

# Harriman-Baines

## SYNOPSIS

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Carter Harriman is a brilliant and famous artist who's known for composing modern Classical music to the lyrics of the mysterious poet Melody Baines. He is also an enigma, a recluse, famous for dodging the public spotlight – a Howard Hughes, of sorts – but not if ambitious journalist Axel Wheel has his way. Wheel has been staking out Harriman (the word "harassing" works, too) and has extorted the composer into giving an interview one cold, eerie, and, when the power goes out, extremely dark night. The evening is further complicated by the surprising appearance of Minnie Baines – the meek, pointless, psychic sister of Melody – who seems a perpetual caretaker to other people's problems. The three of them – the composer, the journalist, and the sister – are soon thrown together before our eyes, along with Melody Baines herself, whose cruel, caustic spirit haunts the Harriman house and who communicates with the worshipful Harriman through her psychic sister.

During the course of the evening, the metaphorical darkness of Carter Harriman and his relationship with Melody Baines is slowly, excruciatingly revealed to us, through flashbacks and the nettling interview of Axel Wheel. Harriman is exposed to be a lonely troglodyte who has walled himself off from a world he doesn't and cannot understand (and which doesn't and cannot understand him either). Melody Baines is found to have been a needy manic depressive who's alcoholism and cruelty (especially to her tormented sister, Minnie) lived at odds with the beautiful poems she composed. And Minnie Baines... she is revealed to be much, much more than the stick-figure caricature she portrays.

Before the play is over, the disturbing truth is revealed: we learn that Melody Baines, far from being the great poet in a great collaboration, is merely a smokescreen, a phantom, a prism through which two desperately lonely people – Carter Harriman and Minnie Baines – communicate with the outside world and with each other... but unveiling the lie behind that prism is enough to cut their lifeline to humanity.