

MAGNOLIA & VINE

SEPTEMBER 2019 • ISSUE 02



Magnolia & Vine

Cover Design: Austin Shay

Heading and Subheading Set: Haettenschweiler

Text Set: Times New Roman

All authors/artists retain the rights to their work. All work that appears in this journal has been published with permission of the author/artist.



EDITOR-IN-CHIEF AUSTIN SHAY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE:

'till Death

The Brotherhood of Man

Coming Back to Bozeman

A Constellation of Perceptions

Womankind

The Deconstruction of Lee and Darrell

'til Death

a fifteen-minute play
by donnarkevic

CHARACTERS

PAULINE REED: A fifty-year-old housewife

RUSSELL REED: Pauline's husband, a fifty-one-year-old coal miner

SETTING

February 15, 1970. Lundale, West Virginia. The living room of Pauline and Russell Reed. The set is furnished with a chair, a couch, an end table between chair and couch, a radio and newspaper are on top of end table, a coffee table with a yellow rose in a vase. There is also a bookcase filled with books.

ACT I

(PAULINE sits in chair mending a work shirt while RUSSELL sleeps on couch.)

RADIO

. . . And, finally, the Lundale Amherst Coal Company #5 mine, cat-eye shift will not work. Amherst Coal Company #5 mine, cat-eye shift will not work This has been the six o'clock mining report for February 15, 1970.

PAULINE

(Turns off radio on end table. With newspaper, taps RUSSELL, napping on couch.)

You don't work tonight.

(He does not awaken. She taps him harder. Loudly.)

Russell!

RUSSELL

Wa . . . what?

PAULINE

You don't work.

RUSSELL

I'm up.

PAULINE

The mine report. You don't work tonight.

RUSSELL

(Clears throat. Sits up, sleepy-groggy.)

You pack my lunch pail, Pauline?

PAULINE

No.

RUSSELL

No! What do you expect me to eat tonight at work? Rats?

PAULINE

You don't need anything to eat. You don't work.

RUSSELL

I don't work?

PAULINE

That's what I've been trying to tell you. You don't work.

RUSSELL

I sure do work. Can outwork any of those young punks. Think they're miners.

PAULINE

On the radio. You don't have to report to work.

RUSSELL

Oh, the radio. Then why'd you wake me up?

PAULINE

Since you don't have to work the midnight shift – I figured we could talk.

RUSSELL

Talk?

PAULINE

Yeah. Talk. You've worked twenty-six years on the midnight shift. I wish you'd bid on a day shift. Lord knows, you have enough seniority.

RUSSELL

I get shift differential working midnight. Or have you forgotten how I make the money to feed the kids, put shoes on their feet, and buy them things?

PAULINE

The children feed themselves, put shoes on their own feet, and buy their own things. Our nest has been empty for years. If you were home more often, you would have noticed.

RUSSELL

I meant the grandchildren.

PAULINE

You spoil them rotten.

RUSSELL

I'm their grand pap. I'm supposed to spoil them rotten.

PAULINE

I'm your wife. Spoil me rotten.

RUSSELL

You know what they say, Pauline: A rotten mackerel spoils . . . spoils . . . it stinks.

(Flustered. Stands.)

And I don't have time to trade wisecrackers. I gotta go to work!

PAULINE

Sit down, Russell. I just told you that you don't work tonight.

RUSSELL

(RUSSELL sits on couch and begins to read newspaper. PAULINE stares at him. He lowers paper to catch her eye three times.)

Something on your mind, Pauline?

PAULINE

Yes.

RUSSELL

You want to tell me what it is?

PAULINE

I want to talk about us as a couple.

RUSSELL

A couple of what?

PAULINE

A *married* couple.

RUSSELL

Now! I just woke up! And I'm reading this here newspaper.

(RUSSELL reads paper. PAULINE clears her throat. When RUSSELL doesn't respond she clears it again, loudly.)

Aw, geez.

(Folds paper and puts it down.)

You want to talk?

PAULINE

Yes.

RUSSELL

Alright. Are you going to get mad at me for speaking my mind?

PAULINE

Of course not.

RUSSELL

Well, I noticed you ain't been yourself lately.

PAULINE

What do you mean?

RUSSELL

Well, the stuff you been packing in my lunch pail. Yesterday, just an apple, smaller than a gall stone. And that pot roast you made the other day.

(Indicates indigestion with hand.)

You ain't goin' through the change ag'in. Are you?

PAULINE

Change? Oh, I'm considering a change, alright.

RUSSELL

A new hairdo?

PAULINE

A new address.

RUSSELL

(Misunderstands her.)

A new dress? It's not Easter, yet. Is it?

PAULINE

A new address. I'm moving out, Russell. Consider this your two weeks' notice.

RUSSELL

(Rises. Angry.)

What! You can't move! You're a married woman!

PAULINE

Not for long. I've seen a lawyer.

RUSSELL

You seen a lawyer? How could you? You're a married woman! You don't know any people!

PAULINE

I know lots of people: teachers, butchers, even lawyers.

RUSSELL

We've been married twenty-five years. You can't divorce me. I got seniority!

PAULINE

Twenty-seven. And you're confusing seniority with senility.

RUSSELL

Alright, Mrs. Hardy har har, let me ask you this. Where you gonna go?

PAULINE

Why, I . . . I thought . . . There's . . . I have family.

RUSSELL

In Ohio. How you gonna get from Lundale, West Virginia, to who-knows-where, Ohio?

PAULINE

A bus. A train.

RUSSELL

How you gonna pay for your ticket?

PAULINE

We have a savings account.

RUSSELL

I have a savings account. It's in my name. And I can empty that savings account faster than you can dial up that lawyer you seen.

PAULINE

That money is ours.

RUSSELL

That's right. Ours. It's been ours since our wedding, and it'll stay ours as long as we stay married. You better start practicing this –

(Pretends to thumb a ride. Sits on couch.)

You wanted to talk? What do you got to say about that?

PAULINE

(PAULINE gets up and sits next to RUSSELL on couch.)

Do you love me, Russell?

RUSSELL

What?

PAULINE

Do you love me?

RUSSELL

I heard you the first time.

PAULINE

Do you love me?

RUSSELL

Have you been watching that *Phil Donahue Show* again?

PAULINE

In the Gospel reading last Sunday, the resurrected Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him.

RUSSELL

You know I'm not a church-goer, Pauline. And I'm grateful to Ned Smith for taking you.

PAULINE

He asked Peter three times if he loved Him.

RUSSELL

(Trying to be funny.)

Three times? Was Peter hard of hearing like me?

PAULINE

And you know what Peter replied each time?

(RUSSELL doesn't respond.)

He said, 'Yes.' Why do you think Jesus asked Peter three times?

(RUSSELL shakes his head.)

Because Peter denied Jesus three times. And after his resurrection, Jesus wanted to remind Peter of the man he could be and not the man he casually vowed to be when things were going all fine and dandy. Do you remember our wedding vows, Russell?

RUSSELL

That was twenty-five years ago, Pauline.

PAULINE

Twenty-seven. I remember like it was yesterday: . . . 'for better, for worse' . . .

RUSSELL

I know I ain't always been at my best.

PAULINE

It only asks for better: . . . 'for richer, for poorer' . . .

RUSSELL

You've never needed for anything.

PAULINE

You should have asked me what I wanted: . . . 'in sickness and in health' . . .

RUSSELL

Why are you doing this to me?

PAULINE

(As though no longer talking to RUSSELL.)

Most people think those two vows are followed by 'til death do us part.' It's only logical: 'in sickness and in health, 'til death do us part.' But there's more. The last two vows are: . . . 'to love and to cherish.'

(Looks at RUSSELL.)

You've never told me you loved me, Russell.

RUSSELL

I ain't good with words, Pauline. You know that.

PAULINE

But I actually believe you love me.

RUSSELL

Love. Love. Love. That's all you hear about today from them hippies. Love-ins. Summer of love. Free love. Well, let me tell you something. Love ain't free. It's getting' up every day

(RUSSELL stands up.)

and goin' to work. It's stokin' the coal furnace just before bed and again when you rise. It's eatin' what's set in front of you, even when it's . . .

(Catches himself.)

. . . well, you know what I mean.

(Walks to bookcase.)

What else do you want?

PAULINE

I want to be cherished.

RUSSELL

I got wants, too, you know. You ever ask me what I want?

PAULINE

(PAULINE gets up, puts shirt on couch, and walks to RUSSELL.)

I already know what you want. You want your belly full, your bed made, and you want your Chase & Sanborn black and piping hot. Piping hot. Not hot as possible or hot as hell, but piping hot. And can you please tell me what 'piping hot' means?

RUSSELL

You tell me. You're the one who reads all these books.

(Runs finger along spines of row of books in bookcase.)

Your nose always in a book. Yeah, I want my bed made. With you in it once in a while.

PAULINE

Oh, so this is about sex.

RUSSELL

Pauline, I don't know what this is about. You brought it up. Last night there was a full moon. Before entering the mine, I looked up. I wondered if that was the last sunlight I was ever gonna see. I don't have time to ponder these great questions about life. I'm listening for a creaking roof, for a dribbling rock, for a crack like a breaking bone, signaling that maybe the roof finally *is* gonna fall on me burying me in a ton of blackness. That's what I think about.

PAULINE

I think about what's wrong with us.

RUSSELL

Damn it, Pauline! There's nothing wrong with us!
(*RUSSELL sits back down.*)

PAULINE

Oh, there's something wrong, alright. And were in it deeper than any old coal mine.

RUSSELL

You women. You're always analyzing shit to death.

PAULINE

Is that why you stopped going to our marriage counselor? Cause we were analyzing shit to death?

RUSSELL

That woman was on your side from the start. You women always stick together.

PAULINE

You wanted her to defend your adultery?

RUSSELL

Cheesy Pete! You gonna shoot me twice with the same bullet! You go to church. You talk about Jesus. Jesus forgave Peter for his betrayal. You want me to hang myself like Judas?

PAULINE

Are you forgetting that by the time the doctor caught the infection from gonorrhea –

RUSSELL

Do you have to say –

PAULINE

I was sterile!

RUSSELL

. . . that word?

PAULINE

Which word bothers you most?

RUSSELL

(Almost a whisper. Almost apologetic.)

We already had two kids.

PAULINE

Maybe I wanted more.

(Long pause. PAULINE sits down on couch.)

Why did you give me a yellow rose for Valentine's Day yesterday?

RUSSELL

I always give you a yellow rose for Valentine's Day.

PAULINE

But why yellow?

RUSSELL

Because you like yellow.

PAULINE

I loathe yellow.

RUSSELL

I take it that means you don't like yellow.

PAULINE

Do you know what a yellow rose symbolizes?

RUSSELL

Symbolizes? Now you're talking like my ninth grade English teacher.

PAULINE

It symbolizes friendship. Do you know what a red rose symbolizes?

RUSSELL

No. But I'm sure you're gonna explain it to me.

PAULINE

It symbolizes . . . Oh, what's the use?

RUSSELL

When's the last time you ever sent me flowers, yellow or red?

PAULINE

I cook. I clean. I mend your stinking shirts.

(Lifts shirt.)

You want flowers, too!

RUSSELL

Cooking, cleaning, mending. That's all fine and dandy, Pauline. But flowers are different. In a week or so flowers die. It's like burning money, like burning a candle in church. It's like dying for someone. You ever done something like that for me, Pauline?

(Pauline remains silent.)

That's why you want a divorce? Cause of flowers? Cause I work the cat-eye shift?

PAULINE

You wouldn't understand.

RUSSELL

Well, since you're forcing my hand, I'll tell you why I still work midnights.

(Pause. RUSSELL stands.)

You know why my clothes smell so bad, Pauline? It ain't my sweat. It's the sweat of real coal miners. A year ago, . . . huh, maybe it's two years now . . . The bossman said I wasn't keeping up with production, not like them young new-hires. They been calling me "Rusty," like I was some old rusted pick ax. Anyway, I got transferred . . . sort of. I collect garbage. I clean out the wash house, clean up after men who mine coal. I clean out latrines, Pauline. The bossman told me I was lucky to get the job. Huh. Job. He told me, there'd be no cut in pay. Big deal.

PAULINE

You should have told me.

RUSSELL

I was ashamed, Pauline. I didn't care about the money. We would have made do with less. It's just that . . . I don't know . . . I just didn't feel like a man anymore. Look at me. I'm the refuse coal mines spit out into the nearest stream-bearin' hollow. They dump me into useless piles and compact me with bulldozers. And I grow larger, the coal dust igniting all by itself. Inside, I smoke and smolder like charcoal. All fumes and no fire. And here's the funny part. All the while I keep filling up with waste water and rain. And I don't even drown. I just hold it all in 'til I think I'm gonna bust. But I don't.

(Sits back down on the couch.)

Is that what you want, Pauline? For me to bare my soul like the weather-beaten boards on some swaybacked barn?

PAULINE

I don't mind the age of the barn. I just feel like there's nothing left inside.

RUSSELL

It's like I don't know you anymore, Pauline.

PAULINE

Maybe you never did. Just read your paper, Russell.

(RUSSELL slowly opens paper.)

And, from now on, save the flowers for my grave.

(Stage darkens. The end.)

THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN
Peter O'Keefe

SETTING: A Cop Bar in Detroit.

AT RISE: HORTON is seated at the bar grimly nursing a drink. Horton is black, early thirties, intense, angry. He's casually but crisply dressed in a sports coat and silk tie. The BARTENDER (a man) stands nearby, reading a newspaper.

The SOUNDS of a LOUD RAUCOUS PARTY can be heard from the back of the bar (OFF STAGE). The LOUD VOICES and DRUNKEN LAUGHTER are heard intermittently throughout. The noise clearly annoys Horton.

(MACK enters. He's white, late 40's/early 50's, built like a snowplow. Both body and soul carry the dents and abrasions earned during a lifetime of walking through obstacles rather than around them.)

MACK

(to the Bartender)

Heineken.

(He goes to take the barstool next to Horton.)

HORTON

S'taken.

(Mack stands, gripping the back of the chair, staring at Horton. The Bartender approaches with his bottle of beer. He hesitates for a moment, then sets it in front of the empty seat next to the contested stool. Mack follows the Bartender's lead and reluctantly takes the next barstool over, leaving an empty seat between the two men.)

(Horton watches Mack out of the corner of his eye.)

MACK

What?

HORTON

You remind me of this cop. When I was a kid I worked a paper route, shoveled snow, cut lawns--every damn thing I could think of--til' I saved up enough money to buy me a new ten-speed bicycle. A Schwinn. This cracker cop stopped me one day. Said that bike was too nice for a nigger kid. Must be stolen. Took it.

MACK

Let me have a glass.

(The Bartender brings Mack a glass.)

HORTON

When I got out of the service, first thing I did was take the exam to be a cop.

(LOUD SINGING from the party in the rear momentarily silences Horton. He has to struggle to maintain his composure.)

HORTON

And I don't even want to hear any of that affirmative action crap. Scored third highest out of the whole damn applicant pool: Black. White. Wop. Wetback. Watusi. Man. Woman. Whatever.

(Mack fills his glass.)

HORTON

When I was comin' up the white police force in this city was nothing more than an army of occupation. Busting heads, killing, raping... Worse than any fucking street gang. My uncle was shot by a white cop when they found him in a motel room with a white girl. Resisting arrest. And him with his hands cuffed behind his back and nearly every bone in his body busted. Fucking King Kong couldn't have resisted that arrest. Fucking Harry Houdini couldn't have...

(LOUD CHEERING and CLAPPING erupts from the party in the back, then recedes again.)

HORTON

When I first joined the force they taped pictures of monkeys over my family photo's. Put human excrement in my locker. Those days are over now.

MACK

Peanuts.

(The Bartender brings him the peanuts.)

HORTON

And the people who don't like it--the people who don't want to live in a city run by black folks--they can move to the suburbs with the rest of their cracker-ass buddies.

(Mack slams his glass down on the bar. There is a moment of tense silence. Then, Mack slides his glass down the length of the bar, past Horton, to the Bartender.)

MACK

It's cracked.

(The Bartender brings Mack a new glass and a fresh bottle of beer. Mack refills his glass.)

MACK

Crooks running this city used to be white. Now they're black.

HORTON

The Irish, the Italians, the Polacks – they all had their day. Now it's our turn.

(leaning toward Mack)

You don't have a problem with that... Do you?

(Mack ignores him. There is another eruption of ROWDY VOICES from the rear. Horton grimaces and waits for the noise to die down.)

HORTON

I was ten-years-old. My Grammy bought me a new suit for Easter. It was muddy, so I was walking my bike home from Sunday school to keep from messin' up my new pants. New bike. New suit. New shoes. Necktie. Must'a made quite a picture. Cruiser pulled along side. "Where'd you get the bike, boy?"

(RAUCOUS, DRUNK LAUGHTER from the rear. Then SILENCE.)

HORTON

Afterwards. After they put my bicycle in the trunk. They got back in the cruiser. This cracker cop kept lookin' at me real funny. Like he was on one of them drive-through safari's and he couldn't recall seeing nothin' about me in the guidebook. "C'mere, boy." Reached out the car window and grabbed my necktie. "Git a load a' this: nigger in a necktie." His partner starts the car rolling. This cracker cop kept his grip on my necktie so I had to trot alongside to keep from choking.

MACK

I grew up in this fucking town...

HORTON

Driver picked up speed. I was runnin' like a motherfucker just to keep up--afraid I was gonna' fall underneath the wheels.

MACK

My thirteen-year-old sister was pulled off her bike and gang-raped by a bunch of... Afro Americans.

HORTON

Driver kept nudging the gas. Faster... Faster... Faster...

MACK

By the time I was sixteen I'd been chased by a Negro mob. I'd been held up by colored at gunpoint. At knifepoint...

HORTON

These two cops... These two white cops. They were laughing their fucking asses off. Looked like a fuckin' albino Heckle and Jeckle.

MACK

With a machete. A broken bottle. And a bike chain.

HORTON

Must'a made quite a sight. Funny as all get out--like a goddamned Loony Tunes cartoon.

(to Mack)

What do you think? Loony Tunes? Or more like Three Stooges maybe?

MACK

Now that you mention it: I think maybe that bike chain was off a Schwinn.

HORTON

Anyways, you would of laughed. If you were there, I mean. Laughed your fuckin' ass off.

MACK

Yeah. Maybe. If I'd a been there.

(Silence.)

HORTON

(to the Bartender)

Gimme' a clean towel.

(The Bartender gives him a bar towel. Horton examines it, then carefully dabs his necktie.)

HORTON

Cavelli. That's Italian. One hundred percent silk Italian.

(Mack GRUNTS.)

HORTON

Reason I point this out is you've slopped your fucking beer all over my Cavelli tie. My one hundred percent silk Cavelli tie.

(Mack slowly swivels his stool until his back is to Horton.)

HORTON

Don't turn your back when I'm speaking to you.

(Mack carefully pushes his glass and beer bottle across the bar, as if clearing the decks for action. He swivels slowly back to face Horton. He studies the necktie for a moment.)

MACK

You're hallucinating.

HORTON

Hallucinating?

(grabs his tie and thrusts it at Mack)

What's this? A figment of my fucking imagination?

(Mack reaches out for the necktie. Horton stiffens.)

MACK

May I?

(Mack takes the necktie between his fingers and examines it closely. Then, he slowly closes his hand until he is gripping the necktie in his fist. Horton grabs him by the wrist.)

BARTENDER

Why don't you let me have it dry cleaned for you?

(Both men ignore him.)

MACK

(not releasing his grip)

Knot's a little loose.

(Mack starts to tighten the knot. Horton
knocks his hand away. Both men rise abruptly
to their feet.)

(SEEGER, drunk, oblivious, steps between
the two men as she slams a clump of empty
beer bottles on the bar. Seeger is a hard-
edged, attractive woman in her early to mid-
thirties.)

SEEGER

(to the Bartender)

Two Buds... Strohs... Rum and coke.

(noticing Horton)

Detective...

HORTON

(still focused on Mack)

Sergeant...

(Seeger looks from Horton to Mack and back
again.)

SEEGER

Did I come at a bad time?

HORTON

Guy stuff.

MACK

Pissing contest.

Who won? SEEGER

(Silence.)

Boys will be boys. SEEGER

Yeah, right. HORTON

(Horton straightens his tie and takes his seat. Mack resumes his seat as well. The two men seem to take no further notice of each other.)

Running in the Motor City this year? HORTON

SEEGER
(yells to the Bartender)
Hey! Surprise me with some clean glasses this time.

Won your age group last year, didn't you? HORTON

Always do. SEEGER

Five K? HORTON

I only do Ten K's. Five K's are for wimps. SEEGER
(quickly)
Sorry.

Right. HORTON

(The Bartender brings Seeger's drink order.)

I'm not running this year. Not with everything I've got going on right now. SEEGER

HORTON

Right, you're a busy girl.

(She prepares to go, then stops.)

SEEGER

(to the Bartender)

I almost forgot: Vodka martini.

(There is another BLAST of DRUNKEN
LAUGHTER from the back.)

HORTON

Quite a party back there.

SEEGER

Just blowing off some steam. Look, I was sorry to see you didn't make the list.

HORTON

I hear they baked you a cake in the shape of a sergeant's shield.

SEEGER

C'mon back. I'll give you a piece.

HORTON

That's all right. Never know when you might need a few extra pieces for the
brass.

SEEGER

Christ.

MACK

(to no one in particular)

When I was a kid, there was a baseball field next street over. Blacks tried to use
it, we'd take our Louisville sluggers and chase em off. Sometimes they'd stand
and fight and we'd have us a fuckin' war. But we had the numbers. Pretty soon,
most of the white folks moved away. The black kids played ball and we watched.
They had the numbers.

SEEGER

(incredulous)

Why didn't you just choose up sides and play each other?

(Mack and Horton both look at Seeger like
she has two heads. The Bartender brings the
martini.)

SEEGER

(moving away from the bar with her drinks)
I need to go comfort my inner child.

(All three men watch her retreating figure with
interest.)

MACK

That's one inner child I wouldn't mind comforting.

HORTON

You can have the inner child. I'd like to get me some of that white meat.

(The two men glare at each other. The
Bartender leans on the bar and stares after
the departed Seeger.)

BARTENDER

No mystery how she earned her fucking shield.

(Silence.)

BARTENDER

Only question is... Was it on her back? Or on her knees?

(He gives each of them a knowing look. They
watch in silence while he clears their empties
and wipes down the bar before moving off.)

HORTON

No time for running in the Motor City this year. Too busy fucking her way up the
chain of command.

MACK

Fucking cunt.

HORTON

(mimics)
I always win my age group.

MACK

Five K's are for wimps.

HORTON

Arrogant fucking bitch.

(Silence.)

MACK

So... Did you ever find the cop that stole your bicycle?

HORTON

No. But I found a couple thousand racist sons of bitches just like him.

MACK

You see, that's your problem, Detective. All us gray boys just look alike to you.

HORTON

It is hard telling you motherfuckers apart some times. How long did you say you've been on the force?

MACK

I didn't.

(indicates his empty beer bottle)

I'll have another, barkeep.

(to Horton)

You ready?

HORTON

(takes out his wallet)

Why not.

MACK

Put that fucking thing away.

(Mack throws money on the bar. Horton puts his wallet away.)

MACK

What color d'you say that bike was?

HORTON

I didn't.

(The Bartender, approaching with drinks, freezes in place. Horton smiles. All three men LAUGH.)

(Blackout.)

THE END

Coming Back to Bozeman Ann Vinciguerra

Location: Bozeman, Montana, many years from now

Characters: **Jennifer1**, 72 years old. Wearing a khaki pants, river sandals, a sports watch and a top that is in some way local (IE: KGLT t-shirt, OutWare jacket etc). Carries a small nylon purse (Timbuk2 or some other sort of sporty bag). Neat looking and fit, somewhat soft spoken. (A line in the play says, "They say 70's the new 45," so she can look a bit younger than her age)

Jennifer2 – 32 years old. Trendy looking. Wears a stylish outfit and a big diamond and Yogo sapphire wedding ring. She is sometimes loud, slightly dramatic and pretentious, but overall is friendly and likeable.

Michael - Jennifer1's husband.

Doorbell rings. Jennifer2 opens the door.

Jennifer1 Hi. I'm sorry to drop in on you like this. My name is Jennifer Stern. My husband and I owned this house a long time ago.

Jennifer2 Oh really.

Jennifer1 It was our first home and I was hoping I could have a quick look around.

Jennifer2 Sure, come on in. (Letting Jennifer1 in) I'd love to show you what we've done with the place.

I'm Jennifer, too. Jennifer. Now that's a name that went out with Subarus and river sandals. Sooo 1970s. What was wrong with naming me Madison or Hyalite or even Absorkee?

Anyhow, sorry to ramble on like that. What brings you back to Bozeman?

Jennifer1 My husband Michael and I are in town for the MSU homecoming. It's our 50th reunion. We've been living in New York City and it seems like forever since we've been to Montana. Michael couldn't wait to go fishing so I thought I'd take a walk around town while he's out with the guys.

Jennife2 Well, a lot has changed, but after living in New York City, you probably won't even notice the difference.

(Jennifer1 taking a look around)

Jennifer1 This is really something. It reminds me a lot of our loft in SoHo.

Michael and I used to think Bozeman would be our home forever. We loved it here – this house, the mountains, the quality of life. We couldn't think of living anywhere else but life puts opportunities in from of you... (Fades away)

Jennifer2 Well, it's never too late to come back. Bozeman's not going anywhere. Besides, you're still young. They say 70's the new 45!

Jennifer1 (Looking out the window) Some yard. What a garden.

Jennifer2 People were all freaked out over climate change, but really, when you think about it, it's what we were all waiting for. We can now grow everything we need in Bozeman.

Jennifer1 This is quite a renovation.

Jennifer2 When the rail went in a few years ago real estate prices went through the roof. This area had been blighted for so long that prices were cheap in comparison. So my husband Bridger and I just bought this cute little fixer-upper...

(Phone rings. Conversation cut short)

Jennifer2 Excuse me.

Hello? Gallatin darling. How are you? (Pause) NO! WAY! (Pause) INCREDIBLE!

(Pause) This is simply divine. (Pause) Yes, Bridger and I will be there. We wouldn't miss this for (Waves hand in the air) tuit le monde. (Pause) Splendid darling. See you at 7:30. Ciao.

Jennifer1 Sounds like good news.

Jennifer2 We just got a reservation at Mortenson's. (Pause. No reaction from Jennifer1) Greg Mortenson's Bistro, the new Afghan restaurant in the Baxter Hotel. It's only been open for six months and it's impossible to get a table. Booked for months solid before they even opened. But there was an unheard of cancellation tonight so thankfully we won't be spending another evening at Plonk.

Jennifer1 Plonk's still around?

Jennifer2 Sure, but it's moved. It's out on 74th Street.

Jennifer1 Bozeman has a 74th Street?!

Jennifer2 You know, out near Blixseth Heights. It used to be called Four Corners. (Pausing) Plonk was probably pretty popular when you lived here.

Jennifer1 It certainly was. We weren't sure if Bozeman was ready for a wine bar but it took off right away. Michael and I didn't go very often. We were just starting our careers and trying to make ends meet.

Jennifer2 Polar ice cap spring water?

Jennifer1 Sure.

Jennifer2 Plonk is soooo gauche. Old fashion wine bars made a comeback a few years ago, but trends come and trends go and everything moves ahead. For some reason, Plonk just stayed the same. Don't get me wrong. The drinks are great, the food, to die for, but the atmosphere has got to go. And with all of those professors and non-profit conservation folks filling the place and their beat up old Prisuses and electric cars parked out front...Plonk is (pause) your know... (Pause. Trying to be tactful) It's like a museum to the past.

Jennifer 1 I'll have to stop by and take a look for myself. (Shaking head in disbelief) 74th Street.

Jennifer2 Let me guess. You and your friends liked Ale Works.

Jennifer1 We loved that place. We went there all of the time. How did you know?

Jennifer2 Oh, you just look like the Ale Works type. You seem pretty fit so I am guessing you were part of the "hard core" crowd – you and the Ridge hiking, mountain biking, droppin' in bro bras. I can picture you and your "peeps" enjoying a beer at the bar after a day in the mountains. Am I right?

Jennifer1 You're right on. Droppin' in. Bro bras. I haven't heard those terms in years. Where did you pick up the old lingo?

Jennifer2 I was a history major at MSU and interned at the historical society. I helped curate a big exhibit on turn of the century Bozeman. My favorite part was the old ski bum culture.

(Chuckles. Becomes animated) Yo' dude! Go big. Hard core. That's my favorite, hard core. You sounded like a bunch of stay at home moms on a Pilates kick. (Laughs) Get it? Core.

But as an intern I couldn't get enough of those "extreme" ski films. The rad skiing, the old school gear, the ubiquitous techno music. (A few dance moves) Untz, untz, untz. I'm surprised it didn't drive you mad. Of course, everyone was probably half mad to begin with. No offense.

Jennifer1 (Barely getting this in) None taken.

Jennifer2 I mean, you would of had to have been mad to schlep those massive skis and clunky ski boots up and down the mountains all day. In flimsy Gore-Tex before climate change really kicked in! I'm surprised any of you lived to tell about it!

Jennifer1 We had a lot of fun in those days.

Jennifer2 Let me show you something. You're going to love it.

(Getting box) When we bought this house, there were a bunch of boxes in the shed from past renters.

I'm having my curators at the historical society label and catalogue the contents and we'll use the artifacts in an upcoming exhibit.

Go ahead. Take a look.

(Jennifer1 pulls stuff out that is easily recognizable. A pair of Crocs, an avalanche transceiver, an Outside Bozeman magazine, etc)

Jennifer2 Look at this photo. (Passing photo to Jennifer1) A few friends packing up the trusty Subaru and heading out on a mountain bike trip.

Jennifer1 (Looking at photo) An old Subaru Forrester. I loved that car. I had one in green.

Jennifer2 I bet those full-suspension mountain bikes weighed what, 21 pounds? Again, how did you do it?

Jennifer1 Probably more like 27 pounds. We thought those bikes were “pretty sweet” as we used to say. (Looking at photo again) A Subaru Forrester, my first decent car.

Jennifer2 I can’t believe you drove those big cars. I know there were bigger cars on the roads, but with gas prices, why’d you bother?

Oh, listen to me babbling on again. I am so sorry. I’ve probably offended you again.

Jennifer1 Times have changed. We lived here before the rail. (Pulling more things out of the box) Look, a Co-op membership card. I was a working member there.

Jennifer2 The Co-op’s still around. Chain supermarkets were outlawed from Bozeman. There are now over 30 Co-ops around town.

Jennifer1 Wow! Look at this collection of season passes from Bridger Bowl.

Jennifer2 It’s all pretty classic stuff, isn’t it? For the life of me I can’t figure out what this is. “Live strong.” Go figure. (Handing bracelet to Jennifer1)

Jennifer1 It’s from the Lance Armstrong Foundation. They were sold to raise money for cancer research.

Jennifer2 Really? Cancer research? I’ll have one of my curators look into that.

(Both continue to check out stuff)

Jennifer2 (Pulling small laptop computer out of the box) Look at this laptop. It’s huge. I couldn’t imagine having to haul it around.

(Phone rings)

Jennifer2 (Looks at cell phone) Please excuse me. It’s my daughter’s school calling. I’m going to take it in the other room. Yogo’s been having some discipline problems lately so this may not be too pretty.

Jennifer1 (Solo on stage)

(Hand to chest) Breathe. (Pause) Deep breaths. (Pause) Heart rate's okay. Chi is flowing freely. Temperature's all right.

(Opening purse to take out paper, looking out the window) My plane ticket says I've landed in Bozeman. I see the Bridgers so this must be Bozeman. (A bit distraught) Isn't it?

Jennifer2 (Re-enters the room) Whew! Really nothing at all. I just forgot to give permission for a field trip. It's the skydiving unit in PE and they'll be doing some big jumps in the Tranquilities today.

Jennifer1 (Slight shocked and confused) Skydiving? The Tranquilities?

Jennifer2 The Tranquilities, the mountain range near Big Timber. Probably know as the Crazies in your day. Years ago the name was making people uncomfortable so it was changed. That was during the height of the big mental health crisis; when people still had to use primitive drugs like Valium and Prozac to handle stress and anxiety.

Jennifer1 A friend of mine was badly hurt in a skydiving accident. A freak accident really, but it still leaves me shaky.

Jennifer2 There's really nothing to worry about. Skydiving's become so safe. Yogo started when she was four.

Jennifer1 You said they're going to the Crazies, I mean the Tranquilities, for the day? That seems like a long way to go for a gym class.

Jennifer2 Yogo's away at boarding school in Big Timber.

Jennifer1 (Slightly shocked) You don't look old enough to have a daughter in boarding school. (Even more shocked) And since when does Big Timber have a boarding school?

Jennifer2 Yogo's only six. Bridger and I had kids pretty young. We were only 32. Call us old fashion, call us nuts, but we couldn't wait until we were into our 50s to have a child like couples do these days. Anyway, Yogo is spending her primary years at the Big Timber Multi-Lingual School for Young Children.

Jennifer1 (In disbelief, but polite) Can you repeat that please?

Jennifer2 The Big Timber Multi-Lingual School for Young Children. Based on the Thich Nhat Hanh concept of primary education.

Jennifer1 A Thich Nhat Hanh school. I think I read about those in the Times. (Jennifer2 hands her brochure. Jennifer1 reads from cover) A multi-lingual boarding school with a mindful approach to education.

Jennifer2 Yeah, it's the new paradigm. Bozeman, even today, is pretty isolated and not very diverse. Thich Nhat Hanh schools require at least 50% of the teachers be foreign born. A curriculum of genuine holistic mind/body education....(Fades off and pauses.) Bridger and I always knew that was how we wanted to educate our daughter.

Jennifer1 How does your daughter, Yoda is it, deal with being away from home at such a young age?

Jennifer2 Her name is Yogo. (Holding out hand to admire big Yogo sapphire and diamond wedding ring) Named after the most precious gemstone ever mined in Montana. So impossible to come by these days. The Yogo sapphire, rarer than a bra shredding cold smoke at Bridger Bowl on a powder day. (Laughs) Excuse my humor.

Jennifer1 You've got quite a way of putting things into historical perspective.

Jennifer2 Anyway, sending your child to a Thich Nhat Hanh school is so de rigueur. The ideology is really quite brilliant. They have everything from rigorous academics to destiny expanding opportunities to intensive outdoor recreation. They even have a totally local, vegan cafeteria. When Yogo's ten she'll go abroad for a more worldly education. Besides, there's the crime we have to worry about.

Jennifer1 Since when is crime a problem in Bozeman?

Jennifer2 Since RightNow Technologies bought out Microsoft and half their workforce moved here. You thought growth was crazy when you live here, well after the buy-out it really exploded and crime came with it. Bozeman's no longer a cow town, if you can imagine that.

Jennifer1 (Slightly agitated) Apparently, it's no longer even a ski town.

Jennifer2 (At some point she stands up) At the turn of the century people used to think crime in Bozeman was under control but then that guy with the soup kitchen built a homeless shelter. RightNow acquired Microsoft a few years later (talking faster and getting more dramatic) and it's been a constant stream of new folks moving in and disrupting our quality of life.

And with the electric train zipping people (Waving arm around) from Bozeman to Three Forks to West Yellowstone and beyond, and with over 300 miles in the Main Street to the Mountains trail system everyone has become much more free to move around. (Looking directly at Jennifer1, leaning towards her and nodding head) That's how crime spreads, you know.

(Jennifer1 leans back and looks slightly startled but remains silent)

Jennifer2 (Sits down, quiets down) Oh, listen to me going on again. All I know is what I've read at the historical society. Bridger says when I get like this I sound like a desperate housewife.

Jennifer1 I loved that show. (Confused look from Jennifer2) It was about these housewives who lived on Wisteria Lane (Fades away) Never mind.

(Pause. The women both sit on the couch in silence.)

Jennifer2 (Looking at watch) Look at the time! I'm late for a lunch appointment. (Running around gathering coat, throwing things into her bag, etc) I have a million things to do before dinner at Mortenson's. I've got to go.

Jennifer1 No problem. I enjoyed our visit. I'm surprised you let a stranger in considering the crime.

Jennifer2 You can spot an old-time Bozemanite from a mile away so I knew you were okay. I enjoyed our visit, too. I should call you. I'd love to interview you for the historical society. Better yet, why don't you just drop by? We're located in the old Story mansion in between the coffee shop and the city offices.

Jennifer1 Thank you. That's a very kind offer.

Jennifer2 I'm sorry I have to run on you like this. (Waving hands in the air) My life is frantic! I don't know how I manage to fit everything into one petite day. (Jennifer2 then pops a pill from a small bottle. Jennifer2 becomes visibly calmer. She then tilts the bottle towards Jennifer1 to offer her a pile but Jennifer1 shakes her head no.)

Jennifer1 I used to work in marketing for the Metropolitan Opera and in times like this our lead soprano used to get frantic and call out, "I need a Valium. Someone bring me a Valium."

Jennifer2 Cute. Valium. (Chuckling)

Jennifer1 Nice meeting you Jennifer.

(Jennifer1 & 2 shake hands)

Jennifer2 Likewise. Enjoy your visit to Bozeman.

(Women start walking out the door)

Jennifer2 And Jennifer?

Jennifer1 Yeah?

Jennifer2 Go big!

Jennifer1 Yo dude!

Jennifer2 Hard core.

(Lights fade)

Jennifer1 (Screaming) Valium. I need a Valium. Someone bring me a Vallium.

(Lights come back on. Now in Jennifer1's SoHo loft, which looks exactly like Jennifer2's house.)

Michael (Coming into room) Honey, calm down. It's just a nightmare. Everything is okay. What were you dreaming about?

Jennifer1 (Waking up from sleeping on the couch, still shaken) I was dreaming we were in Bozeman. I was visiting our little house on Rouse Street, but it had changed. Everything had changed.

Michael Of course dear. Bozeman was always changing. It still is. Come to bed now. We leave for Gallatin International Airport in the morning. (Walking off stage) I can't wait for the reunion. Apple martinis at Plonk.

A CONSTELLATION of PERCEPTIONS

Virginia Barrett

a passage in poetics in one act

[with an invocation of Emily Dickinson, H.D., and Denise Levertov]

CHARACTERS:

Goldfinch: Adult female dressed all in white. She wears a loose tunic or dress with two large pockets. Bare feet.

Pomegranate: Adult female dressed all in white. She wears a loose tunic or dress with two large pockets. Bare feet.

Rheade (flute player—any style wooden or bamboo flute): Adult male dressed in a loose white men's tunic with pants and a saffron-colored raw silk scarf. Bare feet.

Stage directions are given for a theater, but this piece could be easily performed outside.

Opening:

[Stage is bare except for an old wooden school chair with a writing surface on one arm, downstage left. **Goldfinch** sits in the chair. A small, black journal rests open on the writing surface. She writes with a black pen, bent over the journal slightly. Flute music is heard offstage. The mood is meditative, the melody not a recognizable song (an original composition or improvised). Flute plays for two minutes, then fades.]

[Enter: **Pomegranate**, upstage right. She trails a very long, narrow piece of paper (as for an adding machine or register). It moves through her hands as she reads from it, like off a ticker-tape. She walks slowly downstage to stop stage center.]

Pomegranate: As poetry changes itself it changes the poet's life. By 1860 it was impossible for Emily Dickinson simply to translate English poetic traditions . . . In prose and in poetry she explored the implications of breaking the law just short of breaking off communication with a reader. Starting from scratch, she exploded habits of standard human intercourse in her letters, as she cut across the customary chronological linearity of poetry . . . Repetition, surprise, alliteration, odd rhyme and rhythm, dislocation, deconstruction . . . [she] built a new poetic form from her fractured sense of being eternally on intellectual borders, where confident masculine voices buzzed an alluring and inaccessible discourse . . . 1

[**Pomegranate** stops, downstage center, the paper still moving slowly through her hands.]

[**Goldfinch** stops writing and sits back in the chair. She appears to have remembered something and speaks, unaware of any other presence but her own.]

Goldfinch: That was the year, wasn't it? "Odd rhyme and rhythm," when poetry first came to me, really came, like a visitation, as if forging through the snow and ice of the seemingly endless Vermont winter to knock on our classroom door, asking only for me. Lone girl in the Sophomore English class, a day student at a boarding school for boys. My boy-crazy hormones all aquiver as if perpetually urging spring. It should have been exhilarating and yet, I ached for her, for someone like Dickinson to enter my life.

I sat always to the left side of the teacher's desk, not completely *out* of the group of seven boys positioned around the brick-walled room, just slightly in my own sphere. The angle enabled me the only view out the old, large windows.

By my Window have I for Scenery
Just a Sea—with a Stem
If the Bird and the Farmer—deem it a "Pine"—
The Opinion will serve—for them— 2

When our teacher first assigned Dickinson, I could barely understand her, but she drew me in—a sudden blaze in the fireplace. She offered me warm tea in the form of poetry, from what seemed

to be a bottomless cup of observation, contemplation, and rapture. I wrote a poem when I first discovered her. It started: *I walked upon your garden too heavily I fear, you were angry because I crushed the dew.* My teacher called me a poet. My words were foolish and sentimental to me and yet, Dickinson had begun to give me a kind of inner permission. Permission to explore and connect. Permission to seek a wholeness. The wholeness within the fragments of both beauty and sorrow I saw and felt.

Pomegranate: The more you try to catch at the particulars in a writer, the more particulars you think you have found, the farther you get from where you thought you were supposed to be going. I am finally learning to let myself drift. But there are different rivers and currents to drift on. Rafts or writers are made from different materials. Trust the place to form the voice. 3

Goldfinch: Why did Dickinson move me so? She was a woman, for one, and I needed her, especially being in school with so many boys and living then with my father. My mother was gone, not dead, but far away in Florida which had nothing to do with Vermont or Dickinson's Amherst which too had snow and cold and celebrated spring with intense wonder each year. I was hungry for a female voice to give me some sort of nourishment. And yet, Dickinson was *not* a woman to me in many ways, because her use of language appeared so quirky, so unfamiliar that I could not connect to her in that way. She did not sound like any women I had ever known; she also did not sound like any other poets I had been exposed to. Not that poetry was something abundant in my life—Dylan and Joni Mitchell lyrics aside, it most definitely wasn't. So I had nowhere to place Dickinson, still I intuitively sensed she expressed something beyond the realm of the everyday—even an everyday way back in the Amherst of the 1800s.

Pomegranate: A poet is never just a woman or man. Every poet is salted with fire. A poet is a mirror, a transcriber. 4

Goldfinch: Did I have had an inkling that Dickinson was a visionary in some way? A transcriber, I might say now, of existence which reached far beyond anything I was experiencing in the day to day events of my teenage life and mind? Perhaps subconsciously so—oh how I see now her revealing, her seeking, her concealing.

Pomegranate: In some sense the subject of any poem is the author's state of mind at the time it was written, but facts of an artist's life will never explain that particular artist's truth. Poems and poets of the first rank remain mysterious. 5

[**Pomegranate** has accumulated a large pile of paper at her feet. She nears the end of the paper scroll and lets the rest drop. She steps out of paper paper pile and exits, downstage right.]

[**Goldfinch** slowly closes her journal, putting it and the pen, into her pocket. She crosses the stage to the pile of paper, sits down cross-legged within it (but not on it) and begins to tear the paper into small pieces.]

Goldfinch: [speaking as if in a slight trance] For as it is dislocation and detachment from the life of God that makes things ugly, the poet, who re-attaches things to nature and the Whole,—re-attaching even artificial things and violation of nature, to nature, by a deeper insight,—disposes very easily of the most disagreeable facts. 6

Goldfinch (shakes her head slightly): God? Did I just say the word God? My mother hated the God of her Southern Methodist mother and so, in mimicry, did I. Not hate, really, but a squirming discomfort. And the name Jesus just made me nervous whenever my grandmother intoned it. *Did I believe in him?* She would sweetly-firmly corner me. She accepted Jesus as her savior, whatever that meant. Some of my cousins and I still joke about it, but I understand now that my grandmother was simply seeking. The word seek comes from beseech: “to beg urgently.” We are all in a constant state of seeking—begging for it, really—for an original “Whole,” as Emerson said, even if we don’t realize it. This is why we have such endless subject matter for poetry, for our constant *Beseeching* with words, and this is why poetry is created—it’s a path for seeking.

[**Goldfinch** pauses, hands stop tearing paper. She stands, brushing off torn paper from her clothes.]

[Enter **Pomegranate** downstage right with a broom, a tin pail, and a tin dustpan inside. She walks to the pile of torn paper to stand to the right of **Goldfinch**. They do not acknowledge each other, both contained in their own spheres.]

Pomegranate: Poetry is a quest to embody what the lyrical sensibility inherently knows to exist within us, and without us.

[**Goldfinch** walks slowly back to desk, sits, pulls her journal out of her pocket, and places it on the writing surface. She speaks one line from Dickinson, then begins to write.]

Goldfinch: Nature is a haunted house—but art is a house that tries to be haunted. 7

[**Pomegranate** puts the bucket down, places the dustpan on the floor, and begins to sweep up the torn paper, sprinkling them slowly into the bucket like white leaves. She speaks as she does this.]

Pomegranate: The “house” is our wholeness, our place of Being, which is “haunted” by the Divine, most strongly felt and experienced in Nature, as Emerson said, as all the Transcendentalists espoused. But Dickinson was of no particular creed except her own. Art, or more specifically Poetry here, is an attempt to reveal our wholeness again. To make us “haunted” with Spirit. To reveal the veils of concealment, while retaining a sense of mystery.

[**Pomegranate** finishes sweeping, places the dustpan back in the bucket, exits slowly, downstage right.]

[**Goldfinch** continues writing in her journal. Flute playing is heard from offstage for a minute, then fades. She closes the journal, gets up, places it and the pen in her pocket. She stretches her arms up, then brings them down, swinging them back and forth vigorously as if performing morning exercise. She grabs the back of the chair to drag it across the stage on two legs far downstage right. She upturns the chair forcefully so it rests on the floor upside down in an arched position. She sits gingerly, awkwardly on the side of the chair, limbs somewhat akimbo.]

Goldfinch: Did H.D. go over the top placing Modernist poetry on a status with sacred ritual? With the ability to bring humanity to a deeper insight, to a higher level of awareness? Grant it the power of invoking Spirit?

No, I don't think so. Poets wrote the first incantations so, *why not?* The exhilaration of surviving World War II had left her in an exalted state. If poets do not seize the moment to write of such transcendence, no one will. That's what Dickinson did nearly a century earlier, and though hers was an interior transcendence, it touched the earthly, the universal, and the sacred, and interwove them. So too, H.D. announced her offering to the world in the form of poetry, because she saw the poet to be the prescribed visionary of truth for humankind.

[**Goldfinch** stands. Flute music heard softly offstage. Exits downstage right.]

[Enter **Pomegranate** centerstage right carrying a bundle of large sticks in her arms. She kneels down by the chair, lets the sticks roll to the floor. Flute music fades from offstage. She begins to place the sticks in a lean-to arrangement, using the chair as the base. She speaks while crouched on her haunches. (Note: her pockets are full of bright flower petals).]

Pomegranate: These poems were a direct response to the war, during which H.D. remained in London through all the bombings. H.D. called for an alchemy of religions and spiritual beliefs from throughout the ages to create a new beginning—to “re-invoke and “re-create.” It was the poet who would bring about this integration. Hers was a voice calling forth all to be poised for the tremendous personal and social healing waiting in the “gloom” after the traumas of war.

But we don't need war to invoke poetry. After any trauma, poetry brings voice to the healing. And poetry brings voice to that which may not need healing, but simply a transcendence from the ordinary, which may cause eventual trauma. Where is meaning in the normal, the customary, the routine? Where does Spirit come to play in the everyday, the day to day? We beseech. We *be* speech. Speech for extraordinary living—breathing out of the ordinary.

[**Pomegranate** steps back from her assemblage, considers it, is satisfied. She sprinkles the flower petals from her pocket over it. Exit: **Pomegranate** centerstage right.]

[Enter: **Rheade** downstage right as **Pomegranate** exits. (Note: the flute is first heard off stage.) He stands beside the chair, continues playing.]

[Enter **Goldfinch** centerstage right carrying a six-foot wooden ladder which she sets up centerstage left, the open A-shape of the ladder facing the audience. She mounts the ladder and sits at the top, turned toward the audience. She removes a ball of thick chartreuse yarn from one pocket and large, wooden knitting needles. A very narrow 20-inch length of scarf has already been started. She begins to knit, letting the scarf fall from the ladder like a vine.]

[Enter **Pomegranate** upstage right carrying a 6ft. wooden ladder which she sets up centerstage right, parallel with first ladder. The ladders should be a little over 10 feet apart. She mimics what Goldfinch has just done.]

[Exit **Rheade**, downstage right, flute fades offstage]

[Knitting, **Goldfinch** and **Pomegranate** begin to speak in turn, but as one, aware now of each other.]

Goldfinch: Such poetry is exploratory. How to go about such a poetry?

Pomegranate: I think it's like this: first there must be an experience, a sequence or constellation of perceptions of sufficient interest, felt by the poet intensely enough to demand their equivalence in words. 8

Goldfinch: the poet is *brought to speech*.

Pomegranate: Suppose there's the sight of the sky through a dusty window,

Goldfinch: and clouds and bits of paper flying through the sky . . .

Pomegranate: the memory of a long-past thought, or an event tied to what's seen or heard or felt, and then a notion, an idea, a concept

Goldfinch: each playing on the other; together with what she knows about history;

Pomegranate: what she has been dreaming

Goldfinch: the condition of being a poet is that such a cross section, or constellation of experiences periodically wakes in her this demand:

Pomegranate: the poem.

[pause]

Goldfinch: To fulfill this demand begins a contemplation, a meditation; words heat the feeling and warm the intellect.

Pomegranate: To contemplate comes from ‘*templum*,’ temple, a place, a space for observation, marked out by the oracle.

Goldfinch: It means, not simply to observe, to regard, but to do these things in the presence of a god. 9

[pause]

Pomegranate: Levertov’s approach to the poetic process is organic. She involves the poet’s total experience in a harmonious way.

Goldfinch: A conscious recognition of something perceived leads the poet. She is moved to such a degree as to seek a way in which to manifest it.

Pomegranate: Levertov uses the word “demand” to explain the force of the calling to write a poem—she is not being gutless about the dynamic energy behind the creative urge

Goldfinch: Her language suggests a consciousness involving a heightened awareness, an awakening to a realm beyond simple perception.

Pomegranate: Form is a revelation of content, as if the poet is traveling, body and soul, with the poem as a living being.

Goldfinch: And together the two entities will bring forth what is meant to be revealed.

In Unison: It is a holistic happening, not something forced through.

[**Goldfinch** and **Pomegranate** freeze. Flute is heard offstage then fades.]

NOTES

The names of two women characters in the play were inspired by the imagistic poet, H.D., from *Tribute to the Angels*, p. 157

Our Lady of the Goldfinch,
Our Lady of the Candelabra,

Our Lady of the Pomegranate,
Our Lady of the Chair;

we have seen her, an empress
magnificent in pomp and grace,

we have seen her
with a single flower

I subsequently researched the symbolic attributes of goldfinches and pomegranates. The two findings which resonated with me the most are as follows:

Godfinch: “Since Ancient Egypt, the human soul had been represented in religious art by a small bird. We see the Ba - the soul bird - on a detail of an Egyptian coffin. A very general reading of the goldfinch might, therefore, remind the viewer that his soul is ‘in the hands’ of God.” <http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk>

Pomegranate: “In some Hindu traditions, the pomegranate (Hindi: *Beejapuram*, literally: *replete with seeds*) symbolizes prosperity and fertility, and is associated with both *Bhoomidevi* (the earth goddess) and Lord Ganesha (*the one fond of the many-seeded fruit*). The Tamil name *maadulampazham* is a metaphor for a woman's mind. It is derived from, *maadhu*=woman, *ullam*=mind, which means as the seeds are hidden, it is not easy to decipher a woman's mind.” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pomegranate>

The name of male character, **Rheade** (flute player) was based on Native American myths of how flutes came originally from a man hearing the music from reeds. The variant spelling is meant to give it a Celtic quality in honor of my heritage.

Source materials for notated lines:

1. Susan Howe, *My Emily Dickinson*.
2. Emily Dickinson, “By My Window Have I for Scenery.”
3. Susan Howe, “Talisman Interview.”
4. Susan Howe, *My Emily Dickinson*.

5. Susan Howe, *My Emily Dickinson*.
6. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Poet."
7. Emily Dickinson, Letter to Higginson (L459A).
8. Denise Levertov, "Some Notes on Organic Form."
9. Denise Levertov, "Some Notes on Organic Form."

WOMANKIND

(A SPOOF ON THE MORALITY PLAY MANKIND)
(AUTHOR UNKNOWN)

by
Dianalee Velie

PROLOGUE

Common Sense:

Women of all ages listen to me,
For this neither farce nor comedy will be.
The morality plays of old, to mankind did spaketh,
But now your gender is the one much shaketh.
Your sex once firmly held its place
Filled with such amazing grace.
With a ring they all did rush to marry.
Today to the altar they all do tarry.
For choices, there are many that abound,
And truly do the mind confound.
But to make my point clear
Please lend me your ear,
And I'll tell you a story so true.
For it's based on the fact
That life's always a pact
And Common Sense a fine gray hue.

*Common Sense exits but stays on stage to watch.
Enter Womankind on Hobby Horseback*

Woman:

Upon my faithful steed do I trot
Into my own real Camelot.
The sky is crystal blue and clear
And not a cloud would dare come near.

The trees with scalloped edges rise
Heralding in the new sunrise.
They circle my secure domain
With fresh green leaves just kissed by rain.

The yellow and the white striped tent
With pointed turrets looks heaven bent.
A castle it may have been to me
And I a queen for all the world to see.

For happiest I am when I do ride
Upon my love's strong noble hide.
A horse he may be to the world at large
But to me he is a royal charge.

There is no one about on this lovely day
And my beastie and I just romp and play.

Enter Mad Max

But alas Mad Max doth suddenly appear,
"A hard hat miss, least that beast rear!"

My reverie is clearly broken
For on this point he hath oft times spoken.
But my time is my own and not easily taken
No matter what this old man spaketh.

Money enters to the side of the stage, arm and arm between Old Ways and New Ways

But alas there is more trouble brewing
Those creatures lurk about without my doing
And Sir Max is here and Sir Bob isn't
I think it's time to leave now, tisn't?

I see Max's Ferrari and a life so sweet
But oh his armor is much too complete.
A pinstripe suit at 6 in the morning?
I'm in boots and britches with sweat much pouring.

And always in my mind Sir Bob doth appear,
With his 8 husky dogs and a sled with no deer.
And animals and horses he doth love best.
Dressed in jeans he was when he took up my quest.

But there is one point that makes me shudder.
I hope he's not in search of a mudder!
I am at best ten years much older.
My the air has just grown colder.

For neither one shall my glacier break
Until my own life, I do remake.
For being widowed was no small joke.
I'll be prepared least this one croak.

For in writing I find a special talent
But only to me has it become apparent.
I find it is a terrific glee
To read the words put down by me.

My idol has always been the bard
And in his name I study hard.
He must be laughing in his grave
To see me play with verse and wave.

But woe is me I must stop this folly
It really has become quite jolly
To turn my life's trifle ruckus
Into a poem that is quite Puckish.

Money, New Ways and Old Ways approach center stage

Now here comes money with those two nosey dames.
The way they adore him they have no shames.
They both want to know my every thought
And between them money is cheerfully caught.

He courts them both and lures them to me.
Next he'll have them both undo me.
A motive he does never need.
It seems we all have so much greed.

Money:

Hello my sweetie, here I am your old friend
At the bank you were today, more money did they lend?
I see I'm still your every other thought
And, oh my, your hair with gray is fraught!

You look O.K. but not much younger
Your eyelids are heavy and your cheeks much sunker.
But here, listen to my friends and hear what they say
Don't wrinkle your nose and send me away.

Woman:

Oh money you are a silly old elf
So pomp and arrogant and full of yourself.
And though I need what you can buy
You care not whether you cheat or lie.

Money:

But alas sweetheart did I not hear you pray
That, that stack of bills you would just love to pay?
That Max over there can buy you a Porsche
So what if his idea of love is pure sadistic torcha.

Look at his watch it's a Rolex to boot
With those kind of bucks who'd give a hoot.
You know, I have heard them say.
A couple of swats a day keeps your arrogance at bay.

Woman:

Your words are falling on deaf ears
For in my life I've shed many tears,
But none of them have been over gold.
You make your point much too bold!

You see I'm more Madonna than whore
Although you think that is a bore.
I have worked very hard all my life
And hold in high esteem the title of wife.

New Ways:

Wife! Who said anything of the kind!
This is 1990 girl, are you quite blind!
You can earn all your own pile of money,
Now Old Ways is laughing what does she think is so funny?

Old Ways:

Oh, money has its proper place
But think on it. It's an age-old chase.
For silly girl you'll come to naught,
It was for diamonds and gems we dearly fought.

For men were meant to take care of us
I can't believe today there is such a fuss.
We have our men put us on a platter...
You're laughing, Dearie, now what's the matter?

Woman:

A platter that's usually fit for a feast!
Why on such a platter usually sits a cooked beast!
Usually stuffed in the mouth with an apple or pear
And can no longer think or no longer swear.

She should rant and rave against those that cooked her,
I'll earn my keep and enjoy it with succor.
For I don't want to wind up in a pot,
I think my mind is worth quite a lot.

New Ways: (laughing)

Now listen to me for just a while
I see Old Ways has made you smile.
Life today is so very complex
Education is a must, the simple RX.

Get thee a Masters or a Ph.D.,
Arm yourself with titles and a good degree.
Behind ivy covered walls you should tarry
And give no real thought to when you should marry.

Enjoy your freedom and have lots of funnery,
Tis not yesteryear, where you'd be got to a nunnery.
For in me you should put your trust,
And enjoy your merry widow's lust.

Woman:

You make lots of sense and your point I do see,
But what about children, most want two or three.
And while your words don't send me laughing
With that type of life, I'd need much staffing.

A person to cook and one to clean
And one to watch the kids, do you get what I mean?
I cannot be in every place.
That kind of life sounds like a race.

New Ways:

You know you can disguise yourself as Power,
And then upon you many riches will shower.
All you need do is don a pinstripe suit,
You can have your cake and coffee and eat it to boot!

You'll have gentlemen work in your corporation
And on weekends use them for sheer adoration.
I don't know why you look so squeamish,
Men have done it for years, or so it seemeth.

Woman:

Oh, on the thought of power I would love to coast,
Especially after hearing your arrogant boast.
You say with power my fears will all vanish
But the thought of power seems somehow quite mannish.

But yet the thought of this sounds like great fun,
I just may take it for a trial run....

Common Sense getting more and more agitated comes center stage

Common Sense:

Now, now listen girl have you gone quite mad,
You're a grown woman now of that be quite glad.
It seems to me you've lost your senses,
Next thing you know you'll give up your menses.

You know I had some fun the day I made your body,
If I remember it well, I had too much toddy!
The spot from which all life will thrust
Is the same joyous spot over which men will lust.

In retrospect it didn't turn out bad.
So please don't be angry and go away mad.
It gives you a great source of power,
Though smaller in size, over men you will tower.

And many a noble war was fought,
Because between a woman's legs mankind was caught.
To follow such eternal bliss,
Into that dark unknown abyss.

It is there you create and also enjoy,
Believe me this was not my ploy.
I started out just to change a few things
I'm Common Sense and have so few flings!

But this mistake turned out better than expected,
It really is wonderful those two things are connected . . .

Woman:

You mean my body was one big joke!
Your neck I'll grab and then it will I choke.
How can you sit there and file your nails,
While telling me such outlandish tales?

Surely you must have just been kidding
I'm sure you just followed the God's own bidding,
And followed their orders to a tee,
Not drunk and alone after one hell of a party!

Common Sense:

Now wait a minute girl, they liked what I did.
Juno applauded and Jupiter hid.

The Gods thought my idea was great,
With one modification that came too late.

You see I was supposed to have you twinned.
It is in this mistake that I really have sinned.
You know you really should have been doubled
So that in this life you would be less troubled.

There would be one of you to go out and the other in,
One of you to play mommy and one for just him.
One to have a career and the other to marry
One to be lustful and one for a child to carry.

You could have a lover and a husband as well
And give not one thought to burning in hell!
The Gods thought it would make great chatter
And the play was the thing so what did it matter!

It would be great material for many a great poet
Would you join me in a glass of Moet?
I feel the need for something with bubbles,
Why my dear your face has fallen in rubbles.

Woman:

Oh Common Sense I think you are crazy,
Not to mention really quite lazy!
You're saying that you didn't finish the job,
Why it was my sanity you intended to rob!

Didn't the Gods think you were insane?
When all you did was cause us pain?
For life would be easier if I were two,
You knew a woman had much to do!

Common Sense:

No, Great Jupiter thought it was a riot,
While Juno at his side said quietly "We'll try it,
But if womankind is to be but one,
You Common Sense must be her devoted son."

"At her side you will stay and never be missed,
So on the turbulent seas of life she never will list.
And when she seems overwhelmed by life,
You'll be at her side to ease her strife."

"For since you so designed this creature
You'll be forever, her best feature."
And so sweet Juno had justly spoken,
I am forever your very best token.

Woman:

Why Common Sense you're nothing but a lush!
Look at your cheeks, there's an alcoholic flush.
Is this how you weigh all those important decisions?
You're nothing but a common drunk who should be in prison.

I thought you were all I had going,
Now I feel my anger growing!
I wanted you to show the way,
Not with a bottle of Jamaican Bay.

Champagne and Pina Coladas don't help me one bit,
Not when I have to decide if my job I should quit.
I know I can't do that; I still need the money,
I guess I'll write part-time and hope I get funny.

Common Sense:

Now see, I've brought you to the logical conclusion
My drunken state was just an illusion,
To help you reach your own decision,
It is upon you the moon has risen.

And here I will leave you all alone,
You upon whom the moon has shone.
Because you are my one and only creation,
You were the cause of my greatest elation.

So wear your gift just like the laurel,
And splash on something sweet and floral.
For you are my one and only pride and joy,
And no mere squawking baby boy.

No one could balance the way that you do
There is not a man that could fit your shoe.
You are so very perfectly complete,
From the top of your head to the bottom of your feet.

Even though I made a few mistakes,
Find yourself a mate that's all that it takes.
And he can be either husband or lover
Today even female and not under cover.

So take a moment someday to tell me how it all works out
I'll always be near dear so just give a shout!
For timeless I be, if I swear off the tea,
Oh woman I'm yours, Common Sense I do be!

THE END

The Deconstruction of Lee and Darrell

Thomas Misuraca

Cast of Characters

LEE, a young gay man, comes off a little too serious, stoic.

DARRELL, Lee's ex, near in age, more outgoing and open than Lee.

Setting

Living room of Lee's house.

Time

A weekday.

LIGHTS UP ON:

(The living room of a house where one of the residents is about to move out. Up center stage should be a couch with a coffee table in front of it. There should be at least one box of stuff on each side of the couch.)

(LEE, a young man, enters stage right. He carries an empty box. He crosses to the box on stage left, and with a sigh, begins sorting through items inside it. He places some items into the empty box.)

(SFX of a key in a door. LEE looks up, startled. DARRELL, a man close to him in age, enters through the front door, stage left. He carries an empty box. The two men are surprised to see each other.)

DARRELL

I'm sorry, I thought you'd be at work.

LEE

I took the day off.

DARRELL

I can come back.

LEE

Maybe you should.

DARRELL

E-mail me a good time to come.

(DARRELL starts to exit.)

LEE

No. Wait. We might as well get this over with. Better to have you here to make sure you take what's yours.

(DARRELL stops and turns back to face LEE.)

DARRELL

I'm not worried if some of my stuff gets lumped in with yours.

LEE

That isn't what I meant.

(It takes DARRELL a moment to realize what he did mean. The distrust hurts.)

DARRELL

I'm not going to steal any of your stuff.

LEE

Not sure I can trust your word any more.

(DARRELL tries to mask his hurt. He spots the boxes on the other side of the couch.)

DARRELL

Fine. I'll start over here.

(DARRELL kneels before the box and begins to look through it. LEE removes a CD case from his box, looks at it, and extends it to DARRELL.)

LEE

This is you Sarah McLachlan CD.

DARRELL

No. That has to be yours. I never bought one of her CDs.

LEE

You listened to this constantly, on repeat. I had to beg you put on something different.

DARRELL

That was two decades ago. I've gone digital. Regardless of who bought it, you can keep it.

LEE

I don't want it.

DARRELL

Then sell it.

LEE

Most record stores have put a moratorium on Lilith Fair artists.

DARRELL

Donated it to Good Will. We should start a pile for the things neither of us want to take.

LEE

Fine.

(LEE opens the CD to check it and blurts out an annoyed sigh.)

LEE

There's a Lisa Loeb CD in here.

DARRELL

I'm positive that one isn't mine.

LEE

But this had to be your doing, you always put the wrong CD in the wrong case. It drove me crazy.

DARRELL

Then another reason you should be happy that I'm-
 (can't say "leaving")
 -that I've gone digital. You should, too.

LEE

I like things tangible. To look at the artwork while listening to the music.

DARRELL

You haven't looked at that artwork in twenty years.

LEE

It's still like a piece in a scrap book. You don't have to know it's there to know it holds lots of memories.

(LEE removes the CD from the jewel case and places them both on the coffee table. He returns to his box. DARRELL looks over and picks up the case. He examines the artwork.

(There is a change in lighting which symbolizes a time change. LEE stands and faces DARRELL. LEE looks excitedly as DARRELL examines the CD with delight.)

DARRELL

For me?

LEE

Yes. I hope you like it.

DARRELL

A gift on our second date? Are we lesbians now?

LEE

No, but you'll be one step closer with this.

DARRELL

I don't know Sarah MacLachlan's stuff?

LEE

That's what you said the other night when we were talking about our favorite singers. I was going to make you a mix tape but you said you converted all to CD.

DARRELL

Because CDs are indestructible. They're going to last forever. Tapes get worn out too quickly.

LEE

Well, as CDs go, this is one of the best. She's a fantastic song writer.

DARRELL

I can't wait to listen to it.

LEE

All I ask is that you give her a chance. You won't be disappointed.

DARRELL

I give all music, and people, a chance.

LEE

Hope this person didn't scare you off by giving you a gift on our second date.

DARRELL

If anything, you further won me over more. You're a very thoughtful guy.

(LEE is unaccustomed to hearing compliments.)

LEE

It wasn't anything, really.

DARRELL

I think it was. Thank you.

(They move in for a kiss, but before they reach each other, the lights return to present time, LEE returns to his box. DARRELL places down the CD case and moves back to his box. He pulls out a different CD case.)

DARRELL

Here's the Lisa Loeb case, I bet the Sarah Maclachlan CD is in here.

(DARRELL opens it and looks. LEE waits to see what he's found.)

LEE
Well?

DARRELL
Stone Temple Pilots.

LEE
That definitely has to be yours. I hated that band.

DARRELL
No you didn't.

LEE
I know what bands I liked and hated.

DARRELL
I could have sworn you liked them.

LEE
You were wrong.

(LEE focuses on his box. DARRELL is tempted to argue the point, but decides against it. He places both items on the coffee table. LEE is obviously annoyed at the one CD not being put in its proper case, he rises to fix it. He then picks up the Stone Temple Pilots CD, looks at it for a moment, then drops it on the table in disgust.)

(The lights again change to represent a flashback. DARRELL rises and turns to face LEE. With a smile, DARRELL pulls two tickets out of his back pocket.)

DARRELL
Happy anniversary!

LEE
You remembered!

DARRELL
How could I forget? You reminded me every day this month.

LEE
I never made it to a year with a man before. This is cause for a grand celebration.

DARRELL
And it will be. Here!

(DARRELL places the tickets in LEE's hands. He looks at them, then tries to hide his disappointment.)

LEE

Tickets to see the Stone Temple Pilots?

DARRELL

Surprise!

LEE

It sure is. I only like one of their songs. You're the more fanatical fan.

DARRELL

But it'll be great to share the experience together. You get to see them through my eyes.

LEE

Yeah, I suppose.

(tries to look on the bright side)

And we can have a nice dinner downtown before the show.

DARRELL

It's going to be tough getting downtown after work. We may have to grab fast food on the way there, or a hot dog at the venue.

LEE

We can do a late dinner after the show.

DARRELL

On a school night?

LEE

I hate when people use that expression. We're adults, we can stay up late every once and a while without anybody's permission.

DARRELL

I need at least six hours of sleep.

LEE

You should have thought of that before buying concert tickets.

DARRELL

The show will be over in plenty of time to get home. Just not to do anything after.

LEE

We can book a hotel downtown near the show.

DARRELL
 Why would we do that?

(LEE gives him a seductive look.)

DARRELL
 Oh...

LEE
 It's more fun in a hotel room. We can be as messy as we want and not have to worry about the sheets.

DARRELL
 Maybe some other night. We won't be able to have much fun with me having to work the next day.

LEE
 No, we won't.
 (slightly sarcastic)
 Happy Anniversary.

DARRELL
 (gleefully)
 Happy Anniversary!

(DARRELL moves in for a kiss, but LEE turns away and returns to his pile. DARRYL does the same. Lights turn back to present time.)

(LEE removes a flannel shirt from his box. He sniffs it, but appears disappointed that what he's expecting to smell is long gone. He looks over at DARRELL, then back at the shirt. The lighting cue changes to a flashback. DARRELL crosses to LEE, picks up the shirt and puts it on. They both move downstage. Beach SFX. DARRELL and LEE are staring out at the ocean. LEE appears to be chilly.)

DARRELL
 Beautiful sunset.

LEE
 (feigning)
 Gorgeous.

(LEE rubs his arms to keep warm. DARRELL notices this, takes off the shirt and wraps it around him.)

LEE
Thank you.

DARRELL
Can't have you freezing to death.

LEE
What about you?

DARRELL
I'm always warm.

LEE
I'm always cold.

(DARRELL wraps his arm around him and pulls him close.)

DARRELL
Then I'll do whatever it takes to keep you warm. If we were out in the wilderness, I'd build you a fire.

LEE
A romantic gesture, but there is no way you're getting me into the wilderness.

DARRELL
Not even camping?

LEE
Never. My idea of roughing it is a Motel 6.

DARRELL
You have to open yourself to new experiences.

LEE
I am. As long as they don't involve the possibility of me being eaten by bears or having to crap outside.

DARRELL
Most campgrounds have bathrooms.

LEE
Outhouses don't count.

DARRELL
You have to at least try it once. I'll bet you'll love it.

LEE
I see we're not going to be taking a trip to Las Vegas either, since you don't understand odds.

DARRELL
But it would be fun, the two of us alone in the wilderness.

LEE

That's when the chain saw killers get you.

DARRELL

We can take a hike up a mountain.

LEE

Where I'll get bit by a rattlesnake, no doubt.

DARRELL

Swim in the lake.

LEE

And get attacked by leeches? Or alligators?

DARRELL

We'll roast marshmallows by the fire. Make s'mores even.

LEE

Do you know how many calories those are?

DARRELL

Then we'll sleep under the stars.

LEE

While getting sucked dry by mosquitos and who knows what else will come visit us in the dark of night.

DARRELL

How about looking on the bright side? We can have sex in the outdoors.

LEE

We can do that any time. There's a park across the street.

DARRELL

It's more primal being in the wilderness. And I'll be there to protect you from the bad things. Just like I'm protecting you from the cold.

LEE

One sweater does not a protector make.

DARRELL

But admit it. I've warmed you up.

LEE

I am hot now. And a little bothered.

DARRELL

Oh... Maybe we should go to that park.

(DARRELL squeezes him tighter. LEE sniffs the shirt.)

LEE

It smells like you.

DARRELL

I'm sorry. I washed it over the weekend.

LEE

Not in a bad way. It has traces of your cologne, soap and deodorant. The little witch's brew that makes up the odor of Darrell.

DARRELL

I should bottle it and sell it at Macy's.

LEE

I'd buy every single bottle.

DARRELL

It would fill up your spare bedroom.

LEE

Can't have that. It's time I cleaned that room out.

DARRELL

You'd get rid of all your clutter?

LEE

In order to turn it into an office, yes.

DARRELL

You already have an office.

LEE

This one's for you.

DARRELL

I'm fine using the couch and coffee table if I need to work at your place.

LEE

I'm talking about you permanently working at my place.

DARRELL

Are you suggesting I move in?

LEE

Unless you prefer a tent over a nice, warm house.

DARRELL

When?

LEE

Whenever you're ready.

I'm ready.

DARRELL

(DARRELL spins LEE around and moves in to kiss him, but stops before they get there. Lights change and they move back to their present spots. DARRELL stops to examine his box. He will speak without looking at LEE.)

Are these the boxes I used to move in?

DARRELL

I have no idea.

LEE

I think they are.

DARRELL

You can take them if you want.

LEE

No. I'll just take the ones with my stuff in them.

DARRELL

(The lights change to a flashback. DARRELL rises and picks up the box. He meets LEE downstage.)

I thought we weren't moving you until the weekend.

LEE

There were a few things I wanted to bring earlier so they didn't get lost in the shuffle.
(notices shirt)
You're wearing my shirt.

DARRELL

Yes, it keeps me warm on a cold day like today. And its scent reminds me of you.

LEE

Awww. That's sweet. But you should probably wash it.

DARRELL

And lose your smell. They say scent evokes the strongest memory.

LEE

You're going to have my smell here 24/7. You're welcome to come sniff me any time.

DARRELL

DARRELL

Future guests.

LEE

Yeah, if I have a dinner party or something.

DARRELL

Oh.

LEE

You can have any of the coffee that's leftover.

DARRELL

No, that's fine.

(Light change to a flashback. DARRELL rises and moves downstage. He sniffs the air. LEE pulls a coffee cup out of the box. He moves downstage to present it to DARRELL.)

DARRELL

You made coffee for me?

LEE

I did more than that.

DARRELL

Irish Coffee?

LEE

No. I bought a new coffee machine.

DARRELL

But, you don't drink coffee.

LEE

No. But you do. And this is your home now. It should have all you need in it.

DARRELL

My coffee machine was fine.

LEE

Not it wasn't, it was old and you haven't cleaned it since 1989.

DARRELL

It still made a good cup.

LEE

There were furry things growing in it. I threw it out, though it probably should be burned.

DARRELL

It's a very sweet thing for you to do.

LEE

More bitter, or at least that's how coffee tastes to me. But you have to buy your own beans. I don't want to take a chance on getting you something you don't like.

DARRELL

I doubt you'd ever do anything I wouldn't like. You're are a wonderful man.

(They move in to kiss but stop as the lights change to present time. They return to their perspective boxes. DARRELL places the coffee cup in his box and then pulls out a framed picture of the two of them. He smiles when he sees it. Shows it to LEE.)

DARRELL

Do you want to hold on to this?

(LEE looks at it in disgust.)

LEE

No, you can keep it.

DARRELL

Are you sure? It's a great picture of us. We look so happy.

LEE

It's yours.

DARRELL

I could scan it and make a copy for you.

LEE

No thanks.

(DARRELL looks at the happy Lee in the picture then back at the sad LEE across from him.)

DARRELL

They weren't all bad memories.

LEE

But those are the ones that usually linger.

DARRELL

Only if you let them.

(LEE does not reply and returns to his box. DARRELL looks at the picture and the lights change to a flashback. He presents the picture to LEE again.)

DARRELL

We can't even keep this one up there? They'll just think it's a picture of two friends.

LEE

With their arms around each other?

DARRELL

Even football players put their arms around each other in photos.

LEE

I'll have to take your word on that. But I can't risk having anything around here that would make my parents think I'm gay.

DARRELL

Does that include me?

LEE

They know I have a roommate.

DARRELL

But I usually sleep in your bed.

LEE

This week you sleep in the guest room.

DARRELL

Where are your parents going to sleep?

LEE

In my room. I'll take the couch.

DARRELL

Maybe it would be easier if I just went to a hotel for the week. Or crashed with a friend.

LEE

But I want you here.

DARRELL

No you don't. You're hiding all evidence of me. Should we burn it as well?

LEE

It's only for a week.

DARRELL

Ten days.

LEE

And I need you here to help me get through those ten days.

DARRELL

How can I do that when I can't hug you or kiss you or give you a blow job under the kitchen table?

LEE

You've never done that.

DARRELL

Yeah, but with your parents here, it'd be fun to try.

LEE

Even you don't have the guts for that.

DARRELL

True. But you need to get some guts and come out to your parents already.

LEE

I can't.

DARRELL

Why not?

LEE

They're too old and conservative. They couldn't grasp the concept of a gay son.

DARRELL

You don't think they know already. You're single and have a male roommate and never talk about dating girls. They know.

LEE

They don't. Because if they did, they'd disown me.

DARRELL

They would not disown their only son.

LEE

Yes they would. You don't hear the way they talk. They are against the gays and the blacks and the Mexicans. They are as white bread as you can be.

DARRELL

Then so what if they disown you? You have your own family now.

LEE

You say that... but...

(Awkward pause.)

DARRELL

What?

LEE

How long is this going to last?

DARRELL

I'm not planning on going anywhere.

LEE

Even after a week of being treated as a roommate.

DARRELL

Lee, I love you. And I will support you in all things. If you decided to remain closeted to your parents then I will be the most annoying roommate you ever did see. And if you decide to come out to them, I'll stand right by your side as you do.

LEE

I'm so lucky to have you.

DARRELL

You are.

(They move in for a kiss, but stop before they get there. Lights change back to present time and they each return to their boxes.)

(DARRELL places the picture in his box and digs a little more. He appears to have everything that belongs to him.)

DARRELL

Well, I'm going to take this box and head out.

LEE

My key.

(DARRELL reaches into his pocket, pulls out the key and hands it to LEE. LEE takes it without a word.)

DARRELL

Oh, I should give this back to you as well.

(DARRELL reaches into his other pocket to pull out a cell phone and hands it to LEE. LEE looks at the phone in question.)

LEE
Your phone?

DARRELL
Technically you bought it as part of your plan, and since you took me off that...

LEE
Because you're no longer friend or family.

(DARRELL is hurt by this. LEE takes the phone. Lights change to a flashback. LEE points to the screen on the phone.)

LEE
What is this?

DARRELL
What are you doing with my phone?

LEE
Reading your text messages.

(DARRELL tries to hide his panic. But he knows he's been caught.)

DARRELL
You have no right to do that.

LEE
Yes I do, it's my phone.

DARRELL
That you gave to me.

LEE
Not so you can hook up with guys on it.

DARRELL
I haven't hooked up with any guys.

LEE
Then who's Peter?

DARRELL
He's a friend.

LEE
These texts sound a little too intimate for a friend.

DARRELL
So, we went out a few times.

LEE

On dates?

DARRELL

If that's what you want to call them.

LEE

So, you're telling me that you've been dating other guys while living with me.

DARRELL

Not other guys, just Peter.

LEE

And that makes it OK.

DARRELL

No. It's not OK. I never thought it was. But all you want to do is stay home and watch television. I want to go out and do things. And so does Peter.

LEE

And by things, you mean sex.

DARRELL

I haven't had sex with Peter. I haven't had sex with anybody.

LEE

So that's what this is all about?

DARRELL

No, but it's part of it. We fell into a rut, in all aspects of our relationship, and you don't want to do anything to get out of it.

LEE

So you run to another man.

DARRELL

I didn't run to him. We met at a bookstore. I thought he'd just be a friend, and the three of us could hang out, but I felt something I hadn't felt in a long time.

LEE

Obviously not guilt.

DARRELL

I felt plenty of that, too. I didn't know what to do. I love you, but I wasn't feeling in love any more. I wasn't sure what I was feeling with Peter. I needed some time to figure it out and either let him go or...

LEE

Let me go?

DARRELL

I would have had to reevaluate our relationship.

LEE

Well, I just did. And I want you out.

DARRELL

If that's how you feel.

LEE

How else am I supposed to feel? You're out there sleeping around with other guys.

DARRELL

I told you, we never slept together.

LEE

Did you kiss?

(DARRELL is hesitant.)

DARRELL

Yes.

LEE

Romantically.

DARRELL

Yes.

LEE

That's worse. A sexual affair I could almost understand. That's just giving in to instinct. But kissing is so... intimate.

DARRELL

It just happened.

LEE

And you just happened to continue to see him.

DARRELL

I'm sorry. I was confused.

LEE

Well, let's settle that confusion. Get out of my house.

DARRELL

I'll be out by the end of the week.

LEE

I want you out tonight.

DARRELL
But... where will I go?

LEE
Call Peter.

DARRELL
I've never even been to his place.

LEE
I don't care. Get out.

(The lights return to present time.)

DARRELL
Want to inspect my box before I leave. Make sure I'm not stealing from you.

LEE
No. Just go.

DARRELL
Well... good-bye then.

(LEE throws the phone into the box. Instinctively, DARRELL kisses LEE on the cheek. LEE is surprised by this and quickly turns back to his box.)

LEE
(without facing him)
Good-bye, Darrell.

(DARRELL starts to exit. Stops as if he's going to say something more, but does not. He turns and leaves. LEE looks after him once he is gone. He rises and stand before the coffee table. He places his hand to his cheek, still shocked at the kiss. Then he picks up the Sarah McLachlan CD cover. Tears swell in his eyes as he glances it a moment before clutching it to his chest and falling onto the couch.

(LEE breaks down and cries as the lights slowly fade.)

The End

CONTRIBUTOR

Notes

donnarkevic: Nutter Fort, WV. MFA National University. Recent poetry has appeared in *The Binnacle*, *Nassau Review*, and *About Place Journal*. Poetry Chapbooks include *Laundry*, published in 2005 by *Main Street Rag* and *Many Sparrows* to be published in 2018 by *The Poetry Box*. Plays have received readings in Chicago, New York, Virginia, and West Virginia. *FutureCycle Press* published, *Admissions*, a book of poems, in 2013.

Peter O'Keefe is a writer and filmmaker, born, raised and educated in Detroit, now living in Racine, Wisconsin. He has worked in a wide variety of media including episodic television, feature films, documentaries, commercials, and corporate and educational videos. His narrative short films have screened at a variety of film festivals and other venues. His documentary about visual artists in the Midwest, "Dreaming In Public, Making Art In the Real World" was recently awarded an Emmy. He has been awarded a Writers Guild screenwriting fellowship and my short play "Brotherhood of Man" was a finalist for the Humana Theatre Festival's Heideman award in 2004.

.Ann Vinciguerra is a dual American/Italian citizen. She lives in Bozeman, Montana where is practices the art of balancing work and play. Ms. Vinciguerra enjoys backcountry skiing, mountain biking, and serving as a volunteer DJ at KGLT, Bozeman's alternative public radio station. Her work has appeared in *Ascent Backcountry Snow Journal*, *Denver Post*, *Mountain Gazette*, *Outside Bozeman*, and newspapers in Jackson Hole, Wyo. and Crested Butte, Co.

Virginia Barrett's recent books of poetry include *Between Looking* (Finishing Line Press), *Crossing Haight*, and *I Just Wear My Wings*. Barrett is the editor of two anthologies of contemporary San Francisco poets including *OCCUPY SF*—poems from the movement. Her work has appeared in the *Writer's Chronicle*, *Narrative*, *What Rough Beast*, *Roar: Literature and Revolution by Feminist People*, *Ekphrastic Review*, *Weaving the Terrain* (Dos Gatos Press), *Poetry of Resistance: Voices for Social Justice* (University of Arizona Press) and elsewhere. She received a 2017 writer's residency grant from the Helene Wurlitzer Foundation of Taos, NM and is currently editing an anthology of poetry by Wurlitzer fellows. She holds an MFA in Writing and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She teaches in the MFA in Writing program at the University of San Francisco.

Dianalee Velie is the Poet Laureate of Newbury New Hampshire where she lives and writes. She is a graduate of Sarah Lawrence College, and has a Master of Arts in Writing from Manhattanville College, where she has served as faculty advisor of *Inkwell: A Literary Magazine*. She has taught poetry, memoir, and short story at universities and colleges in New York, Connecticut and New Hampshire and in private workshops throughout the United States, Canada and Europe. Her award-winning poetry and short stories have been published in hundreds of literary journals and many have been translated into Italian. She enjoys traveling to rural school systems in Vermont and New Hampshire teaching poetry for the Children's Literacy Foundation. Her play, *Mama Says*, was directed by Daniel Quinn in a staged reading in New York City. She is the author of five books of poetry, *Glass House*, *First Edition*, *The Many Roads to Paradise*, *The Alchemy of Desire*, *Ever After* and a collection of short stories, *Soul Proprietorship: Women in Search of Their Souls*. She is a member of the Vermont Branch of the National League of American Pen Women, the New England Poetry Club, the International Woman Writers Guild, the New Hampshire Poetry Society and founder of the Joh Hay Poetry Society.

Thomas Misuraca studied writing at Emerson College in Boston before moving to Los Angeles. Over 100 of his one-act plays have been produced or stage read in theaters all over the world, many winning audience favorite awards. Eight of his full-lengths have been produced across the U.S., including *Geeks! The Musical* which went on to be produced Off-Off Broadway. In 2014, he won two writing awards: The Pickering Award for my old-age superhero play, *Golden Age*, which was produced in Michigan; and the Las Vegas Little Theatre New Works award for *Little Black Book*, which was produced there in 2015. In 2017, his ten-minute play, *Cocktail Party*, was runner-up audience favorite at the College of Brockport's Festival of Ten X, and a film based on his short play, *Krampus*, won the Krampus Film Festival Asbury Park. This year, his full-length *Cyber-O* was runner-up for the Pickering Award, and *Masters of the Dark Realm* won second place at the Las Vegas Little Theatre New Works award and *Cocktail Party* won the judges' Grand Prize at Stage Door's One Act Festival. He is a member of the Alliance of Los Angeles Playwrights, First Stage L.A. and The Dramatist Guild.

MAGNOLIA & VINE | SEPTEMBER 2019 | ISSUE 002