

AS HE IS

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Made in Highland

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## THOUGHTS FOR PRODUCTION

It is important to remember that this play is an allegory. We sought to depict a woman's journey to understand and build a relationship with God. The character is not meant to **be** God but to be a personification of the woman's view of God at different times throughout her life, eventually coming to the most complete understanding of Him as father.

While the piece requires the actor playing the MAN to create 14 distinct characters, the virtuosity needed should not upstage the underlying message of the play.

The set should be minimal, suggesting the necessary furniture and facilitating quick changes.

Costumes should also be minimal, relying on single costume pieces to represent each of the Man's characters, such as a Santa hat, a breastplate, etc.

In order to help the audience understand that the MAN and WOMAN from the prologue and epilogue are acting out the allegory, it is important that they return to those initial characters between each scene and that the transformations into the allegory characters occur in front of the audience. This can be achieved by having trunks onstage containing all costume pieces and having the 2 actors set all set pieces before putting on the next scene's costumes.

We recommend listing all of the scene titles in the program.

It is intended that the play be performed without intermission.

**THE CAST OF CHARACTERS**

WOMAN - ages five to mid forties

MAN - various ages

The play was written with the intent that it be performed with 2 actors and feel that is the best way to convey the idea. But given the demands of the roles, we understand that it may be necessary, in some circumstances, for the part of the man to be played by multiple actors. While we strongly recommend that 1 actress play the role of Woman, if multiple actresses are cast to depict the Woman at various ages, it is critical that the audience understands it is the same woman throughout.

**PROLOGUE**

WOMAN  
We all seek to know.

MAN  
And be known.

WOMAN  
Ask for answers.

MAN  
But don't hear them.

WOMAN  
Plead for help.

MAN  
But don't accept it.

WOMAN  
Look for God.

MAN  
But don't find Him.

WOMAN  
So we create Him in our image.

MAN  
From the pieces we have.

WOMAN  
The parts we understand.

MAN  
Always some truth.

WOMAN  
Often familiar.

MAN  
Always incomplete.

WOMAN  
We do our best to see.

MAN  
He wants to be known.

WOMAN  
But we see limitations.

MAN  
He is infinite.

WOMAN

We see existence.

MAN

He is transcendent.

WOMAN

We see fragments.

MAN

He is cumulative.

WOMAN

We see Him as we are.

MAN

And not as He is.

#### **SCENE 1: SANTA**

Empty stage except a chair with the  
MAN in it

WOMAN enters tentatively. She is  
obviously very young. She starts to  
creep towards MAN in the chair, but  
then runs off stage. WOMAN creeps  
in again. Takes one step forward  
and stops

MAN

Well, hello there, Little One.

WOMAN

You're Santa.

MAN

That I am.

WOMAN

Where are your elves?

MAN

I gave them the day off. Union rules.

WOMAN

Are your reindeer outside?

MAN

A little secret. I find public transportation  
to be more efficient.

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WOMAN

So, no reindeer?

MAN

Not 'til Christmas Eve.

WOMAN

When you bring the presents.

MAN

That's the tradition.

WOMAN

You bring everyone presents?

MAN

Everyone you know.

WOMAN

Mama said I could tell you what I want for Christmas.

MAN

That's what children all over the world do.

WOMAN

So I should tell you what I want?

MAN

You can.

WOMAN

And you'll bring it to me?

MAN

Isn't that why you ask me for it?

WOMAN

Yeah, because I want it. Mama said some children write you letters, but I don't know where you live. Do you live here?

MAN

No. I just came here so I could see you.

WOMAN

Do you live far away?

MAN

You would think it's far.

Pause. He waits for her to approach.

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MAN

So you came here to see me.

WOMAN

Yes.

MAN

How nice. And to ask me for something.

WOMAN

For a present.

MAN

That's why I'm here...So far so good.

WOMAN doesn't move.

MAN

Do you want to come closer?

She takes a couple of steps toward him.

MAN

Are you as close as you want to be?

She considers and takes a step back.

MAN

Ho! Ho! You can stay where you are. I can hear you. You came to ask me for something.

WOMAN

Yes, a present. Mama said to.

MAN

Do you always listen to your Mama?

WOMAN nods her head "Yes"

MAN

Really?

WOMAN nods head more slowly and tentatively

MAN

You always try, don't you?

WOMAN

Yes.

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MAN

Good. Good for you. (pause) What can I do for you?

WOMAN

I want a baby!

MAN

You want a baby?

WOMAN

Yes.

MAN

Oh. What kind of baby?

WOMAN

A girl baby.

MAN

You want a girl baby.

WOMAN

Yes. A girl baby doll.

MAN

Ah. I see.

WOMAN

One that cries (she creeps closer) and opens and closes her eyes and has hair.

MAN

You want her to have hair.

WOMAN

Yes. Hair like mine.

MAN

You have beautiful hair.

WOMAN

Thank you. It's just like my Mama's.

MAN

So you want your baby to have hair just like yours?

WOMAN

(Steps closer) But not as long.

MAN

Of course. Anything else I should know?

WOMAN

Do you know where I live?

MAN

Yes, I do.

WOMAN

We don't have a chimney.

MAN

I know.

WOMAN

We used to have a chimney before we had to move 'cause my daddy died.

MAN

I'm sorry about your daddy.

WOMAN

It's ok. Mama says he watches over me. But how will you get in to leave me my present?

MAN

Not to worry, Little One. I don't need a chimney.

WOMAN

Why not? Mama said you come down the chimney.

MAN

Sometimes I do. Sometimes I have to enter other ways.

WOMAN

Like windows?

MAN

Occasionally.

WOMAN

You won't fit through our window. You're too fat.

MAN

(Laughs) You are a very observant little girl. Then I'll use your door.

WOMAN

Mama locks the door to keep the bad people out.

MAN

I'm not bad people.

WOMAN

She still locks it.

MAN

I can get in even if it's locked.

WOMAN

You can? With magic?

MAN

With keys. The elves have a side business.

WOMAN

They make toys and keys?

MAN

(Nods) Busy little folk.

WOMAN

Ok, you can use the front door then.

MAN

Thanks.

WOMAN

So if you are going to come to my house...

MAN

Yes?

WOMAN

That means I'm... (pause)

MAN

You are what?

WOMAN

I'm on the nice list...Right?

MAN

Didn't you say you listened to your mother and did what she asked?

WOMAN

Yes.

MAN

Then, you are on the nice list.

WOMAN

So you'll bring me my baby doll?

MAN

Isn't that how you said it works?

WOMAN

Yes. If I'm good, you'll bring me what I ask you for.

MAN

That sounds simple enough.

WOMAN

I can't wait 'til you bring my baby. I'm going to feed her and walk her, and give her baths. And she'll probably never cry much. Will she be under the tree or in my stocking?

MAN

I will put her...

WOMAN

Don't put her in my stocking cause she might not fit.

MAN

Like me through the window?

WOMAN

No, cause she's not fat.

MAN

Of course not. Under the tree it is!

WOMAN

But not on the floor. It's hard.

MAN

I could put her on the sofa. How does that sound?

WOMAN

Ok.

MAN

Just ok?

WOMAN

She could fall off the sofa.

MAN

Hmmm. I see your point. Not the stocking, not the floor, not the sofa... This is a dilemma.

WOMAN

(Tentatively) Maybe you could bring her a bed too?

MAN

Ah. A bed. That would solve it, wouldn't it?

WOMAN nods.

MAN

Excellent idea. I will alert the elves.

WOMAN

Really? Oh, I wish it was Christmas right now!

MAN

The time will be here soon enough. Oh and don't forget to leave me one of your mother's delicious cinnamon cookies. I don't need a chimney, but I do need one of those cookies!

WOMAN

(Running off stage) I won't!

A beat and she runs back on stage and hugs him.

WOMAN

Thank you!

WOMAN runs offstage

## SCENE 2: KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOR

WOMAN enters and tucks her doll baby in bed next to her. Singing "The Garten Mother's Lullaby"

WOMAN

"Sleep, O babe, for the red bee hums, the silent twilight's fall. Aoibheall (pronounced Ee-val) from the grey rock comes To wrap the world in thrall...

She forgets the words of the next part, hums and skips to:

WOMAN

Beside the dying fire..."  
(Whispering) Without the fire, Baby, Evil will come. Without the fire we won't be warm. Without the moon, we won't be able to see. Then the monster comes without the fire, when the moon hides.

She picks up her doll to whisper in her ear.

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WOMAN

You're scared too? We might die just like the fire. No more light. I can't protect you if we sleep. What if we die before we wake?

She holds her baby close. She looks towards an open closet door. She thinks she sees something...hears something.

WOMAN

What's in there!? We see you! I can tell you're in there! Stay in there and don't come out! I'm not going to sleep! I won't sleep so you can't come out! We're going to stay awake all night and then you'll never stop our breathing!

She's clutching her baby as she stares into the void of the closet.

WOMAN

I'm tired too but we can't sleep, Baby. Evil comes when we sleep and takes away our breath! (Pause) We have to call him again! He always comes. He'll protect our breath from the monster who tries to take it! Then, we can sleep even when the fire dies and Evil comes! He'll watch us through the darkest night and wake us in the morning light! Call him with me!

She recites the summoning.

WOMAN

The darkness comes,  
The Sun sinks low,  
And soon we sleep--  
Too near our Foe.  
Come Knight to us  
With shining suit.  
Put Evil 'neath  
Thy gleaming boot. (Pause)  
Come Knight to us! Brave Knight to us! Come  
Knight to us! Come Knight with Shining Armor

MAN, looking like a Knight in Shining Armor, enters the room and stands between the bed and the closet. He looks at the WOMAN and her doll. He turns to the closet and draws his sword. He kneels before the foot of the bed.

MAN

I am here, fair lady, and...tiny other fair lady. I will watch thee both through the foul, dark night.

WOMAN

Oh Sir, I am grateful for your kindness. For coming whenever we call.

MAN

Rest easy, m'ladies. I came nigh when I heard thy cry! What is it!? What horror do you face with only this wee, seemingly silent maiden as a companion?

WOMAN

Evil from the grey rock comes again and is going to wrap our world in Thrall! We have to sleep--The queen commanded us--and so we need your help!

MAN

(To himself) 'T would be merciful if this shrunken lady-in-waiting had any desire to serve thee! (Aloud) But fear not! I will stand between you and the Evil and all the Thrall he can muster! What is Evil's nefarious plan this time?

WOMAN

It's the same! The Queen tells us we must go to bed. She says, no light, the door must be closed, and we cannot make a sound. It's so dark, and I'm so tired. I know The Queen is right, but she doesn't believe in the monster or what happens at the end of each day when the sun goes down and we have to go to sleep.

MAN

Do tell me, fair Lady. It is obvious that this shrunken one is mute!

WOMAN

It's the same as always. At night, when we fall asleep, the monster comes out of the closet, slides to our bed and tries to suck in all our breath. If we don't wake up, if no one is there to stop him, he takes all our air and we never wake up in the morning.

MAN

But M'Lady, you live! You are here tonight to beckon me to your side and the side of this curiously worthless, waxen waif! (To the doll) Unless...she is quiet, but quite deadly??

WOMAN

No. She just doesn't do much. She can pee.

MAN

I knew it! Away thou three-inch fool!

MAN waits for her to run away.  
Gives up.

MAN

How is it that you survive these vile and  
nightly attacks!

WOMAN

What do you mean?

MAN

You are yet here! You live! Your breath is  
with you still! How is it that you carry on?

WOMAN

Because you save me! Whenever I see the  
monster moving in the dark, I think of you.  
When he's waiting for me to sleep, I call you.  
As I am about to close my eyes I say the words  
my daddy taught me and you come! You always  
come!

MAN

Come Knight to us! Brave Knight to us!

WOMAN

Yes! They are magic words! Whenever I use  
them, they bring you to me!

MAN

It's true. When I heard your sweet  
incantation I was compelled to run to your  
aid.

WOMAN

(Sleepy now) Stay with me, Sir Knight. Between  
me and the monster! Watch over us and protect  
us from that ugly creature. I am so afraid  
we'll die!

MAN

Close your eyes, M'Lady! Fear not! I am with  
thee! I shall guard thee with my life through  
the long and lightless night. If Evil should  
dare to venture from his lair and begin his  
ghastly inhalation, I shall fill his toothsome  
maw with my steely friend and he will rue the  
day he ever tried to silence your sweet  
breath!



WOMAN

(Eyes closed and drifting off) Thank you.  
Thank you. (To her doll) Don't be scared now.  
Close your eyes. We can sleep and breathe! Our  
Knight has come! Our Knight is here.

MAN softly strokes the hair of  
WOMAN. He begins singing softly the  
the 2nd verse of Gartan Mother's  
Lullaby.

MAN

"Dusk is drawn and the Green Man's horn is  
wreathed in rings of fog."

His singing turns to humming as he  
turns towards the closet, draws his  
sword and plants it in the floor  
before him and kneels to keep his  
vigil.

### SCENE 3: FRIEND

WOMAN enters and sits on bench. She  
removes her backpack and slumps  
dejectedly. MAN enters and stands  
looking at her.

What? WOMAN

Hi. MAN

Hi. WOMAN

(Pause) Big day. MAN

I'm not going. WOMAN

Yeah, that's what it looks like. MAN

You can't change my mind. WOMAN

Ok. MAN

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WOMAN  
Just go on without me.

MAN  
All right.

He sits beside her on the bench and slumps in the same way she did, letting out a big sigh.

WOMAN  
I thought you were going without me.

MAN  
I am.

WOMAN  
No you're not.

MAN  
Yes I am. Just not quite yet.

WOMAN  
You'll be late.

MAN  
No I won't. I'm speedy.

WOMAN  
If you run you'll get all sweaty.

MAN  
I'll just walk quick.

Pause. He sighs again.

WOMAN  
Why are you sighing?

MAN  
Not happy I guess.

WOMAN  
Why not? What do you have to not be happy about?

MAN turns to look right at her.

MAN  
I can think of a few things.

WOMAN  
Don't try to make me feel guilty. Just go to school.

MAN  
I told you, I will.

WOMAN  
Good.

MAN  
Ok.

He settles back on the bench.

WOMAN  
Why are you still here?

MAN  
I'm waiting.

WOMAN  
Waiting for what?

MAN  
For my friend.

WOMAN  
(Confused) What friend?

MAN  
The friend that thinks high school is going to  
suck and is determined to hate it.

WOMAN  
That's me.

MAN  
Yep.

WOMAN  
Stop waiting for me. I told you, go on without  
me.

MAN  
I know.

WOMAN  
So GO!!

MAN  
Why would you rather sit here and feel bad  
than go with me?

WOMAN  
Oh, I don't know. Only a million reasons.

MAN  
Like what?

WOMAN

Like I don't know where anything is. Like I don't know how to find my classes. Like I can't remember my locker number. Or what room it's by. Or when I'm allowed to go to it or if I'll have enough time between classes to...

MAN

(Kindly) Stop. It's ok. I can show you where everything is.

WOMAN

But you don't know the locker combination that they gave me and I forgot.

MAN

No, but the office will have it and you don't even need it today. Besides, that backpack could hold a small library.

WOMAN

Then there's lunch. I have no one to eat with. All my friends are going to the other high school except my best friend who had to move across the country last month...

MAN

I thought I was your best friend.

WOMAN

You're different.

MAN

Different?

WOMAN

Yeah, we're not really best friends, we're family friends. Your dad makes you look out for me cause he and my dad were best friends. You didn't choose me, you got stuck with me.

MAN

No, I didn't. No one made me do anything. And being family friends just means that I've known you longer and better than ordinary friends.

WOMAN

No, you don't.

MAN

I knew you'd be here. I knew you wouldn't want to go to school. I knew...

WOMAN

I know that you care about me and everything.  
It's just that you're old and...

MAN

I'm less than 2 years older than you.

WOMAN

And you have lots of friends and it's not like  
we really hang out.

MAN

We can hang out.

WOMAN

And do what?

MAN

Anything that makes you happy.

WOMAN

Nothing will make me happy. I have to go to  
this stupid school by myself....

MAN

By yourself?

WOMAN

With a bunch of strangers and then there's  
lunch. The worst part of the whole day. I  
don't know how to buy my food and only nerds  
bring their lunches and I don't have anyone to  
sit with so I'll look pathetic eating all  
alone and I can't do it. I can't go!

MAN

I'll look for you at lunch. You can sit with  
me.

WOMAN

People will think I'm weird. Freshmen don't  
eat with Juniors.

MAN

They do if they're cool.

WOMAN

I've never been cool. I just try not to get  
stuck in the loser group. But people will see  
that I don't have friends my own age which  
means I'm hopelessly weird. And then they will  
either make fun of me or feel sorry for me  
which is probably worse.

MAN

How could anyone feel sorry for you? You're smart, pretty, funny...not today but usually.

WOMAN

No, I'm not. I'm ugly. Look at my hair. It's hideous and I started breaking out and no one wants to spend time with me doing anything.

MAN

Your best friend liked spending...

WOMAN

I told you she MOVED!!!

MAN

I know. But I'm still here. I'm spending time with you right now.

WOMAN

We're not having fun.

MAN

I can't disagree with that. Let's start walking and see if we can make that more entertaining.

WOMAN

I haven't changed my mind.

MAN

I was just thinking... since your old best friend moved, that must mean there's an opening. So I move up by default, right? Time to celebrate my promotion and the fact that you now get to go to school with your best friend after all. Things have taken a cheery turn.

WOMAN

When you get to school you'll see your other friends and forget about me.

MAN

No, I won't. I've never forgotten about you. Remember middle school? You didn't want to go there either, but I showed you around and you never got lost after that.

WOMAN

That school was way smaller. Nobody could get lost there. The halls were color coded.

MAN

And elementary school... Your first day, I saved you a seat on the bus. And a seat for that doll you took with you everywhere. Then, I walked you to your room. I even waved at you during recess.

WOMAN

You didn't play with me.

MAN

You had to stay in the kindergarten playground but I kept an eye on you the whole time.

WOMAN

You did?

MAN

You didn't notice cause you were having too much fun on the slide.

WOMAN

That was a good slide. I loved that slide. It's just that I hate beginnings. You finally get used to something and then you have to move on to something new. New people. New places. New rules. Why can't things stay the same?

MAN

Because teenagers don't fit on kindergarten slides.

WOMAN

I could.

MAN

I don't think so.

WOMAN

Are you calling me fat?

MAN

I'm calling you grown up.

WOMAN

I don't want to be grown up. I want to play on the old playground and have my old friends and not go to this new school.

MAN

You didn't want to go to kindergarten. You didn't want to go to middle school, or camp or soccer practice or bed at night...

WOMAN

Most things scare me.

MAN

But you liked every one of them eventually.

WOMAN

I guess. I really like going to bed.

MAN

I'm right. And you'll like high school too.  
Just give it a chance.

WOMAN

You'll make sure I know where to go?

MAN

Absolutely!

WOMAN

I won't have to eat by myself?

MAN

Not unless you hide from me.

WOMAN

You'll show me how to buy my lunch?

MAN

I'll go first and you just do what I do.

WOMAN

What if you buy something I don't like?

MAN

Now you're just making up problems. I promise  
I'll help you.

WOMAN

Ok.

MAN

Ok, like we can go now?

WOMAN

Ok, like I guess so.

MAN

Great. Come on.

WOMAN

Hey... I couldn't do this without you.

MAN

Yeah, I know. That's why I'm here.



WOMAN

What about next time?

MAN

What next time?

WOMAN

The next time I have to do something hard.

MAN

Do you really have to ask?

WOMAN

I like to be sure.

MAN

I'll be there to help you.

WOMAN

Really?

MAN

Really.

WOMAN

You promise?

MAN

I promise that I will always be there for you.

WOMAN

(Standing up) Ok. We can go.

MAN picks up her backpack and helps her put it on.

WOMAN

Thanks.

MAN

Anytime.

They exit together.

#### **SCENE 4: ADMISSIONS COUNSELOR**

WOMAN stands at the door.

MAN

Ah, yes...good...come in and take a seat.

WOMAN

Thank you, Sir. Thank you for this opportunity to meet with you.

MAN

Yes. Of course.

He sits back and looks at her as she becomes more and more uncomfortable.

WOMAN

This is a beautiful campus.

MAN

Yes. It certainly is.

Pause.

WOMAN

It's even prettier than in the pictures.

MAN

Indeed.

Pause.

WOMAN

I've wanted to be a student here since I knew what college was. I did a paper on its founding for my AP History class. (pause) It's always been my first choice.

MAN

It's everyone's first choice.

WOMAN

Right... and I can certainly see why.... Especially now that I'm here....

Pause.

MAN

So, why do you want to attend this school? Besides our prodigious origin story and the obvious skills of our landscape architect?

WOMAN

An excellent question.

MAN

(Sarcastically)Thank you.

WOMAN

Given it's unequalled ranking among...

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MAN

Yes, everyone is aware of it's ranking, but that's not the real reason you want to come here.

WOMAN

It's certainly part of the reason...?

MAN

It's not. Why does its ranking matter to you?

WOMAN

I want the best education I can get.

MAN

I see. Why?

WOMAN

So that I can be successful when I graduate.

MAN

Successful at what?

WOMAN

I've been seriously considering studying Celtic mythology. I'm particularly interested in mythical figures like the Green Man, an omen of death when seen in the...(noticing he's unimpressed) but I haven't settled on a major yet.

MAN

So, you're undecided regarding what you want to succeed at, but you think that we can help you achieve that non-specific goal?

WOMAN

Yes?

MAN

Then to summarize, you want to attend this school because other people speak positively of it, and because you think it will help you achieve some unquantified measure of excellence in some unspecified area.

WOMAN

No. That's not what I'm saying.

MAN

Actually, that's exactly what you just said. So perhaps we should begin again and you can answer my question in a manner that more closely represents your desires. Why do you want to attend this school?

WOMAN

(With more confidence) Because I believe that this school will offer me opportunities to discover who I am and who I can become.

MAN

So you don't know who you are?

WOMAN

No, I mean yes, to some extent...but we all can become more self-aware.

MAN

Who do you think you are now?

WOMAN

Who am I? Well, I grew up in....

MAN

Yes, I know. It's in your bio.

WOMAN

Oh. Sorry. Well, I was raised by a single mother who emphasized...

MAN

In your bio.

WOMAN

I went to an excellent high school where I concentrated on taking AP classes.

MAN

On your transcript.

WOMAN

I've played the violin for twelve years.

MAN

On your resumé.

WOMAN

I went on a mission trip to Guatemala when I was....

MAN

Part of your essay. And every applicant has been on a humanitarian trip. Look. You submitted a skillful application. Excellent grades. Glowing references, et al. That's why you're here with me now. (Points to a pile of papers) That's why they all come to me and share the same story. What makes you different?

WOMAN

Different?

MAN

Different from all the other straight A, concert-giving applicants who spend their free time serving the third world while mentoring the disadvantaged here at home?

WOMAN

I'm an athlete.

MAN

Nationally ranked?

WOMAN

No.

MAN

All-state?

WOMAN

No.

MAN

All-County?

WOMAN

No.

MAN

What else?

WOMAN

Wo hui jiang zhongwen. (*translation: I can speak Chinese*)

MAN

Fluently?

WOMAN

More...conversationally.

MAN

Fuiste a Guatemala, hablas español?  
(*translation: You went to Guatemala, do you speak Spanish?*)

WOMAN

Pardon me?

MAN

Ah, te entiendo. Sprechen Sie irgendwelche anderen Sprachen? (*translation: Ah, I understand. Do you speak any other language?*)

WOMAN

I'm not sure what you said but I took a year of French in middle school.

MAN

Pourquoi as-tu arrêté d'étudier le français?  
(*translation: Why did you stop studying French?*)

WOMAN

Parce que...je...it's been a really long time.  
(*translation: Because I...*)

MAN

(Disappointed) Suoyi ni zhi jiang yingyu ma?  
(*So you only speak English?*)

WOMAN

Yes, only English...and some Chinese.... Dui bu qi. (*translation: I'm sorry*)

MAN

What else?

WOMAN

I organized a fund raiser for the American Heart Association.

MAN

How much did you raise?

WOMAN

(Proudly) \$5000.

MAN

(Dismissively) Oh...\$5000.

WOMAN

I volunteer at a food bank.

MAN just stares at her.

WOMAN

I sold more Girl Scout Cookies than anyone in my troop?

MAN still just looks at her.

WOMAN

I adopted a rescue dog. I always pick up trash when I see it. I almost never speed. I dressed up as your school's mascot for multiple Halloweens. Ok, that was my dad's idea. But I liked it.

MAN

Your dad is an alumnus?

WOMAN

Yes. Was.

MAN

That wasn't in your application.

WOMAN

I wanted to get in on my own merit.

MAN

I see. Well, thank you for your interest in our school. You will hear from us soon.

WOMAN

Wait. That's it? This the end of the entire process I have been working for and sacrificing for for as long as I can remember? That's it? I'm dismissed? Deemed unacceptable? All the things I've done when viewed in their entirety just simply aren't enough? I am not enough?

MAN

You must understand that we receive applications from the very best students in every high school in every school district in countries all over the world. We cannot accept all of them.

WOMAN

I'm not asking you to accept all of them. I'm asking you to accept one of them. Me! To look at the sum total of my life and see beyond the facts and figures and see the sacrifice and effort. To see the determination and desire, to see that it is those things that make me who I am. That make me different. That make me...

MAN/WOMAN

Special.

MAN

We will certainly review all portions of your application before we make a final decision. But again, this is a school for exceptional people.

WOMAN

That is all I have ever tried to be.

MAN

Yes, I'm sure it is. Please enjoy your campus visit and be sure to stop by the beautiful garden next to the quad. It is significantly more impressive than the pictures.

WOMAN stands and heads to the door.

**SCENE 5: TOUR GUIDE**

MAN stands center stage with WOMAN facing him.

MAN

Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen. I will take a moment to rest my voice. Please feel free to take advantage of this time to absorb the wealth of information you have just received. I will lift my umbrella when I am prepared to begin again.

WOMAN

Pardon me, Sir, but would it be all right...

MAN

No. No. Sorry. Resting... resting...

WOMAN

I was just wondering...

MAN

Res...ting! As in a state of rest. No noise. Quiet. Shhhh.

WOMAN

(Whispering) Sorry. I'm just going over to...

MAN

Madam. Do you not understand that it is my solemn obligation, indeed, I have made it my profound duty to open this wondrous sight, this time in history, to your every sense. I have in my soul the capacity to fill every second of your waking day with the most amazing plethora of cultural pearls. I do not have the physical ability to match my potential without...occasionally...resting my VOICE!!! I cannot answer your, likely pedestrian, questions and serve this eager group to my utmost. Hush. There will be a moment of rest. Madam, look to the umbrella.



WOMAN

Ok. I'll watch for the umbrella. But... now you don't have to talk or anything, you can just nod... I was hoping to take a minute to go across the way. You see it's a suggestion in my book. I won't be more than five minutes (pause) Ok?

MAN

Your book?

WOMAN

Your voice. If it's Ok just nod.

MAN

You *must* tell me. I'm achingly curious. What is it? Fodors? Lonely Planet? Let's Go - skipping tralala somewhere?

WOMAN

It's just a book I got from my mom when I graduated from college. Well, it's actually a journal. My dad travelled after he graduated and my mom thought I'd like to see some of the things he saw... In his journal he wrote about some of the places he went. Mom was a bit nervous and didn't want me to go alone so we settled on this tour. Sorry. Too much information. The point is I need to run across the way. You rest. I'll be back.

MAN

May I see that...book.

WOMAN

Oh, it won't mean anything to you. I know we're on a tight schedule and I really must get going if I'm going to get back on time.

MAN

What is across the way?!

WOMAN

Well, it's not really anything specific.

MAN

How could it possibly be?

WOMAN

Possibly be what?

MAN

Specific. Specific. You know details, richness, texture.

Made in Highland

WOMAN

Oh... Hmmm. Ok. Well, I'm going to just go across the way for a moment. That's all. I promise.

MAN

Because...?

WOMAN

I'm worried that you're still talking. You'll never make it through the rest of the tour.

MAN lets out a loud, exasperated sigh and stares at WOMAN

WOMAN

Ok, you see...it isn't really an actual place that he's talking about. It's more his general philosophy. Things to make a trip better. One of his ideas is to "always go across the way" (Pause) I think the point is that you see things that aren't part of the beaten path. Places tourists don't usually go.

She waits but he doesn't respond.

WOMAN

He said not to be afraid to explore on your own, to find your own way. So I'm just going to see what there is across the way. Ok?

MAN

This, madam, is an issue of trust.

WOMAN

Trust?

MAN

As "in whom do you place your trust?", me or your father who wrote that a generation ago? Me or some chatty woman you sat by on the bus who's been here before. Me or the sign down the road that suggests your life will be somehow incomplete until you view the world's largest ball of twine. Me, Madam, or you?

WOMAN

This seems to have become a bit too complicated. I came on your tour to see things. I don't really see why I must now declare some kind of allegiance. I just want to go across the way.

MAN

This is not complicated. It is simple. I am prepared to unfold before you everything you need to see. If you follow your book you will see nothing. It's simple. Stay and see everything. Leave and see nothing.

WOMAN

But I can do both. I can see all the things you've planned and I can go and see the things I want to on our breaks.

MAN

No, you cannot. You see, when you chose to embark on this journey, you also chose the captain. If you choose to jump ship at this point you will declare, in essence, mutiny. You will be left to captain your own ship. Ours will move on.

WOMAN

You mean, if I go across the way right now, while you are on a break and I have my own free time, if I go to see something else, just for a minute, you will leave me behind?

MAN

No. Never. You will have left me.

WOMAN

But I'll be right back!

MAN

You won't be right back. You'll be captured by some kitschy trinket, some one-of-a-kind bauble. You'll be sucked in by the colors and the smells emanating from the carts of the local culinary peddlers, offering delectable dishes filled with local flavor and local filth. In your fruitless search, you will think you have time to scan one last shop but you will miscalculate the length of time needed for your return. You will scurry. You will run. You will race but when you arrive we will be gone. You see, Madam, you can't be "right back".

WOMAN

Look, I appreciate your concerns and I realize that you are far more familiar with this area than I am. Maybe there is nothing across the way. But I want to find that out for myself. I just want to make a few choices of my own.

(MORE)

Made in Highland

WOMAN (CONT'D)

This tour specifically said that there would be free time. Free time. Time when I could decide where to go and what to see. This is my time now and I'm going to do what I want with it. I am going to go across the way.

MAN

What exactly do you expect to see that I haven't shown you?

WOMAN

I don't know. That is not the point. The point is, that whatever I find, I will have found on my own. I will have discovered it. Not been led to it. I will decide what it is and what it means and why it's important. It might not be important to you or to anyone else, but it will be to me because no one told me I had to see it or know about it or think it's great. It will be my own personal 5-minute side trip. And it will be the part of this trip that I will remember the most.

MAN

Trust me, Madam, it won't.

WOMAN

I trust you, but it will. I know what I need to do in order to fully enjoy my trip. I'll be right back.

MAN

Ladies and Gentlemen, the umbrella is raised. We will be re-embarking on our journey immediately. I trust you have had sufficient time to ponder the significance of this place and prepare yourselves for further enlightenment. As our next stop will be, no doubt, overwhelming. I hope you have rested. Pick up your heels, Ladies and Gentlemen. We will be moving at a good clip.

WOMAN

It's time to go? You're moving on? But I haven't gone across the way yet. There are things here I wanted to see. Can't you give us five more minutes? Or even three? I'm sure I could do it in three.

MAN

Prepare yourselves, my loyal followers. History may have forgotten our next stop, but I have not. Nor will you after today.

Made in Highland

WOMAN

Fine. I'll come with you. But the only thing I'll remember is what I've missed, what you wouldn't let me do. Apparently, there's nothing free about this tour. We're only free to do things your way.

MAN

That is fine, if it helps you to see it that way.

WOMAN

Take us to your next unmissable experience.

### SCENE 6: GAS STATION ATTENDANT

WOMAN enters.

MAN

Well, looky here! I didn't expect to see you back so soon. You musta torn like a bat outta you knows where. Didn't hit that big pothole a couple miles yonder, did ya? 'Cause our mechanic ain't in today.

WOMAN

Nope. Turns out that I never actually got there. I have been hopelessly lost for over an hour. Your directions were kinda hard to follow.

MAN

I am sorry about that, Ma'am, but you did say you preferred the scenic route.

WOMAN

I generally like going across the way to see the things people usually miss but I think it was a bad choice this time. Can you please tell me how to get there the easy way? I was supposed to be there 15 minutes ago.

MAN

No problem, Ma'am. I'm here to help.

WOMAN

I got a signal for about a mile but then I lost it. How do people usually find things around here?

MAN

Oh, we mostly all know the different ways to get everywhere we need to be.

WOMAN

Well, I'd be very grateful if you could tell me, in detail, the quickest, easiest way.

MAN

Will do, Ma'am. Ok. So you go out on the road there. The one you started on before.

WOMAN

(Scribbling on a piece of paper) Ok.

MAN

Turn left at the telephone pole.

WOMAN

How do I find the telephone pole? I missed it last time.

MAN

You can't miss it. It's about a farsee up the road before the bend.

WOMAN

A what? What's a farsee?

MAN

You know, about as far as you can see up the road.

WOMAN

Oh my. So at the pole I go left.

MAN

Right.

WOMAN

I go right?

MAN

Shoot no. I meant correct. You go left.

WOMAN

Got it. I think.

MAN

Now you're headed up north into the hills.

WOMAN

This is the way I tried to go before.

MAN

Yeah, but it's gettin' diff'rent comin' up.

WOMAN

Ok.

MAN

Remember this is the part with no lights ner nothin'. For about five miles. Don't rely on your odometer. That's just an approximation.

WOMAN

Yeah. I got that part right.

MAN

Then you come to the crossroads where you turn north.

WOMAN

I thought I was going north.

MAN

You have a mighty fine sense of direction, missy. But by the time you get to that intersection you'll have turned around so many times that right is north. So turn right.

WOMAN

Ok. I think I did that.

MAN

Now this is where we diverge for the easier path. I told you to drive 'til you could smell the pig farm.

WOMAN

Oh, I smelled it.

MAN

I told you you couldn't miss it. Pungent ain't it? Just rolls around in your nose and yer mouth till it gets all stuck in your teeth. It becomes a sorta emotional thing.

WOMAN

It was startling.

MAN

And you thought your granny's pre-TicTac breath was gonna compare.

WOMAN

I think this is where I got off track. The stench made me a bit nauseated and I might have missed something.

MAN

Well, you won't this time cause we ain't goin' near Stubby's farm.

WOMAN

I'm not sure anything's worth repeating that experience. I don't care how gifted a florist Gert is.

MAN

I hear ya. This time you're gonna stay straight 'til you come to Devil's Fork. The road basically breaks into three. Look for the road with the dog. There'll be a dog in one of the 3 roads. You'll wanna take that road.

WOMAN

What kind of dog?

MAN

Not sure. Part hound. Mostly mutt.

WOMAN

Oh, you mean a real dog?

MAN

Yes, Ma'am.

WOMAN

A real dog in the road will tell me which one to take.

MAN

Yep.

WOMAN

How do you know he'll be in the right road?

MAN

You see, all three roads lead down into the ravine which is regularly flooded. Usually one road is passable. The dog'll know which one.

WOMAN

What if he's not there at all? What if he's off peeing or something?

MAN

Oh, he'll be there.

WOMAN

How can you be so sure?

MAN

It's what he does. Mysterious, ain't it?



WOMAN

I'm not sure this way sounds easier. So I go to the three-pronged road and turn down the one with the psychic dog. I assume he'll be off to the side so I won't run over him.

MAN

Bad assumption.

WOMAN

His ESP doesn't tell him when cars are coming?

MAN

It's not that. He's just real old, like 27 or somethin', and both his hips have arthur-itis.

WOMAN

I suppose once I pass I'll have to put him back.

MAN

He'd be much obliged. Now, after you go down that road thru the ravine, you'll be looking for the entrance to the holler.

WOMAN

Don't tell me. I have to find a one-legged squirrel whose tail will be pointing me in the right direction.

MAN

Nah, that's the other way... Just kiddin'. Now you're gonna look for a golf cart and a bird bath.

WOMAN

Why would anyone have a golf cart up here? There can't be a golf course anywhere near here.

MAN

Don't ev'ryone want a golf cart? 'Bout this time of day the Harmon boy rides his golf cart up and down the road that leads to the holler.

WOMAN

Why?

MAN

The child ain't quite right. Likes the repetition.

WOMAN

So I turn where he is?

MAN

You can't be sure exactly where he'll be, now can ya? That's why the bird bath is important.

WOMAN

Of course.

MAN

Now there will be bird baths in lots of yards but the one you are looking for will have a little girl sitting in it.

WOMAN

A real one I suppose.

MAN

You know an unreal girl?

WOMAN

Not yet but I'm learning about all sorts of things today.

MAN

Baby Gert'll be sittin' in that birdbath. That's yer road.

WOMAN

And the house I'm looking for will be at the end of it?

MAN

Yep. Ain't you curious why she's sittin' in there?

WOMAN

Not if it doesn't effect my ability to find the house.

MAN

It don't.

WOMAN

To be honest, I'm not sure why you think this way is easier.

MAN

Gotta be. Cause you couldn't get even half the way on the scenic route.

WOMAN

You make a good point. But I'm not at all sure I'm going to make it this time.

MAN

I'll call ahead and tell 'em to have Baby Gert wave ya down when you get close.

WOMAN

If I get close.

MAN

Mind my asking what you want Gert's services for?

WOMAN

She's doing the flowers for my wedding.

MAN

You're gettin' married? Well, congratulations!

WOMAN

Thank you. The flowers are the last thing I have to take care of.

MAN

Is it gonna be a big weddin'?

WOMAN

Not really. Family, close friends mostly.

MAN

My daughter got married last summer. Walkin' her down the aisle was the proudest, saddest moment of my life. Will your daddy be walking' you?

WOMAN

My dad died when I was little.

MAN

I'm sorry to hear that. Everybody needs a father. Don't seem right.

WOMAN

It's Ok. My best friend since childhood's going to do it.

MAN

How'd you hear about Gert anyways? She only works with locals.

WOMAN

She's my fiancé's aunt.

MAN

You're storyin'! Now, ain't that a twist-a-roo. Which nephew?

Made in Highland

John. WOMAN

John? MAN

Yes. WOMAN

Hmmmm. Who's his mama? MAN

Daisy Grace. She's the one that insisted we use Gert for the flowers. WOMAN

Oh... you're marrying Dindoo. MAN

Dindoo? WOMAN

That's what he's called around here. Or at least he was when he lived here. I ain't seen nor heard a peep from him in years. I wanna say, goin' on a decade. MAN

Well, I don't think it's been that long but he's been in school. That's where we met, at the state college. And since then he's been busy starting his career. There hasn't been much time for visits home. WOMAN

Sure. MAN

Why did people call him Dindoo? WOMAN

Trouble seemed to follow that boy like a pesky 'squiter. Every time somethin' bad happened the first words out of his mouth was "I din do it". Said it so often we called him Dindoo. MAN

Well, fortunately that all seems to be behind him. He's very successful. WOMAN

Good to hear. Glad he's outrun his troubles. Hope he stays ahead of 'em. He sure left a wake of chaos trailin' after him as a youngin'. Plenty of people near to have drowned in it. MAN

WOMAN

He hasn't told me much about his childhood.

MAN

Now I know that folks can change but wouldn't hurt to ask him a few questions.

WOMAN

I suppose we've all done things when we were growing up that we'd rather people not remember.

MAN

That's the straight truth there. Though some things are a might tougher to forget than some others.

WOMAN

Well. I've got to get to Gert's.

MAN

How come Dindoo didn't come up with you? Show you around the place?

WOMAN

Like I said, he's very busy.

MAN

Right.

WOMAN

I'm afraid that I may not do any better with this set of directions than I did with the first ones you gave me.

MAN

Missy, they are as clear as the sky outside. Just follow what I told you.

WOMAN

I'm afraid that there's too much room for interpretation or misinterpretation. I might find the wrong dog in the road or see the wrong girl in the birdbath. There are no street signs or house numbers. It's one huge confusing maze. Do you at least have a map? Something I can use if I get lost again?

MAN

I got a general map of the area. But ain't no one mapped out the specifics of the hollers. You gotta just follow my instructions best you can.

WOMAN

Well, I don't have time to mess up again. So let's hope this set makes more sense to me than the last one.

MAN

Nothin' wrong with the last set. Cain't help it if you can only follow city signs.

WOMAN

And I'll never get a phone signal?

MAN

Hold it up high enough and turn it the right way and you might get a bar or two some places.

WOMAN

Great. Well. Here I go again. Wish me luck.

MAN

You don't need it. I told you how to get there. Tell Dindoo I said "hey" and that he best treat you right.

WOMAN

Ok...Thank you.

#### SCENE 7: BOSS

WOMAN enters. MAN is at a desk.

WOMAN

Sir, do you have a minute?

MAN

Yes. Come in. Sit down.

WOMAN

Thank you. I just wanted to let you know that I've finished all of the reports you asked for. The information you wanted for your meeting is in a PowerPoint I emailed to you and I made sure I connected with the other department heads regarding the memo you sent.

MAN

Excellent.

MAN picks up phone and dials out.

MAN

Where is the file with the forms that were due Monday?... Where on my desk? Oh... wait... Here it is. Thanks.

WOMAN

Since I've finished these I was hoping I might be able to take a little time off. Just a long weekend.

MAN

We got a bit behind on these. The deadline was Monday. Can you complete them and make sure they go out today?

MAN hands her the folder.

WOMAN

(Looking through it) This isn't anything I've done before. I'm not sure...

MAN

They're basically self-explanatory.

WOMAN

I'm not sure they are. I'm completely unfamiliar with...

MAN

You'll figure it out. You have 'til 5 o'clock today.

WOMAN

That may not be enough...

MAN

Now, I know you've been working a lot of extra hours lately but until we get thru next month's conference I'm just not sure we can get by without you.

WOMAN

That's flattering, Sir. But part of the reason I worked those extra hours was to be sure I had everything prepared and taken care of.

MAN

I'm sure you have, but things always pop up, don't they?

WOMAN

Yes, I suppose, but...

MAN

In fact, we've hit a little snag with the caterers and I'd like you to see if you can sort it out.

WOMAN

Of course. I'm sure that won't take long.

MAN

It won't take long assuming you can negotiate them into our target price bracket. People respond well to you.

WOMAN

Again...thank you, but I'm not sure that price negotiation really falls in my job description.

MAN

Perhaps, technically speaking, but as you know, here, we believe in using people's individual strengths to benefit the whole and you are very persuasive.

WOMAN

This situation might not support that assessment.

The phone rings. MAN answers it.

MAN

(Into the phone) You are supposed to be fielding my calls... Look at my calendar. I can't possibly talk with them until the end of the week... I don't understand the rush. Fine. Have them call... (To WOMAN) What's your extension?

WOMAN

1308

MAN

Extension 1308. Tell them to leave a detailed message and we'll solve this before the end of business today. (Hangs up). You'll need to check your voicemail when you get back to your desk.

WOMAN

What's it about?

MAN

It'll all be on your voicemail. Oh and I'm concerned about the schedule of the afternoon meetings. We may have to flip the 1 and 3 o'clock slots.

WOMAN

Afternoon meetings?

MAN

At the conference.

Made in Highland



WOMAN

I'm sure that can be easily handled by your assistant.

MAN

She's really buried at the moment with another project. Just look over it and see if you think it's worth revising the schedule.

WOMAN

Yes, sir. If I finish these things today and leave tomorrow free for additional trouble shooting are you ok with me taking Friday off?

MAN

Didn't you take a vacation day a few weeks ago?

WOMAN

Actually that was an FMLA day. My daughter was sick.

MAN

Ah. (the phone rings). Yes? Well, call them back and ask to speak with the manager... Why? ... I don't see what the problem is... Never mind. I'll get someone else to handle it. (Hangs up) I have another issue for you to resolve.

WOMAN

Sir. Wait. I don't mean to complain and I appreciate the trust you have in me but this is really more than I can handle effectively.

MAN

Don't be silly. You are one of our finest employees. You've got this.

WOMAN

I'm not so sure.

MAN

Well, I'm positive. Remember last year's conference? You told me the same thing. And yet it came off without a hitch.

WOMAN

It nearly killed me. I spent the two days after it in bed.

MAN

Oh, one of our attendees has Celiacs and 3 are vegans. Will you remind the caterers of that when you talk to them?

WOMAN

I'm not overstating the fact that I can't handle all of this. I have barely seen my family in weeks...

MAN

You had that sick day.

WOMAN

I can't remember the last time I ran my dishwasher because we haven't eaten a meal that didn't come from a bucket or styrofoam box in who knows how long...

MAN

Your daughter must be thrilled. Kids love eating out.

WOMAN

She's fine with it but my husband isn't. He says my job has made him gain 10 pounds. My house is a mess. I have no clean clothes and you really don't want to know how long it's been since I showered. I can't do this. And actually, Sir, those are just the symptoms.

MAN

Symptoms?

WOMAN

I haven't told you everything that's going on because I wanted to maintain an appropriate separation between my personal life and my job but lately I feel like the balance is off. I am never home in time to help my daughter with homework or spend any quality time with her during the week. She's growing up so quickly and I feel like I'm missing it. My husband complains that I'm giving too much time to my job and not enough time to him, even though he's on the road most weeks for *his* job. Anyway, I just feel like my family is being effected and the stress of that is causing me to be less productive here.

MAN

Your job performance has been consistently exceptional.

WOMAN

That's always my goal but I feel like I can't maintain this standard with everything else going on.

MAN

Why did you take this job?

WOMAN

Because it was a great opportunity...

MAN

This may sound harsh but then why are you complaining about doing your job? This is what you signed up for.

WOMAN

Is it?

MAN

Yes, it is. You wanted to work for a company that appreciated your skills, that pushed you to learn new things, that gave you opportunities to grow. Have we done that?

WOMAN

Yes.

MAN

You knew it was going to challenge you but you liked that.

WOMAN

Yes, I guess.

MAN

That's what you told me in your job interview. I understand that circumstances have changed and that your personal life is currently adding stress, but did you think that your entire life would simply unfold in exactly the way you scheduled it? How many days turn out that way here? And you expect your life to be more predictable or manageable?

WOMAN

I knew there would bumps...detours, but...

MAN

If I told you the personal crises of each person in this office you would be stunned. Marriage problems, mental health problems, financial problems, troubled kids, aging parents. The list just goes on and so do we. We do hard things because life gives us no other options. I hired you because I knew you could do whatever was asked of you. Was I wrong?

WOMAN

No, I can do it. I just need a little break.  
Just a long weekend.

MAN

I can give you a long lunch. Take 2 hours if  
you want. Just be sure that you stay until the  
these items we've discussed are finished.

WOMAN

Yes, Sir.

MAN

Oh, and on your way out, my assistant has a  
list of potential clients that need to be  
contacted by the end of the week. Several of  
them are international so you may need to  
contact them from home due to the time  
difference.

WOMAN

Yes, Sir.

MAN

Enjoy your lunch and remember - you got this.

### SCENE 8: DOCTOR

WOMAN is pacing. MAN enters. The  
desk is still on the set with two  
chairs in front of it.

MAN

Thanks for hanging back for a minute. The  
receptionist will keep an eye on your  
daughter. I just wanted to check with you.  
See how you're doing.

WOMAN

Well... I've been tired lately. Really tired.  
Sorta exhausted.

MAN

How much sleep do you get a night?

WOMAN

About 6 hours, usually.

MAN

That's not enough. You should be getting 7 to  
8.

WOMAN

Sometimes I have trouble getting to sleep.

MAN

How often?

WOMAN

Most nights... Every night.

MAN

Do you wake up during the night?

WOMAN

Sometimes.

MAN

Do you have trouble going back to sleep?

WOMAN

When I'm worried about things.

MAN

How often do you...

WOMAN

I worry a lot.

MAN starts to check her pulse.

MAN

Do you find yourself falling asleep when you are watching TV or at the computer?

WOMAN

No, not really.

MAN

Do you snore?

WOMAN

My husband complains about everything I do but he hasn't mentioned that. So I guess not.

MAN

Ever wake up in the middle of night fighting to catch your breath?

WOMAN

No.

MAN

Are you under extra stress currently?

WOMAN

Besides the obvious? Well, I have a full-time job, a husband that travels and a needy dog. Stress is my default mode.

MAN  
Any other symptoms?

WOMAN  
I get headaches.

MAN  
How often?

WOMAN  
About once a day-ish.

MAN  
On a scale of 1-10, how severe?

WOMAN  
Is ten high?

MAN  
Yes.

WOMAN  
Like "want to cut your head off" high?

MAN  
Sure.

WOMAN  
And 1 is no headache?

MAN  
Noticeable, but non-impacting.

WOMAN  
I don't know.

MAN  
Approximate.

WOMAN  
I don't really get the scale. My pain level 5  
and yours might be totally different.

MAN  
It's not an objective measure. It's your  
perception of the pain.

WOMAN  
Those numbers seem very objective. Every one  
knows what 5 is. If you ask me for 5 donut  
holes I can't give you 3 because your 5 is my  
3.

MAN  
(Staring at her) Give me your best estimate.

WOMAN

I estimate the pain to be medium. No. Medium rare. Yes, definitely medium rare. That allows for a range. Somewhere between cool red and warm pink depending on who's labeling it.

MAN

(Writing it in her chart) Alright. 5 it is. Do you exercise?

WOMAN

That's a tricky question.

MAN

Tricky how?

WOMAN

It's just do you mean exercise as in move around a lot or like go to a gym and sweat?

MAN

The sweating kind.

WOMAN

Darn. Sometimes I sweat when I'm running around... I don't know. Look. I really do appreciate you checking on me. It's very kind of you. But I don't think you can help me unless you can help my daughter.

MAN

Let me see if I can't provide you with some relief.

WOMAN

Well, I certainly wouldn't say no to that.

MAN

First of all, idiopathic cephalgia is largely benign and self-limiting so there is little reason for concern.

WOMAN

I'm sorry, I have no idea what you just said except for the "no concern" part which is good news I think, but I'd like to know why I should be relieved.

MAN

Headaches of unknown origin are most often harmless and go away on their own.

WOMAN

So you don't know what's causing my headaches?

MAN

From what you've told me it would seem that they are a result of stress.

WOMAN

And my exhaustion too, I suppose?

MAN

Given your life situation it's safe to assume your fatigue is circumstantially not physiologically based.

WOMAN

Meaning?

MAN

There is no indication of apnea, narcolepsy or hyper-somnolence. I don't think your situation warrants further tests until we try to mitigate the obvious cause. I believe stress is the cause of your headaches and sleep issues as well.

WOMAN

Great. So I just need to relax.

MAN

That would help.

WOMAN

Thought you wanted to help me, Doc. My life is way too complicated for such simple solutions. And ultimately, the best way to help me is to help my daughter.

MAN

I can give you information on relaxation techniques. Meditation is often therapeutic.

WOMAN

I recognize I have a stressful life. I can't change that. I need a diagnosis that has a cure. Life isn't curable.

MAN

Well actually...

WOMAN

Death is never a solution.

MAN

I agree. But your situation really is treatable. Start with some lifestyle changes and if that doesn't work we can look into medication.



WOMAN

It might be easier to start with the medication.

MAN

There are side effects.

WOMAN

Lifestyle changes have side effects as well.

MAN

Yes. Almost always positive ones.

WOMAN

Obviously, you haven't dealt with me when I'm forced to do sweaty exercise or am denied a Snickers bar. Definitely not positive.

MAN

I'll have my nurse provide you with the literature.

WOMAN

I don't want literature, I just want to feel better. You said you wanted to help. You got my hopes up. I really would like to feel better.

MAN

And you will, I assure you. No caffeine after 4 o'clock. Control your salt intake. No electronics half an hour before bed. Consistent sleep schedule. Get 30 minutes of exercise a day. The sweaty kind. And try meditation.

WOMAN

This is not helpful.

MAN

Yes, it is. You just aren't getting the help the way you want it. But you'll be happy with the results. I promise.

WOMAN

You wanted to see how I was doing. I said I'm not sleeping and get frequent headaches.

MAN

Yes, we covered this.

WOMAN

But you haven't given me a workable solution so I thought we should start over. I need you to give me something to help me sleep and something for my headaches.

MAN

And I gave you protocols to treat them both.

WOMAN

I don't have time to exercise or meditate.

MAN

I bet you do. It's a matter of prioritizing. It's important that you make time for healthy habits.

WOMAN

You know what my schedule is like.

MAN

Yes. You also said you have a dog. Walking him daily will help you get the exercise you need.

WOMAN

Her. She's a girl.

MAN

Walking *her*.

WOMAN

But walking my dog is not going to get me in shape right away and the fact that I'm not getting enough exercise to get in shape is only going to cause me more stress. Which is what I'm supposed to avoid!

MAN

All I can do is give you the information. The steps for becoming healthier. You have to decide if it's worth it.

WOMAN

Worth giving up the little free time I have and the things I enjoy in order to do things I don't like.

MAN

You'll see the results and then you'll like them.

WOMAN

I seriously doubt it. You aren't telling me anything I didn't know before I came here. Don't you think I googled how to fix sleep problems and headaches? You've got to have a better solution than what I can find on the internet in five minutes. That's why you went to school forever and can charge outrageous amounts of money for your secret cures.

MAN

I don't have secret cures.

WOMAN

That seems to be the conclusion we keep coming to. So now I'm going to go home, take my dog for a brisk walk and download some meditation app so I can get to sleep tonight. Seems like a long shot.

MAN

If you consistently follow my suggestions I'm sure you will see noticeable improvement.

WOMAN

And if not, I'm coming back for pain meds and sleeping pills.

MAN

I'm sure that won't be necessary.

WOMAN

But I'm sure it would be a whole lot easier.

MAN

You need to take care of yourself not just your daughter.

#### **SCENE 9: BUFFET CAPTAIN**

WOMAN enters.

MAN

Welcome to Barney's Buffet where if you don't leave with your belt undone we haven't done our job.

WOMAN

Thank you.

MAN

Is this your first time visiting us?

WOMAN

Yes, actually.

MAN

Great. We love first-timers. Now let me explain how this works.

WOMAN

Ok.

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MAN

Listen closely.

WOMAN

I'm listening.

MAN

Eat dessert first. Try everything you want but don't finish anything you don't like. And don't stop 'til you're totally full and satisfied.

WOMAN

Wow, that wasn't what I expected.

MAN

Most importantly - ENJOY!!!! Oh. And use a new plate each time you get more food.

WOMAN

Right. I know that one.

MAN

I hope you came hungry because I expect no less than 10 dirty plates at your table.

WOMAN

I'll do my best.

MAN

I'm sure you will. That's all we ask! So what brings you to our cozy establishment?

WOMAN

Truthfully? I have to make some "lifestyle changes" starting tomorrow and I wanted one last splurge before committing to drudgery.

MAN

Then you came to the right place. We are splurge central. It is my goal to provide you with everything you need to be happy. Will anyone be joining you?

WOMAN

No. I was heading home from work, saw your sign and just made an impulsive decision.

MAN

And a fine impulsive decision it was.

WOMAN

I probably should have called my family and had them meet me here.

(MORE)

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WOMAN (CONT'D)

My daughter would love this place. But sometimes my husband gets judgy about the things I eat. I figured I didn't need that on my last day of food freedom.

MAN

No, you did not. Though it's hard to judge with a mouth full of banana cream pie and NO ONE can resist our banana cream pie.

WOMAN

Oooh. I love banana cream pie.

MAN

Now let me show you around. This is the main buffet. It has all the sides and desserts. I wasn't joking when I said you can start with pie as your appetizer if you want. We have 16 varieties. All home-made. Also cakes and cobblers. This is the potato section. Mashed, fried, baked, hashed, stuffed and au gratin. Over here are your breads and rolls. And don't worry, no one here is going to tell you not to fill up on bread. Try any and all of it. Here are the meats. Pork, chicken, steak. How do you like your steak cooked?

WOMAN

Medium rare. If that means a warm pink center.

MAN

If that's what you want then that is exactly how we'll cook it for you. Warm pink it is.

WOMAN

Why have I never heard of this place?

MAN

No idea. Pretty great, huh? We also have seafood. Fish, shrimp, lobster...

WOMAN

You serve lobster here?

MAN

Of course we do. You like it don't you?

WOMAN

I love it!

MAN

Just the tails though. Less work for our guests.

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WOMAN

The tail is my favorite part. I can't believe you serve all-you-can-eat-lobster. Wait. I forgot to ask how much this all costs. This may be out of my price range given all the choices you have.

MAN

You are in luck. Your first visit is pay what you can. So you decide what it's worth and what you can afford and pay that amount.

WOMAN

This is too good to be true.

MAN

Nonsense. It's exactly as good as it should be! This is what you deserve. Life is hard enough. You deserve to indulge every so often without having to pay an arm and a leg.

WOMAN

I do not know why I haven't come here before.

MAN

Neither do I! This way to the ice cream station!

WOMAN

No way. Ice cream too?!

MAN

Soft serve and scoopable.

WOMAN

Do you allow people to put ice cream on their pies or cakes?

MAN

Are you kidding?! We insist! Put it on your lobster if it makes you happy.

WOMAN

Can I move in here? Do you rent rooms?

MAN

We get asked that a lot. Now there is one other thing. Understand it's entirely up to you but I'm obligated to make you aware of it.

WOMAN

I knew there was a catch.

MAN

Over here, please. (Quietly) In this corner, we have vegetables. Many people choose to avoid this area, and that is fine with us. But if you happen to be someone who feels drawn to this facet of the food universe understand that you will not be judged or treated any differently. We offer a diverse selection of vegetables covering the entire culinary rainbow. Eat. Don't eat. Up to you.

WOMAN

I like some vegetables.

MAN

Well good for you. Way to speak up. Nothing to be ashamed of. And now I think that concludes our little tour. Any questions?

WOMAN

Uhhh. No. Oh, what time do you close?

MAN

In fifteen minutes. Go!!

WOMAN

Nooooooooo!

MAN

Just kidding!! We don't close. Ever. We're open 24/7.

WOMAN

I could stay here and eat all night long?

MAN

Many have.

WOMAN

No limits?

MAN

Only the ones you impose on yourself.

WOMAN

Then the only other question I have is do I start with pie or cobbler?

MAN

A question for the ages! Our plates are big enough to hold both. I would, however, strongly recommend the ice cream with either one.

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WOMAN

I cannot believe I found this place. I don't remember the last time I was this excited! I feel like a kid in a candy store only this is way better!

MAN

Did I show you the candy counter?! (Sings)  
"Who can take the sunrise, Sprinkle it with dew?" (From *The Candy Man*)

WOMAN

Ooooooh...You can!!

MAN

So let the fun begin!

WOMAN

Yay!!!

MAN

Now remember, if that lifestyle change doesn't work out for you then I expect to see you back here every week with the rest of your family. And be sure to spread the word. Tell your friends, family, neighbors... Everyone deserves to know about us.

WOMAN

Oh, I will. This is too good to keep to myself.

#### **SCENE 10: BARTENDER**

WOMAN enters. MAN is behind the bar. She sits down and immediately the man places a large glass of water in front of her. Throughout the scene MAN is attentive although he is cleaning glasses and the bar. He quickly responds to her needs, giving her what she wants before she can ask. He also shows his attentiveness by smiling and nodding as she speaks.

WOMAN

Oh thank you! I have never wanted a glass of water more in my entire life.

She drinks the entire thing.

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WOMAN

Boy, I needed that. Which you obviously knew by looking at me. I must look awful. Not the way I thought I'd look as I went adventuring. Why do all heroines in adventure movies never look sweaty? I had no idea that my body was capable of exuding this amount of moisture. (He smiles) I cannot believe how hot it is here. I'd read it was hot but this is a whole new level. I feel like I can't breathe.

WOMAN closes her eyes and just breathes deeply for a few moments. While she does MAN moves a fan to blow on her and refills her water glass. She opens her eyes and looks around the space as she drinks.

WOMAN

I guess you must get used to the heat. You'd have to or people would be passing out in the streets all the time. (She giggles. He smiles.) No, this is definitely not what I expected. Not at all.

Takes another drink, looks at him not wanting to offend.

WOMAN

It's nice though. Quaint. I'm glad to be off the beaten track. Away from the kitschy trappings of the tourist meccas. You must be glad you don't have to deal with tourists. They can be so obnoxious. Always thinking that things at home are superior to whatever place they're visiting. Expecting everyone to understand them. Take pictures of them. Cater to their every need.

He hands her a handkerchief. She wipes her brow.

WOMAN

Thank you. I think you should embrace the cultural traditions of the place you are visiting. See how the local population lives. What they enjoy.

He hands her a napkin and she dabs her lips.

WOMAN

That's why I came out here. I don't want to see what everyone thinks represents this area.

(MORE)

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WOMAN (CONT'D)

The stuff that gets put on guide book covers and paperweights. I want reality. Real life. It requires a bit more daring to go waaaaay across the way, but it's worth it. Definitely worth it.

She finishes the drink. He replaces it with another.

WOMAN

I should have packed differently though. But then how do you pack for something you have never experienced? I brought all the wrong things. You know, I could literally throw out half the stuff in my suitcase and not miss a thing. But I guess that's the point of adventuring. Finding out what you really need! I should add that to my journal.

He hands her a pen, which she takes as if it appears out of thin air and she writes on the napkin.

WOMAN

"Finding out what you really need." Perfect!

She hands him back the pen.

WOMAN

You see, I don't know anyone who's ever been here or even wanted to come. Not that it's not nice. It's just not the kind of vacation destination that gets a lot of media coverage. Anyone can see the Eiffel tower or the Coliseum but this...this requires intention and purpose. But it means no one had any advice either. When I told people my plans, they just stared at me like I was crazy. My best friend, my co-workers... The only one who thought it sounded fun was Barney's beautiful banquet captain at this amazing place I've started frequenting. He's all for trying new things.

She takes another drink.

WOMAN

Not sure what made me decide to come. Well, except that I knew I didn't want to do one of those tours again. Too proscriptive. No say in what you get to do.

He slides over a bowl of nuts which she reaches into without even noticing.

WOMAN

The first time I went I appreciated the sense of security. No decisions, no surprises. But, that isn't for me these days. So here I am in the middle of nowhere, nearly dehydrated and about half a degree from heat stroke. But I found it myself!

He removes her empty glass and does not replace it.

WOMAN

My mom thought it would be good for me to take a break. "Go and see new things", she said. "Get away from everything for a little while." It seemed like an interesting idea. To go some place where no one knew me. No one could have any expectations of who I am or who I should be. Here, I can be anyone I want to be.

While listening, MAN begins to sweep around her barstool.

WOMAN

Once my father rode a bus across the country and every time a new person sat in the seat next to him he assumed a new identity. He became a whole new person. For a while he was the oldest of 10 kids from a cotton farm in Alabama. Later, he was a bassoonist heading for his first major audition. He even convinced someone he was an exchange student from Australia, on his way to meet his host family. I don't really want to be someone I'm not. I just wish I were as brave as he was. So here I am, throwing caution to the wind...

Her gesture of "throwing caution to the wind" and dizziness from the heat causes her to tip slightly out of her stool, but Man catches her and keeps her from falling.

WOMAN

...as I try to cavalierly melt in some forgotten part of the world hoping to learn something about myself by observing others I know nothing about. Haha! And my husband said I was too predictable.

MAN brings her juice.

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WOMAN

Bet he didn't predict this.

She drinks the juice.

WOMAN

Then again, I didn't quite predict this either. I thought I would be able see things differently from a new vantage point... from a place of unfamiliarity. What kind of juice is this? It's good.

She doesn't wait for an answer.

WOMAN

But I was wrong. Everything just looks hot not different. (Looking directly at MAN.) So, if this were a movie, and I looked beautifully coiffed and cool, now is the time that you would share with me some ancient, somewhat cryptic wisdom that will become the turning point of my entire life.

He smiles at her.

WOMAN

It doesn't have to be ancient or cryptic even. (Pause) Just some meaningful thought (Pause) Or even touristy info. You know, the insider scoop... Or the secret of beating the heat... Just something... Anything... Please! There must be something you can tell me!

He smiles at her kindly.

WOMAN

Do you even understand what I'm saying?

He continues smiling.

WOMAN

Of course not. Why do I even try?

She reaches for her bag and starts to leave as MAN holds out her sunglasses which she has forgotten.

### Scene 11: Landlord

WOMAN enters. Chair is completely turned around facing upstage.

MAN is standing in a darkened upstage corner and is not visible to the Woman or the audience.

WOMAN

Forgive me for barging in like this, but I have been waiting for over an hour in a room crammed full of people who apparently have some kind of personal relationships with you, because while I was waiting my turn everyone else's name was called but not mine. You gave each one your time and attention, but I just sat there waiting. I'm kind of at the end of my rope and I'd like you to address my concerns. I need you to help me with this! It's your job to talk to me!

No response.

WOMAN

Well... Ok... I guess I'll just tell you why I came all the way down here to speak to you in person. Because I've tried everything else! I've called. I've emailed. I've texted! I tried FaceBook and Twitter, and I don't even tweet, but I tried that too! And no one has gotten back to me. So I had to take time off work and come down here personally, just to get your attention! What do you have to say for yourself!?

No response.

WOMAN

Seriously?! At least listen to me then! You see my heater doesn't work. It hasn't worked for a week and yet no one seems to care. I can't get warm in my own home. I know that you aren't interested in my personal life, but things are a bit difficult for me right now. Maybe you aren't answering my requests because I'm late with this month's rent? Understand, please understand, that I'm not some irresponsible woman who doesn't pay her bills. This has never happened to me before. But I am recently divorced and I was forced to sell my house as part of the settlement which means I had to pay all the relocation expenses to move into your apartment not to mention the impossible lawyer fees and there have been medical bills...Like I said this isn't who I am. I always pay my bills...You can check that!

No response.

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WOMAN

And I've tried to take care of this myself! When you wouldn't respond to the fact I can practically see my breath in my apartment, I went next door for help but my neighbor wouldn't answer the door. I heard him in there, but he wouldn't answer. I tried twice and then I gave up. Then I tried you again. Nothing! I got so desperate that I called my ex-husband and he wouldn't even answer the phone! He would have just said it wasn't his fault anyway. (Imitating his accent) "He din'do it!" We are freezing to death and he wouldn't even answer my call. I can't provide a decent place for my daughter because my husband wouldn't let me keep the house. And he says, I ruined *his* life! He says, I deserve to live in this crappy apartment in a horrible neighborhood away from our friends, away from her school, away from all hope! He thinks I'm worthless!

No response.

WOMAN

The heater is the most critical problem but not the only one. I have been trying to get some assistance since I moved in. The bathroom faucet leaks which keeps me awake. The front porch light is burned out or just won't turn on in a neighborhood I don't trust because it isn't safe! And there's a very odd and unpleasant smell coming from under the refrigerator. I won't let my daughter near it because she has a strong gag reflex and nearly vomits every time she gets close.

No response.

WOMAN

All right I've had it! Are you even listening to me? I have rights as a tenant. You can't just ignore me. It's 48 degrees in my apartment! 48 DEGREES! Hypothermia is a real possibility. I'm freezing not worthless!!

No response.

WOMAN

How can you be so rude to me? So uncaring? Have you nothing to say?! Will you at least turn around and look at me?

She crosses to the chair and turns it around. It's empty.

WOMAN

What?... Where are you? I know you're in here. Other people came in. You talked to the others! They saw you. I've been right outside all afternoon. I'd have seen if you left. You have to be here somewhere.

She looks around the space.

WOMAN

Why, when I need help, are you not here? Why did you help those other people? You are the landlord. It's your job to help me. I can't live like this. I'm cold, exhausted and unsafe because you won't do your job. Where are you? Why won't you answer me? Do you really expect me to keep living like this. You don't care enough to even speak with me? (She sits in the chair) You were the one person who I thought might be able to put the pieces back together. Fix my heat. Fix my light. Fix my home! But you're not even here. You never were here. Not once. Never. (Pause) Fine.

She stands and addresses the empty room again.

WOMAN

If you won't help me I'll fix things myself. I don't need you. I'll figure it out on my own. You should be ashamed of yourself for treating human beings...for treating ME like this.

She exits. MAN steps out of the corner and watches her leave.

### **Scene 12: Thief**

WOMAN is sitting on bed.

WOMAN

Breathe. Just Breathe. Focus on the breath.

She takes a couple of slow breaths.

WOMAN

I have to sleep.

She starts humming Gartan Mother's Lullaby and then sings:

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WOMAN

"Aoibheall (ee-val) From the grey rock comes"

She stops singing.

WOMAN

Aoibheall is a just a fairy. She can't take our breath. Breathe. Breathe. "And soon we sleep too near our foe. Come Knight to us. Come Knight..."

WOMAN dozes for a few seconds. MAN emerges from the same place the Knight entered in the second scene. He stares at her for a moment. Throughout the scene he is aloof and totally unaffected by the WOMAN's pleading. WOMAN wakes up startled.

WOMAN

WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN MY HOUSE!!! GET OUT! GET OUT!! GET OUT!!!!!!

MAN

I can't do that now can I?

WOMAN

Leave or I'm calling the police.

MAN

Oh, I'll be gone before they get here.

WOMAN

What do you want?

MAN

I'm here to take something of yours.

WOMAN

Fine. Take anything. Just leave.

MAN

Oh. I will.

He turns toward another room.

WOMAN

Where are you going? My purse is in here.

MAN

I don't want your purse.

WOMAN

Everything valuable I have is right here.

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MAN

No, it's not.

WOMAN

Yes, it is. How do you know what I have? Or where I keep it?

MAN

I've been here before.

WOMAN

WHAAAATTTTT! You've been stalking me? How long have you been watching me. You've been IN my house? I told the landlord this was a dangerous neighborhood. I begged him for better lights.

MAN

I've taken things from you before.

WOMAN

When?

MAN

A few times.

WOMAN

You're lying. I've never been robbed.

MAN

Really?

WOMAN

What? Of course, really. I'd know if I'd been robbed.

MAN

I took your admission to that fancy school you wanted to go to.

WOMAN

What are you talking about? I didn't get an admission packet. I never got accepted. And how did you know I even applied? How long have you been stalking me?

MAN

I took your friend away when you started high school.

WOMAN

What friend?

MAN

Your best friend from middle school.

WOMAN

She moved somewhere.

MAN

I took your baby doll.

WOMAN

My baby doll? What baby doll?

MAN

The one you asked Santa for when you were little.

WOMAN

I lost that doll. No one took it.

MAN

How could you have lost it? You adored her.

WOMAN

Mom said I left her somewhere.

MAN

That doesn't sound like you.

WOMAN

How do you know what sounds like me?

MAN

I took your marriage, your house, your health. Shall I go on?

WOMAN

How do you know any of this? Who are you and what do you want?

MAN

I want your daughter.

WOMAN

Excuse me???

MAN

I'm here to take your daughter.

WOMAN

(Menacingly) I don't know who you are or what kind of sick prank you are trying to pull but you are going to leave now. Right now. This is over.

MAN

But, it's not.

WOMAN

Yes, it is.

MAN

I will leave when I get what I came for.

WOMAN

You will never get that. She is mine. She is my baby. The best thing in my entire life. I'll never let you have her.

MAN

Oh, yes you will. You don't have a choice. I take whatever I want. Whenever I want it. And now I want your daughter.

WOMAN

I will fight you to the death. I have been afraid of things in the dark before. But I'm not afraid of you. You should be afraid of me. I will kill you before you take her.

MAN

You can't.

WOMAN

Watch me.

MAN

Look at yourself and look at me. Which one of us is going to win?

WOMAN

I will give you anything. I'll give you all my money. I'll give you everything I have. Here. My car keys. Here's all my money. I don't have any jewelry. What else will you take? Anything. Take anything. Just don't take her.

MAN

You don't really get how this works, do you? I'll say it again. More slowly. I take whatever I want. The only thing you have that I want is your daughter. So I'm going to take her and there is nothing you can do to stop me.

WOMAN

Take me instead. I have value. Take me. I can take her place.

MAN

No, you can't.

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WOMAN

Yes. I can.

MAN

You'd leave your daughter without a mother?  
Rather cruel of you.

WOMAN

It's not cruel if it saves her.

MAN

I doubt she'd see it that way. Let's wake her  
up and ask her. You or her?

WOMAN

What kind of monster are you? Why do you want  
her?

MAN

Why do you?

WOMAN

I can't pay any ransom. I have already offered  
you everything I have.

MAN

It's not for you to know the reason. Knowing  
doesn't change anything.

WOMAN

Maybe I could find a replacement if I knew  
why. Something you'd accept instead.

MAN

Not possible.

WOMAN

You don't know what I will offer.

MAN

Yes I do. You've said it repeatedly.  
Everything. You will give me everything and  
anything, except what I want so I have to take  
it. Sorry.

WOMAN

How can you do this to me? She's all I have.  
Please. Please!

MAN

I am sorry but your desires don't outweigh  
mine. So please move out of my way.

WOMAN

Never. You'll have to kill me first.

MAN

No, I won't.

He picks her up and moves her out of the way.

WOMAN

Stop it. No.

She grabs him and won't let go.

MAN

This is getting tiresome and rather silly. No amount of begging or crying or screaming is going to change the outcome. You are out of options. So let go of me and this will all be over soon.

WOMAN

(Not letting go) Why? Why would you do this to me? Who are you?

MAN

The one with all the power.

He shakes the woman off and pushes her back on the bed.

WOMAN

No. No. You can't take my baby. You can't take her. Don't hurt her. Please, don't hurt her. I hate you.

WOMAN curls in fetal position on the bed.

MAN

I know you do. I expected nothing less.

MAN stops and touches her hair before he proceeds in the direction of the daughter's bedroom.

### SCENE 13: MAGICIAN

WOMAN enters. MAN is seated facing an imaginary mirror, removing make-up. He can't see her come from his angle.

MAN

(Still facing upstage). Hello. I've been waiting.

WOMAN

Pardon me?

MAN

(Still with back to her) You're the woman from the 3rd row. House left.

WOMAN

Yes. How do you know that? You're amazing.

MAN

(Turning around) I knew you'd come. You had to come.

WOMAN

I had to come where?

MAN

Here. To see me.

WOMAN

You knew I would come to your show? How could you know that?

MAN

Because your daughter loved magic... but that's not what I meant.

WOMAN

My daughter? What do you know about my daughter?

MAN

Enough. I do children's shows.

WOMAN

You knew her?

MAN

What I meant was that you had to come and see me. Not my show.

WOMAN

I don't understand...

MAN

I know. But I'm glad you came. Please make yourself comfortable. Tell me why you've come.

WOMAN

I came because I want you to tell me how you did that trick, the one...

MAN

Illusion.

Made in Highland

WOMAN

Excuse me?

MAN

I prefer the term illusion. Trick implies the intent to deceive. I'm not trying to deceive anyone.

WOMAN

Illusion implies the same thing.

MAN

Does it? An illusion is something that is likely to be wrongly perceived by the senses. A subtle difference.

WOMAN

Ok. How did you do that illusion?

MAN

Which one?

WOMAN

The one where you sawed the woman in half.

MAN

Oh yes. I thought you'd find that one particularly intriguing.

WOMAN

You did?

MAN

Yes and you do.

WOMAN

Do what?

MAN

Find it intriguing.

WOMAN

Yes. Well, what I came here for was to find out how you did it.

MAN

You have just made a very popular request. People always want to know how? It puzzles me a little since I think "why?" is a much better question.

WOMAN

I know that it isn't real.

(MORE)

WOMAN (CONT'D)

But it looked like you actually separated that girl's top-half from her bottom-half. I know that it has to involve two people but I watched very carefully and can't figure out how you got them in the boxes without me seeing.

MAN

And thus the illusion of magic. Now do you see why your daughter found it so fascinating?

WOMAN

Why do you keep talking about my daughter? Did you know her?

MAN

All children love magic. To them it is real. They aren't looking for the "how" or even the "why". They just appreciate its miraculous nature.

WOMAN

But it's not miraculous. It's just a trick...

MAN

Illusion.

WOMAN

...and I want to know how you did it. How you made it look like you took someone apart and put them back together.

MAN

So you don't think what you saw actually happened?

WOMAN

Of course not. No one thinks you can cut someone in half without them dying.

MAN

That happened to you, didn't it.

WOMAN

What? No. That's ridiculous. I've never been sawn in half.

MAN

Really? Hmm. Then why do you care so much about how it's done?

WOMAN

It's driving me crazy and I know it will keep driving me crazy. I understand that it's not real, but it looked real.



MAN

Maybe you need to expand your definition of real.

WOMAN

I'm painfully aware of the breadth of reality. How things you can't fathom can all of a sudden become the nightmarish existence you can't wake up from or sleep through. I know reality.

MAN

I see.

WOMAN

Just tell me how you did it and I'll leave you alone.

MAN

Oh, I'm in no hurry to have you go. I enjoy talking with you.

WOMAN

You won't tell me? I promise I won't tell anyone else. I'll keep your secret.

MAN

No. You'd tell someone.

WOMAN

No, I wouldn't.

MAN

Yes, you would. We always learn secrets from people who swore they would never reveal them. And then the pattern continues. You swear and then tell. They swear and then tell and so on. But I don't care if people know.

WOMAN

You don't? I thought a magician never reveals his secret.

MAN

If I told you then I'd have to kill you.

WOMAN

What? You're not seriously...

MAN

Of course not, but that's what they say, right?

WOMAN

I guess I've heard that.

MAN

If you thought I couldn't tell you, then why are you here?

WOMAN

I really need to know. I've been told I can be persuasive. I thought I'd give it a shot.

MAN

Well then. Here's the secret - I wish everyone knew how I do what I do.

WOMAN

Really? That would ruin your show.

MAN

Would it?

WOMAN

Yes.

MAN

Then I'd better not let you in on it.

WOMAN

Wait. It wouldn't ruin it for me.

MAN

Just everyone else?

WOMAN

Look, just tell me.

MAN

All right. Happy to. First of all, there is the expectation.

WOMAN

Expectation of what?

MAN

What the audience expects to see. They expect to see things they can't explain. Things that break the rules of life as they understand them. But they also expect that everything will be done temporarily. Any violation of the rules of nature will be righted when the show ends. No one will be permanently marred or maimed.

WOMAN

Ok. I see that.

MAN

But what you can't see yet, is my perspective. The important thing is that I can see from every angle. I see what the audience sees from every seat in the house. I see what it's like inside the box. Both halves. I see what my production team sees. I see how it all comes apart and know how to put it all back together.

WOMAN

And you do that how? How do you put the woman back together? Exactly?

MAN

You know, it's interesting. That's never important to the children. They just think that a two-part person is cool.

WOMAN

Cool, unless the top-half-person needs to walk somewhere or the bottom-half-person needs to say something.

MAN

They believe I can make the woman whole whether or not they know how I do it.

WOMAN

I like things to make sense. To be explainable.

MAN

Yes, you do.

WOMAN

It must hurt to be in the box. I know they aren't sawed thru but it must be very uncomfortable to be squeezed in there. It must feel like forever.

MAN

Depends how flexible you are.

WOMAN

It would hurt me.

MAN

Yes. When I saw you come into the auditorium I thought that you would be an excellent choice to be my volunteer. But as I watched you, I realized you'd already experienced the box. You were already in pieces. You just wanted to be put back together. But you doubted I could do that for you.

WOMAN

It's hard to unbreak something.

MAN

But you saw it happen.

WOMAN

That's not enough.

MAN

True. It's not. But I can only try to explain it to you from my perspective. From where I stand, the woman is always whole. Just changed. That needs to be your perspective too. You need to see what I see and know what I know. You aren't broken just rearranged.

WOMAN

I want to be back to the way I was.

MAN

That is the rest of the secret. Once a person has been cut in half they can't be the same. Oh, they will look like their pre-box-selves but the experience unalterably changes them on the inside. They have gained another perspective.

WOMAN

That's the whole secret? That you defy people's expectation that things will be again as they once were?

MAN

Expectations are usually too low. And isn't that the most amazing illusion of them all. The senses perceive the woman to be the same as before but in reality she is entirely changed. Now that is magic!

WOMAN

If you say so.

MAN

I do. (Pause.) So...I guess that makes me The Green Man.

WOMAN

Green Man?

MAN

From the lullaby.(sings) "Dusk is drawn, and the Green Man's Thorn is wreathed in rings of fog..."

WOMAN

How do you know that song?

MAN

I know a lot of things.

WOMAN

My dad used to sing that to me when I was very young. I didn't understand it then.

MAN

The Green Man is an omen, good or bad depending on when you see him.

WOMAN

I know. If seen at dusk, he's a symbol of death.

MAN

If seen at dawn, he symbolizes rebirth. Now you just have to choose what time it is. (pause) I have loved our chat but I must get ready for the next show. Please feel free to stay and watch.

#### **SCENE 14: FATHER**

WOMAN enters. Stands at a distance from a gravestone. She closes her eyes and takes a deep breath.

WOMAN

I love this time of the morning when the day is new and things seem possible. I'm sorry it's been so long since I've been here. I'm sorry I've stayed away.

MAN enters from the same upstage corner he was in for the Landlord scene. WOMAN never actually sees him or has any direct contact with him. MAN always speaks directly to her in the most loving way possible.

MAN

Not to worry, Little One.

WOMAN

I couldn't come before. I was trapped and squeezed until I could barely breathe.

MAN

But your breath is still with you.

WOMAN

I couldn't move. So I couldn't come.

MAN

Do you want to come closer?

WOMAN takes a step toward the  
gravestone.

WOMAN

But I'm here now.

MAN

Are you as close as you want to be?

WOMAN takes another step toward  
gravestone.

WOMAN

I don't know what you can do for me.

MAN

I am compelled to come to your aid.

WOMAN

I'm here because I don't know where else to  
go.

MAN

I promise I'll help you.

WOMAN

I'm in limbo. Stuck between dusk and dawn. I  
don't know who I am any more.

MAN

You don't know who you are?

WOMAN

I know who I was. A wife. A mother. But I  
can't go back to my old life.

MAN

You don't fit on the kindergarten slide  
anymore.

WOMAN

I'm supposed to be changed but I still feel  
broken.

MAN

You aren't broken just re-arranged.

Made in Highland

WOMAN

I couldn't handle the things life handed me or took from me.

MAN

You expected your life to be more predictable or manageable.

WOMAN

So I'm afraid to move.

MAN

Have you taken the time to ponder the significance of the place you are now?

WOMAN

I'm at a crossroads and I want to be brave again. Not be afraid of what's across the way.

MAN

This is an issue of trust.

WOMAN

But I'm afraid of getting lost again. I never seem to have the appropriate map. I need to know which way to point my chronically crumbling life.

MAN

Just follow the instructions best you can. And remember you prefer the scenic route.

WOMAN

So I'm waiting. Waiting for something. Some sign.

MAN

And you aren't getting help the way you want it.

WOMAN

I can't see it. I need help.

MAN

We do hard things because life gives us no other options. I know you can do whatever is asked of you.

WOMAN

I need you.

MAN

And I am always here.

Made in Highland

WOMAN

If you were here you could fix me.

MAN

I don't have any secret cures but let me see if I can provide you some relief.

WOMAN

Life continuously demands that I change and I'm tired of it.

MAN

But you'll be happy with the results, I promise.

WOMAN

I just want to get away. To rest, someplace where people take care of me for a while.

MAN

And make sure your glass is always full?

WOMAN

But escaping isn't coping, or evolving. So how do I move forward?

MAN

I think "why?" is a much better question.

WOMAN

Why do I feel so incomplete?

MAN

I can only explain it to you from my perspective. You need to see what I see and know what I know.

WOMAN

I can't be who I was and I can't see who I should be now. It's like the way I remember you. I have pieces that don't quite go together. I see flashes, hear lines of lullabies and childhood rhymes. I think I remember a few things but it might just be things people told me about you. Stories I eventually made myself part of. Why couldn't I have real memories like everyone else? If I remembered you better maybe I could see how my pieces should finally fit together. Maybe I'd see who I could be, in you.

MAN

Look at yourself and look at me.



WOMAN

I miss you. I miss who I think you were and who I imagine you to be.

MAN

My goal is to provide you with everything you need to be happy.

WOMAN kneels in front of the gravestone.

WOMAN

I just want to be with you.

MAN

The time will be here soon enough.

WOMAN

I love you, Daddy. I loved you then and I love you now.

MAN

I know you do. I expected nothing less.

#### **EPILOGUE**

MAN and WOMAN step out of the last scene and address the audience.

WOMAN

And so we seek Him.

MAN

Ever wrestling.

WOMAN

Adding layers.

MAN

Adding depth.

WOMAN

Analyzing.

MAN

Reconciling.

WOMAN

Waiting for that brighter day...

MAN

When we can know...

Made in Highland

WOMAN  
Even as we are known.

MAN  
And love...

WOMAN  
Even as we are loved.