

Monica:

“All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players; they have their exits and their entrances, and one woman in her time plays many parts...”

My college is doing a production of *As You Like It*, we were rehearsing last week. And as I said those words I looked into the wings and my best friend Rachel was waving at me... she was all twisted, like she had to go to the bathroom or something... and I was trying to remember my lines... and why is Rachel waving at me? I couldn’t remember my lines. I just started laughing and we stopped. It was vintage Rachel.

So, Rachel didn’t have to go to the bathroom. It was a call from home. My brother, Ross, needs a bone marrow donor—again.

I guess, technically, my parents are asking me if I want to do it... and I want to want to do it... but I don’t really feel like I have any choice. I tried to pretend that I’m not scared, that it isn’t really any big deal... I am so scared.

They used me for bone marrow before, when I was twelve... and anyway, it turns out that I also donated bone marrow to Ross when I was just a year old... it turns out that the only reason they ever even had me was because Ross needed bone marrow.

I suppose none of us chooses to be born... still... we have some sense, some illusion maybe, that we were willed into existence by the great forces of the cosmos... I was just made for the sole purpose of providing Ross with spare parts. Who am I? Am I just some old car in the junkyard— you find the part you want and take a hacksaw to it? If Ross is so defective, why don’t they just let him die and conceive a replacement Ross the same way they conceived me— I mean, when is it enough? I know I’m just being selfish and scared. Of course I want to help my brother. It’s just that... well, I wish I could choose to help him... it’s not my choice... it’s my destiny... it’s the only reason I exist.

Why do any of us exist? Because our parents were drunk and bored one Saturday night a long time ago? Is who we are forever determined by the circumstances of our past? Are we forever yoked by history? I don’t think so. But then, if we redefine ourselves each moment— are we just machines being constantly loaded with different software? Is there such a thing as I?

I have to believe that I am a unique person with a unique destiny. I may exist in Ross’ shadow. There may be billions of humans on earth. But I am the only me. No one may ever have exactly the same thoughts and dreams and fears again. I was born of purely utilitarian reasons... I was born of someone else’s choice... the future, I think, will be my own choice.