

SIMON MAGIC

By Jerold London

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SIMON MAGIC

TIME AND PLACE

2025. America. Not so pretty a time. (Scenes 2 and 3: brief flashbacks to 2020.)

CHARACTERS

WOMAN. Dressed in blue. The High Priestess (Tarot).

MARIGOLD. A grieving mother. Age 30. Not ugly (contrary to what she says about herself).

Voice of Marigold. Offstage. Different.

DRIVER. An automaton. Male age 60, dressed in a black-and-white checkered jacket (like Masonic checkerboard flooring), black pants, and a chauffeur's cap.

SIMON MAGIC. Age 60. Dressed in a scarlet suit with gold braid. Across his shoulders a stiff silk cape.

BONNIE. Age 11. Non-speaking part.

Voice of Bonnie. Offstage. Different.

... in the dialogue indicates a thoughtful break.

... // in the dialogue indicates interrupting (but **not** overlapping) text.

Three weeks after my mother is dead I dream of her. We walk a rutted path, an oval track around which we are making our slow revolution. Side by side, so close our shoulders nearly touch, neither of us speaking, both of us in our traces. Though I know she is dead, I have a sense of contentment, as if she's only gone someplace else to which I journey to meet her. The world around us is dim. A backdrop of shadows out of which, now, a man comes. Even in the dream I know what he has done. And yet, I smile, lifting my hand and speaking a greeting as he passes. It's then that my mother turns to me. Then that I see it. A hole the size of a quarter in the center of her forehead. From it comes a light so bright, so piercing, that I suffer the kind of momentary blindness brought on by starting at the sun – her face, nothing but light ringed in darkness when she speaks: “Do

you know what it means to have a wound that never heals?" I know I am not meant to answer; and so we walk on as before, rounding the path until we meet him again. This time he's come to finish what he's started. Holding a gun, he is aiming at her head. This time I think I can save her. Is it enough to throw myself in the bullet's path? Shout "No." I wait till that single word. My own voice wrenching me from sleep. But it's my mother's voice that remains. Her last question to me: "Do you know what it means to have a wound that never heals?" A refrain.

– Natasha Trethewey, "Memorial Drive," 2020.

The *duende* wounds, and in trying to heal that wound that never heals, lies the strangeness, the inventiveness of a man's work.... It is a battle pitched between you and death.

– Federico García Lorca.

When I began to understand alchemy I realized that it represented the historical link with Gnosticism, and that a continuity therefore existed between past and present. Grounded in the natural philosophy of the Middle Ages, alchemy formed the bridge on the one hand into the past, to Gnosticism, and on the other into the future, to the modern psychology of the unconscious.... The possibility of a comparison with alchemy, and the uninterrupted intellectual chain back to Gnosticism, gave substance to my psychology.

– Carl Jung, 1957.





SCENE 1 – THE HIGH PRIESTESS

Two chairs, center stage, between two tall, Doric pillars – the pillar stage right of the chairs is black. The pillar stage left is white. The WOMAN enters and sits, facing the audience, in blue light.

WOMAN

Blue is the light of the soul.
Mortals have two lights to protect:
White-gold, the light of love and sex, and blue.
With two golden threads, and Mozart.

Bonnie spoke sandwich.
P B and J. Mac and grilled cheese. Fried eggs.... Coneys.
Marigold, her mother, handled the high waters of single parenthood well enough.
With some help from her father, Joel, single himself.
But when Bonnie died of Covid-19, Marigold floundered.
Bewildered as he was, and putting aside as much of his law practice as he dared,
Joel stepped up, not knowing (who would?) quite what to do. It was beyond him.
We've never seen such grief as engulfed Marigold.

I watch over Marigold these days. She's special to us. That's the role *I* play in this.
I am known, to some, as The High Priestess of Tarot.
Somebody Marigold's lost faith in.
And, sadly, there's a limit to what my wisdom alone can do. The rest lies with her.
More than once I've witnessed her just a few breaths short of her last.
You love somebody. And when their spirit leaves, what can you do?
I've seen families destroyed by it.
How do you handle a daughter who is grieving herself to death?
Like the Greek goddess, Demeter, who lost *her* daughter and lost her will to be.
Maybe Joel saved her life, and never quite knew how. Something happened.
It wasn't faith. God and I had lost our predictability for Marigold.
Those were the strangest times.... [*ironically*] Like these aren't now.
Some people scared to death of Covid.
Some throwing parties to reward the first new person to catch it.
Insanity.
Anyway, Marigold's still alive. At the moment, at least.
Five years to the day, that is, to the day after five years to the night when she died.
But ... what does survival mean without hope?..
You will see me later.

Exits.

SCENE 2 – DEATH

2020. Stage right or stage left (Director’s discretion). MARIGOLD, a coronavirus mask on her face, stands one side of a plexiglass shield, separating her from her (offstage) daughter. Also offstage can be heard “I’m Forever Blowing Bubbles.”

MARIGOLD

Screams. Pounds on the plexiglass.

My baby. My baby.

Not my baby. Not Bonnie. Not her.

Not my baby. Not my baby. Not my baby Bonnie. Don’t take her. *Please.*

Music ends.

MARIGOLD shrieks, like a wild animal, and falls to the floor.

MARIGOLD

From the floor.

[nearly incoherent] Children don’t die of Covid. Unless they’re cursed.

I didn’t do it. I didn’t curse her. I couldn’t lose her because of me.

Because I didn’t mean to.

Must be. Must be. Must be me because I loved her with all my heart.

Must be me. Must be me because I loved her with all my heart.

All things I love. Stands to reason.

Everything I imagine, it happens. Everything I fear blows up in my face.

Cursed. Both of us, cursed. God despises me.... Why?

MARIGOLD is helped offstage. The plexiglass shield remains.

SCENE 3 – FUNERAL

2020. Stage left or stage right (opposite of Scene 2). Closed casket. MARIGOLD (in black, black veil) sitting in a chair. Funeral music. The casket is lowered into the stage floor. The WOMAN (The High Priestess) is standing, off.

The music ends, and MARIGOLD exits.

SCENE 4 – THE MAGICIAN

DRIVER enters, picks up the chair from Scene 3, carries it and places it, center stage, some distance in front of the Scene 1 chairs (to comprise a limousine), and sits down in the driver’s seat.

MARIGOLD enters, an umbrella over her head, a very large suede handbag over her shoulder. She closes the umbrella, enters the limo, putting the umbrella and handbag on the floor in front of her, sitting down. There is a cup-holder in the space between the two back-seat chairs – a bottle of water resting in it.

DRIVER

What’s on your mind?

Voice of Marigold

Why is it, every time I meet an A I, they keep getting fresher?
It feels like I never woke up this morning.

MARIGOLD

What took you so long?

DRIVER

I can take you anywhere you want. What’s on your mind?

MARIGOLD

Unbuttons her blouse, takes a doll from her handbag, and begins “nursing” it against one of her breasts.

Medusa. On MacArthur.... Hairdressers, can’t you see?

Voice of Marigold

You grew ugly the second Bonnie died. And uglier every second second since.

Find me a bear with claws to tear the heart out of any man daring to touch me.

MARIGOLD

Can’t you see? my little girl’s face on every face of every girl I see?
On every door, and every pillar, and every shard of every glass I break?
In the mask of every moon,
for the last one thousand eight hundred twenty-seven nights?
And no answer why. Why her? Why not me?
All I knew was loving her.

Voice of Marigold

You have Hamlet on your mind.
"To be or not to be."
And suicide ... after all this time.
And perchance to dream.
Aye, there's the rub.
Isn't it?
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come?

DRIVER

Why not have another child?

Voice of Bonnie

Why not have another child, Mama?

MARIGOLD

Who'd dare touch a woman that will turn manhood to quicksilver?
And feed him to the bears?
Life loaned me two blessings, and took them both away: Bonnie and my sanity.

Voice of Marigold

Many a nightmare finds me raped by a gang of strangers. Rabid.
No bears protecting me.

DRIVER

I can take you.

MARIGOLD

Where?

DRIVER

Where people aren't sitting in parks, hiding their heads in the sand.

Voice of Bonnie

Ostrich. My favorite egg muffin.

MARIGOLD

Where?

DRIVER

I can take you.

MARIGOLD

Where?

DRIVER

Where you can walk again on feelings of gingerbread.
Ride on feelings of curiosity.
Fly on feelings of rooftops.
Float on feelings of Mozart.
Slide on feelings of swan feathers.
Glide on feelings of golden hair.
Sleep on feelings of angels' softness beneath you.
Where you can swim yourself into seas of endless comfort.
Follow the sun forever at sunrise.
Trace Apollo's path on Space Odyssey 2001.
Have Bonnie back, plus another child upon your breast.

**MARIGOLD finishes nursing the doll,
"burps" her, cradles her, and then puts
her back into the bag.**

MARIGOLD

There's no such place.

Voice of Marigold

Where men fight their way into my apartment.
Press me naked against the cold glass of my windows.

MARIGOLD

You make me want to puke, in your beautiful machine.

Voice of Bonnie

Would you like a ride in my beautiful machine?
Up, up and away, on my beautiful four wheels?
Glide with ghosts together, you and I.
For this thing flies. It can fly.

MARIGOLD

There is only, never a day goes by I don't cry my eyes out for her.

DRIVER

Where you can be home.
With a perfect man to come, who'll never leave you.

MARIGOLD

I have no such feelings.

DRIVER

No such what?

MARIGOLD

No such feelings.

DRIVER

No such feelings of what?

MARIGOLD

Men are coarse and clueless things. Ignorant and crass about the female sex. Ignorant. Expecting erections alone to soothe the pain between our legs. Between our heartbeats.

DRIVER

Expecting Eve to walk to Adam.

Voice of Marigold

There's a way of walking that creates character.

MARIGOLD

What?

DRIVER

What *do* you expect?

MARIGOLD

I expect a driver to stay quiet for a mouth piece. I can't be forever blowing my feelings out in bubbles to a robot.

DRIVER

It's not your way.

MARIGOLD

No, indeed, it's not my way.

DRIVER

Ridiculous.

MARIGOLD

What is? What's ridiculous?

DRIVER

Life and death.

MARIGOLD

To a robot, maybe.

DRIVER

And love.

Voice of Bonnie

I'm not dead.

MARIGOLD

Tell me, what *is* life? from the perspective of a robot.

DRIVER

Moving death.

MARIGOLD

Death stinks of death to Birnam Wood.
Or wherever it moves.

DRIVER

If it's dead, it doesn't change directions of its own accord.
If it's alive, it does. On its own.

MARIGOLD

Is there really so little as that, to separate Bonnie from me?
Motion and nothing else?

Voice of Bonnie

I'm not dead.

DRIVER

Torture, too.

MARIGOLD

Torture. True. So true, and true again....
Torture and time.

DRIVER

Less time than you may think.

MARIGOLD

Time is torture, true. Less time, perhaps, a bit less torturous for some. But only.
The Book of the Dead, read half-ass backwards by James Joyce.
That kind of torture.

Voice of Bonnie

I'm not dead, Mama.

DRIVER

We A I's can think. What we can't do is feel. Not the way you do.

MARIGOLD

Thinking's a mystery to us who *can* think.

A hodgepodge of rain and memories.

First, an idea. Then memories, scurrying around it. Out of the rain.

The pain is not in the ideas themselves, but in the shadows of them.

Voice of Marigold

What is life without pain?

What is time without consciousness?

MARIGOLD

The pain is in watching memories recede.

Out, into the distance, growing dimmer, yet remaining there like falling stars.

The pain is in the limitless losses in our lives.

We live, and therefore we lose, sewing golden threads into our hearts....

[beat] I wish I could wake up from this nightmare. I've changed my mind.

Voice of Marigold

I wish I could wake you up from this nightmare.

Voice of Bonnie

I'm not dead.

MARIGOLD

How do you know you can't feel like we do?

DRIVER

I'm sure of it.

MARIGOLD

We only feel as good as bodies around us. You need more body.

I've no body around me, since my daughter died.

You certainly must feel better than I. Aching, end to end, just to end it.

Just feelings to end these feelings. Wishing them away as quickly as possible.

I take myself to bed each night,

praying to God that the next morning I will awake with a brave new hope.

Which never comes. No matter how many pills I take.

Voice of Bonnie

I'm not dead, Mama. Wake up.

MARIGOLD

There are five things you robots don't have enough of:
Sleep. Hope. God. Love. And grief.
Not something ringing inside you. Right? To connect to?
No stomach pains to connect to. No callings in life. No thoughts of suicide.
When I would dress in the mornings, Bonnie would tug at me. At my blouse.
For me to look at her.
Or call me. From another room. For me to come see something.
All the closets I've gone through.
All her clothes I've washed, over and over, and put away in drawers and closets.
Remembering.

Voice of Bonnie

Mama. I'm still alive.

MARIGOLD

Calling me, almost. Almost mind-to-mind. That's how it felt.
Almost like God. Not anymore. God only knows why it ever did.

DRIVER

Today is the first day of a brave new world.
Are you prepared?

Voice of Bonnie

Mama. Today you will see me again.

MARIGOLD

You're artificial. You don't know a thing, what matters to me.

DRIVER

Try me.

MARIGOLD

To somehow feel, air-to-air, body-to-body, mind-to-mind, touching Bonnie again.

DRIVER

When?

MARIGOLD

Or my Creator.

DRIVER

When?

MARIGOLD

What do you mean? When?

DRIVER

When does that feeling come to you? air-to-air, body-to-body, mind-to-mind?

MARIGOLD

All the time, Fool! Right now.

DRIVER

Since your daughter's passing?

MARIGOLD

Her death, Metal Mouth....

Don't call it a passing.

DRIVER

She has passed into another realm.

And don't believe me. I know you don't.

But I know what is true is true, what you don't.

Voice of Bonnie

Mama. *Today.*

MARIGOLD

You don't know shit. You things never do. You things never die.

DRIVER

When does the calling call to you?

MARIGOLD

All the time, Fool!

DRIVER

Before your daughter was born?

MARIGOLD

[*beat*] How could you know that?

DRIVER

I know what is true, what you don't.

MARIGOLD

Talking to you is like talking to a dog.

DRIVER

Or a god.

MARIGOLD

Before she was born, I talked to her.

Can I trust to tell you that?

In astral space, she told me. Whatever that meant.

DRIVER

Go on.

MARIGOLD

She told me she was different.

She told me she would be born different. With a different kind of brain.

Whatever that meant.

DRIVER

A brain unlike yours or mine.

Well, a brain unlike mine.

MARIGOLD

She was born. And who she was.

With a different brain, maybe.

In a plane I could talk to.

DRIVER

When? When did you speak to her, after she was born?

MARIGOLD

In my mind. Months before she learned to talk to anyone else.

I was not in my perfect mind then.

DRIVER

And you talk to her now?

MARIGOLD

How would you know?

She asks me if I'm mad.

I tell her, I'm pissed as Hell. How would she feel? I ask. If I'd left her?

That's how we talk. Me. Outside my perfect mind.

DRIVER

What else?

Voice of Bonnie

Mama. I'm alive.

MARIGOLD

Where there are men, there are whores.
Where there are whores, there's trouble.
Where there's trouble, there are criminals.
Where there are criminals, there are police.
Where there are police, there's fear.
Where there's fear, there's anger.
Where there's anger, there can be no peace.
Forever. As long as I live.

Voice of Bonnie

Mama....

DRIVER

What does *she* say?

MARIGOLD

She says she needs a man. AT HER AGE? I scream.

DRIVER

What else?

Voice of Bonnie

A perfect man.

MARIGOLD

I don't know. I don't know. Stop asking me....
A perfect man.
It's not relevant. She's dead. She needs no man.
Heaven forbid. Look at me. Am I crazy?

DRIVER

People are looking at you right now.
For your next child.

MARIGOLD

What?

DRIVER

Looking at you. Looking ahead.

MARIGOLD

Looking ahead at what?

DRIVER

You've lost a child.
You need a child to nurse.

**DRIVER turns on the radio. "I'm
Forever Blowing Bubbles" offstage.**

DRIVER

What's that?

MARIGOLD

It was her favorite song.
She'd have me sing it to her three ... four times a day. And always at bedtime.

DRIVER

I can take you.

MARIGOLD

Do you have any idea how mental you sound?

DRIVER

Adam and Eve were mental.

MARIGOLD

Adam and Eve?

DRIVER

To risk it all for us.
Has she mentioned them to you?

Voice of Bonnie

Mama. Adam and me.

MARIGOLD

No! And I'm not talking to you anymore. Just let me out here.

DRIVER

We're almost there.

Music stops.

MARIGOLD

Where?

DRIVER

At the Gnostic Library.

MARIGOLD

Where?

DRIVER

Simon Magic. Eyes wide shut at the Gnostic Library.

MARIGOLD

What are you talking about? I told you Medusa's. On MacArthur.

DRIVER

It's a place where there once was no place.

MARIGOLD

Where?

DRIVER

A place where there were fields, to stand up straight in,
before there were buildings.

MARIGOLD

A place where there were fields to stand up straight in? Before buildings?

DRIVER

Have you ever loved a man?
Have you ever loved a woman?
Do you love me?

MARIGOLD

This is insanity.
I have no further feelings to declare.

DRIVER

Other than despair.

Voice of Marigold

No *life* left to declare, either.

DRIVER

[pause] What is it? You're looking at, so distant?

MARIGOLD

At death.

DRIVER

At a birth, possibly?

MARIGOLD

Would you get off that birth bomb?
You're one presumptuous son-of-a-bitch.

DRIVER

You have a body for birthing.

MARIGOLD

You have no idea where you're going.
My reproductive rights are my own, thank you.

DRIVER

I can see what you can't see.

MARIGOLD

Yes?

DRIVER

A garden.

Voice of Bonnie

Your children are in it.

MARIGOLD

What?

DRIVER

Your children are in it.

MARIGOLD

Bonnie's gone, so shut the fuck up.

**MARIGOLD picks up the bottle of water
from the cup-holder in the space
between the two chairs.**

MARIGOLD

Ah! Sure that's cold!

DRIVER

Don't take it personally. Or as an insult.
There's nothing to feel inadequate about, not to know the end at the beginning.

MARIGOLD

Opens the bottle and begins drinking.

I hate my life.

DRIVER

Love defeats hate.
Just as love defeats death.

MARIGOLD

Ask anyone. Ask God.
Ask the crags and shadows of Hell themselves, if you want to.
Does love defeat death?
Hardly was a weapon in my hands, was it?

DRIVER

Are you chaste?

MARIGOLD

Of course I'm chaste.

DRIVER

Do you believe in chastity? Alone?

MARIGOLD

I believe chastity *is* alone. Only one.
Exclusiveness of one's vagina for one's single desire.
And my single desire, other than exiting this limo,
exited my vagina eleven years ago.

DRIVER

You like vagina? The word?

MARIGOLD

You'd prefer cunt?

DRIVER

I'd prefer womb. Your holy womb.

MARIGOLD

My what??

DRIVER

Your will and holy womb.

MARIGOLD

I will not.

DRIVER

Not for anything?

MARIGOLD

Not for anything. What do you think I am, a common whore?

DRIVER

Everyone has her price.

MARIGOLD

You Asshole! There's nothing on Earth ... //

DRIVER

Being with your daughter, again?

Voice of Bonnie

Being with me again?

MARIGOLD

What are you saying?

DRIVER

If ... call it the universe. Call it The High Priestess of Tarot. Call it God, if you will. If you could have five more years, say, with your daughter, would you agree?

MARIGOLD

Agree to what? Sell my soul?

Hell yes, Man, I'd sell my soul for five more years with her.

Is that what you're asking?

DRIVER

Not *your* soul. Agree to conceive another soul.

MARIGOLD

Conceive what? A replacement soul? Is *that* where my madness would subdue?

Voice of Bonnie

My brother. My lover. My Adam.

DRIVER

For humanity's sake.

MARIGOLD

Gives DRIVER the finger.

I hate you.

DRIVER

I take it from that you would.

MARIGOLD

Let me out of here.

Why do I ever let myself take posh limos?

I hate the posh. I hate rich posh to Hell.

And I especially hate rich posh limos to Hell.

DRIVER

We're here. One last word: Listen with patience. Do not lose your temper.

Nothing can be gained by losing your temper....

Your daughter's not dead.

MARIGOLD

This is not Medusa's.

DRIVER exits the stage, only to reenter as SIMON MAGIC in a black and white checkered mask. In the interim MARIGOLD finishes drinking the water and puts the bottle back.

SIMON MAGIC goes to the limo, opens the door, and sits in the back next to MARIGOLD.

MARIGOLD

Who are *you*?

SIMON MAGIC

Removing the mask.

Simon Magic.

MARIGOLD

You look like a chauffeur I know.

SIMON MAGIC

You look like the mother of a young girl I know.

MARIGOLD

Why are you here? Why am *I* here, for that matter.
I have an appointment at Medusa's. On MacArthur.

SIMON MAGIC

We have something to share with you.
Undoubtedly unsettling.

MARIGOLD

What?

SIMON MAGIC

[*beat*] Your daughter, Bonnie, is alive.

Voice of Bonnie

I'm alive, Mama.

MARIGOLD

The only thing in the world that matters to me is my daughter Bonnie.
And I don't take the least kindly to ... //

SIMON MAGIC

She lives.

MARIGOLD

How? How can that be? You're lying to me.

SIMON MAGIC

Because she died.

MARIGOLD

I was there. You know-it-all Samaritan. I saw her die.

SIMON MAGIC

She literally died. Died of Covid-19. And came back to life of her own accord.
Her body was removed from the ICU. Then her brain overcame her death.
Because she has a mage's brain that we only prayed would come in our lifetime.
Even though sources had foretold it. Even though we know love defeats death.

MARIGOLD

Foretold by whom? Nostradamus?

SIMON MAGIC

By Zarathustra. By Nietzsche.

By Goethe.

By Mozart.

By the Bavarian Illuminati.

By the cards. And, yes, by Nostradamus.

Voice of Marigold

He's going to attack you.

SIMON MAGIC

Newton had a brain like that. We suspect.

But he died without ever reproducing it. Probably afraid to.

MARIGOLD

This is all blatantly untrue. And why was I never told?... Newton, maybe.

Why are you doing this to me? What am I to you, cannon fodder?

Voice of Marigold

I don't trust this man.

Voice of Bonnie

You will.

SIMON MAGIC

She told doctors how to save others. And by God's good grace, we got there first.

People who don't believe in magic or miracles don't believe in allowing magic or miracles.

MARIGOLD

You have two and a half minutes, before I start screaming.

SIMON MAGIC

Your daughter's brain is superhuman. A metaphor of you and we don't know why.

Its connections are universal, not hemispherical. Not left brain. Not right brain.

No Abraxas in it. A *whole* and holy brain.

An instinctive reaction to work together, people, all of them.

And forces are out there intent on destroying powers like hers. Terrible forces.

We did what we had to: Protecting your daughter by burying her, so to speak....

Don't believe me, if you don't want to. But they *are* there. You'll learn.

MARIGOLD

You son-of-a-bitch.
What are you playing at? The Da Vinci Code with me?
You think I'm that dumb? And all that I've lost.
I haven't done anything to you. I haven't done anything to anybody.

SIMON MAGIC

I cannot emphasize this enough:
What we do requires the utmost secrecy and beyond. It's life and death.
Absolutely. You're lucky we're here. We're lucky you're here.
Which is why we did what we've done for the two of you. We had to.
Keeping you in the dark. We had to. You'll learn.
If we hadn't, the two of you would be dead by now.
These people have power, and use their power to kill to keep their power.
They are ruthless. Poisonous. Arsenic, heroin, and fentanyl ruthless.

MARIGOLD

You're bastards.

SIMON MAGIC

The next step rests with you.
If you wish your daughter's life to complete its cycle, as she does ... //

MARIGOLD

You're idiots, or sadists, to think anyone would believe any of this.
I'll be the first to tell you, I'm absolutely nothing special.
The only special thing ever in my life has been Bonnie.

SIMON MAGIC

Precisely.
And if you're able to conceive a male child with the same cerebral configuration,
the two of them could be progenitors of what some have called Nietzsche's brave
new world.

MARIGOLD

Nazi's, you mean.
You're sick. More than that. Nauseating.
What you're proselytizing is incest. Bald-faced sister fucking.

SIMON MAGIC

In the beginning, there was no incest. Couldn't be.
Or else humans wouldn't make it to a critical mass. Think about it.
You're the common thread. Who, we suspect, are genetically immaculate.

MARIGOLD

What? Are you flaming witless?

SIMON MAGIC

Your daughter, Bonnie, is alive. And we are intent on keeping it that way.

MARIGOLD

Who are you people?

SIMON MAGIC

I wouldn't give you that information, even if I could.
Suffice it to say we're known by no name. Emanon.
And we have financial resources greater than you could possibly imagine.
More than most nations in the world. More than Jacob's Ladder.
And it's because of the protection our wealth can buy that you two are alive today.

MARIGOLD

I hate the rich. You're going to attack me, aren't you?
People who think they're so great because they think they're so rich.

SIMON MAGIC

Great wealth is no panacea. I confess it openly. Adamantly.
It's far more a sin than a comfort.
More a curse than a blessing.
More a magnet for the assassination of integrity,
than a protection for the vulnerable of this world.
But as dark as its corners may be, great wealth is a necessity.
Until it won't be, anymore.

MARIGOLD

Great wealth dehumanizes.
It's an abominable hoarding that holds millions in poverty.

SIMON MAGIC

We could debate that. But believe me, we know:
Great wealth is a struggle.
It's a huge burden on those that have it.
And I'm not just playing the poor little rich boy card.
Great wealth despairs of the Earth by worshipping the treasures of the Earth.
But on a grossly overpopulated planet,
where the only real freedom left lies in great wealth,
it's the only safe crib there is, lying in a manger.

MARIGOLD

Great wealth gorges itself on men's egos.

SIMON MAGIC

Great wealth fights wars inside ego. To live up to itself. I'm telling you the truth.
With great wealth comes equally great obligation. Albert Schweitzer's principle.
And we hold on to it. One hundred percent.
We have great wealth, and we *owe* great wealth for it. End, of story.

MARIGOLD

Great wealth is no camel through the eye of a needle.

SIMON MAGIC

I tell you. A hundred times I tell you. A thousand.
You are the light and the way. The light shines from *you*.
You have wealth beyond everything in the world today. It's *that* we honor.
For it has been said:
From the darkness within woman will come the light of the world to come.

MARIGOLD

Sex is the light you sickos seek. And an orgy.

SIMON MAGIC

Evolution has always been the way of this planet.
Deny it, and deny this world's past and future.
Deny it, and throw away the keys to the world's current spiritual imprisonment.
Accept it, that the world cannot master the spiritual leaving the sexual unmastered.
Thus, the two golden threads.
Thus the two life columns that frame coequal male and female.

MARIGOLD

Do you accept the future of the sick, the impaired, and the infirm?
Do you accept the future of the voiceless, the homeless, and the impoverished?
Do you accept the future of the struggling teachers and the poorest pupils?
Do you accept the future of the farmers and their workers?
Do you accept the future of the actors and the playwrights?
Do you accept the Whitmans, the wanderers, and the mountain climbers?
Do you?

SIMON MAGIC

We do. We have continuously searched for and accepted them all. No dark magic.
Only an endgame of eliminating ignorance, injustice, and isolation in the world.

MARIGOLD

That's not how I see it.

SIMON MAGIC

You better see it.
Because your daughter's life depends on your seeing it.

MARIGOLD

What have you done with my daughter?

SIMON MAGIC

It's God's plan.
God's kingdom to come within us.
God's inevitable evolution of human kind.
As inevitable as eternity. Through the divine feminine.
We are believers. We believe in God.
But not believers in any *Book*.
And not believers in Nietzsche's "God is dead."
Because God is most certainly not dead.
We have faced up to the fact that eventually people on Earth,
as we know them, will be replaced. Like the Neanderthals were.
And it can start, and should start with you ... and your daughter.

MARIGOLD

With us?

SIMON MAGIC

As managers of wealth, we'll be needed for a while.
Because the new generations will have little or no interest in wealth.
And because the forces set on destroying you must be kept at bay.
For now, at least.
In time, it all will give way to the down-going.
To an Earth led by human beings who literally care for everyone the way Doctor
Schweitzer cared for everyone. The reverence for all life he foretold.
There will be an age of joy, and happiness, and blindness toward wealth.
And it might, just last. Because wealth will not, in fact, exist for your descendants.
They will be free of greed's spell.

MARIGOLD

You're dreaming. You're a Communist.

SIMON MAGIC

Thus speaks the New Testament.

MARIGOLD

Methinks you promise too much. And what if that's not what I want for my life?

SIMON MAGIC

Shh. How many of us really know what we want for our lives?
As if knowing would change even an inch in the path of our stars.
If you're awake, you do what's right by your heart, and not take your life.

Voice of Marigold

I don't think I like this man.

Voice of Bonnie

You will.

MARIGOLD

None of this breaks a particle of sense to me.

SIMON MAGIC

Thus spake Zarathustra.

MARIGOLD

What if I just sue you? For kidnapping.

SIMON MAGIC

You're not really free to. To go there. Or to go anywhere, actually.
But, before you panic, talk to your daughter.
We can cross the litigation bridge later.
But keep in mind the grave danger she's in. You're both in. Deathly periled.
And that's no idle chatter. Believe me. And only we are capable of protecting you.

MARIGOLD

Do you expect me to fall for this? And spread my legs for you?
You just want to rape me, don't you?

SIMON MAGIC

I can't imagine you'd believe we'd go to all this trouble, just to get into your pants.

MARIGOLD

You have a point there.
As ugly a baboon as I am, who'd ever want to have sex with me?

SIMON MAGIC

You happen to be the most desirable woman in the world. Ten billion beautiful.
And we will have our hands full, selecting down to your four suitable suitors.

MARIGOLD

Are you kidding me?

SIMON MAGIC

Some of the wealthiest men in the world, you wouldn't believe.
They are praying for the chance. To be a part of posterity.

MARIGOLD

Like flying to Mars.

Voice of Marigold

Like love.

MARIGOLD

And love doesn't matter?
Fucking me, and not caring a thing about me?
Not even *liking* me, maybe?

SIMON MAGIC

It's irrelevant.
There are only three related relevant things.
That you get your daughter back.
That you produce a son.
And that we keep all of you safe.
The rest will take care of itself.... Love can be a bitter cup. Even at the best.

MARIGOLD

This is darker than Rosemary's Baby.

SIMON MAGIC

We have a place in the mountains of Montana where you will be safe.
Hidden, under the Big Sky.
For the rest of your lives. The power of great wealth to guarantee that.

MARIGOLD

Great wealth. The god I'll be beholden to.

SIMON MAGIC

Great wealth can lead to great depravity.
No question.
Marquis de Sade.
Or it can lead to noble charity and Andrew Carnegie.
It's all in the character of the camel rider.

MARIGOLD

Wealth beyond reason leads to the end of a poor men's free spirit.
The happy ramblers. The laughing rags of tramps. The guilty old fornicators.
Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

SIMON MAGIC

It's racism, not wealth. *Racism* is the metaphor for the end of a poor man's free spirit. Like Noah's flood is the metaphor for the world's death.

MARIGOLD

Great wealth emanates foul odors.
Like asking what the hugger mugger of the world's poor are necessary for.

SIMON MAGIC

Beware of idealizing the tenor of the poor, lest a statue to them crushes you.
We're all in this together, rich, poor, heathen, and in between.
We're talking about a world to come whose genius won't sink into racism.
Where there is laughter in the streets of Calcutta, and no cages left in Bombay.

MARIGOLD

Pipe dreams.

SIMON MAGIC

Possibly yes. It's beyond what we have now, to be sure. It's all on faith.
Because today we are walking among men as only fragments of the future.

MARIGOLD

You talk of God, but to me you are supremely godless.
It's eyes like yours that could scorch the souls of the world's children.

SIMON MAGIC

The world's our oyster, yours and mine.
We merely ask that you let it open. On its own. And listen to what it has to say:
What a piece of work is a man!
How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty!
In form and moving, how express and admirable! In action how like an angel!
In apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world. The paragon of animals.
And yet, to us, what is this quintessence of dust?
Man is a bridge across global environmental destruction.
Before it's too late.

MARIGOLD

How did you possibly get strapped by a religion as arcane as that?

SIMON MAGIC

The knowledge has been in mankind's soul since before Pythagoras.
Since before the mathematics of the pyramids and Stonehenge.
Always threatening. Always wounding. Always close to death's doorstep.
Albert Schweitzer saw it; and dedicated his life to acting out its truth.
The world's greatest un-crucified man....

All we want is for you to get pregnant with your own child.
Not someone else's. And stay out of harm's way.
The eagle is the only creature to father a female eagle's eaglets.
Her eaglets. Who will fly high, over the world, on unshrugged wings.

MARIGOLD

You better go. My lid's about to blow.

SIMON MAGIC exits, limo and stage.

BONNIE enters, goes to the limo, opens the door, and sits in the back-seat chair next to her mother.

MARIGOLD

Who are you?

Voice of Bonnie

Eve.

Voice of Marigold

That's your name? Eve?

Voice of Bonnie

That's my Zarathustra name.

Voice of Marigold

What's your other name?

Voice of Bonnie

My Before Name was Bonnie.

From offstage can be heard "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles."

Voice of Marigold

How old are you?

Voice of Bonnie

Eleven.

Voice of Marigold

You've been paid to say that, haven't you?

Voice of Bonnie

Have you lost your imagination?

Have you lost your creativity?

Voice of Marigold

Who *are* you?

Voice of Bonnie

Mama? Who else ever talked with you this way?... I'm Bonnie.

A breathless pause. The music stops. Then ... what happens to MARIGOLD happens as though she is momentarily blinded. She reaches out for Bonnie's face, and takes it between her hands, sobbing almost, kissing her lost daughter uncontrollably.

At a nearly simultaneous moment an urge overcomes both of them, and they exit the limo and embrace. Standing. Gasping. Smothering sobs. Until their fierce embrace trips them, falling together to the ground. The craft of the actors and Director captures, in an individual way, the struggle (more on Marigold's part) for some balance between sanity and hysteria, as though mother is snatching daughter from the clutches of Hell itself, life and death, body and soul. The play could end here.

MARIGOLD

Oh! my God! Oh! my God! Oh! my God!

I love you, Bonnie.

I love you, Eve.

More than the world has words enough to tell you, I love you.

BONNIE

I love you, too, Mama. And I've missed you so much.

They stand, separate, and stare at each other.

Then the two begin walking. It's just a stage, but all the world, and in particular, woods and a river.

Voice of Marigold

I'm myself. Again. Almost. Bet you're glad about *that*.
Oh, for the days we could romp precious moments away together with abandon.
Five years of nightmares. Horrified each day would end with nothing left of hope.
Life's a hard dungeon on those who mourn. I nearly killed myself.

Voice of Bonnie

Being with you again.

Voice of Marigold

This must be love's crutch the Sufi poets hint at. You think?
I'm so shaky I can barely stand....
[catches herself] Whew! Well, I guess we have a ton of bricks to talk about.
Have you kept up on your homework? Is school in person? or virtual?

Voice of Bonnie

You must be kidding.

Voice of Marigold

Have you heard what they want to do with us? Montana, and all?

Voice of Bonnie

We're not free. Not since my miracle. And we won't be.
I've seen what those bloody creatures can do. Stilettoes through eyeballs.
Brains shot-gunned sideways, just as easily as heads insulated in plastic bags.
And you're one of us now. You're not free, either.
But you'll *love* Montana. Like I do.

Voice of Marigold

I will? A village to raise a child in? In a Big Sky bubble?
If that's all there is, what's the big deal to life, Truman?
We're just prisoners.

Voice of Bonnie

You're a mother. I'm your child. And we can never leave our destiny.

Voice of Marigold

Our captors. Are they good people? Simon, and the rest at Hotel Montana?

Voice of Bonnie

Olympic gold. Twenty-four karat.

Voice of Marigold

Are you sure?

Voice of Bonnie

Positive.

Voice of Marigold

Is Tom Cruise in this

Voice of Bonnie

He would risk his life for you.

Voice of Marigold

Somewhat between Mission Impossible and Eyes Wide Shut

Voice of Bonnie

I know. He's told me.

Voice of Marigold

In a dream?

Voice of Bonnie

He's in love with you, you know.

Voice of Marigold

Who is? Who's in love with me?

Voice of Bonnie

Simon Magic. I figured you'd figured that out by now.
After all this is over, of course.

Voice of Marigold

Being with you again.
It's I've been blind as a bat in a cave.
And now I think I can see again.

Voice of Bonnie

He's, maybe, not movie star fit, or pop star, or superstar.
But I'm talking, in the final scene, when feelings really meet the road.
I guess, though, that'll have to wait.

Voice of Marigold

Bonnie! Simon Magic must be twice my age.

Voice of Bonnie

Our being together again.... That.

Voice of Marigold

Because that's more than that, isn't it?

Voice of Bonnie

Because Yes. It is.

Voice of Marigold

All this isn't just for us, is it?
Life's not just a fiction, is it? Something more than creations of the mind, right?

Voice of Bonnie

The world wasn't made just for you and me.
No.
We were more made for the world, than it for us.
All of us spinning in a whirlpool.
Separate lives in a chaos of intersecting billiard balls and marbles.
And people, too, who speak sandwich.

Voice of Marigold

That's what you used to say, isn't it? When you were little.

Voice of Bonnie

Still do. Because I love you, Mama.

Voice of Marigold

[*beat*] The world needs more of that. More of you.

Voice of Bonnie

What they've taught me is pure:
The purpose in life is so simple: loving. So easy. As easy as falling in love.
What you do in loving is giving. It's easy.
Giving yourself up. So that your inner insides touch others' inner insides.

Voice of Marigold

You wouldn't think that, if you could see yourself.

Voice of Bonnie

Oh? I need more diversity? More experience?

Voice of Marigold

It's me. *I* need to see you better....

Simon can't live forever, you know. Not at his age.

Voice of Bonnie

You like him, don't you?

Voice of Marigold

Being you and me again. That's what I like.

Voice of Bonnie

That's why we're here.

Voice of Marigold

Which is? Now that you mention it. Where?

Voice of Bonnie

I'm not sure.

[*pointing*] What river is that? The Moldau?

From Smetana's Moldau, offstage.

Voice of Marigold

Tower Bridge.

Voice of Bonnie

I never knew Seurat painted in London.

Voice of Marigold

I thought you were supposed to know everything.

Voice of Bonnie

I don't know squat. I *compassion* everything. The bread versus wine thing.

Music stops.

Voice of Marigold

Why do you feel Simon loves me?

Voice of Bonnie

His wife died.
She was about your age.
Five years ago.
Of Covid-19.
Right at our same hospital.
Right at the same time I was coming back to life.
That's why he was up there. That's why he found me.
She was the most beautiful woman in the world.

Leaves, or paper leaves, start falling.

Voice of Marigold

Oh, look! I always loved being in the Fall and the leaves with you.

Voice of Bonnie

I love New England this time of the year, too.

**They thrash about a bit through the
leaves, and then walk on.**

Voice of Marigold

Should I be jealous? Or flattered?

Voice of Bonnie

Her name was Helen....
Of the face that launched a thousand ships.

Voice of Marigold

That was three thousand years ago.

Voice of Bonnie

He said he could put his hands over his ears and still hear her at the gates of Troy,
pounding the belly of the wooden horse with a spear.
She came back. Into another life.
And he loved her.
And he loves you, now.

Voice of Marigold

Me? He loves *me*?

Voice of Bonnie

Well, not until after....

Voice of Marigold

After the sack of Troy.

Voice of Bonnie

You might say that.

Voice of Marigold

He's a stranger. They're all strangers, crazy for my body.
All fabulously powerful.
Is *this* the way the world ends?

Voice of Bonnie

Just close your eyes, and pretend.

Voice of Marigold

What if I don't want to pretend. What if I want *him*?
The way a girl wants her own bath.

Voice of Bonnie

I thought you didn't like him.

Voice of Marigold

Maybe I've changed my mind. Maybe I don't want mechanical.
Maybe I want to live my life.

Voice of Bonnie

It's allowed. But it'll cost him ten billion dollars.... You're worth it, though.

Voice of Marigold

I am? What else have they taught you?

Voice of Bonnie

That happiness is a reward we reward ourselves with.
From inside out. Not from things we get. Or lovers we've had.
But by following our soul's doing.

Voice of Marigold

The way I'm happy now.

Voice of Bonnie

It's allowed.

Voice of Marigold

What else?

Voice of Bonnie

Someday the world will go iridescent.

Voice of Marigold

When?

Voice of Bonnie

riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by
a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs.

Voice of Marigold

Makes sense. What else?

Voice of Bonnie

Science is at war with itself. Blindfolded.
Without a cause or a purpose.
Just like the rest of the world.
Centuries of injustice, and social hatred, and global cannibalism.

Voice of Marigold

That's cheery. What else?

Voice of Bonnie

Evolution is inevitable. Eventually old people will be replaced.
Like we replaced Neanderthals.

Voice of Marigold

Old gods, too?

Voice of Bonnie

We will be praised, and hated.
We will be called thunder words, and blamed more than James Joyce himself.
More than Nietzsche even.
Called bastards of the new world.
Until we are rejoiced.

Voice of Marigold

Someday the world will go iridescent?

Voice of Bonnie

Something will descend from wisdom to teach the world.
Not giving alms. Not poor enough for that.
To teach the perfect man to come. And after him, new faces of God.

Voice of Marigold

What about me?

Voice of Bonnie

What about you?

Voice of Marigold

I just feel like I'm some mare they're trying to impregnate.

Voice of Bonnie

That's odd. Maybe because that's what you are.

Voice of Marigold

Shut up, unless you want to come along.

Voice of Bonnie

No thanks. Why don't you simply *think* yourself pregnant.

Voice of Marigold

That's not the way of the future, is it? I surely hope not.

Voice of Bonnie

Life's a contradiction.

Sorrow and slaughter everywhere. Poverty. Babies crying, for food.

And yet, we enjoy life because that's what God wants.

Otherwise, the leaves wouldn't turn so many, beautiful colors in autumn.

Tigers wouldn't burn so immortally bright, framed in their fearful symmetry.

We must have the stubbornness to accept our gladness,
in the ruthless furnace of this world.

To make injustice the only measure of our attention is to praise the Devil.

Voice of Marigold

Back to Simon Magic. What's his story?

Voice of Bonnie

Every era thinks that it is living at Earth's watershed moment.

Voice of Marigold

Nothing is, as it turns out.

A gunshot, heard at a distance.

Voice of Marigold

What's a gun shot mean? In a person's dream?

Voice of Bonnie

One out of every 21 black American males will be murdered in their lifetime.
Most will die at the hands of another black male.

Voice of Marigold

What?

Voice of Bonnie

In the future we will try to avoid the cringed end of the loaf.

Voice of Marigold

What?

Voice of Bonnie

In the future, if the world doesn't lose all patience before I grow up,
avoid looking too far into the future. Now is enough to survive.

Voice of Marigold

Back to Simon Magic. What's his story?

Voice of Bonnie

Christ! It's a labyrinth, isn't it? Life.
Life's stream of consciousness.
I get weary just thinking about it.
Eliot would have a field day, if he ever knew about this.

Voice of Marigold

Indeed.

Voice of Bonnie

This is the way the world ends.
This is the way the world ends.
This is the way the world ends.
Not with a bang, but a foursome.

Voice of Marigold

Back to Simon Magic. What's his story?

Voice of Bonnie

Wisdom, when it's increased to the Nth degree causes him enormous pain.
By its abundance. If not distributed.
He'd memorized every Tarot card, right side up, upside down.
And prayed for help.... Helen came to help him.

Voice of Marigold

How? How did she help him?

Voice of Bonnie

She convinced him that it's not important to know about everything in life.

Voice of Marigold

He didn't know that?

Voice of Bonnie

She explained how the greed for knowledge without light illuminates darkness. To avoid Abraxas at all costs. He's all around, and as insidious as betrayal. Trust the terrible worm to the slightest degree, regardless of his promises, and you may never get him out of your life. Forever. Simon was trying to learn too much. Like Faust. One out of every 21 Americans who know too much goes insane sometime. Knowing too much can lead to morbid obesity of the brain.

Voice of Marigold

How did *she* know so much?

Voice of Bonnie

A reincarnation of Helen of Troy, who'd been raped by Abraxas many times. And who fell desperately in love with another man, while married.

Voice of Marigold

It's happened before.... What else?

Voice of Bonnie

Simon had been experimenting with flying in his dreams. Places around the world. And some places out of it. Some places quite dangerous, as it turned out. It was worth the risk, he thought, because, when he would fly, he felt enlightened. But there are enemies out there, too.

Voice of Marigold

Aren't all these enemies just dreams and illusions?

Voice of Bonnie

Not at all. I can promise you. Even in dream-flying, enemies can be all too real.

Voice of Marigold

How?

Voice of Bonnie

In dreaming like that you can be led into an emotional Venus flytrap,
where an overwhelming depression suddenly snaps shut,
and you don't want to wake up anymore.
Getting sucked into a bottomless pit with Abraxas, with no way out.
Which Simon almost did, were it not for Helen. Who flew in to save him.

Voice of Marigold

Oh?

Voice of Bonnie

She went after him there. And found him. And brought him back.
When she died of Covid-19, he was alone. Except for me.

Voice of Marigold

He's okay now?

Voice of Bonnie

With you. And me. Yes.

Voice of Marigold

Should I like him?

Voice of Bonnie

He can love you like no man ever.
I'm sure of it, from what he's seen and where he's been.
After your quarantine, of course.

Voice of Marigold

Your father made a fool out of me once
I don't want to be made the fool again by a man.
I want Simon.
I don't want to be a mare, let to a stable of stallions.

Pause. Ravens cawing.

Voice of Marigold

I love the voices of the ravens. Don't you?...
Hear them? In the trees?
Hear them, after all these years?
See them?
Look! Look! For the sun will soon be down.

Voice of Bonnie

Yes. I hear them..

Voice of Marigold

Bonnie?... Eve?
If you're so pure,
how could you have been a part of what they did to me for so long?

Voice of Bonnie

When would you have believed us, earlier?
When I was seven? let's say?...
Or eight?...
Or nine?...
Or when I was ten?

Voice of Marigold

Yes. Yes. When you were ten.

Voice of Bonnie

You hadn't settled the lawsuit by then.

Pause.

Voice of Marigold

Oh....

Pause.

Voice of Marigold

And the money we got?...

Voice of Bonnie

Of course.

The two of them walk on.

DRIVER enters, sits down in the driver's seat, and waits.

Voice of Marigold

I'm not
I'm a little weak.
Being with you again. After all these years.
Let's go and sit down awhile in the limo.

They walk toward the limo. BONNIE exits the stage.

Voice of Marigold

It's getting dark.
You seem so far away, I can hardly see you.
Are you gone?
How do I get back to you?
It's so unclear to me, all of a sudden, how to get to you.
Through the grief around you.
How do I get through?

Voice of Bonnie

There's only one effective way with grief:
Confront it. Embrace it. Defeat it.

MARIGOLD enters the limo and sits down. Umbrella and suede handbag are on the floor. MARIGOLD is obviously unwell.

DRIVER

What's on your mind?

Voice of Marigold

Why is it, every time I meet an A I, they keep getting fresher?
It feels like I never woke up this morning.

MARIGOLD

What took you so long?

DRIVER

I can take you anywhere you want. What's on your mind?

MARIGOLD

Unbuttons her blouse, takes a doll from the handbag, and begins "nursing" it against one of her breasts.
Medusa. On MacArthur.... Hairdressers, can't you see?

Voice of Marigold

You grew ugly the second Bonnie died. And uglier every second second since.

Pause. MARIGOLD puts the doll back into the bag.

MARIGOLD

What took you so long?

I feel faint.

It's spinning.

Everything's spinning around, like a wheel of fortune.

Down, where

Down under illiterate beliefs.

I'm not giving up.

I have the stubbornness.

The WOMAN enters, goes to Marigold's side of the limo, jerks her out of the chair, forces her over to the plexiglass shield (of Scene 2), and shoves her fingers down Marigold's throat.

MARIGOLD vomits against the plexiglass.

END