

NERVES OF THE HEART

by

Ashley Pearson

Ashley Pearson  
811 Lambert Drive, Penticton  
BC  
V2A 8Y5  
1 (604) 849-2103  
Ashley.pearson@questu.ca

## Introduction

Who are we? The 'self' is a challenging thing, and one we struggle with on a daily basis. It is one of the most fundamental questions of being human. However, we generally have some sense of self, and this sense is one we express to the outside world. For me, the interconnected questions of 'What is a self?' and 'How do we express ourselves?' are the main motivations behind my play, "The Nerves of the Heart." Notions of the self are expressed on many levels in my work. First and foremost, this work is an exploration of my self, and an expression of that self. It is infused with my passions and my memories, and has been influenced by my experience of the theatre, mathematics, culture and the human heart.

On a secondary level, many of the characters in this play struggle with the self. Primarily, Iris ('I'ris) is confronted with two alternative interpretations of her self, created by the men who love her, William and James. They have specific beliefs about who she is; both also attempt to confront objectivity in a problematic way. But these expressions of Iris are reflected back as expressions of William and James, the creators. Here we encounter one of the primary problems of expression and self - objectivity. Can we objectively experience another self? What does it mean to experience ourselves in an objective way? Can we ever express another's self?

This play is concerned with religion and science, the place of rationality and emotion in the human experience, and the place of society in the governance of the self. Many of these ideas

are juxtaposed with one another because I am fascinated by the ideas of duality and contradiction.

The two main academic subjects addressed in this play, mathematics and theatre, are traditionally juxtaposed against one another in our everyday existence. One is creative and emotional while the other is rational and systematic. But, as with many things in this play, these two ideas only contradict one another on the surface. If we encounter them on a deeper level, both are uniquely human endeavors, and both, in some way, express ourselves and our interpretations of the world.

I have not untangled many of these questions and ideas from one another, my experience of them is similar to the play's experience of them -- they are interconnected in a messy, emotional, confusing and fundamentally human way.

Throughout my creative process, I have come across more questions than answers, but the experience of creation has answered some of these questions on a more intuitive level. I hope you find answers to some of these questions in your experience of the play, and if not, I hope, at least, you find your own questions.

ACT [1]

SCENE [1]

IT IS THE EARLY 1800'S, AND WE ARE IN THE BRITISH COUNTRYSIDE, THE INTERIOR OF A STATELY MANOR HOUSE.<sup>1</sup> JUST OFF STAGE, WE HEAR THE SOUNDS OF A PARTY.

A GIRL, IRIS, ENTERS AND COLLAPSES ONTO AN ELEGANT SOFA. SHE IS FOLLOWED BY HER FRIENDS, GUY, BEATRICE AND JAMES.

IRIS: I wish every night could be like this.

GUY: (*He hands her a drink*) Tomorrow morning you may wish otherwise. In fact, If we keep up this pace, tomorrow morning we might still be dancing.

IRIS: Wouldn't that be wonderful!

BEATRICE: Of course you think so, your toes aren't loosing sensation from terribly pinching shoes.

IRIS: Oh, stop complaining. You're just afraid of stepping on someone's feet. Perhaps you just need sufficient temptation.

A LOOK PASSES FROM BEATRICE TO GUY.

Are you keeping secrets, Beatrice?

BEATRICE: Only of the kind one doesn't tell.

IRIS: Funny, I always find those are the ones everybody already knows!

BEATRICE: Perhaps in your case, Iris, but I am still holding out hope.

GUY: Well there's a revealing turn of phrase. Are you holding out hope for the secret, or are you secretly holding out hope?

GUY HOLDS OUT A HAND FOR BEATRICE.

BEATRICE: *(Wickedly)* Ask me after the next dance and perhaps I shall tell you.

THEY GO OFF DANCING. IRIS AND JAMES SHARE A LOOK.

IRIS: Now, James, why have you been skulking all evening?

JAMES: I was merely admiring the view.

IRIS: And is it to your liking? Is it worthy of one of your paintings?

JAMES: Oh no, it is too fair for one of my simple pieces. I could never do it justice.

IRIS: The point of art is not to represent a true reality, but merely to interpret one aspect of it, is it not?

JAMES: Perhaps. In any case, I'm out of the colour red, and therefore could not paint your lips.

IRIS BLUSHES.

Or the blush on your cheeks. (BEAT) And so, you must settle for my dazzling conversation.

IRIS: I suppose it will have to do, since you have always been impossible to convince to dance.

JAMES: Dance is an occupation for idle men. One dances if one wishes to take a break from thinking. I never wish to take a break from it. (PAUSE) But for you, perhaps this once I can forego my principles.

HE HOLDS OUT A HAND FOR HER.

IRIS: I do hope you know your left foot from your right. Luckily, I have never been one to shy away from a challenge.

THEY GET UP TO DANCE. JUST AS THEY ARE ABOUT TO LEAVE THE ROOM, ANOTHER MAN

ENTERS FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM. HE IS TALL AND STRIKING, AND LOOKS AS IF HE HAS JUST COME FROM A LONG JOURNEY. BOTH IRIS AND JAMES TURN TO HIM AND FREEZE.

WILLIAM: Please, please. Don't let me interrupt.

JAMES GOES OVER AND HUGS HIM.

JAMES: Good to see you, William.

IRIS: Tired of your precious Academy, William?

JAMES: I'm surprised you're back. I don't think the person you're looking for is here, but I hope you will join us tomorrow for--

WILLIAM: -- What? Oh yes, of course I will. Wouldn't miss it. Now if you'll excuse me, long journey.

HE EXITS. JAMES RETURNS TO IRIS, BOTH ARE SLIGHTLY DISTRACTED WITH THEIR OWN THOUGHTS.

JAMES: (A little disgruntled) So, the prodigal son returns. I'm surprised he could bear to leave his lab for a day, much less to come down and visit.

IRIS: Yes, it is quite a surprise, isn't it?

JAMES: Quite.

IRIS: Well, in any case, are we going to dance?

JAMES: Perhaps not, I have not been practicing.

IRIS: You must have very many wicked things to occupy you then.

JAMES: Not nearly as many as I should like to have in the future.

IRIS: I thought men were meant to become less wicked as they got older.

JAMES: I have no intention of aging a day more. I am perfectly happy where I am, thank you.

IRIS: (Teasing) Will you sell your soul to the devil, then, and hide away your true self in one of your paintings?<sup>2</sup>

JAMES: Oh no, he would not take it. It's far too monochromatic. Instead, I shall sell my soul to the God of Numbers, and tell him, "sir, every year let me age half as much as I did the year before, no more, no less." "How reasonable," he'll say, "I cannot possibly deny such a request from a good lad." And then, next year, I shall age only half a year, and after that a quarter, and then an eighth, and after that the increments shall be so small I will barely have a wrinkle in 100 years.<sup>3</sup>

IRIS: You are much too logical for me, I can hardly put up with it.

JAMES: Well, you will not have to for much longer. I'm told the men go hunting tomorrow, and the women are to remain behind.

IRIS: I wish things were not so traditional. I could outride all of the men here, and you besides.

JAMES: I do not doubt it, and will therefore be glad not to suffer such defeat at the hands of such a beautiful woman.

THERE IS A MOMENT. THEY ALMOST KISS.

Well, perhaps I should take my leave.

IRIS: Yes, it is very late.

JAMES: Goodnight, Iris.

HE LEAVES.

IRIS: Goodnight, James.

EXEUNT.

ACT [1]

SCENE [2]

IT IS MORNING, WILLIAM AND JAMES ENTER TALKING TOGETHER WITH GUY IN TOW. WE ARE IN THE SAME ROOM AS LAST NIGHT.

WILLIAM: You can't possibly believe that any serious advancements can be made in the medical profession without the detailed study of human anatomy.

JAMES: But William, to dismember actual corpses is a vile practice that goes against nature. Until man is decent enough to treat his fellow man with the respect he shows himself, we cannot advance as a species.

WILLIAM: That's rather naive! The advancement of our species will come through science. Even the most innocent children can be kind to one another, but to understand the inner most workings of our physical being, to really know ourselves, that is where the future shall lead us.

JAMES: If man continues to belittle his fellow man, to lose himself in technical detail and forget his true spirit, what separates him from the animals, we shall never reach enlightenment. As Rousseau himself said, "What wisdom can you find greater than kindness?"<sup>4</sup>

WILLIAM: And curing our diseases, is not that kindness? Medicine isn't cruelty, James, it is showing kindness to humanity instead of to a single man.

JAMES: Through the violation of corpses? No, you shall not sway me on this.

WILLIAM: I'm surprised, James. I did not know you were so... Religious.

JAMES: I am not. I simply have principles. I'm surprised you don't!

WILLIAM: Come now, there are numerous examples in the scientific community of somewhat... Controversial practices leading to the greatest breakthroughs. You yourself are very interested in many less accepted practices, they just happen to be in a different field.

JAMES: Considering alternative ideas in mathematics is hardly the same thing. Theories in mathematics do not have quite the same effects on people's lives.

WILLIAM: You don't think the cult of Pythagoras had an effect on anybody's life?<sup>5</sup>

JAMES: Well yes, but perhaps only tangentially.

WILLIAM: All areas of scientific research are riddled with ideas that challenge the morals of the human populous. It is a fact of life. A fact the scientific community must learn to live with if any progress is ever to be made. And it is a fact the world finds almost impossible to accept. Democracy will be the ruination of progress, James. As soon as the general public is allowed to vote on matters in which they have no education, ignorance and fear will triumph over reason.<sup>6</sup>

JAMES: So what would you suggest, the population have no say in their own lives?

WILLIAM: Perhaps merely that they have no say in matters beyond their comprehension.

GUY: While I am thankful for your return, William, I think its high time you switch to a topic of more interest to us mere mortals. You and James can have your philosophical squabbles on your

own time. We do not all possess the genius of the pair of you.

WILLIAM: Well then, I shall have to stop wasting my breath. Perhaps it would be better spent reciting the words of your favorite Lord Byron.

GUY: (Jokingly) Oh yes, I'm sure Iris would appreciate hearing a rendition, although I'm not sure from which of you it would please her more.

JAMES AND WILLIAM BOTH STIFFEN UP AND LOOK SOMEWHAT DEFENSIVE. THERE IS AN AWKWARD SILENCE.

But perhaps we should save the poetry. Let me get you both a drink.

JAMES: Hmm? Oh, Thank you. William, did you happen to notice Guy dancing with Beatrice last night?

WILLIAM: And are your intentions towards my sister honorable?

GUY: I'm hurt that you would even have to ask!

JAMES: Well, there was that time in London...

GUY: I was young, reckless. I didn't know my own heart.

JAMES: You were clearly thinking with another organ.

GUY: Yes, well, perhaps if you did some thinking with that other organ it would have more friends.

WILLIAM: Settle down, boys, settle down. I'm sure we can find a less... Controversial topic to occupy us.

JAMES: Yes, William. How long do you intend to visit this time?

WILLIAM: I hadn't quite decided. I do have a number of personal matters to resolve, and it really depends if their outcomes are in my favor.

JAMES: And if they should not go your way?

WILLIAM: I think it unlikely, but if so, I will return to my work up North. I take it you intend to remain at Cheltenham's leisure?

JAMES: Your Father has been very kind. The parks here are an exceptional place for my field of study. I intend to begin landscape painting. I am so content here I may never leave.

WILLIAM: And there's nothing that would make you go?

GUY: For some reason I get the feeling we're still on the previous topic of conversation.

JAMES: I can see how some big change-- As you said, outcomes in my favor might--

GUY RELENTS, SEEMING TO REALIZE THAT  
THE FIRST TOPIC OF CONVERSATION WAS  
THE SAFEST.

GUY: And what of the immortal soul?

JAMES: What?

GUY: When you dissect a corpse. What happens to a man's immortal soul if his body is... Sacrificed for science?

WILLIAM: When we lay a man to rest in the ground, his body rots, is eaten by worms, his mind becomes the very soil we walk upon. I cannot see having a greater objection to life as an instrument of education than to that.

JAMES: Guy is right. It violates the natural order of things.

WILLIAM: As do painting, farming, the domestication of animals... Would you have us live as wild beasts in the forests? Hunting and fishing for survival?

JAMES: Of course not, but you must admit that living as the savage man must have been much simpler.

WILLIAM: I had no idea you were so Rousseau-ian, James. You espouse him with such gusto.<sup>7</sup>

JAMES: I am merely suggesting that perhaps progress is not always in the best interest of man.

WILLIAM: And what would you have instead? Religiosity?

JAMES: Not of the fanatic variety. Come, William, you antagonize me. We are both men of reason. Of course we should have scientific reason. I simply mean to suggest that exercising caution in matters which may lead us down morally questionable paths.

GUY SIGHS, RISES AND EXITS. WILLIAM AND JAMES FOLLOW THEIR ARGUMENT CONTINUES AS THEY EXIT, BOTH MEN ARE AGAIN COMPLETELY ABSORBED.

WILLIAM: Then please, define for me a 'morally questionable path.'

JAMES: Well, anything which may bring harm to...

EXEUNT.

ACT [1]

SCENE [3]

IRIS AND BEATRICE ENTER THE ROOM AS THE MEN LEAVE, OCCUPIED BY THEIR OWN CONVERSATION.

BEATRICE: How have you been so calm?

IRIS: I simply do not have anything to be excited about.

BEATRICE: But William is back. He came back! And it certainly wasn't to visit his sister.

IRIS: I'm sure he's very happy to see you!

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BEATRICE: Yes, but that is beside the point!

IRIS: There is no point, I will not make something from nothing.

BEATRICE: That only works if there's nothing to begin with. And what about poor James?

IRIS: What do you mean 'what about poor James?' What does James have to do with any of it? Besides, why should he be 'poor' James?

BEATRICE: Iris, you're really not fooling anyone by playing innocent. You know perfectly well what I mean.

IRIS: I know nothing of the sort.

BEATRICE: Right, so you were not once practically engaged to my brother, and you have not been flirting with James constantly since your arrival?

IRIS: A pack of lies. Really, Beatrice, everyone here can be such gossips.

BEATRICE: Yes, but only about the blatantly obvious.

IRIS: Like you and a certain someone...

BEATRICE: Oh, no, he wouldn't ever...

IRIS: Like you? Of course he would! And he does! Just you wait, I wouldn't be surprised if you were engaged within a week.

BEATRICE: You are changing the subject.

IRIS: Only because it *begs* to be changed. Men are so boring. I cannot understand why *they* get to discuss everything interesting and the only thing we are aloud to speak about is them.

BEATRICE: Well, I suppose we could talk about what they are talking about... Then that's still talking about them, isn't it?

IRIS: Yes, there can't possibly be any objection to that.

BEATRICE: You know, I heard James and William talking about dissection! How awful! They were discussing the best ways to create diagrams of the insides of bodies.

IRIS: Really? What did they say? I mean, what details?

BEATRICE: You are very morbid, Iris. They were talking about some man named Scarpa and his drawings of nerves to the heart.<sup>8</sup>

IRIS: Scarpa... I wonder if there's anything by him in the library.

BEATRICE: Why? You wouldn't go and look at it, would you?

IRIS: Just for curiosity's sake. (PAUSE) Look, you wait here and make sure no one goes in, and I'll go see.

BEATRICE: I don't know...

IRIS: I'll be as quick as a rabbit.

BEATRICE: Isn't that what the men were hunting?

SHE LEAVES.

BEATRICE LOOKS AROUND NERVOUSLY. SHE BEGINS PACING, WORRIED. SHE HEAR SOMETHING IN THE HALL, AND HALF HEARTEDLY ATTEMPTS TO HIDE. GUY ENTERS.

GUY: Oh, Beatrice, I was just looking for you.

BEATRICE: You were?

GUY: Yes, I have a question I wanted to ask you.

BEATRICE STILL LOOKS AROUND NERVOUSLY.

Are you quite alright? You look worried?

BEATRICE: No, I'm fine, I mean I'm just... Please do go on.

GUY: My dear Beatr-- Please, why don't you sit.

BEATRICE: Oh yes, of course.

GUY: Beatrice, with all my heart I offer you my whole self--

IRIS RE-ENTERS QUICKLY, INTERRUPTING.

IRIS: I found them, look, they're-- Oh! I was just... Getting something for... William. I'm terribly sorry. Have you seen him?

GUY: He was in the morning room with James last I saw.

IRIS: Yes. Thank you. Carry on.

SHE EXITS.

GUY: I love you. I did not know myself until you saw me. I lived in a world of men trapped with cages around their hearts. I am no good at verses, so I have borrowed one. (PAUSE) "Self is the only prison that can ever bind the soul; Love is the only angel who can bid the gates unroll."<sup>9</sup> (PAUSE) You are my angel, and I would be honored if you would be my wife.

THEY KISS.

BLACKOUT.

ACT [1]

SCENE [4]

WE ARE NOW IN A DIFFERENT ROOM, PERHAPS A STUDY. IRIS SITS ALONE AT A TABLE, LOOKING AT THE BOOKS SHE HAS TAKEN. SHE APPEARS TO BE CRYING. WILLIAM ENTERS. AS HE BEGINS TO SPEAK, SHE TRIES TO WIPE AWAY THE TEARS AND HIDE THE BOOKS.

WILLIAM: I was just looking for you, Iris. Beatrice would like your advice on a-- are you alright?

IRIS: Yes, yes. I'm fine. What does she want?

WILLIAM: What are those? What have you been looking at?

IRIS: They're nothing. I was just curious. Beatrice overheard you and James and I--

WILLIAM: You were looking at anatomical engravings?

IRIS: Yes, I was. It seems so odd to think that this is all we are.

WILLIAM: Is that why you're distressed? (PAUSE) Iris, of course this is not all we are. A piano has a wooden frame, and keys, and strings of specific length, but that is not all a piano is. We are the music played by nature; Anatomy is simply understanding the construction of the instrument.

HE LOOKS TO IRIS FOR A RESPONSE.

IRIS: William, why did you leave?

WILLIAM: I-- There were some things I had to do.

IRIS: And you couldn't do them here?

WILLIAM: No.

IRIS: You couldn't tell us what you were doing? You couldn't tell me?

WILLIAM: Things were complicated. But I always intended to return.

IRIS: Well, thank you for letting me know you were coming back.

WILLIAM: I am truly sorry, but I had to go.

IRIS: Did you find what you were looking for? When you left?

WILLIAM: I did, and I didn't.

IRIS: Then why did you come back?

WILLIAM: There are some things I must take care of before I can continue my work.

IRIS: So you're leaving again? Just like that? You came back to do business and thought you might as well take a holiday before getting back to your research? Have you told anyone you're leaving again?

WILLIAM: James knows.

IRIS: Oh, well of course James knows. The two of you, thick as thieves. Going on and on about your experiments and such. Nothing for the delicate ears of a woman. I think the two of you will be very happy together.

WILLIAM: Iris, you know that James and I both lo--

JAMES ENTERS.

JAMES: James and I both what?

WILLIAM: Are very committed to our work.

JAMES: Oh. Iris, what's the matter?

IRIS: It doesn't matter anyway. I'd best go speak with Beatrice.

SHE EXITS, LEAVING THE BOOKS BEHIND.

JAMES: What was that about?

WILLIAM: Quite honestly? I'm not really sure.

JAMES: Well from the looks of her, it didn't hurt my chances.

WILLIAM: I don't think either of us faired particularly well in the conversation.

JAMES: You know, we really must resolve this somehow. Perhaps you should go back to your laboratory, your presence clearly upsets her.

WILLIAM: I don't believe my leaving is the best solution. On the other hand, if you left, we could sort ourselves out and be on our way.

JAMES: Clearly a flawed plan. (PAUSE) Really things are very simple. I love her, you abandoned her. You coming back here has just confused her.

WILLIAM: We were meant for each other.

JAMES: A man of numbers who believes in destiny, I'm shocked.

WILLIAM: I will be the first to acknowledge that book learning is not the only way to know something. The mysteries of the human heart lie far beyond reason.

JAMES: But isn't that what you study? What are your experiments about if not the human heart?

WILLIAM: As if I am the only one to be so intrigued by human nature. Your study of mathematics goes far beyond levels of mere calculation. Do you think anybody really believes you are here to paint landscapes? You don't think I've caught on to your veiled questions about chemistry, philosophy...

JAMES: At least I do not allow my work to take over my life.

WILLIAM: And I should be punished for choosing to shield my family from mine?

JAMES: She is not your family, William. Not yet.

THEIR ARGUMENT HAS AT THIS POINT ESCALATED ALMOST TO PHYSICAL VIOLENCE.

JAMES BREAKS AWAY. A PAUSE.

Clearly this matter needs settlement if we are both to have any peace of mind.

WILLIAM: Clearly. (PAUSE) And I take it you have no solution?

JAMES: Not as such, no. Perhaps we should both speak to Iris and... Lay out our cases.

WILLIAM: That would seem the fairest course of action, I suppose. Although, we should probably have some kind of plan, in case she cannot decide between us.

WE ARE IN UNSURE TERRITORY HERE.

JAMES: Yes, an equitable manner of making the decision.

WILLIAM: It should be fair, and take into account all of the necessary attributes. Temperament, Family connections,

JAMES: Commitment, intelligence... It should be a test of all our abilities. And our feelings towards her.

WILLIAM: And final. No second guessing or challenging the verdict.

JAMES: Yes. Completely. And we should have enough time as to do the utmost of our abilities.

WILLIAM: Let Iris name the contest.

JAMES: Yes. And be our judge and jury.

BLACKOUT.

ACT [1]

SCENE [5]

IRIS AND BEATRICE SPEAK.

BEATRICE: Have you any idea why Mr. Graves is not speaking to Mr. Wollensly? It really does make dinner between them practically unbearable.

IRIS: I believe they had a falling out over the hedges between their properties. They are both such sticklers about the proper arrangement of shrubbery.

BEATRICE: And yet they can't seem to straighten up the shrubbery on their heads.

WILLIAM AND JAMES ENTER.

JAMES: Beatrice, might we have a word with Iris?

BEATRICE: Of course--

IRIS: I'm afraid Beatrice and I are having a very serious conversation. It simply cannot wait.

BEATRICE: I'm sure James and William have very important things to discuss with you. I'll be in the drawing room when you have finished here.

SHE EXITS.

JAMES: Iris, you know how I feel. I love you. I can see who you truly are.

WILLIAM: Or so he believes. And I, likewise, believe the same. We cannot continue like this.

IRIS: This is ridiculous. You two are such scientists. Have you ever heard of someone sitting down and having such a civilized conversation about love!

JAMES: Yes, well, regardless. We cannot keep on this way. You need to make a choice.

IRIS: You know perfectly well I cannot. If I could, I would have.

WILLIAM: That is why we would like to propose another solution.

IRIS: (SARCASTICALLY) Finally, someone's proposing.

WILLIAM: A contest. The task of your naming, to help you decide which of us is truly your match.

IRIS: You would have me pit you against one another like dogs in a ring? No, I shall not.

JAMES: Not like that. A test of our intellect, our creativity and our passion.

IRIS: (SHE CONTEMPLATES) A contest... It seems so... Medieval.

WILLIAM: The greatest achievements of man have come through competition.

IRIS: We are not talking about one of your experiments or problems. We are speaking of lives, human lives.

WILLIAM: Well, if you can devise another means to settle this issue, by all means, do enlighten us.

IRIS: A contest...

JAMES: To the victor go the spoils.

IRIS: And I may choose the victor?

WILLIAM: You may choose the victor.

IRIS: What task would you like?

JAMES: We leave that entirely up to your discretion, Iris. Although, I am unnaturally skilled at lawn bowling...

IRIS: You would have me sell myself to a lawn bowling champion?

JAMES: On second thought, perhaps you'd best decide on your own.

WILLIAM: Yes, we wouldn't want things to get out of hand, now would we.

IRIS: I am not quite sure if I like the idea.

JAMES: Come now, Iris, it is brilliant. The perfect way to settle such a... Challenging problem.

IRIS: (NOT CONVINCED) Well, if nothing else, I'm sure it shall be entertaining.

JAMES: We live to serve.

WILLIAM: Or something like that.

IRIS: So, aside from me, what else have you two been scheming about?

WILLIAM: Oh, you know, this and that.

IRIS: William, if you tell me, I promise not to understand, and to then forget promptly afterward.

JAMES: It is exceedingly boring, Iris. All mathematical theory and calculations.

IRIS: Are you actually working together on a scientific project? The bitter rivals? I'm shocked.

WILLIAM: If you must know, we're exploring some ideas about infinity.<sup>10</sup>

IRIS: Oh, how mysterious!

THE LIGHTS FADE.

ACT [1] SCENE [6]

THE LIGHTS COME UP ON A SPACE, REPEATED THREE TIMES. IRIS SITS ON A CHAIR (THERE ARE THREE IRISES SITTING ON THE THREE CHAIRS). THE IRISES PERFORM THE SAME ACTIONS AT THE SAME TIME. THIS SCENE SHOULD BE VERY OBVIOUSLY DIFFERENTIATED FROM THE PREVIOUS AND FOLLOWING SCENES. WE SHOULD NOT REALLY FEEL AS IF WE ARE STILL IN THE SAME PLACE.<sup>11</sup>

SHE STANDS, WALKS UP TO THE AUDIENCE, LOOKS OFF INTO THE DISTANCE. LOOKS OFF TO THE SIDE. SHE WALKS INTO THE NEXT REPETITION (THE IRIS ON THE END REPETITION GOES OFF STAGE AND APPEARS BACK ON THE OTHER SIDE. SHE LOOKS BACK AT WHERE SHE CAME FROM. THE DIALOGUE ONLY COMES FROM ONE IRIS AT A TIME, ALTHOUGH THE OTHERS MAKE EXACTLY THE SAME MOVEMENTS. THE DIALOGUE PERIODICALLY SWITCHES IRISES.

IRIS LOOKS TO HER SIDE, SHE APPEARS TO SEE SOMETHING IMPORTANT IN THE DIS-

TANCE AND GOES AFTER IT (OF COURSE,  
SHE COMES BACK TO THE SAME PLACE).

IRIS: Hello? Hello! Is somebody there?

I can see you, you know. I wish you would look at me. I'm staring right at you. Hello? Can you hear me?

SHE GOES OFF AND BACK AGAIN.

Why are you running away from me? I'm here, wait... Please!

SHE DROPS HER SHAWL.

Look there, you've dropped something.

SHE GOES AFTER IT AND PICKS IT UP.

Excuse me, you've lost your... Oh, its the same as...

SHE REACHES FOR HER OWN AND REALIZES  
IT ISN'T THERE.

Never mind. Listen, why won't you come here and talk to me? Why do you ignore me, (TO HERSELF) always looking away... Its as if she doesn't know I'm here.

(TO THE OTHER) Hello!

(TO HERSELF) A woman who will not look at me, just as trapped as I am. And I cannot walk past her, but somehow return to the same place, even though I am chasing her and she runs away. Perhaps she is not real and I am chasing some... Ideal.

SHE LOOKS AT THE OTHER.

But what ideal? What phantom image, what reflection? If the shadow stands there, then where is the caster? Or perhaps like a portrait, the model has long since aged and withered, left to stare at her lost self.

TO THE OTHER, AND TO HERSELF.

Where is your original self? What have you done with her? Why do you fade, why can I not catch you?

TO HERSELF.

I am lost in a world of people turning away. Of the same person turning away. Who is that person?

TO THE OTHER.

Who are you?

TO HERSELF.

Who are you? (PAUSE) Are you me?

GAZES BACK AND FORTH.

Is a copy the same as the original? What if there is no copy and I simply see myself? If I walk, I walk back to the same place I began. Perhaps my eyesight follows the same path... Perhaps there is just one. William once said, "In mathematics and philosophy, man stands alone; In lovemaking, he is among all species." I wonder if we stand alone in looking at ourselves as well.

TO THE OTHER.

Then why don't I answer myself?!

LOOKS TO OTHER SIDE.

You do...

BLACKOUT.

ACT [1]                   SCENE [7]

IT IS STORMY OUTSIDE. THERE IS A PARTY JUST OFF STAGE. WILLIAM AND JAMES DISCUSS SOMETHING IN HUSHED WHISPERS, BEATRICE AND GUY STAND TOGETHER, MORE INTIMATE THAN BEFORE. IRIS STANDS WITH THEM, BUT IS DISTRACTED. SHE GLANCES OVER TO WILLIAM AND JAMES OFTEN.

GUY:                    Do you still wish every night could be like this, Iris?

IRIS:                   Perhaps not quite like this. It is strange how repetition can make something so wonderful seem...

GUY:                    Repetitive?

BEATRICE:              Or perhaps it is because nothing is every really the same. Nothing repeats. This night is not the same as last night, even though we do the same things, even say the same things. There are differences. We are different.

IRIS:                   But are we ever different? Even though our lines change are we really the same?

BEATRICE:              From other's perspectives we change.<sup>12</sup>

GUY:                    Not you two as well. I can't stand for another pair like James and William. Too much philosophy hurts my head.

IRIS:                   *(Ignoring him)* The point of the self is not to be part of a true reality, but merely to interpret one aspect of it, is it not? That is what perspective is.

BEATRICE:              But if there is no true reality--

GUY:                    What is this challenge I hear talk of?

IRIS:                   Oh, James and William believe it will settle things between them. I am supposed to judge them on some task I choose.

BEATRICE: And what task shall you have them do? Please don't make them fight each other! I couldn't bear it!

IRIS: Of course not.

GUY: You could make them sail around the world and back.

IRIS: I have already chosen.

GUY: Well then please, enlighten us.

WILLIAM AND JAMES RELUCTANTLY GIVE  
IRIS THEIR ATTENTION.

IRIS: The challenge is this: Whichever of you can create the best likeness of me, the truest representation of myself, shall win.

SILENCE.

JAMES: Well, William, you may as well share your own announcement, since we all stand to attention.

WILLIAM: Thank you, James, but I had rather not.

BEATRICE: What is it, William? Do tell us.

WILLIAM: As I was just telling James, it is nothing of concern to any of you, and it is information I prefer not to share.

GUY: Come, William, what news could be so bad? We are all friends here, are we not?

IRIS: Yes, there can be nothing we could not share.

WILLIAM: The Academy of Natural Sciences has asked me to withdraw. It is all political nonsense. I was working on a project in an area the Academy deems 'inappropriate.' It is totally ridiculous really, my work is not 'in style' at the moment. But don't worry, I'm sure they will come fully around very soon, and then they'll be kicking out all of the geologists or some such thing.

IRIS AND OTHERS STAND SHOCKED.

BEATRICE: Is this why you came back?

WILLIAM: Part of the reason, yes. But I also had other things in mind.

IRIS: And what was this research they deem so 'out of style' at the moment?

WILLIAM: I cannot explain it to you, it is very complicated and--

IRIS: Then show it to us.

WILLIAM: It is a delicate experiment, and I have not yet had success with it, I should very much like to keep my work private (HE LOOKS POINTEDLY AT JAMES) As this conversation should have been.

HE EXITS.

JAMES: I'm sure it is all just a misunderstanding. I will go speak with him and sort everything out.

JAMES EXITS AFTER WILLIAM. BY THIS POINT THE ROOM HAS FALLEN MOSTLY SILENT.

BEATRICE: Forced out of the Academy-- Iris, the scandal.

IRIS: Everything will be fine, as they said, a misunderstanding.

BEATRICE: Yes but, why not tell us, Iris? Why keep it a secret?

IRIS: Perhaps he thought he could deal with it before we had to find out.

BEATRICE: Yes well, that would be like him, not asking for help.

IRIS: It's funny, you know. To think you know someone so well, understand them, and then... I was sure he came back for me.

BEATRICE: We all were. And he did. He could have stayed in London despite what happened--

IRIS: Not easily.

BEATRICE: (REMEMBERING) But the contest! What shall we do?

IRIS: I think perhaps tonight is not the evening for it. Maybe tomorrow or the next day.

BEATRICE: Yes, I'm sure things will be much calmer by then.

BLACKOUT.

ACT [1]

SCENE [8]

WILLIAM ENTERS THE ROOM, DISTRESSED,  
PACING. JAMES ENTERS AFTER HIM.

JAMES: William, what in God's name happened? You are more brilliant than most of the Academy!

WILLIAM: Intelligence is not the measure of a man's worth. Science has become a political animal. The Academy is the lapdog of parliament. Any researcher whose interests vary from those prescribed is left to the mercy of a pack of rabid dogs.

JAMES: But your interests surely do not stray so far from the Academy's? They are not interested in the human body?

WILLIAM: They are only interested in what the government whispers in their ears. And the government is full of men who fear God. Like you, they are appalled at the idea of studying man's inner workings. To cure the sick would go against God's will. To solve the mysteries of life would be to play at his work.

JAMES: But they are scientists. Men of rationality. Perhaps if you talk to them, explain what you are working on. Share your work--

WILLIAM: No. I will not share the details of my work with anyone, much less a group of conservative old men who want nothing but more money and more power. I will not stoop to that level.

JAMES: Well, perhaps if you show me what you are working on, we could find a way to--

WILLIAM: You have already heard too much about it. It is very sensitive material. Besides, its not as if your research is an open book to me.

JAMES: (ACQUIESCING) True.

WILLIAM: And I do not need the academy. They provide nothing but limitations. I intend to find a place to continue my work on my own.

JAMES: You will leave here again so soon?

WILLIAM: I cannot stay, there will be too many questions. And besides, we have a challenge to complete. You hardly think we can do it justice here in what, a mere few hours? If you think you can, by all means, do. But I intend to put in my most noble effort.

JAMES: No, of course. We cannot simply wave our hands and have it done. Although, it would be possible to take a lifetime on the task.

WILLIAM: Which is why we must set a limit, a time frame. To express a person's true self...

JAMES: A year, it is a reasonable length for an engagement, why not for this?

WILLIAM: Yes, a year. A good length of time, but not too long.

JAMES: So when will you go?

WILLIAM: It would hardly be fair for you to stay if I'm to leave. You must go with me. We will part ways in London and begin our work.

JAMES: I suppose if we are going to be fair about it, I must go.

WILLIAM: Yes, you must. So it is settled, we will leave this place and return in exactly one year from the date of departure.

JAMES: Neither of us should contact Iris, or anyone who may relate news to her.

WILLIAM: She should remain impartial. But even Beatrice, my parents, Guy?

JAMES: If they hear news of us they will relate it to her. If something happens to sway her opinion, then all our work would be for naught.

WILLIAM: Fine. I agree.

JAMES: So, we will go after the weekend, when things have quieted down.

WILLIAM: (PAUSE) No. (PAUSE) I must go sooner-- there will be too many questions. And I doubt they will understand our reasoning... Besides, we must not be allowed time to influence Iris's decision now that we know the challenge.

JAMES: What are you suggesting?

WILLIAM: We go tonight. We leave a letter explaining ourselves and including the date of our return, and we leave.

JAMES: Escaping in the night without so much as a goodbye? No, William, I do not like it.

WILLIAM: Do you think I want to flee my house like a thief in the night? But what choice do we have? We cannot stay and explain, they will turn things into some silly game, as if her heart were some trinket to be won at cards.

JAMES: Instead to win her heart we break it?

WILLIAM: We do what is right.

WILLIAM GOES OVER TO THE DESK AND BEGINS WRITING ON A PIECE OF PAPER. JAMES GOES TO HIM AND READS OVER HIS SHOULDER.

THE LIGHTS FADE.

## ACT 2

In this act, 3 settings should be on the page simultaneously. Stage right, we find James' workroom. Centre stage is garden where we find Iris, and stage left is William's Laboratory. During the entire act, Iris, William and James should be on stage. The 'scene changes' should happen solely through light changes.

ACT [2] SCENE [1]<sup>13</sup>

WE ARE IN A DILAPIDATED LABORATORY. A CLOTH COVERS AN OBJECT THE SHAPE OF A BODY ON AN OPERATING TABLE. THE ROOM IS BADLY LIT.

WILLIAM ENTERS WEARING AN OPERATING APRON. WE GET THE SENSE THAT SOME TIME HAS PASSED, PERHAPS HE HAS A BEARD NOW. HE IS IN A FERVOR, PACING QUICKLY. AN OLDER GENTLEMEN, PROFESSOR BEHRN FOLLOWS HIM, WHEEZING AND SLIGHTLY OUT OF BREATH, PERHAPS DUE TO HIS GIRTH. HE WEARS A SOMEWHAT ILL FITTING SUIT WHICH PULLS IN THE FRONT, BUT IS OTHERWISE WELL PUT TOGETHER. HE HAS GLASSES AND A BEARD. PERHAPS A LIGHT GERMAN ACCENT.

WILLIAM: There is something wrong with the heart.

PROF. BEHRN: Yes, but William, I was your professor, I hardly think I'm qualified to help you with-- What is it exactly that you are doing?

WILLIAM: I am building something. A person. A woman. (HE STRUGGLES TO EXPLAIN) The copy of a woman-- A friend... But the heart, there is something wrong with the construction, something missing.

PROF. BEHRN: What do you mean 'building a woman?' You mean you're building something *for* a woman?

WILLIAM: No. Well, yes. And no. But the heart-- If you'll just come take a look, I'm sure you can help.

PROF. BEHRN: Well all right then, dear boy, but you look like you haven't slept in weeks, you really should take better care of yourself, you know.

AS HE SPEAKS, HE APPROACHES THE OPERATING TABLE, WHILE WILLIAM HOLDS THE BLANKET UP FOR HIM. UNDERNEATH THE BLANKET IS A SKELETON COMPLETE WITH BLOOD VESSELS AND SOME ORGANS. IT IS NOT NECESSARY THAT THE AUDIENCE SEE THIS. AS SOON AS THE PROFESSOR GLANCES AT WHAT IS ON THE TABLE, HE GASPS AND STAGGERS BACKWARD. HE PULLS A HANDKERCHIEF FROM HIS POCKET AND PUTS IT TO HIS MOUTH.

Dear God-- Where is the skin?!

WILLIAM: (AS IF IT IS OBVIOUS) It isn't-- I haven't made it yet. I must get the heart working first.

PROF. BEHRN: Haven't made it yet-- Dear boy, you *made* that... monster? How?

WILLIAM: It is not a monster, it is almost a woman. And through combining various disciplines of the sciences, mathematics, anatomy, chemistry...

PROF. BEHRN: And is there precedent for something of this nature?

WILLIAM: Well, I have been conversing with a colleague in Geneva... Please Behrn, see what you can make of it?

PROF. BEHRN: Yes, well, what exactly is the problem?

WILLIAM: There is something wrong with the heart, I'm not sure what.

BEHRN RE-COVERS HIS MOUTH AND NOSE WITH HIS HANDKERCHIEF AND APPROACHES THE OPERATING TABLE CAUTIOUSLY. HE PEERS DOWN AT IT, SLOWLY, HE APPEARS TO BECOME FASCINATED WITH IT AND BEGINS TO LOOK CLOSER, LOWERING HIS HANDKERCHIEF AND ADJUSTING HIS GLASSES.

PROF. BEHRN: Hmm-- The blood vessels appear correct. There is something strange--

HE STRAIGHTENS UP AND WALKS AWAY. HE BEGINS TO PACE, DEEP IN THOUGHT. WILLIAM WATCHES HIM EAGERLY.

There is something wrong with the nerves of the heart.<sup>14</sup> They appear to be deteriorating.

WILLIAM LOOKS PUZZLED AND CLOSELY EXAMINES THE HEART.

WILLIAM: They do.

HE RAPIDLY BECOMES COMPLETELY LOST IN THOUGHT AGAIN. MUMBLING TO HIMSELF.

Hmm, if I remove all the deteriorating nerves and replace them-- but I should re-enforce the material... The nerves of the heart...

PROF. BEHRN: William... William. William!

WILLIAM: Huh? Yes?

PROF. BEHRN: Why are you doing this? What will it bring you? What is your goal? It cannot possibly be useful to make such a mannequin.

WILLIAM: I intend to animate her.

PROF. BEHRN: You intend to animate her. You are building a woman from scratch and you intend to animate her?

WILLIAM: Yes.

PROF. BEHRN: Why?

WILLIAM: Because I love her. Well not her (GESTURES TO THE TABLE), but there is a woman I love, and I intend to win her hand.

PROF. BEHRN: By making her a... What? A flesh and blood wind up doll?

WILLIAM: No. By creating a true representation of her. By finding the spark of life and showing her herself.

PROF. BEHRN: This is utter madness! And you think this will win her heart?

WILLIAM: I know it.

PROF. BEHRN: She must be utterly singular for you to go to such lengths. (REFERRING TO THE EXPERIMENT) Extraordinary.

WILLIAM: She is. And I will deserve her, no matter what I have to do.

PROF. BEHRN: Does the academy know of this?

WILLIAM: Of course not. You know the Academy dismissed me months ago.

PROF. BEHRN: Well, yes. And I can hardly think they would approve of such a project.

WILLIAM: Luckily, I no longer operate under their orders.

PROF. BEHRN: You never did follow their guidance in any case.

WILLIAM: I did when they were correct. There was once, I believe.

PROF. BEHRN: I am too old for such politics. Although I do wonder if it is at least partly my fault you are so unrelenting in your research.

WILLIAM IS DISTRACTED BY HIS WORK. HE DOES NOT LOOK AT BEHRN, BUT AT THE BODY.

WILLIAM: You were the best professor I had, Behrn. I hardly listened to the others.

PROF. BEHRN: So perhaps entirely responsible. Well, I'd best leave you to it, although I disapprove entirely.

WILLIAM: Please, stay. I believe there is some brandy in a cupboard somewhere.

PROF. BEHRN: You are busy, and besides, I tend to avoid drinking near exposed organs.

HE STANDS TO LEAVE.

(PAUSE) (AFFECTIONATELY) I hope you are well, William.

HE EXITS. WILLIAM WAVES HIM AWAY, ONLY VAGUELY AWARE OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT [2] SCENE [2]

WE ARE IN A GARDEN.

IRIS SITS AT A PARK BENCH IN A FALL GARDEN, READING. HER DRESS IS LESS COLORFUL THAN USUAL. BEATRICE APPROACHES.

BEATRICE: Iris, you look like you could use some company. Iris?

IRIS: Hmm? Oh yes, please sit. How are you?

BEATRICE: I should ask you the same question. You've been very distant lately.

IRIS: How is Guy, is he doing well?

BEATRICE: Yes, he's his usual self. You really should come visit more often instead of staying cooped up here with my parents. We are only a short distance away.

IRIS GIVES A FEEBLE SMILE.

But what about you, you've seemed so sad since-- well, for a while now. You are very much not yourself at the moment.

IRIS: I wish I could be. Myself, I mean. I feel so distant, as if I am in some other place gazing down on myself. I eat, and sleep, I read and I make choices, but it is as if I am watching someone else carry out the actions. I am a bystander in my own body.

BEATRICE: Oh, Iris. I am sorry for what happened. But they will come back. They promised.

IRIS: Yes, but they left. Both of them left me. They knew how I felt when William left, and yet they went anyway.

BEATRICE: Yes, I can't say I agree with their choices, but they did it out of love.

IRIS: The weather is lovely this time of year. The colours of the leaves-- The air is so crisp. I love this time of year. But, it slowly turns to winter, the autumn abandons me for the frost and the snow. It chills me to my bones. And then spring comes, and I realize that perhaps it was right to leave, because the flowers bloom, and they would not have if it had remained. Then spring turns to summer and brings an oppressive

dry heat, and I wonder again why the autumn left me. And then the summer is shed, and my autumn returns. I do not know if it was right to leave, but I must accept it, because that is its nature.

You cannot tell me it is in the nature of a man to leave the woman he loves. I will not believe it.

BEATRICE: I would not try. But Iris, perhaps they felt they had to go, in order to win your heart.

IRIS: If either came back early because they could not stay so far for so long-- he would by my champion.

BEATRICE: Perhaps that is your answer then, that neither of them know you well enough.

IRIS: No, because I know them. I know they do this despite their love, not because of it. They will suffer, just as I suffer, to prove they love me.

Men believe that love is suffering, that it is a challenge of endurance and strength. That to love is to go to war, one must win the battle to be worthy of it. But for women, love is like a ship sailing to a distant shore. The sails need coaxing to billow in the wind. Without being tended love will sit idle, drifting on the current.

And so I suffer in the trenches, forced into a battle against my very soul. I become a general rallying my thoughts and commanding them to happiness and preoccupation.

BEATRICE: I am sorry, Iris. (PAUSE) Perhaps you should come to London with me for the season. I may not be that much fun, but Guy will entertain you, and there would be many diversions.

IRIS: Oh, I would not want to impose.

BEATRICE: Come, it would be no imposition at all. We would love to have you. I would love to have you. We

may have to return early to the country for my confinement, but it should not be too much of an inconvenience.

IRIS: It sounds wonderful, Beatrice, I should love to accompany you. I shall have to write to my parents, and of course, as long as Lady Cheltenham does not need me I would be pleased to join you.

BEATRICE: Then it is settled. I shall speak to Mama immediately.

BEATRICE RISES.

Oh, Iris, I am sure we shall be so distracting you will hardly remember my brother and his friend by the first party!

BEATRICE EXITS.

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT [2]            SCENE [3]

WE ARE IN A STUDY. THERE ARE PAPERS AND BOOKS STREWN ON EVERY AVAILABLE SURFACE. OTHER THAN THAT, THE STUDY IS WELL KEPT. THERE IS A DESK, A CHAIR AND A FIREPLACE.

JAMES SITS BEHIND THE DESK, HOLDING HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS. HE IS RATHER UNKEMPT. HE SCRIBBLES SOMETHING ON ONE OF THE PIECES OF PAPER, LOOKS AT IT FOR A MOMENT, CRUMPLES IT, AND THROWS IT ON THE GROUND. HE REALIZES SOMETHING, AND BEGINS TO SHIFT ALL THE PAPERS AROUND, SEARCHING FOR ONE IN PARTICULAR. A YOUNG WOMAN ENTERS, MARIAH, SHE IS CARRYING A TRAY. ON IT IS A TEA POT AND A CUP AND SAUCER.

JAMES: Mariah, have you seen the sheet with the toroidal diagrams on it?<sup>15</sup>

MARIAH LOOKS VERY CONFUSED. JAMES LOOKS AT HER AND SIGHS.

The one with the pictures of-- of-- something the shape of a ring.

MARIAH: No, sir, but I'm sure if you just let me organize things a bit...

SHE PLACES THE TRAY DOWN ON THE DESK, ON A STACK OF PAPERS. SHE ATTEMPTS TO MOVE ANOTHER STACK OF PAPER SO SHE CAN PUT THE TRAY DIRECTLY ON THE DESK. JAMES DOES NOT LOOK HAPPY.

JAMES: Please don't, everything is in a very specific order.

MARIAH: Then where is the toroi-- the ring paper, sir?

JAMES: Well, I don't know, that's why I asked.

MARIAH: So, everything is in a specific order except for that piece of paper?

HE GIVES HER A LOOK.

JAMES: Oh, alright, you may rearrange my papers. But if you see that one, please do give a shout.

SHE BEGINS CLEARING AND ARRANGING PAPERS.

MARIAH: What is it that you're doing, exactly, sir?

JAMES: I am (PAUSE) creating a space of sorts.

MARIAH: What do you mean 'creating a space?'

JAMES: Well, I am designing an object that umm-- 'transports' the user into a different type of space.

MARIAH: That sounds very complicated, sir. I hope it is not the Devil's work.

JAMES: No, Mariah, it is not the devil's work. It is the work of Mathematics.

MARIAH: It sounds very complicated. I believe you must be quite brilliant.

JAMES: Brilliance is simply an outward manifestation of perseverance.

MARIAH: Yes, sir.

JAMES: Creativity, that is the only true skill.

MARIAH: And are you creative?

JAMES: Yes, I believe so. Anyone can be creative, Mariah. To employ creativity at any task changes the activity from simple labour to something which improves the mind.

Take, for example, the task of chopping wood. One could simply place a log on the ground and take an axe to it, but, if a man considers the grain of the wood, his stance when chopping, the dryness of the log (which he may determine by thinking of the weather of the area over the past while, for example), and all other factors contributing to how log, axe and man came to be in such a situation, the man can determine how best to chop the log. This is creativity, taking all disparate information and synthesizing it into a new idea.

MARIAH: You are a very strange man. To think of the weather to improve the chopping of wood.

JAMES: Yes, well, I never had any talent at chopping wood, so perhaps I am mistaken.

HE LOOKS DOWN AT HIS WORK AGAIN.

But there is something I am missing here. Have you found that paper yet?

MARIAH: No-- oh! Here it is.

JAMES: Thank you. Hmm... The space is lacking a dimension. Of course... Perhaps I need to change the--

HIS VOICE FADES, LOST IN THOUGHT.

MARIAH: Should I pour your tea, sir?

JAMES: Yes, Mariah, thank you. Then that will be all.

MARIAH POURS THE TEA AND EXITS. GIVING A BACKWARD GLANCE TO JAMES, WHO IS ONCE AGAIN, COMPLETELY LOST IN HIS WORK.

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT [2] SCENE [4]

WE ARE IN THE TORUS AGAIN.

IRIS: I see myself. I know that I am here, but I can see myself (PAUSE) there. Yet, I cannot look at myself. Not in the eye. It's as if I am ashamed of my desire to look at myself, so I look away. I am looking away to look at myself. Never looking back-- always looking back. Someone is always leaving. I am always leaving. (SHE WALKS THROUGH TO THE NEXT COPY) But I am always here, again I see my body. That endless regression of imperfection. What am I? What more than a quintessence of dust?

We begin, in the wombs of our mothers, as little inklings of people that may one day be. But we lose ourselves in other people. Because we rarely look at ourselves, we begin to see others as mirrors, reflecting parts of us, making manifest their own desires. And so we are born from other people, we are the creations of reflections, the insubstantial imaginings of those apart from us. We are made from sand, tempered into glass, but no more than sand. We cannot see ourselves. We cannot create ourselves. I create those who create me. I see those who see me.

AS SHE SPEAKS, THE SCENE 'STRETCHES' SO THAT WE ONLY SEE ONE COPY OF THE ROOM AGAIN.

ACT [2] SCENE [5]

ONCE AGAIN, IN THE GARDEN. IT IS CLOSER TO SPRING NOW, AND SEEMS COLDER. THE FALL LEAVES ARE GONE. JUST A TOUCH OF THE NEWEST GREENERY SPROUTS THROUGH THE SNOW.

IRIS STANDS IN FRONT OF THE BENCH,  
LOOKING AT THE SCENERY. SHE IS HOLDING  
A BOOK IN HER HAND. GUY APPROACHES  
HER.

GUY: Iris, Beatrice and I must go now. She'd like to say goodbye to you.

IRIS: Yes, of course. I shall be there in a moment.

GUY BEGINS TO LEAVE AGAIN, BUT SEEMS  
TO THINK THE BETTER OF IT.

GUY: Beatrice was very fond of your company in London. She was overjoyed that you seemed to be yourself again.

IRIS: Yes, it was wonderful to feel so carefree again. I am so thankful for your hospitality.

GUY: But you are not really yourself again, are you?

IRIS: There were moments that I was. There were moments I felt as if I should never feel the way I felt when they left again. But now, being back here again... It is so vivid. The feelings they left me with.

GUY: I know what they did was wrong, but I hope it was not inexcusable. You know they both love you very much. They would travel to the ends of the earth to make you happy.

IRIS: That is the problem. They think they have to.

GUY: They are a different species, William and James. They are smarter than most of us put together, and between the two of them, I truly believe they could rule the known world if they wanted to. But they do not understand people in the same way as you and I. They are too logical. And love is not logical. I think it scares them both. They have never experienced something they could not quantify study. So, they do what they know. They apply their love to logic, because they cannot apply logic to their love.

Please, be happy again, Iris. They will return, and all will be well.

IRIS: I just have such a feeling of foreboding. As if I have lost myself for good, and I will never return.

GUY: I am sure it is just exhaustion. We have had a long journey, and rest is in order for all.

IRIS: Yes, I'm sure you're right.

GUY: Perhaps I should stop distracting you from your distraction.

HE POINTS TO THE BOOK.

What are you reading now?

IRIS: Oh, it is Doctor Faustus, by Marlowe.<sup>16</sup>

GUY: "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,

And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?"

IRIS: I do not like that part, it does not ring true for me.

"Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed

In one self place, for where we are is hell,

And where hell is must we ever be."

GUY: As morbid as you ever were.

IRIS: Mephistopheles truly understands his soul, whereas Faustus accepts his ignorance and does not try to know himself.

GUY: Yes, but Mephistopheles is in hell.

IRIS: Perhaps that is how we know ourselves.

GUY: So, do you know yourself now, Iris?

IRIS: No, I have simply become aware that I do not know.

GUY: Well, let us hope that you never find out.

IRIS: Yes, let us hope.

GUY: (PAUSE) Iris, are you alright?

IRIS: I am, Guy. I am just a little bit lost in the wilderness.

GUY: Things will turn out, I know it. The wilderness can be beautiful.

IRIS: I sometimes wonder if it is where I belong.

GUY: We all belong in the wilderness, but that does not mean we must live there. It is not a terrible place to visit once in a while.

IRIS: (A FEEBLE SMILE) Yes, it is a place we always appreciate once we have returned to the comforts of society.

GUY: Well, one cannot say you are not as cynical as you ever were.

IRIS: And one cannot say your are not as kind as you ever were. Thank you, Guy.

GUY: Now, I must return to my wife before she bursts, and I am sure she is wondering where we have run off to.

IRIS: Yes, let's not give her cause to worry.

GUY HOLDS OUT HIS ARM FOR IRIS. SHE TAKES IT. THEY EXIT IN FRIENDLY CONVERSATION

GUY: So, which was your favorite ballet in London?

IRIS: Oh, I very much enjoyed Giselle.<sup>17</sup>

GUY:                   Aah, yes. The tragedy. I am entirely unsur-  
                          prised.

THEY EXIT AS THE LIGHTS FADE.

ACT [2]                SCENE [6]

ONCE AGAIN WE ARE IN JAMES' STUDY. IT IS EMPTY.

JAMES RUSHES IN HOLDING A STRANGE  
LOOKING GLASS AND METAL OBJECT. IT RE-  
SEMBLES A TORUS, BUT IS ROUGHLY HEWN,  
AND HAS A NUMBER OF MIRRORS ON ITS  
SURFACE. HE SEEMS EXCITED.

JAMES:                Mariah? Mariah! Come quickly!

MARIAH:               Yes, sir? What is it? Has something gone wrong?

JAMES:                No! I have done it! Look! Isn't it magnificent?

HE HOLDS UP THE GLASS OBJECT.

MARIAH:               (UNSURE) Yes, it's lovely, sir.

HE WAVES HER OFF.

JAMES:                No, Mariah, you have to experience how it works.  
It looks rough on the outside, but it will do  
the job.

MARIAH:               And what is the job, exactly?

JAMES:                Well, a I told you before. It will send the  
user-- well not send, exactly-- it will... Oh,  
you just have to experience it. Please, come,  
sit down.

HE GUIDES HER TO HIS CHAIR. SHE SITS,  
CAUTIOUSLY.

MARIAH:               Will it hurt?

JAMES: No, no, it won't hurt.

HE PLACES IT ON THE DESK IN FRONT OF  
HER AND ADJUSTS ITS POSITION.

JAMES: Now, look into the slot in the front. That's all  
you must do. Just gaze at it.

SHE OBEYS, SLOWLY. AFTER LOOKING INTO  
IT FOR JUST A SPLIT SECOND, SHE STANDS  
UP AND BACKS AWAY QUICKLY.

MARIAH: What have you done? That is the devil's work,  
Sir. Please, let me destroy it!

SHE GRABS THE POKER FROM THE FIREPLACE  
AND MOVES AS IF TO SMASH IT. JAMES  
BLOCKS HER PATH.

JAMES: No! Don't! This is not the work of the devil,  
you ignorant girl! It is the work of science. I  
have achieved something here, something unprece-  
dented!

MARIAH: That... Thing... Is unnatural! Please get rid of  
it, sir!

JAMES: No! It is my greatest triumph! It will win me  
the heart of my only true love.

MARIAH: It has driven you mad! You are in a fever. How  
would this win you the heart of a woman?

JAMES: These things are beyond your understanding,  
Mariah. And she is a woman like no other.

MARIAH: There is much I do not understand. But I do know  
that this is unnatural.

JAMES: It is beyond man's understanding of nature, but  
that does not mean it is unnatural. Please, look  
again, Mariah, look for longer and see what is  
really there!

MARIAH: No, I do not think I should.

JAMES: Come, Mariah, do not be so skittish.

MARIAH: I may be skittish, sir, but I will not look.

JAMES: You will look or you will leave immediately, and hope I do not see you again.

MARIAH: Then I shall, and hope that you will come to your senses before it is too late.

JAMES: Get out. And do not return.

SHE LEAVES. HE SITS DOWN AT HIS DESK AND PUTS HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS.

This is no more the work of the devil than I am his instrument. I am no Doctor Faustus, I have not sold my soul for knowledge, nor for power. She is the mad one. Her ignorance makes her so. I have not given up myself. I am still the same man.

I can see myself so clearly now, I know every part of my being, purely and completely. There can be no question where my heart lies. It is with her, and I would break it a thousand times to win her love. I would plumb the depths of the deepest ocean to find her soul and know it as completely as I know my own. And this is what I shall do.

HE EXAMINES THE OBJECT, TURNING IT THIS WAY AND THAT, HE SEEMS OBSESSED WITH IT, LOOKING AT EVERY DETAIL VERY CLOSELY. HE HANDLES IT SO CAREFULLY, AS IF IT COULD BREAK AT ANY MOMENT.

It is beautiful. Each facet so perfectly placed, the reality matching a set of equations as if the pattern had been brought to life in Socrates' world of forms, part of a more fundamental reality. It rests with our true selves, and so is somehow beyond the comprehension of the everyday man.

This object, this piece of true art, will find Iris's true self. It will send her to that world of forms and show her self as I see her, as an-

cient Helen appeared to all the men of Greece.  
The embodiment of true perfection.

HE PUTS DOWN THE OBJECT AND RETURNS TO  
HIS PAPERS.

THE LIGHTS FADE.

ACT [2]                   SCENE [7]

WE ARE ONCE AGAIN IN THE LAB. THE OPERATING TABLE HAS BEEN  
PUSHED INTO THE BACKGROUND AND 3 CHAIRS NOW SIT AROUND A LOW  
COFFEE TABLE. A WOMAN WHO LOOKS IDENTICAL TO IRIS (THE OTHER  
IRIS) SITS IN A CHAIR.

WILLIAM BRINGS IN A TRAY WITH 3 TEACUPS AND A  
TEAPOT. HE PLACES IT ON THE TABLE.

WILLIAM:               Now, Iris, do you remember how to pour?

THE OTHER IRIS: Yes, I do. Thank you, William. When will your  
friend be getting here?

WILLIAM:               Any moment now.

THE OTHER IRIS: I am very excited to meet him, you have told me  
so much about his work.

THERE IS A KNOCK AT THE DOOR AND WIL-  
LIAM GOES OVER TO OPEN IT. PROFESSOR  
BEHRN ENTERS.

WILLIAM:               Behrn! I'm so glad you could make it.

PROF. BEHRN:          Yes, thank you for having me, William. And who  
is your friend?

WILLIAM:               This is Iris. Iris, this is Professor Behrn, one  
of my dearest friends.

THE OTHER IRIS: It is wonderful to meet you, Professor.

PROF. BEHRN:          And you as well.

HE KISSES HER HAND.

To find such a jewel in a dusty old lab, and in  
the company of William nonetheless.

THE OTHER IRIS POURS HIM A CUP OF TEA  
AND HANDS IT TO HIM.

THE OTHER IRIS: Thank you, William did not tell me you were charming.

WILLIAM: I did not know he was. So, Behrn, how go things with the Academy?

PROF. BEHRN: Oh, as institutionalized as ever, I'm afraid. They've actually sent me to spy on you a number of times, they hear rumors of some strange experiments. I believe you have them shaking in their boots.

WILLIAM: Well, perhaps they ought to have considered that before removing me from my position. At least then I would have had to keep them abreast of my progress.

PROF. BEHRN: You never divulged your work, even when you were a member. You cannot expect them to stop being curious just because you are not one anymore.

WILLIAM: I suppose that's true. So what have you been reporting?

PROF. BEHRN: Oh, mostly nothing. The occasional hint that you may be working on the same thing as Pemberton, but that your work has progressed much farther.

WILLIAM: Is he still experimenting with thermodynamics?

PROF. BEHRN: Of course, I can't imagine he should ever do anything else. He does get on my nerves, though.

WILLIAM: Well, thank you for not giving me away.

PROF. BEHRN: Of course, my dear boy.

HE TURNS TO THE OTHER IRIS.

I'm sure you don't want to hear about the politics of stuffy old men, dear. Tell me about yourself. Where are you from?

THE OTHER IRIS: Here.

PROF. BEHRN: A London local then. And are you this mysterious woman William is making a copy of?

THE OTHER IRIS: Oh, no, I have not met her yet.

WILLIAM: Behrn, this is her.

PROF. BEHRN: This is who?

WILLIAM: This is the copy. The finished copy.

WHILE WILLIAM SAYS THIS, BEHRN BECOMES SLACK- JAWED. HE DROPS HIS TEA CUP.

PROF. BEHRN: No. You must be joking, William. This cannot be her.

THE OTHER IRIS: Oh yes, I am her. Or, well, I am not her. I am the copy.

BEHRN STANDS AND BACKS AWAY.

PROF. BEHRN: What have you done? How could you-- William, this is impossible. I will not believe it.

WILLIAM: It is quite possible. You are a man of science, Behrn. I have presented you with evidence, please, feel free to examine it.

THE OTHER IRIS: Oh yes, I don't mind.

SHE STANDS UP AND HOLDS OUT A HAND TO BEHRN. HE TENTATIVELY TAKES IT AND BEGINS TO EXAMINE IT.

PROF. BEHRN: There are no markings anywhere. She has no... Scars, nothing. How did you do it?

WILLIAM: I promise you do not want to know, Behrn. She is flawless, in every way imaginable.

PROF. BEHRN: This is-- stupendous. It is fantastical, William. And is she like the real one?

WILLIAM: Perfectly. She is not a copy, she is Iris.

PROF. BEHRN: (ASTONISHED) "Isn't this dreaming: whether asleep or awake, to think that a likeness is not

a likeness but rather the thing itself that it is like?"<sup>18</sup>

WILLIAM: That was Plato, right? The Republic? An apt quote, I suppose. Although I cannot distinguish between the world of forms and the world of reality. Both are the same. Is this the form and that the copy? I am quite convinced that there is no world of forms. Or that this is it.

PROF. BEHRN: You are either a genius or a magician, William, and I am not sure which.

WILLIAM: A magician deals in illusion. My trade is science.

PROF. BEHRN: This goes beyond the realm of science. (PAUSE) Things at the Academy are changing, William. There are more progressives in the seats of power now. Such a creation as this... You may have the opportunity to be re-instated, you know.

WILLIAM: Really? They would take this work seriously now? They would not be so... Conservative in their views?

PROF. BEHRN: It is possible. I will look into it.

WILLIAM: I return to the country soon, you shall have to write to me there.

PROF. BEHRN: Yes, of course. And for now I feel I should take my leave.

WILLIAM: Of course. (PAUSE) Thank you, for taking me seriously.

PROF. BEHRN: How could I not, with such evidence before me.

THE OTHER IRIS: It was wonderful to meet you, Professor.

PROF. BEHRN: It has been quite the enlightening visit, my dear. (PAUSE) Until we meet again.

HE EXITS.

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT [3]           SCENE [1]

IRIS AND BEATRICE STAND TOGETHER SPEAKING IN LOW VOICES.

BEATRICE:           What will you do when they return?

IRIS:                I've hardly been thinking about it. Perhaps I will declare them both strangers to me, as I appear to be to them.

BEATRICE:           You know I love you, and I do believe they have both behaved horrendously, but do you really think that the best course of action?

IRIS:                Perhaps not, but I can think of nothing else which would not be worse.

BEATRICE:           Perhaps you could trick them somehow?

IRIS:                This is not a game, Beatrice. Treating it as one is how we managed to arrive at this situation in the first place. No, I must master my emotions and show them that they cannot treat me as they have.

BEATRICE:           What of the contest?

IRIS:                I do not know. I suppose it shall depend what they have created. But I am quite tempted to reject both of them on sight!

BEATRICE:           Please do not throw away your future happiness for their mistakes, Iris.

IRIS:                I think perhaps for the first time, I am actually aware of what might make me happy.

BEATRICE:           I am glad, I think.

GUY APPROACHES THEM.

GUY:                 Aren't you just awash with anticipation? I know I am. Iris, I hope you are not going to be too cruel, remember that they are mortal men.

IRIS: I wouldn't dream of it.

JUST AS SHE SAYS THIS, JAMES APPEARS AT THE DOOR. HE LOOKS BATTERED BY THE WEATHER. ALL EYES TURN TO HIM, EXCEPT FOR IRIS WHO, VERY SLOWLY AND DELIBERATELY, WHISPERS SOMETHING TO GUY, AND LEAVES THE ROOM. JAMES LOOKS CONFUSED.

BEATRICE: James, you've returned. We are so glad to have you back.

JAMES: Yes, a pleasure. Has William returned yet?

BEATRICE: No, he has not arrived.

JAMES: Thank you, please excuse me.

AS JAMES MOVES TO EXIT IRIS, GUY STEPS IN HIS PATH. HIS TONE IS CLIPPED AND FORMAL.

GUY: Iris has asked me to tell you she sends her regrets, but is feeling rather ill this evening. I'm sure she will see you tomorrow.

JAMES: You cannot be serious? I do feel we should speak with some urgency.

GUY: I'm afraid she is not interested this evening.

BEATRICE: James, please, tell us about your journey. You must be exhausted.

JAMES: (RESIGNED) Yes, I am tired. The weather was not the best for riding. I am surprised William did not beat me, he had a much shorter distance to travel.

BEATRICE: Well, you know William. I'm sure he encountered a rare pattern of raindrop...

THEY MOVE TO A SOFA AND SIT IN QUIET DISCUSSION. AS THEY SPEAK, WILLIAM STRIDES IN, EQUALLY BATTERED, LOOKING TRIUMPHANT. HE LOOKS AROUND FOR IRIS.

WILLIAM: Good evening.

BEATRICE: Good evening, William. I trust your journey was pleasant?

WILLIAM: Not particularly, but I am a man of destinations.

JAMES STANDS.

JAMES: As dramatic as always, William.

THEY HUG, GUY STANDS AND HUGS WILLIAM ALSO.

WILLIAM: James, how are you?

JAMES: In good health, more than that I'm not sure.

WILLIAM: Beatrice, as lovely as ever. Guy is treating you well, I assume?

GUY: As well as I can, and better than you could.

WILLIAM: And where is Iris? I should very much like to speak with her.

GUY: Iris has turned in, she is feeling ill and will not be able to see you until tomorrow.

WILLIAM: What do you mean, ill? What sort of ill?

GUY: I don't know, a headache perhaps.

WILLIAM: How long has she been ill?

JAMES: Since my arrival, apparently.

WILLIAM: What do you mean, she saw you and came down with a headache?

JAMES: Something of that nature.

WILLIAM: Well, I must see her, tonight. I will not wait.

BEATRICE: You must. She has asked explicitly not to be disturbed.

WILLIAM: But surely she would wish to see me?

BEATRICE: I think perhaps she would prefer to see anyone except you-- well, and James.

WILLIAM: What do you mean? Why should she not want to see us?

BEATRICE: Do you really need to ask?

JAMES: I had assumed she felt any reunion would be too overwhelming for so late an hour.

BEATRICE: Do you think all women frail, emotional creatures, or just her?

GUY PUTS A HAND ON BEATRICE'S SHOULDER.

GUY: What Beatrice means is-- well, you have not exactly treated Iris particularly well.

JAMES: What? We have done exactly as she asked!

GUY: No, you have listened to what you wanted to hear from her, ignored what she actually wants, and abandoned her, without so much as a word, for a year. Not to mention how you've treated Beatrice and I. The wedding was lovely, incidentally, and our son is almost 3 months. He has his mother's eyes.

WILLIAM: Guy, Beatrice, I am truly sorry. But this is ridiculous, I'm sure if I could speak with Iris--

GUY: You could what? Explain to her how this was what she wanted? Any of it?

BEATRICE: Please, Guy, let us not, any of us, presume to know how Iris is feeling. Now it has been a very long day, for everybody, and I think it high time we all retired. William, James, I am sure Iris will wish to see you tomorrow.

WILLIAM IS FUMING, JAMES LOOKS RESIGNED.

GUY: Yes, I must agree with Beatrice. Good night.

HE HOLDS AN ARM OUT FOR HER AND THEY EXIT. WILLIAM FOLLOWS, LEAVING JAMES ALONE. HE APPEARS TO LOSE ALL THE STRENGTH THAT WAS APPARENT IN HIM WHILE OTHERS WERE IN THE ROOM. HE SIGHS.

EXEUNT.

ACT [3]                   SCENE [2]

IT IS NIGHT. WE ARE IN IRIS' BEDROOM. THE ONLY ITEMS TO DISTINGUISH IT AS SUCH ARE A BED AND A DESK. THE ROOM IS LITTERED WITH BOOKS. THE ROOM IS LIT BY THE MOON, WHICH IS FULL AND CASTS SLIVERS OF LIGHT ON THE FLOOR FROM AN OPEN WINDOW. THERE IS ALSO A CANDLE BURNING BESIDE THE BED.

IRIS LIES IN BED, TOSSING AND TURNING. AS SHE SLOWLY BEGINS TO FIND STILLNESS, A LARGE STACK OF LETTERS, TIED WITH A RIBBON, IS SLIPPED INTO THE ROOM. IT SLIDES ACROSS THE FLOOR, STARTLING HER AWAKE. SHE LOOKS AROUND, UNSURE OF WHAT THE SOUND WAS, AND SEES THE LETTERS. SHE RISES, TAKES THE CANDLE AND LETTERS, AND GOES TO A DESK. SHE UNTIES THE STACK AND FINDS A NOTE ON TOP. SHE PICKS IT UP. SHE READS THE NOTE ALOUD.

THE NOTE READS: My Dearest Iris,

Words cannot express my regret to have caused you any pain or sadness. However misplaced, my motives were pure. I love you with all of my heart, and the agony I felt being without you for so many months was almost more than I could

bear. Please find the many letters I wrote you over the past year as a small token of my sincerity. I beg for your forgiveness.

Your ever faithful,

James

IRIS PUTS DOWN THE NOTE AND OPENS THE FIRST LETTER IN THE STACK. SHE READS IT, PUTS IT ASIDE, AND BEGINS THE SECOND. WHILE SHE READS, HER Demeanor SOFTENS. AS SHE IS ABOUT TO OPEN THE THIRD, THERE IS A KNOCK ON HER DOOR. SHE GOES TO IT AND DISCOVERS WILLIAM ON THE OTHER SIDE.

IRIS: William! What are you doing here? It's the middle of the night.

SHE MOVES TO CLOSE THE DOOR.

WILLIAM: Iris, please. I needed to speak with you.  
(PAUSE) Please, Iris.

SHE RELUCTANTLY LETS HIM IN AND MOVES TO STAND ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM FROM HIM.

IRIS: What is it?

WILLIAM: I could not-- I could not sleep without seeing you. Without apologizing. My behavior has been... Abhorrent. I cannot begin to forgive myself. Please, if there is anything I can--

HE NOTICES THE LETTERS LITTERING THE DESK. HE GLANCES AT ONE.

WILLIAM: Are these from James? Has he been writing to you this entire year?

WILLIAM IS SLIGHTLY WORRYINGLY ANGRY.

IRIS: No. I mean, yes, he did. But he did not send them. He just gave them to me.

SHE WALKS OVER TO THE DESK AND HANDS HIM THE NOTE FROM JAMES. WILLIAM GLANCES AT IT AND TOSSES IT BACK ONTO THE DESK.

WILLIAM: And I take it this gesture has softened your opinion of him?

IRIS: I have not forgiven him, if that's what you mean. I have not forgiven either of you.

WILLIAM: And you should not. But please believe me when I say I will do anything to make it up to you. I love you, and I want you to be my wife. Please do not let your anger cloud your judgement. I could not bear to lose you over this.

(PAUSE)

I have nothing more to say, there is nothing more I can say, no adequate explanation I can offer. I just had to see you.

HE MOVES TO LEAVE.

IRIS: Wait. William. The letter you and James left, the one that explained why you were leaving. It said you both intended to return with representations of me, of my soul. Have you done it?

WILLIAM LIGHTS UP AT THIS QUESTION. AS WILLIAM SPEAKS HE MOVES TOWARDS HER.

WILLIAM: Yes, I believe I have. Oh Iris, it is truly astounding, what I've accomplished. What I've done for you.

AS HE APPROACHES, SHE STIFFENS AND STEPS BACKWARDS.

IRIS: Thank you, William.

HE LEAVES.

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT [3]

SCENE [3]

WE HAVE RETURNED TO THE ROOM AGAIN. EVERYONE IS SEATED, GAZING INTENTLY AT WILLIAM, WHO STANDS CENTRE.

WILLIAM: Ladies, gentlemen, dearest Iris. There can be no true 'representation' of a self. We are complicated, changeable beings. To be human is to be unrepresentable, indescribable. To be human is to be a being of contradiction, of emotion and reason, of love and hatred, of mercy and vengeance, of sin and faith. And that is merely what it means to be a member of our species! To add to that what it means to be a woman, and to be young, we arrive at infinite depth, and to add to that the culmination of each experience life grants us-- we are each a miracle. We cannot see ourselves with a mere portrait. Art cannot represent us. An actor cannot play us on stage. We are more than can be shown in pictures, more than can be heard in music. No human occupation can show us ourselves that would not take a lifetime to see. The mere act of living is the only way we know ourselves. Only by experiencing a life can we know it.

Yet, there is one human occupation, the highest calling of man, that can bring us close to ourselves. To reason, to observe the outside world and interpret it, this is the highest art of man, and the way we discover ourselves. Science is the earthly manifestation of this trait. We observe, we discover, we interpret, we create.

And so, Iris, that is what I have done for you. I have created. Not the feeble shadow of art or the vague generalizations of words, but true perfection the likes of which only science can provide. I give you, not a representation, but a piece of your true self.

THE OTHER IRIS ENTERS, SHE IS NERVOUS. SHOCK, AWE AND HORROR ARE DISPLAYED OVER THE AUDIENCE, ALL IN THEIR TURN. GUY STANDS UP AND MOVES AWAY.

This is Iris.

THE OTHER IRIS: Hello.

IRIS SCHOOLS HER FEATURES, STANDS AND WALKS OVER TO HER, IMPASSIVE. SHE LOOKS INTO HER EYES. AFTER A FEW MOMENTS, SHE RETURNS TO HER SEAT.

IRIS: Thank you, William. James?

WILLIAM: Iris, you cannot be serious. You haven't even spoken with her! You cannot have made a judgement already.

IRIS: You said yourself, William, any true judgement would take a lifetime. And I would rather not wait that long, would you? How long would be sufficient, then? Would you like me to take as long as you did? A year? But that can hardly be enough. Why not two, or five?

WILLIAM: I take your point. Please, spend a few days, a week at least! Give me that courtesy.

IRIS: After you have been so attentive to me?

WILLIAM: Please, Iris. I know I do not deserve it, but--

THE OTHER IRIS: If I may? Iris, I do not know you. I feel as if I am a stranger to myself. Perhaps we are entirely different, or perhaps we really are exactly the same people. I don't know, but I would like to find out, wouldn't you?

IRIS LOOKS AT WILLIAM.

IRIS: One week. (PAUSE) James?

WILLIAM AND THE OTHER IRIS SIT TOGETHER. JAMES STANDS, EXITS THE ROOM BRIEFLY, AND COMES BACK WITH THE TORUS-LIKE OBJECT.

JAMES: I have no talent with words. I cannot explain the reason behind my creation, because I do not fully understand it myself. All I will say is that I agree with William about one thing, we are infinite. And we are mysterious. We are strange loops of recursion, and this is what

makes us human. The ability to comprehend our own consciousness. Iris, you do not need a mirror to see yourself, you do not need a copy. You need only to look within, and that is what my creation will help you do. It will take you to a new universe, the universe within your soul.

HE MOVES TO GIVE HER THE OBJECT. SHE LOOKS TENTATIVE.

Please, take it. It will not hurt you. Just look-- see there, the glass. Look through it.

SHE DOES SO, AND THE SCENE DISSOLVES INTO THE TOROIDAL UNIVERSE WE HAVE SEEN BEFORE.

ACT [3]                   SCENE [4]

WE ARE ONCE AGAIN IN THE REPEATING, TOROIDAL UNIVERSE.

IRIS APPEARS JUST AS WE LEFT HER, IN THE SAME POSITION, WITH THE SAME EXPRESSION.

IRIS:                   Beginnings are never origins. We don't start when something has ended, but in the middle of it. 'Once upon a time' is not 'Once when time began.' The beginning of a story is a choice, the place we happen upon the action. The beginning of a person is too. We start where we choose to. We bring what we'd like from our past into our future. We share with others only what we'd like. We narrate. We embellish.

ACT [3]                   SCENE [5]

IRIS SITS IN PRECISELY THE SAME PLACE ON THE SOFA, HOLDING THE TORUS, AS SHE WAS BEFORE. HOWEVER, THE REST OF THE SCENE IS DIFFERENT. THE OTHER IRIS SITS AT HER SIDE, LOOKING AT HER, THERE IS NO-ONE ELSE IN THE ROOM.

GUY AND BEATRICE ENTER. BEATRICE IS GAZING SOMEWHAT WORRIEDLY AT IRIS, AND THEY DISCUSS IN HUSHED VOICES, BARELY ACKNOWLEDGING THE OTHER IRIS IS THERE.

BEATRICE: There is something about that-- thing. It is not natural. Iris spends far too much time just gazing at it. Always with her, the mannequin. It has five days since William and James returned and she has done nothing since. I have not spoken two words to her.

GUY: I am sure everything is fine. She is just doing what they asked. Experiencing their creations. I would not be surprised if her reason for all of this is simply to make a point.

BEATRICE: No, I cannot believe that of Iris, to worry us all so much, simply to what? Unnerve them?

I am genuinely concerned for her welfare. What if she should continue down this path? She will waste away!

GUY: But she cannot continue. In two days times, she will have to make a decision, and then this will all be forgotten. I promise you, there is nothing to worry about. Perhaps you should talk to her, it will calm your nerves.

BEATRICE: I will give it my best effort. I hope I can manage it.

GUY LEAVES, AS BEATRICE APPROACHES  
IRIS AND THE OTHER IRIS. SHE SITS.

Hello Iris.

THE OTHER IRIS: Hello, Beatrice. The weather is lovely today, don't you agree?

BEATRICE: Yes, it is. But I was hoping to speak with the other Iris. Do you know how to...

THE OTHER IRIS: Oh, yes. It's quite simple. You just have to break the connection.

THE OTHER IRIS WAVE HER HAND IN BETWEEN THE TORUS AND IRIS. IRIS 'SNAPS' OUT OF IT.

IRIS: Why did you do that? I had almost discovered something new.

THE OTHER IRIS: Oh, I'm sorry, Iris. But Beatrice would like to speak with you.

IRIS: Oh, thank you, Iris. Yes?

BEATRICE: Well, I was hoping we could take a walk in the garden. I know how much you love it at this time of year.

IRIS: Could we speak here?

BEATRICE: Well, yes, of course.

IRIS: What is it?

BEATRICE: How are you?

IRIS: I am fine, thank you. And yourself?

BEATRICE: I am worried about you, Iris. You spend all day staring into that thing, and you never speak to me anymore.

THE OTHER IRIS: She has only had it for five days, she can't have possibly hurt your friendship that much.

BEATRICE: Please, Iris, come outside and speak to me.

IRIS: I cannot think of anything to say--

BEATRICE: Why do you spend so much time looking into that thing? What do you see?

IRIS: I see everything. The whole entire universe, the heavens and the earth, and all that is below it. I see all that I could ever possibly see. I see myself. And in those moments, I know myself, unlike I have ever known anything. And then I am released, and I see Iris. And I know her more than all other beings, because I have seen her. And I look at her and I see infinite light and infinite darkness merging, and I know her better than I know myself. Then I am a stranger to myself, and I must return to that space, so that I can know myself again--

BEATRICE: Iris, listen to yourself. Do you know what you are saying?

IRIS: No, because I do not know myself anymore. I cannot stand to see my face. I see myself receding.

BEATRICE: Please, Iris, let's go outside. See the world.

IRIS: How can I know the world if I do not know myself? I cannot, it is impossible. I am trapped, because I need to know myself. Otherwise I cannot, will not know another. You. I do not know you, you are a stranger to me. You are nothing, you are a figment because I perceive you through myself, my memories form who you are I cannot see you without my memories of you. My memories colored by the lens of myself then. But who was I then? Such a distant self from the one that sits before me. I am not that self, it is a stranger to me, and so you are a stranger to me. I do not know you.

BEATRICE: And I do not know you. What has happen to you Iris? They have driven you mad. (TO THE OTHER IRIS) And what of you? Why are you not lost?

THE OTHER IRIS: She will not let me look. I am a mirror, not a soul.

IRIS: My soul is a mirror reflecting myself. But I cannot reflect myself because I perceive the reflection and it changes who I am, which in turn changes the reflection. I am a product of my own reflection. I must know who I am.

BEATRICE: This cannot be her. There is something wrong with it. I will go find James at once.

THE OTHER IRIS: Please, be kind to her. I know what it is to be faced with yourself. It is not an easy thing.

BEATRICE: Yes, of course.

SHE EXITS. THE OTHER IRIS AND IRIS SIT ALONE, IN SILENCE FOR A MOMENT.

THE OTHER IRIS: Do you know me?

IRIS: "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,

AND BURNT THE TOPLESS TOWERS OF ILIUM?

SWEET HELEN, MAKE ME IMMORTAL WITH A KISS:

SHE KISSES HER.

HER LIPS SUCK FORTH MY SOUL, SEE WHERE IT FLIES!"<sup>19</sup>

"And I have heard of your paintings too, well enough; God

has given you one face, and you make yourselves another: you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nick-name God's creatures, and make your wantonness

your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on't; it hath

made me mad."<sup>20</sup>

"COME, HELEN, COME, GIVE ME MY SOUL AGAIN.

HERE WILL I DWELL, FOR HEAVEN BE IN THESE LIPS,  
AND ALL IS DROSS THAT IS NOT HELENA!"

And yet, I know you not. Who are you to fool me with your eyes, so much like a pair I used to know but cannot-- No.

SHE SLAPS HER. AND STANDS UP, PACING.

I shall not be fooled, not by a man or by a mirror. Only I can fool myself. And yet, your breath so measured--

"O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!

The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword;

The observed of all observers, quite, quite  
down!"

"O THOU ART FAIRER THAN A THOUSAND STARS,  
BRIGHTER ART THOU THAN FLAMING JUPITER  
WHEN HE APPEARED TO HAPLESS SEMELE;  
MORE LOVELY THAN THE MONARCH OF THE SKY  
IN WANTON ARETHUSA'S AZURED ARMS;  
AND NONE BUT THEE SHALL BE MY PARAMOUR."

"And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,  
That suck'd the honey of his music vows,  
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,  
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh;  
That unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth  
Blasted with ecstasy: O, woe is me,  
To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!"  
To look through myself, and on the other side  
encounter the absence of myself, some vast un-  
known-- some universe.

BEATRICE RE-ENTERS WITH JAMES IN TOW.

IRIS: James! James I must speak to you.

JAMES: Yes, Iris?

THE OTHER IRIS LOOKS UP AT JAMES, AS  
IF SHE IS ABOUT TO SAY SOMETHING. WE  
GET THE SENSE THAT SHE WISHES JAMES  
WERE SPEAKING TO HER. IN FACT, THE  
OTHER IRIS IS A PERFECT ENOUGH COPY  
THAT SHE HAS FOUND HERSELF IN LOVE  
WITH JAMES AND WILLIAM AS WELL.

IRIS: Please, come sit. (PAUSE) Now, you must tell me  
about anatomy. The make up of the human body. Of

my body. I must know myself. Completely. Please, tell me. What lies under the skin?

JAMES: Iris, are you feeling ok? Perhaps we should go outside for a while...

IRIS: No! No, you must tell me. What is on the inside? How are we animated? What is it that causes life?

JAMES: Not now, Iris. Are you hungry? We could go to the kitchen, find something to eat...

IRIS: Oh, of course, I am sorry. I've embarrassed you-- I should have asked William about it, anatomy. How could I. When you have been so kind to me.

JAMES: No, I'm fine. It's alright.

IRIS: I cannot thank you enough for showing me who I truly am. It is... Astonishing.

JAMES: Please, lets go for a walk. It is not enough to know who you are if you are not being that person.

IRIS: That's interesting... learning who you are prevents you from being that person-- and we're back to the mirror that changes what you look like.

JAMES: Iris, stop. Take a deep breath and look at yourself. This isn't you.

IRIS: That's what I've been doing-- looking at myself. This isn't me-- Am I looking at a stranger? Please, James, be consistent. I thought this was what you wanted, you and William.

JAMES: Not like this.

IRIS: Well then, let's go outside. And you can explain to me how I should be.

JAMES AND BEATRICE ARE CONFUSED BY HER APPARENT CHANGE IN HEART.

JAMES:            Alright...

IRIS:             I shall even race you.

SHE RUNS OUT. LEAVING JAMES WITH THE OTHER IRIS AND BEATRICE. HE LOOKS AT BOTH OF THEM, WHO LOOK EQUALLY BEWILDERED, AND FOLLOWS HER OUT.

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT [3]            SCENE [6]

IT IS NIGHT, AND IRIS SITS AT A DESK READING A BOOK TO HERSELF. SHE IS READING ABOUT THE ANATOMY OF THE HUMAN HEART.

SHE STANDS. THE FRONT BUTTONS ON HER DRESS ARE PARTIALLY OPEN, REVEALING HER UNDERGARMENTS. SHE HAS A BLACK PEN, AND AS SHE READS THE LOCATION OF A NERVE OR VESSEL, SHE MARKS IT ON HER OWN CHEST. SHE APPEARS TO BE DRAWING A DIAGRAM OF THE HUMAN HEART, OVER TOP OF HER HEART.

IRIS:             ...and the ventricula connect to the atrium...

SHE DRAWS IT.

-- The left ventricle--

Leaving the aortic valve...

But how to draw the blood pumping, the flow of oxygen-- it cannot be done accurately. A diagram is not a thing, it is merely a reflection of it. We cannot capture the whole without the whole. We are merely a sum of our parts. But we must know the parts to know the sum. Find the parts to find the whole.

AS SHE IS SPEAKING, SHE TAKES A SCALPEL OFF THE TABLE. SHE BEGINS TO CUT ALONG THE LINES SHE HAS DRAWN.

The skin, the blood-- the blood vessels-- There is something hidden beneath, muscles, tendons-- obscured by blood and skin. But aren't we all?

HER SPEECH WEAKENS AS SHE CONTINUES TO CUT, AND TO BLEED. SHE SEARCHES WITHIN HERSELF. SHE LOOSES STRENGTH. HER ARM FALTERS. SHE DROPS THE SCALPEL.

SHE DIES.

IT IS DARK AND QUIET. STILLNESS PERMEATES THE STAGE.

SLOWLY, VERY SLOWLY, THE LIGHTS COME UP. IT IS MORNING. THE OTHER IRIS ENTERS, NOTICES THE BODY, SHE CHECKS IF IRIS IS ALIVE, ATTEMPTS TO MOVE HER, CANNOT. DURING THIS PROCESS, SHE GETS SOME BLOOD ON HER CLOTHING. SHE SEES THE HYPER-TORUS SITTING ON THE DESK BESIDE IRIS. SHE PICKS IT UP, ALMOST CONSIDERING LOOKING INTO IT. THINKING BETTER OF THE IDEA, SHE SMASHES IT ON THE GROUND. SHE IS SHOCKED. SHE MOVES TO LEAVE THE ROOM, BUT AS SHE DOES, BEATRICE, WILLIAM AND JAMES ENTER. THEY SEE THE OTHER IRIS STANDING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM. SHE TURNS TO FACE THEM, LOOKING TERRIFIED.

WILLIAM: Iris, what is--

HE SEES THE BODY.

Oh my God. What happened?

HE GOES TO THE BODY. JAMES NOTICES IT.

JAMES: Jesus.

JAMES LOOKS HORRIFIED AND CANNOT BEAR TO LAY EYES ON IT AGAIN.

(SPEAKING TO BEATRICE) Don't look. Please..

HE GOES TO THE OTHER IRIS, WHOSE GAZE IS FIXATED ON WILLIAM AND IRIS.

Iris, are you alright? What happened?

HE EMBRACES HER. SHE SEEMS TO GAIN SOME AWARENESS OF WHAT IS GOING ON. IT IS NOW SHE REALIZES THAT BOTH JAMES AND WILLIAM ARE REFERRING TO HER AS IRIS. THEY CANNOT TELL THEM APART.

WILLIAM: She's dead.

HE STANDS.

What happened, Iris? What did you do?

THE OTHER IRIS: I-- I... I wanted to see if she really was like me. On the inside. Both of them, the-- object and the model. I wanted to see if they were as accurate on the inside. Not-- mechanical. I wanted to take her apart, and see to what extent you had replicated-- To what extent you were accurate...

WILLIAM: Jesus, Iris. Why couldn't you have asked?

THE OTHER IRIS: I didn't-- I had to see it for myself. You asked me to judge. I have done so.

GUY ENTERS

GUY: What's going on?

JAMES: It's alright. Iris just-- disassembled William's project. And mine, for that matter.

BEATRICE: So this business is finally over, I take it? We can all go about our lives? Iris, you look much more like yourself again today, now that those-- things-- are gone.(PAUSE) But then-- you have chosen, Iris?

THE OTHER IRIS: I do feel much more like myself. And yes, I have. (PAUSE) After much thought and-- examination-- of both projects, and of my feelings for

both James and William, I must declare William the winner of this strange contest.

UPON HEARING HIS NAME, WILLIAM GRINS GLEEFULLY, GRABS IRIS AND TWIRLS HER AROUND IN AN EMBRACE. JAMES, ON THE OTHER HAND, LOOKS CRESTFALLEN.

WILLIAM: Oh, Iris, I shall make you the happiest a person could ever be.

GUY: Well, now that all of this nonsense is cleared up, we do have a dinner party it would not do us well to miss. Beatrice?

HE HOLDS HIS ARM OUT TO BEATRICE, AND THEY EXIT TOGETHER, FOLLOWED BY THE REST OF THE GROUP, EXCEPT FOR JAMES, WHO REMAINS BEHIND A FEW MOMENTS, LOOKING AROUND THE ROOM. HE THEN EXITS AFTER THEM.

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT [3] SCENE [7]

THE OTHER IRIS IS IN IRIS'S ROOM. SHE READIES HERSELF FOR THE DINNER PARTY. SHE IS CAUTIOUS, CAREFULLY CHOOSING JEWELRY. WHILE SHE PREPARES, SHE LOOKS AROUND AT DIFFERENT ITEMS IN THE ROOM, OPENING DRAWERS, LOOKING AT BOOKS-- EXPLORING. SHE IS CLEARLY VERY CURIOUS ABOUT ALL OF THE ITEMS IN THE ROOM.

SHE IS STARTLED BY A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. AFTER CHECKING HERSELF ONE MORE TIME IN THE MIRROR, SHE SPEAKS.

THE OTHER IRIS: Come in?

WILLIAM: Hello, Iris. You look beautiful tonight.

THE OTHER IRIS: Do you think so? Thank you!

SHE PICKS OUT A NECKLACE.

WILLIAM: Here, let me help you with that.

THE OTHER IRIS: Thank you.

SHE HANDS IT TO HIM AND HE HELPS HER  
PUT IT ON, HIS HANDS LINGERING ON HER  
SHOULDERS.

WILLIAM: Iris, there is something I was hoping to speak to you about.

THE OTHER IRIS: Yes, William? You know you can speak to me about anything.

WILLIAM: I wanted to... Apologize.

THE OTHER IRIS: For what? You've been so wonderful to me.

WILLIAM: No, I truly have not. It was wrong of James and I to leave you the way we did. And it was wrong of us to-- inflict-- such experiences on you as we did. I have dragged you through hell and back, and you have been so good to me.

THE OTHER IRIS: William. You are too harsh on yourself. You did not drag me into hell. You gave me something no other person has had. You gave me a chance to see myself for all I was. You showed me the truth.

WILLIAM: You are too good for me. I cannot deserve you.

THE OTHER IRIS: But you do, William. If anybody in the world deserves me, it is you.

WILLIAM SEEMS SLIGHTLY CONFUSED, BUT  
ONLY SLIGHTLY. HIS QUESTIONS BECOME  
MORE POINTED.

WILLIAM: Then you are not still mad at me?

THE OTHER IRIS: Of course not. I love you.

WILLIAM: And you are not mad at James?

THE OTHER IRIS: No, I am not. Although I do not feel the same about him.

WILLIAM: But you did love him?

THE OTHER IRIS: Well-- of course, but I did not know him the way I know you. Please, William, don't be mad. Let's go to dinner. The whole thing is forgotten.

WILLIAM: Of course I'm not mad, I'm just... Confused. The Iris I knew would never cool her temper so easily.

THE OTHER IRIS: People change, William. Especially when they are faced with themselves. With all their imperfections, their human flaws. Is it surprising that someone would try and curb those tendencies?

THE OTHER IRIS REACHES OVER TO PICK UP A BRACELET OFF HER DRESSER. AS SHE DOES SO, WILLIAM GRABS HER WRIST AND EXAMINES HER HAND VERY CLOSELY. SHE LOOKS TROUBLED, AND AFTER A MOMENT, SHE SNATCHES HER HAND BACK.

William, everything is fine. I was-- lost. Now I am not. It is a simple as that.

WILLIAM: (TO HIMSELF) I wish it were.

HE GRABS HER CHIN, LIFTING IT TO CATCH HER EYES. THEY LOOK AT ONE ANOTHER DEEPLY, FOR A LONG MOMENT. HE RELEASES HER.

Yes, Yes. Of course. I am sorry. Please, forgive me. Things have been-- difficult.

THE OTHER IRIS: There is nothing to forgive, William. We both just need some time to readjust to ourselves.

WILLIAM: Yes, I'm sure. Well, shall we?

THEY EXIT.

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT [3]                    SCENE [8]

WE ARE IN THE STUDY ONE LAST TIME. IT IS DARK, BUT THE SOUNDS OF THE DINNER PARTY ARE AUDIBLE IN THE DISTANCE.

WILLIAM ENTERS, DRESSED IN A TRAVELING CLOAK. HE LOOKS HURRIED, AND GATHERS A FEW BOOKS AND PAPERS FROM THE TABLE. AS HE IS ABOUT TO LEAVE, JAMES ENTERS FROM THE OTHER DOOR, DRESSED FOR THE PARTY, BUT CLEARLY STILL UNHAPPY ABOUT THE EVENTS OF THE AFTERNOON.

JAMES: William? What are you doing?

WILLIAM: I am-- I have-- Something has come up. I must leave immediately for London. It is urgent. (PAUSE) The Academy has re-instated me. Behrn has just written.

HE HANDS JAMES A LETTER.

JAMES: But you would not leave for this, William. It is a trifle. The Academy will still be here when-- But that is not it. You are troubled. (PAUSE) Things may not have turned out the way I would have chosen, William, but I am still your best friend, I can tell when something is wrong. But what do you have to be unhappy about? Everything has turned out in your favor. If anyone should leave, it should be me.

WILLIAM: No, you must not. Someone should stay and watch over things, just in case...

JAMES: In case of what? What is wrong with you William? What has happened?

WILLIAM: It is-- Iris. I don't think-- I think she is dead.

JAMES: Are you mad? She is in the other room. I just danced with her.

WILLIAM: I don't think you did. I mean, I don't think that was Iris. I think it was... Her. My copy.

JAMES: What? You have gone mad. How can you think that, William? No, it is Iris. I could tell, if it-- The thought is unbearable, William, what is wrong with you?

WILLIAM: I am sure it is her. I know it in my heart. I can feel the weight of Iris's death on my heart. It weighs down as if an ocean of water were pressing it onto me.

JAMES: You were too attached to that mannequin, William. You feel its destruction-- I cannot even call it a death. If you are so convinced, why not confront her about it. Ask the others, see if anybody agrees.

WILLIAM: I will not take her away from them, as she has been taken from me. I cannot force them to bear the weight which should be mine alone. Let them live in ignorance. They will be better for it. But I cannot stay and be a part of that lie. I cannot pretend to love that-- thing.

JAMES: So... What? You will leave, without warning or reason? You will go to London and rejoin your precious Academy? You will leave her to suffer?

WILLIAM: No, I will leave her to live. I will spare them suffering. All of them. And she will learn to love you, in time. I am sure of it. And you believe it is Iris. So she already does love you.

JAMES: This is madness.

WILLIAM: It is redemption. I have lost myself completely. I must go. I will re-live her death until my own, and then perhaps I will meet her again.

JAMES: I do not know whether to stop you or to thank you.

WILLIAM: Do neither, but go back to her. And tell no one of this.

JAMES: I hope you know yourself again, William.

WILLIAM: Do not wish that on anyone. It is a burden none should bear. Goodbye, James.

JAMES: Goodbye.

THEY EMBRACE. WILLIAM LEAVES. JAMES  
LINGERS A MOMENT AND THEN DEPARTS.

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT [3]

SCENE [9]

THE LIGHTS REMAIN DARK FOR A LONG MOMENT, AND THEN FADE UP TO THE SAME ROOM AS THE BEGINNING OF THE PLAY. AGAIN, WE HEAR A PARTY OFF-STAGE. IT IS THE SAME PARTY AS IN THE BEGINNING OF THE PLAY. EXACTLY THE SAME PARTY.

A GIRL, IRIS, ENTERS AND COLLAPSES ONTO AN ELEGANT SOFA. SHE IS FOLLOWED BY HER FRIENDS, GUY, BEATRICE AND JAMES.

IRIS: I wish every night could be like this.

GUY: (*He hands her a drink*) Tomorrow morning you may wish otherwise. In fact, If we keep up this pace, tomorrow morning we might still be dancing.

IRIS: Wouldn't that be wonderful!

BEATRICE: Of course you think so, your toes aren't losing sensation from terribly pinching shoes.

IRIS: Oh, stop complaining. You're just afraid of stepping on someone's feet. Perhaps you just need sufficient temptation.

A LOOK PASSES FROM BEATRICE TO GUY.

Are you keeping secrets, Beatrice?

BEATRICE: Only of the kind one doesn't tell.

IRIS: Funny, I always find those are the ones everybody already knows!

BEATRICE: Perhaps in your case, Iris, but I am still holding out hope.

GUY: Well there's a revealing turn of phrase. Are you holding out hope for the secret, or are you secretly holding out hope?

GUY HOLDS OUT A HAND FOR BEATRICE.

BEATRICE:           *(Wickedly)* Ask me after the next dance and perhaps I shall tell you.

THEY GO OFF DANCING. IRIS AND JAMES  
SHARE A LOOK.

IRIS:               *(Teasing)* Now, James, why have you been skulking all evening?

JAMES:             *(Flirtatiously)* I was merely admiring the view.

IRIS:               And is it to your liking? Is it worthy of one of your paintings?

JAMES:             Oh no, it is too fair for one of my simple pieces. I could never do it justice.

IRIS:               The point of art is not to represent a true reality, but merely to interpret one aspect of it, is it not?

JAMES:             Perhaps. In any case, I'm out of the colour red, and therefore could not paint your lips.

IRIS BLUSHES.

Or the blush on your cheeks. (BEAT) And so, you must settle for my dazzling conversation.

IRIS:               I suppose it will have to do, since you have always been impossible to convince to dance.

JAMES:             Dance is an occupation for idle men. One dances if one wishes to take a break from thinking. I never wish to take a break from it. (PAUSE) But for you, perhaps this once I can forego my principles.

HE HOLDS OUT A HAND FOR HER.

IRIS:               I do hope you know your left foot from your right. Luckily, I have never been one to shy away from a challenge.

THEY GET UP TO DANCE. JUST AS THEY ARE ABOUT TO LEAVE THE ROOM, ANOTHER MAN ENTERS FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM. HE IS TALL AND STRIKING, AND LOOKS AS IF HE HAS JUST COME FROM A LONG JOURNEY. BOTH IRIS AND JAMES TURN TO HIM AND FREEZE.

WILLIAM: Please, please. Don't let me interrupt.

JAMES GOES OVER AND HUGS HIM.

JAMES: Good to see you, William.

IRIS: Tired of your precious Academy, William?

JAMES: I'm surprised you're back. I don't think the person you're looking for is here, but I hope you will join us tomorrow for--

WILLIAM: -- What? Oh yes, of course I will. Wouldn't miss it. Now if you'll excuse me, long journey.

HE EXITS. JAMES RETURNS TO IRIS, BOTH ARE SLIGHTLY DISTRACTED WITH THEIR OWN THOUGHTS.

JAMES: (A little disgruntled) So, the prodigal son returns. I'm surprised he could bear to leave his lab for a day, much less to come down and visit.

IRIS: Yes, it is quite a surprise, isn't it?

JAMES: Quite.

IRIS: Well, in any case, are we going to dance?

JAMES: Perhaps not, I have not been practicing.

IRIS: You must have very many wicked things to occupy you then.

JAMES: Not nearly as many as I should like to have in the future.

IRIS: I thought men were meant to become less wicked as they got older.

JAMES: I have no intention of aging a day more. I am perfectly happy where I am, thank you.

IRIS: (Teasing) Will you sell your soul to the devil, then, and hide away your true self in one of your paintings?

JAMES: Oh no, he would not take it. It's far too monochromatic. Instead, I shall sell my soul to the God of Numbers, and tell him, "sir, every year let me age half as much as I did the year before, no more, no less." "How reasonable," he'll say, "I cannot possibly deny such a request from a good lad." And then, next year, I shall age only half a year, and after that a quarter, and then an eighth, and after that the increments shall be so small I will barely have a wrinkle in 100 years.

IRIS: You are much too logical for me, I can hardly put up with it.

JAMES: Well, you will not have to for much longer. I'm told the men go hunting tomorrow, and the women are to remain behind.

IRIS: I wish things were not so traditional. I could outride all of the men here, and you besides.

JAMES: I do not doubt it, and will therefore be glad not to suffer such defeat at the hands of such a beautiful woman.

THERE IS A MOMENT. THEY ALMOST KISS.

Well, perhaps I should take my leave.

IRIS: Yes, it is very late.

JAMES: Goodnight, Iris.

HE LEAVES.

IRIS: Goodnight, James.

END.

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