

Eleemosynary

By Lee Blessing

Echo: I started wondering if they weren't right. Maybe the smartest thing would be to forget you completely. And Grandma. After all, what did I ever get from the two of you, except a good education? You especially-what were you ever to me, except a voice on the phone now and then? And I looked around the new room where I was staying, and it was real nice and...blank, the way a thing is before you put any time into it. I thought, I could live a whole new life here. I could invent a whole new me. I could become like Robinson Crusoe, and adapt myself to a strange and harsh environment. I could live in a kind of desert. I could even flourish. Like you have., I could live without the one thing I wanted. But I kept hearing your voice. That voice on the phone, hiding behind spelling words, making excuses-or so energetic sometimes, so...wishing. I don't even remember what you said, just the sound of it. Just a sound that said, "I love you, and I failed you." I hate that sound. And I will never settle for it, because no one failed me. No one ever failed me. Not Grandma, and not you.

I am a prize among women. I'm your daughter. That's what I choose to be. Someone who loves you. Someone who can make you love me. Nearly all the time. I'm going to stay with you. I'm going to prepare you for me. I'm going to cultivate you. I'm going to tend you.