

RIPPLES

Written by

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INT. PSYCHIATRIST OFFICE - DAY

Minimalist office, white walls, and clean lines. The furniture is white perspex or clear glass, except the retro leather couch on which sits...

BELLA, 50s, drab grey clothes that match her pinched face and sullen expression. She looks expectantly at...

DOCTOR OSWALD, 40s, bright eyes and unruly hair, and shimmering skin - he's a hologram.

OSWALD'S HOLO

Sorry, multi-appointmending. Go on...

FLASHBACK - CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND

YOUNG BELLA, 7, greasy hair, scruffy clothes, and doughy face, crosses a pretty bridge. The bridge crosses a narrow waterway that connects to a Children's Playground.

ADULT BELLA (V.O.)

I visited the playground most days.

She heads to the swings, climbs onto one, and starts to sway. No one is with her, though other children play nearby.

PATTIE, 8, pigtails, cheery smile and pink frills, approaches Young Bella.

PATTIE

You're at my school.

Bella nods.

PATTIE (cont'd)

Want to skip stones?

EDGE OF THE WATER

Pattie stands on the bank, the bottom of the ornamental pond visible as it's only a couple of feet deep.

PATTIE

See, you just flick your hand.

She demonstrates with a small flat stone that skips over the water, two, three, four, and finally a fifth time.

Young Bella grabs a small stone and tries to emulate Pattie.

ADULT BELLA (V.O.)
I couldn't do it, mine just went into
the water and sank.

PATTIE
Ha, rubbish, that's not even a skip!

OSWALD'S HOLO (V.O.)
And how did that make you feel?

Young Bella tries again, but again the stone just sinks.

PATTIE
Loser, loser, loser.

END OF FLASHBACK

ADULT BELLA
Second best, as always.

OSWALD'S HOLO
And what did your Mum say?

BELLA
That she'd help me win.

He raises a questioning eyebrow.

BELLA (cont'd)
She ignored me and poured more wine.

OSWALD'S HOLO
And how did that make you feel?

BELLA
Unimportant, unloved...

OSWALD'S HOLO
Go on, how else did it make you feel?

BELLA
A loser.

OSWALD'S HOLO
Wins and losses, especially losses,
send ripples throughout our lives.

A buzzer sounds.

OSWALD'S HOLO (cont'd)
Same time next week.

Bella opens her mouth to speak but his hologram has gone.

INT. COMPUTER LAB - DAY

DOCTOR VREEN, 30s, as smiley as he is youthful, points at the human-size pod that's beside a massive array of hi-tech servers. The whole lab is state of the art.

Bella, now in a business suit and studious glasses, retrieves a shrivelled apple from within the pod.

VREEN
Are my notes up to date?

BELLA
I just need to compile and enter this
afternoon's data Doctor Vreen.

VREEN
Great, critical it's all transcribed
fully, we are on the verge now.

She nods and organises some paper reports on her clipboard.

BELLA
That close?

Vreen points at the apple.

VREEN
We can get organics there and back.

BELLA
But it's so shrivelled.

He turns on his heels to leave the lab.

VREEN
(over his shoulder)
I said we're close, not there. Send
tomorrow's appointments to my tab.

Bella stares at the apple, turns it in her hand as the lab door closes with a pneumatic exhalation.

From her pocket, she retrieves a large flat skipping stone.

INT. COMPUTER LAB - NIGHT

Bella taps some complicated co-ordinates into the keypad on the pod, double checks everything, and then climbs in.

In an instant, she vanishes from view, only a slight electric HUM evidence that something extraordinary has just happened.

EXT. CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND - DAY

Adult Bella stands at the swing, pushing Young Bella.

ADULT BELLA
... be a winner.

YOUNG BELLA
Mum says I should settle. What does settle mean?

Young Bella jumps down from the swing and heads to the see-saw, jumps on the lower seat.

Adult Bella shakes her head, as she sits on the other end of the see-saw. Her hair is streaked with grey.

ADULT BELLA
It means you shouldn't try and win. Mum's wrong, I had to learn that the hard way. But you can learn now.

YOUNG BELLA
I can?

MONTAGE

- Adult Bella demonstrates stone skipping.
- Young Bella has multiple attempts.
- Young Bella's throws all end with the stone sinking.
- Adult Bella demonstrates again, and again
- They return to the swings.

ADULT BELLA
It's not working.

YOUNG BELLA
I'm sorry.

ADULT BELLA
Winner's never apologise, there's always another way.

YOUNG BELLA
What's wrong with your face?

Adult Bella touches the wrinkles multiplying on her face.

PATTIE (O.S.)
Loser, loser, you here?

Pattie skips over, eyeing Adult Bella suspiciously.

PATTIE
Your Grandma?

ADULT BELLA
In a way.

PATTIE
What?

ADULT BELLA
Nothing, Bella here was saying you
can skip stones really well.

PATTIE
Best in school, better than Bella.

ADULT BELLA
Want to show me?

Pattie moves to the water's edge, both Bella's following.

As Pattie bends down to find a stone to skip with Adult Bella, now with a full head of grey hair, skin paper-thin, takes something from her pocket, her larger skipping stone.

She steps forward and brings the stone down in a vicious arc, stopping when it connects with Pattie's skull.

Pattie looks stunned, blood flowing from her scalp.

ADULT BELLA (cont'd)
Winning is all...

She hands Young Bella the stone.

YOUNG BELLA
That matters.

She brings the stone down into Pattie's face.

Repeatedly.

Old Bella fades from view, only Young Bella remains.