

MIRROR IMAGE
(A play in one act)

By Aminta Lara

Characters:

Ana

Julia

Carmen's Voice

Locksmith's Voice

This play is for one actress; an audiovisual medium (movie or videotape) will be used to join the actions of the two characters.

So as to avoid a constant repetition of which reality we are referring to, we will state that everything involving Ana's character is projected on a screen and everything involving Julia will be acted out by the actress on stage.

THE DREAM

[The first images will be projected on the screen. Ana is inside her apartment; she has fallen asleep on a very large scale model of a beach-front tourist development. It is obvious that she has been hard at work for several days. The apartment is a mess, dirty dishes, ashtrays full of cigarette butts, an unmade bed, clothes lying where they were dropped. The phone rings, startling Ana awake. She is afraid that she may have damaged the scale model. She looks it over carefully, spots the area she was working on, and goes back to gluing cars and palm trees in the area of the parking lot... The phone rings and is picked up by the answering machine.]

ANA'S VOICE

This is 730-4354; please leave a message.

CARMEN'S VOICE

It's me. Answer the phone, I know you're there. Pick up the phone!. Please don't overdo it; there's no reason to. Remember that Mr. Lima is a minimalist... Pick up the phone! You are unbearable... At 7:30 at the café across the street... Our work and our future depend upon your being on time... Pick up the phone! Don't even dream of putting in little cars and shrubs. Ciao.

[Ana pays no attention and goes on with what she was doing. She starts to nod, dozes off and begins to dream.

In the following images we see two realities that are linked together. Ana and Julia are back-to-back, like the two sides of the same coin. Their movements are identical, fluid. They search so as never to find each other. They are in the character's dream world, where the unconscious meets the conscious. This is

the beginning of narrative. The rhythm of spasmodic music keeps time with the movements of the two characters. We will hear rhythmic and melodic patterns, or both, which will be supplemented with body movements that are accentuated by the editing. For example: In a 4/4 pattern we have two quavers, one crotchet, two quavers, a rest. This pattern is repeated for four measures then, during the fifth measure, the portion of the two quavers of the third movement consists of the actresses' movements.]

ANA:

I should set that aside.

JULIA:

I should set this aside.

ANA:

Thinking puts things in their place.

JULIA:

I don't know if I think. What do I think? I am...

ANA:

Out, out. Should I get out of here? Where? Is there somebody there?

JULIA:

If I go in? If I step in? If I change? I am...

ANA:

Think, think... that brings relief... think. I don't listen. What do I see?

JULIA:

The dream... the dreams... permission. The dreams! Do I walk? Am I moving forward? Hello...

ANA:

A fixation.... I should find myself a fixation... a game... a book,.. a poem. Read a book... look for a poem... Who?

JULIA:

The rain. The rain sings and it sounds like smiles. I am...

ANA:

It's cold. I need a kiss... a poem... something to make me constant. Who? What shall I read? Am I?

JULIA:

Here. I'm here. I'm looking at you. By looking at myself, I look at you. Here! Turn around for a second.

ANA:

I remember the day that I first remembered... The poem. I had better rebuild the poem... Sleep is sneaking up on me...

JULIA:

I am looking at you, and it is the same as looking at myself. What strange world have you built for yourself so as not to see that I am looking at you and that, by looking at you, I look at myself? At what strange point did our encounter vanish?

ANA:

To put together a poem. To stop writing a poem.

[Ana is inside the scale model. She is searching, we don't know for what or for whom. We see her lost, desperate. She feels she is being chased. She flees, but we don't know from whom. Every time she thinks she has found a way out, she finds that she is back where she started. She finds a stairway and follows it downward. It is a long, dark stairway, that becomes darker and darker and seems to lead to a void, to nowhere. Then she sees a door. The door is a strange one, set too far back. She hesitates, tries to turn back but cannot. She overcomes her fear and flings the door open. She meets herself, recognizes herself, shoots herself. We watch her fall, mortally wounded, covered in blood. Everything goes black.]

[The radio alarm goes off. MUSIC.]

THE LANGUAGE

[Ana awakes with a startle. She sits quietly for a short time. She checks the scale model and tries to glue on some palm trees that came unstuck while she slept. She realizes she doesn't have enough time and removes the ones that are still standing. The radio alarm is still ringing; she shuts it off. She sits in silence, then jumps when the radio alarm starts ringing again; as she fumbles trying to turn it off, the radio falls and stops ringing. She leaves it lying where it fell and goes into the bathroom. She stares at herself in the mirror, but does not like what she sees. She turns on the faucets in the shower, walks out of the bathroom, goes to the kitchen and opens a can of CocaCola, drinks directly out of the can, leaves the can on top of the refrigerator. Julia is following her movements, trying to find her.]

ANA:

The briefcase is on the rocker.

JULIA:

I rock silently on your bosom.

[Ana goes back to the bathroom, looks in the mirror, picks up a tube of toothpaste and a toothbrush, sticks the toothbrush into the shower, realizes that the toothpaste tube is not rolled up neatly and tries to fix it. She steps into the shower.]

ANA:

My breasts, I think my breasts are beginning to sag. Age is brushing up against me..

JULIA:

I will brush up against you as I slip by.

ANA:

[Inside the shower she keeps on trying to fix the tube of toothpaste, finally gives up and brushes her teeth.]

I'll slip by the dry cleaner's later today.

JULIA:

Later. Infinity will be later if your eyes do not pick up my longing, which is yours too.

ANA:

[She soaps herself, fiddles with the tube of toothpaste again, then the hot water begins to run out.]

What I long for is a good drink, a good dinner and a good lover...

JULIA:

Lover, a most beloved lover would I be for you, and you for me. Forever.

ANA:

[With all her fiddling, she has broken the tube of toothpaste. She lets it drop in the shower.]

It's always the same... I'm late. I'm really late.

JULIA:

Late. Too late... for what?

ANA:

[She steps out of the shower, grabs a towel and half dries herself. She rubs lotion on her body and puts on her deodorant.]

Why do I always promise more than I can accomplish?

JULIA:

I wish I could smooth the path of your afflictions.

ANA:

[Trying to untangle her hair, with little success.]

I should resign and set about doing something else

JULIA:

Slowly, I would surround everything that touches your heart.

ANA:

[She goes into the bedroom, opens the closet, can't find anything that she wants to wear.]

I hate pressure.

JULIA:

To start off on a new course and be able to leave me behind.

ANA:

[From the chair next to her bedside table she picks up the skirt that she had worn the day before. She goes back to the closet and grabs a jacket, opens drawers and takes out a shirt, underwear and stockings.]

I should just forget about the project and live off air.

JULIA:

And steal away from yourself... staying the same inside me.

ANA:

[She begins dressing, putting on her underwear, stockings, the skirt and shirt.]

They'll kill me if I don't go... and that will be the end. How will I pay for the car? Weren't you dying to have a new car? So, there....

JULIA:

I would sing.... I would sing forever for an encounter with your steps... our steps.

ANA:

[She can't find her shoes and starts looking under the bed, in the closet, in the bathroom.]

I'll never make it by 7:30.

JULIA:
Lend me what you feel.

ANA:
[She picks up the phone and dials, but the line is busy. She is still looking for her shoes. She goes into the kitchen, bumping into a small fish tank which she ignores. She finds her shoes and puts them on.]

It's useless. I'll never change.

JULIA:
No, forgetting is like banishment... painful.

ANA:
[She picks up the briefcase that is lying on the dining-room table. She goes back to the bathroom, looks in the mirror, puts on some makeup but still doesn't like what she sees. She is about to go out, but can't find the keys to the apartment.]

Where in hell did I put the keys?

JULIA:
[Julia takes the keys that are hanging in the lock.]

Is it just imagination that moves things around?

ANA:
[She digs through her briefcase, the pockets of her jacket. She takes the jacket off and looks through it carefully. Back in the kitchen she takes another sip of her Coke.]

In the briefcase... What was I wearing yesterday? Where the hell did I leave the keys? If I got in, they have to be here somewhere.

JULIA:
I'm still here.

ANA:
[She goes into the bedroom, the bathroom, checks the drawers in her bedside table, the chest of drawers, and looks in the shower. She picks up the tube of toothpaste and puts it where it belongs.]

The keys? Where did I leave the goddam keys? That's all I needed... locked in.

[She tries to make the phone call again, but the line is still busy. The busy signal is very loud.]

JULIA:

I would have to be made of water, in order to cover you...

ANA:

[Searching under the sofa, the armchairs, in the refrigerator.]

What is wrong with me? Where did I put the keys?

JULIA:

Be made of fire to understand you... of air to lift you and soar...

ANA:

[Pacing back and forth in the bedroom.]

What's wrong with the phone? I have to call. Where are those keys?

JULIA:

Of earth to conceive you within me.

ANA:

[She tries dialing the number once more.]

They are not going to believe me. *[The phone rings.]* Carmen? Don't start yelling. Wait a minute. The model is ready, I just can't find the keys to the apartment. Yes, I looked there, too. Postpone the meeting. I'm going to call the locksmith. No, you don't have an extra set of keys; I changed the locks after they broke in. I gave a set to Mother. She's away on the island. The keys to Mother's house are on the same keyring as mine. Hang up and let me call the locksmith. Just postpone the meeting!

[She grabs the yellow pages and, after quite a bit of searching, finds a number and begins dialing.]

This is your local phone company. The number you have just dialed has been changed to 730-7564.

[She dials again and we hear the phone ringing at the other end.]

Hello. This is an emergency. I can't find the keys to my apartment and I absolutely have to go out right now. No, no, I don't want to get in, I want to go out. No, what I want you to do is to send me a locksmith. 529 Cornwall Avenue,

fifth floor, apartment 53. 730-4354. What? Well send him as soon as he gets back.

JULIA:
Let me belong to you for just one second.

[The phone rings and Ana answers.]

ANA:
Carmen, don't hassle me. I won't be there by 8:30 no matter how hard I try. Change it! They're going to send the locksmith as soon as he gets there. I'm going to hang up now and I am not going to answer the phone again.
[She hangs up.] Oh God!

JULIA:
Here, here, always here.

A DAY OFF

[Ana flops on the sofa, picks up all her remote controls, turns on the television set and the radio. Julia follows her actions reluctantly, and finally manages to get her to stop.]

ANA:
A half morning off... that's not too bad. *[She goes back into the bedroom to continue searching]* Where the hell are the keys?

JULIA:
Free.

ANA:
[Looking under the sofa.]

Maybe I'll take advantage of the time and do some reading. I haven't read in so long. I wonder how the fish are doing? *[She sprinkles some food into the fish tank]*. I really should use the time to finish the model.

JULIA:
You should.

ANA:
[She goes into the bathroom, looks at the tube of toothpaste and cleans up the toothpaste that is oozing out.]

How about lying down and resting a bit? I'm exhausted. I'll make myself a big cup of strong coffee.

JULIA:
A big one.

ANA:
[Looking through the briefcase and the pockets of her jacket.]

Where could I have left the keys? I had better really look for them.

JULIA:
Change

ANA:
Coffee? I've never been able to make coffee. I'll go down to the deli. *[She looks in the mirror, touches up her lipstick.]* I can't go down to the deli. I can't walk out of here. Where in goddam hell did I put those keys?

JULIA:
[Holding the keys in her hand.]

Here they are, next to your dreams, your shadows, your secrets.

[The phone rings and the answering machine picks it up.]

ANA'S VOICE:
This is 730-4354, please leave a message.

CARMEN'S VOICE:
Answer, darn you. You go too far. The meeting is at 11:30. What happened to the locksmith?

[Ana picks up the phone and dials.]

ANA:
Hello, this is the lady who is locked in the apartment. No, not in your apartment, in my apartment. Yes, the lady who called an hour and a half ago. Did the locksmith ever get there? He's on his way over here now? Oh, thanks. Thank you so much!

[Ana finally gives up. She takes off her shoes. She goes back into the bathroom and stares at herself in the mirror. She picks up the tube of toothpaste and drops it in the wastebasket. She goes into the kitchen, picks up the can of Coke and flops down on the sofa. She turns the volume on the TV up higher and starts switching channels, almost automatically. Using the remote controls, she turns

the TV off and the radio on and jumps from station to station. Nothing is to her liking and she turns the radio off. She walks over to the scale model and begins working in silence, replacing the bushes that she had removed earlier.]

REMEMBRANCES

ANA:

[After staring at the scale model for a while]

It's strange. Last night I dreamt that I was dreaming that I was killing a part of myself in cold blood. I was chasing myself with great ferocity. I knew it was hard, difficult. It was a duel. Me against myself....I hide, it finds me. I lock myself in, it finds me. I look for allies, it keeps after me....Then it finds me. I keep it entertained, but it's too late. It is inside me, deep inside that part of me. And it is me, tired of responsibility, of being there and ready to do everybody's bidding except finding out what I am, what it is that breathes with me....It's that in my dreams I'm always making mistakes, and I leave the path because I'm always looking in the wrong places. Because nothing is written about me, for me.

JULIA:

And why not write it together, I weaving and you screaming?

[When finishing her speech, Ana feels Julia's energy, but she believes it comes from outside herself and she will try to discover where it comes from. The doorbell rings and she goes to the door.]

ANA:

Who's there?

LOCKSMITH:

Are you locked in?

ANA:

Are you the locksmith?

LOCKSMITH:

Who else would I be? How else would I know that you're locked in?

ANA:

Can you open the door?

LOCKSMITH: