

ANTISTROPHE TO AN ANDRO-SAPPHIC TRAGEDY

A Play

by

Greta Mae Geiser

Phone: (651) 202-7279

Email: gretam@comcast.net

Cast of Characters

<u>Reno</u> :	A young woman; It; Beautiful, Perfect, Lovely; The Other One; Them
<u>Tolstoy</u> :	A young man full of stories
<u>Dublin</u> :	A man
<u>Pique</u> :	A woman; Decidedly not the Goddess; Artemis, Zeus, Juno, Frigg, Phoebe, Trivia, Mercury, Apollo, Baldur, Selene, Victoria, Nemesis, Ragnarok, Tarturus, Betrayer, Torturer; A liar
<u>Glare</u> :	The First One
<u>Eclipse</u> :	The Other One
<u>Thursday</u> :	A young woman from the mountains

Scene

A beach, nighttime. Somewhere, there is a bed, unmade. Somewhere else, there is a writing desk. These are important. Nothing else will be. Probably.

Reno Alone

When Reno is alone on stage, give her enough time to really be alone. Thank you.

Pronouns

Bolded pronouns always refer to Reno. This is only used in more confusing cases. They do not need to be emphasized.

antistrophe /æn'tɪs.tɹə,fi/n

A response. A foil. But not an ending.

AT RISE:

RENO has just woken up. She is alone. She might sit on the edge of the bed. She might stand on the shore, looking out at the ocean. She might stretch. She thinks.

RENO

She never swims. It's odd, having the expanse of the ocean at her feet and never swimming in it. She likes the smell. There is history packed into the salt. So many gods and murders and halcyon days.

(Eventually, TOLSTOY enters and lingers on the edge of the space.)

TOLSTOY

Do you want to hear a story?

RENO

Hello. *(She takes TOLSTOY's hand and brings him onto the beach.)* No. Thank you.

TOLSTOY

If I were a spider, and I wove out my story in silk, would you listen?

(RENO laughs.)

RENO

No.

TOLSTOY

A bull?

RENO

If you were a bull?

TOLSTOY

Yes. Then would you listen?

RENO

No.

TOLSTOY

An eagle then? (*RENO shakes her head.*) A swan? A satyr?

RENO

A satyr?

TOLSTOY

A goat man.

RENO

I know what a satyr is. Thank you.

TOLSTOY

What about a flame?

RENO

A flame?

TOLSTOY

If I was a flame, and I could tell you stories with my body, would you let me?

RENO

You'd burn me.

TOLSTOY

Imagine I couldn't.

RENO

No.

TOLSTOY

A shepherd? A snake? A sheep? A horse? (*RENO laughs and shakes her head.*) A dolphin?

RENO

Why don't you tell me as yourself then? If you must tell me.

(She sits on the bed.)

TOLSTOY

This is the story of me. (*Beat.*) I was in love once. I would have followed her to the ends of the world. I did, I think. But she was at odds with Love. She hated the Winged God, and because he sent me, so she hated me.

RENO

Did she run from you?

TOLSTOY

Yes. I was afraid she would fall or scratch her legs with thorns. I could have healed those wounds. But no medicine can cure Love. (*Beat.*) Do you want to hear another story?

RENO

That's the end?

TOLSTOY

Enough of it.

RENO

Tell me another.

TOLSTOY

I was in love another time. With an unfaithful woman.

RENO

This story is sad.

TOLSTOY

It was a long time ago.

RENO

How did you find out?

TOLSTOY

A raven told me. Ravens are truthful, you know. Crows lie.

RENO

I like crows.

(RENO outstretches her arms, inviting TOLSTOY into her embrace.)

TOLSTOY

I can't stay here.

RENO

I know.

TOLSTOY

My friends are expecting me.

RENO

I know.

TOLSTOY

I know.

(They embrace. TOLSTOY exits. RENO is alone. The beach suddenly feels very empty. After a while, DUBLIN enters, unacknowledged. He takes in the scene and climbs onto the bed. He lounges.)

RENO

She looks at herself. Her hands. The skin. The flesh.
(*She does.*) Disgusting. (*DUBLIN glances at RENO.*) Don't
look at me. (*Beat.*) I didn't invite you.

DUBLIN

The door was open.

RENO

There is no door.

*(DUBLIN shrugs as if to say "I rest my
case." A moment.)*

DUBLIN

It screams into the ocean, but no one hears.

RENO

It does not.

DUBLIN

It does. (*Beat.*) And why does It?

RENO

It does not. It would never. Because It knows what the
ocean is made of.

DUBLIN

It does not.

RENO

Does.

DUBLIN

Not.

RENO

Does.

DUBLIN

What?

RENO

What?

DUBLIN

Is it made of then, if It knows so much?

RENO

It knows.

DUBLIN

Then what?

RENO

It doesn't need to tell you.

DUBLIN

What is **It** made of?

RENO

Exactly what it is. Nothing more. Nothing less. It's only what it is. And everything that it is. And nothing that it isn't.

DUBLIN

I like looking at **It**.

RENO

The ocean?

DUBLIN

No.

(A moment. RENO turns away.)

RENO

She breathes slowly. Terribly slowly. Too slowly to fill her lungs completely before she must exhale.

DUBLIN

It speaks. *(A moment)* It sleeps.

RENO

(Not to DUBLIN. To anyone but DUBLIN.)

She never sleeps. But she dreams. She dreams in colors brighter than the stars. Terrible colors. Wonderful colors. Dreams that defy what she knows to be true. Dreams that rewrite the truth she lives. *(Now to DUBLIN)* Dreams that hate.

DUBLIN

It dreams in painted pictures.

RENO

She doesn't like the pictures you paint.

DUBLIN

I don't paint.

RENO

And she likes that.

(DUBLIN finds himself at the shore. His toes touch the water.)

DUBLIN

Venus was born of seafoam.

(RENO begins to make the bed.)

RENO

Not real seafoam. Something else entirely.

DUBLIN

It was seafoam. She walked out of the sea on the shore
of Cyprus.

RENO

I disagree.

DUBLIN

It's a fact. Venus. Seafoam. Cyprus. *(Beat.)* The
daughter of Zeus and Dione.

RENO

She can't be a daughter and a seafoam at the same time.

DUBLIN

The daughter is the seafoam.

RENO

No.

DUBLIN

Dione was the ocean.

RENO

She was not.

DUBLIN

And Dione was Zeus. And from the foam came Venus.

RENO

Aphrodite.

DUBLIN

What?

RENO

Zeus would beget Aphrodite.

DUBLIN

But she came from the foam, nonetheless.

RENO

You don't know anything.

DUBLIN

I know that Aphrodite was born of Zeus and Dione, who was the ocean, and that she stepped out of the seafoam on the shore of Cyprus.

RENO

Nothing.

DUBLIN

More than **It** does.

RENO

You'd romanticize her into a Venusian abomination.

DUBLIN

I would hope so.

RENO

(Not to DUBLIN.)

She's never dreamt of Venus. She's dreamt of Aphrodite. Dian. Freya. But the man wants a painting of a naked Venus.

DUBLIN

It's painted Venus before. Venus in the seafoam.

RENO

Not for you.

DUBLIN

It thinks that **It's** better than the Goddess. Be careful. The last one to do that turned to stone.

RENO

It does not think It's better than anyone. It honors the Goddess where honor is due. But It dreams only of Aphrodite, who was never born of pretty foam, but of the severed pieces of Ouranos' cock.

(DUBLIN sits on the newly made bed.)

DUBLIN

Soon It shall pursue. And if It refuses gifts, soon It shall give them. Soon It shall love.

RENO

It doesn't have gifts.

DUBLIN

It will.

RENO

It will do as It pleases.

DUBLIN

It will do as pleases me by pleasing her.

RENO

By pleasing whom?

DUBLIN

Venus.

RENO

She will not paint Venus. She will paint a Vestal virgin and see what you think of that. Hm?

DUBLIN

There are no more Vestal girls.

RENO

Only because you killed them.