



PARTIAL OBJECTS



S H E R R Y K R A M E R

B R O A D W A Y P L A Y P U B L I S H I N G I N C

PARTIAL OBJECTS

a fairy tale about what
happens in the night

Sherry Kramer

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sherry Kramer is the recipient of an NEA, a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, a McKnight Fellowship, and a commission from the Audrey Skirball-Kenis Theater Project. Her plays have been produced here and abroad and include productions at Actors Theater of Louisville Humana Festival, Yale Repertory Theater, Second Stage, Woolly Mammoth Theater Company, Soho Repertory Theater, Ensemble Studio Theater, Annex Theater Company, InterAct Theater Company, and the Theater of the First Amendment. She was the first national member of New Dramatists. Other plays include: WHEN SOMETHING WONDERFUL ENDS, DAVID'S REDHAired DEATH (The Jane Chambers Award), THE WALL OF WATER (L A Women in Theater Award), WHAT A MAN WEIGHS (Weissberger Playwriting Award, New York Drama League Award, The Marvin Taylor Playwriting Award), A THING OF BEAUTY, THE BAY OF FUNDY: AN ADAPTATION OF ONE LINE FROM THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE, THINGS THAT BREAK, THE WORLD AT ABSOLUTE ZERO, THE MAD MASTER, THE LONG ARMS OF JUPITER (a croquet performance piece), THE LAW MAKES EVENING FALL, THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY, A PERMANENT SIGNAL, THE RELEASE OF A LIVE PERFORMANCE, THE MASTER AND MARGARITA (a singing-

theater adaptation), NANO AND NICKI IN BOCA RATON, NAPOLEON'S CHINA (a play with music), IVANHOE, ARK., and THE RULING PASSION. She holds M F As from the Iowa Writers' Workshop (Fiction) and the Iowa Playwrights Workshop, and teaches playwriting at Bennington College, The Michener Center for Writers at the University of Texas, Austin, and the Iowa Playwrights Workshop, where she was previously head of the workshop.

PARTIAL OBJECTS premiered in 1993 at Mill Mountain Theater (Executive and Artistic Director, Jere Lee Hodgkin) in Roanoke, Virginia as part of The Norfolk Southern Festival of New Works. The cast and creative contributors were:

MEPHISTOPHELES..... Adrian Williams
PARIS..... Jerry Bradley
JULIANNAMartha Perantoni
MARGARET Wendy A Rolfe
Director Ernest Zulia
Stage manager..... Cindi Raebel
Dramaturge..... Jo Weinstein
Costume designer..... Anne Toewe
Scenery & lighting.....John Sailer

CHARACTERS & SETTING

MEPHISTOPHELES, played by an actor who, if he had been smaller, would have played Puck, when he was younger; but it is now exactly just too late.

PARIS, played by a charming, likable actor, mid to late thirties; he'll look like a boy all his life.

JULIANNA, played by an actress who has been cast in comedic parts one time too many; early thirties.

MARGARET, played by an actress who can play from six years old to thirty years old

Setting: PARIS's and JULIANNA's apartments, and a few places in between

Time: The present

Music: A score should be designed to accompany MEPHISTOPHELES at beginning and end of ACT ONE, and elsewhere when appropriate.

for David Juairé

ACT ONE

PROLOGUE—ON EARTH

(MEPHISTOPHELES appears, wearing a black cloak lined with blood red, and walking with a slight limp. He carries a cane with a silver poodle handle.)

(He performs a few simple card tricks for the benefit of the audience. These need be no more complicated than any that a child could do—the important issue is that they are done with style, panache, showmanship.)

(He sets up two hands of cards on a small table down stage—then checks both hands and, considering for an instant, plucks an ace from the deck and tucks it in his sleeve. He turns to go, then turns back, addressing the audience.)

MEPHISTOPHELES: Well, come on, now—you don't expect me to insult you by pretending to have nothing up my sleeve, do you?

No, that fits right in with your ideas about me. In fact, you've been thinking and saying the most terrible things about me for the longest time.

Well, stop—

(MEPHISTOPHELES makes a magical gesture. Great bolts of lightning crash, and thunder cracks loudly.)

MEPHISTOPHELES: STOP!!!!!!

(Lightning and thunder increase.)

MEPHISTOPHELES: STOOOOOOOOOOOP—

*(The lightning and thunder cease abruptly as
MEPHISTOPHELES stops himself from further fury.)*

(He holds his head in his hands, gaining control.)

(After a moment, he looks up, smiling bravely.)

MEPHISTOPHELES: I'm better now. I'm all right. Don't worry, I don't want you going home tonight and saying "Oh, Lucifer himself had a nervous breakdown right on stage, it was soooooooooo boooooooooing. We half expected that at any minute he would regale us with stories about his much abused childhood. Z z z." I mean, who cares? Everybody had a rough childhood. Everybody had a father who didn't understand them. Everybody wants to take it out on everybody—but nobody but Satan worked out his adolescent anger by trying to destroy the world, did they?

No.

So go on, saying those terrible things about me.

Go on—believe the world itself is running away in these arms. *(He raises his arms out in front of him.)*

You say my arms are strong enough to carry you away from what makes the birds sing and the heart rejoice. But you know nothing about these arms. *(He lowers his arms.)*

Listen—you and I—we're not so very different. You and I—we're really quite alike. We both dream the same dream, we both long to be reunited with a piece of ourselves we've lost, we long with the same ache to return to the safe place, we dream of feeling God's grace once again! *(He sees that we don't believe him.)*

You don't believe me. Nevertheless it's true.

Everything I've ever done, I've done for one reason only—to get home. That's what I'm doing here, on earth. Trying to get all of us home. Home. Ah, yes. I remember, it's your curse to see heaven heavy with

angels, beating their wings, lazy in the radiance of the vague, pure, everlasting.

And it's mine, and all the angels' curse to curse you for the blindness that sees us there. An angel may not love, and suffering finds us everywhere we search for the one, true heaven, which is here— (*He indicates the audience.*)—here, in this heroic landscape, this maze of redemption, this—

(Lights up on a bed.)

MEPHISTOPHELES:—small place of impassioned astronomy. (*He walks over to the bed, sits down on it.*)

This place, where two bodies and two souls in perfect desire resemble God's face, on the face of the earth.

You know what I'm talking about. Don't pretend you don't, you know you do. You know you were born to feel heaven in a touch. To understand the secrets of the universe in the way the breathing of the person sleeping beside you fills the lost night air. You know you were born to feel something—magnificent. (*He gets up, walks down stage, leaving the bed behind in a pool of light.*)

Wouldn't you give anything to feel that magnificent something? To feel the sweet warm slash of redemption? Would you give your soul to feel it? Would you? What if someone walked up to you, right now, and said that if you gave your soul, you'd feel what you can just remember so deep inside you, you could pull yourself apart with knives and never find it— (*Intimate, really intimate with the audience, truly excited*)—if someone said, just give your soul, and you will feel that place—yes—that—the place where dim recall past knowing sees a face of beauty past belief— (*He almost sees it.*)—you'd give it. (*He makes a magical gesture.*)

(Blackout)

Scene One

(Beat 1: Fireworks appear inside PARIS's bedroom. Gradually they illuminate the room, revealing PARIS, standing on his bed. He throws his arms in the air, laughing.)

PARIS: Do it again! Do it again!

(More explosions of lovely, red and gold light. PARIS dances in the light.)

(Blackout)

(Beat 2: PARIS and MEPHISTOPHELES playing cards. A few cards are played.)

PARIS: Gin. *(Laying down his cards.)*

You know what that means.

(Blackout)

(Beat 3: PARIS and MEPHISTOPHELES suspended in the room, flying. They tilt and bank in tandem. The wind whips through their hair.)

PARIS: Oh, look—there's the Eiffel Tower! Shit!!!! There's the Great Wall! Wow!

Hey, that forest down there. It looks like the Garden of—

(Blackout)

(Beat 4: PARIS and MEPHISTOPHELES playing cards. PARIS is now wearing a shiny black visor. After a few cards are played:)

PARIS: Guess what? *(He lays his cards down.)*

(Blackout)

(Beat 5: PARIS runs in place, with one arm held up, holding a torch. He is out of breath. He stumbles, catches himself, goes on. The Olympic theme music blares out, and he “climbs” the stairs to the Olympic flame—which he lights, to thunderous applause.)

(Blackout)

(Beat 6: PARIS and MEPHISTOPHELES playing cards. PARIS is now wearing a riverboat gambler’s hat. A few cards are played. It may be noticed that PARIS picks up every card MEPHISTOPHELES discards.)

PARIS: You won’t believe this, but— *(He puts down his cards.)* Gin.

(MEPHISTOPHELES can’t help smiling.)

(Blackout)

(Beat 7: A huge nuclear missile with prominent Iranian markings is in the room. PARIS, using a huge wrench, is messing around in the missile’s mechanism. He pulls out an oversized computer chip, smashes part of it, replaces the chip and closes the door to the compartment.)

PARIS: Okay. That takes care of all the dirty bombs headed in the direction of my parent’s house.

(Blackout)

(Beat 8: MEPHISTOPHELES and PARIS playing cards. MEPHISTOPHELES discards, face down. PARIS instinctively goes to pick it up—MEPHISTOPHELES puts one hand over PARIS’s, and with the other lays down his hand—it’s gin.)

MEPHISTOPHELES: Gin.

PARIS: Oh. Well, I guess I couldn’t keep up that streak forever. So. What do you want?

MEPHISTOPHELES: A kiss.

PARIS: What?

MEPHISTOPHELES: A kiss.

PARIS: A kiss? What do you mean, a kiss?

MEPHISTOPHELES: A kiss.

PARIS: But you're a man—I mean—I know you're not really a man, I mean you're not either, but—I mean I know we had a deal, but—

(Blackout)

(Beat 9: MEPHISTOPHELES seated on the bed. He pats the place next to him. PARIS sits. MEPHISTOPHELES kisses PARIS. PARIS endures it bravely.)

(Blackout)

(Beat 10: MEPHISTOPHELES and PARIS playing cards. PARIS is obviously very nervous. PARIS is wiping his face, wringing his hands, fumbling with his cards. MEPHISTOPHELES wins.)

MEPHISTOPHELES: Gin.

PARIS: Shit.

MEPHISTOPHELES: Another.

PARIS: Now listen here, I—

MEPHISTOPHELES: Another kiss.

(Blackout)

(Beat 11: MEPHISTOPHELES and PARIS kiss. This time, PARIS kisses him back.)

(Blackout)

(Beat 12: MEPHISTOPHELES wins. PARIS throws his cards into the air.)

(Blackout)

(Beat 13: MEPHISTOPHELES and PARIS sleeping in each other's arms. A soft rose light fills the room.)

(Blackout)

Scene Two

(Just before dawn. MEPHISTOPHELES is floating above PARIS' bed, lying on his side with his head propped up on his elbow.)

MEPHISTOPHELES: I don't know what all the fuss is all about. It's really very cut and dried.

PARIS: It's my soul. My soul!

MEPHISTOPHELES: Nonsense. Before I came you didn't think you had one.

PARIS: I don't see why you can't love me without it.

MEPHISTOPHELES: Who said anything about love?

PARIS: Let's go someplace, okay? Someplace where there aren't a lot of people. Morocco. Tahiti.

MEPHISTOPHELES: No more Morocco and no more Tahiti.

PARIS: Then how about my sister's house in Jersey? I haven't seen the new baby yet.

MEPHISTOPHELES: You really try my nerves. Why do you want to make me angry?

PARIS: I'm not the one who's trying to make anyone angry.

MEPHISTOPHELES: And I am?

PARIS: You have this thing about saying you love me.

MEPHISTOPHELES: It's not a thing about saying it. It's something I can't say.

PARIS: Yeah, yeah. Go ahead and hide behind an angel can't do this and that crap.

MEPHISTOPHELES: It is hardly crap.

PARIS: It is to me.

MEPHISTOPHELES: It wasn't last night.

PARIS: Stop talking to me about last night! I can't think about anything else! I've never been held like I was last night. What are you going to do about that! Tell me! What are you going to do about that!

MEPHISTOPHELES: I've already told you. Last night wasn't real.

PARIS: Don't do this to me!

MEPHISTOPHELES: Last night was an illusion.

PARIS: What are you talking about? The Great Wall, the Eiffel Tower, that—

MEPHISTOPHELES: All that you felt and all that you saw with me was mere illusion. You never left this room.

PARIS: But after, when you kissed me...

MEPHISTOPHELES: Apparition. Fantasy. Dream.

PARIS: I won't believe that!

MEPHISTOPHELES: Believe. I never touched you, or you me.

PARIS: You wanted me.

MEPHISTOPHELES: Someone had to hold your head down for you. Someone had to teach you how to pray.

PARIS: You liked it!

MEPHISTOPHELES: Liked it! I would love it, if I could.
But you were made for love, not me.

PARIS: You're just a whore!

MEPHISTOPHELES: (*Bows, elegantly*) For God, and no one else.

PARIS: You go to hell!!!

MEPHISTOPHELES: Been there. Done that. Listen. The moment for which you promised your soul will not be with me.

PARIS: Why not?

MEPHISTOPHELES: It will be with a woman.

PARIS: Who said anything about a woman?

MEPHISTOPHELES: You did, actually.

PARIS: When!

MEPHISTOPHELES: Last night. In the heat of passion.
You called out a beautiful name.

PARIS: But I can't have it with anyone but you. It's not something that happens here.

MEPHISTOPHELES: You seem to think it did.

PARIS: That's different. It was with you.

MEPHISTOPHELES: With this woman it will be real.

PARIS: But I want you!

MEPHISTOPHELES: You want what you had last night.

PARIS: And why shouldn't I?

MEPHISTOPHELES: With this woman you will not have to share an illusion. You will have something real.

PARIS: (*Laughing*) Real? You don't know the first thing about it. Last night was real.

MEPHISTOPHELES: With a woman, Paris, you can—

PARIS: Can what. WHAT! Look. Here's what happens with a woman. Here's what you think is real.

I meet her. I wait for her to say she loves me. She says it. I look at her. I say to myself: "The rest of my life. Does this woman look like the rest of my life?" She doesn't. Or, it happens like this.

I meet her. I wait for her to say she loves me. She doesn't. I realize I have to be the one who says it. I say it. Guess what happens next. Go on. Can't? After I say I love you I get to watch her look at me and say, to herself: "The rest of my life. Do I want this person to be my life for the rest of my life?"

Last night was real.

MEPHISTOPHELES: Then one woman is like another to you, and it doesn't matter who I bring?

PARIS: No matter who you bring me, it will end the same.

MEPHISTOPHELES: You're sure?

PARIS: Are you asking me who I'd like? Because if you are, I'll tell you.

MEPHISTOPHELES: Who?

PARIS: Marilyn Monroe.

MEPHISTOPHELES: (*A bit disgusted*) Sorry.

PARIS: Yeah, I'll bet.

MEPHISTOPHELES: I've someone else in mind for you.

PARIS: You do? Then why haven't you brought her here!

MEPHISTOPHELES: I will.

PARIS: When?

MEPHISTOPHELES: Soon.

PARIS: Why not now?

MEPHISTOPHELES: I must first show her what I've shown you.

PARIS: Oh.

What do you mean...show her?

MEPHISTOPHELES: You know what I mean.

PARIS: Do you have to? I mean, isn't there some other way?

MEPHISTOPHELES: Not if she's to promise her soul.

PARIS: Well, what if she doesn't? What if she doesn't want to give you her soul?

MEPHISTOPHELES: You forget who you are talking to, Paris.

PARIS: Yeah, but if she doesn't want to I've given you my soul for nothing!

MEPHISTOPHELES: I will not take your soul until you've had the moment you've been promised.

The two of you, together.

PARIS: But what if we can't?

MEPHISTOPHELES: The risk is mine.

PARIS: You're going to her tonight?

MEPHISTOPHELES: I am. It is time for the dream to end.

(MEPHISTOPHELES snaps his fingers. PARIS falls immediately asleep, standing up.)

MEPHISTOPHELES: Sleep—and when you wake, say nothing of what has happened.

(PARIS, sound asleep, backs into bed and lies down.)

Sleep. *(Gathering himself up in his cloak for his dramatic exit.)*

The day breaks. The night dies. And the Prince of Darkness flies. *(He flies away.)*

(Blackout)

Scene Three

(A few hours later. JULIANNA is sitting near the open door, wearing her coat and a look of incredible unbelief.)

JULIANNA: Now wait a minute. Let me get this straight. I come over for breakfast, and just like that, it's over?

PARIS: I told you I can't explain it.

JULIANNA: I don't care what you can't. I came over here for breakfast, let's go. We'll go and come back and then we'll see.

PARIS: Julie—

JULIANNA: Breakfast is my favorite meal. It's good no matter where you go and it's the best meal deal for the money. Even MacDonalds makes a great breakfast. Their hash browns are too greasy but their hotcakes are good.

Come on. We're going to breakfast. And then we'll come back here and talk.

PARIS: Julianna, please, don't—

JULIANNA: Charlie's makes a great breakfast. They have those waffles that they're famous for. Everybody knows about their waffles. They make them to order for you, don't leave 'em sitting around. If they left 'em sitting around they'd get hard and stale and they wouldn't be famous for them. Let's go. Let's get some breakfast and then we'll talk.

PARIS: Listen to me, I can't talk about it, I can't, I—

JULIANNA: I could make you breakfast! We could stay and I could make you breakfast here! I could make the omelet, or you could. I could fry the bacon first and make the eggs, or you could wash the pan and

make them after. We could have rye toast if you have it, or just make do with white. We could squeeze fresh orange juice if you have juice oranges. We'll make coffee and then we'll set the table and then sit down together.

We'll have our orange juice and we'll have our toast and we'll have our eggs and our bacon and after that we'll have our coffee.

Or we'll have them all together.

And then we'll talk.

PARIS: All right, Julie. Enough.

JULIANNA: What do you mean, enough? It's not enough. It was never enough, someone saying they couldn't say why and it's not enough now and you know it. So just say you don't love me, and let me go.

PARIS: I do love you, Julie, I just...

JULIANNA: Don't love me enough?

PARIS: Listen to me, didn't you ever have something happen to you that didn't make sense, but made all the sense in the world? Something that just ripped up your life and you fell all in pieces? Something that—

JULIANNA: If you're talking to me about seeing some woman's legs on the subway, you'd just better stop. I don't want to hear about another woman. I want to hear about *you*, and *me*, and *you and me*.

PARIS: Look, maybe I'd better call you tomorrow.

JULIANNA: I don't want to hear it tomorrow, I want to hear it now. I want to hear you say "I don't love you" and then I'll go.

Come on, it's a phrase you've said a million times, but this time, it's got a don't after the I, it's very simple.

Come on, Perry. Say it.

PARIS: No.

JULIANNA: Then I don't go home.

I don't go home and we spend the day together, sitting in this room, we spend the day and the night and all the days and nights after. Until you say it.

Look at me. Look at me please, and say it.

PARIS: (*Sighs*) Come on. Let's go have breakfast.

JULIANNA: HOW CAN YOU TALK TO ME ABOUT BREAKFAST! (*Realizes. Beat*)

SHIT.

PARIS: What are we gonna do?

JULIANNA: I don't know, I don't know.

I don't know.

PARIS: I don't know.

JULIANNA: You're supposed to know.

PARIS: I know.

JULIANNA: Just say it, Perry, one time, fast, or slow, or very quiet if it's easier. I love you and I'm asking you to say it once. Then I'll leave and it will be all right.

I won't stay in bed for three or four weeks crying out your name in a room with the shades drawn. I promise.

Say it and it will be all right. I love you enough to believe you.

PARIS: Do you.

JULIANNA: Yes.

PARIS: But not enough to leave unless I say it?

JULIANNA: You can't have it both ways, Perry.

PARIS

But I love you, Julie, I just—

JULIANNA: Don't love me enough to say it, once and for all, and let me go?

But I do. (*She kisses him.*)

I don't love you. (*She turns to go.*)

PARIS: Julianna, wait—

JULIANNA: No.

PARIS: But you don't understand—

JULIANNA: What is there to understand? You don't love me.

PARIS: I never said—

JULIANNA: Not enough. (*She leaves.*)

(*Blackout*)

Scene Four

(*The middle of the night. JULIANNA's apartment. She walks into her bedroom. MEPHISTOPHELES is lying on her bed.*)

JULIANNA: What, again? How do you get in here?

MEPHISTOPHELES: It's four o'clock in the morning. Where have you been?

JULIANNA: Where have I been? Where do you get off asking *me* where *I've* been? Last night I wake up, from a deep, untroubled sleep. You're bending over my bed. I don't scream. It's not the first time I've seen a dark shape bending over me in the dark. This is the first time it's real. It takes me awhile to realize that so I don't scream. I think about screaming. Before I know it you're in bed beside me. I decide that it's time to scream. I open my mouth and I scream. There's no sound.

This has happened to me before, but only in nightmares. I remember a painting I once saw of a woman dreaming about a hideous horse's head leering above her. I'd prefer the horse's head.

You start floating above me and I shut my eyes. When I open them later you're gone.

I get up this morning, take a shower and shave my legs. I wash my hair and do my nails. I go over to have breakfast with the only man I've ever really loved and he tells me it's over and he can't say why.

Now tell me who the hell you are and how you got in here.

MEPHISTOPHELES: He didn't tell you why?

JULIANNA: No.

MEPHISTOPHELES: I'm sorry.

JULIANNA: Yeah.

(JULIANNA sits on the bed next to MEPHISTOPHELES. He puts his arm around her.)

JULIANNA: So am I.

MEPHISTOPHELES: Through the window.

JULIANNA: What?

MEPHISTOPHELES: I came in through your bedroom window.

JULIANNA: Oh. Sure. Why not.

MEPHISTOPHELES: What do you mean, sure, why not. Your bedroom window is fourteen stories up.

JULIANNA: A man can change completely in one day, I figure pigs can fly.

MEPHISTOPHELES: What's that supposed to mean?

JULIANNA: That I'm living in a dream world. And you're just part of the dream.

(MEPHISTOPHELES begins to kiss JULIANNA's neck. He continues to caress and kiss her throughout her speech.)

JULIANNA: After I left him I wandered the streets. It's what they do in movies, and I had nothing better to

do. Just wandering's not what it's cracked up to be, so I started following. I followed men. Any man at first, then younger ones who looked like if I followed them I'd find out why I shouldn't. I got on buses going crazy places. I got off at their stops and looked around for more. There aren't enough of them to really go around above ground so I went under. You make better time on the trains and that gives you an edge.

Underground there's plenty to choose from. A lot of them walk like they know something. The way some of them walked told me stories I couldn't begin to repeat to you now. Then one story looked like the last and they all looked alike. I come home, and you're here, and I don't know why I'm not screaming.

MEPHISTOPHELES: Turn out the light, Julianna.

JULIANNA: You know my name. That should surprise me. Nothing surprises me. I wish it did. Does that mean I'm getting old? I wonder.

MEPHISTOPHELES: It means I know your name.

JULIANNA: I don't know yours.

MEPHISTOPHELES: You will.

JULIANNA: Don't tell me yet. I'll put out the light. (*She stands, and puts out the lights.*)

(*Blackout*)