

“D”

By Jerold London

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**Wild nights - Wild nights!
Were I with thee
Wild nights should be
Our luxury!**

**Futile - the winds -
To a Heart in port -
Done with the Compass -
Done with the Chart!**

**Rowing in Eden -
Ah - the Sea!
Might I but moor - tonight -
In thee!**

– Emily Dickinson

“D”

TIME and PLACE

Progressing from the Middle Ages to the present.

Each scene describes its setting. However, throughout all scenes the staging should suggest a delicate balance between material reality and dream reality.

CHARACTERS

DARIA, sixteen.

FRANCOIS, 30, a monk.

JESSICA, eighteen.

ANGELO, 25.

ANNA, twenty (engaged to be married).

JOHN PAUL JOHN, 40.

LAURA, twenty-two, from Munich.

MARK, 35, a farmer (and layman veterinarian).

KARL, 30, Laura’s former fiancé.

MIRANDA, forty, very blonde and eye-catching.

DOUGLAS, 20, plain.

DR. JENNER, hypnotherapist.

FEMALE PATIENT, any.

JUSTIN, 50.

KRISTINA, Justin’s mother, but also 50 in Scene 7.

SCENE 1

DARIA is running through a maze of closed wooden doors in an ancient French monastery, going from door to door, banging on them with her bare palm:

DARIA

Aide-moi!
Aide-moi!
Je vous en supplie!

Aide-moi!
Je vous implore!
Je suis perdu et j'ai peur.

Repeating.

Aide-moi!
Aide-moi!
Je vous en supplie!

Aide-moi!
Je vous implore!
Je suis perdu et j'ai peur.

Then.

Help me!
Help me!
I beg you!

Help me!
I implore you!
I'm lost and I'm frightened.

**At last a door opens, and FRANCOIS
peeks his head out.**

FRANCOIS

Qui êtes-vous?

DARIA

Oh! Dieu merci! Thank you, God!
Je suis *Daria*. Qui êtes-vous?

FRANCOIS

Je suis *François*...
Vous êtes une jeune fille!

DARIA

Ô! mais j'ai seize ans.
O! but I'm sixteen.

FRANCOIS

How did you get in, Daria?

DARIA

No one stopped me.

FRANCOIS

But why?
Why would you come into a monastery?

DARIA

I wanted to see.
No one lets me see.
No one lets women see.

FRANCOIS

To see what? monks?
But why?
You must know you're not allowed.
And you must know that none of us are permitted to see a young lady. Ever!

DARIA

My heart's racing so fast I must soon faint, François.
You won't hurt me, will you, if I collapse on the floor?

FRANCOIS

God forbid I should harm you.
Why would you ask such a thing?

DARIA

Because I am a woman, and you are a man, and I have heard things. Such things!
And I fear your soul is from a place that thinks unkindly of women on the ground.

FRANCOIS

You don't know much about men, do you?

DARIA

No. That's why I came in.
So many men.
I had to see.
Are they all as handsome as you?

FRANCOIS

No....
I mean, none of us are handsome.
We are monks.
We have no minds for handsome.
Or use for the word.
It's a word we never speak.
Handsome ... beau ... is a word we don't use for ourselves.
Nor our life here.

DARIA

But you *are* beautiful.

FRANCOIS

Not to hear you talk like that to me.

DARIA

What would you do if I fell into a fit into your arms?

FRANCOIS

Lay you down upon my bed.

DARIA

And then what?

FRANCOIS

Wait for you to recover.

DARIA

Patiently?

FRANCOIS

Patiently.

DARIA

Men ordinarily aren't so curious about women?

FRANCOIS

Monks, perhaps, aren't like ordinary men.

DARIA

Because you worship God?

FRANCOIS

God's eyes look into another perspective. Do you not worship our Lord?

DARIA

I don't know him.
Perhaps I used to.
But something's changed in my mind, and I'm not the same anymore.
It's as though you're in a dream you're having, with lightning and thunder,
and some voice reaches out, and asks you if you worship God.
And you ask yourself, do I?
Do I, Voice?
Do I know what God is all about? Do I even know who you are?
Because if I do, it must be in some other world than the world my brain is in.

FRANCOIS

How did you get in here?

DARIA

I got lost.
It's so dark and confusing.
So foreboding.
And then, when I had no idea how to get out, I became frantic.

FRANCOIS

And who do you think I am?

DARIA

You are François.
Beautiful François.

FRANCOIS

Please don't call me that. It's embarrassing.
No one ever says I'm beautiful.

DARIA

Then where do I go?
And whom do I talk to?

FRANCOIS

Night has fallen.
We are all saying our prayers.
You are not safe outside.
Wolves may be prowling in the woods.

DARIA

But not in here?

FRANCOIS

What do you want?

DARIA

What all women want.

FRANCOIS

God?

DARIA

To feel as though I have lived and learned the truth about life.
There's so much I want to find out. And know.
And no one lets me. They keep it a secret. In Latin.

FRANCOIS

You're just a girl.
A *young* girl.

DARIA

So was the Blessed Mother when she was young.
And what did they tell her?
About her life and her body?

FRANCOIS

What do you know about the Virgin Mary?

DARIA

I've talked with her. Many times.
Through voices I hear.
And I've seen a few things.

FRANCOIS

You have spoken to the Virgin Mary?

DARIA

I still do.

FRANCOIS

When?

DARIA

When I become frantic my heart races at the fear of it.

FRANCOIS

What does she say to you?

DARIA

That God's truth reveals itself only in rapture.

FRANCOIS

She spoke to you about rapture?

DARIA

Only in the state of rapture does deeper understanding become possible.
Truth ... she calls it "ecstatic truth," is in an entirely different stratum of reality.
It's feminine. It's happiness rushing all over you.
It's multi-colored light. And it's wet.

FRANCOIS

How terrifying!

DARIA

Dressed in azure, pink, and pale yellow,
with a white-striped barracan flowing 'round her,
like fleecy clouds about the moon.

FRANCOIS

What else does she tell you?

DARIA

Men are animals.

FRANCOIS

That we know. Anything else?

DARIA

What women want is to hold the fire of creation itself.

FRANCOIS

She told you that?

DARIA

Is she wrong?

FRANCOIS

Is the Virgin Mary wrong?

DARIA

I didn't think so.

FRANCOIS

But you may have misheard her.

DARIA

Ave Maria! I don't think so, so oft I've felt those moments of comfort with her.
Beautiful and soft and calming, as distant chapel bells.
That face so fair. Those downcast eyes, like twilight in its solitude.

FRANCOIS

Is that how do you feel, when she talks to you?

DARIA

Inside out. Like Jonah.
Or on a leaf, tossing in the wind.
Oh how I have loved her!
Everything is frightening and everything is beautiful at the same time. Like you.

FRANCOIS

You must control yourself, Daria. I'm not like that....
What do you mean, on a leaf, tossing in the wind?

DARIA

Not real. Unreal. Mystical and blowing.

FRANCOIS

Drunk?

DARIA

No. Not drunk. I don't drink. She doesn't either. Except red wine occasionally.

FRANCOIS

Then how?

DARIA

At unity. Completely.
With everybody.
And every tree.
And every other leaf.

FRANCOIS

Unity?

DARIA

Silent.
Empty in the silence.
And listening.
Waiting for the rain.
Desiring the wetness of the rain.

Silent? And desiring?
FRANCOIS

Nary a sound but Mary's voice.
DARIA

That's all?
FRANCOIS

And desire.
DARIA

What desire?
FRANCOIS

A dying desire to create.
DARIA

To create what?
FRANCOIS

Love. With the letter "D" around it.
DARIA

Are those *your* feelings? Or Mary's?
FRANCOIS

It's what Mary feels. And I feel. And women feel.
DARIA

[*beat*] You create; and we only dream of creating.
FRANCOIS

We wait for creation to fulfill.
DARIA

The light begins to dim.

We men see through a glass, darkly.
FRANCOIS

We see men through a glass, darkly.
DARIA

We wait; and you fulfill.
FRANCOIS

DARIA

A river, flowing, is never drying.

FRANCOIS

A devout life is never drying.

DARIA

Mary tells me, all that lives dies.

And all that dies lives again.

Like leaves.

Let birds.

Is she wrong?

FRANCOIS

No. Not if there is time enough.

DARIA

And light enough.

Darkness.

SCENE 2

By water, under a full moon. JESSICA and ANGELO enter.

ANGELO

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Address our ears. Soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.

They sit.

ANGELO

Such harmony is in immortal souls they say;
But while this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.
[beat] Mark the light.

JESSICA

The light, Angelo. How far a little candle throws his beams!
So shines a good deed in a muted world.

ANGELO

When I look at you, Jessica, I imagine the freedom that pleasure gives.
Freedom like water. And swimming. And dancing.
Freedom like the pleasure of your company.

JESSICA

When I look at you I feel I could touch the light of the moon in your face,
As you could touch the pounding of my heart upon my wrist.
I feel I could reach perfection.

ANGELO

You *are* perfection.

JESSICA

And so grateful you are in my world.

ANGELO

What is it? That is happening?

JESSICA

Love.

ANGELO

Is it a pearl? A string of pearls?

I want

JESSICA

[*beat*] Yes? You want ...?

ANGELO

Freedom!

JESSICA

Freedom for ...?
Or freedom from?

ANGELO

Freedom from all that keeps me away from you.

JESSICA

Freedom for all of our dreams.

ANGELO

I had a dream last night.

JESSICA

Of this?

ANGELO

About myself, maybe. Or some other girl like me. When I was sixteen.

JESSICA

Sixteen, and then seventeen, and now all of eighteen.

ANGELO

It was dark. I remember that. Inside a castle, possibly.
Large, and dark, and I was lost.
Or *she* was lost and couldn't find her way out.
Until she met a man.
A monk, I think.
Behind a door.
Who told her about wolves outside....

JESSICA

[*beat*] What happened?

ANGELO

They talked....

JESSICA

ANGELO
About ...?

JESSICA
About the Virgin Mary, I think.

ANGELO
The Virgin Mary?

JESSICA
And her desires.

ANGELO
What desires?

JESSICA
All virgins are virgins in the beginning.
Heifers, until the moment.

ANGELO
Until the moment ...?

JESSICA
Until the moment when making love is making love.

ANGELO
Can we?

JESSICA
Can we ... what?

ANGELO
Make love?

JESSICA
And then what?

ANGELO
Do it again.

JESSICA
And then what?

ANGELO
What you want.

What *do* I want?

JESSICA

Yes, what *do* you want?

ANGELO

For this night never to end.
For you never to stop.
For it to last forever.

JESSICA

Ah.

ANGELO

But you will stop, won't you?

JESSICA

I must.
I'm only human.

ANGELO

Even if I don't want you to?

JESSICA

But with a promise.

ANGELO

What promise?

JESSICA

That we'll come back here.
Changed or not.
Always come back here.

ANGELO

Changed?

JESSICA

Once we have tasted it, we will never be the same.

ANGELO

But come back here, anyway.

JESSICA

Yes, come back here anyway.

ANGELO

JESSICA

Oh, the flesh is weak!

ANGELO

Be thankful for it.

Be thankful for the earth we wear around us and our weakness.

It's the closest thing we have to the furnace of creation.

JESSICA

How do you expect a girl to grapple with feelings like that?

They're so Roman, and so complicated.

ANGELO

By taking our clothes off.

**A cloud drifts over the moon, and the
stage darkens.**

SCENE 3

ANNA, in her bedroom in a bridal gown, is looking at herself in a free standing mirror. Next to the mirror is a naked female mannequin. Candles are burning.

JOHN PAUL enters.

ANNA

[*startled*] John Paul! What are you doing here?
How did you get in?

JOHN PAUL

The balcony.

ANNA

What are you doing here?

JOHN PAUL

I have two horses below. Waiting.

ANNA

Waiting for what?

JOHN PAUL

Our escape, Anna.

ANNA

I'm getting married.

JOHN PAUL

I'm granting you clemency.

ANNA

[*thoughtful pause*] I hardly know you.

JOHN PAUL

Nonetheless, how often have you dreamed of my soft caresses, as I have of yours?

ANNA

If I have, I'd be embarrassed to admit it.
A man of your age!
You should know better.

JOHN PAUL

Takes her hand in his and gently touches it to his lips.
Never has a touch so sweet performed its art on me with greater magic.

**ANNA removes her hand from his, but
the two of them remain in obvious
touching distance throughout the scene.**

ANNA

You really must leave.

JOHN PAUL

Not without you.

ANNA

Then stay, and I'll fetch my father to escort you out. Or Don Ottavio.

JOHN PAUL

Is *that* your fiancé?

ANNA

And if it is?

JOHN PAUL

What a sorry coffin to bury your sex in, when there is I!

ANNA

Such commonness would never cross his lips, nor mine.

JOHN PAUL

No, Anna, you, your lips have deeper thoughts in store.

ANNA

Such thoughts that I shall all deny.

JOHN PAUL

Your eyes reveal volcanoes at their very core.

ANNA

They're blind to all that you imply.

JOHN PAUL

Your heart is flowing over with anticipation.

ANNA

I'm innocent of what you say.

JOHN PAUL

If innocent, why then the sudden palpitation?

ANNA

My bosom's pure, pound though it may.

JOHN PAUL

Your breasts are lily white. Determination, ashen.

ANNA

It's not. I'm not. I'd never dare but not.

JOHN PAUL

Just close your eyes. Release your lips to carnal passion.

ANNA

Just close mine ears to lures your tongue has brought.

Hands momentarily over her ears.

JOHN PAUL

Can you not sense my yearning burning even now?

ANNA

It's rape you are engaging in.

JOHN PAUL

'Tis not. I do that which a woman wants, no more.
Her fantasies alone I do endow.

ANNA

To steal a bridegroom's prize is sin.

JOHN PAUL

You don't want to marry him. You want *our love* to share.

ANNA

My secret garden I've declined until my wedding day.

JOHN PAUL

From lashes of your eyes, to each and every hair.

ANNA

And thrum to every beat you find.

JOHN PAUL

Indeed I shall, in harmony with your desires.

ANNA

You are insane! At a time like this!

JOHN PAUL

I'll not be sane again until you slake these fires.

ANNA

O save me from this devil's kiss.

JOHN PAUL

What devil's kiss could own *my* lips and tongue's sensations?

ANNA

O Mary! Lend me strength I need.

JOHN PAUL

To savor, one by one, your needs and your temptations.

ANNA

A fantasy this is indeed.

JOHN PAUL

Your greatest fantasy, as you will soon discover.

ANNA

A dream, an urge, and nothing more.

JOHN PAUL

A craving that you're meant to find your greatest lover.

ANNA

Dream lover and myself a whore.

JOHN PAUL

A woman or a discontented wife.
Who can tell?

ANNA

An honest wife

JOHN PAUL

I am the carnal self no honest wife can quell.

ANNA

Is all the life

JOHN PAUL

Embracing lust to barest breast without denial.

ANNA

That I was meant to be.

JOHN PAUL

I'm offering tonight a free, explicit trial.

ANNA

My last and female fantasy.

JOHN PAUL

Escape with me and you shall see what you will see.

ANNA

I cannot see what I dare not see.

JOHN PAUL

Then look at me!

**She turns. He "salutes" her.
ANNA turns her head away.**

ANNA

All I desired in youthful innocence

JOHN PAUL

Reach for desire's highest peak

ANNA

Was husband, children, love, and commonsense.

JOHN PAUL

Remembering pleasure's pinnacle is what you seek.

ANNA

Children.

JOHN PAUL

The healthiest, most virile child is conceived
upon the time when love and mother are most free.

ANNA

I'd feel more free if you would go.

JOHN PAUL

You'd feel more free without that dress. Take it off.

ANNA

Not because you bid me so.

ANNA removes the bridal gown and hangs it on the mannequin.

JOHN PAUL

Now don your riding clothes.

ANNA

If I refuse?

JOHN PAUL

The saddle or the bed.

ANNA

My virtue or my head.

JOHN PAUL

Somewhere's a place not far from here I own
in which we'll share a month of nights alone
attended to our every want and need
where better brushed and bathed you'll never be.

I promise you.

ANNA

You merely mean to hijack my body, heart and soul.

JOHN PAUL

Hijack?

ANNA

Commandeer. Pirate away. Secuestrar.

JOHN PAUL

If you want a hijack, bring the dummy.

Lights begin to dim.

ANNA

Am I to blame?

JOHN PAUL

For revelation into rapture?
Hardly.

ANNA

For seduction of ecstatic truth, whatever is its name.

JOHN PAUL

It's the *primal essence* of the female thirst you ride to capture.

ANNA

I'm but a candle in the wind.
Catching hold of another's flame.

JOHN PAUL

You'll only rue it, to your once and dying day,
if you eschew the stage where men are wont to play.

**In near darkness the two of them
proceed as close to nudity together as
the Director deems appropriate for the
circumstances.**

Darkness.

SCENE 4

LAURA is sitting on a bale of hay in a 19th century Bavarian barn, whispering a prayer.

MARK (shirtless) sticks a head in from a stall, where he and two other men (unseen but heard) have been manually assisting a cow in troubled labor.

MARK

How are you doing out here?

LAURA

I'm no country girl.
That's for certain.
And I certainly don't belong in there.

MARK

It's going to be fine, Laura, trust me.

LAURA

[*under her breath*] If I ever *do* trust men.

MARK

What?

LAURA

If I ever *knew* just when.

MARK

Be patient. The calf is safely on its way.
Don't wish your life away.

LAURA

If it were *my life*, Mark, I'd never have gotten pregnant in the first place.

**MARK comes out of the stall toward her.
He is shirtless; and signs of blood are on
his chest, shoulders, arms, and hands.**

MARK

Believe me, we know what we're doing, and she's going to be all right.
They both are.
It's nothing but a twisted uterus, Laura,
which I admit I sadly did not anticipate.
But no problem. Many a cow in labor gets one.
It's all in knowing how to get it untwisted in time.

LAURA

What does that mean?

MARK

Sometimes during labor a cow's uterus flips over on itself. When that happens, if the blockage isn't straightened, the calf cannot enter the birth canal, and they both can die. But there are remedies.

LAURA

What? What can you do? And how does it happen in the first place?

MARK

It happens when a pregnant cow gets knocked down or stands up too abruptly. You reach up into her, and instead of feeling feet or a head you find a corkscrew. And then what you do? You get the cow to the ground and start rolling her to undo the twist. Not the wrong way, of course. That makes things worse. The right way. From one side to the other. And sometimes flat on her back. That's what we just did in there. And everything's fine. The path is clear.

LAURA

How heavy is a cow?

MARK

Twelve hundred pounds, give or take.
And the calf and fluids are another hundred.
That's why it takes three men.
Three strong men.
Drei starke Männer.
To turn her side-to-side.
Which we've done.
She's on her feet now, and the calf is coming.
We have a snare around its feet, and the head is straight.
Come. Take a look. It's perfectly safe to watch.

MARK goes back into the stall, out of sight of the audience.

LAURA gets down from the bale of hay, and looks into the stall.

LAURA

[pause] O my God! Look! It's out. There it is. Out with a tumble!

MARK

Marvelous, isn't it?

LAURA

Why are they dousing it with water?

MARK

To break the trauma of the birth.

There. See?

The cold water gets a calf shaking its head and coughing out the fluid in its throat.

LAURA

What's its mother doing now?

MARK

Licking the calf. It's instinctive.

LAURA

Why?

MARK

To clean it.

And get it warm again.

They all do it.

It's part of the bonding process.

LAURA

It's not clean in there?

**MARK comes back out of the stall.
They sit together on the bale of hay.**

MARK

It better be!

That's our first job.

Making sure a calf is born into a clean stall.

LAURA

Oh.

MARK

Something a Munich girl doesn't get to see much of. Right?

LAURA

I'm glad I did. Thank you, Mark.

MARK

I am, too.

LAURA

I wasn't so happy at first

MARK

A new calf, open-eyed and fresh alive, can lift anyone's heart.
It's a miracle. Every time I see it.

LAURA

You made the difference.
You really know what you're doing, don't you?

MARK

I have to.
Life or death, you know.
Animals count on us when their world goes wrong.

LAURA

Why do you love them so?

MARK

It's why I'm here.
Sharing part of this same incredible creation.

LAURA

You think they are ...?

MARK

We all are.
Special.
The fact that men have weapons which can kill doesn't make us any better.
Animals have moral standing, too.
They feel.
They bleed.
They reproduce.
And they love.

LAURA

You talk as if they were people.

MARK

They don't take the place of people.
I don't think that.

LAURA

Then what are you saying?

MARK

Animals fill a place of their own in our world which humans can't.
I've heard it preached in church that people are the reason God created the Earth.
But what I believe is that even if all humans were gone ...
to heaven, say,
the Earth would be a heaven of its own with only animals living on it.

LAURA

You're strange.

MARK

Not so strange, if you think about it:
Animals sense things we don't.
They feel things beyond us.
They hear things we can't.
And they make life more rewarding for us.
Think about it.

LAURA

Maybe I'm not an animal lover like you.

MARK

Animals make life more contactful for us.

LAURA

"Contactful"? What's that?

A brief darkness.

MARK

It's a word I use, but I really don't know a good way to explain it.

LAURA

Try.

MARK

Maybe you could say it's like sex:
One of the best paths there is to companionship and mutual compassion.

LAURA

Compassion? Sex?

MARK

Compassion in the sense of *caring* for other living beings,
rather than *suffering* for them.

LAURA

Suffering the way Jesus suffered. Is that what you mean?

MARK

Religion is something I *don't* mean, Laura.
I'm maybe too stupid about it, but I think a religious person is no more likely to
treat animals with kindness than a heathen is. I'm sorry if that offends you.

LAURA

It doesn't. If anything, it makes me feel more at ease with you.

MARK

My faith is reverence for life. All life.
I ask myself sometimes: What are we sure of?
One thing: It's that we're alive, and want to go on living.
Which is something we have in common with every other living animal.
And in that way we owe respect to all of them,
the way we do to ourselves.
Or are taught to do....
Reverence for life is my religion.

LAURA

[*beat*] Does your religion bring you comfort?

MARK

The problem with comfort is that it depends on other people, too, doesn't it?
What my religion brings me is truth.
My truth.
A truth that *doesn't* depend on other people's attitudes.

LAURA

How so?

MARK

Some people find their truth in monasteries.
Some find their truth in making love.
Some find it in mathematics of the sun and heavenly spheres at play.
Some find it in metre, rhyme and poetry.
Some in management of government, taxes, and laws.
I find mine in ministering to animals. Let birds.

LAURA

And that's being "contactful"?

MARK

People who love animals find life more contactful.
More meaningful.
I'm sure that's the thing....

I met a man out here once, in the countryside, who came from the city.
Not as big as Munich, but city life anyway.
And he seemed completely lost.
He told me he was searching to find "his people," whatever that meant.
Said he'd been searching for over twenty years.
All over.
People he could feel at home with. Could bond with.
His own family, back in the city, for some reason weren't the ones for him.
But when he got out here, and started listening to the animals ...
Maybe I helped him that way....
But in any event, listening to the animals, and perhaps their simplicity,
it calmed his heart and soul.
Calmed that thing inside him that was making him so restless.
Gave him a connection to the ground.
A place of power just his own.
And he found the person he'd been looking for.
Just that easy.
They are married and living only a few miles from here.

LAURA

[*beat*] Are you talking to me about *me*?

MARK

People need people.
But sometimes people need other things first.

LAURA

Diogenes, they say, spent most of his life with a lantern,
searching for an honest man.
I only wanted to find a caring man.
And I couldn't.

MARK

They are out there.
So long as you're not expecting perfection.

LAURA

How do you know all that?

MARK

Animals teach you.

They always try to be themselves; but often they're not perfect.

That's where we come in.

If we're patient enough with them.

And give them confidence.

LAURA

Confidence?

MARK

Like birthing.

The cow pushes, and you pull.

When she eases up, you do too, to give her a break.

She knows her limits.

But if she gives up, that's when you have to take over, and persuade her.

It's called collaboration.

LAURA

How do you do that?

MARK

It's stress.

Often an animal gives up if the stress is too great.

And you come in, and talk to it, and do something physical they haven't seen before, and it gives them hope and confidence to go back and try.

LAURA

[*beat*] I've been under a lot of stress lately.

Which is why my family thought I needed a break.

MARK

Animals.

People.

Stress can happen anywhere.

LAURA

What's your remedy for me, Doctor?

MARK

Listen. Listen first.

LAURA

Listen for what?

MARK

For what a person ... or an animal *can't* tell you.

LAURA

How do you do that?

MARK

Go inside their shell.
People go into a shell of one kind or another.

LAURA

What kind of shell?

MARK

A hermit shell.

LAURA

Have I?

MARK

What do you think?

LAURA

I think I haven't ever found someone who listens to me.

MARK

Are you saying that you think you've never found an *honest* man?

LAURA

[*beat*] Yes....
Yes, I guess that's what I mean.
How did you know?...
For a long time my greatest fear has been honesty....
How can I say that?

MARK

It's in your dreams.

LAURA

In my dreams?

MARK

In a house, probably. Or a castle. Or a monastery.

LAURA

How could you know that?

MARK

Your dreams are the most honest way to know.
Like death.
Death is always at your shoulder.
Your honest friend.
He'll tell you if you're dead.
And he'll always tell you true: You're not dead yet.
No matter how much you hurt.

LAURA

And you can heal that?

MARK

Healing is to isolate the cause.
Then physically address it.
Contactfully.

LAURA

Your word again.

MARK

Get in contact with yourself, and how you feel about it.
How can you get started before doing that?
Respect yourself. All of yourself.
And own it.
Accept yourself as the piece of God you've been given to care for.
To love.
And accept the burdens you've been given.
Love them, too. There's a reason.

LAURA

Life has to be a burden?

MARK

Everything is a burden until you master it.
Then the burden goes away, and you meet your next one.
Life is meeting burdens. Overcoming them.
And then you die.

LAURA

By myself?

MARK

Most certainly not!
We don't make our animals face their tangles alone, do we?
No.
People need people.
And our friendships with people help make us who we are.
No two ways about it: We need the support of others.

LAURA

Scheisse!! Sharing my shame all over the place?

MARK

You're letting your greatest fear become *you*.

LAURA

I'm not whole.
My brain's not whole.

MARK

And you want to escape it?

LAURA

That's right.
Fernweh.
I long to get away from it.
From who I am.

[FAIREN vee]

MARK

From yourself.

LAURA

Ja.

MARK

How can I help you?

LAURA

Wie kannst du mir helfen?
You can't.

MARK

I think I can.

LAURA

Like that cow, and calf?

MARK

From your fear of honesty.
Honesty teaches honesty.
And honesty heals.

LAURA

I don't know you.

MARK

People can get so fearfully far from each other, can't we?

LAURA

I can't do it

MARK

I won't force you.

LAURA

Just get me to force myself. Right?

MARK

I won't force that either.

LAURA

[*pause*] I'm at the end of a long lane of trees.
Leading up to a mansion I know I've been in before.
It's dark.
And frightening.
Because the people in it frighten me.
They know something about me.
And they're going to tell it in court.
Something that's true, that I've tried to bury.
Something that happened a long time ago.
Something I did there.
And no one else knows it.
Something that damaged the building.
And will cost everything I have to put right.
Everything.
And I'll be lost.
And penniless.
On the streets. Alone....
I walk away.
Feeling the lingering, awful feeling of guilt and shame across my face.

MARK

Aside from life itself, and relative freedom from pain and health problems ...
what would you say are the two or three most important things in your life?

LAURA

[*pause*] I don't know.
Imagination? Curiosity? Creativity? Something like that.
Smiling, maybe.
Or people.
Or animals, now.
I don't know.
Why do you ask?

MARK

Because your dream suggests reputation, and your fears of becoming destitute.

LAURA

Pretty selfish, aren't I?

MARK

Not at all.
Selfish is getting people to feel sorry for you.
And eating a pudding when you've already eaten enough and someone else will
enjoy it more.
And thinking mostly about getting people to do things for you and bring you gifts.
That sort of thing.

LAURA

Just worrying about what's going to happen to me?
That's not selfish?

MARK

That's normal....
However, worrying is no solution.
You can worry, and worry, and worry something to death and never solve it.

LAURA

No. You're right.

MARK

What's worrying you?

LAURA

[*pause*] My stigma.

MARK

Which is what?
I don't see any stigma.

LAURA

My mind.
I'm not whole.
My brain is cleaved, not whole.

MARK

It doesn't seem that way to me.

LAURA

It must be because I've thought sinful thoughts ... people tell me.

MARK

You're beating about the bush....
But I can wait.

LAURA

[*long pause*] I fall....

MARK

That's all?

LAURA

And shake and tremble all over when I do.

MARK

And?...

LAURA

Bright, shining circles of light come in that start to smother my eyesight.
I hear buzzing between the light and me, and cannot see.
Sometimes I feel a cold breeze, hear bells, and smell the most disgusting odor.
Then everything that ticks stops, and my mind and memory are gone.

MARK

Manure? You smell manure?

LAURA

Shit.

MARK

Sounds like a seizure.

LAURA

I'm an epileptic.
I have fits.
Punishments from heaven.

MARK

Animals have fits.
And it has nothing to do with heaven or punishment.

LAURA

I lie on the ground, they tell me, and foam at the mouth like the sea.
I writhe around, thrashing like a mad woman.
I bite like a mad dog.
And I don't remember a thing.

MARK

I've had a couple of cats with seizures like that.
And my sister had a poodle once. We comforted them the best we could.
And never once thought to punish them.

LAURA

Do you always have answers?

MARK

No. But I'm always willing to keep an open mind to look for them.

LAURA

You're proud.

MARK

I have pride in what I do. I confess. But it makes me more humble.

LAURA

You're proud, and I'm ugly.

MARK

You are quite beautiful, actually.

LAURA

I spent my time hiding in the house, measuring my grave in silence.
Fearing my next attack more than my death. What else was there for me to do?
No man would come near me after Karl.

MARK

What did you tell people?

LAURA

Nothing. Not much. The only people that mattered already knew.
Most everybody knew.
Then Karl.

MARK

Did you tell them how were feeling?

LAURA

How I was feeling?

MARK

About the seizures.

LAURA

How I was feeling about them?

MARK

How *did* you feel about them?

LAURA

I told you.
I feared them coming more than dying.
The whole thing ... they bewildered me.
That my life should be buried beneath a fracture like that.
Why me?
Why do lightning and thunder only hit me?
Why *my skull*, struck by seizures?
What did I do so wrong?
Why do I even wake up after them?
I don't particularly want to.
And what are they?
Not death, obviously, since I can stand up after the eclipse.
Not night, because I can hear the tongues of bells ringing just before.
Not obscure reveries, since all space comes to stare at me.
More like returning from Hell.
The constant knowing not knowing why this hideous, unholy shadow is upon me.
Why this unnatural funeral in my brain.

MARK

After it's over?

LAURA

I sit numb in my tomb.

MARK

But with courage for the future.

LAURA

I have no future with it, since it has no future but itself.
No future if there be no remedy.

MARK

New medications are discovered every day.
With you I'll share my courage.

LAURA

Who are you to dare such a thing?

MARK

A poor country soul, willing to try.

LAURA

And I, a poor city soul, willing to say Goodbye.

MARK

You're a poet. Your mind is poetry. I can see it, unwilling to let your genius die.

Darkness.

**When light returns MARK has exited
and KARL is standing over LAURA, who
is twisting on the floor in a seizure.**

**She recovers, and slowly stands (on her
own).**

LAURA

[surprised] Karl! How long have you been here?

KARL

Long enough to see the you, you are, you monster.

LAURA

Where did you come from?

KARL

You're ugly.
Horribly ugly.
Twisting on the floor like a demon.
Biting your tongue and trying to eat it.

LAURA

I have seizures, occasionally.
They don't know why.
They can't tell me why.

KARL

Why have you failed to tell *me*?
I can't be married to an animal like you.
That's why.
Ever intending to deceive.
You're ugly. You're dirty.
You're a sack-of-potatoes farm girl, lying in the filth, mucking out a cow pen.
How could I have ever seen you otherwise?
Well, I shall never see you again.
I have a reputation. And a house to maintain.

LAURA

I never meant to deceive.

KARL

You want me to believe that?
Animals like you should be locked up.
Away from proper society.

LAURA

I'm sorry.

KARL

The engagement is cancelled.
Leave me alone.
Forever.
I warn you.

KARL exits.

LAURA remains standing in place.

Darkness.

SCENE 5

1920s. A platform at the side of a hotel dance floor (offstage) where there are tables and chairs.

MIRANDA, dressed attractively in white, and DOUGLAS, wearing a coat and tie, happen to be sitting close to each other at an otherwise empty table, each watching the dancing, and occasionally sipping from the glass in front of them.

MIRANDA

What fun....

[beat] Do you see any girls out there you like?

DOUGLAS

What?

MIRANDA

Any of those girls dancing catch your eye?

DOUGLAS

Moves next to MIRANDA.

I don't attract what I want. I attract what I am.

MIRANDA

Oh?

DOUGLAS

Do you see me dancing?

MIRANDA

Oh! Well, yes, I do, actually.

DOUGLAS

What world are you in?

MIRANDA

A mental-material world.

What world are you in?

DOUGLAS

Not yours, obviously.

MIRANDA

You can be, if you care to be.

DOUGLAS

Who are you?

MIRANDA
My name's Miranda....
And yours?

DOUGLAS
Douglas.
Doug.

MIRANDA
Nice to meet you, Doug.
What brought you here tonight?

DOUGLAS
What?

MIRANDA
Why did you come here tonight?

DOUGLAS
Certainly not the food....
The music.
And the dancing ... watching it.

MIRANDA
I understand.

DOUGLAS
[beat] Why did you come?

MIRANDA
I felt an attraction tonight, pulling me away.

DOUGLAS
An attraction?

MIRANDA
Yes. An attraction.

DOUGLAS
What kind of attraction?

MIRANDA
I've been thinking about love a lot lately.

DOUGLAS
What kind of love?

MIRANDA

The opposite of dislove.

DOUGLAS

What the Hell is “dislove”?

MIRANDA

It’s a deeper feeling than “dislike,”
addressed toward people only, not objects, or drinks.
It suggests a stronger negative emotion.
Like, I don’t just dislike what’s-his-name anymore, I dislove him.
I’ve been lingering in that trap too long.

DOUGLAS

A lover?... Or someone else?

MIRANDA

He left me without a word. Men who leave you without a word don’t love you.
But I don’t let myself think about that anymore.

DOUGLAS

Oh.
Anybody here you “dislove”?

MIRANDA

No one. I came here tonight feeling just the opposite.
You know. Like harmony is just the opposite of disharmony.

DOUGLAS

Someone here you love?

MIRANDA

Right now it’s the ambience. If more than that should happen, let it. I’m free.
Let it flood on me. Drown me.
I’ll get through it; and feel good about it. I’ve done that before.

DOUGLAS

Is this a new thing for women, or something? Free love?
Eat, drink, and be merry while the sky is falling?

MIRANDA

What sky falling? A transient broken heart?

DOUGLAS

I never want my heart being broken, being ugly. No way.

MIRANDA

It's better to have a broken heart than not to feel a heart at all.

DOUGLAS

Not with my looks.

MIRANDA

Wait a minute!

You've said that two or three times now, and I am compelled to argue:

You have plenty to be proud of.

A good body, an engaging face, wonderful eyes.

Especially tonight.

Why the sudden negativity about your looks?

It's merely in your mind, you know.

DOUGLAS

What's in my mind?

MIRANDA

That you're not good looking. Because you are, and you should know it.

DOUGLAS

What is that? Zen?

MIRANDA

Zen is the mystery of the universal mind.

You want something to happen, see it happening, let it happen.

Let the mind. Let birds.

See the light. Hear your way with feeling.

In Zen, to control the cow you give it a bigger pasture.

To control your mind, give it a universe.

DOUGLAS

What do *you* see happening?

MIRANDA

I see what I feel: Eight deer on a slope in the summer morning mist. The sky blue.

Me like a mare let out to pasture. And what's going to happen to me.

DOUGLAS

Are you from the country, or what?

MIRANDA

No. Born and bred a city girl, and forever homesick whenever I'm too far away.

But I have had country dreams.

DOUGLAS

What kind of dreams?

MIRANDA

I'm in a cow pen, on a farm, and something is wrong with me.
Either I can't stand, or maybe not walk right. I don't know.
But a big man comes in.
Not all that much unlike you.
And he lifts me up. Or holds me. Something.
And I know I'm in the arms of a man who is strong, and caring, and constant.
With cows all around us.

DOUGLAS

Wow! How weird!

MIRANDA

We are as we think we are.
And yes, the mind *is* weird.
We, the creatures of flesh and blood we are,
are not so unlike cows in a cow pen, or a pasture.
Our big difference is that we are conscious of having gone beyond the animal.
Because we have greater minds, which we like to think came directly from God,
who loves us most of all.
But
But the mind, in the final resolve, is body, too.

DOUGLAS

What does that mean?

MIRANDA

We are as we think we are.
Because of our minds.
And the mind is a stage: a brain, made up of the same matter as the body is.
Essentially the same fabric and baggage as a nose, or arms, or legs are made of.
Except that the brain has the power to transport us millions of miles away,
on wings of eagles and gossamer.
Even possibly into future lives, by the force of the mind alone.
And dreams....
Past lives, too.

DOUGLAS

Past lives??

MIRANDA

Haven't you ever been somewhere new, and felt you'd been there before?
In a past life.

DOUGLAS

I think I'm feeling that right now.

MIRANDA

Any explanation for the phenomenon?

DOUGLAS

No. Not really. Not that I ever thought much about it.

MIRANDA

Because there is no physical answer.

DOUGLAS

And what does *that* mean?

MIRANDA

It means that all around us are worlds that cross and intersect,
but do not submerge.

DOUGLAS

I'm lost.

MIRANDA

Do you read a lot?

DOUGLAS

As a matter of fact, I do.

MIRANDA

And what happens?

DOUGLAS

[*pause*] Is that what you're getting at?
That when I read, my mind stops chattering at me all the time,
and I go into the writer's world instead?

MIRANDA

Perzactly. Like theatre.

DOUGLAS

But it's all pretend. Make believe.

MIRANDA

Is it? Really?

We are as we think we are.

Animals can learn by sudden insight the same way humans do.

The same way a person can suddenly know something new simply at a Shakespeare play.

DOUGLAS

What does this have to do with the floating worlds all around us, you said?

MIRANDA

There are too-many-to-count ways that any given experience can be fathomed by observant minds.

DOUGLAS

So?

MIRANDA

So, each can be thought of as a somewhat separate world.

And what it means to you, is what it means to you.

DOUGLAS

So?

MIRANDA

So ... if you see yourself as handsome, the way I do, you *are* handsome.

As we think, so we are.

DOUGLAS

There are problems with that, you know.

MIRANDA

There are problems with anything, if you wait long enough.

DOUGLAS

I mean, just because I think I'm handsome doesn't make other people think I am.

MIRANDA

What other people are you talking about?

DOUGLAS

A girl, for example.

MIRANDA

So, if *she* thinks you're handsome, why do you care what anyone else may think?

DOUGLAS

[*pause*] I guess I don't, if you look at it that way.

MIRANDA

Because, as sure as tomorrow is tomorrow, there will be people who think you are, and people who will think you're not.

DOUGLAS

And what do I care? you're asking.

MIRANDA

That's what I'm asking.

DOUGLAS

What *do* I care?

MIRANDA

It's only what's in your mind and the mind of the one.
And, believe it or not, what's in her mind could well come from yours.
Like chocolate.

DOUGLAS

How is that?

MIRANDA

Go out there, on the dance floor, with the confidence of a king. Smiling.
Knowing you're as handsome as a prince, and see what happens.

DOUGLAS

Smiling?

MIRANDA

A good smile is the best part of being good looking,
just as a good laugh is the best part of personality.
They last longer, in the mind's eye.

DOUGLAS

[*beat*] Do you know what is the best part of how you look to me?

MIRANDA

No. What?

DOUGLAS

Your hair. Your thick, blonde hair.
It's beautiful, all of itself.

MIRANDA

I feel it, too.
Cozied up against the back of my neck.
Swinging against my cheek, fair, and smooth, and slippery.
It makes me feel twenty again.

DOUGLAS

[*beat*] How old are you, may I ask?
And if you want to say twenty-nine, go right ahead.

MIRANDA

Forty.

DOUGLAS

Beautiful!

MIRANDA

At forty you can hide behind blonde hair and a smile.

DOUGLAS

Provided your mind is in it.

MIRANDA

You've got it.

DOUGLAS

What are you hiding?

MIRANDA

Nothing.

DOUGLAS

Nothing but what?

MIRANDA

My longing.

DOUGLAS

Your longing for what?
For dancing? For more out of this life?

MIRANDA

Perzactly.

DOUGLAS

Same with me.

MIRANDA

I shall never give up longing to swallow every ounce of life that's flying out there.
I shall let my hair stay long.
I shall let the rain drench through it.
The trees tell of the sun.
The sun, of the birds.
Let birds.
Let birds.
Let every leaf be passion.
Let every passion be joy.

DOUGLAS

I have never met a mind like yours.
Much less a body.
And hair.

MIRANDA

At forty?

DOUGLAS

Can you make love?

MIRANDA

Of course.

DOUGLAS

Then what does forty have to do with it?

MIRANDA

Have *you* made love, Mr. Twenty?

DOUGLAS

Touché.
I asked you one off the charts, and now you, me.

MIRANDA

Tit for tat.

DOUGLAS

[*beat*] Well, no.
As a matter of fact, no.
No, Miranda, I'm still a virgin. Sorry.

MIRANDA

I figured.

DOUGLAS

It's something I'm conscious of.

MIRANDA

It bothers you?

DOUGLAS

Do you have to be in love to make love?

MIRANDA

A little.

At least.

Or else it's just screwing.

DOUGLAS

Because I think making love with a girl I don't love would ruin it, in the end.

MIRANDA

Could you enjoy playing tennis with a girl?

DOUGLAS

Yes, of course.

MIRANDA

Or writing a book or a play together?

DOUGLAS

Yes.

MIRANDA

And be passionate about it?

DOUGLAS

Yes, of course.

MIRANDA

Then you could be passionate about making love with her.

DOUGLAS

Yes, I spose I could.

MIRANDA

What? Why that look?

DOUGLAS

Is passion the same as love?

MIRANDA

It goes a long way.

DOUGLAS

All the way?

MIRANDA

Let leaf be passion, let its very touch.
Let jaw, let teeth, let tongue, let kiss.
Let every temple sing; let every church bell ring.
Let every wayfarer find her Glass Chapel along the way.
Let everyone eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labors.
Let everyone rejoice.
To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the sun.
Let the mare in the field in the summer morning mist make you whinny.
Make you come to the fence and whinny

DOUGLAS

What are you?

MIRANDA

I am an oracle, left behind, who loves the amazing touch of a man next to me.
A man who can dance, and whose passion can out run discretion.
A hero whose mind embraces mine like thighs.
I want a man whose longing for me lengthens every evening like the shadows.

DOUGLAS

You want to be loved.

MIRANDA

Sweet, wild nights, drunk with passion, love, and poetry.

DOUGLAS

Breathes there a man with soul so unflagging?

MIRANDA

For too many a man his love and his life are things apart.
For me, my life and my love are my purpose.
To love again. Be undone again. And feel my blood rush to where my spirit is set.

DOUGLAS

How can a heart bear so much love?

MIRANDA

To answer your earlier question: Passion is love the way fire is heat.

DOUGLAS

It needs

MIRANDA

It needs fuel replenished.

DOUGLAS

Ah.

MIRANDA

Because the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

DOUGLAS

I've heard that said.

MIRANDA

And who can love and still be wise is a poet who can spring forth from passion like flowers in the wildest woods.

DOUGLAS

What about getting pregnant?

MIRANDA

Not all nights of wild passion lead to pregnancy, I assure you.
Some to dreams that live beyond the bed and child-bearing years.

DOUGLAS

Is that what most women want? To be made love to every night?

MIRANDA

Some do. Not all.

DOUGLAS

What do the others want?

MIRANDA

Most anything sweet, and pleasing, and elegant.
But most of all, now that I think of it:
Not money. Not clothes. Not shoes.
Not food or drink.
Not dancing. Not parties.
Not flattery.
The thing most woman desire most is to be in charge of their husbands and lovers.
That's it.

DOUGLAS

That's it?
That's all?
Seems like something a man would want.

MIRANDA

It is a bit masculine, isn't it?

DOUGLAS

What about you?

MIRANDA

Making love every night would be nice.

DOUGLAS

Really? That's it for you?

MIRANDA

There's nothing like intense passion.
But, on the other hand, there's nothing like warm friendship and calm emotional connection, either.

DOUGLAS

Which means more?

MIRANDA

I don't know.
I'm absolutely not sure.
Perhaps passion first, and then the other connections can be nursed.
Get wet before you dry off.

DOUGLAS

Be safe before you get a broken heart is my motto.

MIRANDA

Don't drink lest you get drunk some night. Right?

DOUGLAS

I spose.

MIRANDA

You can get drunk from a sleeping lover's scarce-drawn breath.

DOUGLAS

That I wouldn't know.

MIRANDA

A lover's face, enshrined in sleep, is never formed in vain.
It's as much as an artistic masterpiece.

DOUGLAS

You *do* love men, don't you?

MIRANDA

My favorites.

DOUGLAS

I wish every woman loved like you.

MIRANDA

Not if you have a jealous bone in you.

DOUGLAS

That's something I hadn't thought of.

MIRANDA

Stars at night are for everyone.

DOUGLAS

Stars at night?

MIRANDA

The night shows them all: men and stars in better light.

[*beat*] May I guess which girl interests you most tonight?

DOUGLAS

Looks around the (offstage) dance floor.

Not a one has your wonderful hair, Miranda, *or* your poise and grace.

MIRANDA

No?

DOUGLAS

But

MIRANDA

[*beat*] But what?

DOUGLAS

I never thought this would ever happen to me.

MIRANDA

Something you've just discovered?

DOUGLAS

Feelings I've just uncovered.

MIRANDA

Lips?

DOUGLAS

I could smother your hair in kisses till it storms.

MIRANDA

And bathe in lightning and thunder, I imagine.

DOUGLAS

But I'm afraid.

MIRANDA

Twin happiness: Desire, and the fear of it.

DOUGLAS

What a women really wants?

MIRANDA

Yes. Her heart beating against the chest of a man who desires her more than his fear of desire. I could just eat a man like that up, bite by bite, longer and longer.

DOUGLAS

Till he couldn't stand it anymore.

MIRANDA

To the edges of his endurance.

DOUGLAS

To the very margins of primitive love.

MIRANDA

Love! What is it in this world of ours which makes it fatal to be loved?

DOUGLAS

Why do you say fatal?

MIRANDA

Because love lives. And love dies. And in dying, it takes its part away from you. To age with love is to see the dark side of the moon.

DOUGLAS

What are you talking about?

MIRANDA

In youth there is a spring that satisfies like nothing else.
Until it goes.

DOUGLAS

I still don't understand.

MIRANDA

The twin curses:
Aging.
And jealousy.

DOUGLAS

Neither of them will touch us.

MIRANDA

No, my glorious man, not us.

Darkness.

SCENE 6

The present.

DR. JENNER and the FEMALE PATIENT are in his office – each sitting in chairs facing each other. Her eyes are closed and her left arm is extended. DR. JENNER is supporting it at the wrist.

DR. JENNER

Each time you hear my voice you will go deeper and deeper into relaxation....

You won't fall....

I have you....

You have complete trust in me, and you know I won't let you fall.

Or anything else that could hurt you....

Are you relaxed?

FEMALE PATIENT

Yes, doctor.

DR. JENNER

Do you trust me?

FEMALE PATIENT

Yes, I do.

DR. JENNER

When I snap my fingers you will wake up, fully rested....

Do you understand?

FEMALE PATIENT

Yes.

DR. JENNER

Where are you?

FEMALE PATIENT

Here.... Looking through the window.

DR. JENNER

Where is here, exactly?

FEMALE PATIENT

On the beach.

In the sand.

At Waikiki.

DR. JENNER

The window ...?

FEMALE PATIENT

It's already open.

DR. JENNER

And what do you see through it?

FEMALE PATIENT

Yesterday.

DR. JENNER

Yesterday?

FEMALE PATIENT

Yesterday.

DR. JENNER

Do you know yesterday's date?

FEMALE PATIENT

Yes.

DR. JENNER

Tell me what it is.

FEMALE PATIENT

December fourth.

DR. JENNER

What year?

FEMALE PATIENT

1941.

JUSTIN rushes in, excitedly, wearing a wet suit, barefoot, and carrying a surfboard.

DR. JENNER snaps his fingers and removes his hand from under the female patient's wrist. She awakens.

FEMALE PATIENT

Oh!

The FEMALE PATIENT stands and exits.

JUSTIN

What's with her?

DR. JENNER

Your fly's unzipped.

JUSTIN

I guess I'm in another world this morning.

DR. JENNER

Where are you?

JUSTIN

On a beach.

DR. JENNER

Which beach?

JUSTIN

A timeless one.

With an unending Monet sky above.

Sand beyond sight.

Wetted by the waves, and a child on a pogo stick wearing a miner's hat.

The walls of Dr. Jenner's office fall away, and the two of them are on a beach, standing stage left.

JUSTIN

I have exciting news!

New news!

I made a great discovery last night!

DR. JENNER

Yes, Justin, what is it?

JUSTIN

I'm not gay and I'm not a woman!

That's not why I can't find a woman in my life.

DR. JENNER

I never thought you were a woman.

And I never said you were.

JUSTIN

I mean, in those former lives, those dreams:
From a 16-year-old neophyte in a French monastery, curious about men's bodies,
to an 18-year-old virgin on an Italian river bank, curious about love and sex,
to a 20-year-old bride-to-be, anxious about marriage and intrigued by infidelity,
to a 22-year-old fiancé, unjustly rejected for a flaw in her health,
to a 40-year-old beauty, released from all romantic restrictions.
All of that.
All of those dreams ... real dreams ... vivid dreams.
Dreams of what women want from men in their lives.
Dreams evolving over centuries.
But not *my dreams*.

DR. JENNER

You had them.
You told me them.
Whose were they, if they weren't yours?

JUSTIN

My mother, Kristina's, before she died.

DR. JENNER

Your mother's?!

JUSTIN

You see, Dr. Jenner, she read to me from her diary last night.

DR. JENNER

She read to you?! How long has she been dead?

JUSTIN

Twenty-five years.
In a dream, she read to me.
Last night; and told me she was coming back. Soon.
Because she has something very important I need to see.
But the diary:
It had been hidden all this time in a secret place of hers.
And she read it to me. Parts of it...
You know what? All the dreams I thought were mine, she had them first.
They were *her dreams*.

DR. JENNER

Those were *her* past lives?

JUSTIN

Apparently.
They aren't mine, that's for sure.

**JUSTIN lays his surfboard on the sand,
and the two of them begin walking,
toward center stage.**

DR. JENNER

You had your mother's dreams?

JUSTIN

Yes.

DR. JENNER

How do you suppose *that* happened?

JUSTIN

I have no idea. What do *you* think?

DR. JENNER

Shrugs.

It makes no logical sense.

JUSTIN

And if something makes no logical sense, what have you always told me?

DR. JENNER

It must be a dream.

JUSTIN

Perzactly.

DR. JENNER

You dreamed you dreamed your mother's dreams?

JUSTIN

Either that, or this is all a dream.

DR. JENNER

Well, we both know that isn't true.

JUSTIN

So, there's a flaw in our pursuit of Miranda, Laura, Anna, Jessica, and Daria as past lives of mine. And probably a flaw in past life regression itself.

They stop walking, near center stage.

DR. JENNER

A flaw in past life regression? A flaw in Bridey Murphy? I don't think so!

JUSTIN

Maybe not a flaw, per se, but a wrinkle.

DR. JENNER

What kind of wrinkle?

JUSTIN

A time warp in which past memories of a deceased person momentarily intersect our lives and become our memories.

DR. JENNER

That's impossible.

JUSTIN

Is it more impossible than remembering our own past lives?

DR. JENNER

Yes, I'd say so.

JUSTIN

On what scientific basis?

DR. JENNER

That it's a wholly different ballgame from simple reincarnation.

JUSTIN

Remembering my mother's past lives is maybe, exactly reincarnation.
Second degree reincarnation.

DR. JENNER

What are you talking about?

JUSTIN

That I'm reliving a part of her life and memories.

DR. JENNER

You were *that* close?

JUSTIN

We had some real mother and son moments.
Yes.

DR. JENNER

You never told me.

JUSTIN

I don't think she would have told you, either.

DR. JENNER

You made me imagine her like some kind of ghost in your life.

JUSTIN

Ghosts, dreams, and invisibility cloaks.

DR. JENNER

I'm actually not prepared for this.

JUSTIN

Why not?

You believe in reincarnation, don't you, Doctor Jenner?

DR. JENNER

Of course I do. You know that. Why do you ask?

I've told you, how many times?

History is replete with accounts of spiritual survival after physical extinction.

JUSTIN

And God taught you that?

DR. JENNER

Something inside me taught me it. Call it God or what you will.

JUSTIN

Your soul?

DR. JENNER

Whatever.

JUSTIN

Well, my soul has taught me that there is consistency.

You can have one; or you can have the other.

DR. JENNER

The other what?

JUSTIN

You can believe in spirits existing alongside us in this world; or you can believe there are none. But you can't have both.

DR. JENNER

If spirits don't exist, then what's the point of it all?
Aimless sex and animal magnetism?

JUSTIN

Don't you see? It's the same boat if we're unable to make contact with them.
No contact, no effective spirits in our lives. Just aimless sex.

DR. JENNER

We make contact with our *personal* spirit through past life regression.
That's sufficient.
We're not meant to be spirit catchers for the whole planet.

JUSTIN

Except

DR. JENNER

Except what?

JUSTIN

We *know* we're making spiritual contact in every great piece of art, music, and poetry. We don't know we're making contact with a former life by just remembering something.

DR. JENNER

Spiritual inspiration, you're referring to.

JUSTIN

Perzactly.

DR. JENNER

So what? That only goes to support belief in reincarnation.

JUSTIN

I don't see it.

DR. JENNER

See what?

JUSTIN

The logic in what you just said.

DR. JENNER

Take Akiane Kramarik, for example.
You do know about her, don't you?

JUSTIN

Certainly.

The child artistic genius who painted a masterpiece at, what? age ten?

DR. JENNER

Age eight.

JUSTIN

That sold for \$850,000?

DR. JENNER

That's the one.

JUSTIN

The one of Jesus, that the four-year-old boy saw in his mind while he was having a near-death experience?

DR. JENNER

The same one. By the way, his name is Colton Burpo.

JUSTIN

And they made a movie about it.

DR. JENNER

Heaven Is For Real.

JUSTIN

What's your point?

DR. JENNER

How could a five-year-old girl blossom into the accomplished painter she did at age five without having been born with a painter already inside her? And create a frigging \$850,00 masterpiece by age eight unless she'd had an earlier life as an artist? Answer me that.

JUSTIN

That's a hard one.

DR. JENNER

She's not the only one on record who had a past life as an artist.

JUSTIN

You mean your favorite police officer, Captain What's-his-name.

DR. JENNER

Robert Snow. Commander of the Indianapolis homicide department.

JUSTIN

Who discovered under hypnosis that he was some little-known New York City portrait painter in a previous life, who had died more than thirty years before Snow was born.

DR. JENNER

You've got a good memory.

Snow, while hypnotized, virtually relived the painting of a hunchbacked woman done more than eighty years before his regression. A picture he'd never seen. Painted long before he was born, and essentially hidden away in storage for all the years between.

Afterwards he assumed it was some fantasy of his imagination.

Until he saw the actual painting in an art gallery in New Orleans....

JUSTIN

Tell me again how he described the experience.

DR. JENNER

Whirling around, I saw it before me, feeling the same electricity up and down my arms and legs as when I'd once grabbed onto a live wire without knowing it.

JUSTIN

And he's a believer now?

DR. JENNER

Against all his skepticism too many facts he recalled proved to be true. Other explanations didn't hold water.

JUSTIN

I have a viable alternative explanation.

DR. JENNER

Which is what?

JUSTIN

Trans-spiritual communication.

It exists.

But not necessarily reincarnation.

DR. JENNER

You're fixated on that, aren't you?

JUSTIN

It's merely that there is more reason to believe in the existence of trans-spiritual communication than there is to believe in reincarnation.

DR. JENNER

You don't believe in Bridey Murphy?

JUSTIN

Maybe a little agnostic.

DR. JENNER

And Edgar Cayce, and all he did for past life regression?

JUSTIN

As I said, there are some hard ones to explain.

DR. JENNER

You're pissing me off.

Where does your deceased mother fit into this discussion, anyway?

JUSTIN

Where does my deceased mother fit into this discussion?

This way:

If we accept as fact that there are intense experiences floating out in space from people who have died, which can be retrieved by sensitive minds, there's no need to jump to the assumption that those sensitive minds got reincarnated.

DR. JENNER

What are you saying?

JUSTIN

That telepathic visions can be real.

And that doesn't prove, or disprove, reincarnation.

Reincarnation is a separate animal.

DR. JENNER

What's the reason for calling it that? What's the point?

JUSTIN

The point is, in the first place, my mother, and what she has to show me.

And it isn't reincarnation, I'd bet my butt on it.

And the second point is that we have a world of knowledge at our fingertips.

Why block it by forcing some theory, like reincarnation, that most of the world is not ready to accept?

DR. JENNER

If we don't use past life recall to prove that we don't really die when we do, what's the point of the whole megillah?

JUSTIN

One step at a time....

DR. JENNER

I'll tell you.

Past life recall gives you a better sense of being loved than any physical, sexual, or ecstatic experience you can ever have on Earth. *And*, a better sense of feeling safe.

JUSTIN

But, don't you see? being able to communicate with the past lives of others is a form of reincarnation by itself, even if less self-centered.

DR. JENNER

How is that?

It certainly isn't as satisfying.

JUSTIN

After you die you can't see yourself anymore.

Only the living can see you....

They are your reincarnation....

We are your reincarnation....

We, the body community.

DR. JENNER

I'm not a follower, or a particular fan, of Carl Jung and his hippie archetypes.

JUSTIN

Nevertheless, it is a floatable Plan B to reincarnation, to address the existential crisis of whether our lives have long-term meaning or not.

DR. JENNER

Is that what your mother is up to?

Making you wonder what the existential meaning of your life is?

Beyond interrupting my session with a patient?

JUSTIN

Sorry 'bout that.

I spose I *am* being selfish.

My relationship with my mother was, sadly, a bit sketchy at times while she was alive. And I'd like to make up for it.

DR. JENNER

Get real.

You're *not* your mother's reincarnation, and you're *not* going to see her again.

JUSTIN

You get real, Doctor.

If it's my destiny, or just my goal, I *am* going to see my mother again.

Think what you want, I'm hanging onto that.

DR. JENNER

All right, then.

I believe, Justin, we can safely say that this concludes our session for the day.

Go back to obsessing about yours and your mother's mortality, for all I care.

DR. JENNER exits.

Darkness.

SCENE 7

Same day. Same beach. Surfboard resting, **stage left**. JUSTIN standing, **center stage**.

KRISTINA enters, **stage right**, wearing a white, one-piece bathing suit, barefoot. She approaches JUSTIN.

JUSTIN

Mother!
Is this a dream?

KRISTINA

Thank you for saving my favorite bathing suit.

JUSTIN

You found it.

KRISTINA

Naturally....
What are you up to, Justin?

JUSTIN

Just walking.
Alone.
Feeling the sand, my toes, and thinking.
Actually, thinking of actually nothing.
Except you.

KRISTINA

You always were a good son.

JUSTIN

Your favorite son.

KRISTINA

My only one.

JUSTIN

You don't look a day older than when you left.

KRISTINA

I'm not.

JUSTIN

I always knew you'd be back. Just, not so long.

KRISTINA

How long has it been?

JUSTIN

Twenty-five years.
I'm as old now as you were when you left.

KRISTINA

My goodness! That long!

JUSTIN

Yes.
It took me the first two or three years to believe it all happened.
I kept feeling you were just a beach or a bus ride away.

KRISTINA

I was probably in the next room.
And didn't know yet how to communicate.

JUSTIN

That morning seemed so ordinary.

KRISTINA

So ordinary it took me the longest time to figure out something had happened.
That I'd left, and all.
I still don't know how it happened.
Do you?

JUSTIN

As ordinary they say as the morning of December 7th, in 1941, at Pearl Harbor....
It was the big one. In the water. Near the beach. There was nothing they could do.

KRISTINA

Life is probably always ordinary like that,
just before it isn't, and never will be again

JUSTIN

I think that should be the name of a soup.... "Ordinary" soup.

KRISTINA

Ordinary is a state of mind.
Like I am, you're probably thinking.

JUSTIN

How long do we have?

KRISTINA

As long as you can remember.

JUSTIN

You taught me so much more than I can remember, Mamma Tina...
Remember when I used to call you that?

KRISTINA

Oh my Justin, my little, little Justin.
Oh my Justin, my precious little boy.

JUSTIN

What does a mother want from a son?

KRISTINA

To be her clock.
The pendulum of her life.
A son marks the hour of the day, the day of the week, the week of the month, the month of the year of her completing one chapter and beginning the next.
A son is the incarnation of passion into love, and purpose into breast feeding, no matter what else may have fallen away on the way.

JUSTIN

Mamma Tina, be serious. What *does* a mother really want from her son?

KRISTINA

A whole closet full of things.

JUSTIN

Such as ...?

KRISTINA

Love.
Respect.
Stature.
Joy.
Laughter.
Happiness.
Memories. Memories of me.
And maybe a bit of a scrape now and then with nature.
You know: A bloody knee or nose, a bump on the noggin.

JUSTIN

And what does she want from a man? The same sort of things?

KRISTINA

Heavens no!
From a man, now and then, a woman wants her breath taken away.
Desire she could die for. *For him* and *from him*.
Sex she could climb a bell tower for. Once in a while.

JUSTIN

That's all?

KRISTINA

Strength she can curl up and feel safe in.
That's more of the time.
And, I suppose, a sufficiently long life, free from pain, anger, and hunger.
Free from a too-early heart attack and men telling her what to do.
Thrilling enough to rival sisters and neighbors.
Satisfying enough to sleep sweet dreams in the night.
But real, not phony, with good memories she can kiss and take with her.
But don't mind me.
I'm only one woman, who wanted as much sun and surf as I could get.
Most of you here have to sell a finger or two just to survive, never knowing the
treasure of a partner who protects your dreams and solitude as much as theirs.
Because even between the closest of lovers, Romeo and Juliet included,
infinite distances exist.
I can assure you of that, my son.

JUSTIN

Maybe that's what I've been looking for all wrong in my life.

KRISTINA

If would be nice for you to have a lover.
A special kind of lover.
One who gives you space to be the eccentric boy you are.
And if you two can realize the treasure in it, and believe in it,
a priceless union can join you.
I think I see that for you. Let birds.
A wind filling your wings and carrying you, separate, together, and whole,
beyond the poverty we shared, into an ecstatic validation of your lives....
Are you listening?
And what part have you heard that sex plays in this scenario?
There must be a couple of hundred reasons why people have sex, but not this.

JUSTIN

Did you ever have a union like that with my father?

KRISTINA

Your father was a young and naïve soul.
He never had much experience with women. More with men.
It took me years to forgive him for that.

JUSTIN

For being gay?

KRISTINA

For living rough in the sand, and using me as his beard.

JUSTIN

Oh.

KRISTINA

It wasn't so much his fault, I recognize now.
Who teaches a man what a woman really wants?
Especially a man who loves a life in the sun, on the beach, with other men and boys?

JUSTIN

More to the point: Who teaches your favorite son what masculinity to wear on a day to match a woman's capricious feminine hormones?
What affection to show?
What eye contact?
Who knows, if not your father, what makes a woman want one man and not another?
What brings on the inexplicable, almost uncontrollable, desires she can get?
Life is Hell on wheels trying to figure it all out.

KRISTINA

Your mother

JUSTIN

My mother what?

KRISTINA

You asked who knows, if not your father.

JUSTIN

Oh. You mean you.

KRISTINA

It's likely a better place to start.
To ask a woman what women most want.

JUSTIN

Then Mother, which thing does a woman want most?

KRISTINA

Safety, security, and to be desired.

JUSTIN

There's that "D" word again.

KRISTINA

To be desired is at the start. A door-opener.
No woman wants to be second best in her partner's eyes.
It's the other's urges that catch a woman's attention.
And her power to manage them.

JUSTIN

A woman's essential desire is power over her lover?

KRISTINA

A woman's essential want is to feel safe and be cared for.

JUSTIN

Did my father ever make you feel that way?

KRISTINA

I never liked talking about him before I left. But, no!
Half the time, it seemed, we lived off the poverty of other people's generosity.
And other people were not so always generous for free.
My screams were not screams of ecstasy.

JUSTIN

Edvard Munch.

KRISTINA

Life becomes hard to love when you're hurting like Edvard Munch.

JUSTIN

Did you love him?

KRISTINA

When you came, it was my last bridge to sanity. And the last I saw of him.
It was after that I began to feel so much of his sorrow.
More than I ever had.
And I prayed the weight would be taken from his shoulders.
Which, eventually, it was.

JUSTIN

He died?

KRISTINA

He got AIDS, and I got help to get off the streets.

JUSTIN

I never even knew his name.

KRISTINA

Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes.

JUSTIN

You had a pretty tough life, didn't you? But you forgave him.

KRISTINA

Most of us had to sell a finger or two of ourselves to survive.
But if you don't forgive, it will come back to haunt you worse the next time.

JUSTIN

Are you telling me there's reincarnation?

KRISTINA

I wouldn't know.
What I am able to tell you is this: There is life after life.

JUSTIN

And regret.

KRISTINA

Yes, indeed.
Certain thoughts and spirits are persona non grata in death as in life.

JUSTIN

I always knew you'd be back.

KRISTINA

I had to come back, Justin,
because, Love, you can't see yourself.
Only I can. And you have needed that. Like a poet does.

JUSTIN

Tell me: Who's your favorite poet?

KRISTINA

For joy and mettle: Linda Gregg.
Let Birds.
For pain: Gerard Manley Hopkins.
The terrible sonnets.
For truth in the human condition: Shakespeare.
Lear. Macbeth. And The Tempest.

JUSTIN

Why, really, did you come back?
Just to help me judge the ghastly paradoxes of life over here?
The inextricable strands of love, desire, and pain? Of joy and loss?
The torments of non-returning time?
Losing you was bad enough for me.
When you died, nothing remained for me but grief.
I nursed it, selfishly, like an infant.
Is that what you have to show me?
My foolishness over you?
Or is it some other truth? if truth even exists and is useful in this land.

KRISTINA

To tell you something simple.
And to bring you something.
First, the secret of life is living it. Even if only to survive to the next day.
The secret of life is loving it.
The secret of life is making love with it....
Sorry, but that's it.

Second, walk over here with me.

**KRISTINA takes JUSTIN by the hand,
and leads him, stage right, to a cabinet of
curios.**

KRISTINA

Here. Take one.

**JUSTIN removes the figurine of a bride,
holds it up, and looks it over thoroughly.**

KRISTINA

You can't find a bride because you won't let yourself be penetrated.
You know enough now; and she is in your hands. Be gentle and loving.

Darkness.

When light returns JUSTIN and MIRANDA are standing side-by-side on the beach. She is in a wedding gown. The surfboard, cabinet, figurine, and KRISTINA are all gone.

KRISTINA (Offstage)

Do you take Miranda to be your wedded bride?
To honor, love, and protect her?

JUSTIN

I do.

They kiss.

END