might . . .

FARLEY
Fewk that!

Farley puts boots back on feet.

FARLEY
't'ain't a bad life thissun. Tirin' and a tad hard on ther feet, but still. An' well. Still. Them "rock stars" lived on the road, soes we is in good comp'ny.

MELLON
Farley.

FARLEY
Eh?

MELLON
Do you know what a "rock star" is?

FARLEY
Not nearly but figure some kinda rock spirit fer them rollin' rocks we seen in the desert.

MELLON
Maybe. Maybe.

Farley gathers the Hello Kitty bag and starts to head off. Mellon still lies on the ground, facing off against the sun.

FARLEY

You comin'?

MELLON

No. Think I'll wait till she gets here. Say hi. See if. Anything's changed.

Farley digs into the backpack and comes out with a small metal device. Tosses it to Mellon who gracefully, casually catches it.

MELLON

I may not use it. I may let her . . . Then you'll be without it.

FARLEY

You'll use it.

MELLON

I'm tired. I may--

FARLEY

You'll use it.

Farley exits. Times passes at an accelerated rate. Sunset. Night sounds of predators, snakes and spiders. Dawn. Mellon does not move. Day. Sundown. Night. The air begins to fog with nanomachines, billions and billions of sub-microscopic robots. There is a quiet hum of magic and technology meeting to create TIA Mellon stands, hides the metal device in a coat pocket and waits, hands clasped behind his back and head bowed. The nanomachines coalesce, stick and become a beautiful woman who appears young, but holds ancient powers in her eyes, and a profound sorrow in her voice. She is dressed in distressed leather pants, Dr. Martin's, and a crimson short-sleeved shirt.

Tattoos of dragons crawl up
and down her arms. She takes
an icy, long breath.

TIA

Mellon.

Mellon removes the sunglasses
and puts them in a jacket
pocket.

MELLON

Tia.

Mellon's voice is full of awe
and fear and desire and love
and self-pity. Mellon does not
look up.

TIA

Where's Farley.

MELLON

Gone. Running. The usual.

TIA

And you are . . .

MELLON

Here. Waiting.

TIA

The . . . occasional.

She goes to Mellon, they stand
close, looking at each other.
Pause. Something passes between
them. Something hot, dangerous
and electric. Tia turns and
walks several paces away.

MELLON

You look good this time.

TIA

You look. Tired. You're eyes are darker than I remember.

MELLON

How long? For you I mean?

TIA

You always ask that. There's never a good answer. When I'm .
. . when I'm scattered, time moves differently.

(MORE)

TIA (CONT'D)

Fractally - like each moment is composed of an iteration of moments and each of those is composed of another iterations of moments. Recursive.

MELLON

And yet, you continue to follow. To appear. To want.

TIA

Yes. But.

Pause.

TIA

Mellon.

Pause.

TIA

I am starting.

Pause.

TIA

To forget things. The world slipping into static, moments that break apart and never come back together in quite the same way, with quite the same information. Entropy.

Pause.

MELLON

Despite it all. It's good to see you.

TIA

How long? For you?

MELLON

Time . . . moves differently here, for us, as well. A decade or so. I'm tired.

TIA

Tired enough?

MELLON

I don't know.

TIA

I don't understand. It's what you wanted. I was a by-product, an accident. A guinea pig made god when all the time it was you wanting to touch the world in ways both inimitable and impossible.

MELLON

Not an accident. Never. I . . . I can still taste the desire, the dreams of immortality. Power over mass and energy. To fly. To swim the stars and taste whole galaxies in one swallow. You and I dancing on the event horizon of a black hole.

TIA

You didn't have the skin for it.

MELLON

In the end. No.

Pause. The past washes over both of them, heavy and filled with the scent of burning flesh and scorched earth.

TIA

And so you left me alone. Fragmented. Multitudinous. But alone.

MELLON

Yes.

TIA

Are you tired enough? Now? Of the running? Come with me.

She takes his hand. He does not pull away.

TIA

Let me kiss you.

MELLON

Will it feel soft?

TIA

Yes.

MELLON

Will it hurt?

TIA

Yes.

MELLON

Will I still be me?

TIA

No.

MELLON

Are you still you?

TIA

No one ever is.

Tia pulls him close. Mellon resists for a moment then folds into Tia's warmth. They kiss. The nanomachines begin to move into Mellon, filling him with power and dissolution. He pushes her away from him.

MELLON

No. Not this time. I'm not tired enough to be other than me.

Mellon removes the metal device from the jacket pocket, shoves it into Tia's stomach. It becomes apparent that it is a weapon designed to set up an energy field that disrupts the nanomachines' ability to come together.

Farley enters and watches as Tia gasps, her mouth opening wide with fear and anger, her eyes burning.

TIA

Mellon . . .

She begins to dissolve into the billions of tiny machines that each retain only a tiny fragment of her consciousness.

TIA

. . . you have given. Let us make monsters, . . . and the gods in the midst let us do battle and against the gods . . .

She is gone. Mellon drops the weapon to the ground and collapses, sick with self-disgust.

FARLEY

Couldn't . . .

MELLON

Shut up.

Farley shuts up, retrieves the weapon from the ground in front of Mellon, put it into the backpack. Places a hand on Mellon's shoulder.

FARLEY

I . . .

Farley stops, gently pats Mellon's head, then shuffles away to one of the rocks. Takes off boots and begins massaging his/her feet. Mellon remains kneeling. The radio comes into clarity:

RADIO VOICE 3

His heart was gloomy, his mood restless. He covered his mouth to stifle his outcry:. . . battle.. . .you . . .Lo, you killed Mummu and Apsu. Now, kill Kingu, who marches before her.. . . Wisdom. Nudimmud, the. . . of the gods, be glad and rejoice; You shall soon tread upon the neck of Tiamat!. . . be glad and rejoice; You shall soon tread upon the neck of Tiamat!

Farley hits the radio. It dissolves once more to static. Mellon pulls the sunglasses from his/her coat and puts them on. Stands.

MELLON

Time to go.

FARLEY

Where?

MELLON

Does it matter?

For a moment, the air sparkles in an attempt to coalesce. It fails. Lights fade out. The desert rustles for a moment, the sound of static, and then: silence.