

Keep Going: An Honors Capstone Project

By

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Capstone advisor(s): Cara
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General University Honors

Cast of Characters

<u>GWEN</u> :	Kate Wiznitzer
<u>MARY</u> :	Annelies Van Vonno
<u>EDAN/ALISTAIR</u> :	Nate Bronstein
<u>ZOE/MRS. MELVILLE</u> :	Ashley Zielinski
<u>MILTON/RICHIE</u> :	Alex Abbott
<u>EVE</u> :	Hannah Rinald
<u>SALOME</u> :	Jessica Dall
<u>SASHA/METATRON</u> :	Helen Silverman

ACT I

Scene 1

GWEN, dressed in modern clothes, completely in black, steps out onto the stage, remaining downstage right, as though determinedly narrating a film. There is a bench center stage.

GWEN

In the Beginning was the Word and the Word was--Scotland? Hell, if it exists, has to look something like nineteenth-century Edinburgh. Native Scots--and only native Scots could do this--fondly call it 'Auld Reekie'--in the heyday of the Industrial Revolution, the great machine of progress covers the city in coal dust, rendering it midnight black in broad daylight. In the short, sunless days of winter, the wind sweeping down the narrow, winding streets is strong enough to blow you clear off the cobblestone, the damp chill invades your very soul. You'll never be warm again.

There was a girl who should have died and didn't. In 1857 Mary Halstead was seventeen years old and while the rest of her family shuddered and coughed and wasted away, swallowed whole by consumption, she was ignored completely. By the end of the epidemic, she was the only one left standing, exiled to the worst place for a well-bred gentlewoman to go--across the border to the stark, northern wilderness of Caledonia.

MARY enters as though having recently come off a train. She is dressed warmly, but not warmly enough, for she shivers slightly, and her lips are a little blue. She sits down determinedly, but almost immediately stands up again as EDAN enters.

EDAN

Excuse me--you wouldn't happen to be Mary Halstead, would you?

MARY

Did my uncle send you?

The word "uncle" is possessed of an ominous quality.

EDAN

It was Mrs. Melville, actually. She's Lord Robert's housekeeper. Your uncle has more important things to do than pick up a--That is, I mean to say--

MARY

He must be very busy. With the impending wedding.

Pause.

EDAN

I didn't think it polite to mention.

MARY

It preys on my mind a great deal.

EDAN

Well it would, Miss. It is your wedding.

MARY

You don't think it's...odd, do you, that I've come all this way to marry a stranger?

EDAN

Well, he's not exactly a stranger. He's your uncle's brother, isn't he?

MARY

A distant relation. Remote--They were all dead, in England, there was no one left for me.

(pause)

You really don't think it's odd?

EDAN

I make it a point not to trouble myself with the strange habits of the aristocracy.

MARY

My parents died and there was no one else to take me in, nowhere else to go but Scotland--

The word 'Scotland' is filled with as much loathing as possible, as though a synonym for the most distasteful thing in existence. EDAN is understandably insulted.

EDAN

You make it sound like a death sentence, Miss.

MARY

Just...why Scotland? It's so dark here. I'll never be warm again.

EDAN

Jesus, it's not that cold, is it?

MARY shivers in silence.

MARY

There was no one else to come for me? Only you?

EDAN

There was no one else willing to walk the three miles in that awful gale.

MARY

There aren't any carriages in Scotland?

EDAN

Would you like to wrangle a horse through half a foot of standing water, Miss? I'm the master's gardener, not his stable lad.

(pause)

I can acquire some sort of conveyance if you don't mind waiting--

MARY

I'd rather walk.

Pause.

You may call me Mary, if you like.

EDAN

Mrs. Melville would hang me by my ears from a third-story window--

MARY

Whatever for?

EDAN

It's--a class thing, Miss.

MARY

I have seen the specter of the Devil at my mother's bedside table. I've lost everyone I've ever loved to a skeleton with a scythe--Death doesn't care about class--why should we?

She shivers.

I can't seem to get warm. Maybe when your heart is broken it doesn't pump blood anymore.

EDAN

You're young--you'll find your heart can break a dozen times before it's past gluing back.

MARY

And you know this from experience, do you?

EDAN

Do you want my coat?

MARY

No. But...thank you. For your kindness.

(pause)

I don't even know your name. And please, do call me Mary. I've never been around other people long enough to stand on ceremony.

EDAN

My name is Edan, Mi--Mary. Edan O'Connell.

(pause)

Lord Robert's a good man. And you'll like Addison Gardens.

MARY

A garden. It sounds so--strange, so unreal. How could anything possibly grow in a place as cold and inhospitable as this? Trees, flowers...?

EDAN

You'd be surprised. There are good southern estates that envy Addison for its gardens.

MARY

There's something...passing strange about you, Edan, something I can't put my finger on--

She touches him, hesitantly, a single finger.

Then, she jumps back, as if having touched bare wire.

You burn brighter than anyone I've ever seen--like a large votive candle in a dark chapel. Where on earth did you come from?

As he looks at her, eyes wide, she finds herself chastened.

Oh, dear, I'm so sorry--was that a rude question? I told you I'm not used to people, if I've offended you, I--I didn't mean to--

EDAN

I--I can't remember. I lost my past, my present, and my future in an instant. One day, I woke up and I was--me, as I look right now, with no memories to speak of.

MARY

You're very lucky. I wish I could forget so much of my life. It has not been a very happy one so far.

EDAN

It hasn't been a very long one either.

MARY

Look at you, all worldly-wise. You can't be that much older!

EDAN

Sometimes, when I try to think about my--past, about what I was like before I came here--I feel strange...otherworldly. There are--not memories, exactly, but...feelings--a breath of fresh air, a garden, the smell of new flowers and the presence of eternity; a world without time and then--an overwhelming sorrow, for something lost and not yet regained.

Pause, as they both mull over this in silence.

MARY

Were you religious? In this former life of yours?

EDAN

(broken from his reverie)

I don't know. Why do you say that?

MARY

That--garden. I've...heard of it.

EDAN

(eagerly)

Have you really? Where is it?

MARY

Eden. It's a--story...of a garden, an oasis in a new, unbroken world, and in the center, the birth of sin. You've embraced that--fable--so wholeheartedly that your brain, wiped of all memory, can still remember it--that speaks of something pure and spiritual in you. I envy such a soul.

EDAN

You're not so spiritual?

MARY

Not so pure. I've--lost something, I think, by being lost; having had my entire world destroyed, disappeared, taken from me, somehow I've--

EDAN

You've suffered greatly.

MARY
I continue to suffer! Do you know what it means to be
sold into a life that you cannot possibly like?

EDAN
Yes.

Pause.

MARY
You're my uncle's gardener.

EDAN
Yes.

MARY
A servant.

EDAN
That too.

MARY
Then you know.

EDAN
I know. The yearning in you--for freedom,
and--resolution, I--can feel it. With every breath.
(pause)
Mary?

MARY
Yes?

EDAN
That--that sorrow I mentioned. I can see it, when I
look at you.

MARY
What does that mean?

EDAN
I don't know. That you're human?

MARY
Does that mean that you're not?

EDAN
The rain has stopped. It looks like the storm has
passed through. Would you care to walk, my lady?

He offers her his hand.

MARY

It's only a hand, isn't it? No promises made, no oaths forsaken, only--

EDAN

Just a hand.

MARY

I'm so used to being alone. I'd forgotten what it was like to--meet someone rather kinder than unkind. And you--you're...something entirely other.

EDAN

I'm just a person.

MARY

I'm not so sure.

Hand in hand, they exit. Lights.

Scene 2

GWEN remains onstage, a figure still in funereal garb, a commentator on the world.

GWEN

It hasn't changed much in a century, has it? Still those same, cobblestone streets, the same dark winters, the same pale summer nights. George Square, the University of Edinburgh. Two young people, in love, never knowing that it can be snatched away. Because sometimes you aren't meant to be here.

ZOE and MILTON enter, holding hands. They are clearly newlyweds, the rings brand-new and shiny, their eyes only for each other.

There was a girl who should have died and didn't. Sometimes, there's a typo, a line blotted over in the Book of Life, so that you stay on long past your due. And then, your life gets taken, suddenly, to balance a past mistake.

ZOE

My tutor's written almost every source for this paper. How do they expect me to turn it in?

MILTON

What class is this for?

ZOE

Ancient Literature. 2,000 words on Aristophanes.

MILTON

It's our anniversary. Can't it wait?

ZOE

It's due tomorrow.

MILTON

You work too hard. If you played as well as you worked, I'd be a much happier man.

ZOE

If I played as well as I worked, I'd never get any sleep.

MILTON

Who needs it? There's too much else to do.

(pause)

Think of it. A walk up Salisbury Crags. We can have a nice little picnic, drink cheap wine, watch the sunset--

ZOE

Really, John. I'm so busy, I just don't have the time to--

MILTON

Had we but world enough and time--

ZOE

John, please--stop it--

MILTON

This coyness, lady, were no crime--

ZOE

I--You are the strangest man I've ever met.

MILTON

And you're a miracle.

ZOE

I've been told that my entire life. That doesn't mean I believe it.

GWEN

There was a girl who was supposed to die. She was a miracle child, snatched from the jaws of death by--well, that was the problem. No one knew what saved her. It wasn't as if she got much better. She didn't progress, she didn't recover, but--she was still alive, and she...persisted. It made her different.

MILTON

There's a light around you. And sometimes, like now, it's dimmer, I can still see you, but sometimes--I feel like one of those fools who tried to climb Mount Olympus. I'm always worried I'll have my eyes burned out for daring to look at something too holy to contemplate.

Pause.

ZOE

Well that's hardly out of character; you're a hopeless romantic of a very nineteenth-century caliber. But I do love you for it.

They embrace.

MILTON

You did marry me, you know. You took a vow, Zoe.

ZOE

Maybe the paper can wait a few hours.

MILTON

Poetry triumphs again.

ZOE

Of course.

MILTON

I always thought Andrew Marvell worked better than Shakespeare. I think the imagery in "To His Coy Mistress" is so much more alluring--

ZOE

That's the problem with you literature students. You always think death imagery is sexy. Would like me better, knowing I was going to die? Would I be more attractive then?

MILTON

I never said that--I never--Zoe--

ZOE begins to cough. At first it is obvious that she is joking.

Zoe, that's not funny.

She begins to cough, in earnest, sinking to the ground, hands grappling at her throat.

Are you all right? Zoe?

He sinks to his knees beside her as she continues to cough, her whole body shaking with the effort to breathe.

GWEN

Twenty years of life, taken away in an instant as the pneumonia that had been held at bay for two decades suddenly flooded her lungs--and she drowned to death.

MILTON raises his head as ZOE stops breathing. His eyes are hollow. MARY enters from the far side of the stage and approaches him, slowly, as though encountering a wild animal.

MILTON

Are you Death? Have you come to take my wife away from me?

MARY

This is the way the world works, dear boy. Things move forward--not everyone moves with them. Your Zoe belongs to another time.

MILTON

Do you--did you--know...her?

MARY

Come with me.

He stares, uncomprehending, almost drunk with sorrow, as she holds out her hand.

It was not a request, John Milton.

MILTON

Have you come to claim me too?

MARY

Do you want me to?

Pause.

MILTON

No. God no.

MARY

I belong to one sole being of this world and he's not here. But you--you haven't yet found the thing to keep you from drowning in yourself.

MILTON

She kept me here. She kept me sound. And now--

He pauses, blinking fiercely.

There are...dark walls, closing around the corners of my eyes. Is this going to be the last thing I ever see? My wife dead, my world destroyed, the colors fading with the light?

MARY

Sometimes, Milton, there's...a flaw. In the natural order of things. And when the universe readjusts itself it breaks a lot of hearts.

MILTON

This is it? The great truth I've been waiting for? A dead--a dead wife and you, some figure from a Victorian children's book. No Annunciation, no Angel--

MARY starts at the word "angel."
Is there an angel? Are--are you a--?

MARY

No. I--I knew someone once, who was--unlike anything else. Extraordinary.

MILTON

So was she.

MARY

No. She was merely an aberration. You're like me, Milton. You're waiting for something.

MILTON

For what? Who's coming?

MARY

Your salvation. And my redemption. Or maybe the other way around.

She holds out her hand.

MILTON

I don't even know your name.

MARY

It's Mary.

(pause)

It's just a hand. We're mere mortals, you and I. But maybe we're better for it.

He takes her hand; they exit as GWEN watches.
Lights.

Scene 3

Addison Gardens, modern day. A dark, musty old house, filled with antique furniture and old secrets. MILTON, seated, attempts to read Paradise Lost while wearing sunglasses as EVE enters, dragging a heavy suitcase.

EVE

A little help here?

MILTON

(not looking up)

You sound like you're doing a fine job.

She manages to get it inside, kicking the door closed.

EVE

Hi. Are you--

She consults a piece of paper that she pulls from her pocket.

Jesus--John Milton?

MILTON

Yes.

EVE

And you're the care--wait a second, I just can't--really? John Milton?

MILTON

My parents didn't read much.

EVE

You're the caretaker of Addison Gardens?

MILTON

Aye.

EVE

I'm--did you know there's a pub near the University named after you?

MILTON

You mean "The Blind Poet"?

EVE

(with irony)

Aye.

MILTON

No.

(pause)

I think it's named after Homer, actually.

EVE

Really?

MILTON

How should I know? Maybe you'd better ask the proprietors.

EVE

I'm--

MILTON

Gwen Matheson's daughter.

EVE

Is it that obvious?

MILTON

You wouldn't be here otherwise.

(pause, the hesitation fraught with
melancholy)

She's dead, then?

EVE

A week ago today. I--they told me I...own this place now.

MILTON

No one really owns this place. Your mother kno--knew that.

EVE

My name is Eve. Matheson.

MILTON

Well, that's--really? Eve?

EVE

My parents read a bit too much.

MILTON

And you took your mother's name?

EVE

It felt disrespectful to do otherwise.

(pause)

You're reading Paradise Lost.

MILTON

Trying to. I can't see very well.

EVE

Taking off the sunglasses might help.

MILTON

It makes no difference.

He goes back to the book.
Did you like it? Paradise Lost?

EVE

Iambic pentameter gives me a headache. Besides, how in the name of God do you dictate that to someone?

MILTON

It was easy. The rhythm of a heartbeat, ten taps of the left hand against the right, the fingers touching the palm.

He demonstrates.
Eventually it becomes a part of you, the whole of you, until all you have is the rhythm and the word.

EVE

You're really the original devil's advocate?

MILTON

No. Just unfortunately named. It's a great icebreaker at parties.

(pause)

But whereas the John Milton you're thinking of was born in Cheapside, London, over four hundred years ago, I was clearly not. John's a very common name.

EVE

Yeah, well, so is Eve.

MILTON

The commonest. Your namesake's more notorious than the whore of Babylon.

EVE

I'm nothing like her, you know.

MILTON

The whore of Babylon?

EVE

My mother.

MILTON

Good Lord, I should hope not. She's dead.

EVE

The--lawyers, the guys in the monkey suits, they grieved more than I did. But this place, this house...It's like a relic, from another time. When I saw it, in my mother's old photographs, I--I still can't believe places like this exist.

MILTON

Addison Gardens has been gathering dust since 1859.

EVE

Why is that?

MILTON

Some say that it's haunted.

MARY enters, a strange, ghostly figure in her white gown. She holds the jumping rope in her hand, staring at it contemplatively.

EVE

Haunted?

MILTON

In 1857 a young woman named Mary Halstead moved here from London to marry Lord Robert Matheson's brother Alistair. A year later she died, supposedly under some very unhappy circumstances.

EVE

Really? What kind of circumstances?

MILTON

She had a baby. Not, on its own, a tragedy, but--Rumor has it that it may have been the gardener's. He conveniently disappeared, and--well, Miss Mary wasted away. Probably nothing more than your average case of post-natal depression.

MARY laughs bitterly; MILTON glares in her direction, frowning.

EVE

Did you hear--

MILTON

It's an old house, Miss Matheson. One hears many things.

EVE

An old house. And so empty. There's so much anger in the air that you can taste it--And so much fear.

MILTON

Master Alistair suffered from the rather tragic combination of a guilty conscience and a taste for Highland whiskey. He died in 1859, screaming obscenities at a wall, claiming that his dead wife was hounding him into oblivion.

MARY laughs again.

MARY

Served him right, the smug bastard.

EVE

And all the superstitious aristocracy packed up and left?

MILTON

You can hardly blame them. Caledonia's a savage land to those from warmer climes. Lord Robert retired to his ancestral estates in Kent, abandoning his brother's son and only heir to the care of a Mrs. Melville.

MARY

Poor Richard. He was such a sensitive boy.

EVE hesitates, as if having heard a subliminal note in the music of the spheres, then shakes her head.

EVE

What happened to the gardener?

MILTON

History doesn't tell many stories about servants. He likely absconded with the master's abundant supply of Glenfiddich and headed off to greener pastures, drunker than a literary scholar on Burns Night.

(pause)

You ask a lot of questions.

EVE

My mother never told me much about this place. Not that she ever told me much of anything, but--she thought all of this was behind her, I guess.

MILTON

(with regret)

No doubt it's a place she'd want to forget.

EVE

Did you--I mean, no, that's ridiculous. You would've been three or four years old when she left Scotland. You don't happen to--

MILTON

She was a good woman. Exceptionally kind. And very generous.

(pause)

She spent upwards of a million pounds trying to spruce this place up when every other Matheson in the past hundred years has given up Addison for dead.

EVE

Why?

MILTON

I think part of Gwendolen's charm was that there didn't need to be a reason.

EVE

How do you--

MILTON

Let's say I'm older than I look.

EVE

I'm--I'm staying in the Radisson on the Mile.

MILTON

You've got quite a walk.

EVE

Very chivalrous of you.

MILTON

I do try.

(pause)

You should've thought of staying somewhere closer. I could hardly drive you anywhere, could I?

MILTON takes off his sunglasses. He does not look at her. EVE stands in front of him, but it eventually becomes clear, through various experiments, that he cannot see her.

EVE

You're blind?

MILTON

Didn't I mention that I'm John Milton?

EVE

Yeah, right. I'll call myself another cab.

MILTON

The nearest phone's half a mile down the road. You might as well just walk all the way back up to the Royal Mile.

(pause)

What are you doing for dinner tomorrow?

EVE

That's the question you wanted to ask me?

MILTON

We don't get many visitors. It's always nice to hear a new voice. And there are things I have to tell you.

EVE

I'll be seeing you. Here. At 7.

EVE exits, carrying the suitcase. MARY moves forward.

MARY

She never thought to ask why you were reading a book you couldn't actually see.

MILTON

I memorized it a long time ago.

(pause)

That was dangerous, Mary. She heard you.

MARY

You inviting her to dinner was dangerous, dear boy. You remember Gwendolen, don't you? We don't want to go down that path again.

MILTON

Gwen was--a special case. This girl is--is nothing like her, she's confused, she's angry, she's--

MARY

You don't like her.

MILTON

Of course I like her. But that's not the point, Mary--knowing what Gwen sacrificed for this girl, seeing her here, whole and healthy and ungrateful--knowing what she's inherited--

MARY

I'm telling you, Milton, she's the one.

MILTON

You've had a hundred and fifty years to figure these things out. But that doesn't mean that you *know*--

MARY

She'll do what she has to.

MILTON

She's not her mother.

MARY

I'm not surprised. There's only so much good that can go around.

(pause)

Now, come along. We have work to do before she gets back.

MILTON

And miles to go before I sleep--

MARY

She doesn't seem the type for poetry, Milton. You might want to take that into account.

Lights.

Scene 4

MRS. MELVILLE is standing center stage as EDAN enters from, looking rather harried.

MRS. MELVILLE

You're late.

EDAN

I beg your pardon, Mrs. Melville--I meant to wake on time, I just--I didn't sleep much last night.

MRS. MELVILLE

It was to be expected.

EDAN

Ma'am?

MRS. MELVILLE

The master's niece--she's very pretty, isn't she?

EDAN

I--yes, I suppose so.

MRS. MELVILLE

You're a young man, Edan O'Connell and it is not entirely out of order for you to look at a woman like a pig looks at a rotten apple. But you are far beneath her. If you begin to get ideas above your station you may not have a station for much longer.

EDAN

I know, Mrs. Melville, I've--tried to make it clear to her. But I'm not sure she understands--

MRS. MELVILLE

Or cares?

(pause)

Here she comes now, bounding like a jackrabbit. I swear, I've never met a girl with less decorum in my life.

MARY enters, a creature of rather lighter spirit than when we last saw her. She is nearly bursting with energy.

MARY

I was starting to think I'd never see a blue sky again!

EDAN

It won't last long. There's rain coming in the afternoon.

MARY

How do you know?

EDAN

It's Scotland. There's always rain in the afternoon.

MRS. MELVILLE silently fumes at EDAN.
I'm sorry, Miss, for speaking out of turn.

MARY

Out of turn--what do you--Oh! Good morning, Mrs. Melville.

MRS. MELVILLE

Miss Halstead.

MARY

Is there anything I can do? Anything I can help you with?

MRS. MELVILLE

I believe your uncle has a library. You might read.

MARY

I was hoping for some more...invigorating exercise.

MRS. MELVILLE

I *beg* your *pardon*?

EDAN

There is no occupation for a lady such as yourself. Find a place to sit and look pretty.

MARY

I couldn't possibly--unless, of course, I had a chaperon. Will you join me, Mr. O'Connell? A walk in the gardens, perhaps?

EDAN opens his mouth to reply, but MRS. MELVILLE shoots him a look.

MRS. MELVILLE

Edan is not privileged with a great deal of free time,
Miss Halstead--

MARY

Yes, but clearly I am privileged with too much. So why
not share some of mine with him? You don't mind, do
you, Edan?

EDAN

I--no, of course not, Mary. I mean, Miss Halstead.
Ma'am.

MRS. MELVILLE

You're not to let your work go. Is that understood?

EDAN

Yes, of course.

MRS. MELVILLE

(taking him aside)

She's practically a child. And, for some peculiar
reason, she seems to dote on you. Do not take advantage
of that.

EDAN

I--Mrs. Melville, I would never--

MRS. MELVILLE

You have no family, Edan. You have no past, and that
means in many ways that you have no future.

EDAN

I know.

MRS. MELVILLE

Alistair would not be pleased, if he knew.

EDAN

Alistair is not often pleased, ma'am.

(pause)

Mary has no one else in the world. No one she trusts
but me. And she's getting married in a week.

MRS. MELVILLE

To a fine, upstanding gentleman--

EDAN

Hardly.

(pause)

Let Mary have what's left of her childhood. For the
sake of those of us who never had one to begin with.

MRS. MELVILLE nods and exits. MARY rushes forward, taking EDAN's arm.

MARY

We're alone. I didn't think the old biddy would allow it.

EDAN

She thinks you're too innocent to know what you're about.

MARY

And you?

EDAN

I think you're too daft to necessarily care.

MARY

Has she been giving you lectures again?

EDAN

Mrs. Melville, you mean?

MARY nods.

Well--you don't think she has a point?

MARY

I'm not a bloody child!

EDAN

You ought to be. You have precious little time left for it, as it is, without trying so hard to grow up.

MARY

Oh, what do you know?

EDAN

I--I don't. I don't know anything.

Pause.

MARY

I'm sorry, Edan.

Silence.

I really am, I didn't mean--This is a beautiful garden. You must have worked so hard.

EDAN

Does it matter?

MARY

You're angry with me.

EDAN

That must be it.

MARY

It's perfectly human--

EDAN

Yes, but am I?

MARY

I suppose that is a question we all ask ourselves at one time or another.

EDAN

Have you ever come up with an answer?

MARY

I...I don't know. I think I might have. But it's--it's bound up with everything else, Edan, with your memories--that garden and irrevocable sorrow.

EDAN

What do you mean?

MARY

I barely know what I'm saying anymore.

EDAN

You know entirely what you're saying. But you're afraid. Of me?

MARY

It's hardly logical, I know that.

EDAN

If that's not the understatement of the century--

MARY

It's because I feel as if--when I speak to you, my entire soul is open wide, and sometimes I'm afraid that if I tell you everything you'll understand how awful I really am.

(pause)

These flowers are so lovely. What are the little blue ones called?

EDAN

Forget-me-not.

MARY

That's...kind of tragic, actually.

EDAN

They represent true love.

MARY

Did you ever wonder, Edan, if maybe it was worth it?

EDAN

What?

MARY

The Fall. Original sin. Being cast out of the Garden.
All of it.

EDAN

I don't--You shouldn't talk like this, Mary, it's not
right, it isn't--

MARY

I'm sorry. I've never been around people long enough to
learn how to speak and make my thoughts understood. But
this means so much to me--I've been abandoned, I've
been--cast out, and--sometimes I think I know how she
felt.

EDAN

I don't want to talk about this--

MARY

She stood there shivering, naked and cold, watching the
Gates of Paradise slam shut. And I just wonder if she
thought, maybe, that she hadn't done such a bad thing
after all. And Adam--

EDAN

Please stop--

MARY

Eve did what she did out of ignorance and curiosity.
She reached for the apple, her lips were sweet with the
knowledge of having tasted something wholly unknown.
But Adam, Adam chose to follow her into damnation; he
could have saved himself and saved humanity. Adam
chose.

EDAN

Why would someone do such a thing?

MARY

Because he loved her. Because he didn't want to be
alone.

(pause)

Sometimes I wonder if I would ever be strong enough to make that choice. Would--Edan, if there were someone you loved, more than anything--would you choose eternal damnation over a perfect world alone?

EDAN

Yes.

Lights.

Scene 5

MILTON is seated on the floor. He has set up a picnic. EVE enters, dressed rather more fashionably than she was earlier.

MILTON

My, you do clean up nicely.

EVE

How can you tell?

MILTON

You smell like...sandalwood. Perfume. There's talcum powder in your makeup, wax in your lipstick, Herbal Essences shampoo in your hair. And a little Highland whiskey on your breath, if I'm not mistaken. In the old must of this house you stand out like a new spring morning.

Pause.

EVE

What did Gwen smell like?

MILTON

Like the air after a storm. All new and fresh and...pure. Electric. But--I'd--rather not talk about her.

EVE

Is all this for me?

She sits down next to him.

MILTON

I thought--a picnic--but it was trite of me. Trying to lend a sense of symmetry to a life skewed to one side--but now that you're here, I--Eve, we need to talk.

EVE

(rising)

You said we weren't going to talk about my mom.

MILTON

We have to, it--it's endemic to the whole thing. To everything.

EVE

Just because sainted Gwen Matheson died it doesn't mean the whole world stops turning.

MILTON

It should for her.

EVE

It did for her. She's dead. But I'm not. And neither are you.

MILTON

Do you know how your mother died?

EVE

A car came out of nowhere and crushed the good witch of the north under a rain of automobile debris. And her daughter, the wicked witch of the west, had too much sense to mourn.

(pause)

What is it? What on earth are you trying to tell me?

MILTON

Sometimes...there's a glitch. In the way the universe works. And when the universe readjusts itself--

EVE

Someone dies?

MILTON

Yes.

EVE

My mother in particular.

MILTON

One of a few.

EVE

You are so full of shit. I'm not some kind of cosmic accident.

MILTON

I didn't mean to insult you--

EVE
You didn't? That's news to me.

MILTON rises.

MILTON
Please, you have to believe--

EVE
My grandmother died in a car crash. I remember my mother telling me, and the words *It should have been me* coming from her lips like so much pain. Six years old, a near brush with death and a survivor's guilt that--Is that--is that why--

MILTON
Yes.

EVE
I think I understand. I don't want to, but...But why are you here?

MILTON
My wife died. In some awful, universal folly. I thought--if I could ease that suffering of someone else, if I could find a way to change it--

EVE
So, when you said that you remembered my mother...She knew? You told her she was going to die?

MILTON
Yes.

EVE
How could you?

MILTON
I loved her.

EVE
You loved her? And you destroyed her life. What's the cost of love if someone can do that with a few words?

MILTON
You knew her better than anyone, you know the lure that kind of goodness has--

EVE
No wonder she always seemed so...anxious. There was this tension in her body every time she crossed the street. Like a harp string, wound too tight. What on earth could have been worth that?

MARY enters, moving slowly, carefully.

MILTON

Imagine that you loved someone so much that it defied...everything. Heaven and Hell, fantasy and reality. The woman who lived here once, the woman who haunts this house, she had that.

EVE

The gardener--what was he?

MARY

He was an angel. And he was mine.

EVE

What are you?

MARY

A lost soul. Do you know what it means to have half of your heart ripped away from you, trapped behind some kind of ephemeral veil? I can't bear to think that somewhere out there his soul is confused, suffering, broken--that somewhere Edan exists without me, and I'm stuck here, unable to help him. And it's why we needed you.

EVE

Me? I'm not a--I'm just--

MILTON

Your mother loved you so much, Eve. She's in Hell, and that love is a beacon, calling out to you. You can still feel it, can't you?

EVE

I--I don't--She was a good person.

MARY

She lived past her time. She should have died at six years old, when her own mother did.

EVE

And because of that she's been condemned? What kind of justice is that?

MILTON

The Accountants of the Universe are unmerciful, and exacting. An infallible God can't fix His mistakes; He can't even acknowledge that they're mistakes, so--At this moment your mother is trapped in Hell. And Edan is unable to return either to the life he knew or the one he was supposed to lead.

EVE
And me?

MARY
You're the recipient of a divine inheritance, Eve.

EVE
I don't want to do this.

MARY
But you will. For her.

EVE
Yes.

MARY
Good.

MARY exits.

MILTON
Are you all right?

EVE
I...I don't know. It's a lot to take in.

MILTON
I know, I'm so sorry, if there had been any other way--

EVE
You lost your wife. I can't imagine how that must have felt.

MILTON
I suspect it felt as bleak and purposeless as you losing your mother.

EVE
You loved my mother.

MILTON
Yes.

EVE
Will you love me?

MILTON
I...I don't know.

EVE
Thank God.

The lights fade.

Scene 6

GWEN, in her customary role as a narrator, stands, eying the set (now a moonlit garden) with wry solemnity. In the center is a barren tree.

GWEN

One seldom dreams of an earthly paradise. The search for the Garden of Eden, after all, is ultimately a search for redemption, happiness, and understanding, not a--not a place...though I may be mistaken about that part, given the evidence at hand. Adam was the first gardener but he certainly wasn't much of a landscape architect. I mean, look at that tree--

(she points, pauses, lowers her hand)

I guess the apples didn't grow back. Well, you can't blame the tree. There's only so much knowledge to go around. Does the Garden of Eden have seasons? This place looks so lush and yet so barren. Is this the winter of our content?

EDAN enters.

EDAN

It's late summer, I think. August, early September.

GWEN

He's known Mary Halstead a few months--though I suppose that, in a cosmic sense, he's known her forever. To angels we are all bright souls, gleaming in the dim light of a dark world. Who knows? Maybe he saw her in the dawn of a new age and said, "There's my redemption. That girl, lonely, bereft of infinite and compassionate understanding--if I find her and love her then perhaps--" But who finishes a thought like that? I don't know the whole story. I should, you know, omniscient narrator and all, but--there are more things in heaven and earth than you find in Sartre's "No Exit." A young Adonis, fresh and beautiful and pristine, emerges into this world a full-grown man, as only angels can, but in the brief moments between dream and reality he loses himself to humanity, and forgets. He becomes nothing more than exceptional, and to something that had once been divine, it's a bit of a let-down.

MARY enters in a threadbare nightgown, and freezes. It is the ultimate romantic encounter, hearts frozen in throats. They stare at each other as though to move would be to shatter a world of glass.

Until he meets her. And suddenly humanity doesn't seem so bad after all.

They approach each other, embrace.

MARY

Where are we?

EDAN

I...don't know. It's so familiar, it's as if--as if my heart dreamed this place while my mind looked on, uncomprehending--

MARY

It's beautiful.

EDAN

This is a dream, isn't it? I can say anything I want in a dream, there's no Mrs. Melville, hounding me for looking at you sideways--I can finally say "I love you" without having to look over my shoulder and wait for the glancing blow.

MARY

It's so peculiar. I spend half of my time trying to get you alone, but here--I hardly know what to say.

(pause)

When I speak with you, it's like talking to a revelation. Knowing that my life can be--made better, somehow, healed--just by touching your hand. But I was afraid. The servant girls at Addison watch you like you're some kind of idol. How do I compete with that kind of worship, when all I have to offer is--

EDAN

Whatever you have to offer is enough. Your spirit is enough. It's always enough.

MARY

And, at the same time, it will never be enough. Not while I'm living, anyway.

(pause)

Tomorrow's my wedding day, Edan. And then I'll be a wife, married to an ill-tempered bastard with eyes like a hawk. And that will be it. He doesn't see me, like you do, he sees a--an object, a possession, but not a person. No one ever asked me if I wanted more than that.

EDAN

Don't do this. You don't owe it to anyone, especially not him.

MARY

I have no choice.

(pause)

MARY

I promised myself once, when the world was falling down around my shoulders, that I would walk through it with my head held high, that whatever came I would obey, and consider it penance. It's why I never wondered how strange it was that everyone around me seemed to drop away. The only things that never die on me are plants--

EDAN

And me. Don't forget me.

MARY

If I could keep you, if I could hold onto you, that one living thing that's good, that stays--I would do anything, for that.

EDAN

You'll die. You know that.

MARY

We all do. Some day.

(pause)

I've never loved anyone before. No one. I didn't think it safe, or--or right, somehow, I felt that if I loved someone it would condemn them and--sometimes I look at you and I can't bear it. I don't want to leave this place without knowing what it feels like, that you love me.

EDAN puts his arms around her and they start moving DR as GWEN steps center.

GWEN

A child conceived in a long-defunct paradise is bound to know a thing or two about life before death was an issue. And when that child grows up, maybe God's looking the other way. Maybe for generations. Who knows how time passes to a deity?

Lights.

ACT IIScene 1

A virtually empty rail station. SALOME is standing UL with a clipboard. EVE enters UR, clad rather self-consciously in her underwear (or a nightgown, if casting requires modesty).

SALOME

Can I help you?

EVE

I--I was sleeping, and all of a sudden I wake up and I'm--where are my clothes? And where am I?

SALOME

They're wherever you left them, I suppose. Now, were you an accident or--

EVE

(offended)

I beg your pardon?

SALOME

Name?

EVE

I'm--Eve.

SALOME

You're not on my list.

EVE

This--this place looks like--

SALOME

Waverley Station. Yes, I know.

(pause)

Are you all right? You look like you've been hit over the head with a shovel.

EVE

Am I--am I dead?

SALOME

I should hope so. But--wait. Let me look at you.

There is a long pause as SALOME examines her, almost clinically.

You're not dead.

EVE

How can you tell? Maybe--maybe this very minute I'm lying there, decaying rapidly, and Milton will know and--

SALOME

You land here, and you think, oh, way station for the dead. Most of the accidents arrive here in a daze, and, let's face it, not everyone who comes through here is an accident, but even for them, that knowledge is like a stamp, on the soul, telling you it's over. But you--

EVE

Timor mortis conturbat me.

SALOME

What does that mean?

EVE

"The fear of death disturbs me." In Latin.

SALOME

Oh! Latin. I remember Latin. Vaguely. I've lost so many memories. You have to, here, or the combined weight of two thousand years of banality would drive you mad.

(pause)

Timor mortis conturbat me. It's appropriate. You're standing here, but you're kicking and screaming to get away. You're still afraid of death, and that means you haven't met it yet.

EVE

How would I even know, if I did?

SALOME

I was a young girl when I saw the blank, gray eyes of a man with his head on a silver platter. Believe me, you'd know.

EVE

Why does this place look like Waverley Station?

SALOME

It used to look like Hell. Fire and brimstone, the whole shebang. And then, one day, a man who wasn't a man passed through these doors and everything...changed, damn him. Somehow he made this place an otherworldly replica of--

EVE

(as though remembering something she once heard)

Edinburgh. 19th-century Edinburgh.

SALOME

I wouldn't know. Most of the dead Scotsmen seem to think so, though.

(pause)

Why are you here?

EVE

I was hoping you could tell me. I think I was asleep. Maybe I'm still sleeping.

SALOME

The sleep of the damned, do you think?

EVE

I'm scared.

SALOME

Most people are. It's how the system works--if it didn't, we'd probably greet the condemned with laurel wreaths and bouquets of forget-me-nots.

EVE

I went to sleep, thinking I was safe, thinking that, for once, everything was going according to plan--and then I wake up here, and of course nothing's where it ought to be, because this isn't exactly Paradise, is it? And I'm supposed to be looking for a fallen angel but that's--impossible--

SALOME

You're looking for the man who changed this place. You're looking for Ana'iel.

EVE

An--what?

SALOME

It means "God's"--

Thunderclap.

"answer."

(sigh)

I'm sorry, I forgot we're not supposed to say that word. Lucifer doesn't like it.

EVE

Ana'iel?

SALOME

Every once in a while the angels come down to save someone from themselves. Sometimes they succeed.

EVE

But not always.

SALOME

More often than not, an angel making an earthly visitation gets caught up in the fallibility of it all. I've seen the ghosts of angels come through here. The moments when they remember who they are, what they abandoned to be human, are awful.

(pause)

He smelled like gardenias, and when I told him where he was, he cried. I'm not sure he really understood, to be honest. But he went off into the wide blue astral yonder eons ago.

EVE

Oh, God--

Thunderclap.

Maybe I'm stuck here. Maybe there's no way to get back home. It's not like I can click my heels.

SALOME

He changed this place for someone. To make it familiar...She had a name--

(looks on list)

I used to know all this. She should have passed through ages ago--

EVE

Mary Halstead.

SALOME

Yes. How did you--

EVE

She had such an unhappy life. He only wanted to make it a little better for her.

SALOME

Yes, well.

(pause)

You're not on my list, which means you don't belong here. You're trespassing, and you've been doing it for far too long.

EVE

I--I want my mother.

SALOME

I hated mine.

EVE

Your mother? Why?

SALOME

My name is Salome.

(pause)

I used to be the glory of the world. There was a dance, the Dance of the Seven Veils, and I did it so well that my stepfather offered me anything I wanted in return. So I asked my mother what I should ask for, and she told me.

(pause)

I asked for the head of a man I hardly knew on a silver platter, and he died for my mother's petty ambitions. I couldn't dance again after that, terrified of the damage my swaying hips could do--And thus, you see, I am condemned here, content to watch the world pass by.

(pause)

Does your mother have a name?

EVE

Her--her name is--was...Gwen Matheson.

SALOME starts.

And she was--wonderful. I resented her, and I feel awful for it, but I--she died, so recently--

SALOME

You came here clothed in mourning. And nothing else. Let me get you a coat.

SALOME exits UL.

EVE

Wait, I--

Dejected, she sits down on the bench, tracing the lines of her hand.

I remember you had a scar, across your palm, and I asked you once where you got it, and you said--

GWEN enters, DR, while EVE is talking; she watches her, with pity and a little grief, but as EVE looks up, she stops, standing still, like a ghost.

GWEN

Once upon a time I sold my soul to the devil, and this is what he gave me for it.

EVE

Mom?

GWEN turns and exits DR as SALOME enters UL, carrying a jacket. She hands it to EVE, who puts it on.

SALOME

She's--she's probably in Pandemonium.

EVE

I--I just saw--

SALOME

You'll see a lot of things. Your mind is the only thing left, when your body has gone away, and it--it plays tricks on you, it shows you what you want to see.

EVE

She looked--why would she be in Pandemonium?

SALOME

Because of who she is. That is all I can say.

(pause)

Pandemonium is that way, Ms. Matheson.

Lights.

Scene 2

GWEN is DR. DC, EVE lies prone beside a sitting MILTON, who looks on the verge of tears.

GWEN

When you get here, when you--die, you revisit the moments of your life that weren't the happiest. The moments that changed everything, trembling with possibility, the roads not taken. A single Hogmanay changed my life forever, a single moment, a single phrase--

MILTON

What if I were to tell you that you were never meant to be here?

GWEN

This is what Hell means. To be in a place where everything you are is--melted down and broken apart, and put back together like eggshells, fragile and cracked and awful. And you--

(pointing to a near-insensible MILTON)

You did this to me. I wouldn't have known, otherwise. I told you to leave her alone, Milton, I told you that I'd be a willing martyr for you and that stupid ghost--but not her. You can't have her. You can't.

GWEN exits DR as MARY enters UL.

MARY

She's only sleeping, you dolt.

MILTON

Is she? I've never known a living person to sleep so deeply.

MARY

It's only that she's gone where you cannot follow. You chose her, didn't you? She impervious to the world, until such time as she has fulfilled her purpose. It makes her special.

MILTON

And it makes existence for those who care for her a living hell.

MARY

I told you about the night in the Garden?

MILTON

Yes.

MARY

There were a few more after that one. Only a few, before he left. Sometimes, it was as if--

(pause)

I would look at him sleeping, and I would know, somehow, that he was back in the Garden, trying so hard to make this untamed, primordial thing his own. Because when he woke up, he would look at me and--it was different, in the real world. Dimmer. It's how I knew, at first, that he was...something more than human. Because there was so much disappointment in his eyes. Thousands of years worth of earthly sin rushing back in an instant. He would look at me with such awful pity. As if he knew--

MILTON

She's no angel.

MARY

And that, more than anything else, is why you care for her. No, John, she's as human--physically--as you or I--well. It's her soul that's different.

MILTON

And what does that mean for me, that I--

MARY

You are drawn to the single bright creatures of this universe, to those who operate on a different plane than most. It makes you quite remarkable, that you can see this and embrace it. Don't feel guilty for it. In all your long life you've only grown attached to those who are more than human.

(pause)

There is nothing you can do, however much you feel for her.

MILTON

I don't know what I feel for her. I know what I felt for--

MARY

Ah, yes, poor Gwendolen.

MILTON

You say it as if we had nothing to do with what happened to her. I wonder, now, if it was a self-fulfilling prophecy, if, in the end, she had to see it happen for herself--

MARY

Enough. I know what we did. And I know, better than anyone, the cost of it. When all of this is over, it is my soul that will be condemned for the actions you have taken in my name.

(pause)

Get some sleep. I'll keep an eye on her.

MILTON

No, I--I can--

MARY

I have nothing else to do.

MILTON nods and goes to leave. He hesitates, at the door (UR).

MILTON

I'm sorry. I didn't--I didn't think of what it--

MARY

You're forgiven. Now please, leave me to my private Hell.

MILTON exits. MARY falls to the ground, sobbing at EVE's feet. After a few moments, ALISTAIR enters UL, and it is clear we are experiencing a memory, that it is being relived in MARY's private, private hell.

ALISTAIR
Good morning.

MARY
Alistair! I didn't--that wasn't--

She stands abruptly.
Good morning.

ALISTAIR
You look awful.

MARY
Thank you.

ALISTAIR
New brides are supposed to glow, I've been told.

MARY
I doubt you've been shortchanged, if that's what you're thinking.
(pause)
If you'll excuse me--

ALISTAIR
Mary.

MARY stops at the door UR. He follows her, touches her arm.
You're my wife. I'd like to think I can make you happy.

MARY
It's not in your power. It's not in anyone's power, save God's.

ALISTAIR
And Edan O'Connell's.
(MARY does not respond)
I know what people say about me. "There's muddy water in the Nor Loch that has more sense than Alistair Matheson." But I'm not blind.

MARY
No, I suppose that would have been a great deal too much to hope for.

ALISTAIR
There's any number of women who would lose their--their virtue--

MARY
I am highly disinclined to continue this conversation.

ALISTAIR

You're supposed to be my wife, Mary. You're supposed to--to at least pretend to--

MARY

It's none of your business.

ALISTAIR

It is my business! What do I do when people start to talk? What do I do when they say my wife is--is throwing herself at every gutter-born--

MARY slaps him.

MARY

Damn you, Alistair. Damn you.

ALISTAIR

(comes close to hitting her)

Mrs. Melville says you're with child.

MARY

Mrs. Melville says a great deal that she shouldn't. What does she know? She's been a widow for two-score years. Spending decades watching poor girls like myself vomit their internal organs on the rose bushes?

(pause)

I'll take care of this mess. I don't want Edan to have to clean up after me.

ALISTAIR

You needn't worry about that. I've dismissed your paramour.

MARY

You what?

ALISTAIR

He'll find another place. I heard Arthur Drummond's looking to start a garden at his countryside estate.

MARY

You fired him? Without so much a--why didn't I know?

ALISTAIR

I hardly thought it was something worth telling you.

MARY

He was my friend.

ALISTAIR

A great deal more than that, I think.

(pause)

ALISTAIR
Is it his? The child?

MARY
Don't be vulgar, Alistair, it's not particularly
flattering.

She goes to leave; ALISTAIR grabs her arm.

ALISTAIR
Don't.

MARY
I never asked to marry you. I never wanted to.

ALISTAIR
That's hardly an excuse for carousing with the help.

MARY
It's the only one I have.

ALISTAIR
So help me God, when that child is born--

MARY
Then I'll suffer the consequences. And I'll consider it
a fitting retribution, for my sins.

She exits UL. Lights.

Scene 3

*SASHA and RICHIE (heavily made up and dressed like
characters from a Noel Coward play) are haggling
over prices L as EVE enters (UR). Behind them is a
failing neon sign that says "Les Autres" in an
elegant cursive.*

SASHA
This is the genuine article, my good man! It belonged
to Mata Hari herself! Worn on the day of her execution.
Surely you can see that it's worth something?

RICHIE
Please. It's a relic, darling, and terribly passe.

SASHA
The problem with you, Richie, is that you think
everything is passe.

RICHIE
Too much time at Les Autres, I suppose. It's the
strangest thing, you know--we've had four new girls

RICHIE

forwarded to us from Salome in the past week. All practically in the altogether. Not that I'm complaining, mind you, but still--Salome and her peculiar sense of humor.

(noticing EVE)

My, my, what have we here?

SASHA

One of your new ones, Richard?

RICHIE

Good Lord, I hope not. I'd be terribly remiss if I'd missed such a treasure. Your name, my dear?

EVE

Eve.

SASHA

Such an old standard. Your mother had good taste.

EVE

I took a wrong turn at--I was trying to get to Pandemonium and--where the hell am I?

RICHIE

You've answered your own question, darling.

(indicating the sign)

"L'enfer, c'est les autres."

EVE

No Exit.

RICHIE

Alas, that too. I was born too early for it, of course, so it was apres mon epoque, as they say. Though such a lovely sentiment.

SASHA

(glumly)

Hell is other people?

RICHIE

Well of course it is, Sasha. Chock full of the so-called other people. Conformity being an utter bore, only the dull ones get into Heaven and being suitably interesting this was the only place for me. All the fun's in hell, darling, didn't they teach you anything in Sunday school?

SASHA

I never went to Sunday school.

EVE

Neither did I, the reasons for which are rapidly becoming obvious.

SASHA

Listen, Richard, are you sure you don't want this? I can always find another buyer, but--

RICHIE

I've got no one to give it to, and anyway, it's not particularly avant garde. And you know anything that isn't avant garde is generally out of fashion here at Les Autres. Besides, everyone knows that the poor soul died naked. You'd be better going back to peddling those scrolls from the Library of Alexandria. At least Cleopatra's sex manual has some novelty value.

Glenn Miller's "In The Mood" begins to play, from inside the club.

That's my cue, darlings. Mind you--all the lost souls of my generation have been rehabilitated. As if Heaven had anything to offer them but an eternity of obedience, abstinence, and temperance. You're much better off wandering the highways of Hell, my dear, in pure, transparent freedom, than playing a harp in Heaven with the other winged sheep--Is there anything I can help you with, before I go? Who are you looking for?

EVE

Should I be looking for someone?

RICHIE

You stick out like Dorothy. It is quite clear you're on a quest.

EVE

My mother, and a fallen angel.

SASHA

How very original. Much better than that Italian man who came round here ages ago.

RICHIE

I was rather gratified to discover that he called it The Divine Comedy. What do you plan to do, once you've found them?

EVE

Take them back with me, I suppose.

RICHIE
Good luck.

EVE
Good luck with your party--

RICHIE
Oh, it will be terrible. They always are. But you know how it is. It's the only one in town.

RICHIE exits UL.

SASHA
You're lucky you've made it this far without being dragged down with the rest of them. There aren't many living souls who can make that kind of journey. You can't let the lost know that you don't belong here--they'll drag you down. You'll disappear.

EVE
I'm--still alive, then? Salome, the--bouncer, whatever she is, she seemed to think I was but--

SASHA
I've watched a world rise and fall in the time I've been a resident of this place. In that time, there've only been maybe half a dozen interlopers, bright souls who can carry their lives with them.

EVE
The--the man who acted like a character in a Noel Coward play--

SASHA
Richard Matheson--

EVE
He called you Sasha.

SASHA
A nickname. My real name is--well. Unpronounceable by a human tongue.

EVE
So you're not human.

SASHA
I'm a Duke of Hell. Not a high one, but I followed Lucifer with the rest of them.

EVE
And you're peddling relics of the past like bootlegged DVDs?

SASHA

You'd be surprised at the good a little knowledge can do.

(pause)

And a good silk skirt.

EVE

So...you, what? Rehabilitate people?

SASHA

Sometimes. Mostly I just make their afterlives a little easier. Not everyone has the hope of redemption.

EVE

But I thought--the whole purpose was that everyone had the possibility of redemption.

SASHA

You poor, naïve thing. Do you think Adam and Eve can ever go back to Eden?

EVE

They might. Humanity was cast out of the Garden of Eden, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they threw away the key.

SASHA

You're a dreamer. It's a shame, in a way, but hardly surprising. Perhaps it means you'll remember me, when you go off on your merry way.

EVE

I don't even know where to go.

SASHA

Maybe Richie'll take you. When the party's over. Mind you, he doesn't know much beyond the next bed he sleeps in, and sometimes he doesn't know that, but if you want a guide, he's the best. He knows everyone.

EVE

He thinks he's permanently condemned. A hopeless cause.

SASHA

Yes, he's rather proud of how keenly he earned his place here, but his only real sin is being too shallow to care very much about other people. In that he isn't much different from the vast majority of the condemned.

EVE

Did you--did you say he was--Richard Matheson?

SASHA

Sound familiar?

EVE

Her son. That poor boy. No wonder he doesn't care about anyone. I wouldn't either, if I were him.

SASHA

Yes, you can see it, can't you? This place is a refuge for the unloved. Lonely and abandoned, they come here in droves, so that they can find solace in knowing that not everyone has abandoned them.

EVE

I thought Hell would be...worse than this, somehow.

SASHA

How could it be? We were all angels once. In the beginning, before mankind was created, everything was clean and we were loved. It's only--one day, we were told that we must honor Man because he was the most noble of His works. But Lucifer, for love of His Lord, would bow to nothing, and so he created this place, where we could be your equals, and your helpers, and not your supplicants.

(pause)

Are you all right?

EVE is on the verge of tears.

EVE

I--I don't know. I don't think so. I just--

GWEN enters DR.

I--What the hell? Wait--please, don't go.

GWEN turns to leave, but stops, staring at her.

I just wanted to know. What is this all about? What are you--why are you here?

GWEN smiles and shakes her head, leans forward, kisses EVE on the cheek and exits DR.

Did you see her? Please tell me you saw her.

SASHA

I saw her.

EVE

What--why do I keep seeing this--this apparition of my mother?

SASHA

Her name was Gwen Matheson, wasn't it?

EVE nods.

She must have loved you a great deal.

EVE

I guess so. I--I never thought about it before.

SASHA

Gwen is spending her whole spirit sending out that love like a beacon in the darkness. Wherever she is, tortured, anguished, and alone, she is clinging to that. You should follow it.

EVE

How did--how did you know her name?

SASHA

I can see the patterns of your lives like veins in a leaf, neat and pale and translucent. You and Richard and Gwendolen and--

(hesitates)

The angel. And a young girl, broken-hearted and suffering. And a young wife, longing to bring herself back to the man she loved so deeply. If you'll excuse me, I've other patrons to attend to.

ZOE enters UR as SASHA leaves UL.

EVE

Who are you? Another Duke?

ZOE

No. Are you--are you Eve?

EVE

Yeah.

ZOE embraces her.

ZOE

Thank--well thank something! She's trapped inside her own private hell, and I--I've done everything I can, but I don't think I can--

EVE

Who's trapped?

ZOE

Gwen. Your mother.

EVE

Who are you?

ZOE

My name is Zoe Milton. I died, twenty-five years ago.

EVE

And you're still here?

ZOE

I should've gone, but...I've seen a lot of people like me come here. I chose to stay, so that I could help them. And when your mother came--I knew her, she was a friend of mine, during my life--much younger then, of course, and so very different, so much brighter, but--She came here, and she was broken. Completely. It's as if--as if she carried the weight of the whole world on her shoulders...

EVE

She always did.

ZOE

Not when I knew her.

EVE

You're--did you have a husband, when you were alive?

ZOE

Yes. I've heard the rumors. There are a few lost souls who say he's working for Mary Halstead now.

(pause, as EVE hesitates)

She's got you under her spell too, has she? Why am I not surprised?

EVE

They--they said I'm a cosmic accident.

ZOE

So was I. You see what happens to us? To her?

(pause)

You'd be better off going to back to your own place, and forgetting about all of this.

EVE

But I want to help.

ZOE

So did your mother. And instead she's trapped here, in Hell. Mary Halstead doesn't care who she hurts or breaks or kills--Gwen is broken because everything that she did for you, she did against her will. She let them take you. She let them use you. She let them use her.

EVE

I have to do something.

ZOE

Find Edan O'Connell. Maybe then, you can--maybe you can save her too.

(pause)

He's in the Garden of Eden, reliving his past. Do you know how to find it?

EVE

The second star to the right and straight on 'til morning?

ZOE

Close your eyes. Breathe. Think of a world before sin, stagnant and pure. Think of forget-me-nots.

Lights.

ACT IIIScene 1

GWEN in her pose as narrator DR. We are supposed to realize, now, that at least some of this is her own fantasy, her mind tracing back over the pages of her life and those who came before her. She speaks softly, slowly, as if unsure of the words.

GWEN

It is a mark of common knowledge that every cloud has a silver lining, every rainstorm is followed by clear skies and bright sunlight, and that when darkness falls over one part of the world, the sun rises in another. I'm trapped here, wandering over the lives of others, their pasts, presents, and futures--I've seen so much in so little time. And yet I've never seen a place quite as beautiful as this one.

GWEN exits DR. The curtain rises or the lights shine on the Garden of Eden, last seen at the end of Act I, now more manicured, more fundamentally groomed, more like an English garden than the primordial world. EDAN is working in the corner UL, sorting seed packets, as EVE enters UR.

EDAN

Can I help you?

EVE

Is this your garden?

He turns to look at her; EVE is startled by his appearance. There should be a special spotlight on him, casting EDAN in a rare, unearthly glow.

EDAN

Oh, God, no. It belongs to the Master of the House. I'm only the gardener.

EVE

And the elaborate metaphor continues.

He rises.

EDAN

Beg pardon?

EVE

No--I meant, only, there don't seem to be that many visitors.

EDAN

I don't think it's the right season for visitors, Miss. We don't get many in the autumn.

(pause)

Are you a friend of Mister Matheson's? You aren't dressed like a--

EVE

I'm a relation of his niece.

EDAN

You know Mary Halstead then. How is she? Is she happy in her married life?

EVE

I don't think she is, to be honest. I can't imagine Alistair Matheson's much of a husband.

EDAN

No, neither can I. But it was her--well no, I don't suppose it was her choice. But we all do things we don't want to, at one time or another.

EVE

And things we shouldn't?

EDAN

I--I don't know what you mean, Miss. And if you'll excuse me, I have to get back to work--

EVE

One night, in this garden--you thought it was a dream but for the rest of your life you couldn't get it out of your head. And when her baby was born, he looked like you. Alistair beat her for it. You couldn't stand to watch him do it, so you left.

EDAN

No! No. I wouldn't have abandoned her, I--He fired me, Miss. A long time ago, before--I didn't--She suffered so much, for the love I bore her. Now, that wasn't right, was it?

EVE

No. It wasn't right at all.

EDAN

I have a son?

(pause)

Mrs. Melville always told me I was a fool, looking after Mary like a man hit by a thunderbolt. I led a good life, a meaningful life. But I could never forget that night in the garden. And somehow, when it was all over, I came here.

EVE

Do you know what you are, Edan? Do you have any idea what you've done?

EDAN

I'm--I'm just a man. I don't know why I'm here, I don't--belong here. It was made empty for a reason.

EVE

It wasn't always empty.

EDAN

That was ages ago.

EVE

Once upon a time a man and a woman lived here, in blissful ignorance.

EDAN

They left.

EVE

They tended this place. They were happy. Knowledge being somewhat unnecessary at the beginning of the world they didn't think they needed it, and, besides, God had told them, explicitly, not to eat from that tree--

She points.

God was the only speaking thing they knew, He had created them, and so they obeyed Him, without question. Until one day.

EDAN

I know this story. Mary told it to me, she said--

EVE

What Eve did was unavoidable. She had to. She took an apple from the tree, and with it the knowledge of good and evil, life and death. And for that, she and the man she loved were condemned. And everyone thereafter.

EDAN is close to tears; he falls to his knees, staring at his hands, as her barrage of words continues.

She cursed God, she cursed Adam, she sat down on this very grass and she wept, over and over again. And when it was all over she had to leave. Alone. But Adam couldn't abandon her, you understand, even if it meant following his wife out of paradise and into death. So he ate an apple too. They left, and they closed the Gates behind them.

MARY (OS)

Edan, if there were someone you loved, more than anything--would you choose eternal damnation over a perfect world alone?

EVE

It was never meant to be entered again. You aren't supposed to be here.

EDAN

I don't know where else to go. She's out there, somewhere, without me, and I can't follow her into damnation if I don't know where she is.

EVE

I can help you. I've done it before, just--stepped into this place. Closed my eyes, wished upon a star, the second one to the right, to be specific--or was it a left at the Tigris, a right at the Euphrates, and a U turn at Iran?

EDAN

I can't--

EVE

What have you been doing for a century and a half? Sitting here? Feeling sorry for yourself?

EDAN

Taking care of the garden is not an easy task. And I feel that I've done a good job, all things considered.

EVE

The tenants got kicked out at least five thousand years ago. So who precisely are you tending it for? Mary? She's a ghost, Edan, she's trapped in that house, she has been for decades and her one obsession, over the past one hundred and fifty years, has been you. So you had a fling--so what? Millions of people go through life having one night stands.

EDAN

It was more than that, it was--

EVE

Love. You saw her in this--cosmic ether, and then you were here, on Earth, as a man, and whatever you were before that was somehow immaterial.

EDAN

And what was I?

EVE

You were an angel.

EDAN begins to pray, muttering, hands clasped together. In a moment, there is a thunderclap, and lights down.

Scene 2

New Year's Eve. MILTON and GWEN walk (enter from UL), their hands tucked in their pockets, as thunder and rain crashes around them.

MILTON

This sure isn't winter weather.

GWEN

It must be winter weather somewhere. Somewhere in this existence, the world falls into wild abandon at the sight of storm clouds--as if the storm were the achievement of something extraordinary.

MILTON

Like you?

GWEN

I'm not stealing Zoe's widower.

MILTON

She's been dead a long time, Gwen. Years.

GWEN

Not to me. And I know not to you. She meant so much to you that even your vision left you when she died--

MILTON

Darkness has its own stark beauty. I'm alone with my mind, and I'm fascinated by it.

GWEN

"The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."

MILTON

Quoting me again, are you? Well I've got another witty rejoinder for you--I'm dreaming of a wet Christmas--

GWEN

Oh, you think you're so terribly clever. But you're not, you know. I have more power in this little finger than you have in your whole body.

MILTON

Is that so?

GWEN

It is. After all--

(with a deep sense of ceremony)

I can call spirits from the vasty deep.

Thunderclap.

MILTON

Why so can I, or so can any man. But do they come when you do call for them?

GWEN

Quite a convincing Milton, I grant you, but can he do anything other than quote Shakespeare?

MILTON

I could manage a little Robert Burns, if need be.

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot--"

GWEN

It's Hogmanay. The whole world should be celebrating, but everyone's inside.

MILTON

They should be, on a night like this.

GWEN

There's nothing wrong with a night like this.

MILTON

You're just being contrary. It's unlike you.

GWEN

I meant it. It's just--Thor, banging Maxwell's Silver Hammer in the sky somewhere. He wouldn't do it if he didn't think we could bear it.

MILTON

I don't think you're talking about Thor anymore.

GWEN

I don't think I am either.

(pause)

My mother died on New Year's Eve, you know. In this very street. Another car came out of nowhere and she was gone, in a single, bloody instant. That's where I got this scar--pressing my hand against the shattered window.

(pause)

Sometimes I think I should have gone with her.

MILTON

Yes, I know.

GWEN

You do, do you? Is that why you've spent so much time helping me fix up the old mansion? Digging into family secrets?

MILTON

No, of course not.

GWEN

You're right, this isn't winter weather. It's like someone made it out of smoke and mirrors and dropped it on the city.

MILTON

God, do you suppose?

GWEN

Where on Earth did you come from, Milton?

MILTON

Sometimes I think I fell out of a dream--but that's not on Earth, is it?

GWEN

I'm going to miss this place.

MILTON

Earth?

GWEN

Edinburgh. But I can't stay here anymore, John. This city, it gets under your skin until you love it so much that you can't let it go--But I have to. I can't help it.

MILTON

Gwen. What if I were to tell you that you were never meant to be here?

There is a moment of terror as the agony of this sets in. GWEN goes from disbelief to horror, in a few moments, and we watch with held breath as her world vanishes.

GWEN

(cold, angry denial)
I wouldn't believe you.

Lights.

Scene 3

The METATRON enters, a figure dressed in white, something strange and otherworldly. Wings are optional, but the pageantry is necessary.

METATRON

I've been looking for you everywhere, Ana'iel.
(pause)

What in the name of God are you doing here?

EDAN

I'm sorry, I've been trying to--I have to stay.

METATRON

You remember me, don't you, angel of the Lord? I'm the Voice of God. I outrank you. So unless you can give me a convincing reason to stay I'm going to have to drag you back to the rest of the Heavenly Choir.

EDAN

This girl, she says that she can help me find Mary--

METATRON

A human being, like any other. That's enough, but it doesn't make her *special*.

EVE

He loves her.

METATRON

A biological imperative, not a spiritual one. That's why we stopped doing so many of these earthly visitations. Glands just get in the way of *everything*.

EVE

Love's more than that, it's--it's a force of nature.

METATRON

You humans think you know everything, don't you? Well, you don't. No one does, except God, and that's--well, it's complicated. Trust me, I know Him better than anyone and--you look like you have a question.

EVE

No, I--It was never my intention to question God--

METATRON

What do you think faith is? It's not blind, whatever that poet friend of yours might represent. Listen to me: God *likes* questions. He wants you to ask Him. Maybe He'll answer, maybe He won't, but it gives Him something to think about.

EVE

I just wanted to know...my mother...Why did she die? They--Mary Halstead told me it was some kind of cosmic accident, that the universal accountants messed up or something--

METATRON

Accountants? Oh, that would make my life so much easier, I wouldn't be running around all the time, chasing these errant seraphim--There are no accountants. There's only God.

EVE

So--what the Hell--

Thunderclap.

--is Mary Halstead?

METATRON

An aberration. Or a figment of your own special reality. Does it really matter, either way? This is your spiritual journey, Eve Matheson, not hers.

EVE

There are no accountants.

METATRON

No.

EVE

Then all of this was part of God's plan. Zoe's death, my mother's death--

METATRON

How could you ever think it was anything else?

EVE

But...Milton lives. And lives. And lives. And Mary Halstead--and this man, Edan--the Garden of Eden, the Fall--Adam and Eve--all of it predestined and understood, in its way inevitable--I just don't get it.

METATRON

Of course you don't. Look: God knows everything. But it doesn't mean that everything's inevitable. Everything that happens in this world is and always will be directly in the hands of the human beings to whom He gave that very first choice.

EVE

And we screwed it up.

METATRON

Not necessarily. I think one of the merits of humankind is that you exhibit a tremendous aptitude for learning from your mistakes.

(a glance at EDAN)

Sometimes.

EDAN

It wasn't a mistake. It was a choice.

METATRON

You're more human than I ever thought you would be, Ana'iel. Clearly you're moving up in the world.

EVE

There must be some redemption. And I can't find it. I've looked everywhere, I've searched the Garden of Eden, even, an empty lot with a misguided half-fallen angel for a tenant, but my mother--

METATRON

Everything began and ended for her in the same place. And that's where she is--learning to get over that one thought she can't escape. So here's what you do: close your heart, your eyes and your mind to the sound of your own chaos and open them all to hers. Fill your soul with only memories of her, and you'll find her. That's all.

EVE

Will it be enough?

METATRON

You'll get it eventually. Let your goodness be the mark of his salvation, and it will lead you to hers.

The METATRON presses its lips against her forehead, in benediction, then looks at EDAN.

You've made your choice then, I take it?

EDAN

Yes.

METATRON

Good luck.

The METATRON exits.

EDAN

"God's answer." I chose that name, once, so long ago. When the supplicants asked God how something so infallible, something that was not human, could understand humanity, I was to be His answer.

(pause)

This planet is so...dirty. You come into it wet and bloody and squalling, and then you leave it, almost the same way. So much of your life is spent trying to draw meaning from this existence that is so--ephemeral, so terminal. I hated it so much I wanted to die just so I could go back to Heaven, tell God that I had failed, and suffer in silence.

EVE

But you didn't. You stayed.

EDAN

I forced myself to forget until all I had left of Heaven were dreams of wings and beautiful light, of songs played on harps and the Voice of God, whispering, laughing. I lost myself in my work until, one day, Mrs. Melville sent me on an errand to pick up a girl from the train station.

EVE

You fell in love.

EDAN

I saw Mary and I thought--here is someone who has suffered, and she stands tall, she moves through the world like everyone else, but better. Stronger. Whatever part of me was the angel and not Edan saw her and found something worth telling God about, but I wouldn't let him.

(pause)

I think I wanted to find redemption in her.

EVE

And now?

EDAN

I've been trapped here for a hundred and fifty years because I couldn't find a way to let go. I couldn't remember anything beyond Addison Gardens and Mary, her soul the only bright thing I could find in such an awfully dark world--

(pause)

Who are you? What in the name of all things are you doing here?

EVE

All of this for Mary Halstead and this ridiculous obsession of hers, this love of hers, as if you will redeem her somehow. Was that your purpose? Was it mine?

EDAN

Please. Take me to her.

Lights.

Scene 4

A single bench sits, with MARY on it. SALOME enters UR, clutching her clipboard.

SALOME

Name?

MARY

I--Where am I? What am I doing in Waverley Station?

SALOME

You mean you can't tell? You're dead.

MARY

Well, yes, I knew that bit. I've been dead for a good long while now and I--My name is Mary Halstead.

SALOME

Mary--For God's--

Thunderclap.

--sake...Do you know the hell I've been through because of you? The universal accounts are all messed up, the list is--You should have checked in here a hundred and fifty-odd years ago!

MARY

I could hardly go alone, could I? I wasn't going to go without him, however long it took. And I would do anything to get him back.

SALOME

I hope it was worth it.

EDAN and EVE enter UL.

MARY

You did it.

EDAN and MARY embrace; it is unmistakably romantic, pure and passionate. In the dark dimness of Hell a light shines over the two of them.

This looks like where we first met. Did you do all this for me?

EDAN

I didn't want you to feel afraid, when you came to follow me.

MARY

Where have you been all this time?

EDAN

The Garden.

MARY

I might have guessed. A single bright moment in a terribly dark place. You saved me, you know, in those few sweet months. If only for a little while.

EDAN

You saved me too.

EVE

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was--

EDAN

Love.

SALOME

If the two of you will just step this way, please. Your train is boarding.

He and MARY, hand in hand, walk past SALOME into a white light (UR). Lights.

Scene 5

EVE is just waking up as MILTON enters UL. As she rises to her feet, he rushes to her, taking her in his arms.

MILTON

Thank God.

EVE waits for the thunderclap, wincing, but it doesn't come.

Are you all right? You look as if you've seen a ghost.

EVE

Mary's passed on.

MILTON

I thought so. She hasn't been around lately.

EVE

How long have I been asleep?

MILTON

Oh, ages. A full century's passed outside--you're a regular Sleeping Beauty.

EVE

I'm not kidding.

MILTON

Twenty-four hours. I was ten minutes away from calling an ambulance, but this house isn't wired up with electricity and I'd have to walk back to the main road. Where were you?

EVE

I think I could probably use the Bible as a roadmap now.

MILTON

So--you found Edan?

EVE

Yes.

MILTON

You look beautiful. The astral plane has done wonders for your skin.

EVE

You can see me?

MILTON

Yes.

EVE

Thank God.

She kisses his cheek.

You're clearly out of a job. Are you going to sit here guarding an old, abandoned house for the rest of your life?

MILTON

At least now I know that it'll end sometime. I've got a lifetime ahead of me but that's it, Eve, that's all I've got now.

EVE

And me.

MILTON

And you. What are you going to do now?

EVE

I heard the Metatron, Milton. The Voice of God. The accountants of the Universe don't exist.

He sits down, burying his head in his hands.
I'm sorry. But isn't it a comfort to know that God works, albeit in mysterious ways?

(pause)

I saw Zoe. She was--well, she was someone you would fall in love with.

MILTON

Don't--Eve, please--just, don't.

EVE

I think I might love you. At least some day. It's just--I've known you for a day, maybe, or an eternity, I can't remember, but I think I saw that hope at the beginning and now, after all of this--I've come to understand that love is more important than pop songs give it credit for. Maybe it's more important than anything. And I want to have that.

MILTON

The women I tend to care for also have a tendency to die. And--it's complicated, Eve. I don't want to think that what you are is tied up in who Gwen was and what I made her become--

EVE

Come with me.

MILTON

Where?

EVE

To go get my mother. To take her away from--whatever Hell she's in.

MILTON

That may not be a good idea.

EVE

Why not?

MILTON

I'm just like everybody else now.

EVE

Not quite.

(pause)

I just asked you to do something that is important to me. And you said no.

MILTON

I just can't. You understand, don't you? To see what she is now, to know I put her there--I'm sorry.

EVE

(laughs)

You're a coward. But I'm not.

MILTON

No, you aren't.

EVE

I'm the salvation of lost souls. That makes me better than you.

MILTON

I know.

EVE

I'm going to save her.

MILTON

I'm sure you will.

EVE

You're not coming with me.

MILTON

No.

(pause)

There's still something here for you. You'll still come back to me.

EVE

Yes. But will that be enough?

Lights.

Scene 6

GWEN starts center as EVE enters DR. EVE watches her, wary. We are in the Hell of Gwen's own choosing, the dark night when her mother died. In the distance, someone is singing "Auld Lang Syne."

GWEN

I revisit these moments of my life that--that meant something, that changed me. Words that were so--

MILTON (OS)

Gwen, what if I were to tell you that you were never meant to be here?

GWEN

People never go through their lives with the knowledge of their own mortality. They can't; it's maddening. So I was a strange person--I didn't make the reckless choices, I made the noble ones. Until the last. I'm in this vacuum, and the weight of the world rolls past and I can't catch it. But it was Hogmanay, in Edinburgh, and it was so cold, and so wet, and--

She turns to look at EVE.

EVE

I'm sorry, I--I was looking for someone.

GWEN

A guy came to me once, on a night like this one, and told me that I was supposed to die, and I didn't. And now I can't get it out of my head. I guess it's just survivor's guilt but have you ever heard of survivor's guilt creating its own reality?

EVE

There are no Accountants of the Universe. You weren't running out on your life taxes.

GWEN

Oh? So the Powers that Be sent you, did they? And what are you? Some kind of otherworldly auditor? Here to tell me that my taxes came back all right? Here to give me comfort or solace?

EVE

You died, a week ago.

GWEN

I know. A car accident.

EVE

Yes.

GWEN

I'm sorry that you didn't know ahead of time._I always knew I was going to go that way. I wasn't stupid enough to ignore the fact that there is a certain rhythm to the universe. But I thought that if I tempted fate, maybe I could disprove it, somehow. And then the curtain closed and I was here again, faith in God restored in one unimaginably painful moment.

EVE

You did this to yourself?

GWEN

No. They did this to me. Mary Halstead and John Milton and decades of pain and anguish, conspiring to make me the person who would die. For you. Do you understand?

EVE

No. No, I--

GWEN

How do you live with the knowledge of your own imminent demise? How do you live with that unworthiness? I should have died! Who knows what's happened in the world because I was still in it?

EVE

Nothing. Except that I was born.

GWEN

What are you doing here, Eve?

EVE

I'm here to save you.

GWEN

I was never the one that needed saving.

(pause)

You were such a bright child, did you know that? You always seemed to glow. And there were moments when I thought that--maybe Mary was right, maybe there was something special about you--something I had to die for--

(pause)

Are you here to take me home?

EVE

I--I thought I was. But now--I don't know. A Duke of Hell warned me that--

ZOE enters.

You again. The martyr.

ZOE

Gwen, do you remember me?

GWEN

Of course. How could I forget someone I've known since I could speak?

ZOE

I'm here to take you into the light. You've earned it.

GWEN

Who says so?

ZOE

Does it matter?

GWEN

Yes. All I've earned is this--this repetitive existence, this one night in Hell, repeating over and over and over--

ZOE

Gwen, you lived a full life. Why does it matter how it began, or how you ended it? Or why?

GWEN begins to cry.

EVE

Please don't cry--

GWEN

I can't help it. I spent so much of my life with the knowledge of my own impending death weighing me down, and now--now it's all gone. It's all over. What else can I do?

ZOE

Come with me.

The lights fade and the cast exits until it is EVE, alone on stage, bathed in light.

EVE

When I was little, I used to sit and dream that I could be a part of something greater than myself. Other kids want to be ballerinas, astronauts, movie stars but me? Oh, no. I wanted to be--what's the opposite of the Antichrist? Oh. Right. You grow up in the shadow of someone like my mother and you think, "I'll never be good enough to emulate her" so you try to be something else. I could have turned out a lot worse, all things considered. Instead I became this. An instrument of God. Or a champion of free will. Probably both. And I'm just an ordinary human being--if you can say that any of us are ordinary. So, do me a favor: Close your eyes. Breathe deeply. Think of forget-me-nots. Be thankful to be human and thank God you're alive. And when that part's over, when the air starts to smell of sulfur and it gets a little too hot and Glenn Miller starts to play, just...keep going. You'll thank me for it later.