

QUEER THEORY

ACT ONE

SCENE 1 (SUNDAY EVENING)

A raging thunderstorm. Rebecca Walsh is pacing back and forth on her cell phone.

REBECCA

There's someone in my room! I don't know. (She crosses off stage into the kitchenette and returns on stage) They're not here but there's a suitcase on my bed. Professor Rebecca Walsh, University of California, Berkeley, English Department. I'm delivering a paper in a few days. No, I've never been to the conference. No, I am not a member of the Brontë Society. Listen to me, I've just got in off the air plane from California, I'm jet lagged, I'm exhausted and in a couple of days I'm delivering a paper and I need my rest. Surely you can find me on the list. Hello? Hello? Yes, yes, I'm here. Yes, Rebecca Walsh. I was told there would be accommodations in town and I find myself 5 miles off a dirt road in a gully and there is some one in my room! Not, not a burglar, a suitcase. I was not told that I would have a roommate. (There is a particularly nasty burst of thunder.) Hello? Hello? Yes, I'm here. I have a roommate? Who? Anne Ingersoll. My God, I can't believe this. I was distinctly told I would have a private room. What university is she with? What? You're cooping me up with a tourist?

Anne bursts through the door. She is soaking wet.

ANNE

It was so clear when I started out. Hi, I'm Anne Ingersoll.

Rebecca gazes at Anne dumbstruck, the cell phone forgotten in her hand.

ANNE

Oh, my suitcase, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to put it on the bed, I mean, I wasn't staking a claim on the bed. You can have the bed. I was just so excited by the moors I had to go out into them. My gosh, I'm dripping on the floor, aren't I? I'll change and take a shower

She starts to leave then realizes she still has the suitcase on the bed.

ANNE

I'm sorry.

She drags the suitcase from the bed and pulls it into the center of the room, then realizes that perhaps it is in the way.

ANNE

Is this okay?

Rebecca, who hasn't moved, says nothing. Anne drags the suitcase into the bathroom. Thunder cracks.

REBECCA
(Whispers secretly)

Hello? Hello?

The phone has gone dead. There is the sound of the shower going on followed by fumbling and knocking from the bathroom. The sound of the shower grows more intense and so does the fumbling followed by muted cries. Rebecca becomes concerned.

ANNE
(Struggling to sound normal)

Could you help me? I can't seem to work this shower and I can't open the shower door. I can't turn off the cold.

When Anne begins "yipping" Rebecca hesitates then dashes off stage into the bathroom. There is the noise of Rebecca entering the shower and the struggle with it. They both begin yipping. Then only Rebecca is yipping. Anne enters. She's just pulled her robe on and a shower cap, leaving Rebecca in the shower. Finally the shower is turned off. There is a pause then Rebecca enters. Her hair is plastered to her face otherwise you might see that she is not happy. Anne gives her a sickly smile.

ANNE

Thank you.

Lights out.

SCENE 2 (SUNDAY NIGHT)

Rebecca takes the bed and Anne takes the daybed. The bed is better of course. They have to share an armoire for their clothes. Rebecca begins ununpacking takes most of it and leave a single place for Anne at the bottom. Anne has a tendency to chatter when she gets nervous.

ANNE (OS)

That's really something. I've never roomed with a professor before, of course I've never roomed with anyone before. Is that anyone or anybody?

REBECCA

It really doesn't matter.

ANNE (OS)

It's like "I" or "me" you know. I mean, should you say, "my husband and me," or "my husband and I?" All right, all right, I won't bother you with it. You're here on a vacation from all of that.

REBECCA

Actually, I'm here for work.

Anne enters dragging her suitcase to her bed (along the wall). She is in a bathrobe.

ANNE

For work? What does that mean? "You're looking for work?"

REBECCA

No, I'm here *working*.

ANNE

Ah, I see, of course, you're one of those, them. Which is it? You're one of the featured speakers. My lord, I'm almost tongue-tied around you.

REBECCA

Not really.

ANNE

I am rambling, aren't I? "Aren't I." Hey, I got that right. You can't say "Aren't me," that really sounds stupid. Why is that so easy compared to "my husband and I?" "I" not "me." So I guess it's "my husband and me." It sounds more natural, at least where I come from.

REBECCA

And where's that?

ANNE

Iowa.

REBECCA

Of course.

ANNE

(Laughs)

"Of course," that's what everybody says when I say "I'm from Iowa." Actually Iowa isn't the dumbest state.

REBECCA

Oh really, which state is dumber?

ANNE

Well, I'll just be honest with you; those Southern states are dumber than Iowa.

REBECCA

That's something.

Anne has wet towels.

ANNE

We have a pretty good educational system in Iowa compared to... Where are you from?

REBECCA

Berkeley.

Anne waits for Rebecca to fill the shelves and then takes her single place. She begins unpacking her suitcase. During the scene it gradually becomes apparent Anne's unpacking is a stalling tactic.

ANNE

That's in California. There's a big university there. That's where you teach?

REBECCA

Yes.

ANNE

Isn't that the "Bay Area," that's where San Francisco is. Oh, I love San Francisco. I've never been there but it looks so romantic. (singing that well known tune) "Those little cable cars run halfway to the stars..." Did you go to college there?

REBECCA

No, I went "Back East."

ANNE

"Back East," there you go. That's the way a Californian would say it, the old fashioned way, "Back East," before you could fly.

REBECCA

Yes, covered wagon.

ANNE
(Laughs)

Yes, “covered wagon”, when you traveled in covered wagons. We say “Back East” too, but not everybody. It’s mostly older people living in Iowa, older than me. I’m in my fifties.

REBECCA

A lot of old people in Iowa?

ANNE

Oh yes, mostly old people. Nothing really there, just big cooperate farms. So where did you go to college “Back East”?

REBECCA

Bennington.

ANNE

Oh, I’ve heard of that. It’s one of those very fancy schools in New England. In Massachusetts or something.

REBECCA

Vermont.

ANNE

Oh, I know that state. I was there. I haven't been to many places but I was there in Vermont, and in the Fall. My lord, it’s just like Iowa but with hills. The trees are so beautiful. But those birches... what’s that poem? “I was a swinger in birches,” Robert Frost, right?

REBECCA

“Of birches.”

ANNE

Oh, “of birches.” Of course, how silly of me, “of birches.” Shouldn’t it be, “on?” I guess “of” is more formal and it sounds better.

REBECCA

I think he means that he did it all the time. It was something special he did, a ritual sport.

ANNE

“Ritual sport.” Oh, I like that. Like a “hitter of balls,” “A rider of horses.” Sports really are like rituals, they aren’t really important except that people really make them important, by that I mean, men, especially. Men, aren’t they silly? But they make the world go round. I’m married to a farmer. His name is John. “Farmer John,” isn’t that what you’d say? I have two kids.

They're grown up now, two boys. I have grandchildren actually. Can you believe that? Not that I look that young, but you know, what I mean is that time passes so fast and here I am with grand kids. Are you married?

REBECCA

No, I'm a lesbian.

ANNE

You can have either bed, I don't care.

REBECCA

I don't care.

ANNE

I hope I don't wake you when I get up. I get up early, but I'll be quiet as a mouse, well, quieter than that, you can always hear a mouse, but I'll be quiet. I go to bed pretty early too, but you can keep the light on, I sleep like a log. I guess I should be having jet lag, but I'm giddy as a schoolgirl, I've never been to Europe before. I know that this isn't really Europe this is England, but it's there isn't it, I mean, it really is, France and Holland and Germany, oh and I can feel it. It's so old. Even the grass is old, it's older grass, more from the ancient seed, and the trees are old too and Ireland, we flew over Ireland. It was really old and wet. It was amazing! Which one are you?

REBECCA
(Baffled)

Which one what?

ANNE

I'm Anne.

REBECCA

Yes?

ANNE

You're...?

REBECCA

Rebecca?

ANNE

No, silly, which Brontë?

REBECCA

Oh, which Brontë? Actually, I'm not a Brontë, nor do I identify with a Brontë, but I take it you do. (Dreading the answer) You're name is "Anne" so you are Anne Brontë?

Anne realizing that she has just about run out of everything to unpack.

ANNE

(Apologetically)

It's really silly isn't it? She was Emily's best friend. They were inseparable. I like it that she held her tongue when things got crazy in that house. She was the hard working one. I think she could have made it out of that place if it wasn't for her loyalty. (She sits on her bed in defeat.) I'm sorry, I've got to tell you something, really, honestly, I've never slept in the same room with a woman before. I don't know how to do it.

REBECCA

Do what?

ANNE

Sleep in the same room with you?

Rebecca is completely taken off guard.

REBECCA

Well, just act as if I wasn't here.

ANNE

Just get in my nightgown?

REBECCA

If that's what you normally wear.

ANNE

It's just an old nightgown, not a "gown", more like a dress, or a shift, but with the shoulders.

REBECCA

Why don't you just change into it?

As she crosses into the bathroom...

ANNE

Yes, of course...

Rebecca puts her laptop computer on the dining room table. Rebecca essentially takes over the table. She begins working on the computer. Anne is off stage in the bathroom. There is the unmistakable sound of Anne brushing her teeth with the inevitable expectoration and turn of the faucet to wash the toothpaste down the drain, then silence. Anne enters with a bathrobe on. She crosses carefully into the room and DS to her bed, never once looking at Rebecca. She pulls down the covers and climbs inside and pulls the covers over her. She slides her bathrobe off under the covers, folds it and places it near her. She lies facing DS. Rebecca hasn't taken her eyes off her computer. The light near Anne's bed is still on but Anne ignores it and closes her eyes. Rebecca, without looking up from her book, says...

REBECCA

Would you like me to turn off the light?

ANNE

Oh, that's all right.

Rebecca crosses to the lamp.

REBECCA

You might sleep better with it off.

She turns the lamp off, goes back to her chair, sits and goes back to her computer. Time passes, then the sound of soft breathing, Anne has fallen to sleep. Rebecca looks up from her book and regards Anne as the lights fade.

SCENE 3 (MONDAY MORNING)

The sound of birds at dawn. The lights rise; dawn passes into morning. Anne's bed is neatly made. Anne is nowhere in sight. The daybed has been fixed to make a bed. Rebecca stirs beneath her covers. Her head appears. She looks at her alarm clock, 8 a.m. She bestirs herself and finally puts her feet on the floor. Morning is not her best time. Just as she stands Anne enters ecstatic from her morning expedition. Her face is flushed with healthy excitement; her eyes are shining. She is carrying a bouquet of moorland wildflowers in one hand and her muddy walking shoes in the other. Anne realizes that she should put her shoes outside, she does so and closes the door.

ANNE

Oh, I'm glad I didn't wake you up. God, it's beautiful this morning. This is my first real walk in the country of another country. I took a chance on the rain, I didn't care; I'm waterproof. I got up at dawn and I walked to the top of the hill. There were the ruins of an old church. There were so many sheep and all these dogs tied up. I felt like I was in Wuthering Heights. Would you like some coffee?

REBECCA

I drink tea.

ANNE

Oh, of course, we're in England.

REBECCA

What are those?

ANNE

Wildflowers. Bluebells. It was Anne's favorite flower.

REBECCA

You're not supposed to pick the flowers.

ANNE

Oh, why not?

REBECCA

A hundred thousand people traipse around these hills in a year. What do you think it would be like if everyone picked a flower?

ANNE

My god, I didn't think of that. We don't have that problem in Iowa.

REBECCA

You're not in Iowa.

ANNE

(Devastated)

Oh, yes. What should I do with them, throw them away? I don't suppose I should put them in a vase. It seems like a waste.

Rebecca's face is hard. Anne takes one look at her and drops the flowers in a nearby wastepaper basket as if disposing of a corpse. Rebecca doesn't take her eyes from her. Anne looks at Rebecca and then takes the wastepaper basket and leaves. Rebecca looks after her, then crosses into the little kitchen off stage. There is the sound of water going into a teapot and then the teapot being put on the stove. Rebecca re-enters and puts the bedclothes together and closes the daybed. She is in just about the same position as she was when Anne first entered when Anne enters again.

ANNE

I buried them.

Off stage the teapot whistles. Anne, flustered and imprisoned by embarrassment, crosses to her bed and picks up her new briefcase. She's not sure if she should ask Rebecca if she

wants to come with her and she needs to go but if she does, is she being pushy about having to leave now. She puts her street shoes and sweater on. She really has to go.

ANNE

I got a new briefcase, can you believe that? Me, what am I doing with a briefcase, an old farmer? Farmer, farmer, farmer. I can drive us to the conference if you like. I'm sure I'll get this English driving down. It's not so terrible cuz we drive off the road a lot in Iowa, I mean, in the corn fields and the alfalfa, when spreading manure. Oh god, I'm sorry, that must sound terrible. What I mean, is that I'm getting a hand on this English driving.

REBECCA

It's two hours early.

ANNE

I'm going to spend some time in the cemetery. You know there are over forty thousand bodies buried there? It's only a couple of acres, you know. I thought maybe you'd like to walk through the cemetery with me.

REBECCA

No thanks.

ANNE

Well, I'll see you there.

Anne exits. The sound of Anne's car starting up, then dying, then the starter grinding to a halt, then the starter going and the engine firing up, then revving loudly, then jerking away and finally diminishing in the distance. Rebecca gets her cell phone and dials.

REBECCA

Hello, this is Doctor Rebecca Walsh...yes, yes, thank you, I look forward to meeting you...your daughter is gay, that's terrific. Well, I'm glad to know the Brontë Society is so excited about having me, I'm excited too and that brings me to the problem at hand. Yes, problem. You see, I mistakenly was put in with another person. I was expressly told that I would be having a room to myself...You what? Oh, you're not in charge of that. Well, could you put me on the line with someone who *is* in charge of that? Thank you. (She waits impatiently, finally...) Yes, hello? I was asking...I can't remember his name...Doctor Taylor, yes, I know he is the director...and he told me that I should talk to you about getting a single room...World War Two Days? A celebration? I was told I was to have a private room I believe that was in our contract. Let me get the contract. (She goes to her suitcase and gets the contract. She examines it) Let me see, yes, here it is...oh, it doesn't designate a private room, but I assumed... I'm sure you can find something., she's not bothering me. Well, actually she is. nothing

intentional, listen, I just want a room by myself...listen, I know you're busy. Yes, I can "endure" it.

Rebecca hangs up on her.

SCENE 4 (MONDAY EVENING)

Evening. It's the first day of the conference and it's been a long one, Rebecca's a bit chafed by it all. She's on the cell phone. She's pacing.

REBECCA

You thought I needed a break? You think this is a break? The Brontës! Christ almighty. Straight old men and the usual English cows. I've never seen so many imbeciles in one room. I just got back an hour ago. The English are the worst, they do it in that accent. (She demonstrates) "They slow down and pronounce their words as if every phoneme was an innuendo." ... No, no one of importance. Indra Shiva was supposed to deliver a lecture, "Wuthering Heights, Fantasies of a Nostalgic Subaltern," but she bailed. Who could blame her? Feminists? (She listens) No, no, I *do* appreciate your concern for me. I *don't* mean to sound ungrateful. Thank you so much for keeping all of the phone calls away and darling, thank you, thank you so much for staying there to keep things in order for me. I'm just saying how important you are to me, important, in *every way*. Oh no, you're far more than useful, darling. Cathy, come on now. I *do* love you. We'll go to Mexico.

Anne enters with flowers and a bag of scones. She doesn't know Rebecca is talking on the phone. She talks as she goes into the kitchenette

ANNE

Oh hi, Doctor Walsh. It was great, wasn't it? I never saw so many people who knew so much about the same thing. I brought some things. Real flowers, I mean store bought. And some scones for the morning. I got you one. They're big lumpy rolls. I tasted one. It's really good. (She sees that Rebecca is on the phone) Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know you were on the phone. Those cell phones; they're something. (Rebecca turns her back on Anne) Oops, I'll be quiet.

Rebecca exits out of the house and stands on the front porch so that she can have more privacy. Of course, Anne could listen in if she really tried but she's trying instead not to hear it. It's impossible not to hear some of it and in order to leave Rebecca to her "privacy", she busies herself. She unpacks the bag she brought in from town. She puts the flowers in a vase and puts the vase in the center of the dining room table. She crosses off stage and puts the scones away, pours some milk in a pan and turns on the heat under it. She prepares the daybed for sleep. She unpacks her briefcase on the daybed and puts everything in its place. She crosses into the kitchenette and pours herself a glass of hot

milk. She crosses to the daybed and settles down with the Brontë Conference brochure. All this happens as Rebecca delivers the follow speech.

REBECCA

You have no idea what I have to live with. They've put me in a cottage with this woman. Yes, exactly, I'm rooming with someone. She's from Iowa. She has children, husband, the whole bit and she thinks she's Anne Brontë. Didn't you check the contract about the private room? I assumed that too. It seems that there's some stupid costume celebration called World War Two Days so that everything's booked. (A call comes in on her phone) Wait, Cathy, I've got a beep. I don't know who it is. I'll get rid of it. (She picks up the incoming call.) Hello? (She is suddenly flustered and excited. Oh, Ruthie! It's so good to hear from you. Listen honey, I'll call you right back. No, no, don't leave, I'll be right there. I just have to finish some business. A party? Just wait a couple of minutes. I'll call you right back. I don't want you to pay for the phone call. It costs a fortune. Okay? God, I really want to see you. Do you miss me? Well, do you? Come on tell me. I'm not trying to force you. Oh, you're shy is that it? I'll call you right back. You do? I love you too. I'll call you right back. (She goes back to Cathy. Her tone has abruptly changed. It is businesslike and verging on impatience.) Cathy, I'm sorry. Oh, it was the Director of the Brontë Parsonage Museum "welcoming me aboard." He's a complete bore. Look, let's get this stuff done with, I've got to get geared up for these British Toads. I'm all right; just a bit tense. Come on; let's get on with this. I'm sorry but California to England is a very expensive phone call. I have run over budget as it is. Now what has the selection committee come up with? Tom O'Hare? He's as old as Ronald Regan. He looks like Walt Disney. His specialty is Dante. We need Dante like a hole in the head. Gerald Minner? Oh God, please. Florencia Ingravado? Oh no, not her, anyone but her. She's obnoxious with all her lurid excursions into "the beauty of literature". Cathy, she's here at the conference. I know she hates me. Read the rest of the list. (She listens) That's all of them? Start over again. I need someone who can't get along without me. I've got to go, Cathy. I'll call you in the morning. I'm not hanging up. No, you hang up first. I'm not forcing you to hang up. I've just got to go. I'm not hanging up. I'm not, okay? I love you. (She hangs up. She pushes the dialing memory for Ruth's number. The phone rings, finally Ruth's message comes on. She listens.) Ruth? Ruth are you there? This is Rebecca. If you're there pick up, darling. Ruthie, I told you I'd be right back. Well, I'll call you in the morning. Have a nice time at the party. Don't do anything I wouldn't do. Don't do that either. I'm just joking. Have a good time. If you need me call collect. I'll be here. Love you, goodbye.

Rebecca turns her cell phone off. She mutters to herself.

REBECCA

Why in the fuck did I ever quit smoking?

Rebecca enters the cottage. She puts her cell phone on the chair beside the lamp. She crosses off stage into the bathroom. There is the sound off stage of water pouring for Rebecca to wash her face.

ANNE

It says here that you received the “MacArthur Genius Grant.” My gosh, you're a declared genius. Do you have to take a test for that? How do they know you're a genius (Hastening to correct herself) I mean, I'm sure you are a genius, but how do they know? I don't know why they put you with someone like me. Perhaps, maybe it's because we're both Americans, but I doubt that, what are Americans, anyway? Is that “who” or “what?” It's “what” if it's a thing and “who” if it's a person, right?

The faucet is turned off. She enters.

Rebecca .

REBECCA

You know that stuff isn't good for you. It's unnatural, drinking liquid baby food from a cow. It's like drinking blood.

Anne looks down at the cup of milk in her hand as if it had suddenly gone strange. Rebecca gets in bed and begins reading. Anne reads the events calander for the conference.

SILENCE...

Then..

ANNE

You're lecturing on Thursday. “Queer Theory,” what does that mean?

REBECCA

Why don't you attend the lecture and then you'll find out.

ANNE

Of course I'm attending the lecture, I'll be the first one there. Heck, we can go together.

REBECCA

Oh, goody.

ANNE

“Was Emily Brontë Queer?” That’s a fetching title for a lecture. “Fetching”, isn’t that good? It’s English. The title gets your attention. I think she was quite queer. But aren’t we all? Is that what you mean?

REBECCA

Not exactly.

ANNE

(Confiding in Rebecca)

I think she’s really queer; some one alone, who thinks alone. People don’t like individuals because they’re hard to control.

REBECCA

Just because a person thinks “individually” doesn’t mean they think uniquely.

ANNE

It bothers people though, especially the kind who want to control how people think. I’m kind of queer, only I try to hide it. It’s so strange to be talking to you like this. I guess I’m having a Roman Holiday.

REBECCA

A what?

ANNE

A Roman Holiday where you tell things to strangers you wouldn’t tell to anybody because you’re in a far away country and no one will ever know.

REBECCA

A Roman Holiday is enjoyment derived from observing the suffering of others.

ANNE

Oh no, I didn’t mean that. It’s like “Three Coins In A Fountain,” like in Rome with those sailors and those girls. I have my own theory about Emily Brontë.

REBECCA

I’m sure you do.

ANNE

Any woman on a farm will know the same things Emily did, the same hacking through meat and cartilage, kneading dough and cut and burnt fingers and sweat and food and innards and blood and tired pissed off men. That’s why Emily talks about things with all the blood and gore and

John O’Keefe

Comment [1]:

violence: she's country. Heathcliff throwing a tureen of hot applesauce in Edgar's face, heck that's crossed my mind with my husband, John, many a time, hot applesauce, rhubarb, blackberry. Emily is just a country girl and when she gets mad or is frustrated she thinks like a country girl. "Wuthering Heights," I'm not shocked at all by the book. I like it; it reminds me of home. "Thrushcross Grange," "Thrushcross Grange," that's really hard to say. Can you imagine Emily saying it real fast to her sisters, all of them trying it, "Thrushcross Grange," "Thrushcross Grange," and giggling. Can you imagine Emily's face when she says it, "Thrushcross Grange"? She must have been a hoot. I think she had a great sense of humor. I think she loved to laugh, and I think she mimicked herself with that old protestant lock jaw, broom up the butt, long face and then she's say "Thrushcross Grange." "Thrushcross Grange;" can you say that? Try it Doctor Walsh try it. Honestly, if you want to know about Emily Brontë just try it.

Anne realizes that she's gone pretty far out. She suddenly stops.

REBECCA

Thank you, I'll pass.

Anne begins picking things up and straightening things.

ANNE

They're having World War Two Days in Haworth this Friday.

REBECCA

Excuse me?

ANNE

In the village of Haworth they celebrate World War Two Days. They dress up in 1940's clothes and drive in old cars and jeeps. Some of them even dress like Americans. The big treat is in the morning, at the crack of dawn on Friday, the Royal Air Force will fly over Brontë country.

REBECCA

The air force?

ANNE

Not the air force, but World War Two airplanes, propellers, fighters and bombers.

Rebecca is irritated by Anne straightening her side of the room.

REBECCA

Would you mind?

ANNE

Excuse me?

REBECCA

I can take care of my part.

ANNE

Oh, I see, this is one of the things you do when you share a room.

REBECCA

Yes.

She goes back to her reading. Anne goes to the kitchenette.

ANNE (OS)

Is it the same in here? Shall I take care of the dishes?

REBECCA

I can take care of them.

Anne enters.

ANNE

I see.

Anne sits, defeated. She looks at Rebecca then at her milk. She takes her glass of milk and muses over it, then takes a taste. It *has* suddenly gone strange. She looks at Rebecca, a rim of milk on her upper lip and smiles weakly. The lights fade.

SCENE 5 (TUESDAY MORNING)

It is 9 a.m. and clear. The birds are singing. Rebecca is eating toast and drinking tea. She is reading. Anne enters. She is ecstatic. She's coming back in and it's late.

ANNE

Isn't it beautiful out today? I'm late. (She gathers her stuff for the conference, briefcase, a couple of books, a jacket and scarf) They're having so many things planned. We're going to the Brontë Parsonage Library to see some first addition books, and look at Patrick Brontë's book on medicine where he wrote notes on the margins about his son, Branwell. Then we're going to take the path to Oxenhope, the same one that Charlotte Brontë took with Arthur Bell Nicholls when he courted her. They got married only a few weeks from now, June 29th, 1854.

REBECCA

Well, you best get started.

ANNE

Then later this afternoon Stephen Whitehead is going to lecture on the Brontë collector, Henry Bonnell. It's called "Guardian of the Relics of Passion." Oh, I'm chattering, aren't I?

REBECCA

Yes, I'd like to talk to you about that.

ANNE

(A little apprehensive)

Yes?

REBECCA

There's a rule when you "room" with someone. You allow them their space. You appreciate their quality of life. My life is a quiet life. Chattering is very disturbing to me.

ANNE

So I shouldn't chatter?

REBECCA

Yes, it's irritating.

ANNE

I'm really sorry. I'll shut up, I will, I'll just be quiet. (She doesn't know what to do, she doesn't just want to leave abruptly but she is late) I'll just shut up. I'll leave you now.

Anne backs out the door so as not to be impolite in so delicate a situation. Then there is the sound of Anne opening and closing the car door, car starting up, then dying, then the starter grinding to a halt, then the starter going and the engine firing up, then revving loudly, then jerking away and finally diminishing in the distance. Rebecca continues reading all the while. It begins to rain, it is a steady moderate rain, one that could last all day. Slowly the book slides out of Rebecca's line of sight, she seems to contemplate the air. She puts the book down, then stands and looks out through the front porch window. She hesitates, then reaches for the bag and pulls out her cell phone. She checks her watch. She contemplates it, then impulsively she dials a number. It rings and rings, then finally someone answers.

REBECCA

Hello, Muriel? Yes, this is Rebecca. I'm in England. Haworth. (Repeating it) Haworth. It's in Northern England. It's where the Brontës wrote their

novels. (Pronouncing it) “The Brontës.” You know, “Jane Eyre,“ „Wuthering Heights“... Yes, books for teenage girls.... Why? I’m giving a talk here. Why? I don’t know, it’s just a job. (Silence on the phone) Hello, Muriel? Muriel? (Muriel has answered) I thought I had lost the connection. Why am I calling? Oh, I just wondered how you were. The same. Oh, yes, of course. I’m doing... No, I’ve not been demoted. The Brontë Society wants to feel hip so they invited me. Why am I hip? That’s very funny. I’m not hip but compared to these people I guess I’m quite radical. Yes, of course, I’m not. How’s Paul? (Pause) The same. Well, of course, what would you expect? The same until it’s not the same. (Pause) Well, anyway, I was just checking to see if anything has changed. I guess, it hasn’t. Well, I probably should let you go. Mother? (She’s been corrected) Yes, I should call you Muriel. Yes, we’re adults here. But why shouldn’t I call you mother? I know I haven’t called much. Well, I’m calling now. It’s not a good time? I’m sorry. I’m okay. I mean ‘alright’. God, I just don’t know why I’m making this call. I just want to... I don’t know what I want. (Rebecca wants to cry but she starts laughing instead) Yes, I’ll call you back when I figure it out.

Her mother has hung up. Rebecca stops laughing. She looks at the phone. She puts her face in her hands. The lights fade but the rain continues in the darkness...

SCENE 6 (TUESDAY EVENING)

...the rain continues. Rebecca is on the telephone with Ruth

The sound of Anne’s car, breaks, then a bump as the car hits something, the engine going on for a little too long, then shutting off. Silence for awhile, then the car door opening, then closing. Anne enters carrying her briefcase. When she enters Rebecca gets up from the table and crosses to the window without acknowledging Anne. The rain forces Rebecca to have the conversation inside. She goes into the kitchenette. There can be a bit with Rebecca off stage and Anne sitting on stage trying not to listen. The conversation ends with Rebecca embarrassed and wretched.

REBECCA

...but you know how I . How do you feel? No, I *don’t* know how you feel. I can only imagine how you feel. I know that’s not the same but it’s all I can do and I *want* to feel what you feel and I’m trying, Ruth, I’m really trying to feel what you feel? Are you trying to feel what I feel? If you are you would know how much I want to feel what you feel. I’m what? Older than your mother? So what, what does that mean? I’m *not* your mother. Is it my skin? Does it look like chicken skin? No, honestly, tell me how you feel, you’ve been trying to tell me how you feel all along so tell me how you feel, does my skin look like chicken skin? Stretch marks? You don’t have any stretch marks. What has that to do with chicken skin? Oh, you have stretch marks I have chicken skin. That’s just fine, only you don’t

have stretch marks so that leaves only me with the chicken skin. I know I have chicken skin. Older people have chicken skin. I *told* you my age, right up front, I told you my age, otherwise, how would you know I'm older than your mother? Oh, a guess. Of course. At first I thought you were trying to tell me what you feel but you don't want to tell me because what you feel is revulsion. That's okay, that's fine. It's understandable. I am over fifty and I told you that the first night we spent together. Listen, I don't want to argue with an ocean between us. I'm not trying to control you over the telephone. I'm not being possessive, I just want to be with you. Just be with you. I don't mean forever, just to see you when I get to New York. I have a stop over in New York. Yes, I have things to do in New York. No, I'm not stopping just to see you of course I'm stopping just to see you. I *could* stop in New York to do other things but I'm not. Yes, I want to fuck you; fuck you and fuck you and fuck you. I just want to have a moment of yours be mine, just a little moment, my life with your life. Yes, of course, you have to get back to your studies.. You got to go, yeah. Okay, I got to go too. Yeah, it's late here, past midnight. Yeah, good night, "don't let the bug beds," how do you say it, "bed bugs bite?" Good night, (She's cut off)

Rebecca ends the conversation in the kitchenette. Anne has turned out her light and is in bed. Rebecca, now finished, enters and sits at the table at the computer. She starts to type, then stops, crushed. She closes the computer as the lights fade

SCENE 7 (WEDNESDAY MORNING)

It's stopped raining.

Rebecca is in the kitchenette preparing her breakfast. Anne enters while Rebecca is in the kitchenette. She is quiet. Coming back to Rebecca's world in the cottage is not pleasant. Anne is aware that Rebecca is fixing breakfast so she prepares for the day's conference by packing her things. Rebecca piddles about the kitchenette and dining area so long that Anne, in order to fix a bite for herself, finally has to cross into the area Rebecca is occupying. Rebecca seems completely oblivious of Anne as she sits and begins reading a newspaper while she eats. Anne crosses off stage into the kitchenette then enters with a paper bag. She waits for Rebecca to notice her when she looks up at her muffin the next time she takes a bite of it. Unfortunately Rebecca can take a bite of it without looking up from her newspaper so Anne has to address her.

ANNE

Excuse me.

Rebecca glances up at her then back down to her newspaper.

ANNE

Excuse me?

REBECCA
(Without looking at Anne)

Yes?

ANNE
You didn't eat your scone.

REBECCA
I wasn't aware that it was mine.

ANNE
Oh, yes, remember, I told you I got it for you yesterday. It seems you found something else to eat. I didn't have time to shop. May I have it?

REBECCA
That thing? Sure.

Anne goes back to the kitchenette. She turns on the faucet and pours a glass of water. She enters with a glass of water and the scone on a small plate.

ANNE
May I sit here?

REBECCA
(Not looking up from her newspaper)
Sure.

ANNE
Thanks.

She sits and begins eating. The scone is a day old and has become so dry that Anne has a hard time swallowing it. She chews but the scone absorbs her saliva. She has to wash it down with the glass of water, but that isn't entirely successful because the scone forms little lumps in the roof of her mouth and she has a hard time swallowing it, so she is forced to chew more which unfortunately ends up in a smacking sound. Rebecca looks up at her. Anne puts her hand in front of her mouth and tries to say, "Excuse me," but it winds up saying something like "Ing-mm'ing." With the help of a large swallow of water she manages to get the dough down.

ANNE
Excuse me, it's kind of dry.

Anne takes smaller bites in order to better wash them down with the water. This doesn't work that well either for the dough forms little lumps in the roof of her mouth and in order to pull them free she has to suck them off with her tongue which unfortunately

makes a “popping sound.” This is punctuated by little gulps of water for fruitless lubrication. Rebecca can ignore it no longer, she looks up from her newspaper with an expression of “If you want my attention you’ve got it.” Anne looks helplessly down at her scone. She gets up and exits into the kitchenette and washes the little plate and dumps the scone. Rebecca goes back to her munching and reading. Off stage, from the kitchenette...

ANNE

Doctor Walsh?

Rebecca sighs then obliges Anne with her attention.

REBECCA

Yes?

ANNE (OS)

May I ask you a personal question?

REBECCA

Excuse me?

Anne comes to the doorway of the kitchenette.

ANNE

Do you like the Brontës?

Rebecca is a little mystified by the question.

REBECCA

You're asking me if I like the Brontës?

ANNE

I know its none of my business.

Rebecca puts down her newspaper as an act of putting something to rest.

REBECCA

All right, let’s get this over with. No, I don’t like the Brontës.

ANNE

Not even Charlotte Brontë, most people at least like Charlotte Brontë?

REBECCA

Especially not Charlotte Brontë.

ANNE

You don't like her style?

REBECCA

I don't care about her style.

ANNE

Why don't you like her then?

REBECCA

I think she's quite harmful.

ANNE

Charlotte Brontë, she was only four foot nine?

REBECCA

She glamorized the patriarchal myth.

ANNE

What myth is that?

REBECCA

"Humble girl who rises above her station and meets prince charming."

ANNE

I don't think of Rochester as prince charming. Anyway, what's wrong with that?

REBECCA

She's a neurotic. She represses her rage and withdraws into fantasy. Her lack of self-esteem and her internalization of patriarchal pressures creates a masochism which finally results in a kind of passive suicide.

ANNE

God, you sound like you memorized that.

REBECCA

She was also a racist. The woman in the attic, Bertha is "Jane Eyre's" real heroine. Bertha is Creole. She's portrayed as mad because biracial people are considered freaks of nature. Rochester uses her and when she becomes pregnant he locks her away in an attic. She has the guts to burn the house down. Bertha is the real Charlotte Brontë unleashed.

ANNE

I think that's very interesting, that last part about Charlotte unleashed. Everybody wants to unleash Charlotte Brontë.

REBECCA

Did you just say that I sounded like I memorized something?

ANNE

I don't mean it in a bad way, it's just like, well, as if you've said that stuff a lot of times.

REBECCA

"That stuff?" "That stuff," is what I do.

ANNE

(Apologetically)

What is that?

REBECCA

I take Western Literature out of the closet and expose it for what it is.

ANNE

And what is that?

REBECCA

The manipulation of power. Authors don't matter. Power dictates social forces, social forces create authors. If the Brontës hadn't come along society would have invented them.

ANNE

You mean the Brontës don't matter?

REBECCA

They matter only as they apply to race, class, and gender. Charlotte Brontë cohabitated with power. Behind the popularity of the Brontë books is the silent, invisible, systematically all-pervading manipulation of people by power.

ANNE

The Brontës are doing that?

REBECCA

They are unconsciously colluding with the agents of power by manipulating people's desire. Everything in culture is about power and how to get it. It insinuates itself into everything and sticks to anything it touches. It hides itself in the very routines of life.

ANNE

Are you, what do they call that, “tenured?”

REBECCA

So you're going to bring that up? I'm smart, I worked hard.

ANNE

That's obvious, but I can't get my mind around the idea that you can't get fired and that you will make money for the rest of your life. That's amazing. That really makes sense, though, without financial problems you can focus on what you do. God, I'd love to have that luxury, only problem, I have to work for a living. By that I mean, do things I really don't like to do, like writing out seed tabulations at Geeps Grain Elevator. That's where I work now. It's better than being a waitress at Denny's, that's where I worked before.

REBECCA

I thought you were a farmer's wife?

ANNE

Oh, we lost the farm. Actually, we sold it, but it was just enough to buy what is really just a yellow shack in town so that we could do minimum wage jobs.

REBECCA

That's what I'm talking about, overcoming the hegemony of corporate America.

ANNE

“Hege...”

REBECCA

“Hegemony.”

ANNE

Does that have to do with witches.

REBECCA

You're thinking saints, “hagiography.” Hegemony has to do with the domination of people by power.

ANNE

You mean like the government or the unions?

REBECCA

Power. Power, itself.

ANNE

What is “power?”

REBECCA

It is a silent structure that governs all of life. It moves without a human agent and with no rational purpose. Even the desire to help is an act of power, for trying to help is trying to control, you feel superior to the person you're helping.

ANNE

My god, what a horrible thing! Where does this power come from?

REBECCA

Power is an effect that has no cause, it is not human, nor is it rational.

ANNE

God, that really sounded like you memorized it.

REBECCA

I beg your pardon?

ANNE

It sounds like the Lutherans when they talk about the devil. I know about people like you.

REBECCA

People like me?

ANNE

Yeah, when I think about people like you I worry about how much toilet paper I use when I wipe my ass!

Anne turns and exits. Rebecca is taken aback. The sound of the car and the usual maladjustments, reverse, forward and gear grinding, finally, the sound of the car fading into the distance.

SCENE 8 (WEDNESDAY EVENING)

Night. The wind is blowing dramatically over the moors, gusts and swirls and eddies but no rain. There is a comfortable glow in the cottage. Anne is in the kitchenette. Rebecca enters with her briefcase and an arm full of books. She's been preparing for her lecture. she puts the books down on her bed, looks about the room but Anne isn't there . she crosses into the bathroom and changes into pajamas. Anne speaks from the kitchenette.

ANNE (OS)

Doctor Walsh? I saw you at the parsonage library this afternoon. I got you something to celebrate your lecture in the morning. I don't know if it's the right thing to do.

Anne lights a candle in the kitchenette and brings out a kind of pie, the candle is in it. Anne is wearing nightgown and bathrobe. She steps back and looks at the pie.

ANNE

I put a candle in it. I know it's not your birthday that's why I only put in one.

Rebecca comes out.

ANNE

Have a seat.

Rebecca sits. Anne goes into the kitchenette and brings out a tray with a teapot and two cups. And puts it on the table.

ANNE

Would you like some tea? English tea, the merchant said it goes good on a cool Yorkshire night

REBECCA

Thank you.

Anne pours her some tea, pours herself some and sits. She takes a knife from the tray and cuts the pie and puts a piece on Rebecca's plate and then puts one on hers. She sits and looks at Rebecca.

ANNE

Go ahead, try it. It's supposed to taste like the land.

REBECCA

It tastes like the land?

ANNE

The Brontës were supposed to have eaten it.

REBECCA

(Meaning that this is the very pie the Brontës ate)
Really? Well, I guess I should eat it then.

Rebecca takes a bite. It is terrible. Rebecca pauses then continues to masticate.

REBECCA
(Politely)

What is this?

ANNE
Mincemeat pie.

REBECCA
Oh.

ANNE
You've had it before?

REBECCA
(Pleasantly)
Yes, accidentally.

ANNE
Is it meat?

REBECCA
What?

ANNE
The pie?

REBECCA
Not exactly, it's suet.

ANNE
Suet? I feed that to my birds.

They continue eating while looking at each other, then...

ANNE
(Pleasantly)
Why are we eating this?

AE
I was out of line this morning

REBECCA
You have a right to your opinion,

ANNE

It's not that, it's just the way I presented it.

Together, they put their forks down. They sit in silence. There is only the wind moving over the hills. They both notice it. The sound is so eerie they can't ignore it. They sit there for awhile. The magic gusts and ghostly howls persist until Anne can take it no longer. She crosses to the door and out into the yard. Anne stands and takes it all in. after a while Rebecca comes to the door and looks out. Anne senses her.

ANNE

I really can't believe I'm here...where they were...listening to this wind...the same wind they heard...the wind they heard as children...the Brontë wind...

REBECCA

How is it different than any other wind?

ANNE

The sound of the wind is the shape of the land, it's like a flute made out of rocks and hills and water.

REBECCA

I'm a bit frayed right now, not much skin between the air and the nerves. It's nothing personal, I'm just a bitch. Good night.

ANNE

Goodnight.

Rebecca goes back into the cottage. She climbs into bed and turns her light out. Anne remains in the yard a little while longer, then enters the cottage. She too climbs into bed and turns her light out. The wind subsides.

Silence, then after a while...in the darkness...

ANNE

Doctor Walsh?

Silence.

Then...

REBECCA

Yes.

ANNE

Did I wake you?

Silence.

REBECCA

No.

Silence.

ANNE

I can't sleep. I guess you can't either.

REBECCA

Yes, otherwise I'd be asleep.

ANNE

Yes.

Silence.

ANNE

Why can't you sleep?

Silence.

REBECCA

Because I keep being awake.

ANNE

What's keeping you awake?

REBECCA

You.

ANNE

Oh, I'm sorry. I'll be quiet.

Long silence.

REBECCA

That's not true.

Silence

REBECCA

That you're keeping me awake.

Silence.

Anne? REBECCA

Silence.

Are you awake? REBECCA

Yes. ANNE

Why didn't you answer? REBECCA

Because I didn't want... ANNE

...to wake you up. ANNE AND REBECCA

They laugh.

Silence.

The wind has stopped. ANNE

It's so quiet. REBECCA

She makes the raspberry sound (fart?) and starts laughing..

What was that? ANNE

Silence.

The Brontës letting wind. REBECCA

Yes, the Brontë wind. ANNE

Anne does the raspberries. Rebecca raspberries back. They giggle, then do the raspberries together. They laugh. They make raspberry sounds. They laugh. Silence. Then the sound of light snoring.

ANNE

Doctor Walsh? Goodnight.

ACT TWO

SCENE 9 (THURSDAY EVENING)

Rebecca is sitting in the chair looking out. The sound of Anne's car approaching, a bit of grinding gears as she downshifts to slow the car in order to save the breaks (it's an Iowa thing) which doesn't work so well, and thus the breaks have to be applied as well, but not too late to knock against a wooden barrier enlisted to keep the car from rolling down the hill. The sound of the door opening, then a moment later clapping shut. Rebecca doesn't acknowledge the sound. Anne enters. Anne is a bit tipsy. She's carrying a bottle of whisky in a bag.

ANNE

Doctor Walsh? There you are! You didn't come to the Black Bull Inn. Everybody was waiting for you.

REBECCA
(Quietly)

I'll bet they were.

ANNE

Well, they were. I waited for you. I drank some cider. I thought it was apple cider. It was so tasty I had me a couple of pints before I realized it was hard apple cider. Gosh, there are so many ways to get drunk in England.

Anne enters the kitchenette.

REBECCA

What did they say about me?

ANNE (OS)

Those English, they're really snots, I'm glad we won the Revolutionary War.

REBECCA

What did they say?

ANNE (OS)

Do you really want to know?

REBECCA

That's why I asked.

Anne comes out of the kitchenette with the bottle of whisky and two glasses, one filled with water.

ANNE

I got this stuff. It's called Scotch Whiskey. It's from Scotland. It was expensive. Would you like some?

REBECCA

No, thank you.

While Anne delivers the speech below she pours a glass of water, opens the whisky and pours a couple of fingers into the other glass.

ANNE

I got to tell you the truth, I thought your lecture was really funny, especially that part about "Male Hysteria." Did you make that up? I love it, it's a hoot. It's true. It's so funny when you hear a couple of guys huffing and puffing under the hood of a 53 Chevy trying to fix the carburetor together. It sounds like they're making love. If they knew it they'd completely freak out. Them huddled around the TV discussing college boy's size on football days or squeezed together in a duck blind whispering in the dark with shotguns in their hands. They ought to kiss each other and get it over with. Women never get that chummy with each other, pawing each other, grabbing each other around the head, pokin and jokin. God, it's so obnoxious. "Male Hysteria."

Anne holds her breath, downs the whisky in a swallow, expels her breath and drinks some water.

REBECCA

My god, what did you just do?

ANNE

I drank some whisky. (Remarking on the experience) Wow.

REBECCA

That's not how you drink whisky, you're suppose to sip it.

ANNE

Yeah, but then I'd taste it. (Looking solemnly at her) Doctor Walsh? I need to ask you as personal question.

REBECCA

Oh, no.

ANNE

Do you think you're better than me?

REBECCA

Of course not.

ANNE

Bull shit, I think you think you're better than me.

REBECCA

No, I don't think I'm better than you.

ANNE

Yeth, I think you do.

REBECCA

"Yeth?"

ANNE

Yeth! Prove it to me, would you drink from the same glass?

REBECCA

From your glass?

ANNE

Yeah.

REBECCA

I don't drink whisky.

ANNE

Would you drink from my glass?

REBECCA

I don't drink from other people's glasses.

ANNE

The alcohol will sterilize my kooties.

REBECCA

I'm not going to drink from your glass. Why do you want me to drink from your glass?

ANNE

Cuz I think you're prejudiced against me.

REBECCA

I'm not prejudiced against you.

ANNE

Yes, you are. You think if you drink from my glass you'll get dumber.

REBECCA

If I drink that whisky I'll get dumber.

ANNE

Drink from my glass.

REBECCA

I don't drink whisky. I don't drink.

ANNE

Do you drink wine?

REBECCA

I don't drink much.

ANNE

Do you think I drink much?

REBECCA

I don't know.

Anne pours some more whisky, holds her breath, downs it, expels her breath and drinks some water.

ANNE

Maybe I do, huh? Maybe I drink this much every night.

REBECCA

Who were they?

ANNE

Who?

REBECCA

Well, come on, Who was talking about me?

ANNE

You've got to drink from my glass.

REBECCA

Cynthia Lacante, right, Cynthia Lacante?

ANNE

No.

REBECCA

Timothy Mathews?

ANNE

I don't know their names, but maybe. There was a guy.

REBECCA

Why don't you just come out and tell me?

ANNE

Drink from my glass.

REBECCA

Come on, what's her name?

ANNE

She's got the hair.

REBECCA

The hair?

ANNE

The hair that looks like it got sawed off her head.

The person's name dawns on Rebecca.

REBECCA

Florencia Ingravado! What did she say? Come on tell me.

ANNE

All this closet stuff, that everybody's in a closet, Hemingway is in a closet, Joyce is in a closet (I don't know who she is), Moby Dick is in the closet.

A ring tone of Beethoven's "Für Elise" is heard coming from somewhere in the room.

ANNE

What is that?

Rebecca is also momentarily nonplused.

REBECCA

Oh, it's me.

She searches and finds the cell phone.

REBECCA

Who would be calling me at this hour? Excuse me.

She crosses to the front porch.

REBECCA

Hello? Cathy? What's going on? What? What are you talking about?

Rebecca listens with hushed attention. This goes on for awhile. Meanwhile, Anne, probably because of the rapid ingestion of the scotch whisky, gets the hiccups. She crosses into the kitchenette and gets a glass of water. She reenters and sits with it and tries to read but it is difficult because she can't stop hiccupping.

REBECCA

She said what? That's not true. You believe her? I can't believe she said that. And you believe her? Wait, Cathy, wait, listen to me.

Cathy has hung up. Rebecca pushes the automatic dialing number for Cathy.

REBECCA

Cathy? Cathy? Please pick up.

Cathy doesn't answer the phone. Rebecca finally closes the cell phone. She stays on the front porch trying to collect herself. Finally, she enters the cottage and sits on the edge of the daybed. Anne tries to control her hiccups.

ANNE

What's the matter, Doctor Walsh?

Anne hiccups. Rebecca can't move. Anne crosses to her but doesn't sit down.

ANNE

What's wrong with you?

Anne hiccups.

REBECCA

What's wrong with *you*?

ANNE

I think I drank too much whisky.

She holds her breath. She hiccups.

REBECCA

Will you stop it, goddamn it!

ANNE

I'm sorry.

Anne grabs the glass of water and downs it in effort to stop her hiccups. She refills the glass.

REBECCA

Ruth's mother called Cathy and told her that I was stalking her daughter and if I didn't stop it she's turn me into the provost.

ANNE

Into a provost? What's a provost?

REBECCA

Never mind. Oh, god, I feel like a pedophile. (Pause) Cathy is moving out.

ANNE

Oh, my god, that's terrible. (Beat) Who's Cathy?

She hiccups.

REBECCA

(Shouting)

You know who Cathy is!

ANNE

Why would I know who Cathy is?

Anne hiccups.

REBECCA

Because you listen to my phone calls.

ANNE

I don't listen to your (She hiccups) phone calls. I (She hiccups) hear them, you shouted them out at me. Just because you're talking on the phone doesn't mean you're alone.

She hiccups.

REBECCA

(Shouting)

Cathy is my partner!

ANNE

Your what? Oh, you mean your husband. (She hiccups) Oh, that's terrible. (She hiccups) Who's the other one then?

REBECCA

The "other one" is Ruth. Jesus Christ (She screams at Anne.) Why do you always have to be so fucking obnoxious? Is it genetic? Here, will this satisfy you?

Rebecca grabs Anne's half full glass of whisky and downs it. Rebecca is practically doubled over with the hot bolts of whisky. Rebecca points at Anne's water.

REBECCA

Wa...

ANNE

Water? Yes! (She quickly hands the pitcher to Rebecca who downs it) Smokey, isn't it? (She pours another glass of water and gives it to Rebecca who drinks and begins to recover) Wow, hiccups are gone. So Ruth is the young one?

REBECCA

Yes, 23.

ANNE

23? Oh my.

REBECCA

Stop it.

ANNE

I figured she was young.

REBECCA

How?

ANNE
Is that “how” or “why”?

REBECCA
It’s “how!”

ANNE
Okay, “how.” Yeah, I guess it’s a different thing, “how did I know?” as opposed to “why do you like 23 year old girls?” Well, how I knew was your tone of voice.

REBECCA
My tone of voice?

ANNE
Yes, I talk to my sons in that tone of voice.

REBECCA
You think I sounded like I was talking to my daughter? Do you talk to your sons that way?

ANNE
Heavens no but I use that tone of voice.

REBECCA
That tone of voice?

ANNE
That “coo.”

REBECCA
“Coo”?

ANNE
Yes, you know that sound that pigeons make, or like when you burp a baby?

REBECCA
Yes, but these babies bite.

ANNE
Like Ruth?

REBECCA

Oh, yeah, she senses I'm losing credibility, she wants to shake any connection to me so she tells her mother, her mother calls my partner and threatens me with an abuse scandal. "Abuse," that's a show stopper, of course I'm not going to bother her again.

ANNE

That's terrible.

REBECCA

Comes with the territory. Only problem is, and this is yet another subtle surprise you get with age, it hurts just a little too much and lingers a little too long.

ANNE

The pain?

REBECCA

The terror.

Rebecca drinks from the bottle and howls. Anne gives Rebecca the glass of water.

REBECCA

Oh, my god, that stuff is strong. Where did you learn to drink that way?

ANNE

In high school. This is the first time I got drunk since I was 17 years old.

REBECCA

Really?

ANNE

Yeah.

REBECCA

I wonder how I'll feel tomorrow but I feel great tonight. It's so crazy, I feel great! I feel fucking relieved. Free at last! Free at last! Why in the fuck am I telling you this?

ANNE

You're having a Roman Holiday.

REBECCA

Give me a fucking drink! (Rebecca grabs the bottle and takes a slug from it. She gasps and Anne hands her some water) It's not a Roman Holiday.

ANNE

No, I don't mean that, I mean the movie and it's not with the three sailors, it's Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck." The three sailors is "Three Coins in a Fountain."

REBECCA

No, "Three Coins in a Fountain" is with Clifton Webb and Dorothy McGuire.

ANNE

That's right, the three sailors are "Anchors Aweigh."

REBECCA

"Anchors Away" is not three sailors, it's two sailors and Kathryn Grayson. You're thinking of "On the Town." "Three times as gay as Anchors Away." The three sailors are Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra and Jules Garret and the fountain is not in Rome, it's in Rockefeller Plaza. Everybody's singing (She begins singing) "New York New York, it's a wonderful town..."

Rebecca continues singing and Anne joins her. They begin dancing. They up the tempo and dance faster, exaggerating the motions of their dancing until they are fairly sawing at the air. They fall on the floor and laugh.

REBECCA

My mother was the moon, my father, a spaceship with an alien inside. He was a frightening man, he'd have outbursts. He's not dead, neither is my mother. They just seem dead. I left when I was fourteen. Well, actually I lived there at home but I was away and as long as I did well in school it was fine. It was really fine. It was wonderful because I was in love. Only one thing, she didn't know she was in love with me, only two things; if my parents found out they would come back into my life and we were so happily separated. She had indigo eyes and black hair and Sleeping Beauty skin. I had to be careful not to have her notice, but she did notice, not with delight, but with an awkward curiosity as if she didn't want to acknowledge that I was staring at her. So we tried to avoid each other and so in trying to avoid, we ran into, yes, each other constantly. Then one day in the last year of high school she finally returned my stare. She had stared at the "dyke." I didn't even know I was "the dyke." I didn't know what the word meant. I just thought I was a very smart slob. But my mother knew. She had known all along for she had not only read my looks but also my journals (of course I had to write it all down, all in code, mind you, in metaphors and similes and distant abstractions like the calculations of a star map) my mother broke the code of course and she nudged my father as he passed by with perturbations as to the disrepair of my persona, the veritable ghetto of my wardrobe and especially (I swear he could smell it) the bursting forth of my pubescence, culminating in his discovery of a sanitary napkin left

unflushed in the toilet (fathers and sharks are alerted by such things) and he came swooping down from the sky. He called me into the library, the citadel, the “men’s room,” “his place” (did I mention to you that I was an only child?). The soul of his only child was a boy, a boy, mind you, who performed with intellectual superiority that far exceeded his expectations, that threatened his narrow alien mind (aliens, I find, are quite traditional after you get to know them) so he didn't want me to “come out” for fear of his own sexual ambiguity (I think my farther was queer and I was his x-ray) so he stood, or rather sat behind his desk (which was his way of standing) with my journals open before him, my mother, up stage right of his shoulder, dark in the shadows as the new moon. My father was a professor of languages, specifically Indo-European roots. Isn't that droll, a veritable seismologist when it came to cryptic innuendo. I'm good at that too. I am more famous than he. But that didn't help me that evening in November, 1958. that's when they found out I was in love with Karen.

ANNE

Oh, my god.

REBECCA

November 18, 1958 I officially “came out” and drove my mother deep into the sky, so deep that she's never been able to see me again. As for my father, it broke the seal on his spaceship and the funny gas from our planet seeped in and so now he's senile and my mother blames me but she's too far out in space to mention it.

ANNE

What happened?

REBECCA

We started fucking, Karen and me.

ANNE

(Correcting her)

“Karen and I.”

REBECCA

Yes, that is until they put me into a school for girls.

ANNE

Oh, my God, that's terrible.

REBECCA

I had a ball.

ANNE

That's wonderful.

REBECCA

Yes, the only problem is that it didn't happen that way. Karen *did* notice me and she sicced all the boys that flocked around her on me and all of the girls too. That's how I came to know the word "dyke." I lived in terror. I ran home from school, ran right into my closet. I mean, my actual closet and I stayed in there reading books by a 60 watt bulb that hung from the ceiling. I read, "Women's Barracks," "Nurses Quarters," "Orgy of the Dolls." I masturbated day and night and when I got a face full of pimples I turned the closet light off and squeezed them in the dark. My mother and father became so concerned that they sent me to a boarding school where I couldn't even go into the closet so I hid between the covers of books and that's how I became a famous scholar, the head of a major department.

ANNE

Tell me something, do I look like a guy?

Rebecca seriously observes Anne.

REBECCA

Yes, I certainly can see the man.

Anne smiles.

ANNE

I can see the "girl" in you.

REBECCA

The "girl?" I don't think so.

ANNE

Yes, I can. I can see that little girl peeking out of the closet. She's cute, she's fat, she's got this pale skin like a book lizard.

REBECCA

I wasn't fat, I was skinny.

ANNE

Same thing, loneliness: big water-drop eyes dreaming about being something some day.

REBECCA

Do you like my face?

ANNE
Yes.

REBECCA
Do you really?

ANNE
Yes, women are like dolphins.

REBECCA
I like women's lips, the way they tuck into the face and then burst out again into a bud...

ANNE
...Or a pout...

REBECCA
...Or a smile...

ANNE
...Oooo, the lips....

REBECCA
...Yum. I like lips. I like girl lips...

ANNE
...Girls lips on a boy...

REBECCA
...pouting lips are good on a girl...

ANNE
...cuz you want to kiss a girl...

REBECCA
...kiss a girl...

ANNE
...Would you kiss me as a boy..?

REBECCA
...I like my boys to be girls. How about me, do I look any thing like a "girl?"

ANNE
Oh, yes, like Cathy from Wuthering Heights.

REBECCA

Wasn't Cathy a blond?

ANNE

Merle Oberon, her hair was dark. (Their faces are very close) Let's dress up. You be Cathy, I'll be Heathcliff. (Anne gets up) Let's see what we brought with us.

Anne goes to the armoire.

REBECCA

Oh, your nightgown.

Anne grabs one of Rebecca's dark suit jackets.

ANNE

And your blazer.

REBECCA

What is this? Is this your scarfie? Golly, how fem. Here, (she throws some clothes at Anne) Go into the bathroom and change, then let's "reveal" ourselves.

Anne and Rebecca exit into her arms full of clothes, giggles and runs off stage into the bathroom and the kitchenette. They both begin to change their clothes.

ANNE (OS)

Let me set this up. Heathcliff barges into Cathy's bedroom when she's dying. Her husband, Linton, is at church and is soon to return but Heathcliff doesn't care that she's another man's wife and nine months pregnant!

REBECCA (OS)

She's nine months pregnant?

ANNE (OS)

Yeah, she had to be nine months pregnant, she gives birth to a girl later that night in Chapter 16 and then she dies.

REBECCA (OS)

Wow, that's kinky.

ANNE (OS)

Are you ready?

REBECCA (OS)

Don't rush me, this fem stuff takes time.

ANNE (OS)

Come on, hurry up!

REBECCA (OS)

All right, all right. Ready?

They burst on stage. They have managed to create a wonderful Heathcliff and Cathy from the clothes they brought with them from the States. Rebecca has found a pillow and has stuffed it up under her nighty so that she looks hugely pregnant. Rebecca runs and flings herself on the daybed in a swoon.

REBECCA AS CATHY

Oh, god, don't see me like this!

ANNE AS HEATHCLIFF

Oh, Cathy! Oh, my life! How can I bear it?

REBECCA AS CATHY

"Bear it?" It is *I* who has to bear it!

Anne flings herself at Rebecca and covers her with a barrage of kisses.

ANNE AS HEATHCLIFF

Don't torture me!

Rebecca tries to beat Anne off.

REBECCA AS CATHY

I shall die! I shall die!

ANNE AS HEATHCLIFF

Don't die! Don't die, you selfish bitch!

REBECCA AS CATHY

Stop it! Stop it!

ANNE AS HEATHCLIFF

No! No!

REBECCA AS CATHY

I shall! I shall!

Rebecca grabs Anne and won't let her go.

ANNE AS HEATHCLIFF

Don't! Don't!

REBECCA AS CATHY

I shall not let you go, I'll drag you into the grave with me!

ANNE AS HEATHCLIFF

'I must go, Cathy!'

REBECCA AS CATHY

'You must not go!'

Anne breaks free and grabs a pillow from the bed and begins hitting Rebecca with the pillow as she speaks

ANNE AS HEATHCLIFF

I must go, you fool, your husband is coming. I must, I must, I must.

REBECCA AS CATHY

No! Oh, don't, don't go. It is the last time! Heathcliff, I shall die! I shall die!

Anne frees herself from Rebecca and looks down at her.

ANNE AS HEATHCLIFF

Hush, my darling! Hush! Hush!'

Anne brings her face to hers.

ANNE

(Tenderly)

Take the words from my mouth.

Anne speaks the words and Rebecca says them after her.

ANNE AND REBECCA

"That is not *my* Heathcliff. I shall love mine yet; and take him with me: he's in my soul."

Anne steals a kiss.

REBECCA

(In quiet amazement)

Have you done this before?

REBECCA

Who did you do it with?

ANNE
(Correcting her)

With whom did I do it?

REBECCA

Whatever.

ANNE

With Emily.

REBECCA

Emily?

ANNE

My sister.

REBECCA

You did this with your sister?

ANNE

There was no harm in it, we were practicing for boys.

REBECCA

Are you practicing for boys with me?

ANNE

No.

They kiss.

REBECCA

You had a sister named Emily?

ANNE

Yes, and a sister named Charlotte.

REBECCA

Wait a second...how many sisters did you have?

ANNE

Two.

REBECCA

You have two sisters and you're named Anne?

ANNE

Yes.

REBECCA

You don't by chance have a brother...

ANNE

...named Branwell? No, but my mother was named Maria.

REBECCA

You mean, like the mother of the Brontës. Your father wasn't named "Patrick?"

ANNE

No, his name was Karl.

REBECCA

Well, that blows that. What would have happened had she had a son?

ANNE

That's the mystery of it, isn't it?

REBECCA

No kidding? Do your sisters live in Iowa?

ANNE

One lives in San Diego, the other one is dead.

REBECCA

Oh, I'm sorry.

ANNE

Charlotte is the oldest, then there was Emily and finally me. Mom taught grade school. My dad did just about everything, handyman, tree surgeon. We lived in a house outside of town. It was while she was having me that mom had a heart attack.

REBECCA

Your mother had a heart attack while she was giving birth to you?

ANNE

She didn't want to talk about it for fear it might scare her to death. All she said was that she knew that there was a hell and that the devil really existed. One winter I got strep throat and so Emily slept with mom and dad slept on the couch. Charlotte was having a sleep over with one of her

friends so she wouldn't catch anything. Next morning Emily woke up with mother dead in the bed. It was so funny, her mouth was ajar like she had just come up with the right question. Isn't that what they call it (She makes a face) "ajar?"

REBECCA

Dead people usually look pretty stupid.

ANNE

"Dead" is about as "stupid" as you can get. Charlotte moved in with the minister's family, "to lighten father's load." She married the minister's son right after graduation, the one who became the doctor. They live in San Diego.

REBECCA

So Charlotte bailed?

ANNE

It's as if she flew high above it all like those jets that bomb places from the stratosphere. Dad fell apart. He never slapped mom, but he slapped Emily. Emily started sneaking out that window and running with the wild kids. She got pregnant by one of them. After she got pregnant a light started to glow in her eyes. She started humming around the house. She hid it from dad for as long as she could. One day Emily and dad were out in the rain and they had a flat tire and dad told her she had to change it herself. So she got down and started changing the tire and then he saw it, "You're not getting fat, you're pregnant! 16 years old! 16 years old, My God! My God!" and he had a heart attack and he died right there in the mud. Emily had the baby. The relatives moved us into a little house in town. Emily got a part time job, I took care of the baby when she was at work. The baby scared me. It looked like a Martian. But you know, I've never really liked babies, they all look like Martians. One day it started crying. I couldn't make it stop so I started carrying it around. There was a storm coming up outside and I heard something crawling around in the basement. I didn't know what to do. I ran to the head of the stairs and opened the door to the basement and looked down into the dark and the baby tumbled out of my arms. I heard it hit the stairs, one, two, then it skipped a few and hit the floor. Just then lightning struck the house and the lights went out. The telephone went dead. I didn't want to go down in that dark basement with the baby there. I didn't know the neighbors. I thought they'd blame me so I waited until Emily came home. When she saw the baby she couldn't move, like she didn't like the way it looked but she couldn't take her eyes off of it and then she started howling. She was so loud the neighbors came. There she was, howling, and me between them in the middle of the stairs pointing at the baby and them looking down at me. They thought I killed the baby. I couldn't tell then I didn't because I couldn't talk. I couldn't talk for a year. I

just kept on seeing Emily in that moment on the stairs with the life going out of her. They put her in the hospital. That night she snuck out and jumped in the river. An Uncle and Aunt took me. They didn't want me in the house so they put me in a trailer out back. After high school they made a mad search for an "eligible" bachelor. They had their job cut out for them. I mean, I wasn't ugly, but I was queer. They found John. He was pretty queer too but he was hard working and most important, he had land. I didn't give a damn about him but I thought, heck, might as well work for him as for them. I didn't think much about the sex part. The whole thing scared the dickens out of me. When people came to visit my aunt and uncle, they kept their babies away from me, so I wasn't a shoe in for mother of the year but John didn't seem to care. What I mean, is that he was just too shy to think about sex, as we were, I guess you'd say, both extreme virgins. Long and short of it, we got married and I moved out to his farm, so it was just us, five cats, two dogs, twenty pigs, twelve Holsteins, and a hundred and eighty acres of corn and alfalfa. It took us a long time but we made a home for ourselves where we could be who we wanted to be. We didn't know that came along with it, "home," but you know, we learned how to talk, learned how to argue, learned how to laugh and along the way we had two boys which I didn't kill. It turned out good for us but it wasn't easy.

They sit in silence. A few birds start to sing.

REBECCA

We stayed up all night.

ANNE

My god, we did.

REBECCA

Sometimes it's an awful sound, the sound of the birds waking, I mean, if you've had an awful night.

ANNE

But you didn't have an awful night.

Rebecca brushes her lips against Anne's.

REBECCA

No.

ANNE

(Her lips near Rebecca's)

Do you think of birds as "waking."

REBECCA

I beg your pardon?

ANNE

“Waking” is too slow for birds. I think they pop awake.

REBECCA

You’re so weird.

ANNE

Is that with an “i-e.” or an “e-i?”

REBECCA

“E-i.”

ANNE

“E-i?”

REBECCA

“Oh.” (Singing) Ole Mac Donald had a farm.

ANNE AND REBECCA
(Singing)

“Ee-eye-ee-eye oh.

They kiss.

ANNE

Wait a second.

REBECCA

What’s the matter?

ANNE

World War Two Days!

REBECCA

What?

ANNE

It’s World War Two Days in Haworth. The RAF is having a fly by and we’re in costume.

REBECCA

We’re hardly World War Two vintage?

ANNE

We're the ghosts of Cathy and Heathcliff during the Second World War cheering Old England on! Come on, let's go, the sun is rising, and they're supposed to fly over at dawn.

REBECCA

Where should we go?

ANNE AS HEATHCLIFF

To Penistone Crag! Bring your cell phone, Cathy!

Anne grabs Rebecca's hand and she heads out the door. Rebecca stops and gets her cell phone and exits. There is the sound of Anne's car doors opening then slamming shut as the engine is started, then gunned, then the sound of the car lurching into motion and the lights fade.

SCENE 10 (FRIDAY DAWN)

The lights rise on them as they are just emerging on the crags. Rebecca is ahead of Anne. Anne is out of breath while Rebecca seems more refreshed than fatigued.

ANNE

My god, you're in shape.

Rebecca takes in the scenery.

REBECCA

Stair Master!

The song trails off as they are overcome with the beauty of the view. The sun is beginning to rise. Anne steps up behind Rebecca and wraps her arms around Rebecca's waist. They take it in the silence.

ANNE

May I call you Rebecca?

REBECCA

Hmm, let me think about it.

ANNE

What are you going to do?

REBECCA

Do?

ANNE
About Cathy?

REBECCA
I'm going to kick her out and you're going to move in with me.

ANNE
Would I be the wife or the husband?

REBECCA
We'd be pals.

ANNE
We *are* pals.

REBECCA
That we are.

ANNE
That we are.

Pause.

REBECCA
I'm going to try to make it work with Cathy, if she'll have me. Maybe we'll take a sabbatical. Go on a trip to some far away exotic land.

ANNE
Like Iowa?

REBECCA
What would they think about a couple of lesbians?

ANNE
We'd introduce you to Alice and Barbara.

REBECCA
Who?

ANNE
A couple of widows who live on a farm together outside Oxford Junction. There's Laura and Megan. They're young, they work on the internet and travel to Iowa City. Then there's Thad and Mark.

REBECCA
"Thad and Mark?" Don't tell me...

ANNE

They have a little cafe in Clarence.

REBECCA

So there are a lot of queers in Iowa?

ANNE

No, just “widows” and “room mates,” and “boys who live with their mothers.”

ANNE

May I use your cell phone?

REBECCA

So that’s why you wanted me to take my phone?

ANNE

Yes, I was manipulating you.

REBECCA

Who do you want to call?

ANNE

My husband in Oxford Junction. I’ll pay for it.

REBECCA

Let me dial it for you. What’s the number?

ANNE

515-255-1048. I’ve never called from a foreign country before.

Rebecca dials. She listens for the connection. Anne is excited and a bit nervous. When the phone starts ringing on the other end, Rebecca hands it to Anne. Anne takes it gingerly.

REBECCA

It won't shock you. Put it by your ear.

Anne puts the phone by her ear. Her husband answers.

ANNE

Hi Johnny. It’s me. Yes. Is it night there? Can you hear me good? Guess where I am. I’m outside. There’s not a house in sight and I’m talking on a phone. A cell phone. Of the person I’m rooming with. She’s nice. She’s sort of nice. Actually, she’s a complete bitch and I like her very much.

Johnny, you should see what I'm seeing. There are these hills, they're so big and long and they stretch out forever. Right now the sun is just coming up. It looks so bright and fresh like it got dunked in gold. The shadows are dark like there was still some night left in them. Everything's still got dew on it. Can you see it? Yeah, the sky's like the ceiling of Saint John's Chapel in Dubuque. It's the land, John, it's haunted. Yeah, it's *all* beautiful. You take care of yourself, honey. I'll see you in the morning. I love you too. Bye...bye-bye. (She doesn't know how to "hang up.") Rebecca takes the cell phone and closes it.) He likes beautiful things.

Suddenly there is a low all pervasive drone. Rebecca looks out.

REBECCA

Oh, my god, look at that!

The drone gets louder.

ANNE

It's the Royal Air Froce!

REBECCA

Look at all of them!

The sound grows thunderous. The shadows of the aircraft move across the women. Anne and Rebecca salute. The thunder goes on and then the lights fade.

SCENE 11 (FRIDAY MORNING)

It is raining. When the lights rise they are in the process of changing clothes and packing. It's all done silently. They try not to look at each other. When there's nothing left to pack they stand with their backs to each other, both in tears. Suddenly they throw there arms around each other.

ANNE

I love the smell of your hair.

REBECCA

It's always the smell of the hair when you say goodbye that stays with you, and the feel, the solidness that won't be there soon. (She holds Anne out at arms length so she can take her in) I'll never take Iowa for granted again.

ANNE

I don't know if I can say the same for snooty gender professors.

REBECCA

Oh yeah?

ANNE

Oh yeah. (She takes Rebecca's face and kisses her.) But they sure taste good.

They hold each other, then Anne goes to the night stand, takes her book and gives it to Rebecca.

REBECCA

This is your copy of Wuthering Heights.

ANNE

Actually, it's not mine. It's Emily's. (Anne takes her suitcase) I'm not going to say anything any more. I'm just going to go.

REBECCA

That's a good way to do it.

Anne heads for the door then stops.

ANNE

Will you come, whether you're with Cathy or not?

REBECCA

I don't know.

ANNE

Of course. That's honest. Maybe in another place it won't be the same.

REBECCA

Yeah, maybe.

ANNE

John Ingersol, Oxford Junction Iowa, only one in the phone book. Besides, you've got it right there, in your cell phone.

REBECCA

Oh, yes, when I dialed your number. You learn quickly.

ANNE

No, quick.

They take each other in, then Anne turns and leaves. There is the sound of the door of the car opening, then slamming shut, the engine firing, then the car lurching into motion and then diminishing in the distance. Rebecca puts the rest of her things in her suitcase. As she does she sings. She is packed. She takes the book Anne gave her and gazes at it

fondly. She takes her suitcase, looks at the room and smiles. She turns toward the door as the lights fade.

THE END