

Sympathy:

A Simple, Tender Grace of the Heart

by *dr. temi rose*

Simple Gifts

Tis a gift to be simple. Tis a gift to be free.
Tis a gift to come down where we ought to be.
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
Twill be in the valley of love and delight.

Shaker Hymn

Characters

any of the characters can be any race or nationality

Angela (*Medea*): 28-34. A tigress. Dark hair and flashing eyes.

Billy (*Director*): 25-60. Brilliant, eccentric. Can be played by any gender.*

Fred (*Jason*): 28-40. Rugged. Tall. Humble.

Henry (*Messenger*): Under 40. A comedian.

Jean/Gene (*Billy's lover*): Exquisite. Any age of consent. Any gender.*

Wilbur (*Tutor*): 50-70. A private man. Homosexual.

Louise (*Chorus*): 18-28. Shy, serious and pretty, a dancer.

Marge (*Nurse*): 40's. Neurotic. Friendly, repressed.

Chris (*Creon and Aegeus*): 20-30. A powerhouse. Radiant.

Trudy (*Stage Mgr.*): 25-36. Capable. Tough and soft.

Terry *is not an actor but the lighting technician. Can be any gender.**

**pronouns can be changed when necessary*

Time: 1981. Tech night on a new production of *Medea*.

Place: A Fringe Theater in Manhattan

The set consists of three main playing areas.

Stage: Two ellipsoidal platforms. Papier mache rocks are piled on the stage right end of the lower platform. A throne is placed on the upper platform. White pillars wherever possible.

Dressing room: An arm chair, some stools and a makeup table with a long mirror.

Audience: Scattered throughout the audience, chairs are reserved for playing areas.

Costumes: Seasonal to production time.

Suggestions for incidental music: Grace Kelly and Judy Garland, "When you wore a tulip."
Boy George, "War is Stupid." Patti Smith's "Gloria" Siouxsie and the Banshees' "Dazzle"
Al Jarreau, "Take Five" Martha and the Muffins, "Danseparc," and "What People do for Fun." Laurie Anderson's "O Superman."

Act One

Light Show

A woman's bloodcurdling screams (25-30 seconds). Then, work lights up and Trudy enters, clipboard in hand. She calls light cues to Terry.

Trudy: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23.
[These are the settings that Trudy calls - **Cue 1** *The show opens with the Chorus dancing on the lower platform, to clarinet or flute music. The lights cover the ground with leaves as in a grove. **Cue 2** Whatever light will suit the Chorus dancing the evolution of a woman from animal existence, through primitive, to proto-social. **Cue 3** Rock pile special. **Cue 4** A wild flash of light when the Chorus screams a blood-curdling scream. **Cue 5** Lower platform illumination for conversation between the Nurse and the Tutor. **Cue 6** Spots on the lower platform for the lamentations of the Nurse and the Chorus. Spot on upper level for Medea. Their prayers are spoken all at the same time, overlapping each other, Zeus, lord of all civilization and Themis, goddess of justice. The prayers build to a pitch. So this cue might involve a gradual dissolve to another special. **Cue 7** Medea's special. **Cue 8** Creon's special on the lower platform. **Cue 9** Bright full light. Shadows at the corners and shadows cast on the back wall while Creon and Medea have their one more day, convo. **Cue 10** Lights focus on upper platform, a large wash dropping suddenly at the edges to black. **Cue 11** Red wash. The Chorus enters and strokes Medea's hair then **Cue 12** From red to pink. The Chorus' speech in defense of women. "In time all will be rectified." **Cue 13** Romantic light for scene between Jason and Medea. **Cue 14** Love scene. The Chorus on the rocks, head in hands. She speaks after Jason storms off. Medea is moving slowly now, the spark for her flame has left. **Cue 15** Aegeus. Somber light. Smaller playing area. Medea, "Let it be, from now on words are superfluous" **Cue 16** Bed light. Drums playing softly. Lights brighten when children enter and fade when they exit. **Cue 17** The Chorus on the rocks gives in to despair. **Cue 18** Same as Cue 16 but brighter. **Cue 19** The Messenger scene. Medea and the Messenger cast visible shadows on the rear wall. **Cue 20** The Chorus dances wildly to a drumbeat then rages at Medea. **Cue 21** Special on Medea in bed with her children. The light is high to mask the children as they lie on the bed. **Cue 22** Lights come up full on both platforms. Jason enters through the audience. He speaks to the Chorus on the lower platform. The Nurse goes off crying. Medea puts on a fine robe with great dignity, completely mad. Jason remains on the lower platform, yelling at her. Lights on the furious lovers and on the Chorus who is standing on the rocks, "Such was the story." Then blackout. **Cue 23** Curtain call lights to Beethoven's *The Ruin of Athens*.]
Thank you, Terry! That looks fine.*

Trudy puts down her notes. Billy has been sitting in an aisle seat, watching. As she stands up, she spills coffee, some of it gets on the floor of the aisle.

Billy: Shit.

Trudy: You alright?

Billy: Oh sure.

Trudy: You want me to take care of it?

Billy: No. I can do it.

Trudy is sweeping the stage as Billy wipes up the spill. Henry enters unnoticed onto the upper platform.

Henry: I had a dream last night. My father was driving. My boyfriend wasn't there and I couldn't find him. We kept picking up different friends of mine. We were all dressed up in bright colors. It was a red convertible. We were riding with the top down. It was a sunny day but I was upset because I didn't want my father to drive. I wanted to drive or find my boyfriend and let him drive.

Billy: I have to make some calls. Did you see the programs? Are they ok?

Trudy: Very nice.

Billy: You saw them?

Trudy: Yes.

Billy: No mistakes?

Trudy: Not that I could see.

Billy: I'll just go check. What time is it?

Trudy: You're early.

Billy: Where is the throne? *(Trudy doesn't answer)* They didn't deliver it today?

Trudy: Nope.

Billy: Did they call us?

Trudy: No.

Billy: You called them.

Trudy: Yup.

Billy: And? *(Trudy doesn't answer)* Oh shit.

Billy exits. Trudy moves the rocks into place on the platform. She is putting the throne(or a substitute) in place when Angela and Louise enter. Angela slips on some of the drink that didn't get wiped up.

Angela: Hey, Trudy, you better clean this up. (*Trudy gives her a look. Angela flashes back a winning smile*) Oh, never mind. I can do it. Where are the paper towels?

Trudy: Where they always are: in the bathroom. I thought Billy already cleaned that up.

Angela: Well, not quite. (*she exits, singing. Louise is holding a large pink teddy bear*)

Trudy: How are you?

Louise: Do you like this bear?

Trudy: It seems like a nice enough bear. What's it for?

Louise: My nephew. It's for my nephew. My brother had a baby. His wife, I mean, had the baby. It's her third baby. They named him Gordon. They're drinkers. No, really. Maybe it was subconscious. They only drink gin in the summer. I had a hard time finding something suitable. I think it's important to give boys pink things. Pink stands for loving humanity. Did you know that? I'm trying to make a statement to my brother that men can be loving. But I think he'll think I'm trying to turn his son into a homosexual or a bohemian, which is probably worse. The point is whether or not he can learn to love himself because conservative men really hate themselves more than they hate women and I don't want my nephew to grow up like that. Hating himself. Then I forgot to have the bear wrapped because he was so soft and I really like holding him and so the store guard stopped me. Do I look like a thief? I mean, do I look like I'd steal a pink teddy bear? How desperate do you have to be to steal a pink teddy bear? I had my receipt so it was no big deal except everybody was looking at me and I had to look all through my purse which is a scary place, for the receipt and then the receipt wasn't there, it was in my pocket... it was kind of awful. Embarrassing. So then, do I look lost? Because three religious eerie people with scrunched up faces started following me and I felt like my bear was a holy saint who had suffered terribly in some kinky epiphany and we were marching in an ancient pantheistic festival parade, celebrating Saint Pink Bear. But where? Where do pink teddy bears go?

Trudy: To fringe theatres, obviously. Have you told Fred yet?

Louise: I am never going to tell Fred.

Trudy: Oh, Louise.

Louise: I'm never, ever going to be able to tell Fred.

Fred (*on the platform, Valentine from Two Gentlemen of Verona*): *How use doth breed a habit in a man. This shadowy desert, infrequented woods, I better brook than flourishing*

towns. Here I can sit alone, unseen of any, and to the nightingale's complaining notes tune my distresses and record my woes. Oh thou that dost inhabit in my breast, leave not the mansion so long tenantless, lest growing ruinous, the building fall and leave no memory of what I was. Repair me with thy presence, gentle nymph.

Angela returns, singing, she mops up the rest of the spill.

Louise: I've noticed that people follow me when I'm frustrated.

Angela: (*indicating the now dirty paper towels*) What do I do with this? (*she shoots the wad of paper towel into the can- whether or not she makes the basket*): All right! Yes. It's drugs. I heard that the Kennedys took acid before any of us had even heard of it. It came from the university labs in Boston where they had clawed their way to the center of power, the Irish Mafia and all that jazz.

Louise: I read a book about the space program and in those days everyone was against it, but Kennedy was for it. There were these pictures of him with the NASA guys and he had on these really dark sunglasses and I thought, I bet he was tripping.

Angela: Can you imagine being that on top of the world? Walking around statehouses and palaces, tripping?

Louise: That must have been cool: the President of the United States of America, inaugurating our future with his mind wide open to the ramifications.

Trudy: No one sees ramifications anymore.

Angela: He had all those women, though.

Louise: No wonder Jackie always looked haggard.

Angela: Suffering, even before the worst thing in the world happened to her. I assumed at first that she looked sad because she was Catholic. Later I thought she must have had a premonition. But now I think it was because she knew her husband was screwing around.

Trudy: I guess people pay a high price for glory.

Angela: I think we're living in a dark age of the soul. Radiant freedom, a distant memory.

Louise: Truly totally evil people, the kind that burn little children and rape old ladies never show remorse.

Trudy: Only moral people do.

Louise: The people who make napalm, I'm sure they have nice families, you know what I mean? They probably go to church and stuff like that -

Angela: But their souls are darks stagnant places, putrid with the disintegration of social responsibility.

Trudy: No doubt.

Angela: Which?

Trudy: All of it.

Louise: I think a mother-father god sounds like a good idea.

Angela: I agree.

Trudy: I don't know. I think it sounds silly.

Louise: Women need to have a projection of their sacred essence. Something to look up to. I mean, look at Medea (*Angela slightly bows her head*) – she's very connected to her goddess self.

Trudy: But the mother goddess has to be more than a destroyer, otherwise, we're better off with the patriarchal asshole we have now.

Angela: And shouldn't god be sort of beyond gender anyway?

Trudy: Something should be beyond gender.

Louise: Or the god layer could stay personified by all kinds of gods, male, female, gay, straight. And let there be another level and a new name for the place it all comes together.

Angela: Do you believe in alternate realities?

Trudy: No. What's the alternative reality right now? There's only one reality.

Wilbur (*on the platform, unnoticed*): A deathly solitude surreptitiously sneaks its fog onto my shoulders, a blanket of cold gloom. Misery lingered, wove itself into a shroud of memory. Weighing me down. My cells torn, life leaking from rends in the fabric of what I once was.

Louise: If god includes everything, he has to be at least 50% female. I mean, stop and think about it for a minute. And maybe, when that 50% is really, really pissed off, she goes all Medea. I mean, maybe it isn't the male principle that starts wars and kills people. Maybe women are the ones who are violent when their love is prevented, diverted, perverted, dissected, fucked up. And the reason we haven't been able to change the world to a more peaceful place is because we're trying to change men when we should be trying to change women.

Angela: Amen! I mean, Awomen!

Trudy: Men say they hate feminism, but they're fine with it really. Because it keeps the frame the way it is. Men might be bad, but they're still in charge. As long as they're in charge, what do they care what anybody calls it? They still get to do what they want.

Louise: While we remain the passive, useless ones.

Trudy: Men like being the ones who do the killing.

Louise: They don't like to think that women might compete with them for that role.

Trudy: What's a woman of action?

Angela: There's no such thing.

Louise: I love doing things.

Trudy: Me too.

Angela: I hate being the bad guy.

Louise: Me too.

Chris (*unnoticed on the upper platform*): He died of AIDS before anyone had ever heard of it. He died before fist fucking was the rage on the waterfront. I was still falling love with him. He wasn't working. He was writing. We argued. What's the difference between work and art? Between work and play? That's easier to define I think. Between art and play? We agreed that work and art could be the same and work and play and art could all be the same but that the whole world would have to change. And how likely is that? And even if it did change, the world, how long would it take? We'd all be dead. So why bother?

Chris enters dramatically, almost dances in.

Chris: Hey, hey, hey. Are all you beauties waiting for me? Wait no more! I'm here. Where do I sign?

Louise: My butt.

Trudy: Do you go to church?

Chris: I'm Catholic. Of course I go to church.

Angela: But just on holidays.

Chris: Yeah. I'm not a fanatic.

Louise: Do you take your lovers to church with you?

Chris: Gee, Louise, that's kind of personal. That's a pretty bear you have there. Did we wake up on the wrong side of the bed this morning and have to bring teddy with us to techie? I never mix carnality with mother church.

Angela: You go inside mother church to worship father god.

Chris: I had not previously realized the hetero-eroticism built into my religion. I wish I had some of what you're all taking but I really need to talk to you (*Angela*).

Angela: (*sings as she and Chris go to the dressing room together*) "As long as he needs me, I know where I must be. I'll cling on steadfastly. As long as he needs me. As long as life is long...."

Billy (*on the upper platform, starting before Angela is finished singing, overlapping*): Alone it feels like an orange juice presser is squeezing my heart and stinging juices are flooding the inside of my chest. Reaching my eyes, will they fall? It never occurs to you that I might matter? That you might matter too? That our love was anything more than *aberrant sexuality*? I don't believe that you didn't know what you were doing. What we aspire towards is what reaches back to us, arms open. And your mouth.

Louise: I'm pregnant.

Jean: I'm angry because you shut me out. Because you hurt me. Because there's enough to eat and we're starving. I have a dream every night about a place just like this only we're different. We're glad to see each other and we're not scared of each other. Every morning I wake up and it's the same crazy garbage. You say the world is like that: Kill or be killed. Win or lose. Top or bottom. I know. No. I don't know. It's not like that in my dreams.

Billy: In my dreams we are a fabric of connectedness covering the globe with a harmony of excellence.

Marge: When God created men she was only kidding.

Wilbur: When Goddess created women, he was having a bad hair day.

Louise: What does love in action look like?

Billy: It's the competition in this culture that terrifies me. Always having to compare ourselves to other people, people we might love if we didn't have the disturbing sense that everyone is our enemy, our potential superior or inferior and that, some second, any day, we might turn out to be the sucker.

Jean: I hate that supercilious shit.

Louise: What do things look like when they're not love in action?

Jean: It's late. I was a college professor. For about six months. I was a fire jumper. I've been married twice. Once when I was very young. I ran away from there. I changed my name. I went to school. I found out I was smart. Not what I had been told. I was in control of my life. In a creative way. I was fine. I lose my will to live when I feel like someone else is running my life. You have to run everything. And I feel I'd be better off dead.

Louise: I'm pregnant.

Trudy: I know. You told me. Remember?

Louise: Yeah, I remember.

Fred: Love begins in fullness. Overflows sometimes and drowns everyone. Overflows sometimes and everybody swims.

Jean: Every fucking step feels like shards of glass ripping and shredding my insides. I'm bursting with my own mangled guts.

Marge: I am defecting from the country of womanhood to the country of personhood.

Trudy: Tell Fred.

Louise: I can't.

Marge: Oh I know, something remains.

Billy: But it's not the same.

Wilbur: The texture is different. Somehow.

Trudy: It's his baby too.

Louise: It's not that. I'm not being possessive.

Trudy: You're being territorial.

Louise: I don't want to bother him.

Trudy: A baby is a bother.

Louise: Fuck you, Trudy.

Trudy: That's right, get the blood flowing. Last time... You said you were going to be careful.

Louise: I was.

Fred: I can be a sucker.

Henry: I like to suck things. I don't find it humiliating.

Fred: Straws.

Henry: Nipples.

Fred: Nipples.

Henry: Cigarettes.

Fred: Cunts.

Henry: Cocks.

Fred: Clits. Sucking is not degrading.

Henry: Forced to suck sucks of course.

Trudy: Maybe you want to have a baby?

Louise: I don't know. I can't get a coherent thought through my brain.

Trudy: That's panic.

Louise jumps up onto the stage and dances her panic, while...

Angela: We walked all day to the top of a mountain where a young native american man had killed himself for a woman he couldn't have. He threw himself off the cliff. He was tripping. He was really into drugs. And alcohol. Anything really. He wanted to have sex with me on top of this mountain. I didn't mind. I'd never been there and I didn't know anyone else who would take me. We watched the sun melt down, red. It oozed down between two mountains really slowly until it was swallowed and I thought it looked like how it felt when the head of his penis crossed down through the tightness of my vagina and melted into a symphony of flesh. Bass and treble flesh. Anyway, he flew his trophy kite. It was beautiful. He never talked to me past necessities, you know what I mean? Now and then he'd say something poetic but mostly he talked about what we were going to do next. We fucked in a little indentation in the rock that made a kind of platform and it was masked by two trees, flowering, pink and white flowers. Nice. There was a breeze. Then he said, *You are my fantasy*. And I couldn't think of what to say because he wasn't my fantasy

at all. I wasn't even sure I had one. He could look at me and see what he wanted to see. His fantasy. Not me. He had really goofy lips. If I was perfect for him, then how could he be so not-perfect to me?

Louise (*finishing her panic dance*): Shit. Shit. Shit. Shit.

Chris is vocalizing.

Angela (*continuing*): He's in jail. He got heavy into heroin, went to France, fell in love with some woman who wouldn't fuck him. When he put his fist through a window, they took him to jail. In French.

Marge (*on the upper platform*): How do I really feel? This shaft of light presents itself as an eternity while I'm stuck here, in a temporality of flesh.

Angela: Ah-hem.

Chris: Yes?

Angela: I thought you wanted to talk to me.

Chris: I did. I do.

Angela: What's it about? (*Chris doesn't answer*) Is it about you?

Chris: Yes.

Angela: Is it bad?

Chris: Yeah.

Angela: Is it awful?

Chris: Yes. I think so.

Angela: Oh my God –

Chris: No. Not that. My dad had a heart attack.

Angela: Oh, I'm so glad. (*she throws herself into his arms*)

Chris: I never told him.

Angela: What?

Chris: I can't tell him.

Trudy (*on the platform*): I was in a taxi with my mother. Sitting on one of those little kid seats they had in the bigger yellow taxis. It folded up from the floor like a huge, metal origami bird. She had the whole back seat for herself. She liked to have the whole couch too. She spread out on things, like an Egyptian courtesan, slanty-eyed and mysterious. That was the first time she talked to me about death. I remember checking in with myself as she was talking and thinking, this isn't bothering me. But it did. I didn't think she'd do it. *It's just talk. (she has the pink teddy bear)* She said a lot about her miseries but she ended up saying that it was better to stay alive. I remember thinking if everything she said was true, maybe she was better off dead. Her life sounded really grim the way she described it. She said to me, *You're lucky. You have the capacity for joy.* I had a lot less after that conversation, let me tell you. Her face was hidden in the shadows. The lights of the city looked so beautiful, promising romance. The romance I can't find or the one that broke her heart? (*pause*) That was the first time I seriously thought about dying. And then I never stopped.

Chris: He drove himself to the hospital. He was in his car when he had the attack. He took himself to the emergency room.

Angela: You're the youngest?

Chris: Yeah.

Angela: How's your mother doing?

Chris: She's ok I guess. We're all ok. Except we're not.

Marge: How do I really feel?

Chris: I'm tired of people dying.

Wilbur: What worlds are these between individualities?

Marge: How do I really feel when you blame me?

Fred (*on the upper platform*): If you take the cross away from Jesus, he looks like he's flying. (*pause*) You'd have to lift the head a little.

Trudy: You're going to have to tell Fred.

Louise: I know! Don't you think I know that?

Marge: How do I really feel when you shame me?

Trudy: He loves you. It'll be ok.

Louise: He's busy.

Trudy: Everybody's busy.

Marge: How do I feel when you threaten me? When you talk about my cunt, my breasts, my person or my children? I feel afraid. I feel threatened, blamed and shamed. I don't like it. My hand on a cool brass doorknob, your black boot in my face.

Fred: In a million years...

Henry: .. if I live a million years...

Henry & Fred: I will never get the hang of love.

Fred: I'm paying attention. But I'm completely lost. I think I choose women who can confuse me. The mystery pulls me in. Tits, ass, legs, it's all good.

Henry (*starting this old routine – Cary Grant and Myrna Loy*): *You remind me of a man.*

Fred: *What man?*

Henry: *The man with the power.*

Fred: *What power?*

Henry: *The power of voodoo.*

Fred: *Who do?*

Henry: *You do.*

Fred: *What?*

Henry: *Remind me of a man.* It's the pace. The pace that's killing us.

Marge: I don't reach for too much. I no longer trust. I try to explain. We get lost in counter explanations. You need a woman who can be bought. I wasn't born to be nice. I wasn't born to be your masturbation device.

Fred: Working for the empire. The skin ripped off your whole body in an instant.

Jean: And you become suddenly susceptible to the vagaries of air.

Fred: And then you kill everything because everything has her love in it.

Jean: Everything you see is touched by my love because you were.

Marge: And now everything must die.

Henry: Indulge your recklessness, get hurt.

Marge: I fall, writhe. Past becoming afraid. Terror echoes in the blankness of your eyes.

Fred: We live in a world where love is a scandal but war is not.

Chris: The loneliest person in the world is the one left behind alive.

Fred & Chris say alive at the same time.

Fred: Alive. Helicopter blades beat the sky. A world where everything goes wrong. Friends die.

Wilbur: A hero is someone who goes out of their way to help other people.

Billy: Is love only ever about loss?

Louise enters the dressing room.

Chris: We won't know who we are w/o him.

Louise: Who?

Chris and Angela speak at the same time.

Chris: Fred.

Angela: Chris's –

Louise: Why would you have to be without Fred?

Chris: Where's he from?

Louise: The Midwest.

Chris: That explains it.

Louise: Explains what?

Chris: His retroprocity.

Angela: That's not a word.

Chris: It is now.

Louise: Because you said it?

Chris: English is a living language. It breathes, my love, grows and changes. When people use it creatively, it is a happy, fluffy language. *In the beginning was the word.* And, baby, what a word it was. Happy, basking in its own originality. When someone spouts a cliché or a sequence of predetermined verbiage, another word wilts and dies. Children, don't let another word die. Everyone who believes in language, clap your hands.

Louise: I don't think Fred's portrayal is retro. I think it's hetero.

Chris: Two positions max?

Louise throws something at Chris. Angela and Chris join in and the rest of the cast reacts as they each enter the dressing room.

Louise: Stop. Oh please stop. I'm going to throw up. *(Everyone stops. It's a trick: Louise begins the battle all over again)*

Chris: A fiendish trick, wench.

Angela: Off with your head.

Louise: Help!

Fred: *(nonchalant)* She threw up on me once, it was pretty disgusting.

Chris: *(to Fred, while still battling Louise)* Really?

Fred: Really.

Costume Parade

The actors in costumes parade a bizarre, out-of-real-time fashion show.

Jean: It's ok to be real.

Billy: It's ok if you can handle it. I can't handle it.

Louise: You know, I hate myself for being a woman. I don't know why really. Sometimes when I can't say anything it's because I don't want to cry.

Trudy: Do you ask yourself hard questions?.

Louise: Maybe I learned it from my mother. And my father. And my teachers. School.

Henry: Yeah. Maybe people who don't ask themselves much don't ask other people anything either?

Trudy: Did you ever have anyone you could say, tell me a story? And they could. And would?

Louise: Sometimes I think I was a misogynist in another life and that's why I have to be a woman and why I don't like it. Much. I like it some. Sometimes I like it. I don't like women.

Marge: I'm a housewife. A houseperson. I'm not a wife anymore.

Henry: The association between love and betrayal is deep. And complex. It twists around so I can't untie all its knots.

Wilbur: It can be a slow slog through unfelt feelings.

Louise: There are some women I like but mostly I don't like any woman much. I could never make love to a woman. See her naked, her breasts soft, dangling.

Angela: I have dreams where he's watching over me.

Wilbur: People make the world in their own image and the more they change their self image, the more the world changes. The more we're hypnotized by greed and paralyzed by dominance, the more the world will become what it is now.

Louise: We each made a little bitty space for each other but it's not enough to raise a child. I miss you or I miss my life. I'm so scared.

Billy: I'm not as brave as you are.

Louise (*thinking about her unborn baby*): I'm not a horrible person. I know what I'm supposed to feel. (*changing the subject*) If I could touch another woman, make love to a woman, I might like myself better.

Marge: No one's scared of me. Maybe they should be. I've killed a lot of people.

Henry: I guess it's time to revision my dreams but...

Marge: Murder is an ugly business. A lonely business.

Henry, Chris and Angela find themselves facing each other.

Henry: I have a question: do I begin with my old dreams and analyze the results as they played themselves out, then try to make reasonable amendments.

Chris: Or do I just embrace completely new dreams?

Angela (*she has the pink teddy bear*): Or do I relinquish dreams altogether and plunge into spontaneity?

Marge: Usually we reckon the worthiness of a life in retrospect but when you kill you have to reckon forward into the future and choose to extinguish something without knowing its potential value.

Henry: Tremble. When he touched me, I trembled. First in gratitude for the embrace, then with pleasure. I see things when I'm with him that I don't see when he's not there.

Chris: I found out I was capable of being dependent. Emotionally.

Henry: Then, when he left...

Marge: He didn't like to wait for me to put in my diaphragm.

Angela: Oh my God! Remember diaphragms?

Henry: I knew myself as someone who would fight to the death for stupid shit until I was elevated not to sainthood, but to fatherhood...

Wilbur: ...which is pretty close in terms of self sacrifice. Taking care of someone precludes destruction and I don't care what anyone says, any other stance is hypocrisy.

Chris: And worthy of condemnation.

Wilbur: Take it from me, time doesn't heal shit. But books are good.

Louise: I read a lot of books. In one of them there was a description of a field of trees whose leaves were baby purgatives.

Billy: Everything goes better with a partner damn it.

Louise: Chew on a leaf or two and your period would come.

Marge: I think I've killed about ten or eleven proto-people.

Louise: If you had succumbed to a night, a morning, or afternoon of passionate embrace.

Marge: My kills weren't accidents.

Louise: Or if you had succumbed to force.

Marge: They were premeditated murders.

Louise: If it isn't a good time for you to rear a child. Famine, emotional, actual, or imagined.

Marge: Up close and personal.

Louise: The Jesuits burned those fields down to the ground.

Wilbur: Murder requires the annihilation of love before any material thing is destroyed.

Angela: The bathroom was covered with those black and white tiles and I was ripped. We were fooling around and I said, just a sec, so I could go put in my diaphragm. It was new -- it came with a stick thing with the notches on it and a rubber spaceship from war of the worlds. You took the spaceship and pulled it tight, like an arrow, then turned it over and upside down, to lock it in place onto the stick thing. I was squatting so I could slide the stick thing inside my vagina, rotate the stick and pop the diaphragm into place. In theory. Every time I'd get the diaphragm loaded on the stick, (I was supposed to spread the sperm killing goo *thickly* so no renegade baby-making spermies could breach the rubber spaceship barrier) it shot across the bathroom, spraying goo, bouncing off the walls. I couldn't stop laughing. Three times I had to retrieve the bouncing rubber, clean the walls and the floor of goo (which was really difficult because black and white tiles move around a lot when you're stoned). Then wash the diaphragm, put more goo on it, stretch it onto the notched thing, turn it over and kapow. He's in the bedroom going, *What are you doing?* All we wanted to do was fuck. I'm hysterical, laughing, trying to get my new plastic slingshot and slimy spaceship to protect me from something I didn't even know I couldn't have.

Henry: I can't relocate love.

Wilbur: Grow a new one.

Chris: Where is there a love that can't get deformed, diseased or destroyed?

Angela (*sings*): "Where is love? Does it fall from skies above?" (*she mimes dodging something horrible falling from the sky*)

Henry: I don't need anything but love and a toothbrush.

Chris: I cannot abandon exstastic subtlety.

Angela: What I liked about him was the roundness of his head. And the kindness of his actions.

Louise: The grace of his tenderness.

Marge: When he smiled.

Wilbur: I received an invitation, to the co-existence of love and ethical behavior. But, operationally, how is that done exactly? Ghost loves call to me. Wail in disbelief that their lives are over. The graveyard gave me x-ray vision. It's not pretty, what we are inside.

Billy: Hey you, I still love you. Most of me is invisible to most people. Most of you is invisible to most people. But we see each other. We are not invisible to each other. Let's take the plunge, walk off the edge into liquid love or madness. How corny can I get? I can know about you and still love you.

Jean: What I know about you makes it difficult to love you.

Chris: Back at square one. Facing the future.

Wilbur: A bit more dissipated than before.

Angela: Thank god for dissipation.

Marge: The ache of memory.

Henry: The burn of hope.

Angela: And the feel of water.

Chris: I am so horribly homesick, a continuous, baseline nausea. Missing things I can't describe but I'll know if I ever fucking feel them again.

Fred: What constitutes courage?

Wilbur: A certain ruthlessness when it comes to desire.

Henry: You gotta do what you gotta do.

Angela: When we were together, we couldn't stop laughing. That didn't last long. How did we become those lunatics in the car? Maybe I have to ruin everything I touch.

Fred: It's a crazy world - somebody has to like it.

Wilbur: It's the lay of the land. The way we are now: Scheming, lying, cheating, plundering each other. Trying to extract life.

Fred: Blood and guts.

Louise: Tits and ass.

Marge: My first feeling, knowing he wasn't coming back, was relief. A sense of doom diminished, imminent danger lessened. Then resurgent waves of exstatic longing. My physical and emotional bodies crying out for him. His smell. The way he was next to me on the bed. Empty. *Whatsoever things be true, whatsoever things be good, whatsoever things be beautiful - think on these things.*

Fred: Who's screaming? I hear screaming. Can anyone hear screaming?

Louise: Does loving Fred mean I have to want to give him babies? Flesh of our flesh. What's the point? What does it prove?

Trudy: Thank you, everyone, that was great. Cue to cue in ten.

Trudy lights a cigarette, walks over to Louise.

Trudy: I don't envy you.

Louise: Well, who would?

Trudy: Angela.

Louise: Why?

Trudy: Did you know she was married?

Louise: Who's she married to?

Trudy: She's not anymore. She got divorced.

Louise: Has she had every type of relationship possible?

Trudy: Meow.

Louise: A long time ago?

Trudy: Not so long really. Her husband expected her to make him some babies but she couldn't. I think she really loved him. Have you considered marrying Fred? Or is it against your politics? *(pause)* People are only interested in their own survival.

Louise: I hate that vision.

Trudy: I want a world where I can feel safe and beautiful and loved.

Louise: An oasis that will sustain me.

Trudy: I'm so tired of trying to transform reality.

Actors leave the stage and head for the dressing room to take off their costumes. Billy comes up onstage.

Billy: Is something bothering you, Louise?

Louise: Poised politely, patiently, portentously incapable of living outside the symbols. I'm fine. *(Louise stands up and twirls into a leap)* I like it [*her costume*] it works.

Billy: I like the color. To live from the heart, denying nothing.

Louise *(she has the pink teddy bear)*: The color's great. Denial so deep there is no other truth.

Billy: Loins disenfranchised by events too long out of control. It suits you. Sifting through the garbage, I read the signs of my becoming in the actions and responses of others. My sign posts.

Louise: Strangers traveling far together alone.

Marge: By myself.

Henry: Lead me to myself.

Wilbur: Demon dreams dawn the apocalypse.

Chris: Angel dreams dawn the new age.

Wilbur: Bestial dreams dawn the new world order.

Henry: Bohemian dreams dawn paradise.

Louise: I could use Harold's magic purple crayon to draw myself into the story of myself.

Billy: She was putting on her shoes. She was very calm.

Trudy: Are you talking to me?

Billy: I'm not sure.

Trudy: Would you like me to listen?

Billy: Oh. Yeah. Yes, I would. Would you? Do you have time? Trudy, Jean is leaving me. What was your first reaction?

Trudy laughs. Billy looks hurt.

Trudy: No. No, I didn't think it was funny. I thought the way you burst out with it was funny.

Billy: It's not funny.

Trudy: No.

Billy: Years we've been together. I'm really used to her. I love --. She smells like home. She was putting on her shoes and leaning over and she looked up at me and I thought about kissing her and her lips opened and out it came, *I'm sorry*. I knew what she meant for a second and then another part of me refused to believe it.

Trudy: Been there.

Billy: I just kept babbling on and on and she was so calm. I sounded like a lunatic.

Trudy: I'm sorry?

Billy: She never says she's sorry. She thinks that there's nothing to be sorry about, if you're willing to work on it. If there's anything at all left to work on. Sorry means there's nothing left worth working on.

Trudy: I wonder - -

Billy: What?

Trudy: Whether romance can last long term? Have you ever seen it?

Billy: No. But I believe in a lot of things I've never seen.

Trudy: We all think we're failing but everyone else is failing too. So that can't be failing, if that's what we are. People don't know how to find or get or do whatever it takes to make love last.

Billy: I think that some people know how to love.

Trudy: It's not an individual thing. It's a cultural crisis. We need scientific experiments to determine all the salient factors that can keep love alive. Then we can construct a love nutritional pyramid. You need two servings of hugs a day, 32 ounces of kissing.

Billy: 64.

Trudy: A cup of intimacy.

Billy: A kilo of orgasms.

Trudy: See? All we have to do is apply our knowledge of the nutritional love pyramid to live happily ever after.

Billy: You're making fun of me.

Trudy: Me?

Paradise Lost

Angela, back in her own clothing more or less, sits sprawled on her throne, reading a detective story. Marge is still in her costume, sitting on the rocks, pretending to herself that she is dangling her feet in a stream. Louise is dancing slowly, expressively.

Marge (*she has the pink teddy bear*): I hope we get out of here before midnight.

Angela: Mmm.

Louise: I hate tech.

Angela: Too much time to think.

Jean: We never talk about anything serious.

Billy: That way we never have to argue.

Jean: That's paranoid.

Billy: Ok, if you say so. I don't like arguing.

Jean: I didn't say we never argue. We argue.

Billy: But not when we're talking --

Jean: Because we never talk.

Billy: Works for me.

(pause)

Jean: I'm not sure it works for me.

Billy: What do you want me to do? Be false to my self?

Jean: No. The opposite. I want to see you find yourself. A central self between the passionate creature you are in bed and the analytical dynamo you are in the world.

Billy: But that's me. I am a creature of opposites. Dualities.

Jean: When someone reaches out to someone who is also reaching out to them, for an extended period, like in a conversation...

Billy: Ok.

Jean: They create a circle of meaning.

Billy: You want us to create a circle of meaning?

Jean: Yes. And back the fuck off or I won't even try to explain this to you. The awareness of a complete self doesn't occur until it's called out to play, to engage with an *other*. To extend in time with someone else. It's a process. And it's like vampires. It can't come in unless you invite it.

Billy: Vampires?

Fred: It's the interpretation.

Wilbur: Always.

Fred: He's got to be more than a cypher, a symbol of male insensitivity.

Wilbur: I would hope so.

Fred: But I lose my sense of what's real to him. He gets swept up in every event. No larger perspective. Do you think he's pathetically materialistic?

Wilbur: We know a lot of people like that.

Fred: Yeah. I guess. Jason, the wall street yahoo.

Wilbur: Sure. He's a progenitor of the whole concept of social, cultural advancement. Before this, society is more or less static. We're born into what seems to be an amorphous sea of relationships. Then you realize that there are hierarchies, of values, of wealth, health, status, beauty. So, here at the end of his adventures, his youth gone, he is still striving.

Fred: Progress through social climbing. Hug and look.

Wilbur: Riding a big new wave isn't as easy for the surfers as it might look from the shore.

Fred: What do you mean?

Wilbur: Kingship. Kings are boring old farts now. But this is before all that. Kingship was cool, like motorcycle gangs in the 1950's; a new breed of masculinity. Young men, rebelling against restrictions - matriarchy and tribalism... there was no cynicism about it. It's all about adventure.

Marge: Do you ever look directly at the sun? I do. All the time. If you look long enough you'll see: there's a palace there. A king lives there with his queen, like Hindu gods, every moment is a dance and every dance is making love and from that heat and joy our world is fed and kept alive.

Billy: Why don't you have any sympathy for me?

Fred: Everything is always developing. That's so hard to grasp. Nothing will ever happen again. Every moment is dead as soon as it's born.

Billy: Look, nothing is ever simple. There was a whole lot going on at the time. Some of it we know about, some of it we don't and can only guess. Robert Graves says that Euripides was paid to clean up the real story and take the curse off Corinth because they killed thirteen of Medea's children.

Angela: I read that. They killed her children and wouldn't bury them, like in Antigone.

Billy: Because she killed Creon's daughter, Creusa. And Creon was pissed. But even in those days people took Medea's side and no one wanted to go to Corinth. People identify with the one who's left behind.

Marge: I want to go to a party. All the people there are people I've loved. Even if I only loved them for a minute. Even if we only shared that vertigo for a few minutes. They'd all be there and we'll be wearing amazing clothes. Our dream clothes. And we look beautiful. There is an orchestra and we dance and laugh and eat and play. The sun is warm.

Henry & Trudy: I'm looking for a man who treats me better than I treat myself.

Trudy: Do you know what a hope chest is? I haven't seen one in a long time. The last one I saw, I was about fourteen. It was a big, pirate sized chest, but in more modern, sleek, cherry wood. It was really beautiful. And inside there was a lot of shiny soft satin. There was a nightgown for her wedding night, doily thingies out of real handmade lace, baptism dresses for the children she hoped to have, baby blankets, napkins. She said she had crystal too but that was downstairs. It had to be kept separately. *You collect things for when you get married*, she said. My hope chest is invisible. There's a sidewalk here that sparkles at night. The surface you walk on is made out of hexagonal sparkling tiles. In my hope chest, I am walking down that street with my true love on a starry night, washed by a summer breeze, under tall trees.

Billy: Euripides isn't just doing a whitewash on Corinth. He also uses his platform to critique the value of expansionism, to critique a progress that exalts the individual above relationship.

Marge: He wanted me to submit to the reign of terror he called *being in control*. He assumed that the only alternative to him being *in control*, was for me to be *in control*, so he interpreted my refusal to accept his control as rebelliousness with intent to *take control*. So he tried to crush me.

Chris enters with cards.

Billy: Euripides wants the audience to identify with Jason.

Louise: But he takes Medea's side.

Billy: Emotionally. And so does the audience at that time. Remember, going in, that the audience starts out against Corinth and for Medea. It's a feat, what he does is extraordinary. He keeps our emotional allegiance with Medea while forcing us to identify with Jason.

Wilbur: Which forces us to confront ourselves as social climbers.

Billy: To feel deflated - the opposite of what social climbers want to feel, the opposite of what Jason wants to feel, the opposite of what expansionist Athenians want to feel.

Fred: Deflated.

Billy: Defeated.

Angela: And just plain wrong. His final betrayal of Medea is inevitable because from his first meeting with her, he was betraying her.

Louise: He was always using her.

Angela: Always.

Henry: He uses everyone.

Angela: Women are tools for his advancement.

Wilbur: His progress stops only when he has vanquished, eviscerated all available natural resources.

Fred: This is a long time before humanism.

Billy: Some people think that Socrates and Euripides -

Wilbur: Who were in school together by the way -

Billy: - helped define the intellectual climate that gave birth to humanism.

Henry: He said I only want him for his body. That's ridiculous. He has a terrible body. I know. I know. If I was using someone for their body, it wouldn't be him.

Marge: A storm brings news from the mid-Atlantic, a downpour of ocean air. Generativity astounds and pacifies. Electrifies. Magnifies. Magnetizes. Sweet wet drops lather down, run rivulets of whole dreams onto the sidewalk rushing downhill to flood unwary lowlands. I could not live up to the décor.

Chris and Wilbur are playing UNO.

Chris: Why do you want to sleep with him?

Henry: He's the most sensuous person I've ever met.

Chris: Maybe you shouldn't have told me.

Henry: Why?

Wilbur: Now he seems sort of attractive to me too.

Henry: What kind of a friend are you?

Chris: Horny.

Henry: What if he doesn't like me?

Wilbur: Everybody likes you.

Chris: He took me to Paris. He said my eyes should be open to beauty. He meant art and architecture, and Paris *is* beautiful. But what opened my eyes was a peacock. Peacocks parading in the park. They don't look like much: brown-grey, when they're hanging out. But chase them, make them angry and they fan a tail that flashes a most intricate, exquisite, glorious -

Angela: Peacock feathers are bad luck in the theatre.

Marge: Somewhere I am starving and people are being very cruel to me.

Fred: What about vanity?

Billy: Vanity is definitely an element of heroism.

Fred: Cold? Heartless?

Angela: Not cold, selfish.

Fred: Sell fish. Step up and get your trout right here. Fifty cents, a pound.

Billy: Not heartless, childish.

Fred: A chill dish can be just the right thing on a stifling summer afternoon.

Angela: She wouldn't kill her children to break his heart if he didn't have one to break.

Louise: She knows he's got a heart. She's going to prove it to him by destroying it.

Marge: I hate Medea.

Angela: I hate what she does.

Billy: I love Medea.

Marge: She sells her soul (*an afterthought:*) or a man who doesn't love her.

Angela: I love her courage.

Louise: I hate that she'll sacrifice anything for a man. First, she kills so he can have what he wants. Then, so he *can't* have what he wants. What does she want that doesn't have to do with him?

Trudy: I hate Jason more. He's a kiss-ass social climber.

Louise: He's for sale. Like today, everybody today is for sale.

Marge: If it can't be sold, break it.

Angela: Use its component parts.

Marge: In pieces it's so much more portable.

Louise: The wall street atom bomb: Destroy companies and lives in order to release more wealth than anyone can possibly know what to do with.

Angela: I hate that she gets so into revenge. That's what sinks it below the mud flats of melodrama into the abyss of tragedy.

Billy: Without revenge there wouldn't be tragedy.

Louise: Is that true?

Marge: I'm not sure. I'd have to think about it.

Billy: Sometimes I think that w/o revenge, there'd be no stories at all.

Marge: Stories that have morals have someone do something wrong then the plot moves forward so we can learn from the mistakes that were done that set the plot going in the first place. There has to be change, growth or degeneration, but it doesn't have to be about revenge.

Trudy (*she has the pink teddy bear*): But there have to be mistakes. Because fucking up is the human condition.

Billy: Sure. But tragedy is triggered by an inevitability. Inevitability is fate. Fate is the working out of revenge.

Louise: Wait a second. When Oedipus sleeps with his mother, that's not revenge.

Billy: Ok. But it's not tragic either, it's just kinky. When he gouges out his eyes, he's taking revenge out on himself for sleeping with his mother. Then it's tragedy.

Louise: Revenge is bad.

Billy: But it's exciting. And in plots it's not presented as bad as long as the thing that was done that brought about the revenge was worse.

Angela: Running away.

Marge: That's a sort of a passive aggressive revenge.

Louise: What about happy endings?

Billy: Revenge inside out. It's still an eye for an eye only in a positive way: you gave so much, you'll have a lot coming to you. (*pause*) I like Medea because she doesn't look back.

Louise: But you said she didn't really kill her children.

Billy: But in the play she does.

Angela: She's not like Lady Macbeth. Jason is the schemer, manipulating her. Oh, wait, Jason is Lady Macbeth. Shakespeare did a gender bender on it.

Billy: And complicated the psychology. It was two thousand years later.

Angela: Medea is Macbeth, without the ghost.

Billy: Because Medea has no guilt; she's not haunted by her conscience. The Messenger is her conscience.

Marge: In a land before guilt.

Angela: In a time where love --

Louise: And Jason is Lady Macbeth without the nightmares.

Billy: Jason has no conscience. He wants what he wants.

Angela: When he wants it.

Marge: In a world without doubt.

Louise: Shakespeare is totally Freud. Wow.

Billy: Medea is a murderer, not a social climber.

Wilbur: Lucretia Borgia was a ruthless murderer *and* a successful social climber.

Louise: But Medea isn't a social climber. Medea doesn't kill to win things or status. She does it to win a man. She does it for his love.

Billy: *All's fair in love and war.*

Louise: You don't believe that.

Billy: But I've seen it: I know it exists.

Marge: There's murder-murder, homicide. And emotional murder...

Louise: Psychological murder...

Wilbur: Suicide is murder.

Marge: War is murder.

Angela: War is definitely murder.

Louise: We don't even know why we go to war. We accept without question the ever-presence of mass murder.

Wilbur: (*sings*) "There's no business, like show business." That's tragedy for you: There is no excuse because no excuse is necessary.

Marge: It's the working out of fate.

Fred: Fate devours individuality.

Wilbur: Individual will becomes subservient to a ceaseless flow of events generated from an initiating...

Billy: Sin.

Wilbur: Well, yes, sins like fear, greed.

Chris: Sins that break the social covenant –

Louise: Like revenge.

Fred: Murder.

Louise: Do unto others.

Angela: You know, violence can be funny. Somehow, twisted around, you can make almost any kind of violence funny. You can even make hurting children funny. But you can't make killing children funny.

Fred: You were thinking of making it funny?

Angela: I'm just saying.

Chris: There's dead baby jokes.

Henry: I know some.

Trudy: Me too. What present do you get for a dead baby?

Henry: A dead puppy. How many dead babies does it take to paint a house?

Fred: Depends how hard you throw them.

Angela: What's brown and gurgles?

Marge: A baby in a casserole.

Wilbur: How do you know when a baby is a dead baby? (*no one knows*) The dog plays with it more.

Henry: How do you get 100 babies into a bucket?

Wilbur: With a blender.

Fred: How do you get them out again?

Marge: With tortilla chips.

Billy: What gets louder as it gets smaller?

Jean: A baby in a trash compactor.

Wilbur: How do you make a dead baby float?

Chris: Take your foot off of it's head. They're both deranged. That's the tragedy. There's not one sensible person in the whole story if you ask me. They're a bunch of blind Oedipae.

Angela: Multiple Oedipus's.

Wilbur: Edified by Oedipae.

Louise: How many legs is that? I mean, all together?

Fred: Octopae. That's pretty good.

Henry: What wouldn't you do?

Marge: When I get so depressed that I start thinking about killing something, I take a valium and go to bed.

Angela: Meaningless sex for hours, will revive your will to live.

Trudy: Or not.

Wilbur: What can't you live without?

Billy: You're leaving me, taking a piece of skin slowly, trying not to tear, pulling. Pulling me apart. Trying to get away, drawn tight, a tug rope, no - a tugboat, caressing, pressing up against an ocean liner.

Henry: Do you think killing her children is suicidal?

Louise: No.

Angela: Not at all.

Marge: It's murder. Your children aren't you. They're an other. Killing your children is murder.

Louise: Without a doubt.

The card game ends.

Angela: When she gave herself over to him, when she gave her will over to him, that was suicidal. Killing the children is reclaiming her life.

Louise: That is so deeply twisted. Anyway, she didn't really kill them.

Trudy: There was a couple who lived on our block who were always fighting. One day she ran him over with her car.

Fred: Ran him over?

Trudy: Yup. The police took her to jail while he was in the hospital. But he didn't press charges and they're still together.

Louise: Is that good or bad?

Chris: Slowing down.

Angela (*she has the pink teddy bear*): Allowing people to show themselves.

Fred: Time to really hear you.

Henry: What am I looking for?

Chris: I have all this grief and terror, I just want someone to stop long enough to ask me about it. But every day --

Henry: If you touch someone, right away it means you have to fuck them.

Trudy: People are scared to touch because they have so much hate built up inside them they think it'll burst out and stain the world with its stench.

Henry: Or they have so much love pent up inside them, they think it'll burst out and embarrass the shit out of them.

Wilbur: That's it. Another day. Set the alarm. Take a sleeping pill. Brush your teeth. Thank god I still have my teeth.

Billy: And the rain falls on my life and someday things will grow again. A fern delicately spiraling open into the light, making itself known. I create my fate. I reach for the sunshine of your love.

Jean: And what I heard you say? I want you to be what I want you to be so that I can love you the way I am determined to love.

Jean & Angela: I don't want to learn love.

Marge (*she has the pink teddy bear*): I want to know love.

Trudy: Places!

Tempest

Angela is sprawled on her throne or near it. Louise is dancing. Marge is dipping her feet into the stream.

Marge: A dark room. A tall man says, *There's something wrong with you*. I believe him. I'm in a chair, as far from his sinister entreaties as I can get. Never far enough. In the sun, peace lingers on my mind like salt sea air: fragile, bracing, true.

Louise: My friends say, *It's the 80's. The 60's were about how things should be*. Now, the hippies have morphed into yuppies and all anyone cares about is getting as much stuff as possible.

Henry: *Who dies with the most stuff wins*.

Marge: Stuff every orifice.

Chris: *I'm spending my kids' inheritance*.

Angela: Kennedy said we weren't supposed to be about getting, he said to ask ourselves what we could give. Reagan is all gimme, gimme, gimme.

Marge: Cracks open the sky.

Louise: Thunder.

Marge: I'm on a special ten day diet.

Angela: Lightning.

Marge: I wish he had never gone out on that damn ship. Winging his way through danger after danger. I quit smoking. Medea should never have met him. The Golden Fleece would still be attached to happy, pudgy sheep grazing peacefully in Colchis. Medea would not have killed her brother. I'm craving cigarettes and Napoleons. When they came to Corinth, this city, my city, one of the loveliest cities in Greece - we have a great view of olive fields and the ocean - when they fled here, their arms full of golden furs, murderers, they were accepted immediately. Greek city-states are always looking for go-getters. Trudy's smoking, can you smell it? They were loved and successful here. They've killed a few more people since. Jason doesn't like to be delayed. If someone gets in his way, Medea takes care of it for him. But now, everything has gone wrong. Nothing is right. A plague of hatred has descended on our city. A puff, a lick, a taste. (*Louise, as the Chorus, makes a horrid, moaning sound*)

Angela: He was more experienced but I didn't feel like asking him anything. I thought if he were more experienced, he would take more time, be gentler or more careful or

something and I didn't know if it was going to hurt or be really crazy. Flat on my back. I can't remember any physical sensations. I was probably way too freaked out to feel much. Except a certain breathlessness because his weight was pressing against my chest. He didn't kiss me while he fucked me. I remember that really clearly. And later I even thought that in some ways fucking had been the end of kissing, because once a guy knew you would do it, then kissing was only a means to an end whereas before that, kissing was the whole show and they really put a lot into it. I miss that. But I didn't kiss him either. I was trying to breathe. I liked it better when we lay on the rug and gave each other zipper burns. Nakedness created a great distance between us, an intimate and not very tender distance. I had expected to be showered with affection. Afterwards. I mean, he had made it sound so important. I thought if I give him something he wanted so much, he'd be glad, right? No way. Not at all. Nothing like that. He seemed almost disgusted. Like he was looking at the leftover turkey after devouring his thanksgiving dinner. Worse than contempt.

Marge: Things aren't going well. Jason has married Creon's daughter. Creon is the King here. Medea is desolate. She won't eat. She can't sleep. She just lies there. Crying. The children's cries she notices as much as a rock notices waves crashing against it. She's talking to herself. She's not a regular person, you know, she's the granddaughter of the sun. She *is*. The sun himself. She's a pedigree person. She's very sensitive. She has great powers. Jason should not have abandoned her.

Wilbur enters as the Tutor.

Wilbur: Good day, Nurse. What are you muttering about?

Marge: What else?

Wilbur: The same?

Marge: Worse.

Wilbur: Ah.

Marge: Something is working on your mind. The children are frightened because they know the adults are out of control. People are starving and their screams echo my own.

Louise: When I'm freaking out I eat rice.

Marge: I ate rice when I had my first abortion. Rice pudding.

Angela: There is something very comforting about rice.

Marge: Something is working on your mind, tutor. Share your thoughts with me.

Wilbur: We live with the madness of rampant individualism. A statelessness that seems good: floating in a still pond, nothing rippling. Nothing to sway us. They say that Creon

fears Medea's temper. When we deny our most fundamental human need for social responsibility, our humanity is diminished. He will banish her. And the children.

Marge: Will Jason allow this?

Wilbur: Old love has not the piquant charm of an unquenched passion. He lives in the palace now. There is certainly wisdom in having Medea elsewhere.

Marge: Has he no heart?

Wilbur: As we all do, my sweet. And, as we all do, his heart beats for himself, first and last.

Chris: *Hopelessly grey*, he said. *Really?* I said. *Absolutely. No solutions*, he said. *Should we just die then?* I said. I was joking. *I don't see why not*, he said, *there really isn't much to live for if it's all dress up and acquisition. Then, at the end of the day, as they say across the pond, ending up tout seul. Aching. Wretched. Alone. Inhabiting a series of social rituals. Avoid taboos. Discover nothing. Share in the creation of nothing. Deadly. Brilliant.*

Henry: If an angel came to you and told you could write your destiny - what would you write?

Wilbur: An adventure.

Angela: A romance.

Trudy: An odyssey.

Fred: *A tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.*

Marge: I just dropped a glass.

Angela: It shattered all over the floor.

Louise: An epic.

Jean: You took better care of the cat.

Wilbur: She cried.

Marge: A tragedy.

Jean: A comedy.

Chris: *There's nothing in the house to eat.*

Henry: What was the name of that man who said he would call?

Billy: A romance.

Louise: Poetry or prose?

Billy: Poetry.

Wilbur: Perspectives change.

Louise: Loving is supposed to be its own reward.

Chris: Hating has its advantages.

Trudy: It would be nice to be loved because someone wanted to reward themselves.

Chris: Hating is satisfying.

Louise: Loving is better exercise.

Angela: It would feel a little weird to be loved because somebody needed the exercise.

Henry: Sport fucking.

Chris (*he has the pink teddy bear*): Lust.

Angela: I've always been lucky in lust.

Marge: Tch, tch. Run inside children, there's food inside. Run along. (*to Wilbur*) Keep them away from her. She is not herself. Her rage will find its mark. May we be spared her fury.

Angela: Why can I not die?

Louise: I hear a voice. I hear a cry.

Wilbur: Then I said, *It's unlikely. I'm not convinced that heaven is ordered hierarchically any more than it can possibly be organized alphabetically.*

Angela spoofs her part.

Angela: Women of Corinth, do not despise me.

Billy: Terry, the lights have to get brighter when Medea enters. She brings the sun and death.

Trudy: Try bringing up five.

Terry: Ok. How's this?

Billy: Better.

Fred and Angela are conversing.

Fred: What is beautiful about men?

Angela: What is beautiful about women?

Fred: When I think of female beauty I see women dancing naked in and out of waterfalls falling into dark pools receiving the downpour. Bird sounds.

Angela: When I think of male beauty, I think of courage - men performing acts of courage. Utter silence.

Trudy: Good. Let's go on. Run your entrance again, Medea.

Angela: Why can I not die?

Trudy: Ok, ladies, skip to the end of the scene.

Marge, Angela and Louise literally "skip" through their blocking to the end of the scene, while...

Trudy: Terry, take this cue off Louise.

Terry: Ok.

Louise: For just will be your revenge.

Trudy: Go.

Marge: When does it get easier?

Wilbur: Never.

Louise: I don't want to know what you think. I want to know what I think.

Some lights go up, others go down, as Chris enters as Creon. Like the others, he is partly in costume, partly in his own vestments.

Trudy: Fine. Chris, please do end cues. I want to make sure we have you covered through the whole scene.

Chris: Everyone asks how many lovers you've had but that is completely irrelevant. Who gives a shit really? What matters isn't how many but how much. How much did you love? How far were you willing to go?

Henry: Before you become entangled in my tempest: Have you ever cared enough to compromise? That's what I want to know.

The following is played very fast and silly. The actors utilize all styles of theater and a variety of accents, just messing around.

Chris: You! ... Til I have thrown you out of my city.

Angela: Destroy me! ... my city.

Chris: Witch! ... threats my city ... nothing to regret.

Angela: My fate ... fear not ... I submit.

Chris: You cannot stay.

Angela: It is my husband I hate ... I will do you no harm ... I beg you.

Chris: No. ... blah, blah, blah ... never!

Angela: *(on her knees)* Respect ... peace.

Chris: I am ... exile.

Angela: No! ... one day.

She grabs his hand.

Chris: What harm ... what mischief?

Angela: I beg you ... one more day.

Chris: One more day.

Angela: Great and noble ... blah, blah, blah....

Chris: ... blah .. by sunset tomorrow, with your children, or die.

Angela: *Thanks a lot.*

Trudy: Cue.

Terry: Sorry.

Billy: I want it like (*she claps her hands briskly*).

Trudy: Yeah, we know. We just missed the cue. Ok, Chris, do it again but so we can understand it, please. Terry, he's going to do it again.

Terry: Great, thanks.

Chris: ...with your children, or die.

Fred: We have achieved dominance over nature but we can't quit. Slash and subjugate.

Louise: Burn and annihilate.

Wilbur: Then come back a few years later and wonder why there's nothing there.

Louise: It's gone because we destroyed it.

Fred: So someone else couldn't use it.

Louise (*she has the pink bear*): Scorched earth --

Fred: -- policy.

Henry: Sometimes I don't want to compromise. Some things I want my own way.

Marge: No, it's ok, since you asked I'll tell you. I was lying flat on my back watching the color tv flicker out of focus over his right shoulder. I had my hand on the kleenex box on the bedside table on the right, in case I bled to death when my hymen broke, I mean, I did not know what to expect. Sometimes in movies, the sheets get really bloody when a girl loses her virginity.

Chris: Can you have true love more than once?

Louise: My mother's really into fate. Embrace your fate. *A proud man is in love with his fate*. How can anyone love something as big as that? I don't love my fate at all. I wish I had a different life altogether actually. Extraterrestrials fly by me on the street on their way to an imaginary series of important events.

Wilbur: When I'm alone, the meaning making moment belongs to me. I don't have to share or negotiate the interpretation of events.

Fred (*from Henry VIII*): *If we did think his contemplation were above the earth and fixed by spiritual object, he should still dwell in his musings; but I am afraid his thinkings are below the moon, not worth his serious considering.*

Angela: Medea, after she kills a whole lot of people, decides that bigamy is worse than murder.

Chris: An unusually fastidious woman, if you ask me...with your children, or die.

Lights fade to black, leaving Medea's face lit til the last possible moment. Chris exits. Angela remains onstage. Louise enters, perhaps with the pink bear.

Wilbur (*during the light change*): I move slower now, my steps in time with the rhythm of the heartbeat of the earth. I find it comforting.

Louise: I'm not sure when to come in.

Trudy: I'll show you in a sec.

The lights have gently changed and are bright on Louise.

Louise: We see...

Trudy: Wait a second, Lou.

Jean: I just can't go along with buying and selling and trading people: If I give you x, then you give me y. Then I'm supposed to give you c: so you can give me b: I want to vomit on your logic.

Billy: Don't. If you control the story, you control the game because the game is a subset of the story. You just need to quit your job.

Jean: So I can spend all my time devoted to you? You know that'll be worse. I felt so connected to you and for someone like me, who had never felt connected to anyone, ever, to feel that connected, it was huge. This is just going to get worse and worse until we accept the inevitable. It's over, Billy. I can't do it anymore, it's killing me.

Trudy (*to Billy*): What do you think?

Billy: Yeah. Ok.

Trudy: Ok, places for the next cue. Lou, the way you know when to come in is that your light starts to come up. Follow your light onto the stage. (*Louise is looking up and around at the lights above. Trudy gets up onstage to show her which light*) When you see this light.... Lou, you see this light?

Louise: Uh-hunh.

Trudy: When you see this light start to come up, that's when you enter. Chris, don't move until it gets really dim and then, when he's on his way out, Medea, you move into your new position and hold it.

Angela: *(looking up from her book)* Yup, ok.

Trudy: Places. *(People move to their places. Then)* Go.

Chris: ... with your children, or die.

Everything goes smoothly. Angela takes her position, then takes out her book to read, while...

Louise: We see the world turned upside down....

Billy: Keep going, Lou.

Billy and Trudy are conferring quietly while Louise is speaking.

Louise: Sacred rivers flow backward to their source and the sea grieves. Nature trembles because she knows that when we turn away from her, we turn against ourselves –

Billy: Keep going.

Louise: -- and we think ourselves free. We think it freedom to do damage, to break oaths, to defy the sacred knowledge of our hearts.

Trudy: Terry, can you bring it down a bit?

Terry: Right.

Trudy: Onward, Louise.

Louise: This must change. This will change. One day, Medea, women will know the glory of life. We will honor the song in our hearts, the freedom of oaths, and the harmony of all humankind. Then we will sing praises to ourselves and not to our oppressors.

Terry has been offering a variety of light options.

Billy: *(to Trudy:)* That's it.

Trudy: *(to Terry:)* That's it. *(to Louise:)* You might as well finish it.

Louise: Then men and women will cease lamenting. Then women will celebrate together with men.

Jean: Aargh, wow. Things are zooming. What did you give me? Why are you so uncomfortable with me socially? Your family is so - avoid dark skins and slanty eyes – white. Well, that's how it seems to me. Your family is culturally frigid. I remember the first time I ever heard a real laugh from you. I understand how brutalized you've been by lovers but I can't talk to you about it because you won't admit you've ever been hurt. And I never thought you were disgusting

Marge: Dearest obstacle, obviate, obfuscate me into ashes.

Trudy: Ashes from which a phoenix could be born.

Wilbur: Everybody hopes for annihilation sometimes. It's so much quicker than life with its (*estending the word:*) *torturously* long story development.

Marge: Everyone hopes for annihilation, if not for themselves, then for somebody else.

Wilbur: Now and then.

Marge: *If only they were gone. If I only I didn't have to feel this pain. If only my wounds would vanish.* I could be no longer wounded but dead. I like red jello.

Louise: Then we will take our place together, unique inside our natures. (pause) When women once again are honored, men, then, will *you* be truly free.

Trudy: Thank you.

Louise: This baby feels dead. I wish someone would come and rescue me from my life.

Trudy: Terry, nine is shining right in the front row. Take fifteen, everybody. We have to move a light.

Billy: Trudy, while we're at it, let's refocus the throne special.

Angela: What throne?

Billy: I know. I know.

Angela: Are we going to have a throne?

Billy: Yes, we will have a throne.

Angela: In time for an audience to see it?

Trudy: Angela, no break for you, I need you here.

Angela: Chris, *please* bring me something yummy.

Terry puts on music then comes down to refocus lights with Trudy. Billy watches over the process that lasts throughout intermission.

ACT TWO

The War between Men and Women

Angela looks up from her book to address the audience.

Angela: He was stunning. Grey eyes with blue. I was a freshman in college. It was Halloween. I had been to a bad party in a stupid costume and I came back to my dorm room, changed back into my favorite costume: bell-bottom-hip-huggers and a baby blue man-tailored, long-sleeved button-down shirt. My hair was all crazy. You know what he said to me? His first words to me? *Do you have a light?* I thought it was a poem: Beautiful. I put too much into that: I was smoking a cigarette. It was logical that I had a match or a lighter or something but I thought he was saying, *Will you be the light of my life? I see light in you. Will you share your light with me?* And I did. Have light. Light in me, mingled with love, looking for a person to shine on. And there he was. Needing light. My beautiful, desolate destiny. We fell in love. We saw each other a lot until we couldn't stand being apart. Then we got married. I dropped out of school but I kept reading. I read all the books everyone on the left was reading. I assumed that he was learning all this in some more kinetic way but I think we were living parallel realities; moving at different speeds to different destinations. We were smoking pot and hanging out. Everyone was exploring sex. It was a constant mosh pit everywhere we went. I loved it. I loved all of it. I loved being in love. I loved him touching me all the time. We made love several times a day, every day. Every day. I marked it on my calendar. I put a little heart for every time we had sex in the square for the day that it happened. Some days there were a lot of little hearts. I kept that calendar for a long time. It's gone now. I threw it out one night in a crazed attempt to eradicate him from my life. But ex-lovers are like martyrs: when you try and kill the memory of them, it gets stronger. I think I love him more *as time goes by*. He was moody and irresponsible but I blamed that on Vietnam: the blood spilled in his hands from the dying bodies of his friends. I didn't expect much from men. Men weren't expected to compromise with women. Women were the compromisers. And I was good at it. I adored him and we blended. But underneath lurked our inevitability. He left me for a woman who never loved him. She had already broken his heart once. He let her do it again. After that, his eyes lost their blue and became all grey.

Fred and Angela: You gotta hear this, you won't believe this part.

Fred: He was a war hero, for Christ's sake. But he was young, seventeen, eighteen. Most war heroes are young. After his first tour of duty, he came home to see his beloved. God, men are so dumb when it comes to women. They're going to the beach for the weekend. He

intends to go a day early but decides, *Hell, no, I spent enough time away from her. I don't want to spend another night without her.* He turns his car around and lets himself into their apartment. *She'll come home from work. We'll make love.* He falls asleep, wakes up to the sound of her laughter. *She's laughing.* But some guy is laughing too. Our war hero jumps up and shuts himself into the bedroom closet.

Fred and Angela: This really happened.

Angela: He stands in the closet while his woman has sex with some guy. When the lovers finally fall asleep, he sneaks out and drives around til the recruiting station opens. He re-enlists for his second tour of duty in Vietnam. But he still can't die. Home from his second tour of duty, he meets me. I thought he had a gift for life. After we're married for awhile, she calls him. Out of the blue. He doesn't tell me. She knows he's married to me. He knows he's married to me. They plan a trip together and off they go. By the time I find out, she's already dumped him. Again. While they were on the trip, she went off with another guy. Again. But something in me broke. I couldn't blend with him any more. I still love him, but there's no blending. I loved feeling part of something with him. Like we were in a love bubble in a lava lamp. He said to me, *Whenever I look at you, I feel good.* I wanted to kill him.

Fred and Angela: He believes in Armageddon.

Fred: He believes that Vietnam was Armageddon. He says nature's revenge for destroying her world is to transform us into insatiable cannibals devouring what we love.

Fred and Angela: I don't know what I think.

Angela: I miss him. No, I don't miss him. I don't think I even like him anymore. But I miss the blendedness. Every day of my life since then, I have missed our blendedness.

Angela and Fred play their first scene in Medea.

Fred: Well. Here I am. Are you happy? Is this what you want?

Angela: No.

Fred: You might have done what I asked. You might have acknowledged your superiors. Acquiesced. No. You are too selfish. Creature: I brought you here out of oblivion, into civilization. You are behaving like an imbecile. You think Creon is not aware of your vile curses? Fool. Would you undermine me? He is calm now. But you keep on. And yet I am here. I come here. I love you. You must accept Creon's offer. Leave this place. Go. Exile is better than death. I bring you gold for the children. There is nothing more I can do for you.

He holds out a bag of gold. She does not approach him. He throws the bag gently in her direction. She catches it. She looks at him for a long time, silent. Then she dumps the coins onto the ground.

Angela: Gold. I saved your life. Many times I have used my life to enhance your glory. So that you might know the sweet taste of victory. If there was anything, anything I had ever denied you - but there is no reason for your betrayal. You lied. A thousand times. And now to me. Your pledge was eternal devotion. And I pledged the same to you. If it please you, explain. Please, justify yourself. (*no one speaks*) No. Nothing. Do you think the gods are dead? Do you think your oaths will wash away with my brother's blood?

Fred: Perhaps you liked it in Colchis? Perhaps you would have preferred to stay with your sisters in the temple of your father? Perhaps you would rather not be revered for your wisdom and power? Perhaps you would have preferred to remain an unknown barbarian? As a prominent woman in a civilized society, you waste no time returning to a primitive state of mind; No, I will not dwell on an accident of birth. Medea, I do not marry the Princess because I have wearied of your charms. No, you know me not. We were exiles when we first came here. Or has that escaped your exacting memory? This city has been good to us. We have prospered. And now, I have an opportunity. To marry a King's daughter. Medea, I would be a fool not to pursue this. I do not want a bigger family. I do not need another lover. I want security. Vain jealousy clouds your mind. You cannot see that I am acting for all of us. I am not against you. You are ruining everything.

Angela: Can you believe your own lies? If you had meant honorably, you would not have kept your marriage plans secret from me. You would have spoken to me.

Fred: And you would have enthusiastically supported my plans. (*Angela spits*) I wanted our sons to be brothers to princes.

Angela: Lies.

Fred: You might see this as your good fortune.

Angela: You insult me. We are exiled once again. Oh, not you. You are a Prince.

Fred: You chose it so.

Angela: I have committed no crime.

Fred: You cursed the King.

Angela: I have kept my faith, my honor and my oaths. I do not marry another.

Fred: You curse the King and threaten his house.

Angela: And you also I curse.

Fred: Stop. If you want my help, you have it. Anything. But forget your anger, Medea. Enough damage has been done, woman. Exercise your grandfather's constancy.

Angela: Oh I am constant. I accept no help from you.

Fred: Creature, your barbarian logic is repulsive to me. You are making yourself insane.

Angela: Go. Go. Wrap your arms around your Princess. Love her. Enjoy the bounty of your civilized society. While you can. Go. Embrace your fate as it longs to embrace you.

Chris and Wilbur are in the dressing room putting on their beards for, respectively, Creon and the Tutor.

Chris: Do you have enough glue?

Wilbur: Mmm. Why?

Chris: Well, I'm running out and I thought we could split some for the show. You know, buy a new bottle and share it since we'll be using it every night for awhile but then maybe not for awhile.

Wilbur: We could do that.

Chris: Yeah. *(pause)* Do you speak any languages besides English?

Wilbur: No. Why? Your beard is crooked.

Chris: Shit. *(pause)* Were you always an actor?

Wilbur: Oh yes.

Chris: Do you have any children?

Wilbur: Yes. A daughter.

Chris: Does she live with you?

Wilbur: Are we playing twenty questions?

Chris: Do you live alone?

Wilbur: Do you?

Chris: Is it straight now?

Wilbur: Yes, I believe it is. Grey your temples more, blend them in with the beard. Here, I'll show you.

Henry: Is there such a thing as innocence?

Louise: I need to talk to you, honey.

Fred: (*absent minded*) What is it?

Louise: Nothing much.

Marge: You can fall in love with something that kills you.

Trudy: Rape is funny. It's not really like anything else, any other event.

Marge: Though there are times that seem to have a rapier tone, an edge, the threat of spiritual dismemberment.

Trudy: Or its actuality.

Louise: It's not that I don't love him, I do. I love him.

Trudy: First, there's the element of surprise, the unexpected. Comedy. A disjunction.

Marge: You're saying that rape has a comedic structure?

Jean: Stop that.

Billy: I'm not doing anything.

Trudy: Two things that don't seem to fit.

Jean: Yes you are. You're hurting me.

Billy: I'm asleep.

Trudy: But they're going to happen in tandem.

Jean: You're hurting me in your sleep.

Billy: How can I hurt you if I'm asleep?

Jean: Your unconscious hates me.

Trudy: Your world splits in two: these things that are happening do not mean the same thing. They cannot exist in one frame. One foot on the iceberg determined, floating away from the other foot, equally determined to be planted on the other iceberg. And you're split, broken, in slow motion, down the middle of your soul.

Louise: It's not that I don't love him, I do. I love him. (*Louise studies Fred who is mostly studying his script, when he's not looking at Louise who dances near and around him. Fred has accidentally sat down next to the pink teddy bear*) He's not terrifying. I'm terrified. Of losing him? No. Of losing myself. He is not me. He is outside me. And yet, because I am attracted to him, he seems to have some sort of control over my body, my external being. I revolve around him. I don't do it on purpose, it's how my body reacts to his body.

Marge: I was very young. But if I don't, I get sort of congested. The ripples of memory need room to spread out beyond me or they echo inside me and deafen me with unbearable reverberations.

Louise: I have mixed feelings about that. I'm very independent. So then, now, this baby is inside me, taking control over my inner spaces. Then where am I? He's outside me and it's inside me - growing. He seems to determine my outer existence. And a pregnancy will definitely determine my inner existence. Then where am I? What territory is left for me? Where do I locate myself? I mean, what if I need to find myself? Am I only a container and a satellite? Don't I have a sun inside me too? Aren't there any planets revolving around me?

Fred: Jason, Yang Gang man. Keeping up with the Creons. No one is this simple. He's too simple. No inner conflicts. What does he love? Revisioning Empire? With me as Emperor. He loves himself.

Marge: There are so many empty forms and rituals.

Fred: Does he love the Princess?

Trudy: Rape is a full out, balls-to-the-wall ritual.

Fred: Does the Princess love him?

Marge: A ritual of disenfranchisement.

Fred: No. She wants to marry a hero. Show off for her girlfriends.

Trudy: It's sadistic: Taking away someone's hegemony, throwing them into a borderless state of pain and fear.

Fred: He wants a throne. There are no classes. There is only power.

Trudy: The worst times are when cruel words accompany the actions. The captions make it harder to forget what happened. Advertisers and propagandists so get this.

Marge: Maybe that's why I always mute the ads. What's the difference between advertising and propaganda anyway?

Trudy: Nothing. Capitalism is a state that requires propaganda, to keep itself acceptable. To keep us from noticing that we are being raped, surreptitiously denied our dignity.

Wilbur: *While my guitar gently weeps.*

Trudy: Capitalism quietly splits the iceberg of life, separating work from meaningful action, language from desire, truth from beauty.

Wilbur: I felt reviled.

Louise: Time is a tyrant. Alarm clocks, calendars, scheduled payments. Einstein, Marx, Freud. A revolutionary holy trinity of twentieth century conceptualizations.

Chris: My sex life isn't (*he hesitates*)

Wilbur (*helping out*): The central motivating factor –

Chris: -- of my personality.

Louise: How can I choose between art and life?

Wilbur: I felt betrayed.

Louise: God, I can't even spell commitment.

Wilbur: *I am a man of constant sorrow.*

Louise: I have to decide what I want. (*pause*) I don't know what I want.

Henry: *You want me to come over to your place but your place isn't any fun. Every time I go over to your place all we do is fuck. Nothing happens at your place except distant acquaintances drop by, speak distantly of the rationalities that pass for emotions and then you want to - -*

Wilbur & Chris: Fuck.

Fred: Where is Shakespeare when you need him?

Billy: You make me feel like I need to do penance for all the crimes in the world. Penance for things I would never even dream of doing. Penance for things that might happen. A savings account filled with penance, just in case. How does who she is and what she does become my fault? My responsibility to ameliorate? Her pain?

Wilbur: So I said, *If you want to love me, you'll have to take me as I am.*

Trudy: It took me a long time to allow myself to understand that ripping the skin off anything is a violation of its integrity.

Marge: Rape detonates a missile inside paradise. A lot of women marry their rapists. Radioactive.

Trudy: No shit, lost, energy dissipates,

Marge: Resonates through my body,

Trudy: And then out to everyone else, waves, not of delight, but violation.

Marge & Trudy: I don't want to know what I know.

Louise: Time. I have time. There's always time. No, there's not always time. Sometimes it's too late.

Fred: What kind of man could Medea love?

Louise: Marxist time is unfolding, historical, Hegelian. We are indentured to the criminally insane. The purpose of historical time is to free us from our pathologically greedy oppressors.

Fred: Are all fairy tales about trying to get something?

Trudy: When I was about nine, my mother made me watch holocaust documentaries on tv. She said I should understand what we're up against.

Marge: I hated being a servant in my own house.

Chris and Henry are kung fu and sword fighting in slow motion.

Louise: Greed is real. Time is not. Real. Freudian time is a dreamscape of internal reckonings. He named furlongs, acres, miles of inner life after Greek drama.

Fred: I'd like to think it wasn't a hostile takeover. I like to believe they were in love.

Louise: If you're going in exactly the same direction, at exactly the same rate of acceleration, or deceleration, then you will see things exactly the same way. Otherwise, forget about it.

Fred: Are there any fairy tales where the task is to give someone a gift?

Louise: Einstein just went directly to the fundamental problem with time: space. And married them. Space/time. But he didn't say how people were supposed to cope with this totally gay wedding.

Marge: I have an A plus in the principles of perpetual servitude.

Fred: Where is there a mythology of gifting? When somebody loves you, that changes you.

Louise: Space/Time is where things really happen.

Fred: When I love someone, does that change her?

Louise: Not like here. Not in three dimensional story time.

Fred: It must. How could it not? Inter-affected. We are inter-affected.

Louise: We're just witnessing the fallout from the real action.

Marge: I couldn't believe they had no genuine sympathy for me. I couldn't believe that they would so dishonor me and then grin and tell me how much it meant to have a mother and a wife like me.

Fred: People love the way they understand love to be.

Angela: Maybe my love will light his way back to his real self. Fat chance.

Wilbur: What if that is his real self?

Marge: They could have paid someone to do what they expected from me. They have never shown any interest in my personhood. To them, I was the holy ghost, gliding through an invisible day, doing invisible deeds, facing invisible foes, thinking invisible thoughts, feeling invisible joys and irrelevant sorrows. They were the "actors," center stage, spotlight.

Wilbur: Is there such a thing as innocence?

Louise: Marx (historical time) meets Freud (dream time) and Einstein (space time) at the crossroads of social theory and they battle. Behemoths, destroying cities, villages and lives with their enormous, philosophical, dinosaurian, webbed feet.

Fred: *That would be something, really would be something, to meet you in the pouring rain, mama, meet you in the falling rain.*

Wilbur: But it does belong to them because they were willing to use force against other human beings in order to take it.

Angela: I must have had a mythical man in mind.

Trudy: It's not real until you communicate it to someone.

Marge: *Keep still: Your story isn't good enough to be real.*

Trudy: It's not real if you don't tell it.

Marge: Toxic waste. The small world. A world of interpersonal events and miniscule moments of possibility.

Louise: Einstein and Marx inspired a lot of death. Atom bombs and revolutions.

Marge: Everywhere I've ever lived there is a style of existence whereby cleaning is no longer a sacred act but a chore for menials.

Wilbur: Shit happens. And we think of it as ugly if we think of it at all. Mostly we ignore it and it piles up.

Louise: Freud is the peacemaker. Ok, all you little psyche bits, let's all try to get along now. Id! Id!! Stop that. Behave yourself. Try and get along with the other personality factors.

Wilbur: Garbage.

Louise: Superego, I can do this. If you stop doubting me for two seconds. Let me think a clear thought without you barging in and taking over.

Wilbur: Garbage in the mind makes people crazy, especially if they can't talk about it.

Angela: No matter what I accomplish, it all comes down to my cunt: that's all anyone wants to know anything about. Who are you fucking? Who are you going to marry? Where are you parking your yoni these days?

Wilbur: Garbage in the heart builds up because people won't allow their feelings to flow. They won't even speak with true emotion except to paid professionals, hired to take out that trash for them.

Marge: So the rest of us don't have to deal with it.

Fred: Look at her.

Chris: It's always much worse than you think it's going to be.

Louise: Marxism justifies our rage at social, political, and economic inequality. And historical time exists to cure these maladjustments.

Marge: I stopped trusting people.

Fred: She's so beautiful. I think she has me confused with an articulate person.

Louise: Freudianism is comforting because you can rid yourself of personal responsibility by blaming your psyche for all the shit you do.

Fred: It's the lack of sympathy he has for her that makes it possible for her to murder his children. If someone has no sympathy for you, is never moved by your situation...

Louise: Einstein scares the shit out of people. He doesn't leave us any escape. There's no one to blame.

Angela: Someone who could break the spell.

Chris and Henry have stopped fighting.

Fred: If they lack the emotional imagination to feel what it's like to be you... When there's no sympathy, everything feels cavernous. Caverns lined with stainless steel.

Louise: Without a doubt, Einstein is the heaviest of all the twentieth century behemoths. No one has a clue how to live up to relativity, much less how to live within it. We have so much invested in our sense of linear time. Attempting to alter our view of time is very threatening. Altering it from the perspective of relationship is anathema, verboten.

Fred: It astonishes me that Medea's love is so meaningless to him.

Angela: God is so broken, how can you not sympathize with him?

Louise: Just thinking there might be relativity (relationship? At the very basis of reality???) sends us running to Freudian analysis or Marxist revolution.

Fred: I love her body. I understand her in my body.

Louise: My mother thinks I'm old. I don't think I'm old. Do I look old?

Louise knocks into Fred.

Fred: Hey, what's up, Lou?

Louise can't speak. There's a frog in her throat. She sits down, feeling scared and shy, embarrassed and about to cry. Fred watches her.

Fred: Louise, I'm sorry. I have a lot on my mind.

Louise: Yeah. Me too. I wanted to talk but this isn't the time. Another time. When we have more time. We can talk later. When we have more time.

Angela: (*as Medea*) Why can I not cry?

Trudy: Places! Jason and Medea.

Fred walks onstage. Medea's throne is now a double bed. Medea is lying provocatively on mussed sheets. A beautiful blue, jeweled box is beside her.

Angela: Jason.

Fred: I am here.

Angela: Forgive me, my lord.

Jason goes to Medea and they kiss.

Angela: Jason, I know I cannot stay here in Corinth, but the children.... Could you speak to Creon? You said that it was for our children that you -- marry the Princess -- our sons could live in the palace. Your sons could be brothers. If the children were allowed to stay in Corinth.

Jason kisses Medea.

Fred: I knew you could understand. I will speak to Creon and the Princess.

Jason throws himself happily onto the bed. Medea brings him the jeweled box.

Angela: I want the children to bring this to the Princess as a token.

Fred: Medea, she has everything she needs.

Angela: She has nothing like these. (*Medea cradles the box*) My robe and my crown...

Fred: Medea, those are your treasures.

Angela: Indeed. But I will not need them. My life is over.

Fred: Don't say that.

Angela: Our sons will carry these gifts to the Princess as a token of my good will and theirs. A blessing on your marriage. Then you will speak to Creon for the children.

Jason is suddenly impatient.

Fred: Yes, yes. Where are the children?

Angela: Below with nurse.

Marge: Flotsam on a sea of other people's desires.

Henry: We can open a branch of amnesty international for heartbreak victims, right here in New York City. I am sure we'd have a huge clientele.

Fred (*from Damon Runyon's Tobias the Terrible*): *Well, of course, at this crack I know what is eating the guy.*

Wilbur: *If I have all the tears that are shed on Broadway by guys in love*

Henry: *I will have enough salt water to start an opposition ocean to the Atlantic and Pacific.*

Chris: *With enough left over to run the Great Salt Lake out of business.*

Fred: *But I wish to say, I never shed any of those tears personally.*

Henry: *Because I am never in love.*

Wilbur: *And furthermore,*

Chris: *barring a bad break*

Henry: *I never expect to be in love.*

Wilbur: *for the way I look at love is strictly --*

Fred: I hear screaming. Who's screaming?

Louise: Why are we doing this stupid play?

Trudy: I want someone to tell me I'm beautiful.

Danse Macabre

Medea, fully costumed in her finest, sits on her throne. The Messenger enters from upstage left, slowly. Medea does not turn around but senses his presence.

Medea: Messenger.

Messenger: You must leave.

Medea: Why?

Messenger: The Princess is dead.

Medea: At last.

Messenger: The King (*pause*) is dead.

Medea: I will remember you always as the bringer of good news, my friend. Speak.

Messenger: You are shameless.

Medea: Speak!

Messenger: Your children and their father arrived at the palace.

Medea: Slowly.

Messenger: We were glad. Servants are grieved by their masters' misfortunes, my lady. We were glad to see the children. It was whispered that you had forgiven Jason. We all kissed and hugged the children. It was I who accompanied them to the Princess' chambers. At first, she did not see us but ran instead to Jason. When she saw us, she hid her face. Jason explained to her that she must learn to be friends with his children. He showed her the gifts and asked her not to exile his children. When she saw the gifts, she agreed to all his wishes. Before Jason and the children had reached the gates, the Princess was putting on the crown. Then she put on the robe.

Medea: Slower.

Messenger: She stood in the robe and the crown. She saw her beauty reflected in our shining, hopeful eyes. Then. Then she trembled. Her legs shook. She fell. A white foam came out of her mouth. She tried to scream but no sound escaped her throat. Her eyes went blind and she screamed. A scream from the dead. A maid ran to tell Creon and Jason. The Princess seemed to revive. Her eyes opened. But as she tried to raise herself, out of the crown came liquid fire. And her robes melted into her flesh. She was filled with terror; and with a demon energy she tried to flee. She ran, hoping to throw the cursed gifts off. But the more she ran, the hotter the flames surrounding her. At last she fell. Her beauty unrecognizable. No one went to touch the pile of blood and fire and bones. But Creon, rushing in, threw himself down upon his daughter and tried to raise and rock her in his arms. *My child, my child, my child.* When he realized he was burning, he tried to pull his arms away and his flesh ripped from his bones. He could not free himself from the clinging fire. Doomed. He died. They lay side by side: the King and the Princess, the remains of an ancient funeral rite. Nothing was left but their ashes and their crowns.

Fred: Love challenges us to be better people.

Louise: I always fail that challenge.

Marge: The abundance of my weeping is truly staggering.

Fred: He can only desire to love. He can't be in love, exist in a state of loving, a state of profound acceptance of mutuality.

Marge: Love destroyed me. I wasn't up to the challenge.

Wilbur: Murderers must sever that connection. Abusers, predators, bullies.

Marge: I'm not a fighter.

Chris: I might have died. I might have been president of the United States. I've never been in love with someone who wasn't dying.

Angela: For some men, love turns to hate as soon as they spill their seed.

Marge: Fertile or infertile ground makes not one iota of difference.

Henry: Release yourself to me.

Wilbur: I am grateful for cosmic cyclicity but offended that this many centuries of human civilization has not yet produced a theory of human cooperation.

Wilbur: Love paralyzes me.

Billy: I love you.

Louise: Hug me.

Henry: What keeps the world good isn't love but friendship. Friendship keeps us whole. Friendship is about liking the weaknesses of your friend. It's companionship. Intimacy. Sympathy.

Angela: Sex chases friendship away. Drowns it in a sea of paranoia and lust.	Chris: <i>You remind me of a man.</i>
Fred: Kiss me.	Henry: <i>What man?</i>
Jean: Don't patronize me.	Wilbur: <i>The man with the power.</i>
Billy: Don't lie to me.	Chris: <i>What power?</i>
Marge: Am I going to allow other people's materialism to ruin my entire life?	Henry: <i>The power of voodoo.</i>
Trudy: There is no other world. There is no better world. This is the only world. And we	Chris: <i>Who do?</i>
	Wilbur: <i>You do.</i>

fuck it up.

Henry: *What?*

Chris: *Remind me of a man.*

Angela is cutting a cake. Marge is transfixed by the cake. Trudy is going over notes.

Angela: The best thing the hippies ever did was invent banana bread. Did you really make this, Louise? It's delicious. I can't cook. This is delicious. Marge, have some. Go ahead, it's really good.

Marge: No.

Angela: Bananas are fruit.

Marge: But cake is cake.

Angela: Trudy?

Trudy: Hmm?

Angela: You want some banana bread. Cake. Louise made it. It's good.

Chris: His love holds onto me. It won't let me go. Or I won't - let him go. I can't let him go.

Trudy: Sure. You know, that's the one thing the hippies did right.

Angela: So, how did we do?

Trudy: We're ok. It's a fucking miracle.

Chris: What are you going to do about the baby?

Louise: Trudy told you? I'm not sure.

Chris: Do you want to have children?

Louise: Yes. But I don't think I'd be a good mother and I can't give up dancing.

Chris: Why would you have to give up dancing? My friend, this may feel remarkably like the dark ages, but it is, in fact, the late twentieth century. You can't give up your art. If you want your family, have it. It will add depth to your dancing. You'd be a great mom. Strange. But great.

Marge: Everyone kills. Some people kill a lot. People act as if there isn't a pile of murdered carcasses underpinning their precariously balanced pose of perfection.

Louise: Wake up. Stretch. You just murdered millions of your own cells. Sit up. Walk around. Who knows how many micro-organisms are destroyed each step you take? Einstein said that. Then you eat something. (*she eats a piece of cake and then cuts herself some more*) My god. How can we? Think of what we're destroying with every bite.

Marge: The world is coming apart. My bedroom is a sad place.

Angela: Temptations follow me wherever I go. No, that's not true anymore.

Louise: *Nice women don't fart in public.*

Angela: *Good women never masturbate with carrots.*

Chris: Carrots?

Angela: Yeah.

Chris: Not cucumbers?

Angela: Cucumbers?

Chris: I always thought it was cucumbers. Or squash.

Angela: No, carrots. They're longer. There's something to hold onto.

Chris: Did you ever have sex with an animal?

Angela: What kind of animal?

Chris: Holy shit. I don't know. Have you?

Angela: Not unless you count men.

Louise: No. they don't count.

Angela: There was one guy who acted like a dog...

Louise: I don't want to hear this.

Angela: Why not?

Louise: It's gross.

Angela: Did you want to hear about me and another kind of animal? You're not making a lot of sense, you two.

Louise: It's ok. I'm confused.

Chris: Me three.

Billy: I can't talk about this

Jean: Why not?

Marge: Forbidden pleasures.

Billy: All the words I have for sex are shocking, gross or clinical.

Jean: So?

Wilbur: Everything good is forbidden, yes.

Chris: Life is ridiculous.

Angela: Don't you forget it.

Billy: So, if I talk about sex I can only use the words that are available. And right away it sounds different than what it was. Than it is.

Jean: Than it was.

Marge: There's no such thing as Happiness, you'll just have to be happy without it.

Billy: I need a reverse handicap. I need a head start.

Jean: Granted.

Billy: Elevate everything I say. It's not how it sounds. How we felt, remember that, ok?

Jean: Ok.

Henry (*rehearsing what to say to someone*): Perhaps you could come over and stay with me? Linger. For awhile. Tomorrow is a long time away.

Billy: I don't want to lose you.

Jean: I think it's too late.

Billy: Let me try to explain.

Jean: Of course. And then I will explain also.

Marge: I had sex once a month for most of my married life.

Wilbur: Sounds familiar.

Angela: I could have sex three times a day, every day. For the rest of my life.

Henry (*he has the pink teddy bear*): I'd like a week solid, continuous, every six weeks. I don't know if I can handle intimacy and sex at the same time. I don't know if I want to try.

Louise: Five weeks off, one week on?

Henry: Yeah. Perfect. Total intensity and then total privacy.

Chris: Once a day is good.

Louise: Yeah, or twice.

Angela: Here – it's a tiny piece.

Marge: Bliss.

Billy: When I put my face between your legs I feel a shiver start in my breast bone and vibrate down my spine and rock my world. My tail bone harmonizing, I reach my face towards your warm damp and your hair is soft and craggly and I suck you as if my life energy were inside you and I need it so badly, I'll die w/o it and I pull on you until you come and I come hearing you come and I am enveloped in time and completely at home in the universe.

Jean: Well, suck my big, fat, emotional-spiritual dicktit.

Trudy: Hey, Dad, what are you doing here?

Fred: Waiting for Lou.

Henry (*he hands the pink teddy bear to Fred*): Hey, Pop! What's up?

Fred: That's funny, you two must be reading my mind. I've been thinking about Jason's fatherhood

Trudy: Henry's a dad. He can tell you all about it.

Fred: You're a father? How many children do you have?

Henry: One.

Fred: I'll be damned. Are you married?

Henry: Divorced.

Fred: Oh.

Henry: She's married again, to a school teacher. They live in Rhode Island.

Fred: Is that where you're from?

Henry: No, my dad was army so I'm from all over. Where are you from?

Fred: Iowa. What's it like, being a father?

Henry: Good. Bad. It was a shock, at first. I was scared. But now he's nine and he's amazing. I could have a dozen more. Well, maybe not. You know, there are different kinds of fathers. I think Jason sees his children as extensions of himself.

Fred: Like my dad.

Henry: Your dad?

Fred: Yeah. He's the kind of man who's so cold that you don't want to kill him, you want some terrible pain to force him into some realization of his humanity.

Henry: That's tough.

Fred: After everyone is dead and gone, Jason will probably clean the blood and guts off the palace walls and rules happily ever after. Everyone neatly out of the way. Why share something when you can have it all? That's what my dad would do. He wouldn't give a shit.

Jean: You never listen to me. You love my existence as you perceive it. You are not interested in my perceptions of myself of who and how I want to be. You believe that you are a real person and I am something else. You told me that sometimes you think I'm too good to fuck. Now you tell me that while we're making it, you're feeding off my life force. Hang on, I have to get myself together. I want you to hear this. I use my energy to create myself. I make beautiful things and times with what you want to suck in its raw state, out of me. I offer you the creations of my life and you reject them, because you want to take my life itself. And I was stupid enough to let you do it. But I need my life to live my life. I love you, Billy, I'm outta here. Don't look back, baby. Don't look back.

Angela: There I was.

Marge: He was pushing me down.

Louise: No matter how hard I tried.

Angela: I couldn't get him to see.

Billy: You hurt me.

Chris: I don't let myself feel.

Henry: Things like that.

Trudy: It makes me sad.

Wilbur: We can be anything.

Fred: We choose to be this.

Louise: I want to go back.

Wilbur: Do it again.

Marge: This time I'll tell him.

Henry: How I feel.

Billy: I wish it was a dream.

Chris: *Sympathize with my becoming, I'm dying. I'm becoming dead!* Sympathize with me, I'm living. I'm becoming alive.

Marge: I could make it beautiful.

Trudy: Tender.

Angela: He never loved me. I loved him. It was an ecstatic reality. I was the king's daughter, the granddaughter of the sun. I never felt any power in myself until *I saw him standing there*, the sun shining on his brown shoulders and all I could think, all I could want, was to fall inside those shoulders. To be lifted, carried away. He smiled as if he were reading my mind. I was everything he'd ever dreamed. His gestures are burned into my blood. My hopefulness when he kissed me. An untamable hunger. I will do anything for him. He makes no promises.

Marge: Bits of glass turn up in the yard religiously along the path and they remind me, as I gently lift them away from my granddaughter's tiny feet, they remind me of all the times I didn't slit my wrists. Could you spare a cigarette?

Trudy: Sure. (*Marge takes a cigarette out from Trudy's proffered pack*) Do you want a light?

Marge: No. No, thank you. Thank you. I'll just suck on it for a while.

Trudy: (*on her way out*) Goodnight, Marge, see you tomorrow.

Angela: And then, one night as we lay together like vines, one around the other, I noticed he smelled like death.

Chris (*he explodes and fights god as if he were a much larger man, kicking and hitting high, directly in the direction of the audience*): Fuck you, God.

<p><i>Chris fights with god and intermittently speaks the following, taking approximately the same time as Marge and Wilbur's conversation.</i></p> <p>Chris: I dare you. Take away everything I love.</p> <p>I fucking dare you.</p> <p>I will not stop loving.</p> <p>I will die loving.</p> <p>I don't give a fuck about being good. I want to be alive.</p> <p>Make it hard, I dare you.</p> <p>Keep it coming, asshole, asswipe, assdick.</p> <p>I can handle whatever the fuck you dish out (I hope).</p> <p>I</p> <p>will</p> <p>not</p> <p>stop</p> <p>talking</p>	<p>Marge: You know, the trouble with having attempted a suicide is that people are wary of you because they don't want to hurt you or trigger another episode, or be responsible for starting a conversation they can't handle. I couldn't face myself for a long time. I couldn't face anyone else either, and now -</p> <p>Wilbur: And now?</p> <p>Marge: Now I'm holding myself back. Oh I'm an expert at that. (<i>pause</i>) Once I had the most beautiful dress in the world. I cried when I opened the box, it was a Christmas present. I thought it was the most beautiful dress I'd ever seen. It was a light silver and pink satin. I tried it on. It felt glorious. Then I hung it in the center of my closet. Where I could see it every day for the three years it remained unworn.</p> <p>Wilbur: For heaven's sake, what happened?</p> <p>Marge: I grew out of it and had to give it away.</p> <p>Wilbur: Why did you do that?</p> <p>Marge: My mother made me.</p> <p>Wilbur: Not wear it?</p> <p>Marge: Oh. No. She made me give it away.</p>
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<p>about</p> <p>love.</p>	<p>Wilbur: Why didn't you wear it?</p> <p>Marge: It was always too good for me, for how I felt about myself. I thought if I wore that dress, the dress would be ashamed of me. I never felt worthy of that dress.</p>
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Angela: If they live they will love him. They mustn't love him. He loves them. But he will never love me. I can make him hate me.

Billy: Separate. Like chairs. I don't want to be separate from you. Separate. See how it feels. Feel how it seems. When we see each other again, we'll be separate. We won't feel each other again. It's darker than usual tonight, bad news floats in the tide. Debris and sand between my toes. I will function even though it is darker than usual tonight and I am alone. *(exits)*

Angela: You are my children. You angels, asleep on your mother's lap. Small pieces of the light that informs the universe. What's the difference between prophecy and a threat? Energies that can be felt and known only in the heart. Escape souls! Fly! I can't do it. Help me! There is no one to help me. This sacred act as private as the ones that conceived you. This murder as painful a labor as those which brought you to my sight. I loved you, Jason. I loved you alone and best. All the wonders of this earth and I chose you to love. That is my crime. And this, my punishment. What do you kill? What do you love? Love makes us do bad things. I will not be subjugated by love. Do you remember when we went to the market and you wanted to talk to everyone? Do you remember? *(she hums a lullaby)* Your face. Your hand. Reaching— Oh my god, I cannot kill them. They are my children. Please. So many have died already. A few more. It has been decided. You decided. I decided. We played a bloody game and it will have a bloody end. By the unforgetting dead in hell, my children will be killed by no other hand than mine. My hands. Jason, look what you have done to me. I held you inside me; you grew inside me. Where I was once alive. Jason, we have murdered time. Don't fret, my little ones. We are each other's hearts. Shh. *(she kills her children)* Shh. Lie still.

Fred *(screams)*: No.

His scream morphs into the depths of pain and horror, rage and despair. He screams for quite a while. Louise is dancing.

Marge: She's dancing. Glittering rags and ratty governments. Dancing in the dark. We are sparkling, look up, drink it in. *(pause)* I'll go home, I'll take a shower. Then I'll lie in bed and smoke a cigarette. What's one cigarette in a lifetime of deprivations?

Blackout/Beethoven Symphony #5 in C Minor Op. 67

FIN