Rather Awake on Earth than Asleep in Heaven

A Play in Six Scenes

by Johanna Rodda

Characters

Jenny – A heroic young woman

Eadith – Her overbearing father, who has built the Enclosure to protect her

Hamdith – Her protective brother

Geoff – Jenny’s well-meaning lover

Spirit of Astrid – The wise spirit of Jenny’s mother

Wolf – A dapper gentleman who comes upon Jenny and Geoff

Scene 1:

(Inside the cement-walled Enclosure. Eadith comes in first through an open gate and goes up to a keypad on the left side of it, fiddles around with it for a few seconds as if trying to change something about it. Hamdith follows through the gate, carrying a sack, which he lays on the ground. Then he exits and goes out of sight, carrying another sack back into the Enclosure. This goes on for a few seconds, and soon they have a conference about the keypad, talking between themselves, shouting and pointing at it. Hamdith goes out again, bearing another sack on his back then laying it on the ground next to the others. After he is done he nods to Eadith, who punches something into the keypad, shutting the gate firmly behind the both of them and cutting off the enclosed yard from the outside. Hamdith picks up one of the sacks that he has just brought in.)

Eadith (pointing): Put that over there. Jenny! (He looks around) Jenny! (To Hamdith) We’ve only been gone an hour or so. Where has she got to?

Hamdith: Want me to go look for her? Maybe’s she’s out in the valley.

Eadith: She’s been going there a lot recently. I wonder why now.

Hamdith: Do you want me to go check?

Eadith: Yeah, go and check. (Hamdith leaves. To himself) I don’t like her spending all that time out there. There was something (he turns around, staring in the direction in which Hamdith went.) Hm. (Sits down, starts counting blades of grass, roving out his penchant as an eccentric millionaire)

Hamdith (returning): She’s coming. She was out in the valley. Found her at the wall.

Eadith: Did you like the look of it?

Hamdith: Not really. We may have to fix a few cracks.

Eadith (grumbling): Damn place is caving all around us. I don’t like it. We built these walls to last. (Looks around) Well, what’s taking so long? She was following you, wasn’t she?

Hamdith: Dunno. I told her to come. I think she was picking flowers along the way or something. But I did see her at the wall, looking at it as if it had something to tell her. Dad, I don’t like it. Ah. Here she is.

(Jenny appears, making her way slowly, flowers in her hands. She is dressed in a lovely sky blue sundress and low beige heeled shoes. She carries in her hands a notebook and a pen and is not cold in the temperate, climate-controlled air. She always only knows one season.)

(Jenny goes up to her father, kisses him.)

Jenny: How are you, daddy?

Eadith: Fine, sweetie. Nice day?

Jenny: It is a nice day.

Eadith (laughs): No, I meant –

Jenny (teasing him): I know what you meant. (Smiling, looks around mischievously) Hamdith, where are you hiding?

Hamdith (steps forward): Right here, Jen.

(Jenny hugs him): Well? What’s for supper tonight?

Hamdith: Potato dumplings, made myself.

Eadith: Wonderful! Why don’t you go get that started?

(Hamdith moves off. Eadith is left alone with Jenny, who, smiling, looks at him as if confused.)

Jenny: What is it, daddy?

Eadith (placing his hands around her face): Your birthday’s coming up, Jen.

Jenny: Yes, it is.

Eadith: What color dress would you like this year?

Jenny (thinks for a minute; deviously; bursts out): Red!

Eadith (moving back as if he had been struck): No, not red, Jenny. Where – ? (he begins, but brushes the thought aside with his hand.) Why don’t we go inside and get ready for dinner?

Jenny (seems reluctant): Can I stay outside, just for a bit longer? The sky’s so pretty and pink this time of day.

Eadith: Pink! Now how about that for a color?

Jenny: Alright, daddy.

Eadith: Come inside in ten minutes.

Jenny: Alright, daddy.

(Eadith kisses her forehead, smiles, and leaves, going inside the glass-and-chrome house. Jenny stands stock-still in the same position, her lips pursed, her brow furrowed, biting her lip. She continues to stand there, waiting and watching as her ten minutes tick away, while sounds of music and of a Cuisinart emanate from the house. She begins to look around her, curiously, as if searching out whether or not she is being observed. Seemingly satisfied that she is radically alone, she begins to speak.)

Jenny: It’s funny how you sometimes know there is something more that you ought to have in your life even when you don’t know what that is. (Pauses) Should I tell him? (Turns around suddenly) Tell who? Daddy? Hamdith? Tell him? But I couldn’t even see him – not really. Just the outline of his lips. (Turns again) If it was a him. (Softens) No, it was. Funny that I should have heard that voice in a dream once – as if I knew it was coming. For me. (Muses, holding her notebook to her chest with both arms, her head in the air.) For me. (Pauses) But coming for me. Why? Daddy? He wouldn’t like anyone else here with us. Funny. (Pauses) How the heart seems to want something more, even when it doesn’t really know how to say what. For me. But what would anyone want with me, anyway? What possibly is there beyond Eadith and Hamdith and me? Is it mother? Is that the key? But I can barely even remember her. Were we happier then? Is that it? (Looks around again, and at the fading pink sky) I wonder why daddy was so upset when I said I wanted a red dress. I only said it because I remember Mommy’s lips and they were red. (Pauses. Looks intently at the house, then softly opens her notebook and takes something out of it, a small slip of paper) We don’t have red here anymore. I miss that – color. But let’s see. (Hastily and secretly unfolds the slip of paper, reads it) Oh! But what does that mean? (Reads aloud) “Loving in truth, I need no further proof, fain in verse my love to show: tell me – by what name do you go?” That sounds like poetry. So, he wants to know my name. But what’s in a name, really? He can call me by it – but did anybody ever get more than that out of a name? Can you possess a person by knowing their name? Do Daddy and Hamdith own me every time they call my name? What a silly thought. Nobody ever owns you but yourself. What a notion! (Pauses, turns) But it’s strange to think, isn’t it? What if that were real, after all, and true? That when someone called you by your name, or thought about you, they owned some piece or some part or some fraction of you. (Thrusts out her arm, with the note in her hand) How absurd! I never want to be owned by anyone, and no one will ever own me! (Looks down at the note, reads its back) What’s on the back? True love? What’s that? Should I tell Daddy? (Pauses) No, it must be some delicious secret I’ll have to learn. (Reads) “Parting is such delicious sorrow. Meet me here again tomorrow.” Well! Daddy wouldn’t like that, would he? (Looks around with a mixture of guilt and curiosity) Well, that’s a secret, then, isn’t it? (Kisses the note)

Eadith (from indoors): Jenny!

Jenny: Coming, daddy!

(She doesn’t go inside yet, though. The sky, falling pink, dims around her. Suddenly, Hamdith slams open the door to the house and comes out. Jenny has stealthily already hidden the note inside a fold in her notebook.)

Hamdith (stepping into the light): Jenny, what’s the matter? Dinner’s almost on the table.

Jenny (smiling): Nothing. I wrote you a poem today. Would you like to hear it?

Hamdith: Go on.

Jenny (striking a pose): I love you more than the sun. You are my brother, my only one – “ (Pause) Hamdith?

Hamdith: Yes?

Jenny: That word – “love” –

Hamdith (visibly on edge): Yes?

Jenny: What does it mean? (Innocently) Really?

Hamdith (after a few seconds, smiles, goes up to Jenny and chucks her on the cheek): Hey, kiddo, you know what love is. That’s what you and me feel for each other – brother and sister. Yeah?

Jenny (hugs him): Ok, Ham. I’ll be in in a minute.

Hamdith: Won’t you come in now?

Jenny: Just a minute. Just until the light fades.

Hamdith (kisses her on the forehead): Alright. But just a minute, okay?

(Jenny nods, faking a smile. Hamdith notices her reluctance, balks, but goes inside. Jenny turns around at a noise, looks at the Enclosure, bites her lip, and, as another note is pressed through a crack in the wall, goes and grabs it, stares through the chink for a second, reads the note, looks confused, shakes her head.

Jenny (to herself, reading): “One, three, two – I love you. One, two, three, four – I love you more. I love you more than the sun. The sun does not love you at all. I love you more than anyone, for you are my all. To see you is heaven, to see you and not to be able to touch you is torture. I have met many people in my time, many different people with different ways, but you confuse me. I do not know who you are, I do not know ... anything. I love you. If you do not love me, I will be rent in two. I want to hold your hand, to stroke your face, to press my lips to yours. Love, Geoff – let me possess you and I will cherish you.

Jenny (presses the note to her heart) What strange words! I wonder what they mean, really mean. I don’t fully understand them. I’m confused. It’s as if there’s another – world – dimension (where did that word come from?) – that is coming over me and that I know nothing about. Does this man love me, or not? He says he does, but how can I be sure? And what love is he talking about, to press his lips to mine? No one has ever done that to me before. It seems a funny thing to do, really. What does that show? Maybe if I imagined him putting his lips to mine. (Closes her eyes, draws her arms to her chest) Hm. That seems nice. (Opens her eyes) But who is he, anyway? I don’t know anything about him. I don’t know anything about who he is or what he wants with me. (Pauses) Wants with me? What does Daddy want with me, or Hamdith? What kind of love is that? Why won’t Hamdith tell me? (Closes her eyes again) Hm. Hm. What is it about that that feels so good? I’ve never felt this before. It feels – nice. What’s the name of this? If this is what love feels like, is this what love is? True love, I mean, not the kind of love like the love that I feel for Hamdith and Hamdith feels for me? Not the love of a brother for a sister and a sister for a brother, but some mystical sort of love that exists between someone who loves and another someone who loves – between a love-r and a love-r. That’s it; that must be the word I’m looking for. A lover. Yes. That is what I want. Someone who has lips to put my lips up against. Someone to love me not like a brother would love more, or a father would love me, but like a – lover would love me. How would that be?

Eadith (opening the door of the house, holds the screen door open as he stares out at Jenny. After a pause): Jenny.

Jenny (smiling): Yes, daddy? (She starts to go up to him, but, seeing his face, stops halfway.)

Eadith: What have you been doing out here?

Jenny: Just catching the night air. You know how much I like it.

Eadith (still at the door): You seem to like it more tonight than you usually do.

Jenny (shrugs her shoulders): Maybe I’m getting to like it more and more the more I see of it.

Eadith (shakes his head, laughs): Maybe.

Jenny (halting; hesitatingly; takes a step forwards towards her father) Maybe I even love it – and not in the way that Hamdith loves me, as a sister.

Eadith (staring): What do you mean?

Jenny (seeing his eyes, backs down, turns, holding her notebook behind her back): Nothing, but, I mean – (turns to face her father) did you love Mommy as you love me?

(Eadith, stunned, is silent. In the silence of the falling evening he lets the screen door slam shut against the doorframe.)

Jenny: I mean, isn’t it possible that there are different types of love meant for different types of people to you in this world?

Eadith: What do you mean? Who do you have besides Hamdith and me?

Jenny: No one, no one.

Eadith (going closer): Jenny, has someone approached you?

Jenny: No. I was just thinking – about how I used to have friends. Do you remember? Back in the days before Mommy died?

Eadith (coldly): What do you know of those days?

Jenny (cowering): Daddy, what did I say? (brought to tears, goes up to him and hugs him)

Eadith (his resolve broken, hugs her genuinely) Jenny, I love you as much as any father ever loved his daughter.

Jenny: But it doesn’t help to think that I am the only daughter out there.

Eadith: It doesn’t make you feel special?

Jenny: No, it makes me feel lonely. (Moves away) To know there are other people other there, and not be able to meet or know them.

Eadith: The world is not what you think it.

Jenny (as she moves further away, Eadith begins to visibly weaken and soften, holding out his hand to her): Daddy, I don’t think anything. Don’t you see that that’s the problem? (runs inside the house with her face buried in her hands)

(Hamdith emerges from the screen doorway as Eadith stands, his head hung, his hands on his hips)

Hamdith (moving towards Eadith): Dad, what’s the matter?

Eadith (sighs in frustration) Tomorrow we start fixing the cracks in the Enclosure.

Hamdith: Is it the wolf?

Eadith (starts; pauses, stops): Yes, son, it is.

Hamdith: We’ll have to check on building supplies.

Eadith: Haven’t we got enough in the shed?

Hamdith (shakes his head): We’re low.

Eadith: Well, I’m not leaving Jenny here alone.

Hamdith: We’ve got no choice. I can’t manage alone, and would you have someone come and bring us the supplies?

Eadith (shaking his head): No, I can’t have that.

Hamdith: Well, then. Like I said. We’ve got no choice. Besides, how’s it different than today?

Eadith (weakening): Well, alright. But we’ll only be gone an hour or two. Joe Harris at the hardware store knows what we like; he’ll have it on hand.

Hamdith: But is it just cracks?

Eadith (defensive): What do you mean?

Hamdith: Dad, if she ever figured out that the passcode is –

Eadith (raises his hand as if to strike him) Don’t you dare speak it aloud, what if she’s listening? (breathes heavily as if coming out of a run, lowers his hand, while Hamdith holds his hands in front of his face) Oh, you know I wouldn’t hit you. (Puts his hands on Hamdith’s shoulders) Ha. Son. You know I need you in this. I know you love her as much as I do.

Hamdith: But is that enough? You can see already she’s starting to –

Eadith (tearing his hands from of Hamdith’s shoulders): Do you want her to end up like your mother? A victim of the wolf? (Stands up taller) We go first thing. And no more than an hour.

(Hamdith nods, the glint of tears in his eye. Eadith pats him on the back, then leads him into the house. For a few seconds all that can be heard is the sighing of the faint breeze, then the sobs of a young woman discovering her first set of real tears. Eventually the rugged silence is rent by the sound of falling plaster as a small chink in the further wall becomes a gaping hole. At first the only thing to be seen in it is the surrounding countryside, but soon a man’s face peers through the hole. He looks around cautiously, begins to speak.)

Geoff: So this is what it is like. For her. This is heaven, this is a hell. I couldn’t live like this. But maybe she could? (Pauses) No, she can’t. I heard her. I can’t leave her like this, not now. I heard her. To hear her! I know now why I love her. She is perfect, she is young, she doesn’t know the world yet. I want to show it to her. I want to take her away from this place, to take her away from this father and this brother who claim to love her but who would keep her chained, a bird in a gold-gilded cage. Does she know that they own her, like a book or a picture or a chair? That she is just another pretty static object that they would fear to lose, and so hold it firmly to their breasts so that it stifles for air? Whereas I love her. I want to set her free. Set her free. Would she see it that way, for her father certainly would not? And what of this wolf they keep talking about? What do they mean by that? Did they build this silly place to keep out wolves and men? But the mother. What happened to her? (As the crack widens he brushes away the thought with his hand.) I can’t think of that now. How am I going to get her away from here? (Thinking. Meantime, pulls out a pen and paper from the pocket of his gray trousers.) I’ll meet her here tomorrow when her brother and father are out. They’ll be wary and suspicious of something, though, so I’ll have to think ... )

(He is interrupted, all at once, by a dreadful howl from somewhere behind him. He looks around, dismayed, then bolts from the crack just in time as Eadith and Hamdith come out of the house.)

Hamdith (raging around): What was that?

Eadith (standing stock-still; grimly) It’s the wolf. He’s back. (Goes up to the crack in the wall, puts his head through it and looks around outside the Enclosure. Satisfied, he comes back and looks at Hamdith.) One hour. Tomorrow. (He goes back inside, angrily slamming the door behind him. Hamdith is left outside, staring at the crack – now a gaping hole – in the wall, as if suspecting something, but soon he moves back inside. There is another pause, and then again the breeze. Then silence for a few seconds. The sound of a window being cracked open, then Jenny coming down on sheets from her bed tied together. When she has almost reached the ground she jumps the last few feet, landing lightly on the dirt.)

Jenny (straightening her dress): I wonder if that’s ever been tried before. Are there other daughters out there who have escaped from fathers who love them too much? But what now? I can’t escape, not really. What’s the use of slipping out a window to come out into the night air? I can have that anytime – almost. What I need is a friend. (See the gaping hole, goes to it, passes her hand over it. She presses her lips to the edge of the wall, then retreats from it.) Dear friend, whoever you are, wherever you are, if you are here now, give me a sign – that you love me. (She closes her eyes again, her notebook pressed against her chest, presumably imagining Geoff pressing his lips to hers.)

(A slight noise. A note is dropped through the gap, wrapped around a book. Jenny turns around when she hears the thump of the book against the ground. She runs up to it, drops to her knees, and unfolds the note. She glances at the title of the book.)

Jenny (reading): “Wer-ter. Johann Wolfgang fon - Gothe.” (puts the book down; looking at the note) “I love you like the sun. I want you and me to be one. Let me savor this delicious sorrow. If you love me, meet me here tomorrow.” Oh, I will meet you. I know what love is now, and if I don’t – teach me! I want to learn. I want to know all the delicious secrets of life that I’ve never encountered or known before. Teach me these things, whoever you are. Press your lips to mine and let me press mine to yours. Tell me what that is called. Is that true love? Then I can no more easily give up loving than I can will my body not to breathe or to live anymore. “Meet me here tomorrow.” I will! (To the gap in the wall) If you are listening, I will! (She jumps up, grabs the tied-together sheets, and pulls herself back into her room as her father can be heard banging on and pleading at her door: Jenny! Jenny! – alternately stern and pleading. Jenny goes into her room and quietly shuts her window just as Hamdith emerges from the screen door and onto the porch, looking out on the yard. Through the window of Jenny’s room we see Jenny smooth her dress, wipe her eyes, and go open her door, letting her father in, a brief moment of power on her part as the keypad he has installed does not work for him. Eadith comes into her room and they are seen talking, then yelling, then crying and hugging, while all the while Hamdith walks around the yard, carefully looking around. Finally Hamdith seems satisfied and goes back inside the house as Jenny is seen burying her face in her father’s chest, his arms around her.)

Geoff (appearing in the crack in the wall) Now I know for certain. Life cannot be lived like this. Awake on earth and not asleep in heaven. (Fading) Rather awake on earth than asleep in heaven.

(Darkness)

End of Scene One

Scene 2:

(Again the porch and front yard outside the glass-and-chrome house. The day is darker and grayer than the previous one, and clouds threaten impending rain. At the sound of a wolf’s far-away howling, Eadith and Hamdith come out of the house wearing raincoats. They go up to the gap in the wall that had begun to appear the day before and place over it a metal panel, which they bolt to either side of the hole. Then Eadith goes up to one of the keypads and punches in a passcode, opening the metal gate. They walk through it. Then the gate is closed and the sound of a truck revving up and driving off can be heard. After a pause, Jenny appears at her bedroom window. She can be seen trying to force the door, which does not budge. Then she goes up to the window and tries to open it, also to no avail. She tries the door again, and the window, until, hearing Geoff’s voice, she goes up to the window and listens.)

Geoff (at the wall): Jenny? (more softly) Jenny?

Jenny (calling through the window): I’m locked in. I can’t get out.

Geoff: What can I – (at the sound of Geoff’s voice, a crack appears in the wall, and it begins to crumble, an opening forming just at the place where his face is. Soon the hole is big enough for him to force his arm through, and he breaks away more and more of it until, finally, he walks right through it and into the yard. (Calling) Jenny, is there a key to your room?

Jenny (through the window): Daddy locks everything by passcode. I don’t know what the combination is. He’s locked the window this time, too. (Looking down at the yard) Is it really you? Did you really write those notes to me? I thought them strange – lovely and strange. How did you find me here?

Geoff: I like to wander in fields. I came upon your house and heard what was going on. I saw your father and your brother going in and out when I was hiding in the woods over there. (Falling nearer to the window) Then I heard you. And I knew I couldn’t leave you here, not like this.

Jenny: I – I don’t want to stay here.

Geoff: You don’t?

Jenny (standing tall, forcing her arms by her sides and her chin up) I – I don’t want to stay here. (Softening) Tell me, your name is – Geoff?

Geoff: Geoff McLeod.

Jenny: Jenny Waters. You know, you’re the first friend I’ve had in years.

Geoff: Am I your friend?

Jenny: Yes. (As if embarrassed) If you like.

Geoff (smiling broadly): Alright, then. Your – friend. Is that what you want?

Jenny (nodding): Yes. (Pauses) Only –

Geoff: Yes?

Jenny: Nothing.

Geoff: Well. Now that we’ve been properly introduced I guess we are really and truly friends. Unless –

Jenny: Yes?

Geoff: Nothing. (Pauses) Tell me, what do you like to do?

Jenny: I like to read.

Geoff: Really? Me too. What do you like to read?

Jenny (thinks for a minute; deviously): Wer-ter!

Geoff (smiling broadly): Really? You’ve read it, then?

Jenny: I read it by moonlight last night.

Geoff: And what are your thoughts?

Jenny: I like the letters. But it’s a possessive kind of – love, if that’s what it’s called.

Geoff: And do you think that love is not –

Jenny (at a sound from outside, ducks away from the window; then appears at it again): Are you good at guessing?

Geoff: Why?

Jenny: Can you guess the passcode to my window?

Geoff: Not the door?

Jenny (shakes her head): No, for some reason I think just the window for now.

Geoff (thinking): Alright. How many letters is it?

Jenny: Four.

Geoff (thinking): Hm. Well, it won’t be the obvious, that’s for sure. Maybe we don’t need the passcode altogether. Let me think. Jenny, what was your mother’s name?

Jenny: Astrid.

Geoff (his hand up to his face): Were she and your father happy?

Jenny: I think so. I can’t really remember back that far. But I remember her. She had pale skin and red lips. (Thoughtful) I remember only one thing she ever said. I was young, and she was saying it to my father in front of me. “In loving you I am bound only for constant sorrow.” (Insistently) Geoff, if that is what I should call you, what kind of love was she talking about?

Geoff: What do you mean?

Jenny: I’ve just been thinking. The love I feel for Hamdith, for instance, is the love that a sister ought to feel for a brother.

Geoff: I suppose so.

Jenny: But isn’t it possible that there are meant to be different types of love for people who mean different things to you in this world? I asked Daddy about this but he wouldn’t give me an answer.

Geoff: I suppose you’re right. You’re very astute.

Jenny: I only meant that I suspected that Daddy loved my mother in a way that was different from the way he loves me.

Geoff (coughs): Yes, I think that’s correct.

Jenny: Did he possess her? Is that the key?

Geoff: I think the type of love your father felt for your mother involves a kind of two-way possession.

Jenny: What do you mean?

Geoff: Jenny, can I just – (Pauses, hand up to his face, his other hand on his hip, considering) No, not yet. Is there any way we can talk more closely? I –

Jenny: Yes?

Geoff: I – I just wanted to say – to your face –

Jenny (leaning in; dreamy) Yes?

(They are interrupted by the sound of cracking glass, as the window itself begins to break. Jenny stands back from it, and soon the entire windowpane is empty, a shower of glass on the ground before where Geoff stands.)

Geoff: Jenny, can you come down?

Jenny: One minute. (She ties together sheets from her bed to form a chain and, lowering herself down to the ground, stands a few feet in front of Geoff, eyeing him with a smile as if amazed.) Well? (she is still)

Geoff: Well.

Jenny: What now?

Geoff (stepping forward, reaches out a hand) Just. (Stops, takes his hand back.) No.

Jenny (confused): No?

Geoff (smiles at her, walks around): So. You like to read.

Jenny: Yes, I do.

Geoff: So. Do you like poetry?

Jenny: Yes, I do. Daddy gave me the poetry of George Herbert when I was young.

Geoff: Is that all? Was there anything in his poems that you like?

Jenny: They seem very – very clean to me.

Geoff: “Very clean?” Well then. Here’s something you may not have read: (quotes) “Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show.”

Jenny: You wrote those words to me. In one of your notes.

Geoff: Do you know who wrote those words?

Jenny (shakes her head): No. Herbert is the only poet I know.

Geoff (advancing): There is another verse that I want you to hear.

Jenny: Alright.

Geoff (strikes a pose): It’s in medieval German. (clears his throat) “Du bist min, ich bin din. Des soltu gewis sin. Du bist beslossen in minem herzen; verloren ist das sluzzelin. Du muost ouch immer darin sin.”

Jenny: What does that mean?

Geoff: Shall I translate it for you?

Jenny (sitting innocently on the ground) Please do.

Geoff: Alright. “You are mine, I am yours; of that you can be sure. You are enclosed in my heart; the key is lost. You must remain in there forever.”

Jenny (stunned): How horrible!

Geoff: Horrible?

Jenny: Yes – to feel as if you could own another person, even some small part of them.

Geoff: Do you think there can be love without some sort of possession – (turning) however small?

Jenny (obviously somewhat uncomfortable) I don’t know. How would I know? Only I don’t like the idea.

Geoff (pleading): But –

Jenny: I don’t like the idea. (Stands with her arms crossed)

Geoff (softly): Alright. I won’t pressure you. I only want to say that sometimes the only way to move forward in this world is to take the bad or painful experiences we have had into ourselves, and get past them and grow from them.

Jenny: You mean we need pain to make us whole.

Geoff (walking around): Pain. And other things.

Jenny (intrigued): What things?

Geoff (pausing): Well, like love.

Jenny: You mean the kind of love that is not like the love that Hamdith feels for me. Not the love of a brother for a sister.

Geoff: That’s right.

Jenny (throws her hands in the air in frustration) But how is it different? What makes that kind of love different?

Geoff (thinking): Jenny, did you never wonder what made your father your father and your mother your mother?

Jenny: They’re that way because they love me.

Geoff: But, I mean – more than that.

Jenny: What do you mean?

Geoff (breathes out, as if considering): Jenny, I am going to do something now, and if you don’t like it and want me to stop, please tell me so right away. Okay?

Jenny: Alright.

Geoff (swiftly goes up to her and, placing his hands on either side of her face, kisses her; backing away) Well?

Jenny: Oh.

Geoff: Oh! (backs away) What is it?

Jenny (her hand to her mouth): Nothing.

Geoff: If I hurt you, I’m sorry.

Jenny (backing away as if shy, ashamed) No, you didn’t hurt me. But –

Geoff: Yes?

Jenny: Nothing.

Geoff (walking around, puts his hand to his chin as if considering his next move) Jenny, did your mother and father fight?

Jenny (considers before answering; nods): I would hear them sometimes. It used to scare me when I was young. But they would yell for a while, and then there would be stillness, and then after that I could usually hear my mother crying like I cried last night. Do you know, that was the first time I have ever cried before.

Geoff: Really? You didn’t cry when your mother died?

Jenny (shakes her head): I wasn’t there. Father wouldn’t let me see. But what’s “died?” (inquisitively) Where did Mommy go?

Geoff (staring): Dear Lord. (thinking) Jenny, do you know when you prick yourself in the finger with a needle or a splinter, blood runs out?

Jenny: Is that what that liquid red stuff is? I’ve never learned about this before.

Geoff (continuing): Well, sometimes, if too much blood runs out or if the blood stops flowing, well – that’s when death comes.

Jenny: But what is death – really? Is it like love? Is it something I have to try out?

Geoff (hastily): No. I don’t want you to think about it. (Turns) No. Wait. You can think about it – that’s alright. That’s normal. But don’t worry about it.

Jenny: But what is death?

Geoff: It’s nothing to – no, that’s not right. It’s something to be thought about, but not agonized over.

Jenny: Why not?

Geoff: As it’s inevitable ...

Jenny: Death?

Geoff: Yes.

Jenny: But what is death?

Geoff (thinking): Death is the end of life.

Jenny (laughing, but intrigued): End of life? But how can that be?

Geoff: You’ve never seen anything die before?

Jenny: Is that the act of death?

Geoff: Yes.

Jenny: No.

Geoff: No? You’ve never seen a flower lose bud or a leaf fall from a tree?

Jenny (shaking her head): Everything in here is perfect. (leaning in) Maybe too perfect?

Geoff: I would agree. That is why –

Jenny: What?

Geoff: Nothing. Jenny, are you sure you don’t want to be here anymore?

Jenny: In this – horrible – place? Yes, I am sure.

Geoff: You know that if you left now and in the way I am contemplating you wouldn’t be able to see your father or your brother anymore.

Jenny: Oh. That seems harsh. Why not?

Geoff: Jenny, this place is not good for you. They are not good for you. The only way you will be happy is if we get you away from here.

Jenny: But – forever?

Geoff: Yes – forever.

Jenny: But they love me. Hamdith loves me.

Geoff: They don’t love you, not really.

Jenny: They do.

Geoff: They own you.

Jenny: But you said –

Geoff: Jenny, I love you.

Jenny: Then show me. I am not sure.

Geoff (goes up to her again, kisses her; she melts into his arms) Well?

Jenny: That’s nice. Is that what love is?

Geoff: Part of it, perhaps.

Jenny: Is that how my father loved my mother? The kind of love he had for her, I mean?

Geoff (holds Jenny at arm’s length, strokes her hair): Would you like to leave this place with me? Really, I mean?

Jenny: I don’t know now. (Backing away from him) I’m not sure. But where would we go? What other places are there besides here?

Geoff: There are lots of beautiful places to see and explore. Haven’t you ever been outside of this enclosure and seen any place else?

Jenny (thinking): Maybe when I was young. I somewhat remember a collection of buildings, houses, places where people would sit and eat together, or get things, or wait for others – a village. A town. Roads. But nothing more than that.

Geoff: Would you like to see other places with me, Jenny? Would you like to travel?

Jenny (looking around, as if trapped) I’d have to leave here.

Geoff: Yes. (Steps forward) With me.

Jenny: No. Only –

Geoff: Yes?

Jenny: Nothing.

Geoff: Jenny, let me tell you something about beautiful places in the world. In a place called Egypt, tall pyramids – four triangles of brick meeting at the top – look out over plains of sand and a lion with the head of a man, a great king who made himself immortal after his – death. In the city of Paris people stroll and eat pastries in the shadow of a tall tower made of iron. In Venice lovers caress as they sit in long wooden boats that carry them down grand avenues of water. In China a great wall snakes around the countryside. In England vast white cliffs of chalk tower above turbid waters. Jenny, wouldn’t you like to see these things?

Jenny: I don’t know. To leave my father –

Geoff (bursting out; then catching himself, as if to a child; but passionately): Jenny, come with me and catch yearless somethings in the summer breeze. Come and savor amorous delights –

Jenny (curious): Amorous?

Geoff: Amor – Latin – love. (As if struck by an idea) Jenny, can we go to your room?

Jenny (eyeing the tied-together sheets) My room? (confused) But what would you –

Geoff: Jenny, like I said before, if you ever feel that I’m hurting you, in any way, please tell me. I just want to help you. I love you.

Jenny: But what does that mean?

Geoff (reaching out a hand): Follow me. We’ve only got half an hour or so until your father and brother return.

Jenny (trusting): Are we going to talk in that time?

Geoff (taking her hand): Follow me. (They go into the house and, soon, are seen entering Jenny’s room, which then goes dark.)

(Meanwhile, the sound of a truck is heard, and headlights are seen through the new gap in the wall. Soon Eadith comes charging through it, followed by Hamdith, calling: Jenny! Jenny!)

Eadith (to Hamdith): You stay here and guard against the wolf (handing him a rifle; runs inside the house, still calling out Jenny’s name, then is seen bursting into Jenny’s room. With a shout, there is the sound of a tussle, and of banging on the stairs. Then Eadith reemerges onto the patio, dragging by his collar Geoff, whom he proceeds to throw onto the ground. Hamdith raises the gun, but Eadith grabs it and points it at Geoff, who raises his hands meekly.)

Geoff (calmly): You wouldn’t kill a man.

Eadith: I’d kill you, no problem.

Geoff: I wonder. And let Jenny experience something else that will allow her to become a real person?

Eadith: I don’t like how much you know. How did you get here? How did you get in?

Geoff: All mysteries in this world are explainable by love.

Hamdith: What happened?

Eadith: I found them lying side by side on her bed, their hands joined.

Geoff: And no more than that. We talked.

Eadith: Oh, you talked, did you? Is that what was going on?

Geoff: Tell me. What happened to your wife?

Eadith: What do you mean you – (spitting it out) you bastard? The wolf attacked her.

Geoff: I wonder. Was she faithful to you?

Eadith: Get out of here, you bastard, and don’t come back or I’ll kill you.

Geoff: Then do it and let her see.

Eadith: She’s hidden.

Geoff: Then do it and let her find out. And be a murderer. How would you keep your composure in here then? (Leaning closer)

Eadith: Get out. Now.

Geoff (Standing; Hamdith, his eyes always on Geoff, backs away from the gap in the wall.) Alright. I’ll go. But you can be sure I’ll be back. Do you think I care for my life? All I want to see is for Jenny to become a real person, not the doll you’ve dressed her up to be. I will take her away from here and show her Paris and Venice and Rome, the city that is love spelled backwards. As they say, “Amor vincit omnia!” (With that, he makes a sprint and dashes through the gap in the wall.)

(Eadith is left pointing the gun at the gap. He stares in blank rage at the empty hole. Then he motions to Hamdith, who disappears for a few seconds and then comes back carrying an even larger metal plate, which he fastens over the gap in the wall and again bolts to either side. He stands back, admiring his handiwork, then turns to Eadith.)

Hamdith: Dad, what are we going to do now? Where’s Jenny?

Eadith: She’s safe. So. Our wall is crumbling. Well, let it then. It’s cement. We can find a better way against wolves and men. We’ll keep her in the house from now on.

Hamdith: But what about the window? You saw –

Eadith: Then we won’t have windows. We’ll build everything out of cold hard immortal steel.

Hamdith: But dad! It’ll – (chokes) it’ll kill her not to be able to go outside.

Eadith: The wolf will kill her if she does. What would you choose for her?

Hamdith: After Mom – Dad, what is the truth, after all? What was that man referring to and how does he know anything?

Eadith (shaking his head): Don’t you ask about it. Don’t you ask anything about it! Get those supplies. We’ll cover all the windows and have it done by tonight. Prepare for the worst.

(Hamdith stands still for a few seconds as if contemplating his father’s request. Then, going up to the gate, he punches a passcode into the keypad and exits. He can be seen hauling in building supplies, bolts and metal plates, while Eadith stands silently aiming the gun at the gate as if waiting for a one-on-one confrontation with the wolf. Gradually Jenny’s crying, shrieks, and screams can be heard, remotely and distantly as if defending themselves through the barest cracks of twenty layers of steel plates. The sky, blue and rosy while the lovers were speaking, has turned again a shade of the deepest, dullest gray. The light gradually fades on the scene as Hamdith is bringing in supplies and Eadith is stock-still with the gun. Darkness.)

End of Scene Two

Scene Three:

(An inner room in the glass-and-chrome house. One dim light shines down from a light bulb at the top of the room. In the corner of the room Jenny can be seen, huddled in her sky-blue dress, her arms around her knees, crying softly. Her face, streaked with tears, tells of how she has been crying and screaming until she is exhausted. She is afraid of the dark. At one point in time Jenny looks up from where her head is buried in her knees and at the dim light bulb, afraid at first, then watching it intently as if asking it for aid. After a few seconds she looks away and puts her head back down, silent this time, not crying. Like a child being abused, she seems to have accepted that situation as one that she, somehow, has caused or brought down on herself. Suddenly, the light bulb begins to glow more brightly, pulsating brighter and then darker for a few seconds as if gathering strength. Finally its luminescence is unmistakable, and its glow shines more brightly over the entire, small room. The light becomes stronger in one distinct portion, then gradually it takes shape in the form of a woman, tall, beautiful, golden-haired. She looks kindly at Jenny for a few seconds, waiting as Jenny starts quietly to sing a simple childhood song.)

Jenny (simply): Once there was a wisegreat king

In the land of Eve.

He gave her a golden ring

So she could never leave ...

Spirit of Astrid (kindly, softly): Jenny, why are you sad?

Jenny (looks up in tears; then jumps up) Mommy! (runs to the spirit, which she tries to embrace)

Astrid (holding out a spirit hand to her): Jenny, I cannot hold you. I am not physical, not in the flesh. You need a real person for that, and you need to be a real person for that. I just want to talk to you, to guide you, to give you some peace. I’ve been watching you all along, your whole life and even longer than that. I have loved you for as long as you’ve been in my life and for as long as I wanted you to be in this world. Now, Jenny, I know that it was Eadith who locked you in this room.

Jenny (nods): Yes. Because of Geoff. Because he came here and he put his lips to mine and he lay down beside me on my bed holding my hand.

Astrid: Jenny, do you love Geoff?

Jenny (nods slowly as if contemplating): Yes, I think I do – if that’s what you call it. (leaning in) But why do you call Daddy “Eadith?” Why not call him “Daddy” or “your father?”

Astrid: Jenny, Eadith is not your father.

Jenny (stunned): What do you mean? Daddy loves me.

Astrid: Eadith owns you.

Jenny: That’s just what Geoff said.

Astrid: That’s because it’s true. Eadith doesn’t love you in the way that a father should love his daughter.

Jenny: What do you mean? I don’t know any other way for a father to love.

Astrid (smiling gently): Jenny, I am going to be like Geoff and say that I want to help you grow up and become a whole person like all adults in this world.

Jenny: You mean I need to learn pain.

Astrid: I mean you need to live.

Jenny: And I can’t do that here?

Astrid (shaking her beautiful head): Jenny, it is only the people in our lives that make those lives worth living.

Jenny: I have Hamdith. And Daddy.

Astrid (as kindly as she can) I am like Geoff. I don’t want to hurt you, only guide you based on the wisdom that my parents gave to me and that I learned by living and talking to people in the world. You need more than just Hamdith and Eadith. You need Geoff, or, when you get out into the world and explore, someone like him.

Jenny: Someone to love me, and not as a brother world love me, but as a – lover would love me.

Astrid: That’s right. We need real, true love in this world. But do you know what else we need?

Jenny: What?

Astrid: We need people, of all and various sorts, and all their industry and knowledge and wisdom and learning. We need the pyramids of Egypt. We need the pastries of Paris. We need the canals of Venice. We need the walls in China. We need the little pubs perched on top of the white chalk cliffs of Dover. We need skyscrapers, we need oceans. We need houses, we need leas. We need the air to breathe, and scientists to tell us what it is made of, to tell us what particles in it, the oxygen, cause us to live, the calcium that causes out hearts to beat, the doctors to tell us that our aortas are blocked – but also the poets to interpret in verse what the sentient feeling of that pain is, and all pain, the markers of which we can tell to others, but the quality of which we can never fully describe to another living being. Only you know what it is like to be you, no one else. That is what makes you special, in spite of and because of all the other daughters and sisters and lovers in the world – and they are there, don’t you worry about that. If you were the only one out there – how lonely that would be! How radically it would change what life is, what it is all about. Do you see what I mean?

Jenny (enthusiastically): Yes. I don’t know about everything you are saying or all the words you use, but I think somehow I understand everything.

Astrid: You are learning, my dear. That is what Eadith has denied you. And it is not right. We only become whole, real people through knowledge, wisdom, learning, living, loving, hurting, or being hurt. We must be around other people, a wide range, in this life, in order to become and mature into the people that we are meant to be. Geoff recited a poem for you, didn’t he?

Jenny (nods) In med-evil – German. What’s that?

Astrid: It’s another language. And time. And way of thinking. And world. It’s the imprint of the thought of another group of people. It’s an objective marker of a subjective way of being. The external signs and symbols of a whole, radically other form of thought. A poem, any writing, any action can be decoded into the original thought behind it. But what’s a thought, after all? There is no “point in time.” Everything that exists exists over time. That is why the whole point in this world is to keep living. As a messenger from the beyond, I know – the point and value of life is in the living. We must live and love while we can. (Reciting) “Gather ye rosebuds while ye may ... Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May.” Do you know which two men wrote those verses?

Jenny: I don’t.

Astrid: The first is by a metaphysical poet, Robert Herrick. The metaphysicals believed that poetic enthusiasm and sentiment should be tailored into a strict form, encompassing poetic meter and rhyme. William Shakespeare wrote the other verse, in one of his sonnets. He is very concerned with love, and the passage of time.

Jenny (sitting down on the ground, like a good disciple): But what do you mean by “time?” Is it anything like death?

Astrid (reaching out to stroke Jenny’s cheek in a ghostly gesture): For us who are alive in this world, death is a part of time and time is a part of death. It also depends what you believe. I never believed in God when I was alive, but I always believed that there was universal truth and a universal desire to be validated by something outside of ourselves, a larger sphere that contains everything inside of it and that gives what is inside of it a purpose. When I died, I went to that higher sphere, and when I die from that sphere I hope (but do not know) that I will again go to some higher sphere that contains it, too, and that proves and validates the world that is a part of it. That is the pain and also the risk and also the joy of living.

Jenny: What is God?

Astrid (her face clouds somewhat): He or she is a being for whom many wars have been fought and many people killed and many ideologies formed over the past many hundreds and thousands of years. Belief in God can embolden and strengthen; it can also weaken, cruellify, and cloud and confuse. It should be accompanied by close and careful thought and not taken lightly, while at the same time not be rejected outright because of lack of evidence. That is not just faith – that is theory. And we are nothing if we do not contemplate the possibilities that exist even outside of our own, close lives. Science postulates things we may never be able to know, like the beginning of our universe or multiverses outside our own. Why may not religion do the same? By whatever name you call it, God, universal truth, science, religion, consciousness, sentience, otherworldliness – all, I think, are fundamentally one and the same thing, inner human impulses – the innermost – that represent the deepest and most natural parts of our understanding. But I am not here, I did not come, to lecture you, or to give you a history of a world you do not yet know, but to help you, to help get you out of this place and into that world so you can live. You will have all the rest of your life to learn. What we must do now is figure out what to do next.

Jenny: What should I do, Mommy? (getting up) Tell me what to do. I don’t want to stay here.

Astrid (gently): Patience, my dear. This room is made of cold steel. It’s not like the cement of the wall, or the glass of your window. It won’t give way so easily or just to the power of love. I can help you, but in the end it’s going to have to be you who gets yourself out of this room. I am a spirit. Like I told you, I am not flesh. I cannot affect the physical world; I can only influence the numinous world of thought. There is a way out of this for you, I am sure of it.

Jenny (looking at the light bulb again as if pleading for it to help her) But how? You said the room is cold steel and won’t give way. How can I get out of it, then?

Astrid: Jenny; look at the door. (Jenny obeys, glancing at the outline of the steel doorway) Do you see what’s beside it?

Jenny: A keypad, of course. Daddy – that is, father, that is Eadith, always locks everything by passcode.

Astrid: He is and always was a smart man. Do you know why he does that?

Jenny: No. Why?

Astrid: It’s because it’s easy enough to find a key and use it, even when someone has taken that key and thrown it into the bottom of a goldfish pond or a deep lake. But a passcode – especially when it’s a word with deep meaning – now that is hard to find, because it took some deep element of thought on the part of the originator. It takes knowledge and – wisdom – to decode. Do you see what I’m saying?

Jenny: Do you mean that the passcode is “wisdom?”

Astrid: Very good. But your father is smarter even than that. He would put the passcode in a language you don’t know so you would be sure not to guess it.

Jenny: Like – German.

Astrid: I think he would go even further than that. Even more primeval.

Jenny: Not med-evil?

Astrid: Do you know what “medieval” means?

Jenny: No.

Astrid: “Medium Aevum” is a Latin phrase that means “Middle Ages.”

Jenny: That’s a period of time?

Astrid: Yes. And a way of thinking, and another language or set of them, and another world.

Jenny: But what could make people think so differently in this world?

Astrid: Because everyone comes from a different place, a different family, a different background, a different political system. Everyone uses a different language, different symbols or turns of phrase to encode their thoughts. But I think that, fundamentally, we all have the same basic, natural desires that motivate us. That what we desire in this world goes back to the fundamentals of what it means to be human. I do not think that our basic desires have changed much since our species was created, by whomever or by whatever process. That is why I think Eadith would have encoded the secret of the door in a more ancient, universal and primeval set of language, a word so ancient and fundamental that, even though you know the ultimate sense of it, you would never, without knowledge and learning, be able to guess it. And knowledge and learning are precisely what Eadith has deprived you of. He has set up for himself a perfect system, one in which he owns you completely, and one from which he knows you will be fundamentally unable to escape.

Jenny: So what can I do?

Astrid: Let me think and guide you. What is the oldest thing you can think of?

Jenny: You. When I was young.

Astrid: That may be the oldest thing in your world. But, like I said and like Geoff told you, there are many places out there in the wider world, the sphere that exists outside of the room that you’re in right now, and there are languages out there that you don’t know and that have existed since time immemorial, and that stem from impulses that are deeper and more fundamental to us and to our species than we can perhaps ever tell. These are the sorts of things that I came down to teach you. I cannot stay much longer. But before I go I want to guide you to the answer that will allow you to open the door to your freedom. Do you know anything about the past?

Jenny: Outside of this place, this enclosure? I know nothing of the world.

Astrid: I am going to tell you something now, and I hope that this will allow you to discover something even more important than just opening that door – to your freedom. Something that will allow you to become the person I wanted you to become and hoped that you would from the very first moment that I hoped you would come into the world. Jenny, I told you when you were young but you may not remember it, but – I love you. I love you as a mother loves her daughter, and I love you as much as any mother ever loved her daughter. If you had not come into the world I would have felt that something was lacking in my life, and I could not now imagine life without you. There is a fundamental secret in this world that everyone who lives knows deep down in their core – knowing it and not knowing it, for it is fundamentally inexpressible in words. There is a truth that can’t be spoken, a pain too deep for knowing, the root of all being, the essence of our humanity – spoken and not spoken, known and unknown, before time, after time, out of time, to which time is fundamentally a mystery, the mystery of life, and for which and because of which great and terrible wars have been fought on this greatmassive pale blue dot, and about which people will continue to war and to fight and to strive for as long as humanity shall endure on the face of this great planet that it has been given to us to steward and protect and respect and cherish and love for as long as our species endures – this and much more I wish for you, my cherished daughter, and that, someday, you will see the wide world that exists outside of this room and this house and this enclosure, that you will eat pastries with Geoff in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower and ride with him in a gondola down the Grand Canal in Venice, and past the Doge’s palace and where Richard Wagner once lived, and will climb onto the back of the lion in Egypt and ride it to the top of the Great Pyramid, from which you will touch the stars, and that you will have dinner and a beer in one of the little pubs that dot the edges of the cliffs in Dover. These things I wish for you, my beloved daughter, these and an infinity of other things that cannot be named in words because they are felt too deeply and by every person who has lived, does live, or will ever live. Now, can you guess what the passcode is? It is a word unspoken and unwritten, because too deeply felt, but known to every rational and even every irrational creature ever to have lived on this pale blue dot. It may be a word you do not know.

Jenny: Mother, I can’t even guess. (Leaning in expectantly) Can’t you tell me?

Astrid (shaking her head): I cannot tell you because the thought cannot be expressed in any word available to human thought. But can you not guess what it is?

Jenny (standing with her hands in front of her, simply, as if reciting a poem as a child would at a school assembly): Of this you can be sure; the world is simplepure. On this I am elated: the desire of all things for life is never sated. So that is it? Really? “The desire of all things for life is never sated?” Life is what all things that live desire. Like desires like. (smiling at herself) Why did I say that? Strange – it just popped into my head, as if it was something that I knew and didn’t know all along, that you just drew out of me. Words unspoken. That seems simple. Yet wonderful and complex.

Astrid: You are a true poet. At heart, where it matters.

Jenny: I suppose that to be a poet one just has to be able to put words to the fundamental desire of our hearts – of the heart that creates them.

Astrid: One heart is as valuable as many. Blood is more precious than gold. But many wars have been fought over piles of gold.

Jenny: Then the passcode is – life?

Astrid: The passcode is the life you were always meant to have. Think about Paris, dream Venice, imagine the pyramids, render the Great Wall, paint the White Cliffs! Live and you will be free.

(Jenny stands with her eyes firmly closed, hands clasped in front of her, as if concentrating intently. Suddenly a great, slurping sound is heard, and the walls of the room begin to disintegrate, melting around her. Soon all that can be seen is Jenny and the spirit of her mother in the middle of fields and grass. In the great distance is a black speck that, on closer examination, turns out to be Eadith.)

Jenny: Mother, it worked! Thank you! (she rushes up to and tries to embrace her mother, but Astrid holds up her hand)

Astrid: As I said, I cannot embrace you, although I would trade the sun and the moon and all the stars to do so. I have brought you to a different level of understanding, one that will allow you to live your life as it ought to be lived. You must take it with you into your new life and not forget it, and let it serve you well. Can you do this for me?

Jenny: Mother, I will. Thank you!

Astrid: Now go. Geoff is waiting for you.

Jenny: Thank you, mother.

(The spirit of Astrid smiles at Jenny before gradually fading away. Jenny, delirious, looks around her, clasping and unclasping her hands and holding them up to her face, before running towards the wall, which stands in crumbles, going through one of the gaps while can be heard Eadith crying, “Jenny! Jenny!” and the low far-off howling of a hungry wolf.)

End of Scene Three

Scene Four:

(A field. The sky is overcast. The sound of running feet can be heard, and Eadith’s and Hamdith’s cries of “Jenny! Jenny!” They soon appear on the scene, running from one side of the stage to the next, beaming flashlights in their hands, until they come back together in center stage and stop. Hamdith is quiet but Eadith continues to look around, his flashlight held in every direction. Finally he points off towards a clump of trees in the distance. Hamdith runs off in that direction, leaving Eadith by himself in the middle of the field. He looks around again, then begins to speak.)

Eadith: So. Is this the day and how I lose my – baby girl? Damn that man and damn the world. What am I going to do now?

(A light begins to gather a few feet away from Eadith. It starts like the light bulb, dim at first, then gathers strength. Eadith watches it, intrigued, his mouth open, as the light forms into the shape of Astrid.)

Astrid: Eadith.

Eadith (holding the flashlight like a weapon) What the –

Astrid: Eadith, if you ever want to find peace in this life you must stop what it is you are doing.

Eadith: And what is that?

Astrid: Pursuing Jenny.

Eadith: No.

Astrid: Yes.

Eadith: She is our daughter.

Astrid. She is my daughter.

Eadith (waving his arm disgustedly): Ah –

Astrid: You may think you love her, and so you do, but in order to love her the better and properly, you must let her go.

Eadith: No. Only.

Astrid: Yes?

Eadith: Nothing. What do you know of it, anyway?

Astrid: That you love Jenny and don’t love her? Just look at what you’ve done to her. Give her up or lose her forever!

Eadith (pleading, crying): No!

Astrid: Then she is already lost to you. Let her now be saved by another. (disappears)

Eadith: No. (raging about wildly) It isn’t true. It can’t be and I won’t let it. He’ll not have her. It isn’t the way. It isn’t the way.

(Hamdith wanders back in as Eadith sinks to the ground in a heap of emotions. He stands in front of him as if questioning)

Hamdith: Dad, what is happening? I think I saw them leaving, that clump of trees over there. Let’s get after them, come on!

Eadith (standing): Son, have you thought about what we’ll do once we catch them?

Hamdith (staring at him): What d’you mean? We’ll take her home.

Eadith: To what home? Our wall is destroyed, crumbled, all the safety we built. We can’t even protect ourselves –

Hamdith: But the wolf! Dad, we can’t let the wolf get her.

Eadith: We can’t even protect ourselves from the wolf now.

Hamdith: But dad – (frustrated turns around, throws out his arms) We can’t let the wolf get her like it got mom.

Eadith: Ham, the wolf didn’t get your mother.

Hamdith: What do you mean?

Eadith: Hamdith, there are some things – no, that’s not it – Ham, do you remember anything from before we built the wall?

Hamdith (shakes his head slowly): Only bits and pieces. Some friends I haven’t seen since then.

Eadith: Then you already know in some sense what got your mother.

Hamdith: I do?

Eadith: Hamdith, it was the outside that got your mother.

Hamdith: Where are we now? Inside or outside?

Eadith (considering): We’re nowhere really now. We’re caught somewhere in between. We’re in a liminal space that is somewhere on the threshold of “there” and “here,” and maybe we’ll never actually be anywhere again.

Hamdith: Dad, what in the world do you mean?

Eadith: We’re half-people, Ham. We’ve got nothing. We’ll have nothing – unless we can rebuild what we had on the same or a different foundation.

Hamdith: Our house? Rebuild again?

Eadith: We can do it, son. (Lays a hand on his shoulder) We can rebuild if we want to. We must find Jenny and get her back to where we know, to where she knows. (his face strained, harsh) We must get her back.

(He and Hamdith run offstage. In the meantime, Jenny and Geoff enter, running, pursued. Their hair and clothes are untidy, especially Jenny’s sky-blue dress. They are hand-in-hand, and come to rest on a tree stump that is large enough for the both of them and that signals that they are nearing civilization.)

Jenny: We must keep going! (tries to run on)

Geoff: Stay for a little while. We have enough of a lead on them. They won’t be able to catch us.

Jenny: Oh, Geoff, you don’t know that.

Geoff: But, Jenny, I do. I know why they won’t be able to catch us now.

Jenny: And why is that?

Geoff: Because we are starting to come into the real world, and that is something that they know nothing about and cannot comprehend.

Jenny: But Geoff –

Geoff: Trust me, Jenny.

Jenny: They’re right behind.

Geoff: Trust me.

(Eadith and Hamdith come stumbling through the trees and into the grove where Jenny and Geoff are sitting. Eadith stops cold. Hamdith goes up to Jenny and tries to pull her away from Geoff, who remains holding her hand.)

Hamdith: C’mon, Jenny, come on.

Jenny (pushing him away): No!

Hamdith: Come on, Jenny!

Jenny (standing up, her arms forced to her sides): No! I won’t go with you. I’m going with Geoff and we are going to climb the pyramids in Egypt and eat pastries in Paris and ride gondolas in Venice and walk the great wall in China and sit on the great white cliffs in Dover. We are going to do this and you are not going to stop us! (She flings out her right hand at Hamdith, who falls down at the blow. He lies there on the ground, stunned, blinking, unable even to move. Eadith simply looks on at the situation resignedly, as if to say that he knew this would happen all along, and shakes his head as if finally assimilating Astrid’s words.)

Eadith: Go, then, Jenny. Go. Go and let him protect you from the wolf.

(From far off, the howling of the wolf is heard.)

Eadith: Go, Jenny, and break my heart. (tears in his eyes, on the verge of outright crying) Go, Jenny, and take my very life from me. Go if you think you will be happier with him. But stay, and we will work things out so that you are never sad and lonely ever again. All you have to do is tell me these things and I will make them right. (Holds out his hand to her)

(Jenny, standing still, finally shakes her head.)

Eadith: Go if you must. But stay if you will.

Jenny (staring; finally): Daddy – father – I cannot go back with you. I have no reason to think and no assurance that anything will be different this time than it was with you the first time. I cannot go back with you.

Eadith (staring): Jenny.

Jenny (shaking her head) No. But – (pauses) but if you will come with me –

Eadith: What?

Jenny (softening): Yes, come with me, come into the world that I am going into, and find a place in it to live.

Eadith (pauses): With you?

Jenny (looking at Geoff): With us. (to Eadith) In the world. And there will be no enclosures and no boundaries and no locked rooms with doors sealed by passcodes that are thoughts and words and feelings felt by people from time immemorial. No more walls to shut out the world and wolves and men. No more fathers who are and who are not our fathers. Father – come out of the world you have been living in and come into the one that I am going to. (Holds out a hand to him.) You asked me to come with you. Now come with me, fearless.

(Hamdith, still on the ground, begins to get up. He goes over to Eadith and lays a hand on his shoulder, breathing as if from a run. Eadith looks at him inquisitively as if asking his opinion, then over at Jenny, who is still confidently holding out her arm to the both of them. Then he sinks down to the ground and starts sobbing.)

Eadith: Do what you will. What value does my life have, anyway?

Geoff (stepping foward): A great deal.

Eadith: You don’t know. What do you know about it, homewrecker?

Geoff (calmly): I know that you love your – daughter, and that you wish her well. So, part of that is her wishing you well in return. Let her, then!

Eadith (in tears for a few seconds): I can’t. I can’t.

Hamdith (going up to Eadith, pulling him off the ground): Dad, come on. Maybe we should listen to them. What do we have to go back to, anyway? Why don’t we start fresh? We can build a new house somewhere, in the back corner of some – village, and we’ll be happy – out there in the world. (Lifting him up and pulling him forwards) Come on, dad. (Eadith allows himself to be moved.)

Geoff (pointing): There is a town just a few hundred yards in that direction. You can already see the glimmer of the sun on the tops of the houses along its outskirts. (straightening) But of course you know this area. See – there is the hardware store where you used to buy building supplies. They know you there. Why not start where you’re known and build outwards from there – not inwards anymore. Promise me that.

Eadith (defeated, resigned, exhausted): I will. (He and Hamdith move offstage)

(Geoff looks towards Jenny, concerned, and sees that she is standing entirely still, hardly breathing, hands at her sides, staring at where Hamdith and her father have exited the stage. Geoff, thinking, soon goes over to her and affectionately touches her arm. She shudders, draws away, looks over at him as if confused. He backs away, puts his hands in the pockets of his trousers.)

Geoff (walking around): Jenny, you know I said to tell me if you ever didn’t like something I was doing and wanted me to stop?

Jenny: Yes.

Geoff (approaching): Well?

Jenny: What? (leaning in) Only –

Geoff: Yes?

Jenny: Nothing. Geoff, do you love me?

Geoff: Yes.

Jenny: Then show me.

(Geoff swiftly goes up to Jenny and presses his lips to hers. She throws her arms around him and they are seen for a few seconds before the stage goes dark.)

End of Scene Four

Scene Five:

(The outskirts of a midwestern town that is half small town, half huge metropolis. The edges of a forest can be seen on the left side of the stage, with an empty space of grass and meadow in the middle of the two areas. The howling of a wolf can be heard as Jenny and Geoff appear onstage, he drawing her forwards, hand-in-hand. They stop midway through the stage. Geoff seems confident and unafraid, but Jenny is afraid. Finally she breaks her hand away from Geoff’s, falling backwards, although he goes up to her and tries to lead her on again. She remains adamant, seeming almost inconsolable. Finally Geoff relents and gets Jenny to sit – tentatively – on a park bench that stands under a spreading, unmanicured oak tree. Jenny sits, her head in her hands, as Geoff stands before her, clasping and unclasping his hands in front of him as if weighing carefully what to do.)

Geoff (walking back and forth): Jenny, I really think we should go on.

Jenny: I can’t, Geoff. I can’t. I want to go home.

Geoff: Jenny, your home is destroyed. You can’t go back. Your father and brother have left and have gone into the world. Go out and join them! Or better still, come with me and climb the pyramids of Egypt! (pleading with her, takes her hand and tries to console her, but she remains emotional)

Jenny: Geoff, I feel as if the wolf is already on me! How do I defend myself?

Geoff: I’ll protect you.

Jenny: But he’ll get you, too. (Stands up, crying, tears her hand out of Geoff’s) He’ll get the both of us!

Geoff: Jenny, we are the both of us caught in a brief moment of the sun, and you are quite the most fearless person I have ever met.

Jenny (smiling weakly): Fearless and into the future?

Geoff: To think that there is anyone else than you more perfect out there, or whom I love, is torture. In this world everything radiates out from its source, and my love for you colors my whole world.

(Suddenly they are beset by a ferocious howling. Jenny jumps up, distraught.)

Jenny: Oh, Geoff, I can’t do it – I can’t meet it – let’s keep going –

Geoff: It’s hard to outrun a wolf.

Jenny: I – (stops, confused, considering) Geoff, what is a wolf?

Geoff: Do you mean you’ve never seen this wolf before?

Jenny: I’ve never seen any wolf before.

Geoff: Never any wolf? Well, perhaps it is –

(They are interrupted by another burst of close-up, loud howling, more of a human-sounding call at this point in time.)

Jenny: Geoff, what are we going to do?

Geoff: Don’t be afraid, Jenny. I think I know –

(They are interrupted by the entrance from stage right of a dapper, well-dressed gentleman in a dark suit, a panama hat, nice shoes, a blood-red vest, with a pocket square and dark sunglasses, which he removes and places into his pocket. Already and even from a distance one can see that he is genuinely handsome. He stops when he sees the pair, Jenny behind Geoff, who stands in front of her. A smile breaks on his face and he watches them for a few seconds before he steps forward and accosts Jenny.)

Wolf: Where are you going, little girl?

Geoff (stepping forward): Don’t you dare speak to her.

Wolf (looking at Geoff as if annoyed): And who are you?

Geoff: Geoff McLeod.

Wolf: No, but who *are* you, really, to her, I mean?

Geoff: I’m, well –

Wolf (laughing): If you can’t even say what you are to her – ha! Let her talk for herself. Well, miss? (leaning over Jenny)

Geoff (defending Jenny): Get away from her.

Wolf (standing firm, eyeing him): Like I said, let the young lady speak for herself.

(Jenny is silent, but as she looks into the wolf’s eyes she seems to be gathering strength. The wolf notices this and smiles, a toothy grin. Finally he straightens and turns to Geoff.)

Wolf (putting his arm around Geoff, who shudders): I think it’s time for me to have a little chat with this – (looks at Jenny) – lovely (at Geoff) young lady. (He begins to lead Geoff offstage despite Geoff’s protests and, passing his hand over Geoff’s mouth, slaps an invisible muzzle on him, which Geoff struggles with and tries to get off of himself, with no luck. Finally the wolf gives him a kick in the seat of the pants, and Geoff goes sailing offstage. The wolf sets up an invisible wall, Geoff’s banging on which can be heard intermittently throughout the scene as the wolf begins to talk to Jenny. Standing before Jenny, smiling both kindly and seductively; Jenny puts her head in her hands and tries to ignore him): Hmm. (Thinking. He goes up to a bed of flowers on stage left and plucks out a particularly juicy red rose. He goes up to Jenny and holds it up before her, standing silently for several seconds. After some time, reluctantly, Jenny, almost curious, slowly raises her head, as if exploring the possibility that the wolf is not, after all, going to attack her outright.)

Jenny (looking at the flower, intrigued, then at the wolf): What’s this?

Wolf (smelling the flower; heavenly): It’s a red rose. Symbol of true love.

Jenny: It’s lovely.

(The wolf holds out the flower to her. She takes it and holds it before her nose, smelling it. Little by little, she grows more relaxed, entranced by the flower, her feet dangling, her arms loose.)

Jenny (slowly at first) It’s my favorite color – red.

Wolf: I guessed you were the sort.

Jenny: Why – why do you say that?

Wolf (smiling): No reason. (Setting his right leg on the park bench, leaning over) Tell me, did that – man of yours ever give you a pretty flower like this one?

Jenny (considering): Well, no. Why? (leaning in somewhat) What does that mean?

Wolf (brushing away a thought with his hand) Oh, nothing, nothing, probably the timing wasn’t right.

Jenny: He gave me beautiful poetry.

Wolf (walking around, his hand to his clean-shaven face): Beautiful? And what made it so?

Jenny (holding the flower before her, looking at it constantly as if mesmerized): Well, it seemed beautiful, less – clean – than Herbert, and – amorous.

Wolf (laughing, his head in the air): Amorous. And who taught you that word?

Jenny: Geoff did. It comes from Latin “amor,” meaning “love.”

Wolf (still chuckling to himself): Does it, now? And tell me, miss, do you know what the word actually means?

Jenny: What do you mean?

Wolf: I mean, can you use it in a sentence?

Jenny (stuttering): Well, okay: “Come and savor amorous delights ... ” (breaks off, unable to think of how to continue)

Wolf (laughing softly to himself): Hahahm. But that still doesn’t tell me whether or not you know what the word actually means.

Jenny (curious): Why not?

Wolf (circling her, hands in his pockets): Well, one could have amorous delights, or vain delights, or operatic delights, or roving delights, or delights in carousing, corrupting, cruellifying, circumnavigating, sheep-shearing, shoals, shells, ships, skipping, skyping, slipping, slopping, slurping, burping, buying, flying, foraging, pillaging, piloting, rioting, striking, stroking, rabble-rousing, hell-raising, fighting, flighting, knights and armor, Lucia di Lammermoor, and the clamor of amor evermore. (looks at Jenny) Are you beginning to see what I am saying?

Jenny (looking back at the flower): Is it like mother said? I know that I am moving to a world right now and I do not know what I am going to find there, or whom, or what they will look like. But I do know one thing.

Wolf: Oh, yes? And what is that?

Jenny (standing up, but timidly): I know that Geoff loves me and that together we are going to climb the pyramids in Egypt and eat pastries in Paris and ride gondolas in Venice and walk the Great Wall in China and eat in a pub on top of the white cliffs of Dover.

Wolf (grinning): Is that so? And can you tell me what a pyramid looks like?

Jenny: It’s four triangles of brick meeting at the top.

Wolf: And what color was the pyramid painted when it was new?

Jenny: I – I don’t know.

Wolf: And the pastries of Paris? How do they taste?

Jenny: I don’t know.

Wolf: And a gondola? How long or curved is it?

Jenny: I don’t know.

Wolf: The Great Wall. Can you see it from outer space?

Jenny: I don’t know.

Wolf: And the beer that is served in the pubs on top of the white cliffs in Dover? What does it taste like?

Jenny: I don’t know.

Wolf: Because you’ve never tasted it before. And you’ve never seen or climbed a pyramid. You’re not yet the richer for having lived.

Jenny (defensively): I’ve lived.

Wolf: In a tight-knit world without recourse to other people or a variety of experiences. My dear, would you like to really live?

Jenny (grasps her hands to her chest as if trying to protect herself from an unseen force, shudders): I don’t know. Mother did say –

Wolf: Your mother is wise. (softly) Listen to your mother, my dear. And your lover. And me. Tell me, have you ever seen a picture?

Jenny: I don’t think so. (Gets up and turns away from him, but obviously intrigued, plucking at the flower) What’s a picture?

Wolf: It’s like anything you or I see around us. It tells you what something looks like, only it doesn’t tell you, it *shows* you. Here. (Reaching into his back pocket, pulling out a photograph. He hands it to Jenny.)

Jenny (looking at the photograph): What’s that?

Wolf: That, my dear, is what a pyramid looks like.

Jenny: A pyramid? (stares intently)

Wolf (wandering around casually): A great pyramid. Burial site of Khufu, next to the pyramid of Khafre, who built the sphinx, the great man-headed lion. That was many thousands of years ago.

Jenny: Thousands of years? Then those people are –

Wolf: They are dead.

Jenny: How horrible!

Wolf: Horrible or not, they made themselves immortal through their works. Horrible – (turns) but inevitable.

Jenny (looking away from the rose and at the wolf): For all of us?

Wolf: Even for you, my sweet dear. (Snaps his fingers, and a petal falls from the rose.) Your flower is dying.

Jenny (staring at the fallen petal by her feet): Oh.

Wolf: What do you think of death now?

Jenny: That fallen petal is still very beautiful.

Wolf: So you think death is beautiful?

Jenny: I think that everything that exists in this world and under the sun is beautiful.

Wolf: That petal is beautiful only because it still has the breath and bloom of life in it. Death is cold, dark, and ugly. In time the red suppleness of that flower will become black, fragile brittleness, and it will crumble in your hand. That is the nature of death: to infiltrate life, to get into its very pores, to break it apart. Do you know what the point of life is?

Jenny (more comfortable): The point of life is the act of living.

Wolf (smiling): No one can say you’re not smart.

Jenny (more comfortable) The desire of all things for life is never sated.

Wolf: Now that’s what I like to hear. Pure poetry.

Jenny: But –

Wolf: Yes?

Jenny: Nothing.

Wolf (drawing casually closer to Jenny): What is it? Tell me, please, and I won’t bite you.

Jenny (backing away): How do I know that?

Wolf: Well, you’re right, we never any of us know the prospects that a new day or turn of time will bring. But I give you my – word.

Jenny: What does that mean?

Wolf: It means I promise. (When Jenny looks doubtful the wolf faces her head on and continues.) I haven’t bitten you yet, have I? I easily could have.

Jenny: Could you?

Wolf: Like I said, I easily could have.

Jenny (begins to back away, but at a flash from the wolf’s eyes, stands firm): Tell me, are you a real wolf?

Wolf (laughs): I am a real wolf.

Jenny: Did you – kill – my mother?

Wolf (darkly): I did not kill your mother. I have never killed anyone.

Jenny: But not anything?

Wolf: I pluck a flower now and again. (Smiling) For a pretty girl.

Jenny (blushes, apparently involuntarily): If you didn’t kill my mother, then who did?

Wolf: There are many wolves out there in the world.

Jenny: Then why should I go out into it?

Wolf: Because of all the flowers it holds. And pyramids.

Jenny: But I should be afraid.

Wolf: You should be cautious, not afraid.

Jenny: But when there are so many dangers out there –

Wolf (staring at her for a moment; then drawing conspicuously closer): Dangers. But also beauties. Wonders. Magic. People. (He reaches out to touch her arm.) Love.

(Jenny shudders, draws back, retracting her arm, drawing both arms into her chest.)

Wolf: Do you know what love is?

Jenny (backing away from him suspiciously, but turning her head to look at the wolf): Geoff loves me. He told me so. He wrote me notes and he pressed his lips to mine and we lay side-by-side on my bed with our hands in each other’s hands.

Wolf (hands in his pockets, stares at her, considering): And what would you say if I told you that I love you?

(Geoff’s banging against the wall can be heard. Jenny looks off worriedly in that direction, starts to move towards Geoff, sees the wolf standing unmoved in front of her, stops, uncertain.)

Jenny: What do you mean?

Wolf: I can see that you are young, and beautiful, and smart, and attractive, and I want to tell you that I love you and am attracted to you.

Jenny (almost speechless): What do you mean, “attracted?”

Wolf (looking at her, raising his eyes): Didn’t your mother teach you anything about the business of love?

Jenny: My mother didn’t live long enough to.

Wolf: Your – lover, then?

Jenny: What do you mean?

Wolf (sighing): Believe it or not, I too wish you well in this world. I too would see you become a real person. I’m not so scary, am I? (Holds his arms out to either side, standing directly in front of her)

Jenny (half circling him): No, I suppose not.

Wolf: Well then?

Jenny: What?

Wolf: The world.

Jenny: Yes?

Wolf: What?

Jenny: Nothing. Only –

Wolf: Yes?

Jenny: Nothing.

Wolf (breathing out heavily): Well, do you think that there is a type of love that you have not considered before?

Jenny: What do you mean?

Wolf: Well, I think you know about the love a mother ought to feel for a daughter, and a father for a daughter, and a brother for a sister, and a poet for a beloved, but isn’t there a kind of love you haven’t considered yet?

(Jenny is silent and still)

Wolf (goes up to Jenny, slowly places his hands on either of her bare arms. She trembles, looks down, confused. The wolf lifts her chin so that they are looking at one another.) What is your name?

Jenny: Jenny.

Wolf: Wolfe. Jenny, how do you think I look? (At the sound of Geoff’s banging, Jenny’s eyes stray, but the wolf continues to stare at her undaunted, his face close to hers. She looks at his face as if conflicted.)

Jenny: I think you look – nice.

Wolf (eyes raised): Handsome?

Jenny (losing resistance): Yes, I think that’s the – word.

Wolf: Do you want to run away?

Jenny: No.

Wolf: Jenny, do you want to explore the city with me?

Jenny (stiffening): I’m going to explore the world with Geoff.

Wolf (exerting a slight pressure on her arm): The city first.

Jenny (quietly, her eyes on him, melting): Alright.

(Jenny allows herself to be led away towards the metropolis by the wolf as Geoff can be heard shouting and banging on the wall. Darkness.)

End of Scene Five

Scene Six:

(Light on a strange place. Three walls of red brick and one of glass windows form a quadrangle in which are contained a patch of grass, trees, and a goldfish pond with a fountain in the center. There are five benches along the arc of a stone pathway, corresponding to five doorways that seem to lead into the interior of the space. There is a feeling of tranquility, peace, comfort, collegiality, family, and fellowship about the quiet and comforting space. We spend a few moments here, listening to the delightful burbling of the fountain in the goldfish pond, place of peace. Words unspoken float through the air and comfort us, and we are reminded of family, friends, and the ones in this world who are dearest to us in life, of hurting and being hurt, and of forgiveness at the end of the path. We come to find, after a long journey, that finally, here, we are in a place of peace.

The sound of soft footsteps is heard from behind the iron gate, then they stop. Jenny’s voice is heard.)

Jenny (in a rich, full, questioning, wise, beautiful, experienced, sad, infused, contemplative, weary voice): What is this place? (She steps forward a pace so that we can see her, on the threshold of life in this quiet city. She stands looking at the gate solemnly, calmly, serenely, resignedly, as if she has forgotten all the past and does not care about either it or the future. Finally she reaches out a hand to the gate, seeing that one half of it is open. She holds her hand there for a few seconds, silent, begins to speak, opens her mouth, closes it, remains standing and silently staring, embattled, a wiser woman now than when she started.)

Jenny: It’s not locked. (Looking straight forwards) Can I go in? (wondering) Is anything denied me now? (Long pause) But I don’t want to spoil its virginal beauty. (stands thinking, listening to the sound of the water in the pond) That sounds inviting. (A plaque on the wall outside the gate catches Jenny’s interest. She revives somewhat; reading) “Remember – Felicity Acceptance – Architect – 1963.” (looking around again, the peace of the space radiating into and through her; poetry that she has written) Radiating thorns in the crown of my side, radiating pain. “Ecce iste venit”: behold, he comes, “saliens in montibus, transiliens colles,” leaping in the hills, jumping over the mountains. Fain in verse my love to show. “Meliora sunt ubera tua vino.” My love, my true love, left me to go leaping through the mountains. I sought him in the city, but the watchmen came and beat me. My love, because he is a poet who speaks in tongues, has left the city. He spoke, and his voice was stilled. It is my love whom they have killed. (puts her head down, almost in tears, but continuing to speak.) The child was not my child or his child, but ours. To love you well. This is heaven, this is hell, this the better, this the worse: this our never-ending ‘verse. And – oh God – this pain? How can I ever, ever explain, you master of duende, how much you’ll mean to me now, alway? (in tears, crying) But I must, oh how I must keep going, so you’ll keep knowing just how much it is that you I love! You are columbus meus, my own, my dove. Gratia causa tua my love grows strong, being so very, very long, I mean, always held within our hearts, in whatever land, of whatever art. I must keep going. Evermore my hands are showing – how much – it is – you – I love. (Unable to continue, Jenny breaks out fully in tears, but she does not sit on the ground or put her hands over her face, only hangs her head a little, vital sadness expressible only in tears.)

(A slight banging is heard, as of a person rapping on a window. Jenny looks up, her mouth open in silence.

Jenny: There’s a man there. He’s waving me in. Can I – can I go through the gate? He seems to say yes. Alright.

(She steps through the open half of the gate and into the rectangular quadrangle. She breathes deeply but with the air of someone who is coming out of tears. Then she stands silently for a few seconds, her arms resting peacefully at her sides. She listens to the fountain for a few seconds, seeming to find some peace in it.)

Jenny: This is an – oasis. In the midst of a quiet city. I – I feel safe and comfortable in this place. What is its name? How long can I stay here?

(Her attention is caught by something on one side of the quadrangle, from one of its walls.)

Jenny: What’s that? A man waving at me. He’s about my age. He’s reading a book. At a desk. With a lamp. What’s he waving at me for? Is he a friend? He smiled at me. Now he’s reading again. Should I go up there? No, best not to disturb him. He looks serene. (looking around again in slow curiosity) I wonder what this place is.

(She goes up to the edge of the goldfish pond and watches the fountain, listening. Suddenly she looks up towards a space just above the glass windows. There is the sound of a choir singing the end of Gustav Holst’s “The Planets.” Jenny listens as the sound of their singing trails off into the ether. When they have finished Jenny goes up to one of the five benches and – tentatively – sits down on it. Quietly, she looks over at the middle of the backrest and reads the word that is written on it.)

Jenny (knowingly): Sapientia. (Nods slowly and wisely; to herself): I feel as if everyone and everything I have ever loved is present in this place. (Sadly she looks at the space next to her on the bench and places her folded hands calmly on her lap.)

(The music of Philip Glass’s “Knee Play 5” from *Einstein on the Beach* begins to play, starting from “Two lovers sat on a park bench ...” It plays for about two minutes while all on- and offstage are silent. After the music stops Geoff emerges from one of the doorways. When he sees Jenny sitting on the bench, her head down, he stops short, as if amazed to see her there.)

Geoff: Jenny.

(Jenny looks up at him slowly. Her mouth opens but she says nothing.)

Geoff (drawing two steps nearer): Jenny.

(Jenny gets up slowly, hugging her arms around her, still saying nothing.)

(Geoff approaches still closer, reaches out a hand towards her hair. Jenny involuntarily flinches, turns awkwardly away, still clasping her arms tightly around her, her head hung.)

Geoff (lovingly, respectfully, sadly, deeply): Jenny, you know I told you that –

Jenny: Yes, I remember. That if you ever hurt me in any way I was to tell you so right away. (Turns to the side, but without looking at Geoff) Unfortunately not all men are so kind.

(There is silence between them.)

Geoff (looking around the quadrangle imploringly, as if seeking for aid; finally, looking at the sky; kindly): Do you know why the sky is blue?

(Pause; Jenny thinking)

Jenny (looking up; tentatively): Water droplets in the air?

Geoff: Very close. It’s called Rayleigh scattering. Radiation on the electromagnetic field of photons traveling from the sun towards Earth acts upon the electrons in particles in the atmosphere and causes them to radiate at the same frequency. Blue light has a shorter wavelength, red a longer. That is why distant galaxies that are moving away from us as the universe expands are said to be redshifted, because the light they are emitting towards us is constantly being lengthened in wavelength as the distance between us and the source of the light grows greater.

(He stops for a moment, stares at her. She still does not look at him, her arms around her. Biting his lip, he continues.)

Geoff: Do you know that the footsteps of the first man to walk on the moon are still embedded on the rock and dust of the surface, and because the moon has no atmosphere, they will likely stay there for millions of years – perhaps lasting longer than us? (Pause. Silence.) It took the Apollo missions three days to reach the moon. (He watches as, hesitatingly, Jenny looks up at the sky; admiring and protecting her) Do you know what the nearest star is called? (Jenny, biting her lip, shakes her head) Proxima Centauri. Four point two four light years away from our sun, which is just one sun among many other billions of suns, our planet just one among billions or trillions of other planets in this vast universe. Just as we are two people among billions of people on the face of this planet that we are slowly choking through our poor stewardship (intoning verse) “This is just to say – it could last forever, could last a day.” We could live for eternity. We could die tomorrow. Jenny, I – (turns away in despair, his hand up to his face)

(They stand facing away from one another silent for a few seconds, neither one moving as if neither wants to be the first to move or knows how. Geoff begins to move away in resigned despair but, at the sound of his retreating footsteps, Jenny turns suddenly and calls out to him.)

Jenny: Geoff.

(Geoff stops, turns, waits)

Geoff: Yes?

Jenny: Nothing.

Geoff (looking at the bench): Will you sit with me?

(Jenny nods slowly. Geoff does not extend a hand, but sits on one side of the bench while, after a pause, Jenny sits on the other. Silence between them, the sound of a fountain. It has turned to night. Stars overhead. Jenny looks down at a crest that is emblazoned on the seat of the bench.)

Jenny (reading): Veritas.

(Jenny continues to stare at the marker. Then she and Geoff look out into the darkness as only the sound of the fountain can be heard.)