

**The Helen Project
Performance Text
by Oblivion Theatre**

Revised 6/15/02

The Helen Project

Performance Text

based on Summer '01 Performance at Chicago Cultural Center

Performers

Leslie Charipar
Jessica Hudson
Stacy Magerkurth
Jimmy McDermott
Ben Stephens

Creative Contributions

Anna Fitzloff
Karen Leick
Terry Selucky

Directed by

Dan Winkler

On set:

- Two tables. Big enough to crawl under. A desk lamp each. One covered with papers, books, notebooks, postcards, magazine clippings, notecards, and a dictionary. On the other rests an old-fashioned tape recorder, the video camera, audio and video tapes, several shiny red apples, and a cheap CD player. A live microphone on a swivel boom is set up at each table.
- A four-poster bed with dingy sheets. This is the audience's focal point.
- Three small stepladders.
- A small "stage" up center of the bed with curtains that can be drawn: one set of rich red velvet, behind which is a large clear shower curtain of the same dimensions.
- Eight troublelights, one amber. These are hung from cross-poles that surround the playing area, their cords pool in tangles and trail out of sight.
- Blue lamp w/ blue bulb on floor near the bed. This is plugged into a socket in the floor
- Placards/easels
- Several flashlights
- Small drum
- Guitar
- A large gilt mirror, upstage center

List of Scenes

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Personal Mythology Ensemble 2. Play by the Rules Ensemble 3. Scapegoat Ben, Jimmy, Leslie
<i>Song: Waiting for the Day</i> Ensemble 4. Truth or Truth Stacy & Ben 5. "Relics" Jessica
<i>Song: Abigail</i> Ben 6. Dance of Jealousy Leslie & Ben 7. Frighten Me Ben & Leslie 8. Thinner: One Jimmy & Stacy 9. A Letter to Zeus Jimmy & Stacy | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. A Man at the Window Ben, Jimmy, Stacy, Leslie 11. Thinner: Two Jessica & Stacy 12. On Beauty... Ben & Jimmy 13. The Ramparts: Dreaming Ben, Jimmy 13a: The Ramparts: Wave Leslie 14. Written on the Body Jimmy & Jessica
<i>Song: Winning a Battle, Losing the War</i> Ben 15. Thinner: Three Leslie
<i>Song: She Spread her Legs</i> Ben & Jimmy 16. Voice from a Can |
|---|---|

This production is created with texts from or inspired by the following:

Howard Barker, Eric Bachmann, Don DeLillo, Tim Etchells, David L. Goines, Hal Hartley, HD, Homer, Kings of Convenience, Declan MacManus, Robert Emmet Meagher, Charles Mee, Stephen Merritt, Marilyn Monroe, "Nancy," William Shakespeare, Patti Smith, Stesichorus, Mihoko Suzuki, Sara Teasdale, Helen Troy (age 18), Russell Weston, Brian Wilson, Jeanette Winterson, W.B. Yeats

1. Personal mythology

As the audience enters, the ensemble prepares the space, organizing folders, rewinding tape, reading, primping, plucking out chords on the guitar. BEN plays music he was listening to on the train over. JESSICA is writing in her notebook, and sorting index cards. Jimmy is on the bed, reading Bukowski's Women. STACY prowls the periphery, helping with this or that. LESLIE changes clothes. The Stage Manager busies himself with mic checks, audio system checks, coiling extension cord, which is everywhere in tangles. The company are business-like, but cooperative, drawn into and out of conversations. They share the work as they share the space.

The ensemble is dark and light: the women in flattering "little black dresses", the men in charcoal suits, white shirts open at the collar; they sport thick-rimmed Elvis Costello glasses. Everyone is barefoot, the men with their trousers rolled like beachcombers. Only STACY looks out of place. She is dressed in a navy-blue dress she wore in our last production together, when she played Pam in Edward Bond's Saved. It is ill-fitting now, bursting its seams.

Eventually, LESLIE and JIMMY begin playing a game on the bed: "Everybody says I..."

This goes on for a bit, STACY watches, from the little stage.

STACY: *(joining JIMMY and LESLIE's game)* Everyone says...I am a sweet girl. *(Pause. She dresses. Steps out of her go-go boots)* Everyone says I am "high maintenance," and a "control freak." *(Pause. Dressing, undressing)* But everyone says I'm different than any girl they've ever dated. *(Pulls black dress over her head; smoothing it out)*

LESLIE: Everyone says I should move back to Iowa.

JIMMY: Everyone says I am a talented boy.

BEN: Everyone says I'm a dreamer.

LESLIE: Everyone says I should move to New York, though, too.

JESSICA: Everyone says I am a big whore.

STACY: *(Overlap)* Everyone says I am a big whore.

Pause

JIMMY: Everyone says I'm misguided

LESLIE: I'm kind

BEN: Too kind

JESSICA: Everyone says I'm fortunate

LESLIE: Everyone says I should never have gotten a divorce.

Pause

BEN: Everyone says I take interesting photos but really should do my share of the driving.

JIMMY: Everyone always says I am apolitical; and the king of pointless challenges.

STACY: Everyone says I am running away from something.

JESSICA: Everyone says I need to slow down.

LESLIE: Everyone says I'm lucky to be alive.

BEN: Everyone says (*Strumming and singing*) there'll be time enough for sex and drugs in heaven.

JESSICA: Everybody says I have a nice body and sometimes a pretty face.

JIMMY: Everyone says I'm young yet.

STACY: Everybody says I'll sleep with them when I'm drunk.

Pause

BEN: Everybody says I shouldn't have said that to her about her eyes bugging out.

Pause

JIMMY: I'm verbal

BEN: I need a haircut.

STACY: I am a good kisser and I have a nice smile.

LESLIE: I should have no trouble finding a boyfriend.

JESSICA: (*Overlap*) I should have no trouble getting laid.

JIMMY: Everyone says I am stoic

BEN: And the spitting image of your father.

LESLIE: Everyone says I have expectations that are too high.

JIMMY: Everybody says I am a sucker for loving A.I.

JESSICA: Everyone says I hesitate.

JIMMY: I am a shy attention-starved loner.

BEN: I shouldn't walk around barefoot at work.

JIMMY: I am a quick-thinking thorough-going misogynist.

LESLIE: I'm a little off.

JIMMY: And never satisfied.

STACY: I can't say no.

Pause. During the preceding, the company have been making final adjustments to the set, slowly dimming lights, moving props, coiling cable, adjusting microphone levels. BEN just strums his guitar at intervals, and plays tape softly on the tape deck. They are almost ready.

JESSICA: I should be more careful.

BEN: Everyone says I am white.

JIMMY: Everyone says I am well-raised.

BEN: Everybody says I sounded like I was kidding, but I was totally serious.

LESLIE: Everyone says I should never have gotten a divorce.

STACY: Everyone says I am cute.
BEN: Everyone says I am too busy.
JIMMY: Everyone says I am hip and cool.
LESLIE: Everyone says I should learn how to give a blowjob.
JESSICA: (*Overlap*) Everyone says I give good blowjobs.
STACY: Everyone says I like sex.
LESLIE: Everyone says I am good in bed.
JIMMY: Everyone says I am sleeping with my boss.
BEN: Everybody says I'm a fetishist.
JESSICA: Everyone says I am a good kisser.
LESLIE: Everybody says I have bigger balls than most men I know.
BEN: (*Into mic.*) What a coincidence.

2. Play by the rules

By now, all lights are out. JESSICA steps out front, wielding a troublelight. She clicks it on and speaks into the light; out into the audience.

JESSICA: Look, some parts of this history have been censored and other parts have been...um...misplaced.

JESSICA snaps out her light, STACY replaces it with one of her own. She illuminates a large white placard with careful black lettering:

**On us the gods have set an evil destiny,
 That we should be a singer's theme
 For generations to come.
 ---Iliad 6.357-58)**

LESLIE: (*Troublelight on*) When I was fourteen I could tell jokes. And men said, you tell jokes better than a man! But for all their laughing, they never laid a hand on me. Not one! So, I stopped telling jokes. And they were all over me. Break one another's jaws and scrapping in the gutter.

There is a time for jokes, but it's not now. (*Troublelight out*)

STACY: (*Troublelight on*) The information wasn't hard to come across, ask after her on the internet (there are a lotta whack jobs out there I can tell you). She's out there, a reflection of a reflection, and she's always saying one thing or another, but the things she supposedly said seemed simple. For Her. (*Troublelight out*)

JESSICA: (*At stage right desk, shuffling papers, etc, her desk light comes on*) Hold on, wait. I'm already lost. I can't find anything in this stupid stack of paper.

LESLIE: (*Upstage, she gazes into the gilt mirror, which is propped against the back wall of the proscenium*) I feel as though it's all happening to someone right next to me. I'm close, I can feel it, I can hear it, but it isn't really me.

STACY helps JESSICA get in the game by handing her a notebook and pointing out a section. JESSICA begins to read, realizing too late STACY has handed her JESSICA's own journal.

JESSICA: I didn't see it coming, and I couldn't have stopped it if I had. *(She continues, reluctantly at first)* He was a great kisser, and the first time we made love was in his Impala or whatever and we were in the graveyard after midnight. The guy had a twisted point of view. But he knew what he wanted. I don't see why my whole future should be tossed out like the baby with the bathwater. *(To BEN, at tech table)* Are we recording this?

BEN starts another tapedeck

LESLIE: The truth was that with all my lipstick and mascara and precocious curves I was unresponsive as a fossil... I used to lie awake all night wondering why the boys came after me.

JIMMY: *(Troublelight on, he's candid with a segment of the audience)* Let me be honest with you right from the outset. I couldn't give a fuck about Helen. I don't buy all this about "struggle." I just find the whole thing uninteresting. But I had nothing better to do... so I fucked her.

LESLIE: The truth is I never fooled anyone. I've sometimes let men fool themselves.

STACY: *(still orienting the audience)* It's like a funhouse reflection of something you know very well, something familiar to the point of obscurity. The language was familiar, and the names, vaguely so. But something didn't feel quite right. It's like a dream that holds you to its logic. Quality of light in a room or something. And it makes us not say a good deal.

LESLIE moves from the mirror, to fetch an apple. This she regards with interest.

Pick up the trail. You try it. Not as easy as it looks.

BEN: *(Into mic.)* Some parts of this history have been censored and other parts have been...um...erased.

STACY: We were afraid to step foot into the arena we had created. We're not natural believers-in-ourselves. None of us are, we need some reason to trust, and so fumbling around in the dark didn't really help. And if we found her, we didn't recognize her. The story is told and retold, used, misused, remembered partially or in full. Assimilation compilation contemplation becomes impossible. I have nothing more to add.

JESSICA: And I wanna say I had nothing to do with the structure of this thing. I'm only a dancer.

JIMMY: Some parts of this history have been censored and other parts have been...um...misused.

LESLIE: Sometimes I feel my organs turning or moving or aching, the organs that set in my lower abdomen or hips. I can feel them turning or moving or aching. I'll be sitting or standing or lying and the discomfort begins quietly and then becomes clearer and more identifiable until I moan.

Silence. Dark. Sounds of ocean waves and rope creaking. JIMMY speaks directly to LESLIE lighting them both with one amber troublelight.

JIMMY: At the end of it all, she was all eyes. Just eyes. Barely recognizable except for those eyes. Those eyes, staring at me. Scared to be going somewhere she didn't believe in.

LESLIE: I don't know where I am. *(She approaches JIMMY, carefully)* There is something having to do with time, clearly. Yesterday I made love to a man I haven't even met. His eyes were like apples, shiny and red, and he spoke to me like he knew who I was, as if I held some secret significance that would ruin if I understood. Every time I open my eyes, it's him who I see, but his features blur so often I feel dizzy. And so I fall against him, into his arms. I won't meet him until next Tuesday, when he'll come to read the meter and take me away with him.

Pause

You will not understand what it has taken me years – or centuries – to experience.

3. Scapegoat **Text by Howard Barker**

JIMMY: Helen fucks the wounded in the wards!

Suddenly, everything goes apeshit. Lights on and off, banging of metal against metal, sounds of mortar fire and screaming of men and animals. Everything available in the room that will make sound is used. It's deafening. JIMMY and BEN each wield a troublelight like a projectile weapon, a bow and arrow, a Molotov cocktail. LESLIE retreats to the "stage" area, on her knees and covering her ears. Suddenly she is the only woman visible.

BEN: She stinks like a horse. I say this, I announce this, I announce this because the idea has got round that she is ethereal. No, I assure you it is not the case. I know she stood naked on the battlements in the seventh year

JIMMY: The eighth!

BEN: The eighth year it was, stood naked and the wind sneaked around your parts, the cool fresh wind but still she smelled like a mare. The army laughed, seeing you less than perfect. Seeing your body rather flawed. Of course they knew the sex was not in the proportions, but still they laughed, calling the cooks out of their tents, shouting, staring and jabbering "why did she do that?"

JIMMY: I know what Helen is, I know! She is all that's unforgivable.

BEN: This was the cause of ten years bleeding, and now look at her—bare legs and filthy back, it makes pigs out of everyone who raged for ten years at the gates if she's to be a slut with unwashed legs.

JIMMY: She was a whore! Why else did we go there?

Utter silence and stillness, save for the creaking of rope and washing of waves.

LESLIE: I think even as you say a thing; you know it to be false. And yet you say it. I think you are the enemy of all Troys, no matter whose. I think you believe nothing, and therefore ought to suffer everything imagination might conceive. I am a better person than you.

All lights fail to black.

Song: I'm Waiting For The Day
Text by Brian Wilson, from Pet Sounds.

From darkness, BEN beats the drum, three times in rhythm. Lights come up to reveal our three women transformed to doo-wop girls singing backup, their heads bobbing through the red velvet curtain. BEN is playing the drum, and singing a bass line into a mic, JIMMY is at the far end of the space, singing lead into a troublelight. He is singing to STACY, who stands on stage.

JIMMY

I came along when he broke your heart
 That's when you needed someone
 To help forget about him

I gave you love with a brand new start
 That's what you needed the most
 To set your broken heart free

I know you cried, and you felt blue
 But when I could I gave strength to you
 I'm waiting for the day when you can love
 again

I kissed your lips
 And when your face looked sad
 It made me think about him
 And that you still loved him so

But you know that pretty soon
 I made you feel glad
 That you belonged to me
 And love began to show

He hurt you then, but that's all gone
 I guess I'm saying you're the only one
 I'm waiting for the day when you can love
 again

He hurt you then, but that's all done
 I guess I'm saying you're the only one
 I'm waiting for the day when you can love
 again

The song has wound down, JIMMY leaves STACY alone, disappearing behind the red curtain. The lights have faded to black, to the dying "aaahhs" of the chorus. Suddenly, and with a certain violence, BEN beats the drum three times in rhythm, JIMMY reappears, face twisted like a gargoyle, singing the coda into the troublelight, the only light in the room.

JIMMY with MEN

You didn't think that I could sit around and let him work
 You didn't think that I could sit around and let (watch) him take you
 You didn't think that I could sit around and let him go
 You didn't think that I could sit back and let you go
 You didn't think....

The WOMEN drag STACY to the bed, slam her down on it, and tie her tightly with troublelight cords. They blindfold her and gag her with scarves. JESSICA slaps her before the WOMEN split.

4. Truth or truth

STACY tied and blindfolded on the bed, BEN approaches her. He examines her body, in its compromised position, and switches on a blue bulb in a lamp on the floor near the bed. Stacy is tied with troublelight cords, and one with an amber bulb is shining in her face. No other light. BEN, in his shirtsleeves, finally picks up a small hardcover book or journal and addresses STACY. He speaks in a thick affected Liverpudlian accent. These characters are playing a power game which has no clear rules. The feel is that at any given moment no one is sure who's on top.

BEN: *(of the book)* So, what, you just want me to read it?

STACY: Yes.

BEN: What are you going to do?

STACY: Listen.

BEN: So just read it? *(He reads silently)* Hmm...face that launched a thousand ships and all that stuff? What does that mean anyway?

STACY: *(Carefully. Is she frightened, or just playing a game?)* That she was so beautiful men went to war. *(Pause)* You understand.

BEN: *(Reading)* Although she had few spoken lines, Helen, the most beautiful mortal on earth, was frequently manipulated on the comedic and tragic stage of Greek mythology. Are you just going to listen, will there be a quiz? — Daughter of the mortal Leda and fathered by Zeus, Helen was used by the gods, allowing her no choice in any of the event therefore she is painted as a puppet of the gods Capital P, capital G. — So her dad was Zeus and the woman was Leda. Zeus, wasn't he a god?

STACY: *(proudly)* He was the Father of the gods.

BEN: So she was a god too?

STACY: No. Half.

BEN: A dual citizenship kind of thing?

STACY kinda laughs.

So what's the point of being half a god if you can still die? Isn't that like being a little bit pregnant?

STACY: It meant she went to Olympus to live with the gods and not Hades. Like Hercules.

BEN: Right. *(He seems to have had enough. He feels stupid, so he ratchets up the stakes)* So you enjoying this then? Doing all right?

STACY: Yes.

BEN: You want me to tie your feet? Maybe give you a bit of a punch? — Helen was used by the gods, allowing her no choice in any of the event therefore she is painted as a puppet of the gods. — you with me? Whatcha thinking about?

STACY: That I shoulda let you hit me. Go for it.

BEN: So there's this list of symbols. — 1. The Golden Apple of Discord – Zeus called upon Paris (son of King Priam of Troy) to award the golden apple to the most beautiful from among the goddesses, Hera, Athena and Aphrodite [*mispronounced*].

STACY: Aphrodite.

BEN: He chose Aphrodite who rewarded him with the most beautiful woman on earth, Helen, the wife of Menelaus [*mispronounced*].

STACY: Menelaus.

BEN: So that was like a beauty contest. Did they have beauty contests back then?

STACY: They had the Olympics, I'm sure they had beauty contests as well

BEN: So the golden apple started all the trouble then? What's worse than finding a worm in your apple? Know that one?

STACY: Yeah, finding half a worm in your apple.

BEN: No. Getting strapped to a chair, having electrodes stuck to your genitals and being beaten senseless with a knotted rope. (*Pause*) Get it?

STACY: Yeah.

BEN: #2 Kylex – contains a drug to wipe out all memories of past evils — is that a real drug? You know, 'ask your doctor about Kylex'? — You ever done anything really evil?

STACY: I've lied.

BEN: Lying's not evil. (*Pause*) Are you lying now? (*Long pause*) #3 Dove – An emblem of Aphrodite. So was she the goddess of peace?

STACY: No, love & beauty.

BEN: What's that got to do with peace? — #4 Broken columns & flames – the destruction of Troy — so Troy was destroyed?

STACY: Yes.

BEN: You know all this stuff already. So who destroyed it, then?

STACY: The Greeks.

BEN: Ever been abroad?

STACY: Yes.

BEN: Really?

STACY: Yes.

BEN: Where did you go?

STACY: England.

BEN: Where's that? Just kidding — #4 Trojan Horse – symbol of Greek victory — Is that where they put a lot of men inside and then pushed them inside the castle?

STACY: Yes.

BEN: My brother took riding lessons for a while. Ever ride a horse?

STACY: Oh, yes. I love horses.

BEN: I took his place once, only once.

STACY: Really? And did you like it?

BEN: No. I thought it was boring, going round in circles. #5 Swan – form Zeus took to seduce Helen's mother Leda — Hmmm.

STACY: Hmmm.

BEN: #6 Magic girdle of Aphrodite – endowed with the power to enslave the heart of both gods & men — what's the sexiest piece of clothing you own?

STACY: Um. I.

BEN: It's not a trick question

STACY: Top drawer of the dresser or hanging in the closet?

BEN: I don't know. Hanging in the closet.

STACY: This dress my brother's ex-fiancée bought me at a thrift shop. Used to be able to wear it, it fits like a 2nd skin, tactile. People used to come up to me and touch me.

BEN: What color?

STACY: Black. *(Pause)* So do you have—?

BEN: Yeah, I've got a dress like that one. I can't wear it anymore either. # 7 Golden chains – manipulation & control – broken chains – freedom.... # 7 Golden chains – manipulation & control – broken chains – freedom..... # 7 Golden chains – manipulation & control – broken chains – freedom.

STACY: Tie my feet.

BEN: You want me to tie your feet?

STACY: Yes.

BEN: #8 Sea Anemone – Resembles flower it is equipped with paralyzing barbs. Flower anemone means forsaken (*He ties her feet during following :*) —ever been forsaken?

STACY: Yes.

BEN: What was your longest relationship?

STACY: *(counting in her head)* One...two...three...four...five...I lose count

BEN: Was it a year?

STACY: Almost.

BEN: Spring to winter?

STACY: Nine months.

BEN: Know why it ended?

STACY: Yep.

BEN: Why?

STACY: He slept with someone else. Sarah, she was small.

BEN: Friend of yours?

STACY: No.

BEN: Friend of his?

STACY: Yes.

BEN: How did you find out?

STACY: I was away at school, I called and she answered the phone. She got really flustered when she found out who I was. And there was the fact that she was there and he wasn't. Yours?

BEN: Four years. Three. Three or four.

STACY: Still going?

BEN: No.

STACY: Would you do something for me? Scratch my nose.

BEN: Like that?

STACY: Thank you.

BEN: You're welcome — #9 Lilies – purity – the white lily is the feminine principle — purity.

STACY: Mm-hmm.

BEN: Hmmm.

STACY: Like wedding gowns.

BEN: Yeah.

STACY: And babies' diapers.

BEN: No.

STACY: At the beginning.

BEN: What's particularly feminine about purity anyway?

STACY: I don't know.

BEN: Is your foot all right?

STACY: Fine. Thank you for noticing.

BEN: Thought it might be a “cry for help.”

Pause

STACY: What’s the last one?

BEN: #11 —guess what it is.

STACY: The moon.

BEN: You’ve read this. Did you write this? — Do you know what it represents?

STACY: Feminine principle again?

BEN: #11 Moon – Feminine principle; full moon – awakening and illumination of the soul. Ever moon anyone?

STACY: Yes

BEN: Really?

STACY: Yeah. Have you?

BEN: No, always seemed counter-productive to me. *(Exits)*

Having been sifting and reading and copying, JIMMY now turns on his desk lamp. He adjusts his glasses, and begins to recite:

JIMMY:

It’s the ancient of which I’m a tellin’
Of that smart bit of crumpet Queen Helen
To Paris she went, and a fine time was spent,
When she came back her belly was swellin.’

Four hundred old boats sailed one day,
(A thousand ships? Never. No way)
to Lesbos they sailed, at seduction they failed.
‘Twas the first time they’d met ladies gay.

So they carried on down through the Med,
With never a woman to bed,
Except Helen the Queen, and they knew where she’d been,
So they made due with barrels instead.

So the Trojans all dived in her ditch,
and their cocks soon developed an itch,
of the pox they all died, and the Greeks marched inside,
on account of that randy old bitch.

He clicks off the lamp with a wink, and from darkness, Ben begins the first strains of “Abigail”

5. "Relics"

(This section is inspired by the story of Leda's rape by the Swan, filtered through the *Rape of Lucrece*.)

JESSICA steps out from behind the red curtain, STACY places a placard reading "Relics." BEN begins strumming his guitar, then launches into the love song "Abigail," by Magnetic Fields. JESSICA sits on the step, and reaches into a cardboard box at her feet. The following objects are drawn from the box and displayed like lost treasures, an odd version of "show and tell" for the assembled audience. BEN sings on, a serenade.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Model airplane | 12. Ceramic moon paperweight |
| 2. Business card | 13. Cigarettes (puts one in her mouth) |
| 3. Matchbook w/ phone # | 14. Torn out yellow page of cab numbers |
| 4. Martini glass w/ paper umbrella | 15. Hospital bracelet |
| 5. Hotel room key | 16. Surgical gloves containing an egg |
| 6. Dollhouse bed | 17. Pill in Dixie cup (swallows it, breaks egg) |
| 7. Duct tape (unrolled and dropped) | 18. Police report |
| 8. Torn bra | 19. Model ship |
| 9. Dirty Polaroids | 20. Apple (she takes a bite) |
| 10. Swan feathers (blown from cupped hands into audience) | 21. An audio cassette |
| 11. Hand mirror (looks into mirror, applies kohl under left eye) | |

Song: Abigail By Stephen Merritt

Abigail
Can you feel my heart in the palm of your hand
And do you understand
Why I can't stay?

Abigail,
An evil wind is blowing through the land
And they need every man
To drive it away

When I come home,
If I come home
You'll be a grown woman
When I come home
If I come home
Don't be alone, Abigail, Belle of Kilronnan

Abigail,
Going to be the beauty of county Galway
And she will live always
In a world of love

Abigail,
I'm off to the war
But you can be sure
I will know you're what I'm fighting for
I'm off to the war
But you can be sure
I will know you're what I'm fighting for
I'm off to the war
But you can be sure
I will know you're what I'm fighting for
When I come home,
If I come home
Don't be alone, Abigail, Belle of Kilronnan."

JESSICA takes the tape to the deck, puts it in, and presses Play. From the tapedeck, sounds of traffic on a city street, with sirens, etc. She sits, listens, and continues to eat her apple. BEN has finished without flourish, and is putting on a tie, reflected in the gilt mirror, which STACY holds for him. Shortly, as the traffic and sirens play on, LESLIE enters the space and drops her stockings on the bed.

6. Dance of jealousy

LESLIE: Hey don't forget your keys.

She tosses them to BEN

BEN: Ah. Thanks

LESLIE: *(Of her dress, into the mirror)* Get this will you? *(BEN zips her up, holds her shoulders)* How do I look?

BEN: That's my favorite dress. *(He steps away from her and puts on his jacket, shoots the cuffs)*

JESSICA has faded out the traffic noises, and plays a sensual pop tune on the tape deck. BEN continues dressing, and LESLIE begins to sway, trying to catch his eye. She finally reaches around him from behind. He turns, she pushes him to the bed, backs off, and begins to dance.

BEN: Hey. I didn't know you had another line of work.

Her dance becomes more sensual, capturing his attention.

Leslie. Leslie. Come closer.

Leslie. Leslie. What are you wearing underneath?

Leslie. Beautiful

as

sin.

Leslie. Leslie.

Dream shift: Lights change, JESSICA brings up the music and other sounds of a club, STACY moves mirror, and LESLIE mounts the stage. The other women move behind her and draw the shower curtain, and dance using the proscenium support poles. BEN's dialog begins to get distressed. House lights are faded up, and he is aware we are looking at LESLIE and the women. He is embarrassed.

Leslie. Leslie.

(Sharply) Leslie.

LESLIE: Yes. Dance with me.

BEN: Let's...

LESLIE: Let's what?

BEN: Come on. Come on now, sit. Sit down.

LESLIE: No. Dance with me.

BEN: Leslie. Come...come on have a drink with me. *(Pause)* I'm alone.

LESLIE: You're not alone. Watch me.

BEN: Everyone is watching you.

She is dancing only for him. She is oblivious to whatever BEN is seeing and hearing.

LESLIE: Let them

BEN: *(Too sharp)* Leslie stop it.

LESLIE: Have a drink.

BEN: Have one with me. *(Pause)* What do you think you're doing?

LESLIE: You wouldn't stop staring before.

BEN: You were dancing for me.

LESLIE: *(Dancing ever more sensually)* I'm right here, Ben. This dress. I love this dress. I put it on for you...

BEN: *(Almost pleading by now)* They're looking at you.

LESLIE: You're taking me home. Just watch. Think about taking me home

BEN: Right now. Can us...

LESLIE: Think about taking me home. Our room.

BEN: Leslie. I don't...

LESLIE: My breath on your mouth...

BEN: Leslie, I don't feel well.

LESLIE: ...and your neck...

BEN: Leslie.

LESLIE: ...my skin touching yours...

BEN: Stop it,

LESLIE: ...your hands between my thighs, all over my body...

BEN: Les...Please...

LESLIE: ...my legs wrapped around you...

BEN: Please forgive me for taking you out just to show you off

LESLIE: My voice in your ear.

BEN: *(too loud)* Dear love *(all sound and movement stop. All sudden darkness, with a single light on BEN hunched over on the bed, hands gripping his head. Delivered as a rushed and futile prayer):*

hallowed be thy abusive beauty and deliver me to your temptation. I'm worth so much more with you on my arm than when I'm alone. Please don't leave me alone...

7. Frighten me Text by Jeanette Winterson

BEN's spot out, JESSICA clicks on the desk lamp. She opens her journal, and begins to read. Her voice is slightly amplified in the microphone.

JESSICA: *"Metamorphosis of Helen, p. 15. 'Helen was a construct to justify the war.' And on p.30: '...applying her abstraction to the concreteness of their wives, children and homeland.' (More slowly)* She takes away comfort: puts him in mortal danger. They are in the line of fire, a place of turmoil, death, anxiety. And from this, the concept of beauty is born, like Aphrodite on her scallop shell. She obtains beauty with the capital "B," she is not this godlike thing, but simply a sign- one to represent many. The men will fight for Menelaus' wife because they would fight for their own.

LESLIE: *(Touches his head)* Why do I frighten you?

BEN: *(as if roused from a bad dream)* Frighten me? Yes, you do frighten me. You act as though we will be together forever, as though there can be infinite pleasure. In my experience time always ends. In theory you are right, the quantum physicists are right, the romantics and the religious are right. Time without end. In practice we both wear a watch. If I rush at this relationship, it is because I fear for it. I fear you have a door I cannot see and that at any minute you will slip through it and be gone.

LESLIE: I'm going to leave.

BEN: Yes, of course you are, going back to the egg, the shell. I'm an idiot. I've done it again and I said I'd never do it again.

LESLIE: I told him before we came away. I've told him I won't change my mind even if you change yours.

I love you, and my love for you makes any other life a lie.

Make three wishes and they shall all come true.

Make three hundred and I shall honour every one.

Lights shift subtly. Something is different.

BEN: Why do I frighten you?

LESLIE: Frighten me? Yes, you do frighten me. You act as though we will be together forever, as though there can be infinite pleasure. In my experience time always ends. In theory you are right, the quantum physicists are right, the romantics and the religious are right. Time without end. In practice we both wear a watch. If I rush at this relationship, it is because I fear for it. I fear you have a door I cannot see and that at any minute you will slip through it and be gone.

BEN: I'm going to leave.

LESLIE: Yes, of course you are. I'm an idiot. I've done it again and I said I'd never do it again.

BEN: I told him before we came away. I've told him I won't change my mind even if you change yours.

Make three wishes.

8. Thinner: One Text from *Uncle Vanya* by Howard Barker

Curtain drawn back to reveal STACY seated on a stepladder in the half-dark, holding a troublelight as if it were a hand mirror. One leg on bottom rung of stepladder, one stretched out before her. Her shoulders and knees are bare. Pause. She switches on the light and examines her face, the bulb glowing inches from her face. JIMMY speaks for her into the mic. His voice is hushed, breathy, direct. Uncomfortably over-amplified.

NOTE: All stage directions refer to STACY's movements.

JIMMY: I'm thinner. *(Pause. Head tilts, hair falls across her shoulders)* I'm thinner or is it only the glass? *(Looks deeper)* Some glass does that, some glass has the propensity to narrow or to broaden the –

STACY: *(calls to unseen companion, over her shoulder)* How good is this glass, Ivan, how...

JIMMY: ...you can be starved in one and bloated in another,

STACY: Where's it from I mean?

Stacy gracefully and self-consciously switches her position. She strokes her face and neck, gazing ever more deeply into the mirror.

JIMMY: ...the Venetians, they make lovely glass; but small chance this is from Venice.

Stacy looks scornfully at the troublelight. Then into the "mirror." Pause.

JIMMY: Surely I have lost weight... But so what? So what I prefer it. I like to be a kite, a basket of thin but pliant bones upon which my skin...translucently...stretches...etceteras...

(Pause) I am talking about beauty.

STACY: *(Looks directly out at audience)* Does anybody mind? I know how uncomfortable you get.

Troublelight out.

9. A letter to Zeus **Taped text from Harper's Magazine, July, 2001**

In the darkness, we hear radio static, snatches of the Beach Boys and the theme from Benny Hill. An oscillator tone going down. Water drops amplified, traffic, maybe some breathing or half an obscene phone call. There is definitely some of the cast speaking in whispers, probably someone reading from The Odyssey, and more radio static. When the tech desk lamp comes on, JIMMY is at the table in his shirtsleeves, rewinding an audiocassette in the tapedeck. STACY is perched stiffly on a stepladder beside him, trying to look dignified with a microphone stuck in her face. We can hear her breathing. JIMMY, who's obviously been in this room with this woman for some time, flips open his notebook, puts on his glasses, and reads:

JIMMY: *(Reading)*

Dear Sir,

It has been 17 years that I have been here in Egypt. 17 years since the start of the war. 17 years since your spiteful jealous wife created my double, my eidolon, and sent her to Troy. 17 years since Hermes brought me here, alone, without my husband or child. For 7 years the war has been over, the siege of Troy ending on blood plunder.

STACY: *(Amplified.)* In...in blood plunder.

JIMMY: *(Overlapping, he corrects himself, makes a note in the transcript.)* ...in blood plunder...

17 years I have waited for my husband. May I remind you that your transportation of me to Egypt, while Hera sent my double to Troy, was under the condition of my eventual return to Greece. Hermes, your messenger, stated as much when he deposited me in the care of Proteus. He said, and I am not likely to forget such words, that I would, "go home to lustrous Sparta, on my husband's arm."

JIMMY shoots her a look. He clearly thinks she's a kook. He continues:

For 17 years I have been patient and faithful, and as Menelaus has made no appearance in Egypt that I know of, I respectfully request that you recall your promise, and deliver my husband to me, so that I may return home with him.

STACY coughs. She moistens her lips.

First in my mind is the swift repair of the considerable damage done to my reputation, which, doubtless, you will understand. The volume of slander that has been heaped upon my name in my absence must be eradicated at once. Not only for the peace of mind it will bring me, but also it will allow my daughter to marry at last, once this stain, which has spread to her, has been removed. Hermione has borne the brunt of the abuse in the absence of both her parents. As your granddaughter, she deserves better. I beg you to end my imprisonment and return me to Greece as was promised. I ask this not only as a suppliant, but as your daughter, if indeed you would claim me as such. You must harbor some affection for me, as you rescued me from Troy, so I ask you now to rescue me from Egypt.

Yours, with all due respect,
Helen of Egypt, nee Troy, nee Sparta, nee Argos.

After a pause.

So that's it. That's your story.

STACY: *(Amplified.)* Yes. *(pause)*

JIMMY: Pretty far fetched, don't you think?

STACY: *(Amplified.)* In fact, it is the truth.

JIMMY: *(Pause.)* Okay look, I'm gonna play this back for you, and I want you to listen very carefully, 'cause if you want to make any changes or amendments, we have to do that now.

There won't be another opportunity. Do you understand?

STACY: *(Amplified.)* Yes.

JIMMY: Alright. Pick up the headphones.

She does. They're big. JIMMY plays the audiocassette and sits back, dropping his glasses on the table, he looks tired.

JIMMY: *(on tape)* Okay. Are you comfortable?

STACY: *(on tape)* Yes.

JIMMY: *(on tape)* Good. Just relax.

STACY: *(on tape)* May I have a glass of water please?

Slight pause

JIMMY: *(on tape)* Sure.

The sound of water being poured. The pitcher stands empty on the table. There is no glass.

STACY: *(on tape)* Thank you.

JIMMY: *(on tape)* Okay now, this is your official deposition, understand that I am going to ask you a series of questions, and please answer them as fully as possible.

STACY: *(on tape)* I understand.

JIMMY: *(on tape)* These are official and will be admissible evidence in a court of law. This will be considered the official record of how it all went down.

STACY: *(on tape)* I understand.

JIMMY: *(on tape)* Fine.

The tape is played, JIMMY listens, when STACY begins to protest that it isn't even her voice, her microphone is cut. We cannot hear her over the tape. She understands what is happening; that what she says matters less than what will be recorded. She straightens up, and sets her face in an expression she hopes looks dignified.

BEN: *(on tape, In an American accent, with a deadly serious earnestness)* Okay, this is of a highly sensitive national-security nature; I hope you're ready to hear it all.

JIMMY: *(on tape)* I'm ready. That's why I'm here.

BEN: *(on tape)* Okay. I'm a clone; you understand what I mean by clone?

JIMMY: *(on tape)* You mean you're a facsimile of someone else?

BEN: *(on tape)* No what it means is that people are bombarded by a microwave before they're born. And inside the microwave is this scalar electromagnetic wave, and what it does is, it essentially mutates the cells, is what it does.

JIMMY: *(on tape)* Okay.

BEN: *(on tape)* Okay. At the top of the page, above my name write "The Assassination of John F. Kennedy"

JIMMY: *(on tape)* Okay.

BEN: *(on tape)* Okay. First off, John F. Kennedy was making a movie and in this movie there were three actors: me, myself, which is Helen of Sparta, Sandy Brown, and Bill Clinton. Okay, so now about Sandy Brown, now you might say women are always changing their names. Her next name is Norma Jean Coca and then Marilyn Monroe, and she happens to be my second cousin.

JIMMY: *(on tape)* Small circle.

BEN: *(on tape)* Oh yeah, it's quite a story. By the way, you're also sworn to extreme secrecy on this too, by you knowing this story, likely you will end up dying for it, let's put it that way.

JIMMY: *(on tape)* I'll have to be careful.

BEN: *(on tape)* You'll have to be extremely careful. You'll find out that because of this your life will go extremely sour because of it. Okay, Bill Clinton is not a native-born American. Bill Clinton is a Russian clone, brought to the United States for the purposes of Communist insurgency, and believe me; I have already talked to the director of the CIA about all of this.

JIMMY: *(on tape)* Okay...brought to America for Communist insurgency.

BEN: *(on tape)* That's correct, yes; in Russia they clone their children to be brilliant mathematicians.

JIMMY: *(on tape)* Okay.

BEN: *(on tape)* And that is Bill Clinton, he is a brilliant mathematician.

JIMMY: *(on tape)* Okay.

BEN: *(on tape)* Okay, I'll tell you what they did. They started pulling Soviet energetics. In other words, through a microwave system they send you dreams is what they are. Your eye has an optic purple on it, and your brain and your eyes are like a television camera. They emit a television signal at about 10Mz. Which is the photo-electron coupling into the graviton. They beam this programming to you when you fall asleep at night.

JIMMY: *(on tape)* Okay.

BEN: *(on tape)* Okay, I'll just say yes, in my life, due to different Communist attacks, I was involved in numerous automobile accidents caused by Soviet energetics.

JIMMY: *(on tape)* Mm-hmm.

BEN: *(on tape)* They can elevate or de-elevate your mood from extreme depression to schizophrenic paranoia. In other words, they can send you all the way from suicide to killing people. And how they perpetrate the suicide part is they microwave a dead person in the ground, say like a recently dead corpse, and place a dream into the mind of that dead person.

JIMMY: *(on tape)* Mm-hmm.

BEN: *(on tape)* And it activates that person's brain, wakes them up, and they put the dream in there, and then they let it sit in there for maybe just a very short time, and then they withdraw it back out again.

JIMMY: *(on tape)* And what does that do to the corpse?

BEN: *(on tape)* It doesn't do anything to the person, but it does some stuff to the signal, to the dream. It gives the dream a sense of death, it gives it that underlying feeling of morbidity, then they beam that to somebody else.

10. A man at the window

During all this, plenty of time is spent getting into position for the next scene. The tape is at first like voices on the radio, then as in a dream. JESSICA takes the recorder to her floor position, and stops it when all are set. BEN and STACY sleeping in bed. All other cast ring the stage, seated cross-legged at the feet of the audience. They have each unhooked a troublelight, and hung it over the steel crossbeams. Each lamp hangs by its cord very low to the ground, and they will swing like pendulums throughout the next scene. On "they beam it to somebody else, JESSICA abruptly stops the tapedeck.

Beat.

Then: BEN wakes up.

BEN: *(Breathless.)* Am I dead?

All troublelights click on.

STACY: *(Jolted and still pretty much asleep)* No, you're here.

BEN: I think I'm dead.

STACY: *(Waking more, she struggles to calm him.)* No, no, no. How do you feel? Where do you feel dead?

BEN: What?

STACY: You just said 'am I dead.'

BEN: I...I don't remember saying that. Did I say it just now?

STACY: What did you dream?

BEN: I can't remember. I try to remember, it's already fading. Something about a beauty contest...

STACY: Was I there?

BEN: Aah, yes.

STACY: Was I pretty?

BEN: *(Pause, he's chasing the dream.)* Yeah, yes. *(he giggles, another pause and he turns to her)* No, really, I can't remember if you were there.

JIMMY: *(Switches off his light, and kneels up)* Mom? ...Mom?

STACY: *(gets up from bed and turns on blue lamp light)* What is it, sweetie?

JIMMY: There's a man at my window.

STACY: There's a what? What's he doing?

JIMMY: Asking questions.

BEN: D'wan me ta...?

STACY: No. Nonono, I'll go. *(To JIMMY)* Come on, come into bed with Daddy.

STACY exits. BEN watches her go.

JIMMY: *(Crawling over BEN and into bed)* There's a girl in my class? She's stronger than everybody.

BEN: *(Still distracted)* Does she push you around?

JIMMY: Sometimes. I kinda steer clear of her.

BEN: *(shifting concern to his son)* Hey-are you okay? Are you scared?

JIMMY: No, I'm okay.

BEN: What did the man look like, did you see him?

JIMMY: He was bald.

BEN: Was he trying to get in?

JIMMY: I don't think so; he just kept saying he wanted to repent.

BEN: Repent?

JIMMY: Yeah.

BEN: What does that mean?

JIMMY: I don't know.

BEN: I mean I know what 'repent' means...

JIMMY: What *does* it mean?

BEN: It's like...it just means you're really sorry. Like...like remember when you broke my watch?

JIMMY: Yeah.

BEN: And remember how you said you were really sorry?

JIMMY: But you made me say it.

BEN: Yeah, true. But that's kinda what 'repent' means. So he wasn't trying to get in?

JIMMY: No, he just woke me up, banging on the glass.

BEN: He must've been banging pretty loud.

JIMMY: He was loud.

BEN: 'Cos you're not exactly a light sleeper.

JIMMY: No, I turned it off. It was dark.

BEN: Remember that time when we drove three hours through the Grand Canyon and you just slept the entire time?

JIMMY: No.

BEN: We even held your head up in the window for a bit and...no?

Pause

JIMMY: This kid in my class went to the Grand Canyon? And fell off the roller coaster.

Stacy re-enters, across the space, she moves slowly to a position opposite BEN, the bed between them. She slides a troublelight along a steel rail.

BEN: *(He is startled)* What's that noise?

He crosses near STACY to listen again. They are very close together. STACY almost touching him, looking up into his eyes. He seems to sense her, but she is not there.

JIMMY: Where are we going on vacation this year?

BEN: *(distracted)* I don't know if we are going anywhere this year.

JIMMY: Why?

BEN: *(Turning to his son)* Well, remember how we used to go with your aunt Donna?

JIMMY: Yeah...

BEN: Well, we can't exactly do that any more can we?

Pause

JIMMY: How did she die?

BEN: *(Sits on floor near bed)* Well. We don't really know. She was in Memphis...

JIMMY: Graceland?

BEN: Right, well, right. Anyway, she was at a bar and she met a guy, a stranger. She left the bar, they think, with him and then, well, that was the last anybody ever saw of her.

JIMMY: How do they know it was a guy who did it?

BEN: *(tentatively)* Well, he left something...they found he left a piece of his hair in the room. And they tested it, like for DNA?

JIMMY: Like Jurassic Park?

BEN: Sure, right, like Jurassic Park. So they know a little bit about him, but they never caught him.

JIMMY: *(Pause. He thinks hard)* Can they use the DNA to build another version of him and then put him in jail?

BEN: Yeah, they should do that, huh?

JIMMY: *(Pause.)* Do you think he repented? That guy?

BEN: Um, I hope so.

(Pause)

JIMMY: Mom doesn't want me to see Jurassic Park 3. Where is she?

BEN: *(getting up and moving vaguely in the direction STACY exited)* I dunno. I think maybe she's downstairs.

STACY: (*seated. Softly:*) No she isn't...

BEN: (*turns toward Stacy's voice*) What?

JIMMY: Why aren't kids allowed in bars?

BEN: (*Moving opposite Stacy, sits*) Well, they're quite boring really.

STACY: (*BEN can hear her voice*) She isn't downstairs.

JIMMY: What happens in them?

BEN: Well...you know how you get when you've had too much cereal?

JIMMY: Yeah.

BEN: It's kinda like that. But for grownups.

STACY: She's gone.

JIMMY: I can't wait 'til morning. I'm gonna have Golden Grahams (*He sleeps*).

BEN: (*looking in direction STACY left, rising slightly*) Stace?

STACY: She's gone.

BEN: (*Turns to Stacy*) What?

STACY: She's gone.

BEN: (*Sits*) Where did she go?

STACY: With him.

BEN: What do you mean: kidnapped?!

STACY: No... She went because she wanted to go...

BEN: No. she wouldn't do that.

STACY: Well she did it. It's done.

BEN: (*Pause, standing*) I'm going to call the police.

STACY: No. don't do that.

I left because I had to, because I wanted to,

There's nothing you could have done to make me stay...

I don't think I get to choose.

BEN: (*sits*) Who is he? (*beat*) How long have you known him? (*beat*) Stacy.

STACY: A long time. Forever.

BEN: That's incredibly selfish. What about us? What about him [*Jimmy*]?

STACY: Don't. I didn't come back to fight, I came back so you would know. So you wouldn't wonder, so we could talk.

Pause

BEN: So this is constructive, we're talking, we're communicating. Where are you?

STACY: Do you really want to know?

BEN: No.

LESLIE: (*Softly, over a mic*) Start again.

Leslie begins to explore the possibilities of the scene, playing it over and again, each time encouraging new readings, new possibilities. She seems part director, part marriage counselor, part Leslie, curious to watch Ben and Stacy work. Although with each repetition she offers them a clean slate, the previous comments hang in the air- never really clearing for the actors or audience.

The couple does not acknowledge her voice other than to hear her directions and to make appropriate adjustments. For Leslie, it is like some serious and elaborate make-believe

game, for them, it is like playing and replaying a painful, immutable scene from the past. Together, they are broken-hearted Prometheus.

BEN: Well, this is constructive. We're talking. Where are you?

STACY: Do you really want to know?

BEN: Yes. That's why I asked.

STACY: Are you sure?

BEN: Do you know?

STACY: Yes.

BEN: Based on what you know about me, do you think that I would want to know?

STACY: I think you'd like to know, but it's what you'd do with the information that makes me not want to tell you. You'll just picture me there over and over, not able to let it go.

LESLIE: *(Almost impatient)* Start again; and use as few words as possible.

BEN: Alright, this is constructive. Where are you?

STACY: Do you really want to know?

BEN: Yes.

STACY: I'm in a hotel room.

You want more?

BEN: No.

LESLIE: Again.

BEN: Well this is constructive, we're connecting.

STACY: Fuck you.

BEN: Where are you!?

STACY: Why does that matter!?! Do you really want to know?

BEN: Yes.

STACY: In a hotel room with him, we just fucked.

LESLIE: Start again.

BEN: So, this is constructive, talking, communicating...where are you?

STACY: Do you really want to know?

BEN: No.

LESLIE: Start again.

BEN: Well, this is constructive. Where are you?

STACY: Do you really want to know?

BEN: *(Deep breath)* Yes.

STACY: I don't know.

LESLIE: Start again.

BEN: So this is constructive; talking, communicating...where are you?

STACY: Do you really want to know?

BEN: No.

LESLIE: Start again.

BEN: Well, this is constructive, talking, sharing information. Stacy, where are you?

STACY: Do you really want to know?

BEN: *(Pause)* Yes.

LESLIE: Ask him again.

STACY: Do you really want to know?

BEN: Yes. *(Pause)*

STACY: Where do you think I am?

BEN: With him.

STACY: Where?

BEN: Uh... *(Pause. He lets the image develop)* I picture you driving; I think you're driving on an interstate at night, stopping at a motel, maybe someplace close.

LESLIE: Start again.

BEN: Well, this is constructive, talking, whatnot...where bloody fucking cunt are you?

STACY: I don't see how it possibly makes any difference now!! Do you really want to know!?

BEN: No...yes, yes.

STACY: Are you sure?

BEN: No, no, forget it. I mean, wherever I picture you, that's where you are, right? I mean, basically.

STACY: I'm sorry,

LESLIE: Say it again.

STACY: *(Careful)* I'm sorry

BEN: *(Too fast)* I'm sorry too.

Pause. STACY scoffs at herself

LESLIE: Ask him what for.

STACY: What for?

BEN: Well, I'm not as sorry as you.

STACY: Fair enough. What are you sorry for?

BEN: Um...well, pushing you away, I suppose. Or is that just me making it about me?

STACY: I don't know. Maybe. Maybe...no, I don't – I don't think you have anything to be sorry for.

LESLIE: You don't?

STACY: No.

LESLIE: Does she?

BEN: Really. Really?

STACY: What? That you don't have anything to be sorry for? Maybe neither of us does. Maybe I did the right thing.

BEN: I don't think you did.

LESLIE: Ask him why.

STACY: Why?

BEN: I think you did the easy thing, maybe.

STACY: Not easy. It would have been easy to stay.

LESLIE: Start again.

BEN: Well this is constructive. You and I talking and... Where are you?

STACY: Do you really want to know?

BEN: No.

STACY: Good.

LESLIE: Ask her again.

BEN: Where are you?

STACY: I don't think you really want to know.

BEN: Humor me. Pretend that I do.

STACY: We're on a boat.

BEN: That's not what I pictured

STACY: I feel lost. And that feels safe because I didn't think you'd come after, but if you did you'd have a hell of a time finding me.

BEN: I'm not coming after you.

STACY: (*Genuine*) Thanks.

BEN: (*Ditto*) You're welcome.

JESSICA clicks off her troublelight and exits

LESLIE: Ask if she's dead

BEN: Can I ask you a weird question? Are you dead?

STACY: No.

LESLIE: Ask her if you're dead

BEN: Are we dead?

STACY: The two of us?

BEN: Yeah.

STACY: You are, I'm not

BEN: I don't believe you.

STACY: You don't think so?

BEN: No.

STACY: That's okay.

BEN: Do you think of me being dead? Does that help?

STACY: I can't explain it, but you are and that's all that matters.

LESLIE: Start again

BEN: Where are you

STACY: Do you really want to know?

BEN: Yes. Make something up.

STACY: We drove to the end of the world and jumped off.

BEN: Is that true?

LESLIE clicks off her light and exits
JIMMY wakes up. The sun coming up.

BEN: (*To JIMMY*) Morning.

JIMMY: Hey.

BEN: Look over there. See anything over there?

JIMMY: (*Looking. He feels for his glasses and puts them on. He peers at STACY*) The clock?

BEN: (*Somehow relieved, and happy.*) Yes. That's right. The clock.

JIMMY: Is today Saturday?

BEN: Yes.

JIMMY: Good.

BEN: But it's still quite early; cartoons don't start for a little while.

JIMMY: Yeah, but the Little Rascals are on.

BEN: (*looking almost through the spectre of STACY*) Hey...what did that guy look like last night, the black guy?

JIMMY: He wasn't black.

BEN: Was he...old?

JIMMY: No. Younger than you. But older than a teenager. He could drive, I bet.

BEN: Hm.

JIMMY: Is driving hard?

STACY: You have to pay attention.

JIMMY: Once when I was little I went with Donny's family to the Dells and I tried to ride the go-carts. But I couldn't reach the pedals. I kept running into things.

STACY: You were too little. *(She exits)*

JIMMY: I had to go to the ball tent. Kids pee in there. What are we going to do today?

BEN: What do you want to do today?

JIMMY: See Jurassic Park III.

BEN: Yeah, we could do that.

11. Thinner: Two Text by Howard Barker

Curtain drawn aside to reveal JESSICA in exact position as STACY's previous "Thinner" monologue. JESSICA moves stiffly, mimicking exactly STACY's previous movements. STACY sits at the tech desk in the dark. It is her voice we hear this time, JESSICA's body we watch.

STACY: *(Into the mic, breathy, over amplified)* I'm thinner. *(Pause)* I'm thinner or is it only the glass? Some glass does that some glass has the propensity to narrow or to broaden the...

JESSICA: How good is this glass Ivan, how...

STACY: You can be starved in one and bloated in another

JESSICA: ...where's it from I mean?

STACY: ...the Venetians they make lovely glass but small chance this is from Venice surely I have lost weight but so what so what I prefer it I like to be a kite a basket of thin but pliant bones upon which my skin translucently stretches etcetera...I am talking about beauty.

JESSICA: Does anybody mind I know how uncomfortable you get.

Stands and walks downstage center, she is bolder, more brazen with her body than STACY, and gets to continue the monologue.

STACY: Beauty does upset you beauty does irritate your nerves, it is so very...

JESSICA: *(Addressing audience)* Undemocratic. Beauty.

STACY: It is an unforgivable thing.

JESSICA: I have it however, so...

STACY: And all things lead to my body what else is there but my body

JESSICA: *(Spreading her arms open)* ...all things lead to it.

STACY: ...including: physics, mathematics, linguistics,

JESSICA: ...where else could they lead...

STACY: ...psychology, hygiene, and weapons training.

JESSICA: ...ask the student on the train who seems consumed by numbers...

STACY: ...where his efforts lead. My body is the end of thought, the terminus of rationality and instinct both. My husband thought that; but he couldn't say it. It depressed him. It humiliated him...

JESSICA: (*Triumphant*) I am the point and purpose of the world.

STACY: ...which dared to announce itself and that...surely...is...

JESSICA: ...sin.

STACY: Is it? Is it sin?

JESSICA: Is it? Is it sin?

STACY: It's sin, I think

JESSICA: Is it? Is it sin?

STACY: It's sin, I think; to state the obvious...

Blackout

12. On beauty Text by David L. Goines

Written Text:
**On the inefficiency of beauty pageants
and a suggestion for their modernization**

*Fluorescent lights/house lights come up.
LESLIE, into hand held mic, ad libs introduction of Dr. Benjamin Stephens and Dr. Jimmy McDermott and their discussion on the inefficiency of beauty pageants
JIMMY and BEN enter from the back of the theatre "acknowledging" audience, carrying placards and note cards. Each takes a position at the front of the theatre and sets up and adjusts their own props.*

BEN: (*Checks mic, clears throat*) Rather than the subjective, whimsical evaluations that so often lead to dud Symbols of American Womanhood, the modern beauty pageant should take a hint from the Ancient Greeks and that straightforward measure of feminine pulchritude represented by Helen of Troy, daughter of Zeus and Leda, whose face ". . . launched a thousand ships, and burnt the topless towers of Ilium."

Here we have a useful, dispassionate, scientific measure of beauty: a "helen."

Placard: h = helen

One helen is sufficient good looks to launch one thousand ships, and to cause the destruction by fire of an entire city.

Placard: boat drawing x 1,000 + Chicago skyline in flames drawing = h

The objective standards of Ship Launching and Arson may now be used to analyze feminine beauty.

Just what is meant by "launched a thousand ships?" What kind of ships are we talking about here? How can we compare modern ships to ancient?

The ships that carried the Wrath of Achilles to Troy had single banks of oars arranged symmetrically on either side, manned by up to fifty rowers. Such a vessel was called in Greek a penteconter and might have been 100 feet in length and about one-tenth that in the beam, having a displacement of about 20 tons.

Placard: 1,000 x penteconter = 20,000 tons

One thousand such ships makes 20,000 tons. By this measure, the woman who breaks a bottle of champagne over the prow of a ship of 20,000 tons displacement and so launches it, becomes the equal to Menelaus' wandering spouse. At least so far as maritime affairs are concerned.

If an average-size woman were to do no more than launch herself--by getting into the bathtub, say-- she would automatically get credit for about .3 hundredths of a ship launching. Larger women would do a little better. If ships launched were the sole measure of beauty, Eleanor Roosevelt and Mamie Eisenhower would emerge,

Placard: drawing of Mamie

without peer, as the most desirable of women. Marilyn Monroe

Placard: drawing of Marilyn

would not even be in the running. The pyromaniacal inclinations of the toothsome Mamie and Eleanor were, however, imperceptible. They didn't even smoke.

JIMMY: Thank you Dr. Stephens. Arson as a measure of allure merits separate consideration. The "topless towers of Ilium" may well have been a fair-sized walled city of perhaps as many as 12 acres, though it is more likely that it was a fortified palace not much larger than a ballroom.

By comparison, in 1871 Mrs. O'Leary's home town was a city of some 300,000 souls and the land area devastated by her careless cow

Placard: drawing of Cow

was 3-1/3 square miles: 17,450 buildings were destroyed, 100,000 people were rendered homeless and 250 lives were lost. A simple appraisal of torched acreage shows Mrs. O'Leary

Placard: drawing of Cow x 44 > h

to be 44 times more beautiful than Helen.

There is no record, however, of Mrs. O'Leary causing any ships to be launched, though surely she must have bathed from time to time. By the measure of .3 hundredths of a ship per ablution, a wash every Saturday night would give her the equivalent of one ship launching every six and a half years. To equal the lubricious Helen, Mrs. O'Leary would need to bathe once a week for six thousand five hundred years.

Placard: soap bar x 6,500 = h

BEN: Comparing the values, then: Mrs. O'Leary's arson factor of 3,288 against Helen's ship launching factor of 6,500; gives us Helen of Troy, selected by the goddess Aphrodite as the most beautiful woman in the world and still the champ, by a factor of just about two to one. Even after all these years, Helen remains twice as beautiful as her closest contender.

JIMMY: Not every woman is hot enough to burn down a city. But taking up smoking, or cooking the evening meal will add up. Combined with regular bathing, every woman can be remembered as more beautiful. The table below will be of assistance:

As JIMMY and BEN recite the following in alternation and from handwritten notecards, the WOMEN pull aside the red velvet curtain. Their sashes are lettered in Greek, and they sport cheap-looking plastic tiaras. They pantomime each of the following with cheesy props and costumes and beauty-pageant smiles, adding another layer of absurdity to the proceedings. By the time the guys reach a 'helen,' the WOMEN begin to overlap and bump into each other, each struggling for the spotlight; for the audience's (and the MEN's) attention. This degenerates into a classic campy girlfight between LESLIE and JESSICA, with STACY looking on, and straining a smile.

TABLE OF HELENS AND EQUIVALENTS

HELENS	EQUIVALENT
Attohelen (ah) 10-18 helens	Light up a Lucky While Strolling past a Shipyard
Femtohelen (fh) 10-15 helens	Burn a Dinner Candle & Spit a Toothpick into a Water Glass
Picohelen (ph) 10-12 helens	Barbecue a Couple of Steaks & Toss an Inner Tube Into the Pool
Nanohelen (nh) 10-9 helens	Send the Old Man on a Canoe Trip & Build a Good Roaring Blaze in the Fireplace
Microhelen (μh) 10-6 helens	Christen a Motor Boat & Start a Grass Fire
Millihelen (mh) 10-3 helens	Launch One Homeric Warship & Burn Down a House
Centihelen (ch) 10-2 helens	Incinerate a City Block & Launch Christopher Columbus' Entire Fleet: The "Niña" (40 tons), the "Pinta" (50 tons) and the "Santa Maria" (100 tons)
Decihelen (dh) 10-1 helens	Torch the Central Business District of Oakland, California, & Launch the Clipper Ship "Flying Cloud" (1783 tons)
Helen (h):	Raze One City & Launch the WWI US Battleship "Delaware" (20,000 tons)
Dekahelen (dah) 10 helens	Oversee the Incendiary Bombing of Ten Cities and Launch the Aircraft Carriers "Theodore Roosevelt" (91,487 tons) and "Dwight D. Eisenhower" (91,487 tons)
Hectohelen (hh) 102 helens	Instigate a Major Modern Conflict & Launch the Oil Platform "Stratford B" (with ballast, 899,360 tons), the Supertanker "Seawise Giant" (624,038 dead-weight tonnage); the Oil/Ore Carrier "World Gala" (282,460 dwt tonnage) and the Bulk-Ore Tanker "Hoei Maru" (208,000 dwt tonnage)
Kilohelen (kh) 103 helens	Launch the Equivalent of One Million Greek Warships & Spark a Nuclear Confrontation
Megaheln (Mh) 106 helens	Launch the Equivalent of One Billion Greek Warships & Blow Up the World
Gigahelen (Gh) 109 helens	Launch the Equivalent of One Trillion Greek Warships & Destroy the Solar System
Terahelen (Th) 1012 helens	Launch the Equivalent of One Thousand Trillion Greek Warships and Make Serious Inroads on the Welfare of the Galaxy

With visible embarrassment, JIMMY closes curtain on STACY and girl fight.

BEN: *(Sheepishly attempting to cover for the mess they've made)* It is to be hoped that beauty exceeding the Hectohelen class evades even the most ambitious.

JIMMY drops mic, picks up placards and storms out.

BEN: Now, doesn't this make the selection of a homecoming queen, Miss Fresno, Miss California, Miss USA, Miss World and, capping them all, Miss Universe, just a little more orderly? More exciting, too.

When computing nega-helens, or sufficient ugliness to sink a thousand ships and extinguish an urban conflagration, merely convert. Thank you.

Exits

13. Ramparts

Texts include Howard Barker and Jeanette Winterson

Leslie and Stacy sit in the dark behind the upstage shower curtain. Ben and Jimmy sit on either side of the bed with flashlights slowly panning the audience searching for the voice during the following monologue.

LESLIE: Troy was full of intellectuals. I saw their corpses. Their corpses hung on wires. All of them kept diaries; always their diaries in a miniature hand like lice had crept through the inkwells. Any paltry thought they deemed immortal. Fevered note-takers and every scrap was burned by troops, every leaf! The comedy of history.

*Flashlight beams find LESLIE and STACY huddled together and whispering, laughing quietly.
Flashlights out.*

JIMMY: We never wanted anything so badly or hated anything so much.

A light turns on at the foot of the stage revealing STACY, sitting. She holds a series of placards which she flips during the course of JIMMY'S monologue. LESLIE paces behind STACY on stage with a scarf draped about her. Her face is barely visible. BEN plays softly on the guitar. JIMMY drags himself as if he is injured, onto the bed and begins to bind his foot and heel. He completes this task over the course of the monologue.

Title: Men

Title: are easy to please

Title: but are not pleased for long

Title: before some new novelty

Title: must delight them.

JIMMY: I went to a house very much like the houses on Livingston avenue in new Brunswick New Jersey. It had two stories, perhaps three, the third floor being a skylight-type of room. I was dressed in a long brown coat I used to wear when I roamed those streets in the cold of Jersey's winter.

Title: Men
Title: must be occupied
Title: at all times,
Title: otherwise
Title: they make mischief.

JIMMY: The house was used by, owned by, or somehow represented a collective of women with varied feminist goals. As I walked up the steps, I reflected on these women whom I knew by association only.

Title: Men
Title: are always seeking soft women,
Title: but find their lives in ruins
Title: without strong women.

JIMMY: My intention was to get to the third floor. No one was there, but I knew or felt that this was a performance space; it had the restlessness of a room just after a happening. I looked out at a wide expanse of night sky, saw the stars, and felt a sense of wonder. Yet I had no expectation or clue what was to come.

Title: Men
Title: are easy to make passionate,
Title: but
Title: are unable to sustain it.

JIMMY: In one sudden, miraculous moment, Madonna appeared in and across the night sky.

LESLIE draws open the red curtain to reveal JESSICA dressed as Marilyn Monroe with a fan blowing up her white skirt and a bare bulb lighting her from behind. She moves slow motion holding provocative poses.

She was a projection, an apparition, a Madonna in the flesh and in performance all at the same time. She was the sky, her image filling up a very large part of the visual space, and she performed in this sky, which was her stage. She was visible to everyone looking at the sky at that time.

You say, I could not see, that it was impossible, that she is only a speck in the whole night sky, but I could see her. God had given me the eyes of an eagle.

Title: Men
Title: are best left in groups by themselves,
Title: where they will wear themselves out
Title: in drunkenness and competition.

JIMMY: And the voices, the bitter discussion and hate. “Why doesn’t she leave?”

LESLIE: Speak my name.

JIMMY: Has she no compassion? Disappear by a secret gate, and the armies can leave.

LESLIE: Speak my name.

JIMMY: No one would be surprised, she is an ethereal thing. An ethereal. An ethereal.

Title: While this is taking place

Title: Women may carry on with their life unhindered.

BEN: Why does she hold us here?

LESLIE: Speak my name.

BEN: The winters ruthless and bleak, the summers burnt up the plain and filled our mouths with sand.

JIMMY: The army fell with fever. They fell as ears of wheat when the reaper harvests the grain.

Title: If a man asks you for money,

Title: do not give it to him.

LESLIE: Speak my name.

BEN: What is her name? This figure walking the ramparts. This woman...

JIMMY: I can see you still, a mist or a fountain of water. In that desert we died of thirst.

Title: Men

Title: are never to be trusted

Title: with what is closest to your heart

LESLIE: Speak my name. (She draws one side of the curtain shut.)

JIMMY: One arrow would settle it. One arrow and we could all go home.

Title: And if it is he who is closest to your heart,

Title: do not tell him.

LESLIE: Speak my name.

She draws the other side of the curtain shut on herself and Jessica. Jessica turns off the light.

JIMMY: No one dared. She had earned from us so much blood. She is no mere woman. Would an arrow pierce a demon's heart?

13a: Ramparts: Wave **Text by Patti Smith**

STACY reveals the final placard and lets it drop to the floor. She turns off the last remaining troublelight. Black. LESLIE steps into a dim spotlight downstage. She searches in the dark for JIMMY who ignores LESLIE throughout the following monologue. Behind LESLIE, a cacophony of sound: BEN scratching the strings and plucking the guitar, amplified humming, plinking of piano keys, blowing of distant wind. Almost inaudible, the shouts of men at war. Rewinding of audio cassettes. Additionally,

STACY and JESSICA whisper, repeat, distort LESLIE's dialog. We see nothing but LESLIE's face, and, dimly, JIMMY's form moving about, tying his tie, dressing, running a comb through his hair

LESLIE:

Hi. hi. I was running after you for a long time.
 I I was watching you from...
 actually I've watched you for a long time.
 I like to watch you when you're walking back and forth on the beach.
 And the way you're...the way your cloth looks.
 I like, I like to see the edges
 -the bottom of it-
 get all wet when you're walking near the water there.
 It's real nice to talk to you.
 I didn't. I-I-I-I-I...how are you? How are you?
 I saw I saw you from your balcony window and you were standing there waving at everybody
 it was really great because there was about a billion people there, but when I was waving to you,
 uh, the way your face was, it was so, the way your face was

it made feel exactly like we're... it's not that you were just waving to me, but that we were we were waving to each other. Really it was really wonderful.
 I really felt happy.
 It really made me happy
 And. Um. I. I just wanted to thank you because
 you
 you really, really, you made me
 you made me feel good
 and...
 Oh, I, it's nothing.
 I um. I. Well I'm just clumsy.
 Yeah.
 No, it's just a Band-Aid.
 No, it's ok.
 Oh no, I'm always doing--something's always happening to me.
 Yeah. Well. I'll be seein' ya.
 Goodbye.

LESLIE'S light fails to black. In darkness, THE WOMEN echo amplified: "Goodbye. Goodbye. Goodbye..."

14. Written on the body

Lights fade up on JESSICA and JIMMY on the bed. He is in his suit trousers and a white T-shirt; she is wearing her underwear and his white dress shirt. Her black dress is on the floor.

She wakes, kisses him. It's sunny outside, and the sun feels good on her face.

He wakes, she freezes, hand over mouth to stifle laugh. Caught.

Pause.

JIMMY: Is someone there? (Senses her, smiles) Jessica...

JESSICA: Yeah. Lucky guess.

He reaches out to touch her face. He maps it deftly, just remembering terrain he knows well. Smile. She reaches out to touch his face. Her eyes are closed. She isn't sure what she's supposed to be "seeing."

JIMMY: Are your eyes closed?

JESSICA: Yes.

She continues, getting frustrated. She stops.

JESSICA: I can't recognize you.

He touches her face and rattles off a few attributes:

JIMMY: You're a girl. Curly hair...these flare when you're upset. Tears run here when you cry. (of scar) This is old. Glass was in here. You must have been about...18. Clean shaven. (She laughs, he continues with the corners of the eyes) You're sleepy still. (Dropping his hands into her lap) You don't smile nearly enough. (Pause) Just gotta learn to read the signs.

They laugh. She turns from him, and takes off her shirt. She spreads her arms wide, and braces. He reaches for her, touching her back at first tentatively, then with more warmth. Her flesh is cool under his hand. As he touches her more deeply, his face changes. He is startled to find under his fingers, imprinted in her back and arms, her breasts and stomach, a story:

LESLIE voices the text, STACY whispers half a beat behind or ahead, we are never sure which. They both speak into the mics, softly, their voices amplified.

LESLIE: Before me, he kept animals. Cats and dogs and hawks and snakes and pigeons, mostly. Once he had a ferret, but it ran out into the hallway and his neighbor beat it to death with a broom. He used to say that he wanted a lion or a giraffe or a rhinoceros. He'd tell me that he would go on a safari and bring back a rhinoceros. That always made me laugh, when he would talk about going on safari. It made me laugh to think of him chasing a lion or a giraffe or a rhinoceros. Once, I asked if he'd take me on his safari, and I then I laughed. After that time, you'd think I would have stopped. After that first time, he tied me to the leg of the kitchen table and he left me there for two days. He brought me a bowl of water and a box of crackers. And he left me there. Under the kitchen table. You'd think I'd have stopped after that first time. Eventually, the animals started disappearing. Everyday there'd be one less. And every day he'd talk about that safari. And every day I'd laugh. Until finally, there were no animals, and I lived under the kitchen table with a bowl of water and a food dish. The last time he tried to pet me, I bit him, and I could taste his blood on my tongue. The next time he tries to pet me, I think I'll eat him. I like the taste of blood and dark red meat.

JIMMY finishes reading her story, and drops his hands. JESSICA waits, apprehensive. JIMMY draws back, turns away. JESSICA exhales, rolls her eyes, and propels herself off the bed. She pulls on her shirt, collects her bra, black dress, etc. and steps away to quickly dress. During this, JIMMY sits on the edge of the bed. BEN's accompaniment becomes a soft melody. He sings. JIMMY stares blindly into the darkness.

Song: Winning a Battle, Losing the War
By The Kings of Convenience

BEN:

Even though I'll never need her,
 Even though she's only given me pain,
 I'll be on my knees to feed her,
 Spend the day to make her smile again.

Even though I'll never need her,
 Even though she's only given me pain,
 As the world is soft around her,
 Leaving me with nothing to disdain.

STACY is helping JESSICA dress: a morning-after handmaiden. STACY pours water from the glass pitcher into a metal basin atop a Corinthian column, as JESSICA catches the water on her toothbrush and brushes her teeth.

Even though I'm not her minder,
 Even though she doesn't want me around,
 I am on my feet to find her,
 To make sure that she is safe and sound.

JESSICA is finished dressing. She peers into STACY's eyes like a mirror.

Even though I'm not her minder,
 Even though she doesn't want me around,

JESSICA and JIMMY are, by now, seated off opposite ends of the bed.

I am on my feet to find her,
 To make sure that she is safe from harm.

JESSICA half-turns, careful not to disturb the springs, then stands. She walks around to face him.

The sun sets on the war,
 The day breaks and every thing is new.

She walks away.

The sun sets on the war,
 The day breaks and every thing is new.
 The sun sets on the war,
 The day breaks and every thing is new.

15. Thinner: Three Text by Howard Barker

*The final “Thinner” monologue involves LESLIE, who repeats exactly the moves and inflections of the other’s performances, but reaches further.
Curtain Drawn back to reveal:*

LESLIE: I’m thinner. *(Pause)* I’m thinner or is it only the glass? Some glass does that some glass has the propensity to narrow or to broaden the how good is this glass Ivan how you can be starved in one and bloated in another where’s it from I mean the Venetians they make lovely glass but small chance this is from Venice surely I have lost weight but so what so what I prefer it I like to be a kite a basket of thin but pliant bones on which my skin translucently stretches etcetera...I am talking about beauty.

Does anybody mind I know how uncomfortable you get beauty does upset you beauty does irritate your nerves it is so very undemocratic beauty it is an unforgivable thing I have it however so and all things lead to my body what else is there but my body all things lead to it including physics mathematics linguistics where else could they lead psychology hygiene and weapons training ask the student on the train who seems consumed by numbers where his efforts lead my body is the end of thought the terminus of rationality and instinct both my husband thought that but he couldn’t say it. It depressed him it humiliated him I am the point and purpose of the world which dared to announce itself and that surely is sin is it is it sin? It’s sin I think to state the obvious...

LESLIE looks down at her body through the black dress. She smoothes the fabric at her tummy. With a sudden and graceful gesture, she reaches behind, unzips the dress, and steps out of it. She is naked underneath.

Don’t touch. This thinness of mine. *(She examines her outstretched arms, fascinated; she speaks directly to the audience)* I am a rack of bones from which swords might be made. Did you know the body was a resource for instruments, the ribs for needles and the shoulder blades, what are they for, axes probably
I am a lethal object
careful...
you might cut your hands and bleed from a caress.

Song: She Spread her Legs and Flew Away By Eric Bachmann (Crooked Fingers)

BEN strums his guitar, begins to connect chords. He and JIMMY step into sight, eventually placing themselves on the bed or stepladders. LESLIE steps offstage as STACY and JESSICA softly close the red velvet curtain. They are seen in vague shadows behind the curtain, LESLIE seated on the stepladder, the others at her feet. Throughout the song, they whisper to each other. The MEN are in semi-darkness, gazing at the closed curtain. JIMMY softly sings:

She spread her legs and flew away
 As if she had nothing to say
 As if she had someplace to go
 Among the broken crowd below
 And though she never got concerned
 A string of bad luck left her burned
 She swallowed everything they sold
 And then she swallowed herself whole
 She spread her legs and flew away

She spread her legs and flew away
 As if she had no time to waste
 As if she'd left what she'd begun
 A minor detail left undone
 Then in mid flight she smashed a wall

That stood one hundred stories tall
 Among the bricks they found her bones
 And so she never made it home
 She spread her legs and flew away

She spread her legs and flew away
 Of this there's nothing more to say
 She was not somebody that we know
 We had been standing way too low
 To see her fly by without fear
 Through all the fanfare and the cheer
 To watch the marquee brightly say,
 She spread her legs and flew away
 She spread her legs and flew away...

16. Voice from a can Text by Sara Teasdale

As JIMMY and BEN are finishing up the song, JIMMY picks up the old tapedeck, and places it upright at center stage. He lights it with the last remaining troublelight, presses play and walks offstage. The MEN exit, and the light goes out behind the curtain. Silence. From the deck, badly taped, far away comes an unfamiliar female voice. It is soft, pretty, remarkable.

VOICE: I am she who loves all beauty – yet I wither it. Why have the high gods made me wreak their wrath – Forever since my maidenhood to sow sorrow and blood about me? Olympus let the other women die; Yet for me there is no rest. For never woman born had wrought such havoc on the earth as I; have I not made the world to weep enough? Give death to me. Yet life is more than death; I will not give the grave my hands to hold, Lo, I shall live to conquer Greece again; To make the people love, who hate me now. My dreams are over; I have ceased to cry against the fate that made men love my mouth, and left their spirits all too deaf to hear the little songs that echoed through my soul. I have no anger now. The dreams are done; yet since the Greeks and the Trojans would not see aught but my body's fairness; men's lives shall waste with longing after me; for I shall be the sum of their desire, the whole of beauty, never seen again. Always I shall be limned on the darkness like a shaft of light that glimmers and is gone. Yea, I shall haunt until the dusk of time the heavy eyelids filled with fleeting dreams. I shall stand with lifted head and look within his eyes, baring my breast to him and to the sun. He shall not have the power to stain with blood that whiteness – Lo, I shall live to conquer Greece again...

The tape runs out, and snaps off. The stage manager mounts the platform, extinguishes the final troublelight, and begins coiling the cord.

House lights up.