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**WHY I LIKE IT:** *Drama Editor JANET EHRLICH COLSON writes... Katrin Arefy's one-act O Lubvi is an unusual yet all-too relatable "love" story about that spark, that connection, and laughing so hard it hurts at the absurdity of what is or isn't meant to be. The humor and depth of feeling in the play are palpable along with the default mode of evasive laughter that playwright Katrin Arefy artfully pushes to the limit and beyond. The rhythms are fantastic; even after the laughter dies down – and it does – then it pops up again like that mythical creature that keeps regrowing its cut-off heads. But by then we've already turned the corner, edging into a darker, raspier, more dangerous territory. It's that place where someone's boundless proclamations of love can be overwhelming. Annoying. Laughable In this world and in this script, people are flawed. They can be mean. They're beautiful and sad. They say one thing and mean another (omigod, Arefy's subtext is a trip). But they keep coming back for more. Isn't that what love's about? Crushing hard on this play. You'll see why.*

MAN

(Laughs) I like how I can joke with you like this. You know that I don't have a crush on you or anything, right?

WOMAN

What do you mean you don't have a crush on me or "anything?" Are you asexual? (Laughs)

MAN

Yes. (Laughs)

WOMAN

(Laughs) Yeah, okay. I've got to go. See you tomorrow.

MAN

Tomorrow? Tomorrow the office is closed! You want to see me outside of the office?

WOMAN

(Laughs) No, I forgot. Oh great, see you Monday.

O LUBVI

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A Play in One Act

by

Katrin Arefy

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Cast of Characters

WOMAN

A young woman. Stylish and good  
-looking

MAN

A young man.

Scene

A quiet street.

Time

Sundown.

ACT I

WOMAN

(Laughs)

MAN

(Laughs)

WOMAN

The croissant was good.

MAN

You like croissants.

WOMAN

Wasn't it good?

MAN

Oh yes, it was.

WOMAN

And you fell asleep in the middle of the workday on the couch. (Laughs)

MAN

I am notorious for that. I can fall asleep in the middle of a noisy party. (Laughs)

WOMAN

But in the office? (Laughs)

MAN

I know. (Laughs)

WOMAN

Maybe you don't sleep well at night?

MAN

Yeah, sometimes I don't.

WOMAN

Maybe girls don't let you sleep at night? (Laughs)

MAN

Yes! True! (Laughs)

WOMAN

Poor boy! (Laughs)

MAN

I even got a proposal!

WOMAN

Yeah? (Laughs)

MAN

Yes, an old friend said she will marry me, unless she finds someone better. (Laugh)

WOMAN

That's true love. (Laughs)

MAN

Yes, but no, I am serious. She actually said that.

WOMAN

Well, that is why I am laughing. (Laughs)

MAN

I know. (Laughs)

WOMAN

Okay, I've got to go now. Have a lot to do tonight.

MAN

Like what?

WOMAN

Like taking the clean dishes out of the dishwasher and putting them in the cabinets. Then taking the dirty dishes from the sink and putting them into the dishwasher. Then taking the clean dishes out of the cabinet and eating dinner so that I can have dirty dishes in the sink for tomorrow.

MAN

Wow, you really plan ahead!

WOMAN

(Laughs)

MAN

Do you do that every night?

WOMAN

Pretty much every night, yes! Well, that's life.

MAN

Is it?

WOMAN

I don't know.

MAN

Let's go get a coffee. You can always move around the dishes later.

WOMAN

No, no, I really do have to go now. My cat is waiting for me.

MAN

The cat and the dishes can wait. How often do you get invited to have coffee with a nice gentleman like me?

WOMAN

(Laughs) This is my first time! (Laughs)

MAN

I knew that. (laughs)

WOMAN

Okay, bye now. Take care, and get some sleep. (Laughs)

MAN

How about I get coffee and croissants, and then I could bring them to your home tonight.

WOMAN

(Laughs!) How romantic.

MAN

Yes, I am a romantic man. I will arrive at your door with the croissants, make you homemade coffee, and while you are working, I will tell jokes so you laugh. How is that?  
(Laughs)

WOMAN

You are funny. Romantic and funny, which is exactly the sort of man I am looking for. (laughs)

MAN

(Laughs) I like how I can joke with you like this. You know that I don't have a crush on you or anything, right?

WOMAN

What do you mean you don't have a crush on me or "anything?" Are you asexual? (Laughs)

MAN

Yes. (Laughs)

WOMAN

(Laughs) Yeah, okay. I've got to go. See you tomorrow.

MAN

Tomorrow? Tomorrow the office is closed! You want to see me outside of the office?

WOMAN

(Laughs) No, I forgot. Oh great, see you Monday.

MAN

Now that you know you don't work tomorrow, could you get a coffee and relax?

WOMAN

I don't even drink coffee.

MAN

Oh, you don't? Are you a vegetarian? (Laughs)

WOMAN

(Laughs) You guessed it!

MAN

Okay, I don't want to take your time, but if you are up for a croissant and tea, I also wanted to tell you something.

WOMAN

Like what?

MAN

Not here, not like this.

WOMAN

No tell me. What is it you want to tell me?

MAN

Don't worry; it's all good vibes.

WOMAN

Yeah, but what is it about?

MAN

Let me tell you another time.

WOMAN

Whatever. Okay, I will see you Monday.

MAN

Maybe I will call you over the weekend and tell you.

WOMAN

Look, this is starting to be annoying. At least tell me what it is about.

MAN

I said, it's nothing to worry about. It is all about you.

WOMAN

About me! (Laughs)

MAN

Yes. Okay, go do what you need to do. I wish you a wonderful weekend.

WOMAN

Hmm, okay.

MAN

Are you going to be thinking about what I wanted to say?

WOMAN

Oh yeah! (Laughs) I will think all weekend, and I won't be able to sleep. (Laughs)

MAN

I know! (Laughs) You are going to think, "Oh, maybe he wants to say he loves me!"  
(Laughs)

WOMAN

(Laughs) Maybe he wants to make a house for me out of croissants.

MAN

(Laughs) Maybe he had a ring in his pocket, and I turned my luck away.

WOMAN

(Laughs) Yes, all of the above.

MAN

But can I ask you a question?

WOMAN

The question is, will you marry me? (Laughs)

MAN

(Laughs) No, no. Seriously, the question is, what would you do if I were to tell you that I do have a crush on you?

WOMAN

(Laughs)

MAN

(Laughs.) No seriously, I want to know what you would do.

WOMAN

Well, I...I mean it would definitely be better than if you told me you hate me. (laughs)

MAN

You wouldn't be mad at me?

WOMAN

No, why should I?

MAN

Are you serious?

WOMAN

Yes.

MAN

Okay, but you know I don't have a crush on you, right?

WOMAN

(Laughs) Of course! That's not even a question.

MAN

You are the best.

WOMAN

Thank you. You are very kind, too. You have a big heart. I noticed that.

MAN

Merci, madam.

WOMAN

All right have a good weekend and...

MAN

Wait! But how about you? Do you have a crush on me?

WOMAN

(Laughs)

MAN

(Laughs) Because I sensed something when I told you about the proposal I received. (Laughs)

WOMAN

(Laughs) Yes, of course I have a crush on you! Didn't you notice I eat croissants only with you?

MAN

(Laughs) But once you gave yours to the boss.

WOMAN

Come on, he is not my type. (Laughs)

MAN

What is your type?

WOMAN

A fat man a little shorter than me who likes croissants and asks me out for coffee after work...oh, and he is wearing a green polo shirt right now. (Laughs)

MAN

(Laughs) You are the best. Okay, let me guess...hmm...is that me?

WOMAN

(Laughs) Let me see, are you wearing a green polo shirt?  
Oh, you are! What a coincidence?

MAN

(Laughs) (Does a little silly dance)

WOMAN

(Laughs a lot.) Oh my, I really appreciate how you can  
make me laugh when I am exhausted and all I want is to go  
to bed!

MAN

Go to bed? (Laughs)

WOMAN

Shut up. (Laughs) Gosh, I have laughed so much, and I have  
so much work waiting for me.

MAN

Which do you prefer--laughing or working?

WOMAN

Laughing. (Laughs)

MAN

Me too! (Laughs)

WOMAN

Oh, we have so much in common. (Laughs)

MAN

No, but seriously, it is great to be around someone like  
you.

WOMAN

Oh, seriously, it is great to have a work friend like you.  
You make my day lighter, a lot lighter.

MAN

Oh, and now I am a work friend! After you proposed to me!  
(Laughs)

WOMAN

(Laughs) I backtracked.

MAN

You women are all cowards. (Laughs)

WOMAN

That is a sexist comment! (Laughs)

MAN

Gosh, my jaw hurts from so much laughing. (Laughs)

WOMAN

I thought you said you liked laughing? (Laughs)

MAN

I lied! (Laughs)

WOMAN

You men are all liars! (Laughs)

MAN

Now, that's sexist! (Laughs)

WOMAN

Who is sexy? (Laughs)

MAN

Ah, stop, Jesus. (Laughs very hard)

WOMAN

I am not Jesus! (Laughs)

MAN

Jesus didn't even exist. (Laughs)

WOMAN

Stop! The last thing we want is Woland to show up here at the lake. (Laughs, sits down from a lot of laughing)

MAN

Who is Woland? Your boyfriend?

WOMAN

(Laughs) I forgot you don't read books. (Laughs) I don't have a boyfriend.

MAN

So who is Woland?

WOMAN

It is Satan. Don't worry, it is just a character from a book.

MAN

(He sits down too.) Which book?

WOMAN

Look (laughs), look, I have a (Laughs) I have a (Laughs so much she can't speak) surprise for you (Laughs).

MAN

(laughing) What is it?

WOMAN

(Takes two croissants out of her bag and gives one to Man. They both laugh very hard.)

MAN

You stole them? (Laughs)

WOMAN

I didn't steal them. They were left over, and they were going to be thrown away.

MAN

That would've been a waste.

WOMAN

A sin!

MAN

Definitely. (They start eating the croissants in silence.)

WOMAN

This is why I took this job—the croissants! (Laughs)

MAN

Yes, sure. Not the benefits?

WOMAN

Nope!

MAN

And not me?

WOMAN

(Laughs)

MAN

But listen, seriously, I want to tell you something.

WOMAN

Yes, sir!

MAN

I don't know if this is a good time.

WOMAN

I don't know either.

MAN

No seriously, I mean.

WOMAN

Yes?

MAN

You know how some times are not good times and other times are kind of..

WOMAN

Yes, I have heard about that. I think you are talking about good old times, right? Like old time is good time, but new time..

MAN

No, I am serious. I mean there is a lucky time and an unlucky time. I mean there are times when you really want to know if the stars are aligned for you to say something or do something.

WOMAN

(More interested in her croissant than the conversation)  
You know what happened the last time I felt it was the right time for me to do something, and the stars were aligned?

MAN

What?

WOMAN

I ended up realizing that the stars were joking! (Laughs)  
Have you ever seen a fortune teller? I mean have you let them actually..

MAN

Listen, I really...

WOMAN

No, wait, I am serious.

MAN

I am serious, too. There is something I want to tell you.

WOMAN

You said you would tell me another time.

MAN

But now that we are sitting, maybe I could tell you now.

WOMAN

Oh, is it that bad? Did someone die or something?

MAN

No one that I know of. But...

WOMAN

But what? Someone that I know of?

MAN

Yes...No! Oh, please, it is about you!

WOMAN

I am listening...Go on.

(Long pause.)

MAN

I meant to tell you that day when you called me to explain...remember when I was working from home, and you helped me with...

WOMAN

Okay, I know I lost my patience with you that day, and I am sorry. And I probably said something wrong. I do that sometimes when I am stressed, and then I don't even remember that I did it. That project was all on my shoulders. I was stressed. And I have to say (laughs) you were not a big help at all! I am sorry (laughs), but, no, I really mean it. I know I shouldn't have lost my patience like that.

MAN

No, you didn't say anything wrong.

WOMAN

Really? I remember I was really mad at you. That's all I remember.

MAN

I didn't do my part well, but that was...

WOMAN

Aw, okay, so is that what you wanted to tell me? You know sometimes I can be really tough at work, but I am sorry. I mean it. I am really sorry.

MAN

No, I don't want you to apologize.

WOMAN

You want me not to do it again. I will try my best not to do it again. (laughs) But you should also try your best to do a more responsible job. You know, now that we are talking about it, how many times have you left your tasks unfinished and we all had to help you or wait for you? Can you try to take more responsibility at work?

MAN

I will. But this is not what I wanted to talk to you about.

WOMAN

(Devours her croissant and speaks with her mouth full.) Oh it wasn't?

MAN

No, maybe now that you are eating I can tell you.

WOMAN

What does it have to do with my eating?

MAN

(Laughs) I thought when you were eating you would stop talking and start listening, but apparently I was wrong. (Laughs)

WOMAN

(Laughs, the food sticks in her throat, and she starts coughing and laughing at the same time.)

MAN

(Hitting her on the back)  
Are you okay? I am sorry.

WOMAN

(Laughs) Are you planning to kill me? You look suspicious.  
(Laughs)

MAN

(Laughs and then sits quietly with a very serious expression.)  
Could we stay quiet for thirty seconds, please? Is that awkward for you?

WOMAN

Oh, not at all. Sure, I might fall asleep, though. I am so tired.

MAN

You won't. Just sit and listen to the sounds around you.

(silence)

MAN

(continues)

Okay...I think I am ready to tell you now.

WOMAN

(whispers) Can I talk now? (Wants to laugh but man's look stops her.)

MAN

Listen...That day when you called me...I...First of all, I wasn't expecting the call...But...when I heard your voice on the phone, my heart dropped. I couldn't concentrate on what you were trying to show me because I felt a huge surge of love for you, something I haven't experienced since I was a teenager.

WOMAN

Oh my god! Are you joking?

MAN

I understand if you don't have the same feelings for me. But I wanted you to know and now...(sighs) now I feel lighter.

WOMAN

Oh my god!

MAN

I hope you don't stop talking to me.

WOMAN

No, I mean, I can't tell if you are joking!

MAN

I am not joking. That is my true feeling for you. Very strong feeling. When I close my eyes and remember the first few months when I started working here, I see that...it is very clear to me that...I have loved you all this time.

WOMAN

Are you serious?

MAN

I am very serious.

WOMAN

Oh, (long pause) I appreciate you sharing your feelings with me and...I respect your feelings. And no, I will not stop talking to you.

MAN

Yes, it is okay if the feeling is not mutual.

WOMAN

Oh, that makes me sad.

MAN

No, I don't want to see you sad.

WOMAN

No, I mean not that sad. Just a little sad. I mean I am still in disbelief. Maybe you are joking?

MAN

I am not, my dear. I am not, my love.

WOMAN

Oh!

(Long pause)

WOMAN

I don't know what to do.

MAN

Don't worry. You don't have to do anything.

WOMAN

I know I don't have to, but I care about you, and seeing you love someone who can't love you back makes me sad.

MAN

Yes.

WOMAN

So, how do you feel right now? Close your eyes, close your eyes, how do you feel?

MAN

I can't tell you.

WOMAN

No, tell me as a friend.

MAN

Let me not tell you...I...

WOMAN

Why? You can tell me. It's okay.

MAN

I feel like I want to hug you tight, but don't worry, I will not.

WOMAN

Oh, (sad) that is sad.

MAN

Yes.

WOMAN

I don't feel like hugging you now...or ever...I mean...I am sorry, I don't know what I am saying. I mean, I do care about you but...

MAN

Don't worry, really, I mean it. It's okay.

WOMAN

But how? It is terrible! I know the feeling. I mean I never told someone I loved them and they didn't love me back. But I can imagine if they didn't, that would've been terrible.

MAN

I can't say that it is easy, but I still want to feel the love I am feeling, and I am not going to let go of it. It is powerful.

WOMAN

Oh, no! What a bummer. (Long pause)  
Now we are not even laughing.

MAN

I am sorry.

WOMAN

Don't be sorry. It is not your fault.

MAN

I know.

WOMAN

It's nobody's fault.

MAN

Yes, I know.

WOMAN

It's Cupid's fault, if anyone's. (Laughs but quickly remembers that it is not a funny situation.)

MAN

You see, I love how you can laugh in any situation.

WOMAN

Yes?  
(Long pause)

Maybe if I stop laughing, you will stop loving me, and everything will be good again. Then we could laugh together again...no, that wouldn't work...No more laughing.

MAN

Oh, don't say that, please. I want to laugh with you. That is what brings warmth to my heart.

WOMAN

Oh...that's crazy. How can that bring warmth to your heart if I can't even love you? Maybe I should try to...no, I don't think that would work.

MAN

It's okay.

WOMAN

What should we do now?

MAN

Nothing, really. We will finish the croissants, and you will go take care of your dishes, and I will go home and think about you.

WOMAN

Aw, that is romantic. (Laughs, then remembers that it is not funny anymore) Sorry, but I mean, seriously, you are romantic. But I just...

MAN

I understand. I wasn't expecting you to say you love me back.

WOMAN

Really?

MAN

Yes, really.

WOMAN

And you still told me that you...?

MAN

I wanted you to know. Now I feel lighter.

WOMAN

Well, that's admirable. And brave...I mean, it's nice.

MAN

Thank you.

(Long pause. He doesn't finish his croissant. She does.)

WOMAN

When people have a problem, they go to couple's therapy, but since we are not a couple, I don't think that would work.

MAN

No, it wouldn't.

WOMAN

Plus, it's expensive...I mean...we don't really need to do it anyways.

MAN

Oh no, we don't. No.  
(Long pause)

MAN

What are you thinking about?

WOMAN

It will be strange to work in the same office now.

MAN

No, don't worry. I will not bother you or express my feelings anymore.

WOMAN

I know. No, it is not a bother...it's just weird. I mean...sorry. Don't know what to say.  
(Long pause)

WOMAN

Maybe you are joking, ha?

MAN

Okay, what if I said part of it was a joke? Then what would you do?

WOMAN

Then I would laugh. (Laughs and then remembers that it is not funny) I mean, what do you mean? I would say...I would probably say, hey, look, I have my cat and dishes waiting for me, and you are taking my time with your feelings that are not even there? I would say please respect my time!  
(Angry)

MAN

Respect your time? You don't even want to sit with me for ten minutes and have a croissant after I told you all about my feelings for you?

WOMAN

Well, looks like you are confused about your own feelings. One moment we are making fun of love and the next moment you say you love me and then you say you were half joking? I mean, what does that even mean? Half joking like half loving?

MAN

You don't have to try to understand. I fell in love with a woman who can't even understand love or humor or anything. (Angry)

WOMAN

Oh great! Now we are fighting! We are in a fight, and we aren't even lovers yet. I mean we are half lovers because half of us loves and the other half doesn't. What an odd situation to be in.

MAN

You can call us half lovers, but when I said I would make homemade coffee for you and tell you jokes, I wasn't joking.

WOMAN

But then when you said you loved me, you were half joking! That is ridiculous. I mean jokes are supposed to be ridiculous but not in this way. This is beyond ridiculous. You are making me worried about you and your feelings, and then you tell me it was a joke?

MAN

I didn't say it was a joke.

WOMAN

You said—

MAN

I said, what if I told you part of it was a joke. I said what if, WHAT IF, okay? And I said part of it, PART OF IT!

WOMAN

What does *part of it* mean? Which part of it?

(Long pause)

MAN

No part of it. I said I love you, and I do. (Angry) If I say something, I mean it!

WOMAN

Okay, okay, I am sorry. So when you say different things or opposite things you mean different things or opposite things?

MAN

Yes, maybe. But I didn't say opposite things. You heard opposite things.

WOMAN

I heard what you said.

MAN

You interpreted what I said...you assumed...you gave my words a meaning I never meant...I meant to, I...(angry)

WOMAN

All right, all right, calm down. I really don't want to make you upset. We are friends, after all...I mean...friends and half lovers...I guess. Or a quarter lovers, since you were half joking.

MAN

That is not even funny.

WOMAN

Nothing is funny anymore...or at least in this current situation.

(pause)

But on the other hand, it is funny if you look at it...I mean...I guess anything can be funny or not funny depending on how you see it...I mean...I am sorry...It is not even relevant right now.

MAN

It's okay. I like your philosophical mind.

WOMAN

Oh, shoot. I guess you are serious. I mean you look serious. You look like someone who is in love.

MAN

What made you think I wasn't?

WOMAN

No, nothing. It is just really strange to...

(Long pause)

WOMAN

Have you told anyone else about it?

MAN

That I love you?

WOMAN

Yeah.

MAN

Like who? People in the office?

WOMAN

Or anyone else who knows me.

MAN

Wait, are you ashamed of being loved by me?

WOMAN

No.

MAN

Oh yes, it is not enough that you don't love me. To hurt me even more, you tell me that you are ashamed of my love for you. (angry)

WOMAN

Wait.

(Man and woman talk at the same time in a loud and angry manner.)

MAN

I am not asking for love. I am not even asking for compassion, but I deserve respect. Just respect as a human being. I fell in love with a bitch, with someone who not only doesn't have a heart, but also doesn't have a brain. Empty. She's all empty up there, and why do I love her...

WOMAN

I didn't say that. Wait. Okay, I am sorry, but it is not my fault. I can't...what do you want from me? You are making me feel stressed, and you are making me feel like a piece of shit. Why would you love someone...

(Woman takes the croissant from man's hand and puts it into his mouth by force.)

WOMAN

Now you will shut up. (Laughs)

MAN

(Laughs) You see? This is why I love you.

WOMAN

Oh, (laughs) shut up now.

MAN

Who can do that? Laugh in the middle of a fight?

(Long pause)

WOMAN

Can we change the subject? I don't want to fight with you.

MAN

Yes, we can change the subject, my love. How about you tell me about your family. Do you have siblings?

WOMAN

It's awkward when you call me "my love." Could you please not do that?

MAN

Yes, ma'am. Ma'am, do you have siblings?

WOMAN

That was even more awkward. Just don't call me anything for now.

MAN

Okay, pssst, do you have siblings? (Laughs)

WOMAN

(Laughs) Yes, I do. I have a sister. She is two years younger than me, but sometimes I ask for her advice. She never asks me for advice. She is a knower.

MAN

Is Noer another character from a book that I didn't read?

WOMAN

No, (laughs) I made that word up. You know how we say she is a seer, or she is a listener? My sister is a knower. That means she knows everything, even things that she doesn't know.

(Man laughs) Woman Continues

You ask her anything, and she has a strong opinion. She has a strange habit of closing her eyes and holding her chin up when she talks. That is how knowers talk. So, when I need to make a decision, and I need help, I ask her. She speaks as if she knows everything, so even though I know she is probably wrong, I can convince myself to do what she said. Just because of the way she speaks with her stupid confidence.

MAN

(Laughs) I am confused. I can't tell if you are praising her or criticizing her.

WOMAN

(Laughs) I can't tell either. But that is my sister.

Gosh...don't look at me like that please.

MAN

Like what?

WOMAN

Like a lover.

MAN

What? I...? Do you want me to close my eyes?

WOMAN

No, that is too much to ask. No, I don't. (Pause)  
We should do something about this. We can't change the subject and pretend...

MAN

What can we do? You can't cure love. You can't delete love. You can't redo love. It is what it is. I love you, and you don't love me. It is as simple as that.

WOMAN

You think that's simple? Look, there are tons of books written about one-sided loves. People can commit suicide in this situation. It is serious. I am worried. Maybe it is good you don't read books.

MAN

It's not that I never held a book in my hand. I have read a few books in my life.

WOMAN

It's okay. You don't have to read books. I mean, even if you did, I couldn't love you. Sorry, I am not trying to be mean. I am just trying to find a solution.

MAN

Solution?

WOMAN

How do you feel right now? Close your eyes, get in touch with your emotions, and tell me the first thing that comes to your mind.

MAN

(Closes his eyes. Pauses)  
It's the same feeling. That I want to hug you tight. But don't worry, I won't.

WOMAN

(Sighs, pauses, then starts crying.)

MAN

What happened? I am sorry. This wasn't the right time to tell you. The stars were not aligned, as you said.

WOMAN

No, it's not you. I just...I just feel sad because I want to be loved, but not by you. I wish you were someone else. Someone I could love in return. You know, a handsome man, smart, and accomplished, well-read, and...not in a green T-shirt but maybe in a blue button-up or something. (Pause) It is just a lose-lose situation, you know? Sad for me, sad for you.

MAN

(sad) Yes, I see that. It is definitely not a happy situation. But I am happy to be sitting next to you on the asphalt. I love how you can be stylish and classy and suddenly sit down in the middle of the street. That is just awesome. I love how you can be serious and efficient at work and come out with croissants in your bag. I love how you can laugh while crying.

WOMAN

(Continues crying) I want a lover who is smart, successful, and who makes me proud. Someone I can't wait to see every night when I go home, and maybe he even would take the dishes out of the dishwasher, but that is not important. He would be from a good family, and his parents would adore me. We would go for neighborhood walks at night. He would hug me. I would put my head on his shoulder, and he would kiss my forehead. (Her sadness lingers into a long pause.)

MAN

I could kiss your forehead too, if you would allow me.

WOMAN

Someone with whom I could talk about The Master and Margarita, and he would have an insight that could blow my mind. Someone who would hold me tight all night.

MAN

I could hold you...

WOMAN

Someone who would want to travel with me, make a home with me, laugh with me...

MAN

I...

WOMAN

(Burst into tears) Shut up! Please shut up!

MAN

(Stares at her with so much love in his eyes. Reaches out to pat her head but stops himself.)

WOMAN

(Bursts into laughter) Imagine if I could love you! (Blows her nose loudly and cleans the tears away. Laughs) Can you imagine?

MAN

Yes, I can.

WOMAN

We would make a baby, maybe a girl that would look like you, fat and (laughs) not so pretty, sorry, I am joking. She would be lazy like you. I would have to push you both to do anything. I doubt you would empty the dishwasher, but that is not important. I wouldn't care if I loved you.

MAN

(Very sad) I am sorry I can never be a good candidate for you in my wildest dreams. I am sorry. I wish I was different...smarter...more handsome.

WOMAN

Oh, no. I am sorry. That was so mean, what I said. You see, I told you, when I am stressed, I say things that I later regret or don't even remember. I am sorry. What did I say? I said something terrible, right?

MAN

No, not at all. You just said the truth. You said what you want and that was not at all who I am or I could ever become. You didn't say anything wrong but I...I am just feeling sadness.

WOMAN

Gosh, I am so sorry. I made you sad. I wish I could at least hug you as a friend, but that would be awkward in this situation. I don't know what to do.

MAN

It's okay. I will just close my eyes and imagine that you are hugging me and then I will feel better.

WOMAN

Oh, gosh...really?

MAN

(Closes his eyes and feels the love and the hug in his imagination.)

(Woman stares at him as if she had seen a strange animal in the middle of the street.)

WOMAN

And, how does that feel?

MAN

(With eyes still closed)  
Awesome!

WOMAN

(Looks carefully and thoughtfully and decides to do the same. Closes her eyes and feels sweet dreams.)

MAN

(Opens his eyes and smiles seeing her do that. Waits for a while. Then quietly asks.)

I don't want to interrupt, but are you hugging the smart guy?

WOMAN

(Embarrassed.)  
Were you watching me? That is not nice.

MAN

The stars are coming out. I am going to lie down and watch the sky. Do you mind?

WOMAN

Oh, no, I don't. (Stares at him and decides to do the same. Tries to put her bag under her head.)

MAN

Do you have any question for the stars?

WOMAN

I do. (Sighs)

MAN

(Sigh) What is your question, love?

WOMAN

If they know where he is.

MAN

Hmm, so he actually exists, and you met him.

WOMAN

I don't know. Maybe I imagined it all. Maybe it was a dream.

MAN

And then what happened?

WOMAN

And then I woke up. (Starts silently crying.)

(Long Pause)

MAN

Do you want me to sing a song for you?

WOMAN

Yes, please.

MAN

(Starts singing. His voice and the light fade away gradually.)

Curtain

August 2021

**THE PLAYRIGHT SPEAKS:** *O Lubvi was inspired by some silly, funny, caring, and confusing chats with a friend/colleague that made me see, once again, how often the universal need for love ironically goes hand in hand with our inability to connect. This play came out of me as naturally as a long exhalation. I just let it happen, although this is not my typical style of playwriting. Therefore I can't name any stylistic or literary influences for this one.*

**AUTHOR BIO:** Katrin Arefy is an essayist and playwright based in Berkeley, California, whose creative nonfiction has appeared in Free State Review, Meat for Tea: The Valley Review, North Dakota Quarterly, Water~Stone Review, and was received with acclaim at numerous literary events in California, including Action Fiction in San

Francisco and Roar Shack in Los Angeles. Her play *The Elbisnopsers* was selected by the Midtown International Theatre Festival [New York City] for production in the fall 2016 festival and reached the semifinalist round of the Ivoryton [Connecticut] Playhouse's inaugural Women Playwright's Initiative later that year. In 2018 the play was selected for production during the Iranian Drama Festival, which is held annually in Heidelberg, Germany, and was also performed at Central Stage in Richmond, California, in spring 2019. Katrin's latest theatrical work is the trilogy *Peace, a Massacre, and the Umbrella*, which premiered at Plaxall Gallery in New York City in June 2019.

Katrin has a master's degree in piano performance and pedagogy from the Gnessin Academy of Music in Moscow, Russia. When she is not writing, she is busy at Golden Key Piano School in Berkeley, where she is the artistic director and head teacher.

You may see samples of Katrin's play at New Play Exchange or on her website [katrinarefy.com](http://katrinarefy.com)