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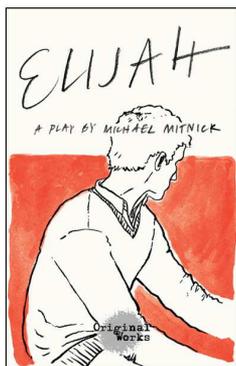
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*Ed, Downloaded*  
© Michael Mitnick  
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# PAST/FUTURE/PRESENT

## A TRILOGY

by Michael Mitnick



### I. PAST - ELIJAH

4M/5W

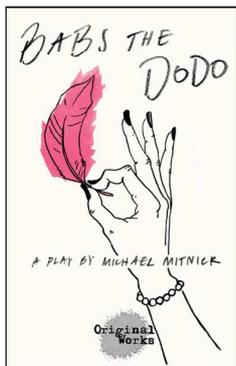
1922: Elijah, a broke student from Brooklyn, arrives in Paris and becomes an accidental Don Juan overnight. While hunting his idol, a reclusive composer of ballets, Elijah is swept into a life changing summer of sex, opium, and blackmail.



### II. FUTURE - ED, DOWNLOADED

1M/2W

Set in a future where one can purchase immortality and spend an afterlife in a digital heaven of one's favorite memories, technological advancements bring infinite possibilities. Half live action play and half film, *Ed, Downloaded* is a sci-fi love story for high-tech dreamers.



### III. PRESENT - BABS THE DODO

2M/2W

Despite a heart of 14k gold, Babs is over-the-hill and facing extinction as a top On-Air personality at the Home Shopping Network. Love appears from unexpected places as Babs fights to survive. This deliriously dark comedy sets Babs in the sale of her life as she grasps for love, happiness and sparkle.

# **ED, DOWNLOADED**

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BASED ON AN EVENTUAL TRUE STORY

BY MICHAEL MITNICK

SAMPLE ONLY

## INTRODUCTION

### DIFFERENT KINDS OF MAGIC

*Ed Downloaded* transports us smoothly from one medium to another, not because it chooses, but because it must.

When Michael Mitnick first sent me his “multimedia play” *Ed, Downloaded* I turned its digital pages with significant trepidation. Don’t get me wrong. Michael is a brilliant and exciting writer and I was thrilled to be reading his latest work. My nervousness was caused by the title page which stated that the play required the use of projection... it was that which made my palms sweat.

Let me explain.

British projection designer Tim Bird and I share a mantra: “Never do projection in the theatre.” As glib as that is, it speaks to an unavoidable truth. Yoking the disciplines of film and theatre together in a coherent and satisfying way is not an endeavor to be embarked on lightly.

Tim and I worked together on a production of Stephen Sondheim’s *Sunday In The Park With George*, a production that started life small off-West End in London, and through great success crossed the pond to Broadway. It used projection, a lot of it, and the effort it took to accomplish what we set out to achieve almost did us in.

You see, film and theatre production share similar concepts, but their processes and workflow have almost opposite needs. Theatre is about developing a performance that can fully exist in the moment. Film is about capturing fragments of performance so that they can be skillfully arranged and aligned to create a whole.

In theatre you edit as you go; in film it comes at the end. Attempt the two at once and it’s like trying to solve which comes first, the filmic chicken or the theatrical egg. And it’s never a shortcut or a budget saver. Projection de-

signers have to constantly push back against the idea that projection is cheap. Projection done well is *expensive*. I'm not just talking technology; I'm talking *content*—that which is projected. Thanks to the financial heft of TV, film and video games, a contemporary audience is very sophisticated when it comes to content.

But the thing about projection in theatre is not just the challenge of can it be done, it's the question of should it be done... Through the last decade developments in technology have seen projection become more and more common as an element in theatrical production. Projection designers, once a rare and peculiar breed, are now commonly spotted in a playbill. Projection in theatre has become ubiquitous, and as a tool used sparingly to subtly augment and enhance more traditional stagecraft it can be a beautiful thing. But it's merely a tool, one of many, and leaning on it excessively and in unwarranted ways is like a carpenter crafting a table with just a hammer.

When projection takes a front seat is when the trouble often starts. I am talking about the explicit use of the moving or photographic image within the theatre—the use of photo/film/video as a significant element scenically and/or narratively.

The scenic question is easier to answer. If you project large a bustling New York street behind two actors engaged in a scene there's going to be a conflict of interest: the audience's. Most people will struggle to keep their eyes on the actors. There's something hypnotic about the moving (or even photographic) image that pulls us in and seeks to conquer our attention. It can dominate and dwarf everything else. If you've ever sat in a bar with a sports game on a large flat screen you'll know exactly what I mean.

Theatre is not a literal form. We sit together in the dark and watch actors perform, in abstracted spaces - fragments (some more than others) of what they are designed

to represent. Theatre engages our imagination in asking us to complete the picture. Film works differently (though it too is best experienced together in the dark). Film, through a lens, presents us with fragments of the complete truth, shuffled together to create a string of progressive events, our imagination engaged in creating the illusion of consecutive time.

*Time*, I suppose, is the central issue, because it's not just a question of *what* we are seeing, but of *when* we are seeing. Film is inherently past tense; it has already happened. Theatre by its very nature is live. Whether Shakespeare or Mitnick, it is happening *now* - the audience is experiencing it in front of them, and its very *nowness* is essential to its power. Film says "this happened, this is something that happened" while live performance says "this is happening; this *is* this."

So that bustling street scene and those two actors are the combination of then and now. Just because we experience them both in dark rooms, that doesn't mean what we are experiencing is the same thing. They are different kinds of magic, and different kinds of magic don't necessarily mix. To let them work together on stage one must allow film to be part of the theatrical vocabulary - not an adjunct or an annex, but integral to the needs of narrative. Projected imagery, for the most part, is too strong a force to be integrated surreptitiously or go unnoticed. It has to be there for a reason.

In the light of these concerns, I guess you're wondering how my first reading of *Ed, Downloaded* went? Well, the fact that I directed its world premiere should give you the short answer. The long one would go something like this...

With *Ed, Downloaded* Michael has written a play that demands the use of video, of recorded performance. It is integral to the language of the play, it's vital to its theatrical vocabulary. *Ed, Downloaded* deals with memory, and

in Michael's writing filmic imagery is vital to the vocabulary with which memory is portrayed.

Not only is film past tense, its relationship to how we remember is potent. People talk of "photographic memories" (and one can only wonder what people called an impressive ability to recall before photographic permanence arrived in 1822). Film critic Mark Kermode describes how film replicates "the peculiar card-shuffling experience of memory," and how maybe that's what allows our brains to so readily decipher the often complex code of edited film. In its sequential imagery, live action film is the simulation of how we remember, of how we dream. With *Ed, Downloaded* Michael has written a play that intricately and brilliantly exploits this relationship.

That's not to say that in 20 years someone won't successfully revive it without projection, unpick the needs of the play and triumphantly present it with finger puppets or some-such. That's because the play is not about projection. It's about the unexpectedly profound effect of one human being on another, and how love can radically change how we view ourselves. It's about what we choose to remember and what we need to forget. It's about how little we can ever really know. It's about love. It's about loss. It's about ice cream.

Sam Buntrock

Frankfurt, Germany

*ED, DOWNLOADED* was first performed at the Denver Center Theatre Company in The Ricketson Theatre Jan 11 -Feb 17<sup>th</sup> in 2013. The cast and crew were as follows:

Directed by Sam Buntrock

Produced by Kent Thompson, Artistic Director of the Denver Center Theatre Company

Scenic Design – James Kronzer

Costume Designer – Meghan Anderson Doyle

Lighting Designer – Brian Tovar

Projection Design – Charlie I. Miller

Dramaturgy – Douglas Langworthy

Production Manager – Edward Lapine

Stage Manager – A. Phoebe Sacks

Production Assistant – D. Lynn Reiland

Production Intern – Paul Stuko

Edward – JD Taylor

Selene – Annie Purcell

Ruby/Marionette – Grace Rex

**PEOPLE**

EDWARD – 20s

SELENE – 30s

MARIONETTE / RUBY – 20s

**TIME**

Now, but a different now.

**NOTE**

Two projection surfaces are used.

SAMPLE ONLY

If all else fails, immortality can always be assured by  
spectacular error.

– John Kenneth Galbraith

SAMPLE ONLY

Thank you to The Denver Center Theatre Company  
who commissioned this play.

## ED DOWNLOADED

### ACT ONE

A

*Afternoon sunlight on a brick sidewalk. A winter day.  
A college town – bookshops and cafés.*

*A human MARIONETTE.  
{a street performer with skin painted to appear as wood}*

*A tall pipe extends from the base of her spine.  
It ends in a crosspiece a foot and a half above her head.  
Rubber tubes run from the crosspieces, connecting to her  
hands and feet.  
They quiver in the winter breeze.*

*A hat sits on the bricks at her feet.  
A nearby portable turntable projects soft music –  
{a recording of “La Valse À Mille Temps” by Jacques  
Brel}  
For now, the MARIONETTE is slumped, lifeless. Waiting.*

*EDWARD enters, dressed for winter.  
20s, tall, pleasant-looking, but meek.  
He carries a large brown-paper shopping bag and ba-  
guette under his arm.*

*Next, SELENE, 30s, brisk and British, enters.  
She carries a large potted plant.*

*At first, they pay no heed to the MARIONETTE, caught up  
in their own conversation.*

EDWARD: And the kid looks around, thinks nobody is looking, and I see him take the rock and slide it into his pocket.

SELENE: And no one else saw him? Not even museum security?

EDWARD: The security department at the Geological Museum is an 80-year-old with a flashlight. They don't even give him a whistle. Or they did, but, things got really out of hand.

SELENE: So what happened to the kid? Did you call the police?

EDWARD: *(Laughing.)* I called the FBI. NO. I didn't call the POLICE. He was *5 years old*.

SELENE: What time do your parents arrive?

EDWARD: What?

SELENE: Their flight. What time does it land? We have to time the meal precisely or—

EDWARD: Something like five-thirty. What was I—

SELENE: Sorry, love. You were talking about the little boy and the rock—

EDWARD: Well, it was really a fossil. A fossil of a feather. You know it. I showed you—

SELENE: You did?

EDWARD: Yeah — remember—

SELENE: Oh! Did you get the lemon for the salad dressing?

EDWARD: What?

SELENE: The LEMON.

EDWARD: (*Digging in bag.*) Oh. Uh...

(*EDWARD pulls the lemon out and it falls, rolling to the MARIONETTE. He looks at the MARIOTTE.*)

EDWARD: (*Seeing the MARIONETTE.*) Whoa. Did you see this? She was so still I didn't even – whoa.

SELENE: My brain is programmed to ignore “Obnoxious Cries for Attention.”

(*EDWARD walks over and picks up the lemon.*)

EDWARD: Look at her. She's *incredible*.

SELENE: Yes, we should stay for her Ophelia. Are you ready to keep the list?

(*EDWARD stares at the MARIONETTE.*)

Edward...

EDWARD: Yeah.

SELENE: Decant the red. Mix the dressing. You're on cheese duty.

EDWARD: I'm on cheese duty.

SELENE: Decant. Cheese. Mix. Oh. Bugger it. *Candles*. I meant to look in the drawer before we— do we have candles?

EDWARD: Do you think she can hear us?

*(SELENE looks at EDWARD. She melts.)*

SELENE: Do you want a coin, little boy?

EDWARD: I'm not a little boy. I'm a big boy.

SELENE: I've seen bigger.

*(Digging coin out of her purse, she hands it to EDWARD.)*

All right. Want a picture with it? I have a camera on my—

*(She takes out her communicator as EDWARD walks to the MARIONETTE. EDWARD looks in her hat.)*

EDWARD: She's made a lot of money. Someone gave her a twenty.

SELENE: She gave her a twenty. Now drop in the coin.

*(EDWARD walks forward and drops the coin in her hat. The MARIONETTE springs to life, moving into a photographic pose.)*

EDWARD: *(Delighted.)* Oh!!

SELENE: Sometimes I forget how young you are. *(As the MARIONETTE rotates, EDWARD is spellbound.)* God you're adorable.

EDWARD: She's better than other robots.

SELENE: Must take her hours to get that paint off. Well. Alright. Let's have a picture then. Here...*(She tries to access the camera on her communicator.)* Go stand by...*it.*

*(SELENE fumbles with her communicator. EDWARD sheepishly stands beside the MARIONETTE.)*

MARIONETTE: *(Quietly, to EDWARD)* What's your name?

EDWARD: *(Shocked.)*  
What?

SELENE: *(To Camera.)*  
NO I don't want VIDEO.  
I want PHOTO.

MARIONETTE:  
What's your *name*?

EDWARD:  
Are you supposed to talk?

I forgot to baste the roast.  
This will...Your mother already thinks I'm an imbecile in the kitchen. What ammunition this will be. I can already hear her...

MARIONETTE:  
I'm not a mime. What's your name?

EDWARD: My name is Edward.

SELENE: *(Looking up.)* Sorry love. What did I call you?

EDWARD: Edward. I mean. Um. *(To the MARIONETTE.)* Hello?

SELENE: *(A serious moment.)* You're stalling. I know you're nervous about telling your parents. But. It's time. Trust me. It's going to be ok. Trust me. It'll be OK.

(EDWARD smiles a little.)

I have it. Ready?

(EDWARD nods. The MARIONETTE is motionless, posed beside EDWARD.)

One. Two...

(The sound of a shutter as EDWARD turns his head, staring at the MARIONETTE. The stage goes dark as the photograph of them develops on the screen at front.)

(The photograph of EDWARD and the MARIONETTE fades into: An expansive frozen video image of The Grand Canyon. In the corner of the video, in a crappy font, are the words "ROCKS & YOU" EDWARD enters, with a badge around his neck. He stands at a podium. In the podium is a glass display featuring a rock, lit up.)

EDWARD: (Practiced) Um. Hi. (Eyes to notecards.) "Hey everybody. Welcome to the Ethel L. Fitzpatrick Memorial Hall of Local Geological Science and Ecology." I'm Edward – sorry about the notecards. They just moved me onto this presentation 'cause they went through Gary's locker and found, um... I'm Edward and, um, "I'm going to be your guide as we travel back, back in time. Back millions and millions of years. To a time before buildings and cars, a time before wars. A time before people like you and me." (Flipping the script over to a handwritten reminder.) "Before we begin, I'd like to thank those of you who donated to the Annual Fund." "Because of your generous contributions this year, I was able to touch over 5,000 school children." (Breaking from script.) That doesn't sound right. (Back into the

*scripted notecards.*) Um. “Today you’ll *learn* about the ground upon which you stand and you’ll *discover* that it holds more secrets than a *country of magic.*” (*Breaking from the script. Mouthing to himself: “Country of magic?” Back to script.*) “This exhibit will blow you...” (*He flips the card.*) “Away.” Oh Gary... (*Clears his throat. Going off script.*) Uhhh. So. Anyway, I’m gonna play this video about the geology of our community for you guys and it’ll do all the teaching. It was made a while ago, so I have to correct a few things as it goes... And now... (*Grudgingly:*) “Are you ready to **rock?**” (*He pushes a button on a wired remote and a ghetto video starts – with zooming pictures of rocks played over energetic MIDI-fied rock music.*)

(*A photo of a mound of dirt is slowly zoom-ed in on as a deep voice says:*)

RECORDED VOICE: Have you ever wondered, “Hey – what’s a rock anyway? Is it just a hard thing? Is it...a bunch of matter – a bunch of dirt compressed by time into a solid?” No.

EDWARD: (*Correcting.*) Yes.

RECORDED VOICE: Rocks may seem like no big deal, but let’s look just a little bit closer... (*The video is now so zoomed in that it is pixilated and unrecognizable.*) ...For what may SEEM like a regular rock is actually a STORY – a story older than time itself. (*A video of a globe rotation. A finger sneaks into the frame and spins it.*) The earth is three *billion* –

EDWARD: *Four point five billion* –

RECORDED VOICE: Years old. (*The finger returns, this time more boldly, and spins the globe.*) If a scientist could ask questions to the very oldest of rocks – what would he–

EDWARD: He or she.

RECORDED VOICE: – learn about our past? About the formation of the earth? About the origins of our Universe? There are one-hundred and seven– (*Exciting panning footage of The Table of Elements. A cartoon man walks and peers inside of each square element like it is a hole – he’s looking for something.*)

EDWARD: One-hundred-and-twelve–

RECORDED VOICE: –elements on the Periodic Table. Together, they make up everything around us. It is hard to predic– (*The video starts to skip.*)  
Hard to predic-  
Har-  
Hard predic- Hard  
Hard to predic-  
Hard to predic-  
Dic-  
Hard Dic-  
Hard Dic-

EDWARD: Aw c’mon...Children, please stop listening. Cover your ears or–

RECORDED VOICE: Hard Dic- Hard Dic- (*There is looping footage of a volcano erupting and un-erupting.*)  
Hard dic- (*The cartoon man falls in the volcano. Then, a phallic rock formation.*)  
Hard dic- (*EDWARD is fumbling with his remote.*)

EDWARD: I think if I reset the...

RECORDED VOICE: Hard Dic - Hard Dic – (*Colorbars come across the screen.*)

EDWARD: I'm sorry everyone. I know this is a massive disappointment. (*EDWARD has a large coughing fit throughout the following:*) If you kids come back in half an hour I should have this working. (*He then regains control.*) Excuse me. Make sure you check out the new exhibit there, over by the water fountain – “Can you stump a tree stump?” (*EDWARD starts to exit, but he is stopped by a young woman, RUBY, who approaches. She has a small bag from a store. She chews gum.*)

RUBY: Edward?

(*He looks up at her.*)

EDWARD: Hm?

(*RUBY smiles broadly.*)

RUBY: Well?

EDWARD: I'm sorry. Do we...I mean...Do I...

RUBY: Ruby!

EDWARD: Ruby! Ohhhh – Ruby... (*They stare at each other a minute.*) I still don't know who you are.

RUBY: Does this look familiar?

(*She turns herself into the MARIONETTE – twisting and bobbing.*)

EDWARD: The robot!

RUBY: Marionette.

EDWARD: Right. You look different.

RUBY: Thank you so much. That's a bad cough you got.

EDWARD: Yeah, well... (*They stare. He looks at her bag.*) Um. So... You get something at the gift shop?

RUBY: Of course I did. How many times in a person's life do you get to *pay money* for a *rock*. No. Um. This was. From a stationary store. I bought a card. My Dad's turning 61.

EDWARD: You know what they say about stationary stores? (*RUBY raises her eyebrows.*) They don't move. ...Because ... Oh I don't think you got it. Because they're—

RUBY: Because they're stationary. No. I got it. Unfortunately.

(*EDWARD smiles.*)

EDWARD: I always wanted to be funny.

RUBY: It's a long life. Maybe someday.

(*RUBY just stands, smiling broadly at him. He's uncomfortable with the silence.*)

EDWARD: Oh! (*He takes the rock from the podium. He handles it with great care.*) This, um, this is my favorite thing in the whole museum. It's actually one of

only thirty-eight fossils on the planet of a dinosaur feather. Do you want to see it?

*(RUBY just smiles.)*

RUBY: God. You're adorable. I bet you've never done anything wrong in your entire life. *(Leaning in, almost whispering.)* Would you like to? Are you going to let me buy you lunch or not? *(She pulls a coin from her pocket.)* After all, I'm already in your debt.

EDWARD: Um. I don't think lunch...is a good idea. *(EDWARD puts the rock away.)*

RUBY: Oh you don't think Lunch is a good idea? You're anti-Lunch? I totally get it. I used to date a guy who was racist against Dinner.

EDWARD: I mean. Ha- that's funny. I mean. I really should fix this video or else the kids might have a good time.

RUBY: One time offer. Nothing is forever. Not even rocks. I'm not *hitting on you* if that's what you're wondering –

EDWARD: No–

RUBY: Believe me. You'd know if I were hitting on you.

EDWARD: I know.

RUBY: Wait. Oh my god. Wait. Do you actually think I'm hitting on you?

EDWARD: No! No. No? No. I–

RUBY: Do you?

EDWARD: I mean—

RUBY: It's just...lunch. Lunch. La-la-lunch.

EDWARD: I...Selene—

RUBY: Selene? That's your girlfriend?

EDWARD: I don't think she'd be happy, if I went to lunch with a...strange...robot.

RUBY: Lucky for you I'm a strange marionette. It's not gonna kill you.

EDWARD: It might.

*(A moment, then— the video screen comes to life suddenly — a mudslide.)*

RECORDED VOICE: There are three types of rocks:  
The igneous, the sedimentary, and the metamorphic.

*(EDWARD jumps, then stops the video. It freezes on the mudslide.)*

EDWARD: Um I'm sorry. I don't think I should.

*(RUBY stares at him then smiles.)*

RUBY: The branch of leaves  
Will soon be the branch of snow  
If you refuse to try, my son,  
Then you may never know. Robert Frost.

EDWARD: Robert Frost.

RUBY: Nah. I actually made that up right now. Nobody really knows like more than like one poem so you can just make up whatever you want and say it's by someone famous and people will think you're really deep.  
*(She stares at him, then recites in a monotone:)*

Yo, yo, I'm a gangsta...  
A mothafuckin prangsta  
My dog's got fang...sta...

*(She stares at him.)*

Robert Frost.

So...lunch...is...a...yyyyyyyyyeeeeee...no? See ya.

SAMPLE ONLY

*(About 45 minutes later. RUBY and EDWARD are walking through woods. They're bundled up for winter. Each holds a pint of ice cream, from which they eat as they stroll.)*

EDWARD: You sure you can leave your car there? You can just leave it on the side of the highway?

RUBY: I just did.

EDWARD: It's so cold.

RUBY: Stay active! Keep those limbs a-movin'!

EDWARD: How'd you find this place?

RUBY: My Dad lives up north. Whenever I drive up to visit him there are like hours and hours of woods on either side of the highway and they look so lonely. I figured...why not check 'em out?

EDWARD: Doesn't someone own them?

*(RUBY plucks a leaf from the ground. She tucks it into EDWARD's buttonhole.)*

RUBY: You do. I do. The government does. It's just beautiful woods for miles and miles. Whoa. My ears just popped.

EDWARD: But this isn't like parkland. We could get in trouble. Should we be here?

RUBY: Should you have just walked out of the museum to eat lunch with a strange marionette?

EDWARD: Well...I guess I shouldn't have...

RUBY: How's the pistachio ice cream?

(EDWARD looks down into his pint, considering.)

EDWARD: I don't know why we're eating ice cream if it's like zero degrees or—

RUBY: Because it's awesome.

EDWARD: I don't think I've had ice cream for lunch since I was a little kid. With a sore throat.

RUBY: My Mom got killed when I was kid.

EDWARD: Oh. (*Silence.*) Oh, I'm sor—

RUBY: She got hit by an ambulance.

EDWARD: Uh—

RUBY: Anyway, when my Mom died my Dad let me eat whatever I wanted. Ice cream tastes the best, so that's what I ate all the time. Food pyramid my butt. I mean, why not eat whatever we want as long as we're alive?

EDWARD: Because ice cream makes you fat.

RUBY: I'm fat?

EDWARD: No, I mean, no, you're not fat at all.

RUBY: Then why'd you insist that I was?

EDWARD: I didn't—

RUBY: You really hurt my feelings.

EDWARD: You're making fun of me!

RUBY: And *you're* catching on how this works. You're much sharper than I thought, Mister Science. (*EDWARD smiles to himself. A moment.*) So. My Dad? So he's been living off the settlement money? So he doesn't have to work which is like awesome because he hated teaching. He used to teach pre-calc, but the kids didn't want to be there and, you know what kiddies? Neither did he. After seven years, he stopped seeing new kids. Just the same personalities over and over again. Types. Did you know that? We're not so unique. He'd accidentally call the smelly, quiet kid the name of the original smelly, quiet kid. Anyway, after St. Bridget's Hospital ruined our lives, he got a settlement. So he quit. So about ten years ago, he woke up one day and got a garbage bag out from below the sink and started walking around the house and tossing all the clocks into it. And all the watches. And he got the ladder out from the garage and even pulled down the cuckoo clock my Mom's Mom bought in the Black Forest. That's Germany. So then he went down the basement and got his red metal toolbox and pulled out this like super ghetto wrench – the kind that mobsters use to bust kneecaps. So my Dad goes around the house and uses it to smash the clock on the stove. And he uses it to smash the clock on the dash of his car. And all the other secret clocks the government tries to sneak into our appliances to remind us we're mortal.

EDWARD: Why'd he do that?

RUBY: Because now he's free. He sleeps when he's tired and he eats when he's hungry. If his friends invite him

to a dinner, he's like, "I'll be over when I'm over." And they're like, "But what if you miss the meal and accidentally just come in time for the desert?" and my Dad's like, "Then I guess I'll just have ice cream for dinner."

And that's how he lives. He reads paperbacks and he sits out on the porch with Maggie (that's our yellow lab) and both of them just stare at stuff. Birds and bugs. He naps and does jigsaw puzzles and he's been writing this terrible mystery novel for who knows how long (he certainly doesn't since he dumped the clocks) and I think my Dad's probably about just as sad as everybody else in this world. But he's free. At least the guy is free. (*A long moment.*) Do you think I'm pretty? I can spot a liar so don't you fib! Jeez. It's not, like, adultery to answer. It's just an empirical question. Empirically, do you think I'm pretty? (*Silence.*)

EDWARD: You're really pretty.

RUBY: (*Smiling, as though she hadn't goaded the question.*) Aw. That's really sweet of you to say. One-two-three-SWITCH! (*They swap pints.*) Tell me your entire life story.

EDWARD: Oh, uh...

RUBY: In real time.

EDWARD: (*Laughing.*) There isn't much of one. I'm the kid from high school no one remembers.

RUBY: Ah, that type.

EDWARD: Yeah.

RUBY: Parents?

EDWARD: Yes.

RUBY: I *mean* what are their names?

EDWARD: Oh. OH. Carol and Dan. I got dirt under my nails from picking up rocks.

RUBY: Tell meeeeeee – where'd you grow up?

EDWARD: Here. I mean. In town.

RUBY: And... What's your biggest nightmare?

EDWARD: Biggest–

RUBY: (*With utmost seriousness.*) Mine is dreaming that I'm giving talk to a room full of people and in the middle of it I realize that I'm ABSOLUTELY....TOTALLY...*clothed*. What's yours?

EDWARD: When I was a kid, I had this dream that I would float away and my parents would try to grab me but they couldn't and then I went up and up and never see them again.

RUBY: What a freak! Annnnnd...you went to the college?

EDWARD: For a little. Then I stopped.

RUBY: Why'd you stop?

EDWARD: Um. Something happened. This all feels really familiar.

RUBY: Eeet ist kalt day-ja-vu. Ist meanst ziz ist meant too-bee. Annnnd...how'd you meet Queen Elizabeth?

EDWARD: You mean Selene?

RUBY: Yeah. Mean Selene.

EDWARD: Oh um. *(He starts to crack himself up. He finds a way to tell the story—)*

RUBY: What?

EDWARD: *(Laughing.)* It's actually...actually a REALLY funny...story. Around the time I stopped going to school, I was working at Harry's—

RUBY: The coffee—

EDWARD: Yeah. And Selene was lecturing at the college.

RUBY: Lecturing? Schmansy.

EDWARD: Yeah, well, before her talk she kept coming up to the counter and ordering espressos.

RUBY: To see you.

EDWARD: Yeah and... *(His face lights up. He starts to laugh at the memory of this.)* She must have had like nine espressos so by the time she gets the courage to come up and ask my name — she's — *(Laughing harder.)* She's shaking like crazy. I found out later that she never even drank coffee. Anyway. So she's like, vibrating, and says, w-w-w-would you want to have dinner with me?

RUBY: You know you're right. That *was* a tremendously original, hilarious story of true love.

EDWARD: Yeah well...I think it's nice, I guess.

RUBY: I honestly thought she was your mother.

EDWARD: C'mon, she's not that much older...

RUBY: She's beautiful. A very severe kind of beauty.

EDWARD: I guess. I dunno.

RUBY: How much older?

EDWARD: Nine years.

RUBY: Spit-take. Nine?!

EDWARD: She runs a Forevertery.

RUBY: A Forevertery? Was she born without a soul or did she just drop it one day? Foreverteries are so creepy.

EDWARD: They're not creepy.

RUBY: Downloading people's brains so they can live forever? I think that's creepy. Who'd ever want that?

EDWARD: Lots of people.

RUBY: Rich people. I hope those places shut down soon.

EDWARD: Don't say that. Selene works really hard—

RUBY: I just...All I know is, when I go, I want to go.  
That much I know. Robert Frost.

*(After a moment, EDWARD looks at his watch.)*

EDWARD : I'm always late.

RUBY: I'm sorry if this is inappropriate.

EDWARD: No it's—

RUBY: We're just talking. That's all. I figure—

EDWARD: No, it's ok. And I got this cool leaf out of it.

RUBY: This isn't a date, you know.

EDWARD: I know.

*(They stare into each other's eyes. Then, EDWARD takes off his watch and kneels.)*

RUBY: *(Laughing.)* What are you doing?

*(He takes a big rock and smashes his watch.)*

EDWARD: Now I'm free.

*(They both look down at his broken watch.)*

RUBY: Kinda wish you didn't do that? *(EDWARD smiles and nods. They laugh.)* One...two...three – Switch!

*(They switch ice cream pints as the lights fade.)*

*(Hours later. SELENE sits at her kitchen table with EDWARD drinking tea. SELENE helps EDWARD take many pills. It's done in a ritualistic, automatic way. SELENE also has a small medicine bag. "I'm Making Believe" sung by The Ink Spots and Ella Fitzgerald quietly plays through a speaker.)*

SELENE: I finished the last of it on my muffin.

EDWARD: Oh good.

SELENE: It's perfection. Make sure you tell her I said that. "It's perfection." Can you get the recipe for me? I'd like to start cooking.

EDWARD: Um. Yeah. Yes.

SELENE: She's not protective of it? Some people are about those kind of things – family secrets and so forth.

EDWARD: Absolutely.

SELENE: So you'll ask her?

EDWARD: Ask... *(A silence. Almost like a standoff.)* Ok I have no idea what you're talking about.

SELENE: *(Laughing.)* Your mother's orange marmalade!

EDWARD: Oh. Yeah. I can – Sorry–

SELENE: Head in the clouds.

EDWARD: She's made that jam since I was four. I used to help her at the kitchen table.

SELENE: It's not jam, it's marmalade.

EDWARD: And you had it on an English muffin?

SELENE: (*Laughing.*) No. On a *muffin*. I'm just English.

EDWARD: She's never once shown up without a jar of the stuff.

SELENE: So tell me what else.

EDWARD: What else what?

SELENE: More about your day.

EDWARD: You know. Normal day.

SELENE: Today at the Forevertery, this man, a lawyer. Early 60's. Divorced. Thin. Silver hair. Handsome. Does it bother you if I call another man handsome?

EDWARD: Not really.

SELENE: Not like any could compare to you. (*EDWARD rolls up his sleeve. SELENE swabs him.*) This silver-haired man wants me to do a ForeverBox modified with a camera, speaker, and microphone. I tell him, "Sir, those are impossible. The technology has not progressed to the point where we could if we *wanted* to."

EDWARD: Why didn't he just pick some of his happiest memories to repeat? If he's rich he could buy ten.

(SELENE takes a syringe from the bag, uncovers the needle, and then removes a small brown bottle from the bag. She inserts the needle into the bottle and draws the fluid into the syringe as she says:)

SELENE: This is why I'm telling you this story. He's sitting there, staring over my shoulder at the rows and rows of glowing ForeverBoxes, looking up at the screens and seeing the sample memories looping like a carousel – a first bicycle at Christmas, a first kiss, the second time someone had sex–

EDWARD: (*Laughing.*) The *second* time–

SELENE: ...The birth of...of a child, a picnic on a hill with some long-ago love. Edward. He glances down from the screens and I think: OK – now he has some ideas. But the silver-haired man just looks sadly into my eyes and do you know what he says? “I haven't lived anything I'd care to repeat.”

EDWARD: Even though he won't know that he's repeating it?

SELENE: Even though.

EDWARD: Hm.

SELENE: Imagine. A whole life and not to have been happy.

EDWARD: So...What will re-living memories be like?

SELENE: It'll be like what you remember, but it'll be as though it's for the first time. Here: Tell me about the first moment you saw me. What does that look like in

your mind? Close them— *(She puts down the needle and places her hand over his eyes).*

EDWARD: I mean. I guess I remember looking at your eyes.

SELENE: You mean my tits.

EDWARD: *(Opening his eyes.)* Your eyes.

SELENE: *(Cover his eyes again.)* Close them!

EDWARD: And. I remember you smelled really good. And...I guess I can see the two of us at the counter, one on either side, even though I couldn't have really seen that.

SELENE: Memories are funny things. Ready?

*(EDWARD opens his eyes and nods. She lifts the needle and inserts it into his arm. She compresses the plunger. The medicine is injected.)*

EDWARD: Was that rich guy sick too?

SELENE: *(Nodding.)* The silver-haired man? He said he'd think on it. I doubt he'll be coming back. Some people are not suited for Life Extension. Why are your fingernails so dirty?

EDWARD: What?

SELENE: Fingernails. They're filthy. Like you've been picking at mud.

EDWARD: I don't know.

SELENE: They weren't like that this morning.

EDWARD: Yes...they were.

SELENE: They *weren't*. I *know*. I can see a grain of sand from 500 meters and your nails were *not* dirty this morning.

EDWARD: Selene, would you please remove the needle.

SELENE: Oh! I'm sorry! I'm sorry, love. (*She carefully removes the needle. EDWARD brings a cotton ball up. She holds his wrist. She then notices that his wrist is missing something...*) Where's your watch?

EDWARD: Huh?

SELENE: The watch I bought you for your birthday?

EDWARD: I'm. It's. I didn't wear it today. It was rubbing weird—

SELENE: Oh. I'll get you a new band. Measure the millimeters. (*EDWARD dabs his arm and takes away the cotton ball.*)

EDWARD: Why are my eyes so...itchy?

SELENE: They told you this would happen. How's the cough?

(*EDWARD doesn't respond.*)

SELENE: You're thinking about your parents?

EDWARD: How did you know?

SELENE: I always know what you're thinking. Like I can go inside your mind. Don't worry about your parents.

EDWARD: I said I had something important to tell them. You made that meal. I hadn't told them all this time and they were just sitting there. Waiting for me to say something. My mother probably thought I popped the question.

SELENE: I know that's what she thought.

EDWARD: Or worse. They probably thought that you were pregnant.

SELENE: Yes. That'd be awful.

EDWARD: I didn't mean it like...

SELENE: It's OK.

EDWARD: It's not OK. You don't have to—

SELENE: It was a reflex.

EDWARD: Yeah well... My parents waited for me to say something and...and I didn't. I didn't say anything. So they got in the cab. And then they left.

SELENE: You'll tell them when it's right.

EDWARD: It would have been right the afternoon I found out. Selene, how can I tell my parents that they'll outlive me? I don't want to die.

SELENE: I know, love, I know. (*She embraces him, putting his head on her breast.*) I'm the luckiest person in the world.

EDWARD: Lucky—

SELENE: (*Dead serious.*) Yes.

EDWARD: You're maybe the unluckiest person I've ever met. Even more than me.

SELENE: You mean Peter?

EDWARD: Well – yeah—

SELENE: When I was with Peter, when he was well and even when he was sick—

EDWARD: It's not fair that you have to do this again. No person should have to...go through this TWICE. It's like some sick joke or—

SELENE: You're not listening. I'm saying – being with him was not like being with you. Fortune smiled on me. Do you know why? Because I have Edward.

EDWARD: Promise me that when I...go...you'll be there.

SELENE: I promise. And thanks to the Forevertery, we'll never be apart. As far as you know, you're already inside the ForeverBox as we speak and this is one of your happiest memories.

EDWARD: This? One of my happiest memories? My injection? This moment—

SELENE: (*Exploding.*) Let's get married Oh God! (*She laughs, covering her face.*) I've been holding that in for a MONTH! UGH. I'm so... (*She stands, turning away and laughing again, embarrassed.*) I know it's *unconventional* for the woman to ask but...you haven't.

EDWARD: Not because I didn't want to—

SELENE: No matter. (*A long moment. She collects herself. EDWARD watches her.*) I...but...not only will our marriage help things legally for your Downloading and Custodial Maintenance, but I *want* to be your wife. I want *you* to be my *husband*. I want...I want to know that we were joined before we were both in boxes. Joined in life and then joined in Extension.

EDWARD: So, I feel like I owe you a ring. I know rarer rocks than diamonds. How about a...blue garnet or...serendibite?

SELENE: You don't owe me anything.

EDWARD: (*Standing.*) I love you.

SELENE: I know you do.

EDWARD: I do. (*They kiss.*)

SELENE: So...we're engaged! Hooray! We should celebrate! Would you want to...

EDWARD: Oh. Um. I'm...I really weak, so—

SELENE: Of course, love. Of course. Well, I could open champagne. Oh! I bought some ice cream! We could—

EDWARD: What I mean is, it's my stomach and with the medicine...

SELENE: Of course. Now. Go get ready for bed. I'll stroke your hair while you fall asleep. (*EDWARD starts to exit.*) Edward. Have a scrub under those nails before you get in my clean bed.

**END OF SAMPLE.**

SAMPLE ONLY