

Excerpt from "Drowning"
Written by Bruce J. Robinson

(It's winter in a New York City suburb. LIGHTS UP on a queen-sized bed. The clock on the side table says 8:30. The warm light, crisp sheets, piles of pillows, and the bright and fluffy quilt make this bedroom nook seem incredibly comfortable.)

(KATHY ZIMANSKI and her two daughters – nine year-old LYNDA and eleven year-old MELANIE - are looking at an imagined TV on the fourth wall. The girls are freshly bathed and ready for bed.)

(We hear a final swell of music from the VCR tape. With remote, Lynda switches it off.)

KATHY

I wonder how many times we've seen THE LITTLE MERMAID?

LYNDA

Tons.

MELANIE

You can never have too much of a good thing, right?

KATHY

Yes, if something is really good.

MELANIE

"Really good?" What's "really good?"

KATHY

Something that not only makes you feel good now but that's good for you in the long run.

LYNDA

When's Daddy coming home?

KATHY

Soon, baby.

LYNDA

How soon is "soon?"

MELANIE

And how far is "the long run?"

KATHY

(to Lynda)

"Soon" is closer than a blink...

(to Melanie)

And "the long run" is farther than your beautiful, young eyes can see.

(Beat. They cuddle. Silence.)

Mom? MELANIE

Yes, Sweetie? KATHY

Let's say I was drowning... MELANIE

"Were drowning." KATHY

Were drowning. Right. MELANIE

That's a morbid thought. KATHY

But it could happen. MELANIE

An infinitely small possibility, yes. KATHY

And, say, Linnie here was drowning, too. MELANIE

Hey! LYNDA

It could happen. MELANIE

Now, I'm upset. Both of my daughters are drowning, one of whom can't use the subjunctive. KATHY

Well, let's say we were drowning. Happy? MELANIE

If you must die, do so grammatically. KATHY

What would you do? MELANIE

Well...I'd swim out to the one who needed my help the most and save her and then swim to the other one and save her. KATHY

That's not what I mean. MELANIE

Somehow, I knew. KATHY

That's too easy. You know that. MELANIE

I do. KATHY

She does. LYNDA

KATHY
(to sidetrack them)
Hey, Linnie! I know how we'll pass the time till Daddy comes home: I'll do your nails.

LYNDA
(jumping up to get the polish)
Yeah.

KATHY
(as Lynda disappears)
Get what you want.

LYNDA (OS)
Great!

KATHY
Except for the black.

LYNDA (OS)
Awwww.

MELANIE
(undeterred)
I mean we're drowning at the exact same time, right?

KATHY
(bemoaning her daughter's persistence)
Omigosh. Okay, what are the mathematical odds against that happening?

MELANIE
Mootherrrrrrr!!! This isn't about mathematics. This is about something bigger.

KATHY
Something silly.

MELANIE

Maybe "silly," yes; but bigger. See, we're exactly as tired as each other and exactly ready to drown at the same exact time and you have exactly enough energy to save one, see, and the other will be...

(Melanie turns a thumbs-down.)

LYNDA

(entering with polish and emery board)

Fish food.

KATHY

That's ridiculous.

(Through the rest of the episode, Kathy does Lynda's nails.)

LYNDA

I think it's a good question.

KATHY

Why? It's purely speculative.

MELANIE

Life is purely speculative, Mother.

KATHY

Do you have any idea what that means?

MELANIE

No. But I do know a lot more than you think.

KATHY

Do you?

LYNDA

Me, too.

KATHY

And what do you know?

LYNDA

Tons.

(realizing)

Oh-oh-oh-oh. I know something you don't know I know.

KATHY

What's that?

LYNDA

I don't think it's nice.

KATHY

Where'd you hear this?

LYNDA

Bus talk.

KATHY

Bus talk.

LYNDA

Should I tell you?

(Kathy considers her other daughter and decides...)

KATHY

Whisper.

(Lynda leans to Kate and whispers – as Melanie tries to push in but Kate keeps away with a straight-arm. Kate tries to hide the fact that she's appalled at what she heard.)

MELANIE

Tell me. Tell me.

KATHY

You haven't told her this tidbit?

(Lynda shakes "no.")

MELANIE

Tell me.

KATHY

I'm sure you'll draw out this gem later...

MELANIE

But –

KATHY

Please, not now. Don't you think I deserve that?

MELANIE

I just want to know stuff.

KATHY

Some stuff isn't worth knowing.

MELANIE

But if it's... I dunno... It's like... but if it's the truth, you know?

KATHY

No.

MELANIE

I mean, the way things are. For real. What's real. That's what I want to know. You don't want to turn your back on the truth, do you?

KATHY

Sweetie, you said you "love-love-loved" the sunflower seeds on the salad?

MELANIE

Yeah.

KATHY

So leave it alone for now, and don't do it for me; do it for the seeds.

MELANIE

Okay.

(Beat)

But I bet she doesn't even know what it means.

LYNDA

(protesting)

Hey, I...

(But the fact that she doesn't know undercuts her pro-forma protest.)

don't.

(Beat – as Kathy's relieved.)

But I'm pretty sure it doesn't have anything to do with blowing on anything. So, which one?

KATHY

What?

LYNDA

Would you save?

KATHY

You two are nuts.

LYNDA

But stubborn. Which would you pick?

KATHY

I couldn't choose.