

Two Shades Away

by

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Cast of Characters

MELANIE:

Early 20's

CHARLA:

Early 20's

Place
Park

Time
Evening

2.

Setting: The play can take place at a swing set.

At Rise: Melanie and Charla sit side by side on a pair of swings.

Melanie: You ever feel like you are two shades away from the life you're supposed to be living? (pause.) I'm there. Sometimes I'll look back, like right now—usually when shit hits the fan and I think about my past and where I went off track; try to point out the place in my mind, where it began, cause I know I was on the right path and something happened along the way that kind of bumped me over a bit and here I am; wondering if I add up, wondering if I am ever going to get back on the right track again.

Charla: I think a lot of us feel that way.

Melanie: I want to be happy...

Charla: What is it that makes you feel like you went off track?

Melanie: Don't laugh at me.

Charla: I'm not gonna laugh at you.

Melanie: I wanted to be a dancer.

Charla: Really? What kind of dancer?

Melanie: I wanted to be a professional hip hop dancer. I began rehearsing more intensely, nights after I got home from work, I thought I had a chance for a moment...

Charla: So what happened?

Melanie: I allowed...I think I let those voices get the best of me.

Charla: Voices?

Melanie: Yeh, outside voices, they became so loud that I started hearing them on the inside. They just overwhelmed me. I couldn't push them away anymore.

Charla: Yeah...I know.

Melanie: ...it just controlled me, changed me, I don't know, I didn't realize what had happened until much later and by then...too late.

Charla: You can still dance.

Melanie: Not the way I thought I would. I used to imagine myself dancing on a big stage in front of thousands of people, traveling the world, it was all I thought about. You know, I never told anyone about it at the time because they look at you as if you are some fool, some dreamer who isn't 'serious' about life...

Charla: There needs to be a way for you to---

Melanie: There is, clubbing. You know I dance at the clubs and I can go all night dancing, cause it's that release I need. I start to get anxiety when I don't get that weekend night in, all the pent up anger, frustration it left me with, that's the release. Ha! And probably how I secretly live that dream.

Charla: I understand that Mel.

Melanie: Yeah..therapeutic I guess. Plus now, I'm going back to school to get my degree and hope that gets me back on track.

Charla: Can I ask you something without you getting mad?

Melanie: What?

Charla: I don't understand why you don't go out there. If it bothers you that much, why don't you just go after it, you know, professionally?

Melanie: What? Dancing?

Charla: Yes!

Melanie: Are you crazy?

Charla: I'm serious. Why can't you---

Melanie: I needed to have some success when I was younger, not now. I'm already over the hill for dancing.

Charla: I don't think so. I think that's all in your mind. We're still young, aren't we? Since when is being in your twenties considered being over the hill?

Melanie: No way. No one will take me serious now.

Charla: Are you kidding me? I've seen you dance at the club and I know you HAVE IT. You are a great dancer.

Melanie: It can't happen now.

Charla: But why not give it one last shot? Why not see what happens?

Melanie: And if I fail, where do I go from there? I'll be even older than I am now before anything gets in motion and what will I do then, wait tables for the rest of my life? So many dancers are out there now, after sticking at it for so long and they're having careers. It's a waste of time at this point. I need momentum.

Charla: You owe it to yourself.

Melanie: Nah, I don't think you get it.

Charla: Mel, you can always go back to school.

Melanie: I don't want to waste more time than I already have. That's always been my problem, wasting time.

Charla: I'm not trying to confuse you or stress you. I just think that it's still worth a shot.

Melanie: And what will I do? Where will I go? How will I survive?

Charla: You're asking all the wrong questions.

Melanie: I don't think so. I think I haven't been asking the right questions for far too long. That's the problem! Life ain't no game. I'm being realistic. I'm finally starting to get my shit together and now---

Charla: Hey, hey, calm down and chill. We're just talking.

Melanie: Yeah but you don't understand Charla. I've been dealing with all this guilt for so long and I just need to let it go. I have to forget the person I used to be in order to set myself free and start living my life again, without feeling haunted by my past, all the time. It never leaves me, you see? There's not a day that goes by when I'm not catching myself thinking about dancing and is 'bout time I put those thoughts in check and get on with my life.

Charla: Why? Why not fight for it?

Melanie: Because I'm afraid.

Charla: Afraid of what?

Melanie: Afraid of being nothing!

Charla: I get it but what are any of us anyway? We are born, we live, we die. Who cares? At least you can do something that matters to you, something meaningful in your life while you breathe.

(pause.)

I'm sorry. I just, I know you long enough to care about you or else I wouldn't say anything to you. I do want you to be happy, but...
(beat) My father was a great saxophone player, did you know that?

Melanie: I didn't know that.

Charla: You know why you didn't know that?

Melanie: Why?

Charla: Because his saxophone never came out of its case. That man drank himself blind every single night because he walked away from what he loved most. I don't blame him. He had a family to take care of, so I don't blame him, but it damaged him forever and forever is a hell of a long time...I'm sorry. Maybe, I'm going too heavy on you because of what I was exposed to in my own life, I saw the end result of a long, sad pursuit of avoidance...maybe even delusion, denial of the truth. I know I may sound dramatic but you really got to me with what you said earlier, being two shades away...aren't you tired of hearing the voices? It's never gonna let go of you, no matter how hard you push it away.

Look what it's doing to you now...what do I know, really, I really don't know much, at least you know your talent, been trying to find mine my whole life. But you *do* have something and it's special. So did my father, but he let it go...you still have a chance. So, why not?

Melanie: I guess you have a point, I don't even know how I'd start practicing again. I don't know, I guess I just have to put my mind to it...find some rehearsal space, you know, seeing as I don't have the same room in my place anymore...

Melanie holds up her arm.

Charla: You can practice at my place if you want, there's a shed out the back, I think it'll be big enough

Melanie: I didn't know you cared so much about me.

Charla: I didn't know, either.

They both laugh.

END OF PLAY