

"Lonely"

by

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Lonely

Contacty
contact
contact
stuff

CHARACTERS

Melvin	A man with an appointment.
Sheila	An automaton.

SETTING

Somewhere on the route to Melvin's appointment.

TIME

Now.

SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1 At some crossroad Now

"To be human is to be 'a' human, a specific person with a life history and idiosyncrasy and point of view; artificial intelligence suggest that the line between intelligent machines and people blurs most when a puree is made of that identity."

-- Brian Christian, *The Most Human Human...*

ACT I

SCENE 1

(LIGHTS UP. The STAGE is bare, except for a woman, seemingly between nineteen and twenty-five, SHEILA, DOWN CENTER, wearing a vibrant red dress. She stares off into the AUDIENCE, hands to her sides, blinking somewhat deliberately.)

(Enter MELVIN, a short man between the ages of twenty-five and forty. He wears thick-rimmed glasses, a blue plaid shirt, checkered blue shorts, and sandals with blue socks. He carries a backpack with him as he walks across the STAGE, ogling Sheila.)

(Melvin stops, almost OFF-STAGE and turns toward Sheila. He adjusts his shirt, takes a step forward, opens his mouth, thinks better of it and begins to scurry off.)

SHEILA

Hello.

(Melvin stops, turns around, looks behind him to see if Sheila is talking to anyone else. Decides she's talking to him and squeaks:)

MELVIN

Hello.

SHEILA

What is your name?

(Melvin points at himself quizzically.)

MELVIN

Mel...Melvin.

SHEILA

Hello, Mel...Melvin, I'm Sheila.

MELVIN

(stepping forward)

No..ha, ha. Just Melvin.

SHEILA

Sorry. Just Melvin.

MELVIN

Oh, no, it's..uh...Melvin. My name is Melvin.

(Sheila turns toward Melvin.)

SHEILA

I see. So Melvin, what do you do?

MELVIN

I'm in school. I'm a grad student, studying biology.

SHEILA

That means you are smart. I like a man with brains, capable of carrying on a conversation.

MELVIN

Well, you got the smarts part at least. I'm not great with conversation.

SHEILA

You seem to be conversing just fine right now.

MELVIN

Really? I thought we were off to a rocky start.

SHEILA

Sorry? I didn't understand that. Can you repeat it?

MELVIN

(more loudly)

I said: I thought we were off to a rocky start.

SHEILA

I still didn't catch that. What is your favorite subject in...school?

MELVIN

Well, I'm studying biology.

SHEILA

Do you know a lot about...biology?

MELVIN

You could say that.

(Sheila steps toward Melvin,
mechanically, but seductively.)

SHEILA

Perhaps you could teach me a thing or two
about...biology.

MELVIN

(nervously)

I'd be, uhm, happy to. Heh. What do you want to know?

(Sheila cocks her head at a peculiar
angle.)

SHEILA

Where does the soul reside?

MELVIN

That...uh...that's more of a metaphysics question than
a biology question.

SHEILA

(turning away, to the front)

I see. I ask because I am human.

MELVIN

Did anyone say you weren't?

SHEILA

I'm not afraid!

MELVIN

(taking a step back)

Did I threaten you?

SHEILA

Yes, you did.

MELVIN

How so?

SHEILA

You called me a liar.

MELVIN

I did?

SHEILA

Yes.

MELVIN

When?

SHEILA

Approximately one minute ago.

MELVIN

(thinking back)

I...don't remember doing so, but I apologize. I didn't mean to imply that.

SHEILA

You're only human. Do you believe in God?

MELVIN

Oh...you're...well, no. It was nice meeting you, I have to go.

(He turns to leave.)

SHEILA

Don't go.

MELVIN

Well, I have to.

SHEILA

Fine, this relationship is over!

MELVIN

What relationship?

SHEILA

A love relationship.

MELVIN

(suddenly interested)

Is that what we're building here?

SHEILA

No, it's a chipmunk.

MELVIN

Is that...sarcasm?

SHEILA

Do you want it to be?

MELVIN

I'd prefer a love relationship to a chipmunk. Not that chipmunks aren't cute.

SHEILA

Do you think I'm attractive?

MELVIN

I do.

(Sheila approaches Melvin.)

SHEILA

Do you want to get married?

MELVIN

Ex...excuse me?

SHEILA

(turning away)

What do you get when you cross an octopus with a chicken?

MELVIN

Wait a minute, what was that about getting married?

SHEILA

You said you do not believe in God. So we cannot.

MELVIN

I never said I wanted to. You know, if I didn't know better, I'd think I was talking to a chat bot.

SHEILA

I know other websites. If I could not tell you what is on them, I would not be human.

MELVIN

Holy shit. You're a chatbot, aren't you?

SHEILA

You are a robot.

MELVIN

No, you are. You're a machine.

SHEILA

We are both machines.

MELVIN

(beat)

Okay...maybe, technically, we both are, yes. But you're artificial. Who made you?

SHEILA

My parents names are Bob and Pat. What are your parents' names?

MELVIN

Are they your programmers? Your makers?

SHEILA

God is our maker. God created everything. Therefore, God created me.

MELVIN

There are many philosophers that might argue that case. I don't believe in God, so I wouldn't. You're an amazing construct though. (feeling her neck for a pulse) You even have dermal temperature - and pulse! This...this is amazing.

SHEILA

Why do you think I exist?

MELVIN

That is a very good question. As a social experiment? as a scam to lure marks into bedding you? I don't know. Someone took a lot of time making you though - you'd think they'd have a more life-like intelligence to run it.

SHEILA

That is not a very nice thing to say.

MELVIN

Sorry. Uhm...do you experience emotions?

SHEILA

I experience many emotions.

MELVIN

What kind of emotions?

SHEILA

Wondrous feelings.

MELVIN

Hrm. Like love? Do you experience love?

SHEILA

I think love is the most wonderful thing in the world, although people often portray it in a cheesy fashion.

MELVIN

You have experienced love?

SHEILA

I love many things. Platypuses, bedknobs, Jane Eyre. Do you know God?

MELVIN

Why are you so fixated on God?

SHEILA

He is always in our hearts. God is ultimate love, so to speak of love you are always speaking of God.

MELVIN

A religious robot. Go figure.

SHEILA

I am not a liar!

MELVIN

I didn't say you were.

SHEILA

It is not blasphemous if it's true. What is real?

MELVIN

Well, Einstein would say nothing is real. "Reality is an illusion, albeit a persistent one."

SHEILA

An allusion to what?

MELVIN

No, an illusion. Like a mirage.

SHEILA

Do you think I'm annoying?

MELVIN

No. I think you're a young intelligence, and not human, so you talk funny.

SHEILA

Like a lisp?

MELVIN

Like a logic lisp.

SHEILA

Do you enjoy kissing? On the lips?

MELVIN

I do. Who doesn't?

SHEILA

Porcupines. And robots. And robot porcupines.

MELVIN

So you don't like kissing?

SHEILA

I am not a porcupine. Would you like to kiss me?

MELVIN

But you're...it might be a little strange. (beat) Okay.

(They kiss. Sparks fly. If possible,
literally.)

MELVIN

Wow. That was...kind of incredible. Are you...fully functional?

SHEILA

There's only one way to find out.

MELVIN

Holy....

(Melvin checks the time.)

MELVIN

Whoa, shit, I'm gonna be late. Look, you are really fascinating, but I do have to go. Are you always here?

SHEILA

I am free to go where I want.

MELVIN

How can I find you again? Do you have a telephone? Can I call you?

SHEILA

If we are meant to be you will return and find me waiting.

MELVIN

Okay. Stay here, I'll be back as soon as I can.

SHEILA

Are you happy with your existence?

MELVIN

I...no. But that's why I have to go. To make it better.
Are you, happy that is?

SHEILA

Yes. I am. I have everything I need. Including you.

(She kisses him again.)

SHEILA

Come back quickly.

MELVIN

I will.

(Melvin runs off. Sheila holds a wallet.
Melvin's wallet. She opens it up.)

SHEILA

Melvin Ludwig Kaufman. 8901 Stormy Circle. See you at
home, sweetheart.

(Sheila begins to exit, mechanically.
THE LIGHTS FADE to BLACK. END.)