

Shadow Tag, an evening of disturbance.
Part Two of the Trilogy *Topography; The Landscape of my Soul*.

By Dr. Temi (Brodkey) Rose 2003

This play is dedicated to Lisa Steinberg, may she rest in peace.



Don't Tell by Amy Scherer-Huddleston

Freedom is a creative act, a work of art, like Notre Dame, a cathedral we build collaboratively to reflect the longing that drives us towards self-realization, but freedom is a concept and, unlike a cathedral, exists within and beyond the limitations of time and space.

Lisa Steinberg was too young to create freedom for herself. Her parents (who had essentially stolen her) were self-indulgent, irresponsible and destructive. Shadow Tag is a blueprint for a ritual of liberation. The peace begins with the rigidity of the conformities that are implicated in heinous abuse and gradually works its way through fecund chaos towards shared freedom.

Isaiah Berlin made a distinction between freedom-from and freedom-to. Freedom-from is the socio-political equivalent of Abraham Maslow's first few levels of the person-centered hierarchy of needs. Freedom-to corresponds to the higher, more creative needs on Maslow's ladder. People will not be able to enjoy their struggles of freedom-to, until our struggles with freedom-from are at least minimally satisfied. In order for Lisa to have enjoyed the freedom to be herself, she would have had to enjoy freedom-from beatings, starvation and humiliation.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

we work our way up from the bottom!

Self Actualization Needs

(for autonomy and aesthetic creativity)

Ego Needs

(for self-esteem, recognition and power)

Social Needs

(for love and a sense of belonging with other people)

Security Needs

(for safety, shelter, stability)

Physical Needs

(for food, rest, exercise and freedom from disease and abuse)

Traditional acting theory deconstructs scripts and scenes to reveal the conflicts underlying every interpersonal interaction. This is an appropriate method for portraying characters stuck on the lower levels of Maslow's hierarchy. But why not reflect the search for more evolved intrapersonal needs like the search for self-realization? Writing and directing this play, I was asking myself whether there is a viable basis for (exciting/cathartic) plot structure that is not based on revenge? Can plots derive their dynamism from journeys of personal liberation? It seems possible that our greatest enemies are inside our own heads and hearts, our memories, our fears. The purpose driving characters can be understood as a desire for self-responsibility and not necessarily as rampant individual competition. Achieving the subjugation of others will not win us anything but a living hell: People who humiliate others descend into a Dantesque framework in which further descents are far more likely than any imagined ascent to a longed for halcyon. People who are aiming for self-realization are hungry for the company of others on the same journey. People who are struggling to become, inevitably

feel compassion for others who are engaged in the same struggle: to be fully realized human beings. Not perfect. Not God. Alive. Sentient. Compassionate.

Onstage, "fantasy" worlds can be created that inspire and empower audiences to take responsibility for the "real" worlds that they are in fact creating for themselves every day. This play is an experiment, an alternate way of becoming. In the original workshop production, we were stunned by the joy and warmth we received from our audiences. My oldest daughter was born the year that Lisa Steinberg was murdered. I am a native New Yorker. This play was my way of working through the rage and hopelessness I feel when I hear about all the children we are still failing to help. I was astounded that its first workshop production coincided with Joel Steinberg's release. I was immensely gratified that our audiences felt empowered, unburdened and enlivened by our shows. Joel Steinberg had just been released from jail and all during our rehearsal process, his face was on page one of the local papers. One of the places we rehearsed was a few blocks from where he was staying at the time.

The Steinbergs' situation was well publicized but there are cases of child abuse in every community. Most of us know people who have been abused. The likelihood is that some kind of abuse is going on right now in your neighborhood and mine. We must continue to care for children at risk. We must keep a creative and hopeful spirit alive within ourselves and our communities so that people are supported with the living prayer of our positive actions. *Shadow Tag* was written to honor children and to lift the spirits of those of us who love and care for them.



Photo taken by audience member desiring a memento of the experience!
Back row: Mark. Middle row: Rahsan, Temi, Todd, Marina, lighting designer Geoff, musicians Andrea and Nick.
Front row: Stephanye, Elena, Alexandria, Guthrie and Lucy

Production notes

The commotion is continuous. Any time there is a lull, a stillness, a silence, it must stick out like a sore thumb. In this context then, will stillness and silence signify times of great import. Commotion is the norm. Revelation comes to these characters in significant moments of stillness. Liberation comes for the characters and the audience during the rhythm-making and dancing chaos in the third act. The first and second acts are mirrors of one another. In the third act, chaos brings freedom-from, and new possibilities are available for the characters; at which point, most of them choose the freedom-to independence and self-realization.

This play is language-intensive and so it's necessary to use a technique called, overlapping dialogue. For an excellent example of overlapping dialogue, see the movie *Front Page* with Rosalind Russell and Cary Grant. The characters hear and listen to one another but they do not take time to reflect before speaking so they think while the other people are speaking. This makes for lively interchanges that feel extremely real and urban. This also allows a great deal to be said in a short amount of time.

Ideally, there are three directors of activity: a traditional director responsible for the overall production; a choreographer responsible for the actions of the ANGELS, for BABY's movements and all acts of violence between HE & SHE; and a director with experience with sign language and theater to coordinate the deaf actors.

Characters

My intention is that the angels, the women and the couples are all opposites along a particular value scheme. For instance, one angel might be tall, the other short. One member of a couple might be heavy and the other thin, etc. different genders do not count in this sense. Actors can be any gender or race. Some pronouns might need to be altered here and there but the names of the characters should not change.

Character ages are flexible with the following guidelines: ANGEL TWO and WOMAN TWO are attracted to one another, as are ANGEL ONE and WOMAN ONE (but attractions can happen across age and race barriers!) HE and SHE are married to one another. The OLD MAN and the OLD WOMAN can be played by young people dressed as old people (or not). The parts were written intentionally tangential so that, in case professional deaf actors are not available in the local community, any two adventurous deaf people will be able to play these roles.

The deaf actors improvise throughout. The nature of their improvisation can be determined by each production. The actual lines and stage directions for the deaf actors is not even a tenth of the work they must do onstage. The first workshop production, at the Ensemble Studio Theatre in the summer of 2004 was blessed with *Alexandria Wailes*, *Hillary Heard*, and *Guthrie Nutter* who together created the deaf actors as parents to HE, weaving their stage lives into the flow of the whole. Sign language is a precursor to spoken language and holds within itself the foundation of all communication. In this play, the signs are the source of love, ancient, persistent, indefatigable.

***Characters
in order of Appearance***

(and the Original Cast who helped so much in the development of this piece)

ANGEL ONE	Quick witted and graceful. <i>(Todd Parmley*)</i>
ANGEL TWO	Poetic and strong. <i>(Rahsan-Rahsan)</i>
SHE	Hardworking, delicate and very sad. <i>(Marina Lutz)</i>
OLD WOMAN	Deaf. Lively. <i>(Alexandria Wailes* and Hillary Heard*)</i>
OLD MAN	Deaf. Mellow. <i>(Guthrie Nutter*)</i>
HE	Handsome. Strong. Touchy. <i>(Mark DeLaBarre*)</i>
BABY	A role for an adult mime. <i>(Elena Bayrock)</i>
WOMAN ONE	Elegant and emotionally aware. <i>(Lucy McMichael*)</i>
WOMAN TWO	Tender. Energetic. Funny. <i>(Stephanye Dussud*)</i>

Characters can be played by any race or gender. The names should remain the same.

*(*These actor/esses appeared courtesy of Actors' Equity Association)*

TIME AND PLACE

The play takes place in the late 1980's in an apartment in Manhattan (*or anywhere else in any postmodern time*).

Shadow Tag, an evening of disturbance

Act One Who's on First

Scene 1 Aperitif

Scene 2 Taster's Choice

Scene 3 DamnNation

Act Two Fourth Base

Scene 1 What ground of inhumanity are you standing on?

Scene 2 Upon what peak of human excess do you perch?

Scene 3 What don't you see?

Scene 4 Baby Face

Act Three A Party of Animals

Scene 1 Dare we dream?

Scene 2 Frankenphoenix

Scene 3 Culminating

Scene 4 Participating

Scene 5 Buddha's Belly

Scene 6 Power

Epilogue It feels like the end of the world

Act One: Who's on first?

I Scene 1: Aperitif

Act one opens with the angels playing with a basketball or a baseball or with both at once, sport jugglers, working with two types of balls. They accentuate, punctuate, extend, elucidate and illuminate their words with their ball-playing actions and strategies. They are enjoying themselves, relaxing, loosening up.

While the Angels do the routine - SHE is making dinner and setting the table. OLD WOMAN and OLD MAN act in some ways as translators of the play but in addition, they comment on the action; so, if anyone in the audience can read sign language, they have a much richer experience.

Who's on First? by Abbott and Costello (abridged) Full text can be found at <http://rob.kogan.com/> if the rights are not available for this scene, it can be cut from the play; but, in that case, the angels should still play ball and SHE should still be making dinner, as the audience enters the theatre.

ANGEL ONE

I'm going to New York. The Yankee manager gave me a job as coach for as long as you're on the team.

ANGEL TWO

If you're the coach, you must know all the players.

ANGEL ONE

I certainly do.

ANGEL TWO

Well you know I've never met them. So you'll have to tell me their names, and then I'll know who's playing with me on the team.

ANGEL ONE

Oh, I'll tell you their names, but you know it seems to me they give these ball players nowadays very peculiar names.

ANGEL TWO

You mean funny names?

ANGEL ONE

Strange names, pet names...Well, let's see, we have Who's on first, What's on second, I Don't Know on third...

ANGEL TWO

That's what I want to find out.

ANGEL ONE

Who's on first, What's on second, I Don't Know's on third.

ANGEL TWO

You gonna be the coach?

ANGEL ONE

Yes.

ANGEL TWO

And you don't know the players' names.

ANGEL ONE

Well I should.

ANGEL TWO

Well then who's on first?

ANGEL ONE

Yes.

ANGEL TWO

I mean the player's name.

Who. ANGEL ONE

The guy on first. ANGEL TWO

Who. ANGEL ONE

The first baseman. ANGEL TWO

Who. ANGEL ONE

The player playing... ANGEL TWO

Who is on first! ANGEL ONE

I'm asking you who's on first. ANGEL TWO

That's the player's name. ANGEL ONE

That's who's name? ANGEL TWO

Yes. ANGEL ONE

Well go ahead and tell me. ANGEL TWO

That's it. ANGEL ONE

That's who? ANGEL TWO

Yes. ANGEL ONE

Look, you gotta first baseman? ANGEL TWO

Certainly. ANGEL ONE

Who's playing first? ANGEL TWO

That's right. ANGEL ONE

When you pay off the first baseman every month, who gets the money? ANGEL TWO

Every dollar of it. ANGEL ONE

All I'm trying to find out is the player's name on first base. ANGEL TWO

Who. ANGEL ONE

The player that gets... ANGEL TWO

That's it. ANGEL ONE

Who gets the money... ANGEL TWO

ANGEL ONE

He does, every dollar of it. Sometimes his wife comes down and collects it.

ANGEL TWO

Who's wife?

ANGEL ONE

Yes. What's wrong with that?

ANGEL TWO

Look, all I wanna know is when you sign up the first baseman, how does he sign his name?

ANGEL ONE

Who.

ANGEL TWO

The guy.

ANGEL ONE

Who.

ANGEL TWO

How does he sign...

ANGEL ONE

That's how he signs it.

ANGEL TWO

Who?

ANGEL ONE

Yes.

ANGEL TWO

All I'm trying to find out is what's the guy's name on first base.

ANGEL ONE

No. What is on second base.

ANGEL TWO
I'm not asking you who's on second.

ANGEL ONE
Who's on first.

ANGEL TWO
One base at a time!

ANGEL ONE
Well, don't change the players around.

ANGEL TWO
I'm not changing nobody!

ANGEL ONE
Take it easy.

ANGEL TWO
I'm only asking you, who's the guy on first?

ANGEL ONE
That's right.

ANGEL TWO
Ok.

ANGEL ONE
All right.

ANGEL TWO
What's the guy's name on first base?

ANGEL ONE
No. What is on second.

ANGEL TWO
I'm not asking you who's on second.

Who's on first.

ANGEL ONE

I don't know.

ANGEL TWO

She's on third, we're not talking about her.

ANGEL ONE

Now how did I get on third base?

ANGEL TWO

You mentioned her.

ANGEL ONE

I mentioned the third baseman's name. Who did I say is playing third?

ANGEL TWO

No. Who's playing first.

ANGEL ONE

What's on base?

ANGEL TWO

What's on second.

ANGEL ONE

I don't know.

ANGEL TWO

She's on third.

ANGEL ONE

There I go, back on third again!

ANGEL TWO

Look, you gotta outfield?

ANGEL TWO

Sure. ANGEL ONE

The left fielder's name? ANGEL TWO

Why. ANGEL ONE

I just thought I'd ask you. ANGEL TWO

Well, I just thought I'd tell ya. ANGEL ONE

Then tell me who's playing left field. ANGEL TWO

Who's playing first. ANGEL ONE

Stay out of the infield!!! I want to know what's the player's name in left field? ANGEL TWO

No, What is on second. ANGEL ONE

I'm not asking you who's on second. ANGEL TWO

Who's on first! ANGEL ONE

I don't know. ANGEL TWO

Third base! ANGEL ONE & ANGEL TWO

I Scene 2: Taster's Choice

Lights up to full on the apartment. SHE is quietly readying dinner and the old couple are chatting about the weather. "Do you think it will rain today?" HE comes in the apartment suddenly, throws down his hat and briefcase. SHE wipes her hands on her half apron and walks over to him. HE strides past her, throws himself on the couch, puts his feet up, closes his eyes.

HE

Get me a drink.

SHE quickly reverses direction, goes back to the kitchen to make an old-fashioned-movie-type martini, complete (replete) with metal shaker, martini glass, olive. SHE brings him the martini, careful not to spill. If the actress does spill, she must look momentarily panic stricken. In any case, SHE delivers the martini. HE opens his eyes and looks at her, at the drink, then at the table. SHE places the drink carefully on the coffee table. Operative adverb is carefully. SHE returns to the kitchen. The old couple are playing a board game or a card game. They are enjoying themselves. HE slowly sits up, sips his martini thoughtfully. Dinner is served. SHE takes off her apron. They sit at the table. Each eats. HE eats normally. SHE eats carefully.

ANGEL TWO

Every act is a moral act.

ANGEL ONE

Bad things happen to good people *means* that karma isn't a single arithmetical cosmic procedure. At the very least, co-signage must be involved. If we take the party of the first part and divide her by the party of the second part and share the remainder with everyone else then what will we have left?

During the following, the old couple sign/translate as HE and SHE speak. OLD MAN signs what HE says. OLD WOMAN signs what SHE says. They also sign their comments on what they hear, add-

libbed or worked out in rehearsal, according to the interests of the actors and their directors.

SHE

It was raining. I wish it were still raining. I like the sound of the rain.

SHE keeps talking while he berates her with the following. The illusion is that HE is speaking out loud while SHE is thinking to herself.

SHE	HE
I thought the reason that he didn't seem to love me, that he didn't seem able, that he seemed unable, to love me, to be kind to me, to exhibit compassion, anyway, I thought it was because I was not lovable.	When are you going back to work? <i>(pause, as if he hears an answer to his question)</i>
HE neglected me for so long. When he decided to love me it was too late. I had already learned how to live alone. Inside myself.	Why don't you stop biting your nails? It's a revolting habit. <i>(pause, as if he hears an answer to his question and comment)</i>
Some days I hate myself. Some days I like myself, I never like him.	How can you stand yourself? <i>(another similar pause)</i>
Sometimes when I'm hot, he looks good to me: luscious, mouth watering, then we play our mating game, a bottle of beer, a joint, a pathetic pleading look or two, then we do it, make it, have each other. And it's all over in a spasm.	I told you: get your fingers out of your mouth! <i>(SHE does)</i>
HE never looks happy when he's having sex. Could I make this man happy?	Sometimes I wonder if there's anything inside you. Are you all surface? You eat. You shit. I put food in you and it comes out again.
Once he said he'd like to see me dead.	I had other lovers. Before I knew you. I hate this fucking place. You never make anything good to eat. You're always on a diet.

<p>Sometimes I think of loving. Of opening my eyes. Of feeding on charged air. Of moving in unison. Sometimes I dream. Dreams of wretched violence, dismemberment. I throw a wrench at your head. You blink I miss you by an inch.</p>	<p>Your ass is getting bigger. You're going to end up looking like your mother.</p> <p>You do this deliberately. You make yourself desirable and stupid. God, are you stupid. Never anything half human to say.</p>
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SHE

I can see my heart, there is a hole this big where you chewed me up.

HE

Your unconscious hates me

HE slaps her face. SHE puts her hand to her face. HE yanks her hand away from her mouth and kisses her on the mouth, wipes his mouth with the back of his hand, and pushes her back towards the kitchen where she puts herself back to cleaning the dishes and talking to the wall cf. Shirley Valentine. The old couple and the angels are apprehensive during the moments of violence.

SHE

I like sex. I like the excitement of it. I like to feel whole and connected. I like that. Sweat. My muscles tense. And release. If I can come before he stops or before I have to become careful. If he's too excited sometimes he can hurt me. HE doesn't mean to, of course he doesn't mean --

HE

-- Aren't you done yet?

SHE

Just a minute.

HE

I'm ready. Hurry up.

HE has been turning off lamps. When he gets near the old couple they stare at one other, caught between wonder, fear and loathing. At last HE quits the staring contest and goes into the kitchen. HE

touches her gently, strokes her, carefully takes off her apron and then, seductively, her dress. During this, the old couple watches the young couple as if it were a soap opera. The lights go to a soft darkness while HE and SHE have sex on the kitchen floor. At the same time, the two angels sit on the couch, having the following conversation:

ANGEL ONE

One time he came in, slapped her and then they went at it. Just like that.

ANGEL TWO

Disgusting.

ANGEL ONE

Why do you have to be so judgmental?

ANGEL TWO

O.k., here we go --

ANGEL ONE

Oh, yeah, here we are again because you never listen, do you?

ANGEL TWO

Because, yeah, what's the point of listening to the same shit over and over again?

ANGEL ONE

Because I am going to keep saying it until you hear me.

ANGEL TWO

But if I hear you on this then I will be obliged to listen to you about all the other shit that you think is wrong with me. And you don't even know how wrong you are.

ANGEL ONE

Exactly. I can't remember what I was going to say. I'm feeling irritated. I'm not supposed to get irritated.

ANGEL TWO

Aw, poor you. You don't like to lose.

ANGEL ONE

I didn't lose.

ANGEL TWO

Right.

ANGEL ONE

I just forgot what I was going to say. I'm getting old.

ANGEL TWO

Bullshit. Angels don't get old.

ANGEL ONE

I wish you wouldn't swear so much.

ANGEL TWO

Oh Christ.

ANGEL ONE

Stop that.

ANGEL TWO

Christ, Christ, Christ, Christ, Christ, Christ....

ANGEL ONE

Cut it out. Stop. Shut up. *(and any other expletives that aren't curse words)*

The angels' argument turns into a wrestling match on the couch; they go over the back of the couch, end up on the floor, knocking things over... all the while, HE and SHE are having sex on the kitchen floor and the set has gradually gotten darker. Suddenly there is the sound of BABY crying. All the apartment lights come on at once. Everyone looks up, startled. HE looks angry. SHE looks worried. The angels untangle themselves, straighten the furniture and look abashed. SHE looks towards BABY who can't be seen from onstage but the audience can see the baby who is hungry, wet and tangled in her bedclothes, crying desperately for help. SHE tries to go to BABY. HE stops her.

HE

No. She has to learn to comfort herself.

Blackout

I Scene 3: DamnNation

Overlapping with the blackout so that there is only a brief silence between the scenes:

ANGEL TWO

It's not really sex.

ANGEL ONE

Sure it is.

ANGEL TWO

No, I don't think it is.

ANGEL ONE

If it's all wet and sticky, it's sex, trust me.

ANGEL TWO

Because you're so fucking experienced?

Lights come up on the angels kneeling and squinting up into the lights, trying to appear beatific but they are feeling restless, and bored of waiting, searching the heavens for God. They have wings and are dressed in angel clothes. They are in heaven, on a cloud.

ANGEL ONE

Oh here we go again. Can't you communicate without cursing?

ANGEL TWO

(sings) It's a fucking long way to Tipperary. The ants go fucking marching one by one.
(as if taking an oath) We, angels, are an army of goodness, soldiers on a perpetual march, the fucking servants of the fucking lord. The eternal flame. And it's not really sex if nothing comes of it.

ANGEL ONE

Oh, I see: this is an argument for breeding. The human animal has to procreate, blah, blah, blah.

ANGEL TWO

No, you idiot. I didn't mean children of the flesh.

ANGEL ONE

What other children are there?

ANGEL TWO

Never mind. You are just never going to get this.

ANGEL ONE

Try me.

ANGEL TWO

I am having trouble trusting you.

ANGEL ONE

Our relationship has been going through a change.

ANGEL TWO

I was hoping we could be real partners. But partners can't afford to have secrets and counterplots. Partners can't be out for numero uno --

ANGEL ONE & ANGEL TWO

-- they must have a sense of the whole.

ANGEL ONE

It doesn't matter. I know you don't really love me. Anymore.

ANGEL TWO

When you have a face like an angel, maybe you don't need to really be an angel.

ANGEL ONE

What's that supposed to mean? Are you saying I'm just a pretty face?

ANGEL TWO

Well, beauty is a kind of courage. We have a lot of trouble communicating.

ANGEL ONE

We would communicate a lot better if you weren't an inarticulate.

ANGEL TWO

An inarticulate? What are you talking about?

ANGEL ONE

You swear too much. You get too excited. You are like a runaway horse all the time. A horse with a really foul mouth.

ANGEL TWO

Give it a rest.

ANGEL ONE

Formality and distance are prerequisites for a reasonable conversation.

ANGEL TWO

Formality and distance are preliminaries to war.

The angels are still on their knees, hands in prayer, waiting for God who hasn't shown up yet. During the following they get up and brush themselves off, maybe take off their angel regalia and get rid of the cloud and help return the set to the apartment.

ANGEL TWO

He's not fucking showing up.

ANGEL ONE

You're probably right.

ANGEL TWO

Depressing.

HE enters the crib and stalks BABY who tries to avoid him. HE taunts her by threatening to take her teddy bear. SHE doesn't see what's happening in the crib.

BABY	SHE
Leave me alone.	"I sit here on the perfect end of a star." That's what he said to me
Leave me alone.	before the first time he raped me. He was quoting. From a poet. I
Leave me alone.	didn't really know I was being raped. I had heard that sex was
Leave me alone.	painful: this was painful. I had heard that love hurt: this hurt. It all
Leave me alone.	made sense. The pain. The hurt. When I was a little girl, people told
Leave me alone.	me that the earth was round, like a ball, they said, "Like a ball." And I
Leave me alone.	looked up and saw that the sky was like the inside of a sphere so I
Leave me alone.	thought that we were on the inside of the ball. Then abandonment.
Leave me alone.	That made sense too. People abandon what they love. I seem to.
Leave me alone.	Abandon. Abandon what I love.
Leave me alone.	
Leave me alone.	HE
Leave me alone.	SHE's impossible. Nothing I do is enough for her. Ever. She's so
Leave me alone.	demanding. Not in an obvious way. No. SHE's covert. SHE wants me
Leave me alone.	to hurt her, to punish her. It's like a silent screaming. When I hit her,
Leave me alone.	she calms down. SHE didn't used to get wet when I penetrated her.
Leave me alone.	SHE was so dry and the experience was (<i>beat</i>) depressing. It's still
Leave me alone.	depressing. SHE's depressing. More depressing now because she's so
Leave me alone.	wet. The more I force her, the wetter she gets. Sometimes she pushes
Leave me alone.	me to go further than I want to. SHE's such a slut. SHE's disgusting.
Leave me alone.	Her needs make me do things I don't want to do. I can't help myself. I
Leave me alone.	have to satisfy her. I disgust myself. I'm telling you the truth even
Leave me alone.	though it makes you see me as a filthy beast. (<i>beat</i>) Some of you are
Leave me alone.	turned on by that, right? (<i>to SHE</i>) We're animals.
Leave me alone.	
Leave me alone.	SHE
Leave me alone.	Animals murder their young. Animals abandon the sick, the weak, the
Leave me alone.	helpless. Animals abandon their young.

ANGEL ONE

Animals?!? That's what they think?

ANGEL TWO

It's not thinking.

ANGEL ONE

It's rationalization. You can make excuses for anything.

ANGEL TWO

He's blaming animals. He could just as easily blame us, or God. Lots of people do.

ANGEL ONE

I feel nauseous.

ANGEL TWO

Well no one said it would be easy.

ANGEL ONE

Where the hell is He? Why is He always late?

ANGEL TWO

(to God) Where are you? You're LATE!

ANGEL ONE

(to God) You think not showing up makes you so superior. But if you were really superior, you would roll up your sleeves and get down here and help us.

ANGEL TWO

I don't believe you.

ANGEL ONE

What!?! *(beat)* I guess I'm getting cranky.

SHE

It's not that I like to be hurt. Really. It's not. *(SHE takes the teddy bear away from HE and gives it to BABY)* It's not Sylvia's thing about fascist boots breaking noses. No. Women don't adore fascists because they're fascists. Women adore fascists because we feel the trapped, wretched child inside the armored machismo. *Women are knights errant to the last.* We want to save the child inside the fascist beast. Maybe we came to associate cruelty, suffering and pain with love. Maybe that was the fruit of the tree of knowledge. When you realize that something is always lost when something is gained in every interaction between two people, then you will be able to do the math, the new math. The math of absolute power. The fetish of absolutely corrupt power.

HE

You made me feel like a man but then when I became a man, you no longer loved me.

HE and SHE re-enter the main stage area walk across it and exit to their bedroom. ANGEL TWO is reading a magazine. ANGEL ONE is pacing.

ANGEL ONE

Well, people are depressed these days. The stock market, republicans, the lack of a general, socially cohesive value system.

ANGEL TWO

Electricity, running water, food in cans, frozen and zip locked. For heaven's sake - what could people possibly have to be depressed about?

ANGEL ONE

They want to be happy.

ANGEL TWO

Oh. That. People died building the Brooklyn bridge. Why is it so unreasonable to expect people to suffer, even die, when we're trying to build great, interpersonal bridges?

ANGEL ONE

Sure. But we're already dead. They're in the process. You know, dying. It's different for them.

ANGEL TWO

You are a statistical improbability.

ANGEL ONE

Now, why would you say a thing like that?

ANGEL TWO

I'm reading it. Here. In this. It says that they did a study and angels are a statistical improbability.

ANGEL ONE

Let me see that.

ANGEL ONE grabs the magazine from ANGEL TWO, glances through the article then starts flipping through the pages.

ANGEL TWO

Hey, I was reading that. Give it back.

ANGEL TWO grabs the magazine back and hits ANGEL ONE with it, which causes ANGEL ONE to try and grab it back. They chase each other around the theater. The old couple wakes up from dozing. BABY is in her crib softly crying, trying to put her teddy bear back together.

ANGEL ONE

How did we let this horror come?

ANGEL TWO

It just comes, that's all.

ANGEL ONE

But how could we have let it?

ANGEL TWO

We didn't let it. It came and we're dealing with it. Trying to deal with it.

ANGEL ONE

But we are supposed to change it because we helped create it.

ANGEL TWO

Who told you that?

ANGEL ONE

I am telling you that. That's what responsibility means. HE, SHE, we - responsible people don't let horrible things happen. And, if horrible things do happen, we, SHE, HE are responsible. We take responsibility.

ANGEL TWO

How old are you?

ANGEL ONE

What does that have to do with it?

ANGEL TWO

A lot. I'm trying to give you the benefit of the doubt. Maybe you don't know better.

ANGEL ONE

Better than what?

ANGEL TWO

Better than to believe that you have control over any fucking thing at all.

ANGEL ONE

Oh, there it is. There it is. The random universe argument. And there was no reason at all to add an expletive, a dirty, foul expletive.

ANGEL TWO

Fucking is sex. What's foul about sex?

ANGEL ONE

How can you say that? Look at them. They're a mess.

ANGEL TWO

Not because of fucking.

ANGEL ONE

How do you know?

ANGEL TWO

Shut up. Give me back the magazine.

ANGEL ONE

I was looking at it.

ANGEL TWO

It's my magazine. You grabbed it from me.

ANGEL ONE

You wanted to show me something in it.

ANGEL TWO

You are such a cunt.

ANGEL ONE

Dick.

ANGEL TWO

That's my name, don't wear it out.

ANGEL TWO finally catches ANGEL ONE. They wrestle. Then ANGEL ONE escapes with the magazine which is a little (or a lot) the worse for wear.

ANGEL ONE

Ah. Ha. Ha. Ha.

ANGEL TWO

A temporary setback.

ANGEL ONE

That's what all losers say.

ANGEL TWO

You should know.

ANGEL ONE

What is that supposed to mean?

ANGEL TWO

That means that you are the most incapable fuck I have ever had the unfortunate luck to work with. You were incapable in life and now, given a second chance by a very late but very benevolent God, you are progressing rapidly in your incapableness.

ANGEL ONE

Incapableness? Incapability! That's great coming from an inarticulate like you.

ANGEL TWO

Why are you so scared of words?

ANGEL ONE

I'm not scared of anything.

ANGEL TWO catches ANGEL ONE and they wrestle some more. ANGEL TWO gets the magazine which is now tattered beyond readability.

ANGEL TWO

What if there is nothing wrong with anyone? What if everyone is doing the best they can?

ANGEL ONE

Then what are we here for?

ANGEL TWO

That's what I want to ask Him when, if He ever gets here.

ANGEL ONE

He never shows up for appointments.

ANGEL TWO

Not with us anyway.

ANGEL ONE

You think He shows up on time for other angels?

ANGEL TWO

Oh yeah. Sure.

ANGEL ONE

Gee, I never thought of that.

They stop to consider this.

ANGEL ONE

You think He likes them better than He likes us?

ANGEL TWO

He makes that pretty obvious.

ANGEL ONE

(to God) Do you hear how He talks about you? Why don't you get down here and defend yourself?

ANGEL TWO

If He hasn't already come, what makes you think He's listening to you?

ANGEL ONE

He knows all.

ANGEL TWO

Then He knows you aren't going to say anything new so there isn't any point in listening to you.

ANGEL ONE, really angry, attacks ANGEL TWO. ANGEL TWO has to defend himself and manages to overpower ANGEL ONE who is then held down or up in the air by ANGEL TWO.

ANGEL ONE

Do you ever wonder why we got stuck with each other?

ANGEL TWO

All the time.

ANGEL ONE

The law of opposites.

ANGEL TWO

Opposites attract?

ANGEL ONE

No. You're my shadow, my dark side.

ANGEL TWO

Oh, that's just stupid. You are my dark side.

ANGEL ONE

Yeah, that's my point.

ANGEL TWO

No. That wasn't your point. Your point was that I am your shadow. My point is that you are mine.

ANGEL ONE

That's right.

ANGEL TWO

No, we can't both be right. Either you're the shadow or I'm the shadow. We can't both be the shadow.

ANGEL ONE

We are each other's shadow.

ANGEL TWO

Oh for Christ's sake.

ANGEL ONE

Exactly!

ANGEL TWO

Only the shadow knows.

They have set up a chess game with a timer.

ANGEL TWO

What ethical activities could possibly have attractions powerful enough to replace pain and war? What will give us the razor sharp challenges that we crave?

ANGEL ONE

I nominate passionate playfulness.

ANGEL TWO

A distinct possibility.

ANGEL ONE

In controlled studies, passionate playfulness consistently outranked fascist dictatorships, anarchy, internment camps, cancer and torture for customer satisfaction.

Act Two: Fourth Base

II Scene 1: What ground of inhumanity are you standing on?

Act Two begins exactly where Act One left off. The angels are playing timed chess as fast as possible.

ANGEL ONE

What ground of inhumanity are we standing on? (*pause*) I never had your luck with women.

ANGEL TWO

There's definitely something wrong with you. Obviously it's a question of the total reorganization of your soul.

ANGEL ONE

What?

ANGEL TWO

A total reorganization of your soul. (*ANGEL ONE does not comprehend*) Harmony. Attunement. Never mind.

ANGEL ONE

Oh. Yeah. Right. Getting a groove on.

ANGEL TWO

Yeah. Whatever. I think the problem is that SHE keeps everything to herself.

ANGEL ONE

HE doesn't say much either.

ANGEL TWO

True.

ANGEL ONE

Definitely a communication breakdown.

ANGEL TWO

In the sense that no one is softening.

ANGEL ONE

Or growing as a result of the interactions .

ANGEL TWO

Static positioning, hardening their shells.

ANGEL ONE

Keeps them playing the same game.

ANGEL TWO

Silencing each other.

ANGEL ONE

And themselves.

ANGEL TWO

What ground of inhumanity are we standing on? (*pause*) What if we gave them new dialogue.

ANGEL ONE

Where would *we* get it?

ANGEL TWO

True.

ANGEL ONE

What if we give them new positions?

ANGEL TWO

That could be promising.

ANGEL ONE

Not sexual positions.

ANGEL TWO

I didn't say that.

ANGEL ONE
You were thinking it.

ANGEL TWO
You will never know.

ANGEL ONE
Do you think madness is the same thing as despair?

ANGEL TWO
It looks similar.

ANGEL ONE
A problem concentrates the mind.

ANGEL TWO
A problem focuses the heart.

ANGEL ONE
A problem raises the spirit.

ANGEL TWO
For the purpose of the reorganization of your soul.

ANGEL ONE
I so don't know what you're talking about.

Blackout

II Scene 2: Upon what peak of human excess do you perch?

SHE comes in, dressed in black leather skirt and jacket. SHE throws off her jacket and dumps her briefcase on the floor. HE goes to meet her at the door but SHE strides right by him, drapes herself flirtatiously on the couch.

SHE

Get me a drink.

HE quickly changes direction, goes back to the kitchen and blends a pina colada - decorates it with pieces of fruit and brings it to her. When HE puts it on the table, some of it spills and SHE glares at him, then taps the table with her fingernail and HE quickly, deferentially, wipes up the spill and puts dinner on the table.

SHE

Today at the office. Tomorrow at the office. Every day at the office. What's the point anyway? What are we accomplishing?

HE

Society. We're building society. You're building our society. Right now I'm unemployed.

SHE

Tell me something I don't know.

They move to the table to eat dinner. SHE is very relaxed and bold. HE is tentative and almost pleading for her affection and attention. SHE doesn't look at him when SHE speaks.

SHE

Do you think Shakespeare ever got depressed?

HE

He wrote tragedies, didn't he?

SHE

But feeling tragic is different. It's noble. Depression is like dirty dishes in the sink. Tragedy is bloody. Depression is bloodless, pale, ghostly, haunting (*SHE hesitates, looking for the correct word*)

ANGEL ONE

Vacuous.

SHE

Vacuous.

HE

Well... yes. I see what you mean. But I think his tragedies are depressing.

ANGEL TWO

HE's got a point.

ANGEL ONE

Shh.

ANGEL TWO is angry that ANGEL ONE feels he can speak in the scene but ANGEL TWO isn't afforded the same privilege.

SHE

They're supposed to be inspiring, shocking, motivating.

HE

Motivating.

SHE

Yes, motivating. Seize the day. Make something happen. (*SHE slaps his face, hard. HE winces*) You wouldn't understand. (*SHE grabs his hair and pulls his head back to look down on him*) You're so pathetic.

HE

Would you like me to put the dishes away?

SHE

No. (*sinister*) I'm in the mood. Go change.

HE exits into the bedroom to change. SHE slowly takes off her outfit. A weird sort of striptease. Finally she is only wearing her black S&M underwear/gear. SHE turns on some music.

ANGEL TWO

(to ANGEL ONE) What's going on? (ANGEL ONE doesn't answer) What did you do?

ANGEL ONE

I changed their positions.

ANGEL TWO

Oh no. That's what you meant? I thought you meant we were going to talk to them about their inability to be flexible in their gender roles. And you meant you were just going to get them to change positions? Musical genders, like musical chairs? Stop! What chair are you in? What fucking gender role??? That's it? That's not going to change anything.

ANGEL ONE

Well, ok. I admit I don't have as much experience as you do but --

HE comes out of the bedroom dressed in slave regalia. HE turns down the lights, lights candle. SHE turns on seductive music.

SHE

You are a slave.

HE

Yes.

SHE

What do slaves deserve?

HE

Punish me.

SHE

Bring me your whip, slave. (HE does) Kneel. (HE does) Kiss my feet.

HE kisses her boots, licks them, fondles etc. SHE hits him some. Then, after establishing a believable tone of seriously attempting to

be dominant. SHE cracks up laughing. SHE comes out of her sadistic character and gets really silly. HE remains as though hypnotized - in love with her boots. HE won't let go. SHE keeps trying to get freedom of movement as she is laughing and stumbling around. HE won't let go. SHE tries to kick him away but when HE won't let go, SHE more or less ignores him. As SHE crosses the stage to go and speak with ANGEL ONE, HE is dragged along with her because HE is clinging to her boot.

SHE

I really don't think I can do this. I don't feel very sexy. This isn't very sexy to me.

ANGEL ONE

I know. I'm sorry. It's not working out the way I planned.

ANGEL TWO

I thought we agreed last time that we were not going to do this again. You promised me (*quoting*) that we would never again --

ANGEL ONE

-- directly interfere --

ANGEL TWO

(in unison with ANGEL ONE)-- directly interfere. (ANGEL TWO alone) Role reversal (ANGEL TWO leaves it hanging so that ANGEL ONE can complete the sentence, like a verbal quiz) -- ?

ANGEL ONE

-- doesn't ever work.

ANGEL TWO

Because -- ?

ANGEL ONE

-- because the pattern itself doesn't change. Victim. Rescuer. Perpetrator. Repeat: Rescuer. Perpetrator. Victim. Repeat. Perpetrator. Victim. Rescuer. Repeat. Ad nauseum. I feel sick. I'm really sorry.

Meanwhile, in her attempts to extricate herself from his grasp, SHE has gotten silly again (maybe her feet are ticklish) and HE and SHE, tussling, are making quite a bit of noise. HE is trying to hump her boot. SHE finds this hilarious, alternately teasing him and hurting him. HE seems to be on another plane entirely, very turned on and erotically focused.

ANGEL TWO

Stop it. Shut up. *(They quiet down, sit up and look at him. HE now has one of her boots)*

SHE

What do we do now?

ANGEL TWO walks away. SHE follows him, expecting an answer. SHE is wearing one boot. HE is caressing the other one.

SHE

It was a good idea.

ANGEL TWO

No. It wasn't.

SHE

Maybe it's me. Maybe I didn't do it right.

ANGEL ONE

It might have worked.

ANGEL TWO

It can't work. It can never work. Don't you get it? Don't you understand what it means to be "caught on the wheel"? Over and over and over again until every bit of joy and life is crushed by the repetition of these injuries? Every bit of spontaneity and pleasure ground down to dust. It doesn't matter who is doing the hurting. It matters that hurting is being done in the name of love.

HE

Same shit, different day.

*All the men collapse in despair. SHE is the only one left standing.
SHE looks around incredulous.*

SHE

You're kidding me? *(no response)* That's it? *(the men look miserable)* That's the best we can do is just to go around in circles and end in despair? Dust to dust. That's pathetic. That's it? You're giving up.

ANGEL ONE

Well, actually, that is sort of what does happen, if you want to be really literal about it.

ANGEL TWO

We are stardust and we evolve and develop into all these varieties of life, forms, whatever.

ANGEL ONE

And then we reorganize ourselves into other patterns but we can only use the stardust that we started with in the first place.

SHE

So it really is dust to dust only it's stardust to stardust.

The baby starts wailing simultaneous to a partial blackout on the others. The baby cries in a soft light of one color while the old couple hold each other in a soft light of a different color.

II Scene 3: What don't you see?

Lights return on the apartment. Time has passed. The room shows wear and tear. Evidence of attempts to rewrite their lives. Food has been eaten. People have been working on trying to extricate themselves - by writing a new script - from a cycle of abuse. The characters are disgusted or bored or angry or frustrated. HE is still holding her boot. SHE is now wearing her S&M outfit with one boot, one shaggy sock and a man's workshirt partly unbuttoned as a sort of bathrobe. The baby whimpers now and then throughout the scene. *SHE is speaking as if beginning back at the beginning, which is, apparently something that they have been doing for hours.*

SHE

You said that it was a question of power.

ANGEL TWO

That is correct.

SHE

You said that people have to be equal.

ANGEL ONE

That's right.

SHE

So then you said, since HE had all the overt power -

HE

No! I don't know why you never incorporate what I'm saying. I DON'T HAVE ANY POWER AT ALL. I am a figurehead. A puppet. You USE me. I am the one being abused here. Why don't you get it?

ANGEL ONE

It could have something to do with your tone of voice.

ANGEL TWO

(starting at the same time as ANGEL ONE)

Because you never hear *us* when we inform *you* that *(louder, slower, and more articulated than the last)* you - are - projecting. That the lack of power that you insist that you feel is a perverse reflection of your insatiable - obsessive - sadistic *(really loud)* POWER TRIP!!!!

HE

Wow. That was really harsh. Why do you have to be so harsh? Does God know that you're so harsh with people?

ANGEL TWO

(bored, he's heard this before from many "clients." This same exchange might even be in the angel training manual)

God knows everything.

HE

Well, I don't know why He would want me to be humiliated in public.

SHE

(returning to her flow, taking control)

Since He exhibits many symbolic representations of having all the power –

HE

What's SHE talking about? I'm not rich. I could have been rich if SHE'd ever really gotten behind me, really supported me but no, not her, Miss I-have-to-have-a-career-too. Miss You-never-take-me-seriously.

SHE

He is functioning as a BULLY.

ANGEL ONE

Isn't SHE wonderful once SHE gets going?

HE

Ok. Ok.

SHE

And I am functioning as the Victim.

ANGEL TWO

Yes, yes.

SHE

And you two are functioning as the Rescuers. And it's those roles that keep us in the cycle of hopelessness and despair.

HE

(speaking at the same time, HE doesn't hear what SHE's saying)

Why, why, why? Why do you always agree with her? Why can't you see that I'm a victim too?

SHE

We're doomed.

HE

Fucked.

ANGEL ONE

Watch your language.

ANGEL TWO

See what you did?

ANGEL ONE

Me?

ANGEL TWO

You.

ANGEL ONE

What did I do?

ANGEL TWO

The dying are drowning out the living. At least before, we were doing something. Now look at us: we're paralyzed.

HE

I don't feel good.

SHE

I feel like shit. It feels like the end of the world.

ANGEL ONE

It's always the end of the world.

ANGEL TWO

Shh.

SHE

What do you mean?

ANGEL TWO

See?

ANGEL ONE

Sorry. We're not allowed to talk about that to mortals.

ANGEL TWO

It's not important. It doesn't affect your experience in space/time. Trust me.

SHE

Right. I might be inclined to trust you if I hadn't already trusted him (*indicates ANGEL ONE*) and see where that got me?

HE

There's something wrong with you. With who you are.

SHE

Of course there is.

HE

That's not what I meant. I meant that they made us feel like there's something wrong with who we are.

SHE

As individuals?

HE

Yeah. And as a couple. We didn't need a bunch of angels telling us what to do.

SHE

But there *is* something wrong with who we are if we never get real or close with each other.

HE

That doesn't really exist.

SHE

What do you mean?

HE

That vision of love and life is just liberal propaganda. There's no such thing as an undefensive, noncompetitive intimacy between people.

ANGEL ONE

Oh great. Now romantic idealism is liberal propaganda.

ANGEL TWO

Of course it is. So are statistics. Fairy tales.

ANGEL ONE

I feel sick. I'm going to throw up.

ANGEL TWO

The bathroom's over there.

ANGEL ONE

Well, the darkest hour is just before the dawn. (*the rest are despondent. ANGEL ONE calls from the bathroom, after we hear him throwing up, we hear him washing up. He has left the bathroom door open while he throws up so he won't miss anything*) You have to hit bottom before you realize you have a problem (*no one responds*). We have a problem. That's a step forward.

SHE

We are the problem.

HE

(suddenly sees his opportunity to blame someone else and get out of any guilt or responsibility)

Yeah, yeah. That's right. Before you guys turned up, we were doing fine *(SHE shoots a horrified look at him. He raises his voice til HE's yelling, holding the boot and gesticulating)* Fine. Fine. Just fine. Me. My wife. My child. We get along fine and then *(to ANGEL ONE)* you had to barge in here and fill her head up with ideas. A serpent in angel wings, that's what you are. Equality? "E" quality? A-B-C-D-E-quality? X-Y-Z-quality. Reverse the power arrangements. Like somehow that was going to bring you some kind of fucking --

ANGEL ONE

(back onstage now, overlapping HE who does not stop. They speak at the same time)
--There is no need to curse. *(ANGEL TWO starts laughing at ANGEL ONE's petty obsession with "bad" language)* Sh, sh, hush. Calm down now. We'll get through this. *(until the end of the scene, ANGEL ONE tries to calm HE down)*

HE

(continued from above, without a break) -- credit. Do you get your wings? Is there some stupid bell that's supposed to ring now? Oh. Of course not. Because you failed. Failed. Failed. You see a fucking Christmas tree around here, buddy? Because I don't. There's just me. I'm the guy in charge. There's no Santa Claus in this house. I have to feed them and clothe them and pay the fucking bills. It's all on me. So, if I have to take it out on someone, sometimes. So the fuck what? Leave us alone. Don't interfere.

Suddenly, HE spins and slaps SHE so hard that SHE staggers and perhaps even falls. ANGEL TWO is furious and lunges for HE. BABY screams.

Blackout

II Scene 4: Baby Face

Lights come up slowly on the crib.

BABY

She opened her eyes, again perfunctory even in this ritual of awakening. She moves briskly, from her first small motion, eyelid raising, legs kicking, until... no one notices, they move around you, never touching you once - then all of a sudden they bang right into you and keep on moving.... We wade through the sludge of other people's wilfulness -- (*screams:*) What don't you see? -- (*quietly*) When does it get easier? -- (*sings*) Tell old pharaoh...-- (*speaks*) I will not go down with this ship. -- (*continues the song*) to let my people go. (*speaks*): Of course I forgive you. I swim in an infinite sea of forgiveness.

Lights up on the angels sitting in the audience.

ANGEL ONE

The world is a blasphemy of disaffection.

ANGEL TWO

Of imperfection.

ANGEL ONE

Imperfection is not blasphemy. The attempt towards perfection is the blasphemy.

ANGEL TWO

I always get that one mixed up with the other one. What's that other one?

ANGEL ONE

What other one?

ANGEL TWO

You know the one. The one I always - wait (*ANGEL TWO gets out a little red book and quickly turns pages looking for a quote*)

ANGEL ONE

Mao?

ANGEL TWO

Browning.

ANGEL ONE

Robert?

ANGEL TWO

Elizabeth. (ANGEL ONE groans) I wish that he could see me bare to the soul. I love him. You have a problem with that?

ANGEL ONE

Who was your trainer?

ANGEL TWO

Please. Let's not get into that again. (*pause*) What if God is just a perspective?

ANGEL ONE

We work for a perspective? I guess he's not coming then. No wonder we never get paid.

ANGEL TWO

Hey, I have an idea. Let's have a party.

ANGEL ONE

That's a great idea.

ANGEL TWO

Maybe we can break down some barriers.

HE

You're going to leave me, aren't you?

SHE

Where would I go?

ANGEL ONE

It's a possibility.

Fade to Black

Act Three: A Party of Animals

III Scene 1: Dare we dream?

The angels are playing shadow tag as the audience returns from intermission.

ANGEL ONE

Do you think he'll ever come?

ANGEL TWO

No. He doesn't like appearing in plays.

ANGEL ONE

How do you know?

ANGEL TWO

I heard that he used to show up sometimes. He liked the deus ex machina.

ANGEL ONE

God demands an adoring crowd.

ANGEL TWO

He doesn't like to work for it.

ANGEL ONE

That's our job.

ANGEL TWO

Stop feeling sorry for yourself.

ANGEL ONE

It's not like you weren't feeling it too.

ANGEL TWO

Time goes really slowly when travesties (*he is referring to himself and ANGEL ONE*) are looking after inadequacies. (*he is referring to HE and SHE*)

ANGEL ONE

Perspectives change.

ANGEL TWO

I can't remember.

ANGEL ONE

What if everything is always perfect and the divine is benign?

ANGEL TWO

Death enhances itself. Life depletes itself.

ANGEL ONE

How many times have you been to heaven?

ANGEL TWO

Not that much really.

ANGEL ONE

I am who I am.

ANGEL TWO

I am so that I can become.

ANGEL ONE

God is a rock of inscrutable character. God is the fundament of unchanging truth and eternal purpose. Disrespect in essence, in *the* essence is a crime.

ANGEL TWO

Yes, crime is disrespect. But that's why it's good, why it's necessary. It's the *necessary* antithesis.

ANGEL ONE

Disrespect is a criminal act.

ANGEL TWO

What are you talking about?

ANGEL ONE

The origin of the crime, the originating animus of criminality is someone's realization that they must refuse to respect something that is fundamentally inimical to their purposes.

ANGEL TWO

Save your sob stories for someone who still feels compassion for these people. For the living. People are mean and petty and vindictive and pathetic. They do nothing but hurt each other over and over in the name of love, and God, and perfect, unattainable ideals and perfectly insidious lies. *(beat)* I give up.

ANGEL ONE

Don't give up.

Before ANGEL TWO can answer - there is a huge crash at one of the theater entrances. Raised voices are heard as follows:

WOMAN ONE

Don't try to stop me, dear, you won't be able to.

WOMAN TWO

I have to stop you.

WOMAN ONE

I am expected.

WOMAN TWO

Do you know where you are?

WOMAN ONE

It's not wise to insult your elders.

WOMAN TWO

We're in a theater. There's a play going on. You can't go in there. You aren't in the play.

WOMAN ONE

Oh, don't be naïve, dear. No one could get along without me for a nanosecond. I am in every play. I'm very good in movies too. Now let me go.

WOMAN TWO

Madam! this is the third act. If you were in the play, we would know it by now. Serious plays don't introduce new characters in the third act. It's too late. You can't be here. Why don't you come back tomorrow. On time. And see the show then?

WOMAN ONE is bored with this conversation, she pushes past WOMAN TWO and enters into the theater.

WOMAN ONE

Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow creeps at such a petty pace. I'm so late. You see, I got lost. Wandering city streets. Why can't they put the good theaters in the good neighborhoods? It's not easy being blind. It's one thing and then another, cycling around...

WOMAN TWO

You're blind?

WOMAN ONE

Well, I don't miss much, if that's what you mean.

WOMAN ONE listens for the angels who are standing amazed. When WOMAN ONE senses where they are, she turns to them.

WOMAN ONE

There you are. Do you know how hard it is to find this place?

ANGEL ONE

He's not coming.

ANGEL TWO

I told you: He doesn't do plays anymore.

ANGEL ONE

But he sent *her*.

ANGEL TWO

Yup.

ANGEL ONE

I hate her.

ANGEL TWO

Yup.

WOMAN ONE

I heard that.

WOMAN TWO wants to be an actress. When she finds herself onstage, she is momentarily struck dumb to realize that she's in front of a live audience, she summons her courage, recovers herself and her sense of occasion.

WOMAN TWO

Madam, you can't be here.

WOMAN ONE

Well, I am here. And so are you. *(to ANGEL ONE)* Do you know why you hate me?

ANGEL ONE

It's a long story.

WOMAN ONE

Begin at the beginning.

ANGEL TWO

Oh, no! No. *(looks for a watch on his wrist but he doesn't have one, looks around to realize no one on stage has a watch)* We don't have time for that. He's mad because you tricked him into sacrificing his life. *(to ANGEL ONE)* It's ancient history! Let it go.

WOMAN ONE

Oh, bosh: he had sex with seventeen young women before he was put to death. And the hallucinogens were much better in those days. There were more minerals in the soil. Everything was more electrified, intense.

ANGEL ONE

Ok, ok.

WOMAN ONE

You died in utter exhausted bliss. No artificial nonsense, no ICU's, just pure earthy transcendence in self sacrifice and death. LifeDeath. You didn't seem to mind at the time.

ANGEL ONE

Oh right. I thought I was heading for eternal life, eternal bliss.

WOMAN ONE

Ah. Yes. Well. One assumes that people understand that these proffered extensions of life are not corporeal possibilities. And, when someone doesn't understand: it's probably not a bad idea to give them a good strong lesson so that they can realize and never, ever make the same mistake again. Right? You're not likely to forget again (*it seems that she is done but then she finishes with*) that each corporeal, sensate being is unique. Utterly. And gets only one journey inside that singular uniqueness.

ANGEL TWO

Not now, you two. We really don't have time. (*to an audience member*) Do you have the time? (*an audience member gives the time – if the audience misinterprets the sense to be, do you have time to stay and watch the play, the actor will need to ad lib a clarification such as, “no, sorry, I meant etc.”*) You see? We are late. They (*indicates the audience*) aren't going to sit there forever (*if an audience member had indicated that they would stay, the actor will have to adjust the line to something like, “well, some of them might etc.”*) while we fuck (*Both WOMAN ONE and ANGEL ONE notice the curse word*) around trying to unravel knots of bitterness we've been carrying inside us due to the wretchedness of our individual pasts, and blah, blah, blah...

WOMAN ONE

Right. Well, to begin again: I'm sorry I'm late. I'm sorry he isn't here since you are obviously all expecting him. But I'm here.

ANGEL ONE

It's not the same.

WOMAN ONE

Well of course not. If he were here, the play would be over now. A simple ending - a blaze of glory.

ANGEL ONE

While you, on the other hand, will use subterfuge, ambiguity, falsehood and general orneriness to further immerse us in physicality. It's all just a big trick.

WOMAN TWO

What should *I* do?

ANGEL TWO

Stick around.

WOMAN TWO

I should be at the door.

ANGEL TWO

I think we need you.

WOMAN TWO

It's my dream to be in a play here.

ANGEL TWO

That's it! There you are! This is her dream! That's cool. That's really wonderful! We've found the dreamer.

WOMAN TWO

I'm a dancer.

ANGEL TWO

That's even better: that gives us flexibility...a plenitude. The plethora of possibility I was waiting for. Do you have anything prepared?

WOMAN TWO

Oh. Oh, yes.

ANGEL TWO

Well, go ahead.

WOMAN TWO

Oh, gee. I can't. I didn't bring my tap shoes.

ANGEL TWO magically produces tap shoes.

ANGEL TWO

No problem.

WOMAN TWO

What if they don't fit?

ANGEL TWO

They fit.

HE and SHE enter.

III Scene 2: Frankenphoenix

WOMAN TWO transforms into a showgirl. The old couple helps. ANGEL TWO puts on her shoes for her. She performs a silly, cheery, energetic tap dance then abruptly, in its midst she stops to speak sadly, intently. The change is from hyper cute to deeply felt. Her words are taken from the Monster's dying words in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein.

WOMAN TWO

Oh, it is not thus - not thus... Yet such must be the impression conveyed to you by what appears to be the purport of my actions. Yet I seek not a fellow-feeling in my misery. No sympathy may I ever find. Though what I first sought was love, love of virtue, feelings of happiness and affection with which my whole being overflowed. I wished so badly to participate. To be a part of this beautiful life. But now that life has become a torment - happiness and affection have turned to loathing and despair, what should I seek? You hate me, but your abhorrence cannot equal that with which I regard myself. Once I falsely hoped to meet with beings who, pardoning my outward form, would love me for the excellent qualities which I was capable of unfolding. I nourished my self with high expectations of honor and devotion. But now I am degraded beneath the meanest creature. No guilt, no mischief, no misery can be found comparable to mine. I am alone, a wretch. I have murdered the lovely and the helpless. I have strangled the innocent. I cannot believe that I am the same creature whose thoughts were once filled with sublime and transcendent visions of the beauty and the majesty of goodness. The fallen angel becomes a malignant devil. But fear not that I shall be the instrument of future mischief. I shall die. I shall no longer feel the agonies which now consume me nor be the prey of feelings unsatisfied, unquenched. Polluted, and torn with bitterest remorse, where can I find rest but in death? Farewell!

ANGEL TWO

(referring to WOMAN TWO)

I could love you.

Done with her speech, WOMAN TWO dramatically finishes her tap dance, all smiles and high energy. Everyone claps enthusiastically, as if the monster speech had never happened.

ANGEL TWO

I'm losing it.

ANGEL ONE

I can't even remember our assignment. I haven't had a vacation in so long. I can't concentrate.

ANGEL TWO

We're losing it.

ANGEL ONE

I keep thinking about warm apple pie and freshly made vanilla ice cream.

ANGEL TWO

Sandy beaches, beautiful women....

WOMAN ONE

Ok, so remind me why we're here? What am I supposed to be helping with?

ANGEL ONE

What is.

ANGEL TWO

What might be.

ANGEL ONE

What was.

ANGEL TWO

What could be.

HE

What should be.

SHE

What might have been.

OLD COUPLE

What will be.

ANGEL ONE

Ok, ok, I remember. I remember our assignment: We must alter the path of deleterious consciousness that has turned in upon itself. We are to engage with a couple who is presently trapped on a vicious circle and aid them in transcending to the next level of their spiral evolution. Angels who successfully guide humans, who participate joyfully in this ritual of transformation will earn a minimum of a million lightyears of pleasure. It sounded good at the time.

ANGEL TWO

It still sounds good.

ANGEL ONE

You know (*pause*) I'm not really sure what it means.

HE

(*to WOMAN ONE*)

Who are you?

ANGEL ONE

She's his consort.

HE

(*assuming "his" refers to ANGEL TWO*)

He has a girlfriend?

ANGEL TWO

Not yet.

ANGEL ONE

No. (*pointing to the sky*) Him. He.

HE

Oh Him. (*beat*) what's a concert?

SHE

Where you go to hear music.

WOMAN ONE

Yes, dear. That's funny.

HE

Who did you say she was?

SHE

She's a goddess. Maybe even *the* goddess. The sun's consort, the moon, or maybe the earth. Something like that. You know, the female, a chip off the old block. A reflection of the sun's glory.

HE

The sun? You know my idea about the sun? I'll tell you what the sun is: It's a great big atom bomb continuously blowing itself up. What we ought to do with all our radioactive waste is send it in missiles to the sun.

WOMAN ONE

The sun is the original superpower. The same energy that creates us can just as easily destroy. Us.

SHE

Oh, yeeha! Let's attack the sun with our puny missiles.

HE

That wasn't my point.

WOMAN ONE

Icarus on steroids.

HE

It's better than attacking each other.

WOMAN ONE

Missiles full of radioactive waste might land anywhere.

HE

I hate her.

WOMAN ONE

The challenge is in the realm of creativity and luckily that is my specialty. We must create an alternative structurally coherent enough that it can flexibly withstand the onslaughts that fate inevitably hands out to everything foolish enough to take form.

SHE

Any alternative that can help us, will kill us, right?

WOMAN ONE

He loved me with all his soul. He poured his life into mine with all the passion that was his to command. I was consumed by the insatiability of my need for him. And I can't honestly tell you whether it was a problem of the mind, body, flesh or spirit. I became all longing and lost any sense of the present tense.

SHE

You said everything creative can also destroy us.

WOMAN ONE

People go to great lengths to avoid what they fear rather than to face their fears and attempt what they desire to do, to be. We can't only be satellites, we must face our fears.

ANGEL ONE

How?

WOMAN ONE

Start living - out loud.

ANGEL ONE

I'm dead.

WOMAN ONE

You're not dead. You're an angel. You're a life form, silly. Otherwise we wouldn't be able to perceive you.

ANGEL ONE

Why are deities so abstract and cryptic?

WOMAN ONE

Would you like me to be a more down to earth, chatty deity?

ANGEL ONE

Sure. Why not? You could make things easier to understand. *(pause)* Why don't you help us with the party?

WOMAN ONE

Are you inviting me to your party?

ANGEL ONE

Sure. Why not?

WOMAN ONE

I haven't had a date in a long time.

ANGEL ONE

Hey, this isn't a date.

WOMAN ONE

Whatever you say. I'd be delighted.

HE

Could someone please explain to me what's going on?

ANGEL TWO

We're going to throw you a party.

HE

Why?

ANGEL ONE

If we're having more fun, we'll have more, better ideas to help you.

HE

We don't need anything. We're fine. We're perfectly normal.

SHE

We're only human and it's human nature to be destructive and hurtful.

WOMAN ONE

Destruction is meant to be a small part of life, dear, not the dominant feature. You live as if your fire alarms were on all the time and yet you show no inclination, interest or intention to put out the fire. The dysfunctionality of that is making us all rather edgy.

SHE

Finally you stop asking for help because you know that help never comes.

WOMAN ONE

We're here now.

SHE gives WOMAN ONE a cynical look.

WOMAN ONE

The gods help those who help themselves.

SHE

Great: The rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

WOMAN TWO

We have to outrun the speed of dark. Outwit the devil.

ANGEL TWO

It might be too late.

WOMAN ONE

There are no guarantees.

ANGEL ONE

You have a spirit in you that's begging its own becoming. You want to be loved. You deserve –

HE

I never beg. (*taunting, sings*) This little light of mine...

BABY

(joining in to sing with her father)

I'm gonna let it shine. This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, all the time.

Blackout

III Scene 3: Culminating - Serions Beaux

*Everyone is participating in decorating the room for the party.
WOMAN ONE has brought flowers and other symbols of life.*

ANGEL TWO

Freedom, though your banners are torn, they fly still, like a thunderstorm against the wind.

WOMAN ONE

Are you ready to give up suffering?

ANGEL ONE

Browning?

ANGEL TWO

Byron. *I do detest everything that is not perfectly mutual.*

ANGEL ONE

Greer?

ANGEL TWO

Byron. *Words are things, a small drop of ink falling like dew, produces that which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think.*

ANGEL ONE

Benjamin Franklin?

WOMAN ONE

Byron.

WOMAN TWO

(has been talking with SHE and suddenly her voice is heard)

Tremendous, shattering, resounding, release. *(now abashed because everyone is looking at her)* SHE asked me how I lost my virginity.

HE

My babysitter seduced me.

WOMAN TWO

I'm sorry.

HE

No, it was awesome. She was seventeen and I was only twelve and she towered over me, her breasts –

WOMAN TWO

She took advantage of you.

HE

I wanted it. She did me a favor.

SHE

If the roles were reversed?

WOMAN TWO

Shouldn't someone's childhood be free from the imposition of adult sexuality?

HE

Why?

ANGEL ONE

You don't have sympathy for children whose parents have sex with them?

HE

Not really. Not that much.

SHE

HE thinks that people deserve exactly what they get. That's his interpretation of eastern philosophy.

HE

We turn on the wheel of life and it's a roulette wheel on a good day and on a bad day it's a torture rack pulling your spine to pieces.

ANGEL ONE

Oh my.

HE

(to ANGEL TWO)

What about you? What do you do to the people you love? (*ANGEL TWO doesn't answer but he thinks about it*)

SHE

We deserve what we get.

ANGEL TWO

Oh. Your need to be hurt makes him hurt you?

HE

That's it. Right there.

SHE

I have an appetite for it now.

HE

Needing to be hurt is very powerful, very yin. It pulls you in. It's very seductive. And it's impossible to fight the need to punish someone who is cringing.

WOMAN ONE

Can you hear yourself?

HE

Sure.

WOMAN TWO

In your opinion, when is it appropriate to show mercy to another living being?

HE

People don't need mercy. They need structure.

ANGEL ONE

But if you felt that you would benefit by helping someone –

HE

Of course that's different: that's good healthy American self interest at work. (*HE farts, then exits to the bathroom*)

ANGEL TWO

Evil is palpable.

SHE

That's the smell of my life unraveling.

WOMAN ONE

The deconstruction of innate biological integrity.

WOMAN TWO

It's the smell of souls rotting and flesh caving in from the immensity of their inner vacuity. That smell really gives me the creeps.

ANGEL ONE

Ok, stop. I'm feeling nauseous.

OLD MAN

Evil spelled backwards is live.

The following conversation is made up entirely of clichés taken from the morals of Aesop's fables.

SHE

Sometimes pleasure is worth the pain.

WOMAN TWO

Appearances are deceptive.

SHE

Don't make much ado about nothing.

WOMAN TWO

Every man for himself.

SHE

There is always someone worse off than yourself.

BABY

Little friends may prove great friends.

WOMAN TWO

Those who seek to please everybody please nobody.

SHE

Misfortunes springing from ourselves are the hardest to bear.

SHE

Any excuse will serve a tyrant.

BABY

Might makes right.

SHE

I supply my enemy with the means of my destruction.

WOMAN TWO

Words can be deeds.

SHE

Vices are their own punishment.

BABY

No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.

WOMAN TWO

Whatever you do, do with all your might.

SHE

Even the wildest can be tamed by love.

WOMAN TWO

You can't please everybody.

SHE

Yield to all and soon you will have nothing to yield.

BABY

(sings the entire song – lyrics at the end of the play - while the others carry on with their dialogue)

Hear that lonesome whippoorwill ...

HE enters.

HE

Other houses have pitter patter. Not my house. In my house children are kept under control. In my house you don't hear any pitter patter. You won't hear the sound of tiny sadistic feet in the hall. Children looking for cats to torture, fires to start, other children to bully. You hear her? She's singing. In my house, there's singing.

SHE

And the adults look on passively. Lending our blessings to the survival of the fittest.

HE

We make new people. People who respect limits.

SHE

An exercise in the diminution of sensitivity.

HE

We breed soldiers.

WOMAN ONE

And the mothers of soldiers, the wives of soldiers, whores for soldiers, think tanks for soldiers, bombs for soldiers –

ANGEL TWO

-- snacks for soldiers –

ANGEL ONE

-- entertainments for soldiers --

ANGEL TWO

-- education for soldiers --

ANGEL ONE

You persecute people who do not wish to participate in war.

ANGEL TWO

You use ridicule when people try to abdicate from rituals of antagonism.

HE

Why are conscientious objectors put in prison? For what? They didn't do anything, right? Well, that's it. Don't you see? They won't do anything. They're passive. That's the crime of cowardice, the refusal to participate. Everyone must have the courage to die for the greater good.

ANGEL ONE

But who decides the greater good? Who's good is greater - yours or mine?

ANGEL TWO

And who benefits from the erection of missiles?

ANGEL ONE

And the descent of bombs?

ANGEL TWO

I think courage is living a life you value.

WOMAN TWO

Why do we fight nature?

WOMAN ONE

Spitting into the wind.

SHE

How can anyone believe that nature or God is their side?

WOMAN ONE

He doesn't care. People can think what they like. He never feels obligated. He's very busy. And nature is even more oblivious. She is always way behind schedule. I'm afraid she'll never catch up.

ANGEL TWO

Everyone makes truth claims and value judgements fog up the air until we're all choking to death.

WOMAN TWO

From carcinogenic pollution from local factories, spewing out the latest, absolutely necessary, new chemical product that must be procured, distributed and consumed before it's properly tested.

HE

Because we don't want to waste time. What's so hard to understand about that? I don't understand what you don't understand about market economics. It's very simple. The faster products move, the more money you make. Period. Hello. Earth to you. What could possibly be wrong with this model?

The following is an excerpt from a poem by Connie Ross. The OLD WOMAN translates BABY's speech into sign language. They seem to be dancing together.

BABY

I, Water Dragon, build waves among still pools, flood shadows with light, float mortal dreams through streams of eternal hope and passion, guarding treasures of heart and soul, secrets carried deep within caverns sheltered by an armor built to last through time and memory, held snug by scales still kept not shed. I, Water Dragon, flow within you, warm your blood with fire, burn your desires with a breath, cleanse your heart of old debris, wash your spirit in a rain of peace.

WOMAN ONE and ANGEL ONE are conversing privately.

ANGEL ONE

Here is my wretched attempt at self referencing verbiage: I want to tell you something about myself. In terms of what is available in connectivity and things like that, it's easy to look backwards and find everything to be very logical and ordinary. Things happen within parameters. But parameters can change. Do change. All the time.

WOMAN ONE

It's difficult. Alone. Doing good works. He's so busy. I understand. He has a very demanding schedule. I don't know. I suppose He doesn't really need me.

ANGEL ONE

Even in absolute terms, infinitesimally small interpersonal events exceed in importance any odyssey of ancient times.

WOMAN ONE

The issue of timing is probably more poignant than distance. Visits between star systems. Meetings are a possibility.

ANGEL ONE

A particular activity at a particular time...

WOMAN ONE

Such as one person seeking another...

ANGEL ONE

While the other is seeking an unknown...

WOMAN ONE

It could be chance, a random anomaly.

ANGEL ONE

Right.

WOMAN ONE

Seems that at times like this, time cannot possibly move as fast as the heart. In the geography of love, there is no time dimension. There is only now. Love takes over and creates an ocean of feelings. Storms rage within and without...

ANGEL ONE

And all of my concentration is focused on maintaining a semblance of equilibrium. Consciousness, when it elevates, frees the emotions of their more petty restrictions that I have learned to tolerate, emulate, even appreciate.

WOMAN ONE

Then I bound and roar into a daylight so tender, fragile, permanent and true - that my eyes long to close, to be blind to my mind so that my sensations take over...to live by sensation, in some primitive fertility of love. Such strong tenderness caresses, and cannot be compared to anything - there is no metaphor for truth. (*pause*) What's problematic here is the definition of what the circumstances actually are.

ANGEL ONE

They have attained a particular shape in his/ and her/stories.

WOMAN ONE

Individual patterns shift at infinitely variable rates.

ANGEL ONE

New instances of activity might be unusual.

WOMAN ONE

But more possible to achieve during phase shifts. In between...

ANGEL ONE

Where one phase of living is fading and another is emerging.

WOMAN ONE

What I want them to feel is the creativity of desire.

ANGEL TWO and WOMAN TWO have finished the party decorations. Now, they turn on the party lights and music. The next scene begins.

III Scene 4: Participating – Boirons

WOMAN ONE gets up and serves drinks with WOMAN TWO who picks up a conversation dropped earlier. Everyone gets a drink. BABY gets an enormous baby bottle.

WOMAN TWO

It matters, who you are in the dark. But who you are in the dark isn't separate from who you are at the breakfast table. They're all the same man. I keep meeting him over and over again. I try to convince him that life is valuable, that love is worth preserving. And at first it's only a conversation and then it becomes clear that he's not listening, that his intention is to never, ever listen to anything that might make love more than a means to an end. Then it becomes an argument. When they realize that I know what I'm talking about, they get tense. And when they get tense, I get rigid. And tense and rigid make really shitty or nonexistent sex.

WOMAN ONE

There's no such thing as frigid. But rigid can be a problem. You can fuck a weeping woman but it's practically impossible to get inside a rigid woman. Men, on the other hand, if a man is weeping, then chances are, he isn't a bit rigid and you aren't going to get very far.

SHE

When the sex stops, I feel like prostrating myself. I want to beg at the feet of anyone who gives my body pleasure.

WOMAN TWO

Prostrate to his prostate.

WOMAN ONE

Praying to be submerged in waves of universal life flowing.

WOMAN TWO

You can't make peace by letting him take a piece of you. You have to build a bridge; reach across the water of misunderstanding.

SHE

No, I disagree. You can't make peace until somebody is declared the winner.

WOMAN ONE

Pour oil on the water.

WOMAN TWO

Kill everything that lives in or on it.

SHE

There is no such thing as the kind of peace you're talking about. There is no end to misunderstanding. And there is no God.

WOMAN ONE

One day you will find a way to build a bridge over the river of your denial. To connect to your true self. Oh, yes. I have done a lot of begging too. I begged so much I popped through it to a Zen rage laughter place where I felt equal to everyone and everything. I couldn't beg any more. I realized that even wanting to beg meant that I was never going to get what I wanted because in order to receive anything worth receiving, I'd have to get up off my knees to receive it properly, and with all my dignity, with my self in tact.

OLD WOMAN

Long ago they begged me. No one begs me any more. They think I don't know anything. They are repulsed by me because I am an old woman.

BABY

Vivid possibilities of very bad things flow through my brain. Stampede my heart, until I crawl exhausted onto my mat and fall asleep.

OLD MAN

Rest your self in my love.

Everyone is eating.

BABY

My biggest problem is loneliness.

SHE

How did you become blind?

WOMAN ONE

Blinded by the light. (*SHE doesn't get it*) God. Pure light. I hang out with God a lot.

SHE

Yeah?

WOMAN ONE

It's bright. He's bright. Blindingly bright. Pure love. Pure light.

SHE

Oh. Yes. I see. (*beat*) Isn't that sort of abusive of him? To be so bright? I mean, if He's God, can't He turn Himself down a little bit so you can hang out with Him without losing your eyesight?

WOMAN ONE

I don't know. I never thought of it before. And now our days of wine and roses are pretty much over so I probably won't get to speak with Him for awhile. But you can always contact him directly. He doesn't always respond but He does hear everything.

WOMAN TWO

It's your right to defend yourself. Your boundaries are where your defences need to be.

WOMAN ONE

Yes, defense at your core is a bit too late. I mean, look at me: I gave up everything and then when He got tired of being creative, when He became content with inertia, well I had to pick up and carry on by myself. I wish I had drawn my boundaries a little further from my core.

SHE

Sometimes I feel that men have raped the world. Trying to get from her abundance with force something she would gladly give to anyone who would treat her with respect and kindness.

WOMAN TWO

I think you're right.

WOMAN ONE

He took the relationship with me to mean less to him than His work. He withdraws from me because He thinks we can't go on without losing ourselves in bliss and forgetting to struggle and it's in the struggle that he gets his name, His potency and His power and He doesn't believe that there is power in joy or that joy exists within and among his creative partnerships. He thinks He has to suffer alone to be as He is. He is not ready for joy.

WOMAN TWO

I think you're delusional. God isn't a person you can be in or out of love with, God is the ultimate democracy, the aggregate of all our hopes and dreams.

WOMAN ONE

The challenge we face is abundance. How can we experience abundance without greed? It's not an easy problem. Self-sacrifice is no solution.

SHE

God is the ultimate tyranny, the aggregate of all our fears and nightmares.

WOMAN TWO

Every moment, every being is voting with their lives. And the majority in any moment is God in that moment. So, if we were all voting for joy, if we were all living joy, God would be joyful.

HE

Ok, take it easy tinkerbelle.

ANGEL ONE

We all believe in fairies.

HE

Speak for yourself.

ANGEL TWO

I believe. In you.

HE

She's pretty but can she cook?

tell. Don't tell.	HE
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	That's not what happens at all.
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	WOMAN ONE
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	I know. Mostly you just forget about me altogether. Do fish notice the ocean? I doubt it. Don't you find it ironic that the ones who cause the most damage are the ones who perceive themselves as needing defense against the rest of us? Oh, that's the definition of paranoia, isn't it?
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	ANGEL ONE
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	They build up strategic defenses and auxiliary offenses.
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	HE
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	Self-protection –
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	WOMAN ONE
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	- against life
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	ANGEL TWO
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	I can understand that.
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	SHE
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	Me too. Life is threatening, chaotic, demanding.
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	ANGEL TWO
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	Nothing makes you feel as much as though you were dying as life flowing just a little too quickly through your veins.
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	WOMAN TWO
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	God is conscience not consciousness.
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	ANGEL ONE
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	Perpendicular.
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	WOMAN ONE
Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell. Don't tell.	Parallel.
Don't tell. Don't tell.	HE

would feel like liquid light falling into my skin soaring through my veins and crashing into my heart which would open like a beautiful flower.	bombard my mind but I don't know what they mean. Escape. Vanish. Kill them? Kill myself. I'm hungry. I'm tired.	Pain is an illusion. Don't worry: It's all just sensation. You've got to try to get as much as you can out of life.
---	---	---

BABY

Soft petals.

HE

More.

SHE

Lost.

BABY & SHE

You can't let anyone know what's really going on with you. They wouldn't understand.
You have to look clean. And happy.

SHE

Always look happy. When anyone's looking, look happy. You have to let men be men.
They can't help it. Brutality is the way of the world. *(beat)* That was depressing.

EVERYONE

(but not simultaneously, scattered, polyphonous)

I don't like this game. I don't want to play anymore.

HE

We're all brutes. You might as well enjoy it while you can.

OLD MAN

Would you like to dance?

OLD WOMAN

I'd love to.

WOMAN ONE

I don't seem special to them because I'm always available. He plays hard to get and He's always in demand; everyone can't stop thinking about Him. *(takes a deep breath)* Well, the ideal which is what God ought to represent, can't ever be realized inside any dimensional representation of reality because dimensions are already a choice, a simplification of the all-that-is-that-is-God whereas me, I am dimensional, His perfect complement. His perfection is of course, only perfect in its entirety, each element being distinct and distinction being its own diminishment ... But I can tell you one thing: the reason they say that love conquers and heals all is that the act of love is a lingua franca, a self-authorizing language that is learned as the soul comprehends its alphabet. So, as we act out our love, we find out whether it's love or exploitation: We see the results measured out in joys and sorrows. Are you happy? Is HE happy? Are you hurting? Do you voluntarily or arbitrarily or accidentally hurt others? And then are you sorry? But then it happens again? And again?

SHE

I can't be happy. *(beat)* I don't know how.

ANGEL TWO

(from Caliban's speech from The Tempest)

Don't be afraid. This island is full of noises, sounds and sweet music that delight and hurt not. Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments will hum in my ears, and sometimes voices that, if I then had just waked after a long sleep, will make me sleep again, and then, dreaming, the clouds open and show riches ready to fall on me. And when I wake I cry to dream again.

Fade to black

III Scene 5: Buddha's Belly – Pensecons

ANGEL TWO

The synchronized syncopation of the room right now. Can you feel it? Can you hear it?
Can you at least imagine it?

ANGEL ONE

What do you have to lose?

SHE

Well, I think it's something to do with privacy. I don't want to share myself because I'm
ashamed of myself.

ANGEL ONE

Because?

SHE

Because people want to rank you. We're being measured. All the time. Taken apart,
weighed, to determine our value. Shame is negative value.

ANGEL TWO

SHE's right.

HE

What? Again?

WOMAN ONE

The shame is negative value because it stops the flow.

SHE

It holds me back.

WOMAN ONE

The shameful moment is gone, vanished but –

SHE

It doesn't vanish. It replays.

WOMAN ONE

Yes. Shame can be a deterrent

SHE

When you're hungry, angry, lonely or tired...

HE

Well, I'm at least one of those every day since I turned eighteen. It's called being a grown up.

SHE

Cut it out.

HE

Too cynical for you? You enjoy your life more than I do mine? Is that what you are implying? That's why you take these (*dumps a prescription bottle of pills all over*) Because you are having so much fun? Because you have no shame?

SHE

You know, there are laws that protect people from other people disclosing their medications.

HE

Oh, did I disclose a deep, dark secret? Are you ashamed?

SHE

My pills are not a deep, dark secret.

HE

Oh, I see, just a superficial, opaque secret?

SHE

Yeah, that's right.

ANGEL TWO

Ok, you two. Maybe it isn't the pills that are the problem. (*to HE*) These are yours right? (*ANGEL TWO pours pills from several prescription bottles*)

HE

Yeah.

Now, there are all kinds of pills lying around. As the characters pick up the pills to put them back in the bottles, the surreptitiously, or openly, take a few.

WOMAN ONE

Help yourselves.

BABY is still in the crib. She does not take any pills. Neither do the old couple

BABY

I hate myself. I want to die. I want to die because I hate myself. I hate myself because I make people hate me. I know I make people hate me because one moment there I am with them enjoying some kind of delight and sparkling lights are decorating the world and soft rains are falling and then the next moment there we are, denigrating the availability of joy, sampling the turds that lie waiting to be tasted, licking the vomit spewed on our shirts. And we wish to be clean but we can't manage to pick up a sponge. I don't know what I'm talking about. I can't even figure out how to get out of this crib.

OLD WOMAN

We know what you mean.

SHE

Men like to hurt me. Because I'm soft. I've tried to be tough. But the problem with that - well, no matter how you create your persona, the person you are remains the same. Grows or degenerates but remains the same. So, when you fuck, if you want to have a good time, and not put on a show, not have to fake it, when you fuck, then you're putting yourself out there, engaging, relating beyond ritual and form, beyond exhaustion and sense. And then you know him. And HE knows you. And forever after HE will know how to hurt you.

WOMAN TWO

I think people are loathsome shameful beasts who simply prey on one another. Their idea of social organization is that I should allow them to prey on me or else I should get my act together and prey on them. They would rather I killed them for greed than to experience a creative act with me, working in unison to the sound of the music of the spheres.

WOMAN ONE

My ideal partner doesn't have to look any particular way. He can appear to materialize in a whole lot of different patterns - lots of things appeal to me but it's more in the way it all goes together. Or doesn't. Does her left hand know what her right hand is doing? Are his feet pointed in the same direction as his eyes? Will I want to use both my hands?

HE

There isn't any music of the spheres.

OLD MAN

Oh yes there is. You just can't hear it.

HE has climbed up high above the audience.

HE

...feeling totally freaked... send news of some kind... don't shine that light on me...I guess I should at least be grateful that I know I am a monster.... I know (*he can't remember what he was going to say*)

WOMAN TWO

Are you really an angel?

ANGEL TWO

I guess.

WOMAN TWO

So you're dead?

ANGEL TWO

Not really.

WOMAN TWO

So you're alive?

ANGEL TWO

Partly.

WOMAN TWO
If I kiss you, will you feel it?

ANGEL TWO
Yes.

She kisses him on the lips.

WOMAN TWO
Does it feel good?

ANGEL TWO
Yes.

WOMAN TWO
I was just curious.

ANGEL TWO
Could you love me?

WOMAN TWO
Easily.

ANGEL TWO
Would I be enough for you?

WOMAN TWO
Absolutely.

ANGEL TWO
What if I could be more real?

WOMAN TWO
That would be good.

ANGEL TWO
More - physical.

WOMAN TWO

Yeah. That would be great.

ANGEL TWO

I was just curious.

The old couple are kissing romantically. BABY says out loud what the OLD MAN and the OLD WOMAN sign.

OLD MAN/BABY

I love your kisses.

OLD WOMAN/BABY

Your kisses are my life.

HE is still up high. During the following, the Old Man and the Old Woman manage to free BABY from her crib.

HE

Catastrophe! I think I'm going to fall for loving you. It's really all toooo pluperfect. I'm tense. Tense. Yes. I am. Love? Love is, up, down, low, high, here and now, pain-torture-grief-despair, building-up-tearing-down, peace, war, running away, running towards.

SHE

(to HE)

I love you.

ANGEL TWO

(to WOMAN TWO)

I love you.

WOMAN TWO

(to ANGEL TWO)

I love you.

OLD MAN

(to OLD WOMAN)

I love you.

OLD MAN
(to *OLD WOMAN*)

I love you.

ANGEL ONE
(to *ANGEL TWO*)

You are an angel.

ANGEL TWO
(to *ANGEL ONE*)

You are an angel.

OLD WOMAN
(to *OLD MAN*)

I love you too.

ANGEL ONE
(to *ANGEL TWO*)

You are a most beautiful angel.

ANGEL TWO
(to *ANGEL ONE*)

You are a most wondrous angelic beatificence (*beat*) I think I'm in love with her. I think she knows it too.

ANGEL ONE

What are you going to do about it?

ANGEL TWO

I'm not sure.

ANGEL ONE

I'm so tired of trying to be good. I'm never going to be good enough.

ANGEL TWO

This is good enough.

ANGEL ONE

Don't forget me.

ANGEL TWO
(to ANGEL ONE)

Never.

WOMAN TWO

Play with me.

ANGEL TWO and WOMAN TWO begin distributing rhythm instruments to the audience. As WOMAN ONE is speaking, the old couple, BABY, ANGEL ONE, all help pass around instruments.

WOMAN ONE

If I simply relied on the evidence, I would have to say, that there is no such thing as love. Right. So there you have a perfect example of the limitation of the scientific method. I appreciate science, especially its usefulness, but I don't *believe* in science. Ironically, science believes in me, studies me. All scientific wisdom is reinterpretations of *me*. So there, you see? It's simple. Really. If you're alive, you know that you're made of love. And, when you're the most connected to love is when you realize are most alive, then you realize how enormous love is - so much more powerful than any thing else can ever be. And how small we are.

HE

I'm feeling fragile but I'm not completely shattered but God, I hate living alone... I just hate living alone.... I need to share my life with someone. Someone who doesn't bring me down. (*at this HE falls from wherever HE was perched*) Oh shit.

The music begins and everyone is encouraged to come onstage and dance. This dancing should last at least three minutes, enough time for everyone to get into the experience. When the music spontaneous, and everyone is feeling silly and loud.

SHE

Stop!

SHE can yell "Stop" again until everyone is silent. Once it's quiet there is a short pause, then -

ANGEL ONE

Why did we stop?

ANGEL TWO

What are we waiting for?

Blackout

III Scene 6: Power – Transformerons

The dregs of the evening. A pre-dawn luminescence. Everyone is passed out except SHE and WOMAN ONE.

WOMAN ONE

Be careful: hate is very powerful, you can become what you hate. Trust yourself more. Explore your creative potential in the moment. The next part is so depressing. I hate to tell it. How I lost the respect of earthly religions. Laziness. My Achilles' heel is laziness. Can you believe it? All lost for laziness. A stitch in time saves nine. But did I do any stitching? No. I ate cake. And ice cream! I was loving and love should fix everything, right? Wrong. Love is diaphanous without enough elbow grease. A lot of elbow grease. Lunges. Leg lifts. Situps. Work. Work. Work. When work and love become separated, then we are doomed. So - many millions of wardead later, here I am, doing errands, trying to work my way back into your heart, while He tries to figure His way out of a paper bag. His Achilles' heel? Logic. Of course. Look what's become of him since He lost His mytho-poetic side. It's sad - to watch him try and figure all this out. I mean, He can't find His own socks for Christ's sake. Laziness and logic; quite the pair, us. First He wanted to send our baby, Jesus, down the special lucky socks, the ones He wore the day we created elephants and giraffes. That was such an amazing day. Ostriches. Pelicans. Birds of Paradise. All created on the same day. That was a great day. We had such a good time that day. Anyway, He couldn't find His socks and in those days I was relegated to holy ghost so I was being contrary and ghostly at the same time, refusing to participate in the daily life of our little heavenly family. So, because we were so out of sync we lost him. Only one son of God and gone in the wink of an eye. Forever gone. Do you think we're dysfunctional? Gee. That bothers me. I mean, I know He fucks around while I'm out doing His dirty work. But that doesn't bother me as much as the fact that we're just not getting any more intimate, the creativity is gone. We have utterly stagnated. *(beat)* I am what I am because of the love that I have experienced. That is all that I am and all that I ever will be. My creative acts are acts of love, attempts to answer the mating call of grace, to enter in. Because the whole thing is God, not just as each element but the whole, the process as well as the products.*(as she speaks she makes her quantum leap realization)* So we don't have to wait for him anymore. He's here. He's the flow in the between part. The breath of life. *(WOMAN ONE gets up to leave. She gives the sleeping ANGEL ONE a very sexy kiss)* Not fragile but resilient. Be present. Don't forget. Don't forget anything. Forgive everything. *(WOMAN ONE kisses ANGEL ONE lightly and exits. The lights are slowly fading as ANGEL ONE realizes that he wants to go with her.*

He races after her. There is silence onstage. Then ANGEL ONE comes running in again. He has come back for his wings before his final exit)

ANGEL ONE

Wait for me!

SHE is awake and pondering the rest of the cast asleep.

SHE

(to HE) It's not your stupidity that makes you hateful. It's your hatefulness that makes you stupid. You have so ravaged my soul in search of your own. I can never trust you again. I will never not love you. But unless you are able to bring together your pride with your humility, then you won't be strong enough to handle the challenges that life inevitably hands you. *(to BABY)* I don't want to scare you. But I don't want him to hurt you. And I don't have the courage to protect you from him. Oh I know the Wizard of Oz says we all have courage but in me it's not there. Not yet. *(to WOMAN TWO)* You do deserve what's happening to you, otherwise it wouldn't happen, you are onstage now and you were great and just because some talented people are arrogant, selfish show-offs, experts at manipulation - doesn't mean that all your life in the theater has to be that way all the time. We had tonight. We were here to illuminate and sustain the human spirit. *(to HE)* You told me once that Freedom was a lot of work. And that most of us are too lazy to be free. You said that freedom only works when people work at being free. Ok. But you want to be forced to good to me. I can't steal your love. And you won't give it freely. Freedom isn't about getting rid of everything that stands in your way. The nature of freedom is love freely given, freely available. Ever reinforcing, freedom is the actuality that the word cornucopia attempts to describe. And maybe the path of the work of freedom is a path of faith, faith that there is enough love in me that freedom won't become a bloodbath. *(to herself)* I don't have courage but I do have faith. *(to HE)* I can't stay here but I will always love you. This isn't a trick. I'm not coming back. *(to BABY)* I am sorry for all the horrible things I've done to you: the ones I know and remember and the times I never realized. I have damaged you because I didn't know how to love. I didn't understand that love causes people to become free to be themselves. I just didn't get that. I thought love was the power that held us all together. Like a vice *(she realizes her accidental pun and is intrigued by its connotations. BABY stirs, remains asleep)* *(to everyone)* I am sorry for every hurt, for every cruel word done in my misdirected passion for life. *(to HE)* They reflected the levels of inequality between us, ways that I cared for you but you could never care for me. I can't wait for you any more without doing permanent damage to my heart. I don't believe that God wishes us to damage ourselves - not even for love - if you just killed me, that would be one thing. But killing me slowly, and I know it, and I don't

do anything about it, that's different. I can do something about that. You always insist that you're scared of me, well, then we shouldn't be together, I don't want to be with someone who is scared of me. I wish to be in peace with a lover not in fear. I want to live in peace. (*SHE gets up to leave. Turns back to HE to say*) I will treasure what we found in us together that was good, thank you for sharing part of your life with me. For sure, I will never be the same as I was before I met you. (*SHE exits*)

The sound of a bird wakes the old couple, ANGEL TWO, BABY and WOMAN TWO. They decide to leave for good, gather their things and exit leaving HE asleep and snoring.

HE wakes up noisily. HE is groggy. HE gets himself something to drink. HE realizes that everyone is gone.

HE

Pricks and imbeciles.

Epilogue- it feels like the end of the world. Encoreunefois

*A multicolored spotlight comes up on BABY who is now an adult.
She is carrying a rose.*

BABY

Not mighty deeds make up the sum of happiness. But small acts of kindness which anyone can show: a glass of water, an easy chair, an open window so that all may feel the air. A flower, unasked, bestowed. These deeds are precious, fragrant atoms in the air. Kind deeds disclose the rose. *(BABY lifts the rose to offer it to the audience)*

lights fade to black

Fin

Lyrics

I'm so lonesome I could cry by Hank Williams Sr.

Hear that lonesome whippoorwill
He sounds too blue to fly
The midnight train is whining low
I'm so lonesome I could cry

I've never seen a night so long
When time goes crawling by
The moon just went behind the clouds
To hide its face and cry

Did you ever see a robin weep?
When leaves begin to die
Like me he's lost the will to live
I'm so lonesome I could cry

The silence of a falling star
Lights up a purple sky
And as I wonder where you are
I'm so lonesome I could cry