

Disgrace

by John O'Keefe

Disgrace was first presented at the 14th Annual Padua Hills Playwrights Festival, Woodbury College, Los Angeles, California, in 1994. The play was directed by the author with the following cast:

Katherine: Denise Poirier

Simone: Dahlia Wilde

Christine: Susan van Allen

Escape

Run One

The lights rise as three women dressed in long, white dresses with black choke collars, parasols and wide hats (Gibson girls) run across the stage. SIMONE is carrying a picnic basket. They are laughing. Note: they always enter from stage right—as if moving in one direction. The stage is always empty. They are running fast, holding down their hats. The lights fade.

Run Two

There is a pause. The lights rise. Again the three women enter stage right running and exit stage left. They are laughing. They're trying to keep their hats on. The lights fade.

Run Three

They enter running and exit.

Stretch Marks

They enter running.

- Katherine** Hurry up.
Christine Come on. Come on.
Simone I'm hurrying. Let's stop here.
Katherine No. No. Farther.
Christine Yes, yes, farther.
Simone I'm tired, my legs are hurting.
Katherine That's how you get the fat off your thighs.
Simone I don't have fat on my thighs.
Christine I don't want the fat off my thighs.
Katherine Why not?
Christine It leaves stretch marks.
Katherine I don't have stretch marks.
Simone Yes, you do.
Katherine I do not.
Simone Yes, you do, you have them all over your face!

They laugh and run off.

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Basin

They amble in.

- Simone** This is nice.
Christine I don't like this place.
Simone Why not?

- Christine** It's at the bottom of a hole.
Simone No, it's not. It's a valley.
Katherine It's a basin.
Christine I don't want to be in a basin.
Katherine Look up there. That hill. Let's go up there.
Simone No, it's too far up.

KATHERINE starts to run. The others stay behind.

KATHERINE stops and turns around.

- Katherine** Come on. Please. Pretty please. You'll like it up there.
We'll be able to see everything.
Christine Oh, all right.

CHRISTINE starts running, too. Stops, then turns around to SIMONE.

- Christine** Come on.
Simone I don't want to climb up there.
Katherine If you stay down here it'll get dark.
Simone It's morning.
Katherine I'm going.
Christine I'm going, too.
Simone You're cruel. You're both cruel.
Christine It won't hurt you, you're young.
Simone I'm not young.
Katherine You're not old.
Simone I'm old in the middle.
Katherine Then move the stuff on either end.

Laughter. KATHERINE and CHRISTINE exit running. They speak offstage.

Christine Kathy, Kathy don't run so fast. You'll muss your dress.
Katherine It'll get full of the ground. It's good. It's good.

SIMONE is alone. She looks around. She becomes apprehensive.

Simone *(Screams)* DON'T LEAVE ME ALONE! *(Runs after them)*

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Orchard

They stroll on stage leisurely.

Katherine Look, an old orchard.
Simone It's dead.
Katherine It was an apple orchard.
Simone Dead orchards are sad.
Katherine Look, there's an old building. It looks like it's burned down.
Simone No, it's just broken down.
Katherine Broken down?
Christine By the wind.
Katherine Yes, and the water.
Simone It was a convent.
Christine It had arches.
Katherine An orphanage.
Simone With a lot of nuns.

Christine Nuns are crazy.
Simone I always wanted to be a nun.
Christine That's because you had a thing for Jesus.
Simone Staying in dark rooms.
Christine Praying in cubicles at night and during the day taking care of the children.
Simone Nursing them.
Christine Without sex.
Katherine Like Mary.
Christine Like Mary.
Simone Becoming virgin again.
Katherine Somehow.
Christine Yes, somehow.
Katherine And keeping that way.
Christine Until we're dead.
Katherine Where we lived is much like that.

CHRISTINE suddenly smiles.

Christine Yes, except for François.
Katherine François.
Simone François.
Katherine This is a disgrace.
Simone I don't want to be a nun. I want to be a whore for animals and women.
Katherine Oh, good God.
Simone It's true. I want to disgrace them, and myself as well.
Katherine In heaven's name why?
Simone I want them to look at me like they did those women in France who slept with the Nazis. I want them to shave

dirty words in my hair. I want them to sneer and spit at Simone: me, and I want to smile at them and look at them with frightened eyes, I want to see the desire in their faces.

Katherine

Desire?

Simone

Yes, the desire one has for a fallen, despicable beauty.

Katherine

You just want respect.

Simone

Respect? Hell no, I want to be feared.

Christine

I think we're in Africa some place on some rich white man's ranch.

Katherine

I think we're in Spain.

Christine

You do?

Katherine

Yes, I can feel it in the air. Can't you? *(She strikes a pose)*
Olé!

Christine

(Strikes a pose) Olé!

Simone

(Strikes a pose) Olé!

Laughter. Lights out.

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Ambling

Lights come up. They are lying on the ground, resting.

Christine

I think love is a primary quality.

Simone

No, love is a diversion.

Katherine

Love, sisters, is the salt of life.

Christine

It's the sugar of life.

Simone

I hate sugar.

Christine

Then it's the salt of life.

Simone

Yes, salt in the wound.

Katherine

Which wound are you talking about?

They laugh.

Christine

(Sings) Love is a dress
that takes me off
and puts me on,
the woman looking back
in the mirror.
Whoever she watches
I watch.

When I kiss her
she kisses me.

Katherine

Where did you learn that?

Christine

I just made it up.

Katherine

I thought so.

Simone

I think love is a good kill.

Katherine

That's sick. What do you think?

Christine

I don't think.

Katherine

You do.

Christine

I don't. I don't think a minute. That's how I get places.
That's how I meet people and do things.

Katherine

You're crazy.

They look at each other.

*

Picnic

The lights come up. KATHERINE appears. She's out of breath and filled with delight.

Katherine Hurry! Hurry! You've got to see this!

SIMONE appears. She's quite exhausted.

Simone My God, at last.

Katherine Look, look, you can see everything.

Simone I can't see anything.

Katherine Why in heavens not?

Simone I have too much blood in my eyes.

Katherine *(Laughs)* Blood in your eyes! Blood in your eyes! Let me see your eyes.

KATHERINE takes SIMONE's face and holds it between her hands.

You're not bleeding. You look beautiful.

They take each other's hands and begin to spin around.

Katherine Beautiful. Beautiful. Beautiful.

Simone Stop. Stop. My knees are going to break off.

Katherine No, no they won't.

They stop.

Katherine They're in your skin, buried in your legs.

KATHERINE picks up SIMONE's hem and holds it up.

Katherine See.

KATHERINE grabs SIMONE around the legs.

Katherine Come on and dance. Dance.

KATHERINE takes SIMONE into her arms and begins dancing the polka. They dance in circles faster and faster. They fall on the floor out of breath.

Katherine I love you, Simone, even if you are a thief.

Simone A thief?

Katherine Yes, you stole François from me.

Simone I did not.

Katherine Did too.

Simone Did not.

Katherine Did too.

Simone Did not.

She grabs KATHERINE and they begin to roll in each other's arms, laughing.

CHRISTINE appears over the hill looking bedraggled.

Christine I'm soaked. I've soaked all over myself. My dress, look at my dress.

KATHERINE gets up.

Katherine It will dry.
Christine Yes, and it will stain.
Katherine Then we'll wash it off in the river.
Christine What river?
Katherine The one over there.

*She runs and stops at the edge of the hill and points.
SIMONE whines.*

Simone That's down in the valley.
Christine It's not far. We can fly there.
Simone You fly.
Christine (*Flaps her arms*) Fly. Fly. Isn't it wonderful? I've never been to any place so wonderful.
Simone I have.
Katherine Where is that?
Simone At home in bed.
Christine It's too late to be in bed.
Simone It's never too late to be in bed.
Christine What time is it?
Katherine I don't know what time it is, you silly bird.
Christine I know what time it is.
Katherine You don't know how to tell time.
Christine I do. I did. I just forgot. Not from a watch head, but from the sun, from there—

She points at the sun.

Christine I can tell. It's nine A.M.
Simone No. It's eleven.

Katherine Right.
Christine (*Distraught*) No, it's not that late. It's nine.
Katherine It's not nine. It's eleven. It's probably even later.
Christine Don't say that.
Simone I think it is later. Look, the sun is almost in the top of the sky.
Christine The sky is moving, not time. It's late down there and it's early up here. It's only nine up here.
Katherine The sky is not moving.
Christine The sky is moving. The sky is moving. Look, look at it move. Birds, we're up with the birds.

She traces the bird's flight with her finger.

Christine I don't care what time it is.
Katherine Let's have our picnic. Come and sit.
Christine Oh, I don't want to get up. I want to look at the sky.
Katherine Christine, please.
Christine Oh, all right. What about her?

SIMONE is looking out watching the horizon. Her fingers are in her hair. She is euphoric.

Katherine She's coming. Aren't you?
Simone (*Not taking her eyes away from the view*) Yes.
Christine What do you see?
Simone Everything.
Katherine Come and eat. Look. I have sandwiches.
Simone What kind?
Katherine What kind did you fix?

Christine I think I fixed peanut butter, banana and honey.
Katherine Yes, here they are.
Christine The bananas haven't gone black?
Katherine No.
Christine What did you fix?
Katherine Eggs.
Christine *(Wrinkles her nose)* Ooh.
Katherine Simone, what did you make?
Simone I didn't make anything.
Katherine Then you can't eat anything.
Simone I don't care.
Katherine That's not fair.
Christine You can have some of mine.
Katherine Aren't you going to eat? Please.
Simone "Eat!" What an ugly word!
Katherine Not if you're hungry.
Simone I'm fed.

CHRISTINE spreads a tablecloth on the ground. KATHERINE takes out the food: two sandwiches. CHRISTINE crosses and looks at the spread.

Christine Where's the rest of it?
Katherine Rest of what?
Christine The food?
Katherine That's it.
Christine That's all of it?
Katherine Yes.
Christine That's not enough.
Katherine She's not hungry.

Christine She will be.
Katherine That's all of it.
Christine Simone, she only brought two sandwiches.
Simone Then let's divide them up.

SIMONE pulls out a knife.

Christine Where did you get that?
Simone I had it since I was a child.

SIMONE crosses and sits on the ground. She opens the napkin and pulls out the sandwiches and begins cutting them on the napkin.

Simone We shouldn't argue. Especially us. We've come to make amends.
Christine You're right.
Simone We could be enemies but now we're becoming friends. When women make up with each other they become everything their lovers fear. *(She is cutting the sandwiches. As she speaks she cuts the sandwiches more intensely)*

Simone We've traveled so far to get away from him. To this hill. And now we are arguing as if he were here slumped over his plate. But he isn't here. Only our thin bodies are here and our thin appetites. We don't need much food. We are thin as the wind. Thin boats. There, everything is cut.

She holds the napkin up with the sandwiches in shreds.

The lights fade.

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Simone's Story

The lights rise. The women have arranged themselves casually. KATHERINE is lying on her back. They are just finishing up their sandwiches.

Simone I want to tell you what happened between us.
Katherine Let's talk about it later.
Christine No, I want to hear about it now. We promised we'd tell everything. That afterwards we'd become friends.
Katherine We didn't promise that.
Simone We met on Friday afternoons. We met together after lunch.
Katherine Today is Friday.
Simone I went to a café and waited for him.
Katherine Café Trieste.
Simone I won't tell you the name of the café.
Katherine It was Trieste.
Simone He'd pick me up in his motorcar.
Katherine The red one.
Simone Which one doesn't matter.
Katherine It was the red one.
Simone And I would go with him into the country.
Katherine So that no one would see you, right?
Simone We didn't talk. We just sat and looked at the road and the pastures and orchards moving by us, feeling the wind blow.
Katherine Did he wear that beautiful touring cap, the plaid one?

Simone Yes.
Katherine I thought so.
Simone We always went to the same place. But we went there by different routes. Some would take us an hour, some less. And once, once we spent the whole day getting there.
Katherine I can't stand it! I can't stand it!
Simone You said you wanted to know.
Christine She does. Don't you Kathy?
Katherine I hate my name. My name belongs to the kind of person you'd say something like that to. "Don't you, Kathy? Don't you, Kathy?"
Simone And when we got there, we'd park the car off the road and bring the picnic basket and a blanket.
Christine A picnic basket?
Katherine Like this one?
Simone Yes.
Katherine I hate picnic baskets.

KATHERINE gives the basket a kick.

Christine What about the blanket? Aren't you worried about the blanket?
Katherine I'm not worried.
Christine No, she's excited.
Katherine Talk to me when you're talking about me. I'm not a bug.
Christine You're as cute as a bug.
Katherine I'm not cute. I hate cute.
Simone He'd bring soap and towels.
Christine (*Begins laughing*) Soap and towels?
Simone He'd wait in the trees away from the lake.

Katherine The lake?

Simone I'd strip and go into the water. I'd swim out to the middle of the lake. And then I'd call to him.

Christine *(Mockingly)* François? *(Begins laughing)* François?

Katherine Stop that.

Christine It's such a stupid name. I always called him Frank.

Katherine Frank? Now that's a stupid name. It has nothing to do with François.

Christine At least it's a man's name. That's how I treated him. *(Disdainfully)* François.

Simone He'd come out of the trees with nothing on and he'd stand there on the beach, looking for me. And I'd see him, his frame, his thighs, his strong, long arms.

Christine Yes, like an ape.

Simone Then he'd spot me and quietly, he'd slip into the water and disappear. I'd watch for him. He never once came up for air.

Christine I'll bet.

Simone The longer he took to reach me the more frantic I got. Once I waited a whole half-hour. But then I'd feel them, his hands on my ankles, gripping them, pulling me down. That part was always inflamed me. Knowing what was coming, wondering how long he was going to hold me under before he released me. And then I'd feel his hands climb up the curves of my body.

Christine Curves?

Katherine Shut up.

Simone And then he would pull me down, pull my face down into the water to his. And he'd kiss me. We prolonged this kiss, sometimes to the edge of consciousness. A deep dark kiss. A kiss of profound significance.

Christine "Profound significance?"

Simone When we broke the water's surface it was with a lust for life, like the dying gasp of a soul reaching for the light.

Christine Oh my God.

Simone The air was so clear, so sweet, the trees like dark dreaming cows, the water like the skin of an eye.

Christine *(Convulsing with laughter)* Oh, stop, stop, please stop.

Katherine Stop it yourself, it's beautiful. Go on Simone.

Simone And then he'd...he'd...

Katherine Yes?

Simone He'd wash me.

Katherine What?

CHRISTINE begins laughing again.

Simone From head to toe.

Katherine He what?

Simone He'd run his slippery bar of soap all over my body.

Katherine You're making fun of me?

Simone I'm not, he really did it. Didn't he do that with you? Didn't he wash you first?

Katherine No, I washed myself.

Christine Maybe he didn't trust Simone to do it.

Simone No, it was the way the soap squeaked on my skin and how the lather covered certain parts of my body.

Christine Yes, like steak tartare.

Katherine Stop it both of you. He was my lover.

CHRISTINE rolls over on her stomach.

Christine Mine, too.

Katherine I'm thirsty. And I'm depressed.

She fishes around in the basket.

Christine Now that he's dead we might as well tell the truth about him. It was well known that he was kinky, Kathy.

Katherine Don't call me Kathy. Call me Katherine.

She pulls a can of Coca-Cola from the basket, pops the top and takes a long, slow drink as the lights fade.

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Christine's Story

In the dark.

Katherine *(Wailing)* I don't want to hear anymore.

The lights come up as if they're in the middle of the scene.

Christine ...Yes, but he was always good to me.

Katherine Please stop.

Christine He'd play with my hands and tell me that they were like small birds just out of the egg and he'd kiss them and tell me he wished they were his. He begged me sometimes to give him my hands. And I promised him that if I died he could have them. He'd take my hands and put his hands

over my hands and we'd wiggle our fingers together. We never kissed. In all that time we never kissed. I had a child by him. It was a small girl.

Simone I didn't know you had a child.

Christine Yes, it was a secret.

Simone When was this?

Christine Remember when I looked so terrible?

Katherine Never, I've never seen you look terrible.

Simone I did. You looked like somebody had beat you up.

Christine Pregnant. A difficult pregnancy. With much blood. I had to put a basin between my feet at breakfast. And the strong smell of my mother's milk. Didn't you notice how wet my chest was?

Katherine No.

Simone Yes.

Katherine But you always looked so flat-chested.

Christine I put a strap across my breasts. I knew that he would be punished if he were caught being the father of my child. And so I waited, waited patiently for the thin moon to rise in my August month and when it did I went to a cottage he built for me deep in the woods where he kept his cars and his tools and I gave birth the child.

Katherine Whatever happened to her?

Christine She ran away.

Katherine Oh, how terrible.

Christine Yes.

Katherine You never saw her again?

Christine I did. She came to visit me only a few nights ago. She came very near the window and I heard this tiny "tap-tap-tapping." The moon was in full stride so I could see the yard in

the sword silver light and there on the edge of the window I saw her tiny fingers creeping up the pane like a Christine young unmarried spider. Those fingers that looked so much like mine. I knew Frank would not be able to bear it. Her hands were in peril. I saw her breath stain the glass, "Mother! Mother! Come with me. I've found a hole in the world and I'm going there. We can run and play with our hands and no one will ever find us." I knew that world was not for me. It was for children who had run away from home at a very early age. I bowed my head and sobbed. Then I heard this sad cry. When I raised my eyes to the window she was gone.

Simone How terrible.

Katherine How ugly.

Christine It is terrible...and ugly but true.

Katherine It is not true.

Christine When Frank came in with my breakfast I knew he sensed something had happened and then he saw them, the tiny prints and finger streaks on the windowpane. And he put his large head on my lap and cried. Then he made this inconceivable request.

Simone Yes?

Christine Do you want to know?

Simone I do.

Katherine I don't.

Christine Then I'll tell *you*.

She whispers in SIMONE's ear. SIMONE nods her head solemnly.

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Hand-clapper

Hand clapping sequence between CHRISTINE and Simone.

Christine and Simone:

How do you kill a man?

Hit him in the head with a pan.

Kick him in the wick.

Stick him with a stick.

Trick him with a trick.

Tickle him with a tick till he twitches.

They laugh. KATHERINE enters out of breath.

Katherine Simone? Christine?

Blackout.

*

Traveling Toward the Storm

They are on the move again, KATHERINE leading.

Christine I don't understand why we had to go. That was a perfectly lovely place.

Katherine It was too lovely.

Christine How can anything be too lovely?

Katherine Too much loveliness is inebriating. It dulls the senses. It makes you stupid.

Simone You're stupid.

Christine I want to stop.
Katherine No, we can't stop.
Christine I want to stop.
Katherine *(Not shouting)* We can't.
Christine *(Not shouting)* Don't shout at me.
Katherine *(Not shouting)* I'll shout at you whenever I damn please.

CHRISTINE starts crying.

Katherine Good God, what's wrong now?
Christine Now you're swearing at me.
Katherine I'm not swearing at you. I'm waking you up. I'm using sounds that will awaken you.
Simone Oh, good grief, Kathy.
Katherine *(As if she had just been called a bad name)* I don't mind if you call me Kathy even though I asked you to call me Katherine.
Simone We want to rest.
Katherine Are you speaking for her?
Simone Yes.
Katherine What are you resting from? We live to move we move to live. If we don't move, we won't live, don't you see?
Christine Don't be scary.
Katherine I'm not. I'm just telling the truth. We shouldn't stay in a place like this. And look, it's getting dark.
Christine It isn't getting dark.
Katherine It is.
Christine It is not. It's not even late afternoon yet.
Katherine What has that got to do with anything?
Christine The sun goes down behind the world and it gets dark or a

cloud gets stuck in the sky and it gets dim. It's neither dim nor dark. The sky is empty and there aren't any trees to cover it up. And we're not going up a hill so it's fine.

Simone You just don't want to tell us about François.
Katherine I do. I just want to move from where we started.
Christine Where was that?
Katherine The house in the valley.
Christine House?
Simone I don't remember any house.
Katherine Residence.
Simone "Residence?" It sounds like skeleton.

The sky darkens. There is the sound of distant thunder.

Katherine Look.
Christine Where should we go?
Katherine Let's go up.
Christine We'll be strangled by lightning.
Simone You're not strangled by lightning.
Christine Yes, you are. Way down deep you are.

SIMONE and CHRISTINE laugh.

Katherine Let's climb up into it.
Christine Let's have an adventure.
Simone I don't want an adventure.
Katherine Yes, you do.
Christine I do.
Katherine I do, too.

KATHERINE and CHRISTINE grin at SIMONE.

Simone I do, too-too.

They laugh and run up the hill. The lights fade.

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Wild Flowers

They enter. There are a number of artificial flowers sticking out of the stage.

Christine Look, a flower patch.

Simone Wildflowers.

Christine I hope they're not catching.

Katherine What do you mean?

She sneezes. They laugh.

Christine Should we go in there and pick some?

Simone We might go to sleep.

Christine Like the Lizard of Was.

Katherine Wizard of Oz.

Christine Sleep. Sleep. Sleep. I want to lie down and go to sleep.

I want to sleep forever.

She runs toward the flowers.

Katherine Stop. We should keep going.

Simone Where? This is a picnic, not a commute.

Christine Yes, it's an old-time get-together, for ladies.

She is poised, paused ready to rush into the flowers.

Christine Please let me go.

Simone She's not keeping you.

Christine Yes she is. She's making all of the flowers dull.

Katherine They are dull. They're not bright. They're strange. They're drugged.

Simone They're not drugged, you're drugged.

Katherine *(Suddenly screaming)* I DON'T TAKE PILLS!

Simone *(Screaming back at KATHERINE and attacking her)* You do. You do. You do take pills. Pills. Pills. Pills.

Christine I'm going in.

She runs in the middle of the flowers. She calls back to the two struggling women.

It's wonderful. It's beautiful.

She begins eagerly picking flowers.

Come on pick some.

The speeches go on simultaneously.

Simone *(Panicked)* Let go of my hair. Let go of my hair.

Katherine *(Screaming in rage)* No. No. No. No.

Christine *(Hugging the flowers she has gathered)* Wonderful. Wonderful.

Simone *(Pleading)* Please. Please. Please. Please.
Katherine You're so beautiful. You are, you're so horribly beautiful.
Simone Please Katherine. Stop Katherine. I didn't mean anything by it.
Katherine You didn't mean anything by it? You screwed my lover.
Christine I know you're worried. I know you think that we're going to get caught. But if we have fun we may never get caught again and if we do we might not even notice it. I love you Katherine. I love you Simone.
Katherine *(Mimicking CHRISTINE)* "I love you Katherine. I love you Simone."

KATHERINE releases SIMONE and breaks into tears.

I hate you, I hate you both. Now I'm gonna get in trouble because I got mad.

Christine No, you're not. Is she, Simone?
Simone *(Terrorized)* She hurt me.
Katherine *(Burying her face in her hands)* I'm sorry. I'm sorry.
Simone Don't say you're sorry.
Katherine *(Shouting at Simone)* I AM SORRY!
Simone *(Cowering)* DON'T! DON'T HURT ME!
Katherine *(Wailing with frustration)* I'm not. I won't. Please, please forgive me.
Simone You can't make it undone like that.
Katherine *(Wailing)* HELP ME! HELP ME!
Christine Don't you see what's happening? We're getting magical. François is with us even though he's down in the basement underneath the stairs. Kathy's got him in her left foot and in her right eye.

Imitating the sound of a man dragging his bum leg as she gathers the flowers.

Crack-slip, Crack-slip, Crack-slip. Coming down the hall. Can't you see him? Crack-slip, crack-slip. *(Imitating his big deep voice)* You in there alone, Kathy? You need Franky's fat pink bat?

Katherine *(KATHERINE and SIMONE begin laughing. She imitates a bat flying)* Pink bat, pink bat.

Christine See? He's already flown away. You got to watch him, else he'll be coming up the hill with us walking in our feet, talking in our mouths.

Simone *(She looks at her feet, looks at her hands and murmurs as she rises)* Up the hill. Up the hill.

Christine Come on and pick these.

She holds up the flowers. The lights fade.

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By a Stream

CHRISTINE enters first. KATHERINE and SIMONE enter skipping. They have their arms around each other's waists. They all have some of the wildflowers in their hair.

Simone Look, a stream.

Christine LOOK!

Katherine It's beautiful.

Simone Let's bathe.

Christine *(Looks into KATHERINE's eyes)* Bathe.

Katherine *(Looks back)* Bathe.

They laugh with delight. The lights fade. In the dark.

Katherine Ooh, it's cold.

Christine It's white.

Katherine No, it's not white, it's clear.

Simone Clear.

*

Garden of Eden

When the lights rise the women are all lying on the ground. They talk to each other as they gaze at the sky.

Simone I could stay here forever.

Katherine The sun's so big and fat I could lick it.

Christine A garden just for ourselves. Look, maybe we could find things to eat.

Katherine Maybe we don't have to eat any more.

Simone They kicked Eve out of the Garden of Eden.

Katherine They kicked out Adam, too.

Simone No, he could have stayed.

Christine Do you think so?

Simone Oh, yes.

Katherine I think so, too. I think God would have fashioned another woman out of his other rib. And she would have been just fine.

Christine But he didn't.

Katherine I know.

Simone And so he got us.

Katherine Yes.

They laugh.

Christine Do you think it happened that way?

Katherine I think there was another Eden, outside the "garden," the Land of Mermaids where a young girl or an old woman could dress herself in bark and roots. She could let her hair grow long and matted and she could rub her body with charcoal and palm oil until she was black. She learned the language of the Mermaids, unintelligible to Adam. It sprang spontaneously to her tongue. And when the time came she escaped from the garden with her companions and they all turned completely wild. Adam wandered outside the garden in search of them until he was returned, pale and stupefied to the land of fences.

Simone That's so stupid.

Christine I liked that story.

Simone Adam can go there, too. Adam can go anywhere. And he knows how to talk Mermaid.

Christine No, he doesn't, he's too stupid.

Simone Mermaid isn't so hard.

Christine Do you know how to speak it?

Simone Yes.

Christine Then speak it.

Simone I am. It's called "I wish upon, I wish upon." It's called, "I wish there was something else." It's called, "I wish I could

fill the hole in my body.” It’s called, “I wish I could get away.” It’s called, “I’ll never be alone or I’ll always be alone.” It’s called, “Help me.” It’s called...

Christine Stop it.

Katherine Yes, stop it, you’re ruining the afternoon.

Christine *(Sitting up, disturbed)* Is it afternoon?

Katherine Yes.

Christine Why does it always have to go that way?

Katherine Which way?

Christine Why does it only get later?

Simone Why does everything have to get so philosophical? Why can’t we just lie here like big snakes on a rock?

Christine I don’t like snakes.

Simone You would if you were a snake.

Christine I’m not...a snake.

Katherine *(Alarmed)* Let’s go.

CHRISTINE begins gathering their things.

Simone I don’t want to go.

Katherine Look, we can still climb up that hill over there.

Christine That’s no hill, that’s a mountain.

Katherine No, it’s just a high hill. When we get there we’ll be able to see everything. Come on.

Simone Why don’t we just go back?

Katherine We can’t go back.

Christine Why not?

Simone There’s nowhere to go here. Soon we’ll be trapped on the top of the highest mountain in the world and there won’t be anywhere to go, not anywhere to go.

Katherine We can’t go back.

Simone Then let’s just stay here, stay here in the Garden of Eden.

Katherine There isn’t any Garden of Eden.

Simone Then let’s just stay here. He’s coming. I know he is. Let’s just stay here until he comes.

Christine *(Frightened)* He can’t come. He’s dead. He’s dead as an old rat.

Simone He’s close.

Christine *(Rising panic)* No he isn’t.

Katherine Please, please come.

Simone Haven’t you felt him? Following us behind each branch? Haven’t you heard his feet breaking the leaves?

Katherine Let’s go.

Simone Tell us about François and I will.

Katherine Nothing happened. He never touched me.

Simone I’ll bet. Tell us.

Christine I don’t care if I hear it.

Simone Yes, you do. It’s only fair.

Christine You’re not trying to be fair. You’re trying to be evil.

Simone Yes, I am.

She makes a scary face and laughs.

Christine *(Frightened)* Stop it.

Simone *(Talking in François’ voice)* Make her tell us.

Christine Stop it.

Simone *(Gets up and approaches Katherine)* What did he do?

What did he really do?

Katherine *(Screaming)* HE BEAT ME! HE BEAT ME! He locked me in a dark room and beat me.

Christine STOP IT! STOP IT!
Katherine He did. Now, let's go.
Simone (*Shaken*) Which way should we go?
Katherine Up.

The lights fade.

*

Nearing the Storm

A crash of thunder. The lights come up as KATHERINE is running across the stage. She enters then exits on the other side. There is laughter offstage, then SIMONE and CHRISTINE enter. They are talking and laughing. CHRISTINE is swinging the picnic basket.

They laugh and skip after KATHERINE as they sing.

Christine and Simone

It's raining, it's pouring
the old man is snoring
he bumped his head
on the side of the bed
and couldn't get up till the morning.

Lights fade.

*

Katherine Comes to a Precipice

KATHERINE comes running alone. She's out of breath. The lights have gotten dimmer. SIMONE sings the popular oldie, "You, You, You, I'm In Love With You."

Simone (*Singing*) "You, you, you
I'm in love with
you, you, you..."

Katherine Christine?

Simone No, silly.

Katherine (*She can't locate where SIMONE is*) Simone?

Simone (*Singing*) "Won't you make my dreams
come true.
Let me cling to you, you, you."

SIMONE dashes out of the trees and grabs KATHERINE and whirls her around, laughing. KATHERINE struggles free.

Katherine Where's Christine?

Simone Back there.

Katherine Where?

Simone By the marsh.

Katherine You just left her there?

Simone I couldn't drag her with me. Besides, I didn't want you to get lost.

Katherine I know where I'm going. How is she going to find us?

Simone The path.

SIMONE looks behind her at the path. KATHERINE is surprised to see it.

Katherine Oh.

Simone You didn't know there was a path?

Katherine *(Lying)* Yes.

Simone Any one can find us. All they have to do is follow the path.

SIMONE laughs. She rushes at KATHERINE and clutches her to her.

Katherine *(Struggles with SIMONE)* LET GO OF ME!

Simone You're not strong now, are you? Have you become a girl again? Have I become a man? Am I your man? I look like him, don't I?

(Suddenly screaming enacting François) "What's the matter with you, are you stupid?"

(She shoves KATHERINE back and struts toward her)
"What are you gawking at?"

KATHERINE looks at SIMONE, bewildered.

Simone *(As FRANÇOIS)* "Come here. I said, Come here!"

KATHERINE backs away from SIMONE, bewildered.

Simone *(As FRANÇOIS)* "Come on, Kathy, come out of your cell and make a baby with me in the sink."

Katherine STOP IT! STOP IT!

Simone *(As FRANÇOIS)* "Come on and be my girlfriend."

They struggle. They fall on the ground and begin rolling and fighting. SIMONE overpowers KATHERINE.

Simone *(As herself)* Do you think I killed her? Do you think I did? Do you think I pushed her into the marsh and killed her? Do you? Do you, my darling?

Katherine Did you?

Simone Do I look like the kind of person that would do a thing like that?

Katherine You look beautiful. You always look beautiful.

Simone Beautiful. Beautiful. Beautiful is what you beat. Look at me.

Katherine You have a scar on your throat.

Simone Isn't it beautiful?

Katherine Who did it to you?

Simone Who do you think? Kiss it. Kiss it and make it better.

KATHERINE runs her lips over SIMONE's scar.

Simone We didn't kill anybody. We killed a shadow.

Laughter. SIMONE and KATHERINE start. CHRISTINE enters. Her face is dirty.

Christine I forgot it.

She holds the basket up.

*

Cleaning up Christine

KATHERINE is wiping CHRISTINE's face off with a napkin.

SIMONE is cleaning CHRISTINE's muddy dress.

Christine If our fathers were here they could clean me up.
Katherine How did you get so muddy?
Christine I forgot about the water.
Katherine What do you mean?
Christine There wasn't any.
Katherine What?
Christine Is my dress dirty? I made this dress just for this.
Simone We all did. Just be quiet.
Christine I haven't had my pill.
Katherine What pill?
Christine The pill that François gives me at noon at three at nine.
Katherine You don't need a pill.
Christine Oh, I do.
Katherine You know about this?
Simone Yes.
Katherine You didn't say you took pills.
Christine I did.
Katherine I didn't hear you.
Christine I said it softly. I wanted to go, too. I wanted to go.
Don't you take them?
Katherine I take them but I don't need them.
Christine I do.
Katherine What happens if you don't get them?
Christine I don't remember.
Simone Look at her hands.
Christine My hands are too beautiful to look at.

SIMONE suddenly runs a little distance away and shouts into the sky.

Simone THE WORLD IS RUNNING DOWN! With every gesture I make smoke. Look at the sky. It's cracking. The heat's going up into the stars. Look, they're sucking all the water away.
Christine *(Touching her face)* My skin is bad now. Now we can't make up.
Katherine We've made up.
Christine Have we?
Katherine Yes, haven't we, Simone?
Simone Oh, yes. *(Screams it angrily at the sky)* WE'VE MADE UP!

SIMONE runs back and gazes at CHRISTINE's hands.

Look at her hands.
Katherine What's wrong with your hands? *(She holds CHRISTINE's hands up. They are paralyzed)*
Christine They're being shellfish.
Katherine Why didn't you tell me she was this bad off.
Christine I'm not bad.
Simone Everyone knew it. If you weren't so bad off yourself you would have noticed it.
Christine You're talking about me. You don't need to talk about me. I helped you just like everyone else did. I helped hit him in the head. I helped put his face in the water.
Katherine *(Shouting)* But you didn't say you needed pills!
Simone You're the one who needs pills. You're the one they always locked up.

Katherine *(Shouting defensively)* That's because I killed my husband!
Simone It's because you didn't behave.
Katherine It's because François loved me the most.
Simone Yes, that's why he locked you up in a room.
Katherine He put me there to keep me away from the lights.
Simone *(Shouting)* Stop acting crazy! He took you in the room because he wanted to play. And you liked it! We all did!
Christine I liked it. Didn't you Katherine? I liked it. We all liked it. We liked it under the table, in the john, on the stairs, in the examination room, in the basement, late at night in the cells with his hand over our mouths. We liked it up the pooper. I had a baby by him. I had it in the toilet!

CHRISTINE looks at them and begins laughing. They look at her and begin laughing back. Gradually they stop laughing; then slowly they look up as if at a door at the end of a set of stairs. They are speaking to their captor, very seductively.

Christine François, François, come here.
Simone Do you like our dresses?
Christine Aren't they pretty?
Katherine We made them ourselves.
Simone Especially for you.
Katherine Come on down in the basement.
Simone And have some fun.
Christine Did you hit him?
All No.
Christine Did you ever hit him?
All No.

Christine Are you lying?
All Yes.

They make striking gestures in unison.

All BANG!

BANG!

BANG!

They begin laughing, laughing and laughing. The lights go down.

The lights rise.

The women run across the stage. This time there's a mood of feverish, incipient hysteria about, and a savage joy of beings who are just beginning to understand that there is nowhere else to go, that there is nothing to hide.

*

Simone's Baby

The thunder rolls, the lights flash, when the lights come up it is darker. They fall on the ground, out of breath.

Christine Let's sleep under a rock.
Simone We'll get buggy.

Christine Bugs don't touch me. They cry when they see me. I've killed bugs. I killed them in my husband's house.

Katherine You killed your husband, not your bugs.

Christine I killed them both.

They laugh.

Christine Who did you kill, Simone?

Simone I didn't kill anybody.

Christine We've all killed somebody. Kathy killed her husband. Didn't you?

Katherine Yes.

Christine I killed mine two times.

Katherine You mean you killed two husbands?

Christine They're all the same.

Simone I never had any husbands.

Christine You had girlfriends.

Simone Yes. I killed my baby.

Katherine What?

Simone I killed my baby.

Christine You're not supposed to kill your baby.

Simone Why not?

Christine Because babies don't do anything.

Simone Babies do everything. They're smart. They're so smart they can't even talk. They make you goo and coo, they pop their eyes and drivel on their chins, they poop in your hands. They scream all night. They scream all day. Because they hate this world. They hate the creatures from this world. Because they're from another planet. And they yearn for their planet. They scream for their planet. They scream in

hatred for the women who stuffed them in their bellies and pulled them down into this dirty, pointed world, stuffed them in bags in their bellies, and ran away with them into this dirty, pointed world. So what do they do? They do the only thing they can. They grow, grow and scream and make you hold them and clean them. They make juice come in your chest and they suck it out of you. And then they hide, hide away and make this big meat body that walks around and shouts and talks and drives away in cars.

Katherine What were you?

Simone A nurse.

They laugh. SIMONE gets up, crosses to the picnic basket and picks it up.

Simone We're not going down again, are we?

The other two look at each other, then look at her.

Katherine No.

CHRISTINE shakes her head "no."

They embrace. Lights out. Thunder and lightning.

*

Eye of the Storm

Thunder and lightning. CHRISTINE enters first.

Christine LOOK! It's gonna storm. Let's get killed.

The lightning flashes, the thunder cracks. CHRISTINE holds up her dress in her gnarled hands.

Christine FRANÇOIS! FRANÇOIS! Come on down and let's fight.
(She laughs)

Katherine Christine, get down from there.

Simone No, let her die.

Thunder crashes.

Christine *(Shouts after it)* FRANÇOIS! FRANÇOIS! Look at him, there he is. See him stumbling out of the clouds?

Thunder crashes.

HERE HE COMES!

SIMONE becomes frightened.

Simone Let's get out of here.

Katherine There's nothing to worry about, let him come. If he hits me there's gonna be storms, earthquakes, starvation, no children will be born.

SIMONE starts screaming.

Simone He put my head in the water! He put my head in the water so I couldn't breathe!

Flashes of lightning. The thunder cracks. SIMONE and KATHERINE hold each other.

Christine Look! He's coming! Coming! *(Screams up into the storm, shaking her fist)* François! François! FRANÇOIS!

Crash of thunder. Darkness.

Marriage

They are sitting together in moonlight.

Katherine They say that women and the moon go together.

Simone That's bullshit.

Christine Let's get married. Simone, give me your hand.

SIMONE puts out her hand. CHRISTINE takes out the knife, grabs SIMONE's hand and cuts it.

Simone *(Screams)* How did you get my knife?

Christine I took it. Give me your hand, Kathy.

Simone Never.

Christine Don't be afraid. I'm good. Even with my hands this way.

Katherine Don't kill me! Don't kill me!

Christine I'm not going to kill you. *(Laughs)*

Simone I'm bleeding. I'm bleeding.

Christine Here, hold your hand over this.

*She holds the empty coke can under SIMONE's hand.
SIMONE is trembling.*

It's like a kiss, full of symbols.

She lifts SIMONE's hand above the can.

Christine Look at it in the moonlight, black as a snail's back.
It's the soul.

Katherine You can't have my soul.

Christine Yes, I can. *(Gently)* Give it to me, Katherine.

*KATHERINE looks into CHRISTINE's eyes. CHRISTINE leans forward and gives KATHERINE a kiss. The kiss lingers.
KATHERINE gives CHRISTINE her hand. CHRISTINE cuts KATHERINE's hand.*

Christine I learned to do this from my husband.

Katherine OW!

She holds KATHERINE's hand over the Coke can.

Christine Here, take this napkin. *(Gives SIMONE and KATHERINE napkins.)* Now it's my turn. *(She cuts her hand and holds it over the Coke can. When she's done she puts the can on the ground)* Now we drink it.

Simone Oh, come on.

Christine Yes.

Katherine Not me.

Christine No, look it's fine.

Simone I don't want to.

Christine It's our last night on earth. Don't you understand?

KATHERINE and CHRISTINE rise up on their knees. SIMONE gets up and runs stage left and searches for a way out.

Simone I'm getting out of here.

Katherine Where are you going to go?

SIMONE looks about her, then at them. She crosses and kneels with them.

Christine I, the despised, the despicable, the desperate, the displaced, the disgraced...

Katherine We're not that bad.

Simone We are.

Christine ...do take thee as my lawful...

Katherine Unlawful.

Christine ...unlawful wife...

Simone Husband...

Katherine And wife...

Christine ...And wife and husband till death do us part.

Simone What does that mean?

Christine Don't worry about it.

CHRISTINE gives SIMONE the Coke can.

Simone How much?

Christine Well, not too much, there's just a little.

SIMONE takes a sip, grimaces and passes it on to KATHERINE. KATHERINE drinks from it. She seems to like it. She hands it to CHRISTINE. CHRISTINE drinks from it.

Christine Yuck.

Simone What's wrong?

Christine I don't like blood.

Katherine *(Gets up)* Let's go.

They get up. They take each other's hands. The lights fade.

Flight

Blackness. KATHERINE makes a soft, lonely wind sound in the dark. The lights come up, they are lying on their stomachs looking out at the vista from the top of the hill.

Katherine Woooo, woooo. You hear the wind coming up from the bottom? Look at the stars. You can see everything here. Everything in the world. Look there's a football game going on over there. There's a horse show. There's a strongman's place and a working heart dance hall where all the high-heeled girls go. And a "Good Guys" camp stall where they're all drinking cocoa around a campfire. There's a graveyard and a night-time cemetery scene. There's a church singing in a deep, black hole. *(Wailing softly)* "Hallelujah. Hallelujah." This is called Baldy Rock Mountain. Except that one side of its head's caved in. *(Suddenly)* GO OVER THERE!

Simone *(Alarmed)* Where?

Katherine Over there. Both of you.

They turn and walk forward cautiously.

Don't dawdle. Hurry.

Simone What's wrong?

Katherine HURRY!

They walk cautiously forward, looking in front of them and then looking back at KATHERINE. Suddenly they both scream and back away. SIMONE falls to the ground. They have just about fallen into an abyss.

Katherine SURPRISE!

SIMONE crawls away from the ledge on her hands and knees, then lies on her back, gasping. CHRISTINE walks to the edge and peeks over.

Katherine Take a good look, Christine.

Christine I can't see anything.

Katherine That's because there's nothing there.

CHRISTINE looks at KATHERINE, then looks back down at the abyss, then looks back at KATHERINE, smiling.

Simone Katherine, I can't fly.

Katherine Did I say fly?

Simone Kathy, stop it.

Christine Fly?

Katherine I found this place in my dreams. It's a great place.

Christine It's a great idea.

Simone Kathy, please.

Katherine Don't you go to places in your dreams, Simone?

Simone Yes, but they're not real.

Christine How do you know?

Simone Because every time I woke up I was locked in my cell.

Christine *(Looking down the hill on the other side)* LOOK! LOOK! Lights. They're coming after us. I'm so excited. It could be a lot of fun, Semi.

Simone Semi?

Christine Yeah, that's your name. *(Runs toward the edge and stops just short, teetering on the brink)* Yes or no?

Katherine Not yet.

CHRISTINE pulls her back. They fall into each other's arms and laugh. They begin dancing and spinning.

Simone STOP! STOP!

KATHERINE and CHRISTINE stop and run upstage.

Christine Did you hear that?

Katherine Voices?

Christine Look.

Katherine They're getting close.

Christine *(Shouts down the hill)* Come on up, we're having a party.

Simone Shut up.

Christine *(Holds her hands up. They're not gnarled anymore)* Look, my hands are coming back! I've got wings, Simone.

CHRISTINE and KATHERINE charge at SIMONE. They pull her from the ground and begin swinging her around near the edge of the drop.

Simone No, no, I'm not going to go. *(Struggles free)*

Christine Don't go then. Stay here and let them lock you up. *(Shouts down the hill)* NOT ME!

Simone You won't get away this way. You'll just be dead.

Christine How do you know? That's what they told you. And look, they're coming after us. They're going to pull us down in a pit in the dark and lock us behind the fences of Eden. How can they know what's there when they don't even know what's here? *(Points at herself)* They don't believe in magic.

Simone I don't either.

Christine I do. *(Looks up and make a spreading motion)*

Simone I want to touch something. I want to touch something. *(Begins crawling, moving her hand over the ground)* I don't like heights.

Christine Yes, you do. You like them too much.

Simone Too much, too much, maybe that's it.

Christine *(Takes SIMONE in her arms and helps her to her feet)* You're in love with them. They're your girlfriends.

Simone The heights?

Christine *(Laughs)* Yeah, all of them.

Katherine *(Singing down into the abyss, the first lines of "Indian Love Song")*
"I hear you calling, calling me."

She holds out her hand to SIMONE.

SIMONE gazes up at her. She takes CHRISTINE and KATHERINE in. KATHERINE and CHRISTINE smile at her. SIMONE takes their hands. The women stand together, stage center, SIMONE in between them.

Simone *(Laughs)* Why am I always the reticent one?

Katherine Because you're the leader.

Simone The leader of what?

Christine Our squadron. *(Runs to upstage right and shouts down the hill)* Yes we did it! We did it all! Hurry! *(Runs back and takes her place next to SIMONE)*

KATHERINE looks at CHRISTINE and SIMONE.

Christine Won't they be surprised?

Katherine Yes. *(Looks at CHRISTINE and SIMONE)* Enough?

Simone Yes.

Christine Ready?

They run downstage toward the abyss, holding hands and fling their arms up. Black out.

The End