

You Touch Me

By Gail Mangham, October 2011

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Cast: female 25+ of any ethnicity

The playwright envisions the use of musical underscoring of text coupled with mime to indicate the walls and movement that is heightened by a dance esthetic.

No props, room can be an open frame, glass, or just created through the movement and focus of the actor.

I don't know how long I've been here. Do you? Some times when I sit really still in that corner over there and lean into the seam where the walls come together and close my eyes, I become the room. The room breathes with me, completely in sync, until I can't tell where my body ends and the room begins. And I imagine the walls and the floor becoming soft. My body sinks into that softness and then the warmth comes. I feel small, and wound in a cocoon of flannel. I look up and see a face with blue eyes, full lips curved in a smile and then the finger comes and touches my nose; the knuckle grazes my cheek; the hand cups my head. My heart grows still; all my nerves concentrate on that hand. I stare into the eyes of this stranger who will not long be a stranger—my mother.

I don't know how long I've been here. Do you? Some times when I sit really still in that other corner over there and lean into the seam where the walls come together and close my eyes, I become the room. The room breathes with me, completely in sync, until I can't tell where my body ends and the room begins. The wall and the ceiling take on the shape, the feel of a bed. I'm lying on my back, knees bent and I watch as the big, tanned roughhewn hands gently take my feet, tickle them and then begin rotating them like the crankshaft on a steam engine, slowly at first and then faster and faster---Choo...choo...choo...CHOO chu..choo...chu...CHOO...chu...choo...chu...faster and faster until the face above the hands breaks out in laughter and my little body convulses with giggles. Then I'm pulled into the air against a huge chest smelling of tobacco, Old Spice and I feel a beating heart not my own, but my father's.

I don't know how long I've been here. Do you? Some times when I sit really still in that third corner over there and lean into the seam where the walls come together and close my eyes, I become the room. The room breathes with me, completely in sync, until I can't tell where my body ends and the room begins. The floor

becomes grass and the walls the rough bark of a tree. I feel hot tears slipping down my face. Then a paw, slight, on my leg and then another, heavier, and a cold touch against my nose, a raspy, wet stroke across my cheek, furry warmth burrowing under my crossed arms forcing them open. My hands knead the contours of the body, feel the comfort of bone and sinew, the compassion given and received. I accept the gift offered—touch, the touch of my four footed friend.

I don't know how long I've been here. Do you? Some times when I sit really still in that last corner over there and lean into the seam where the walls come together and close my eyes, I become the room. The room breathes with me, completely in sync, until I can't tell where my body ends and the room begins. And the floor becomes damp sand and the walls his body—arms encircling me, legs twining with mine, skin against skin, damp, cool, lips against my neck, breath tickling my ear, heart beating against my back, droplets of water from his hair tracing their way down waterways between my breasts. An ocean of touch--the touch of my lover.

I don't know how long I've been here. Do you? Some times when I lie really still on the floor and close my eyes, I become the room. The room breathes with me, completely in sync, until I can't tell where my body ends and the room begins. And the floor becomes a hammock swinging lazily in a warm breeze. I feel the wind dance over my skin scaling the mountain of my swollen womb. My hands spread across the expanse of belly and I grow still, listening and seeing with fingertips and there it is, the somersaulting of life, the tiny punch of hand and foot-- this, our first, most intimate touch, the touch of my child.

I don't know how long I've been here. Do you? I've all but forgotten touch, the touch of anything, anything living, alive with pulsing, warmth, with...Life. All I know is I long for it with a pain that threatens to unravel me. Some times when I stand really still in the center of the room and close my eyes, I become the room. The room breathes with me, completely in sync, until I can't tell where my body ends and the room begins. And I wait; I wait for touch to come, any touch. It does not come. A moment of terror, of despair, of unutterably loss.

Then I take a deep breath and smile, imagine my body expanding outward into the walls, into the beyond, into the forever and then it comes, finally, the touch of a hand on my head gently caressing, so slight that I think I almost imagine it and the

walls and floor and ceiling dissolve and I am enveloped in touch, surrounded by pure touch, touch that feeds the spirit and erases all pain. Touch that tells me I exist, that I am here now, and that I am not alone.

I don't know how long I've been here. Do you? That's OK. It doesn't matter-- because when I close my eyes, you touch me.