

AVE MARIA

ACT 2: The Awakening

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### Scene 0: The Lost One II

#### EVELYN

My name is Evelyn, and I have been lost in a black box for all eternity.

*Instant blackout.*

### Scene 1: The State of Things

*The scene shows Marilyn in her tenement room. Crumpled balls of paper are the latest specimen of spring flowers sporting her linoleum lawn. Her room is darkened, but there's a spotlight on her. Dark-circles beneath her eyes. She appears lost:*

#### MARILYN

I can't sleep! (*Haunted tone.*) My memories plague me:

#### EMS INTERN 1 (VOICE)

Positive, yes. It is so, and it is.  
My dear: By this time, a decade from now  
You will be dead. Yes, as simple as that.  
Perhaps sooner, but not later. Alas...  
The disease is fatal, as is the world.  
Its evil incubates itself in you,  
Infiltrates, permeates, overwhelms your  
Whole entire being—every cell made  
Unto Legion: The very essence of  
Your own transformed unto that of VIRUS!  
And you are forced to destroy yourself  
With your every breath, moment, life's short pulse.

#### POLICE 1 (VOICE)

Nay, but could he had more simply said this:  
The retrovirus infects and destroys  
The immune system—and then it's the end. (*Shrugs.*)  
(*Mutters*) Modern med schools. Students too well balanced.

**MARILYN**

I'm—I'm going to die!

**EMS INTERN 2 (VOICE)**

The test is positive, but it may err.  
Even the great Heavens do so when they  
Let flying stars become nothing but dust.  
Nay, they never meant for such tragedies.  
But mistakes do occur—there's always hope!

**EMS INTERN 1 (VOICE)**

Hope that the dear Heavens have Divinely  
Erred? Nay, but my young apprentice, he is—

**EMS INTERN 2 (VOICE)**

A Believer. The Fates—they cannot be  
So cruel. They cannot be. They just... cannot!

*The stage lights fade back on, as MARILYN stands up. Dim the memory voices:*

**EMS INTERN 1 (VOICE)**

*(Faint echo)* Oh, but they can. You know *naught* of cruelty.

**MARILYN**

The Fates—they cannot be so cruel... They can't!  
Not now. Not when I've gotten rid of that damn trash can, w-when I've finally managed to overcome my writer's self-annihilation. When I've thrown away my needles, my myriad stashes of hero. When I've finally decided to... decided to *let* myself write. When I've...

*The sound of the plopping of mail inside a dinky tenement mailbox right outside her door. MARILYN rushes to the mailbox. She holds the single envelope in her hand as if it's the Holy Grail:*

**MARILYN**

When I've... When I've received the first word of publication...  
*(Genuinely serious voice.)* Poetry.COM! Oh... Oh... they want to publish my poem in an anthology! A—and I only have to pay \$24.95 to pay for the plaque—and \$89.99 to buy the anthology—and \$349.99 to have my name engraved on the back cover—and \$4895.99 to become a Master Poet—ooh, and \$55,420 per month to join the Guild of Poets!

Oh! I knew that saving all that money instead of buying hero would come to some good.

*(Speaks towards the sky/ceiling.)* I'd always known that the fates weren't cruel... That fate would have something truly divine happen to me! My work—renown, read by actual people!

**MARILYN (CONT'D)**

And more... That I would be able to live as a poet...  
To make a living writing—only writing and nothing more. Only the words and I—and... and...  
Evelyn... my dearest twin sister:

It seems that with every verse I utter, every verbalized meaning conjured forth from the great  
expanse of non-existence, every thought made solid, chiseled unto a written sculpture... I grow  
closer to her.

As if a floundering flower  
Finds, finally, the sunlight.  
Pabulum lost, but now reclaimed.  
Life lost, but now reclaimed.

The living death that is my life becomes a relic of a dark past I care not to remember. As if the  
old, dried skin of the caterpillar, left behind. Shed behind, never to be picked up ever again, as  
the butterfly soars, ascends up into the sky. Words alone, they fight the void that undermines  
meaning in life... and they win. Writing is:

As if a rare tonic  
To cure the ails of  
A life not worth living

As if the quintessential elixir  
Needed in order to live.

*(quietly)* Life is mere mortality, otherwise.

*A loud rapping at the door. The sound of scotch  
tape. The pound of a flyer slammed against the  
door. The sound of heavy footsteps walking away.*

*MARILYN goes to the door. She finds a "Rent  
Overdue" flyer.*

**MARILYN**

Rent Overdue. Evacuation and/or repossession imminent.  
But, I won't use the money I've saved in my previous sinful life to pay for rent in... in this dirty,  
squalid place.

No, there wouldn't be any need for that. Soon, I'd be freed of this place. A life apart—a world  
across—away from this life fate never intended me to have.

I'd be a writer. I'd live in a luxury apartment—never have to work for Boss Charon ever again!  
I'd be my own woman. Never have sex with strangers for cash. Never... *(Trails off ad lib.)*

And, all I have to do is write. To bring to life the very words of my life...

*She picks up a pen. Writes. And writes. At odd intervals, balled paper fall from the sky, overstocking the crushed poems on her floor. The sky outside her window goes from sunrise to sunset to sunrise to sunset to sunrise to sunset to sunrise.*

*MARILYN, who now appears a physically pale and shrunken and with rather prominent dark circles under her eyes, walks to her bed, plops down for a few seconds. Then jumps back up, paces:*

### MARILYN

I can't sleep! I can't do anything but write. It's as if the words... as if the words are enslaving me! As if the wordsmith pounds not shape and form unto the words, *but* the words pound the smith out of shape and form. There is an incessant throbbing at the back of my head. There was, rather, but it grew unto a tsunami inside my mind, thundering down upon innocent thoughts, blending, whirling my stream of consciousness with the madness of a migraine, making fleeting my ideas with the crushing vengefulness of sleeploss... so that each moment grows apart from the other—the past becomes its own, the present becomes its own, and the future becomes its own independent entity... My memories become disjoint, my thoughts cluttered, I can't remember one thing past the present—I can't remember my past! I can't—

But then all of a sudden, in the midst of chaos, with formlessness my reality, senselessness my ontology, mindlessness my epistemology, as I'm suffocating in my own mental hell, choking, wheezing in a ponderous miasma of self-defeating thoughts, I'd learn to breathe.

Time would still be in its shattered pieces, the past askew on the other side of the room, as if he never knew the present, as if he never anticipated the future, as if he knew not of change, as if he believed that he would stay the past forever and ever—and that the world functioned according to his belief.

I'd live one moment apart from the other—the present, truly the present, as isolated from the past, the future. The present, as herself. The present as her own element of forever.

And, in that moment, I would find solace. (*She arrives at the window in her pacing. Looks out.*) An instant of clearness of mind, of thought—as if floating, but not floating, as if flying, but not flying, as if... as if the sense of being, purely being.

Of light, apart from it all. (*gestures at the window*)  
Of light, in the midst of night,  
Burns a trial unto daylight  
The sunrise of its own tyranny in the sky.

And, in the warmth of day,  
I'd have dim memories of last night,  
Wraiths of the scores of writs I wrote and wrote and wrote.  
And, just as my writing is my present apart from all, my writing connects me with it all.

**MARILYN (CONT'D)**

And I'd find my memories in a sea of crumpled paper, crushed poetry. Slowly, I'd pick up my lost children, one by one, more and more, balls of wasted words in my arms. I'd save them, the pieces too many, a dry flood upon my floor, and I'd be the catcher in the rye...

With the strength gone from my arms, I'd steal momentum from the past, I'd wring energy from the future, and my hand would accelerate again, the pen no longer too heavy in my grasp—motion, my own, yet again. I'd put my words in its final form.

*MARILYN walks towards a Walmart bag in a corner with a box of envelopes inside. The sky outside begins to sunset.*

**MARILYN**

And then, with dream-like slow-motion, I'd send them off by way of a ship in the guise of an envelope... on voyage... on pilgrimage to the land of the future. And, they would grow up to become the world...

But, in the present that I live in apart from the past and future, there would only be the darkness of night. A sudden blackness.

*Sudden blackout.*

Scene 2: Posted

*A giant blue US Mail postbox appears in her room, replacing her bed. Be careful not to disturb the sleeping poetry all over the floor.*

*Yellowed streetlight spotlight on MARILYN, box, and crumpled balls of poetry:*

**MARILYN**

And I would wander through trash-filled streets on a lone starless moonless night to find the mecca of my pilgrimage in the form of a giant blue box, a shade of sepia underneath the yellowed streetlight.

My package: It's the product of sleepless nights, eternal days lived unto a solo creed:

To live, breathe, *be* poetry—  
A life of a poet—  
A true poet.  
Until death do us part. (*Kisses her package.*)

And with a sense of satisfaction, a fleeting moment of self-assertion, I'd free my work, and it would fly into the open mailbox... and one day, it might flutter into *your* hands.

**MARILYN (CONT'D)**

My work known, even to you.

But I, however... I am spent. I've concentrated the essence of life unto mere words—and it is as if a transfusion of ichor from my heart to paper, by way of the fluid ink of pen, dancing a number choreographed to the music of words, of meaning meld unto form through motion, of... of...

**EVELYN**

Sonorous echoes, through and through.  
Here, there, everywhere. Now,  
The words: the depths of their kismet  
Rings true unto the moment.  
Rings true unto the said word,  
Verbalized unto existence.

**MARILYN**

And I speak the final words of a poet beyond tired—of sleepless nights and eternal days too many. I have delivered my poetry to the blue beacon of the world. And now, I shall finally get to sleep.

*MARILYN plops down on the floor and sleeps on top of piles and piles of crumpled poetry. Lights fade out, except postbox stays under spotlight for a moment longer.*

Scene 3: The Blue Beacon

*MARILYN wakes up on her bed, in her room. (Giant blue US postbox is gone.) There is a small stack of large manila envelopes on the floor next to her. Further from her is the torn envelope from Poetry.com.*

*MARILYN gets up, steps on the envelopes. Picks them up in a dream-like daze:*

**MARILYN**

So it was all a dream... (Takes a few uncertain steps to find the Poetry.com envelope.)  
But, at least this is real—this beacon from the gods, this divine gift of publication, nigh!

*With a sigh, MARILYN walks to her window. She climbs to the sill, and it appears that she might jump out... Lights black out suddenly.*

*Lights fade on to the alleyway with the emergency metal staircases leading down from her window. This alleyway, however, is not dilapidated. The sun shines through the crack between buildings, showing that the floor is vintage stone-tiled. On the far side, there is a sign hanging from the side of the wall that reads, "Heavens above the Styx: A Café," and there are people sipping tea in outdoor tables. The sign also has a subtitle, "Live Poetry, Friday Nights."*

*There is the same giant blue US postbox she saw in her dream lying near the base of the staircase.*

*MARILYN makes her way down.*

**MARILYN**

May you find your way into the light. (*She kisses the manila envelopes. She drops everything off in the US postbox for real this time.*)

*MARILYN trips and falls as she backs away from the US postbox, as if backing away in veneration to a monarch. She catches sight of the Café Sign, as she's about to get up:*

**MARILYN**

"Heavens above the Styx: A Café... Live Poetry, Friday Nights."  
(*Beat. Whispers:*) Deux ex machina.

*MARILYN gets up, as she utters the phrase. She looks out into the audience and says:*

**MARILYN**

The gods wish me to recite words of my own to the world, but I...

*Lights fade out.*

Scene 4: Reality Undiscreet

*Lights fade on, at first misleading the audience into thinking that we're still in the same set. However, as lights brighten, it becomes obvious that this is the dilapidated alleyway of the strip bar. It is night.*

*MARILYN is in her same position relative to the previous set.*

*MARILYN throws down to the ground a bunch of papers, with "Payment Overdue" red-stamped on. She takes a few steps forward.*

*The HOBBO denizen of the alley picks up the papers, scoffs:*

**HOBBO 1**

I ain't gonna pay yo bills. They're for you.  
Go to! Quit dreamin' an' come down t'Earth.  
You gotta *work* in this damn world to live.

*HOBBO 1 crumples the papers, throws the papers at MARILYN. HOBBO 2 laughs gleeful-maniacally and throws balls of paper from an Oscar-metal trashcan at MARILYN. It is as if her poetry's flying through the wind, raining down on her, once again... but in a different incarnation.*

*The two hobos laugh uncontrollably, falling into a giant trash bin/dumpster.*

*MARILYN trudges down the alley, apathetic. She reaches the side door of the bar.*

*The door suddenly flies open.*

**BAR BOSS**

Where you been, y'damn git?  
(Looks Marilyn up and down) Oh no, you think you just gonna come in here all o'a sudden?  
Af'er leavin' with no damn word? We was understaffed that night—da most busiest night of da year, an' you just hadta disappear that very damn night. Lazy irrespon'sibi'ble git."

**MARILYN**

Please...

**BAR BOSS**

Well, you'lade! You'd hafta dress out here in da alley.

*BAR BOSS bangs the door shut. Opens it, throws a sleazy outfit at MARILYN. Bangs door shut again.*

*MARILYN dresses outside in the alley behind a giant dumpster. The OLD LADY comes by and attempts to put a wilted rose in MARILYN's hair.*

*MARILYN pushes the OLD LADY away. The OLD LADY falls to the floor. The OLD LADY looks pathetic and helpless for a moment, and MARILYN is drawn to help the OLD LADY up.*

*The OLD LADY takes MARILYN's hand.*

*As MARILYN helps the OLD LADY up, the OLD LADY draws blood along MARILYN's arm, from MARILYN's heroin mark on downwards, using the thorns of the rose as a dagger.*

*The OLD LADY gazes at MARILYN with haunted eyes:*

**OLD LADY**

One fall, fatal.

*The OLD LADY cackles and disappears into the side of the alley.*

*MARILYN silently pulls on her long Cinderella-ball gloves. Her blood stains through the gloves. She doesn't react. She enters the bar.*

Scene 5: Strip Bar II

*The scene is exactly like Strip Bar I, especially with the patron beer-company propaganda, etc. Marilyn looks a bit paler and less vibrant in this scene to signify that her fatal disease has started to take over.*

*MARILYN dances the usual jig with her pole, but her expression shows a far-away gaze. She doesn't really react to the customers waving cash at her.*

*A man dressed all in white approaches her. He looks distinctly like the deathly pale BLACKWOOD. He stuffs a large wad of cash into her leggings.*

**MARILYN**

I'm sorry. I'm not taking any Bonuses for the night.

*The man looks at MARILYN blankly, as if uncomprehending.*

**MARILYN**

*(Indignant voice, eloquently:)* I'm not a prostitute...

*The man walks away.*

**MARILYN**

... Anymore... But, why am I here?

*(Aside.)* The river leads to the depths of Hades. Boss Charon is the unwitting raft driver, leading the ghouls deeper and deeper unto the whirlpool between myth and reality, the funnel to the nadir, the seventh circle.

*Scene darkens. Everyone but MARILYN freezes in tableau. Spotlight on MARILYN.*

**MARILYN**

And I... I'm here because I need to pay my bills!

But, I... I just rejected a Bonus Buyer... It's as if I don't care for cash.

No, that's not it... Not totally it. I might have HIV—I still haven't picked up the results for the confirmation test. I-it might not be false positive! It might be fatal... I didn't want to pass it on...

No, that's not it, either... It was the fact that... there was nothing but death in him. An emptiness in his eyes. A sense of loss, and yet a sense of uncaring for that loss. As if he'd died and never *lived*, never bothered to understand the difference between death and life.

*MARILYN freezes. Spotlight is still on her.*

**MARILYN (VOICE)**

*(from offstage, a coy fakeish echo:)* They come to enjoy the *pleasures* of life, to see and experience all that their wives can't *offer* them.

*MARILYN un-freezes. She takes a sweeping look at the bar around her, still frozen in tableau. Horrific expression:*

**MARILYN**

A living death... This bar is... is the exact representation of a living death!  
I can't stay here. I-I don't care about my bills. It was a fall to come here in the first place.

**MARILYN**

A fatal fall.

**OLD LADY**

A fatal fall.

*Bar scene suddenly goes back into motion. The crowd of men surrounding MARILYN step back.*

*MARILYN screams as she runs out.*

**STRIPPER 2**

Tragic...

**STRIPPER 4**

... beauty.

*Sudden blackout.*

Scene 6: Lost

*Dark dilapidated alleyway again. It's strangely quiet. HOBO's and OLD LADY have decided to go begging in the park. MARILYN's lost, all alone. She sits on a trash can.*

**MARILYN**

But, the tragedy is that the world is just so...

No. It can't be like that. It can't be because even if the Fates are cruel, there's the fact that Evelyn *exists*. I... I can see her even now. (*Closes eyes.*)

the semblance of my twin sister:  
she stands tall in the middle of the void  
she brings forth a light, all-encompassing,  
wrought of the radiance of her heart,  
glowing brightly with the strength of her spirit.

and there's a surreal contrast between her  
and the black box that is her world.  
and there's a surreal contrast between her  
and the nothingness that surrounds her.

as if she is beyond mere matter  
as if she is beyond the everyday  
beer and swine and sweat and grief  
as if she is beyond the ordinary  
cycle of things: her life apart,  
her life as herself, her freedom to live  
an existence more real than reality itself.

How can such beauty exist in a world so ugly? Surely Evelyn's existence must come before all else. She *has* to exist! Yes, she has to exist!

Because...

### MARILYN (CONT'D)

how can I, a mere urchin of the world,  
decreed to live off the droppings of others,  
condemned to live the shadow of a life...

a harlot of some forlorn brothel,  
who spends her time in darkness,  
asleep by day, a legion of the night,  
her thoughts unseemly, soiled  
by the rotten puke that  
metamorphoses unto acid rain  
that burns through her vision,  
distorts her sight such that  
she become myopic and sees  
only the rampant decay, right  
in front of her, behind her,  
to her left and right,  
above and below,  
all around, neverending...

how can I, one such as myself,  
conjure *her*? how can I,  
from the depths of my mind,  
the nettles of a mere prostitute,  
conjure forth such a poignant  
incarnation of beauty,  
awe and wonder  
so compelling that...  
I myself can only conclude that  
*she has to be real!*

For, I could not have created her. No, I could not have...

### MARILYN

Nay, but she seems more real when I think of her through words... Could my poetry be the way to her? Could this be the clue the good Fates have bestowed to me so that I might find my sister? (*beat*) Yes, that has to be it. Just as every entity is born with a purpose and a means to achieve it—a weapon to fight against all that are contrary to that purpose. Just as wolves are born with fangs to defend their realm, just as birds are born with wings to escape such predators—I was born with this ability to spew out masterpiece statues wrought of words... so that I could find my long lost sister. (*contemplating pause. Serious, dedicated tone:*) Eve Lyn: Through the power of WORDS, the secret battle of VERSES, I'm going to find you.

*Sudden blackout.*

Scene 7: Escape from Hades

*MARILYN enters her room from her window. (She climbs up through an emergency exit, i.e., the foldable metal-frame staircase along the side of the tenement tower.)*

*Her room appears to have been evacuated. Other than her window and the floorboards, the room is an empty stage.*

*MARILYN holds in her hands a large expandable portfolio. It is empty.*

*MARILYN walks straight to a floorboard in the center of the room. She lifts it. She takes out her poems, hidden in the floors of the tenement tower. She puts them gently into her folio.*

*MARILYN walks to her door. She turns the doorknob, about to exit. The door is stuck. She kicks at the door. The sound of a padlock falling on the other side. The door opens. MARILYN walks through. She does not turn around to see it, but there is a giant sign that says “REPOSESSED” and there is also a broken padlock on the floor. MARILYN bends down to the floor mat by her door. The sets from now until Scene 16 may take on an essence of surreality—whether through a smoke screen or whatnot.*

*There is a small wad of hundred dollar bills hidden beneath the mat. MARILYN picks them up.*

*She EXITS.*

Scene 8: The Pits

*MARILYN spends the night beneath a typical inner-city concrete and graffiti bridge. For her, this night is one of non-stop writing despite wind and sleet and rain. Writing is her only solace. Intermittently, the austere silence between her words is broken by the rampant cries of the night—the moans of wanton women drunk on the bridge, the cars and trucks that speed by, sending the whole bridge rumbling, so that it seems the bridge might fall...*

## MARILYN

Dark night reigns in the sky:  
I sit below the whole weight of the world.  
The shadows of phantom giants  
Threaten to topple over,  
To engulf me in a sea of nothingness,  
To wash over me, to bury  
Me under ocean depths,  
So that I, too, become  
Mere memory's wraith.

Flickers of light challenge the night:  
Cries from strangers  
Standing under  
Streetlights, far away,  
Push away the quiet nothingness,  
Become telltale signs that  
I am not alone—there is the world,  
That they exist, and I have  
chosen not to be one of them.  
They remind me of my task  
At hand. They remind me of  
The reason why I must continue:  
My sole solace in all the world...  
The words which I jot down,  
The verses I draw forth from the void  
Closing in on me, a swirl of  
Night around me to remind me of  
The task that must be done,  
The words that must be written,  
The poet who must find her way  
Out of the oblivion beneath the world—  
The writer who strives  
To make writing her life.

I write for Eve Lyn,  
Her radiance of soul,  
Her embodiment of all that is good,  
The joy and wonder  
That overwhelm me  
When I look to her beauty  
For guidance, for hope,  
For the momentum to go on,  
Pen neverending,  
All because of her,

**MARILYN (CONT'D)**

The belief that life is greater than just this,  
The certainty that through writing I can escape this,  
The anticipation that through words I will find her.

*The derelict lurkers of midnight materialize: The set  
rotates a quarter turn, as the moon makes its way  
across the sky. The hint of dawn glows in the air.  
The weight of the night hangs heavily:*

**MARILYN**

Legions of words: they bask in the  
Fading twilight. So many, countless.  
Their form merges unto that of the paper  
And each other, they blend in,  
Melt, meld, disappear unto a clash  
Of meaningful meaninglessness...  
They are dead when they are written,  
For the poet forgets them,  
Having entrusted her memories  
To paper and ink, when  
The medium lacks fidelity.

And, here I am with words  
That I have spent the night writing,  
Verses that I have  
Spent the time of my life  
Weaving... All the while  
Working without knowing,  
With only the tenacity insurmountable—  
That of a seastar clinging to the shore  
To escape the ocean and its vast span  
Of nothingness—just writing  
Without regards to means,  
The fact that I do this,  
Hungry, dirty, homeless—  
A derelict underneath an unkempt bridge.  
I, the unwanted, my words.

I write despite that,  
I cling to the seashore despite that,  
I escape the ocean because of that.

*Daylight breaks. Sunrise starts. The night sky  
disappears in a wash of vermillion. The noise of the  
night die away. Silence.*

**MARILYN**

But I have spent my life writing,  
And I am old now, tired,  
I must achieve the inevitable ending,  
To sleep, I go...

*MARILYN falls asleep beneath the city bridge. The events of the day near the bridge occur fast-forward. The sun moves across the sky. The set rotates a quarter turn back the way it was before at night: the lurkers of midnight return. The darkness of the night descends across the sky, but the darkness freezes on the verge of sunset, the backdrop vermillion. The noise of the night begin.*

*The image of a car is projected to speed across the bridge. Car windows are open:*

**HIGH-PITCHED VOICE**

Friday night, yippee!

*Sudden silence. MARILYN wakes up.*

**MARILYN**

Friday night? The night  
Has come. To the meaningful Heavens, I go to read  
To the world anon.

*MARILYN exits. Black out.*

Scene 9: They Would Have Heaven Above The Styx

*MARILYN walks down the alleyway of “Heavens Above The Styx.” It is the clean and classy version of the alleyway of “The Styx”—architecturally, it’s the exact same replica of “The Styx.” The sky is on the verge of a winter sunset, and although there are the same vintage café chairs and tables outside, no one is sitting out in the cold. On the sign, there is a splotch of mud from the rain that almost blocks out the words “Heavens Above.” MARILYN disappears through the side door beneath the sign.*

*Silence for a few minutes. The audience wonders why the scene hasn’t blackout’ed. The reader wants more action, and the actor is busy axing out this section with his trusted black sharpie.*

*The door suddenly flies open. MARILYN topples out. A loud booing streams through the door. A glass flies out, breaks, barely missing MARILYN.*

Scene 10: Advice in the Dark:

*Dark, clouded, moonless night. The few passing cars make wraith-like shadows in the alley. Haunting rings through the air.*

*EVELYN is crying.*

*It begins to rain, quite suddenly.*

*MARILYN stands alone in the alley. The rain flattens her hair. MARILYN is unmoving.*

*A HOMELESS POET appears suddenly out of the gloom. He looks like HOBO 1.*

**HOMELESS POET**

Didn't appreciate your work, did they?  
Forced you out and sent your soul crashing,  
Divine words fallen; what else did they slay?

*MARILYN is quiet. Still unmoving.*

**HOMELESS POET**

You wrote down the meaning of life on a  
Piece of paper. Modern Prometheus,  
That you are... But have you forgotten it?  
That men can't treasure the light of the gods...  
They haven't the tastebuds for ambrosia.  
They aren't fit for what you've brought to them...  
(*Haunted voice.*) None of them are. They are but fit for Styx.  
(*Beat.*) You ought to see the world. Much to see there.  
(*Immensely saddened.*) And much to learn there, too much, the burden  
Of cruel reality unrelenting.  
But, you must learn it there... where the masters have:  
Paris, France, the countryside, Venice, Rome.  
My dear, you must first see and know the world:  
Understand through your own eyes, its people.  
Know why it must be so... That it can't be!

**MARILYN**

But, I write *not* of the world!

### HOMELESS POET

Ah, my dearest, but what *can* you write of?  
You are born into the world, forced in it.  
It is your reality: All you have.  
All your experiences are drawn from it.  
And you must live *in* it, no matter what,  
However dreadful it may be, you must.  
And, you will find your answers in the world:  
You'd learn the truth from raw reality,  
Cruel teacher that it is, whose taught me such. (*Waves hand about his rags.*)

### MARILYN

So the world holds all the answers to the questions of my life—and it is to be my teacher of poetry. I shall go into the world.

*HOMELESS POET nods at her in acknowledgment, looking grimly sad. Simultaneously, an OLD LADY appears out of nowhere. She carries a wilted rose in her hand. She edges close to MARILYN. She places the wilted rose in MARILYN's hair.*

### OLD LADY

A rose for ye travels, an' ye shall see  
What the world has to tell you about words—  
And ye shall know the meaning of Artist.

*MARILYN limply drops her portfolio into a giant puddle. The portfolio is soaked. MARILYN walks away with the wilted rose in her hair. Lights fade.*

### Scene 11: Insurance at the Cost of Life

*3 or 4 AM-ish clouded sky, moonless night. Dim lamplight. MARILYN sits alone at a bus-stop.*

### MARILYN

I wait here in the dim lamplight. Alone, by myself, about to face the world.  
I don't want to face the world, though. Nay, I sit here because I am now poor—one step from being in rags and begging. I have barely enough money to afford a plane ticket to Paris. That wad of cash I found under the carpet—it was nothing, really. So little money that I saved. So little money that I have left. I can't even afford to purchase multiple bus tickets! I have to wait for the direct bus to the airport—and it only comes once a day! Basin City busses never come on time—they might be three hours early, a week late, or even a year behind!

*The set brightens, the hint of dawn across the sky.*

**MARILYN**

I have to let the time of my life pass away to wait to face the world...

*Silence. Then, footsteps approaching from offstage.*

*MARILYN stands up, looks offstage.*

*The sun also rises.*

*The sunlight makes a halo around the head of a woman approaching from off stage. The light brightens so that her silhouette becomes a blinding smear. An instant later, it becomes clear that she is a MOTHER holding the hand of a CHILD. They walk into view. (Perhaps use multimedia screen to convey this. Fade image as they come into view.)*

*A hobo, whose presence is given away only by the brightened stage, sits across the street sketching them with charcoal and a Strathmore artpad. The CHILD (a boy) is fidgety; it looks like he wants to run away. The MOTHER looks deathly calm.*

**CHILD**

But, mother, why? (*looks at Mother anxiously.*)

**MOTHER**

Why what, dear?

**CHILD**

Why can't I take art lessons anymore?

**MOTHER**

Oh, silly goose, we've had this conversation before.

**CHILD**

But, I still don't understand! (*On the verge of tears*) Why did you and dad throw away all my paints and brushes—and even my easel? I-I found them in the big trash can outside, and I picked them up and brought them back. And all I wanted to do was finish my painting! But, when I got back, I found that it was gone! And I looked everywhere for it! I couldn't find anything. I couldn't even find my sketches! What... what did you do to them?

**MOTHER**

Why, dear, I simply threw them all away. (*Pats Child, lightly.*) All those silly childish drawings of yours. They're all gone now! You're all grown up now! Remember where we're going today?

**CHILD**

*(Quietly, holding back tears.)* Yes.

**MOTHER**

*(She straightens Child's bowtie.)* Now, you're going to ace that magnet school exam today. And we're going to make a great impression on that interview—we'd be the first to arrive to show our dedication! You're going to get into the special middle school for math and science. Yup, you'd get into Patrick Henry Middle School for the Gifted and Talented, all right. And then, you'd be guaranteed entrance to the magnet high school. And from then on, you'd be a star. You'd go to a top university, graduate with an engineering degree... It's the way to go! It's the sure-thing insurance to the good life!

**CHILD**

But, I don't understand why you won't let me draw anymore...

**MOTHER**

We've had that conversation before, dear.

**CHILD**

But, I don't understand it!

**MOTHER**

All right, dear. I'm going to tell you all of it this time. You're a big boy now, and you ought to understand it.

Look at that hobo across the street. What's he doing?

**CHILD**

*(Scrutinizes man for a moment.)* Sketching. Charcoal. Rough outlining on Strathmore paper.

**MOTHER**

Um... yes. The point is that he's drawing. He's an artist.

**CHILD**

Yes.

**MOTHER**

He draws, but he can't make a living out of that. *(Pause.)* Remember the homeless man in the park? The man who sketches on the back of fallen flyers?

**CHILD**

Yes?

**MOTHER**

Those were some pretty pictures, weren't they, dear?

**CHILD**

Yes!

**MOTHER**

But, his pictures won't feed him no matter how pretty they are. No one cares about art now. It's a fact. Just look at the world around you. (*Beat.*) We fear you would become an artist—and starve.

**CHILD**

Is that why dad tore up my paintings of the Virgin Madonna?

**MOTHER**

Yes... you see, your father, himself, had to abandon his art, too.

**MARILYN**

Why?

**MOTHER**

Excuse me?

*CHILD looks at her with tear-brimmed eyes. A specter of hope looks out at her desperately.*

**MARILYN**

Why can't he become an architect? A designer. A good-paying job with art as a part of it.

**MOTHER**

Because it is a *sin* to dilute one's talent. One must either cherish it in full or abandon it completely. One cannot accept the gift of the Gods and not use it as it was meant—in full and in its pure form. He had to choose between life and poverty—he chose life.

*A lost-looking teenager who looks like the boy child walks across the stage, between the folks sitting at the bus-stop and the audience.*

**CHILD**

(*Aside.*) They... they were pictures I saw in my head when the reverend read from the bible—when the choir sang gospel... *Ave Maria*... I wanted with all my heart to show the world the visions I saw in that moment when—

**MOTHER**

He must sever himself completely. *Now.* Lest he ends up a prostitute to art. No, that day must never come. He is to choose *life*, now—so that he won't wind up in the depths of the hellfire that is the life of an artist. He must reject the offering from the Gods. Sacrifice it completely. Turn away from his art forever. It is the only way he can live.

**MARILYN**

But—

*A bus roars to a stop in front of them. MOTHER drags CHILD onto bus quickly. Bus leaves.*

**MARILYN**

But, he would end up living a living death... his essence as bestowed him from the gods sacrificed—nay, his core and passion wrenched out. The bleeding wound from his severed heart forever a stigma that only he can see, feel—a raw pain in the depths of him destined never to heal. Depression as his soul, drudgery as his world—why?

*The bus that goes straight to the airport drops by. MARILYN gets on it. The bus stop is empty. On stage, there is now only the hobo across the street sketching a still life. Lights fade.*

Scene 12: On the Wings of Time

*MARILYN boards a crowded plane. Apparently, the plane's overbooked, and thus MARILYN is upgraded to First Class. The stewardess, who is the OLD LADY in the uniform of a stewardess, guides MARILYN to First Class. MARILYN sinks into the chair without taking note of her environment. There are only three columns in the first class sector, two seats in each column. The other passengers should be in shadows.*

*MARILYN does not notice the man sitting next to her. MARILYN closes her eyes. The stewardess pantomimes in fast-forward-motion the "safety protocols," and the plane begins rumbling in upward ascent. MARILYN opens her eyes when the plane has reached its required altitude and has become still, again. The man next to her taps her, gently. The man is an ARTIST. He looks like the adult version of the CHILD in the previous scene. MARILYN turns and takes a surprised jump.*

**MARILYN**

Oh my god!

**ARTIST**

I was about to say the same thing. I've seen you before!

**MARILYN**

I... I... I've seen you before, too! Just a few hours ago—It seems like just a moment ago, you were this child, about to be forced into a life devoid of art—your mother had an iron grip on your education, and she was convinced that it was either art or money.

**ARTIST**

No, that's not the context in which I remember you.

**MARILYN**

No? But, it was just a few hours ago...

**ARTIST**

Yes, time does fly by, does it not? (*Beat.*) But, it was in a different context. You were one of the nude posers for the human drawing course I secretly took.

**MARILYN**

I was?

**ARTIST**

Yes. Do you remember? (*Aside:*) I, the child of a mere twelve years, lost in the middle of a field of giants. The mind of an artist trapped in the form of a child—a stubborn, determined child who struggled to remain true to realism even as he kept sliding off his chair, his feet dangling in midair, the fall always abysmal. My figure too slight, I disappeared...

**MARILYN**

No... I don't believe I remember you. But, I'm happy you got to draw. I'm happy you held onto your art, albeit you had to do it secretly. But, why are you on this plane?

**ARTIST**

To France, ma cherie. To paint Paris, the streetside. To observe people and understand human nature from the discerning eye of a scholar incognito as an artist. To find real-life subjects to paint and immortalize by means of a telltale brush. To do what I cannot do here, of course. To find the world I thought never existed. To find it all in Paris!

**MARILYN**

I, too, go out into the world. But, I go not to see its people—for I have seen enough of them and their likes! Rather, I go into it by word of a master poet—I go into it to find the meaning of “artist.” I go into the world to find my answers in life. The world is where the meaning of life is held. The world holds the secret to what shall make me a writer. The world holds the secret to what shall cure me of my melancholy. The world holds the secret to my long lost sister, my twin Eve Lyn—the Madonna who lives in a black box of her own.

*The OLD LADY, dressed as a stewardess, comes by  
and takes the wilted rose from MARILYN's hair.  
Neither MARILYN nor the ARTIST notice this.*

**ARTIST**

Yes, Paris, the mecca of freedom—where we artists can be as ourselves—truth—where we can pursue the depths of our soul and escape the fear of self-discovery—beauty—where the grungy tenement world devoid of wonder is filled to the brim with the fantastic—and love—Yes, love... Art, the love of mine: where brush strokes defy time itself, capturing the moment, both its form and essence, the feel of the instant, solidifying what was meant to be a fluid flow, transforming sound, motion, and all events into images—a painting. The kismet to challenge reality itself by melding it into your own form, recreating it in the image inside my head...

*The MAN (whom we've met in the first Bar Scene) walks by. He makes momentarily eye contact with MARILYN. MARILYN jumps as she recognizes him, but the MAN does not make any sign of recognition. The MAN stares at the ARTIST with a look of talent-lust in his eyes:*

**MARILYN**

He wants to steal your soul.

*A horrified look spills upon the MAN's face. He rushes away to the lavatory, at the end of the first class sector. One possible idea for the lavatory involves a miniature rotating set. From one side, it appears to be a room with a door. But, on the other side, it's see-through. After MAN bangs the flimsy plastic airline lav-door shut, the set turns, and the audience can see into the lavatory. MARILYN and ARTIST have their spotlight off. All except the MAN in the lavatory are in darkness.*

*The lavatory mirror is actually a multimedia projection screen. In its "normal state," it shows the reflection of MAN, which can either be live, fed in by a camera by the sink, or pre-shot.*

*The MAN rushes up to the mirror and asks the Mirror, Mirror, on the wall:*

**MAN**

What's wrong with me?

*MAN's reflection melts into a memory. The multimedia projector shows a surreal conversation he had with his business associate, WOMAN, while the man stares out into space at his memories:*

**WOMAN**

Have an apple.

**MAN**

Why, thank you. (About to take a bite.)

**WOMAN**

I want to sin with you.

**MAN**

Um. Excuse me?

**WOMAN**

I'm in the mood for killing another living messiah today.

**MAN**

Ah.

*MAN splashes water from the sink onto his face. The image on the mirror clears, as if it's being washed away. Memory fades, and MAN's real reflection returns. The lavatory set turns back so that the walls are opaque. He leaves the lavatory, returns to the lobby of the plane. He goes back to his seat, next to WOMAN. WOMAN has a look about her that makes it obvious that she is evidently not MAN's wife.*

*Lights on in that portion of the plane. (Lights remain off everywhere else.)*

**WOMAN**

Say, Adam, ever heard of AeonGenesis?

**MAN**

Wh-what?

**WOMAN**

AeonGenesis, you remember that budding biotech company set the middle of nowhere—some forlorn African jungle?

**MAN**

Yeah, there are a lot of biotech interests set in such locations. It brings opportunities to a disadvantaged people and may help eliminate the third world.

**WOMAN**

*(Sighs, irked that she has to remind him of this.)* AeonGenesis, the startup with the preposterous goal of finding the cure for AIDs in *this generation* so that they can, quote, “free the world of the disease that kills the world's people from within,” unquote?

**MAN**

That's awfully generous of them to save the world's people.

**WOMAN**

*(Sighs angrily.)* The non-profit with exclusive access to the prostitutes in Africa who developed immunity against AIDs?! *Now*, do you remember AeonGenesis?

**MAN**

Not quite.

**WOMAN**

*(Sighs with impatience bordering anger.)* Okay, whether or not you remember AeonGenesis or not, I have news for you. Word on the undervine is that they've found it.

**MAN**

*(Voice of wonder)* They've found it? They've found the cure?

**WOMAN**

Yes! And, I've checked! Can you believe it? Of all the unlikely odds they had to go against. *Both* my stock analyst and fortune teller told me that their mission is extremely unlikely to succeed in this generation. And yet they, the nerve of them, the fools—

**MAN**

Just mouthing words of bravado like lost poets... But, lost no longer! They've found the cure!

**WOMAN**

*(Very angrily)* Don't you understand? This means that our stock interests are in danger! Remember all those AIDs "medicine" companies, which Krapware Software funded? The so-called billion-dollar we put into "R and D?"

**MAN**

Yeah, that was a total joke on the shareholders and board of "trustees" who'd never get their share of trust. *(laughs at his lame pun)* How can anyone with half a brain in their head still believe that there's any more "R and D" in classical software? How can they still believe it once the reports show that we're actually making money off this particular "R and D" investment, when—

**WOMAN**

*(Smacks her hand against head.)* The point is that we have interests in those lesser companies. Very significant interests. *All* of them will die when AeonGenesis goes public—

**MAN**

Or when word on the undervine becomes shout and the everyone else finds out. *(beat.)* Eve, why don't we swap interests—trade all our stock from the lesser "medicine" companies and put them all into Aeon?

**WOMAN**

*(Yells loudly.)* Because. They. Are. A. Non. Profit. Organization. You can't buy Aeon stock!

**MAN**

Ah. Now, our other biotech stock can't compete with them at all! They're rezzing free. *(Shrugs.)* Bribe them.

**WOMAN**

You can't bribe them!

**MAN**

Why not?

**WOMAN**

They're... they're (*laughs maniac-uneasily*) they're one of those unconventional consortiums. They claim they live up to this ideal, that they won't step down from it, that they won't have *anything* to do with us, that they won't quote "sully their divine souls with the mud of the river Styx," unquote.

**MAN**

(*Look of great admiration in his eyes, as he looks off into the darkness of the audience.*) So they're one of those rare companies that actually live up to their word—all the way, huh?

**WOMAN**

No! They're one of those rare menaces—like google—which prance around like dumb sugar plum faeries, scattering goodwill, altruism, benefits for *all* of humanity, with the ulterior motive of wiping *us* out.

*The stewardess (OLD LADY) comes down the aisle with a cart full of pudding-like substances. It is apparently a first-class snack. She appears to be trying to convince the patron in front of Man and Woman to try the crème brûlée she's serving.*

**MAN**

Eve, I don't think—

*MARILYN's spotlight turns on suddenly. But, it's obvious that MARILYN's in control of her own light. Her hand stays upraised momentarily to show that she herself flipped on the airplane night-light. MARILYN looks anxiously at MAN and WOMAN on the other side of first class. The duo do not notice him, and the woman mouths cruel divine fate a la her plan:*

**WOMAN**

We have to kill them!

**MAN**

Why... why can't we just buy them? Like what we usually do? We can offer them a sum they can't refuse. We'd just reference it as a "necessary R and D expense." We have the power to offer them the biggest number we can think of—after all, we're *KrapwareSoft* company executives... The power we have over our company, and the potential monetary resources of our company—it's more than a goldmine... it's like a magic goldmine. We can even create money out of thin air if we wanted to—offer them a gazillion trillion *Krapware* "bonds."

**WOMAN**

Wake up, Adam. We *have* to kill them. The living messiah *has* to die, and there shall be *no* Easter. *Think* about it. We've come *this* far. We have *everything* to lose. We *have* to kill.

**MAN**

I... I don't want—

**WOMAN**

You have no choice.

*The OLD LADY stewardess pushes the cart to them. The cart appears to be full. Apparently, none of the passengers seem to want this first-class snack. She holds up the crème brûlée in a clear bowl.*

**OLD LADY**

*(Perky voice.)* Crème brûlée? You know you want it. You can't resist the temptation. You have it in you. The infernal craving, the dire lust, the sheer, utter, *raw instinctual* want for it. *(Solemn serious, slightly menacing voice. Eerie.)* You have no choice.

**WOMAN**

You have no choice.

**MAN**

I... I have no choice.

*The OLD LADY puts a wilted rose in MAN's hair and hands him the crème brûlée. All lights fade, including woman's and OLD LADY's—but, keep the MAN's light and MARILYN's light on for an instant longer, and then:*

*Sudden blackout. Curtain. Intermission.*

Scene 13: Paris, As If In A Dream

*Paris, seaside. Multimedia projector of a beach in the background with crashing waves in the distance. Sound of waves lolling, seagulls cawing. The beach is deserted. Between the audience, and the background, but still quite upstage, there stands the ARTIST—surrounded by a few dozen paintings of his on display. The ARTIST is busily working on a new scene. His head keeps looking up from the easel towards EVELYN, in her box. He seems to be painting EVELYN.*

*There seems to be the sound of a solo violin playing a cheerful classical melody.*

*Further downstage, there are garlands of roses adorning the windows of vintage little shops. However, the audience sees only the windows of these shops, i.e., the glass and logo names of the little shops. The glass of these shops separates the audience from the stage; it is as if the audience is looking out into the streets of memory's Paris from inside these little shops. There is a door on the side. There is a small vintage stair-way built so that MARILYN can easily climb on stage from the audience.*

*MARILYN walks down the center aisle in the audience. MARILYN calls out at the ARTIST, causing a stir amongst the audience, myriad heads turning back, surprised to find a seemingly misplaced actress. (EVELYN disappears, perhaps through a trap-door behind her box.) Simultaneously, a sudden downpour of rain begins on-stage. Thunder, lightning, and all that, if desired. MARILYN runs down the remaining length of the aisle. She rushes to the door, opens it, quickly, to prevent the rain from splashing onto the audience. She enters the vibrant streets of Paris in rain.*

*The paint on the paintings on display has already started to melt. MARILYN looks directly to EVELYN's box:*

## **MARILYN**

She's gone. My sister, she's...

*MARILYN, whose back partially faces the audience, looks at ARTIST hopelessly. The artist turns his easel around for both the audience and MARILYN to see. His painting has captured EVELYN's essence completely.<sup>1</sup>*

## **MARILYN**

(awe-struck) Ave Maria...

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<sup>1</sup> Part that I edited out: A sudden wind sends a smattering of paper flying in the wind, upwards towards the top of the stage. A bright light comes from above, drawing the audience's attention. The painting is reflected sky-wards, so the image looks like a miracle in the sky.

**ARTIST**

She lives in you.

*Blackout.*

Scene 14: Paris, Real

*The painting of EVELYN has been replaced by a smeared wash of colors—EVELYN has melted like all the others.*

*MARILYN is drenched in rain. ARTIST appears to be slowly suffocating, drowning in his downfall.*

**ARTIST**

She's gone... I'm lost. I'm... All my work—the paintings immortal, now ephemeral! All my life—the belief that my work was greater than me, intrinsically destined to live on beyond me... so that one day, a lone soul in the far distant future might look to my art and find beauty in a world long stripped of such... all my dreams—failed! Everything I've ever lived for—gone, in the blink of an eye, a wash of pitiless rain—a brutal force of nature.

**MARILYN**

Cruel fate. (*Closes her eyes in the rain.*)

**ARTIST**

But soft rain... It is but the natural course of events. Part of a cycle. A periodic occurrence greater than me, greater than any single individual. Weather! *Weather* to wreck the slings and toils of life!

I am but a mere man. No more favored by the gods than any other. There is no such thing as fate. It was all a silly misconception. It was just man's arrogance—*my* arrogance. That I, out of the countless billions of others, would be singled out, "bestowed the gift of the gods." Who am I to make such a claim? No, not I. I am but a mere man.

A mere man subject to the natural course of events. A force of nature beyond my control, beyond any man's. A mere man. That I, too, am part of the cycle. I, too. (*begins to walk towards the crashing multimedia-projector waves, the background deep upstage.*)

**MARILYN**

(*Opens her eyes suddenly.*) Where are you going?

**ARTIST**

Nowhere and everywhere. (*solemnly and grimly at first, then lightly.*)  
To the ocean depths forlorn,  
The place which all men spend their entire lives seeking,  
But doomed to never find it in life. For, it simply can't be found in life.  
I am to find it. (*lightly, matter of factly, casually.*)

*The lights begin to fade, so that blackout occurs when ARTIST is a few steps from background of ocean of crashing waves furthest upstage. It is now completely dark.*

**MARILYN (VOICE)**

Wait, don't leave me. Please...

*Scene brightens. Same street. Dry, bereft of rain, the cycle having halted for a long long time, the garlands of roses have wilted. The paintings are now all gone. Clumps of trash clutter the beach. Shop windows are gone, replaced by cracked shards of broken glass.*

*MARILYN sits huddled on the street, crying. There is a hobo next to her. Instead of introducing HOBO N, this hobo has a distinct name. She is THE CHINESE GIRL.*

**THE CHINESE GIRL**

Why do you cry? There is enough sadness in the world so that you shouldn't need to cry. Sadness is just a constant milieu neverchanging, like a low hum in the air. It's something that all in this era were born aware of. As we grow into this world, we become immune to it. So that sadness, no matter how great, never gets to us.

**MARILYN**

It's not the sadness. It's... it's the tragic beauty. My... my friend, the artist. He... He just killed himself! H-he walked straight into the ocean as if some perverted Kate Chopin character.

**THE CHINESE GIRL**

Sadness, nevertheless. It is not the event that matters but your reaction to it. And, it is sadness.

*A FRENCH STUDENT suddenly walks from stage left to right, as she's shouting into a cell phone. Simultaneously, an American EXCHANGE STUDENT walks from stage right to left, as she's shouting into her own cell phone. There should be pauses, as if each is listening in to the other end of the phone. Their sentences should echo each other, as if the American EXCHANGE STUDENT is translating. But, they've never met each other before. Their paths meet in center stage. They glare at each other, hostile strangers, in need of projecting their rage at any who cross their way. They do not respond when, later, on cue, THE CHINESE GIRL hobo asks them for alms.*

### **FRENCH STUDENT**

Mes données tout allées! Rien gauche. Tout allé! Tous. TOUS! Mon lecteur de disquettes tres stupide. Dans le clignotement d'un oeil, tous mes travaux est détruits. C'est la plus mauvaise chose jamais. Je ne peux pas croire ceci! Je NE PEUX PAS croire ceci! Ceci ne se produit pas! Je NE PEUX PAS LE CROIRE!

### **EXCHANGE STUDENT**

My data's all gone! Nothing's left. Everything's gone! All. ALL! My stupid hard disk drive. In the blink of an eye, all my work is destroyed. This is the worst thing ever. I cannot believe this! I CANNOT believe this! This isn't happening! I CANNOT BELIEVE IT!

### **THE CHINESE GIRL**

Of frozen silhouettes—  
The semblance of a nun  
About to step out of her cloister—  
Doomed never to do so.  
The sudden explosion of Vesuvius.  
Pompeii, its citizens become  
Statues of ashes,  
Personalities destroyed,  
Memories forgotten,  
Tasks eliminated:  
Lives immediately annihilated.  
The sudden explosion of the atomic bomb.  
Nagasaki, its citizens become  
Mere shadows on a wall,  
Memories forgotten,  
Tasks eliminated:  
Lives immediately annihilated.  
The sudden realization that my writing is ill fit for the world...  
That I write of a different time,  
An age long dead; an age that hasn't come.  
That I write for a different audience,  
A ghost; the reader who will never exist.  
That I write the words that come to me,  
But I write the words that  
No eyes but mine  
Will ever see...  
That I write the words that I believe are true:  
I write what I see, and I write...  
With a terrible haunting:  
The sudden knowledge that my stories are to become embalmed,  
Their brains torn out of their story skulls,  
Their eyes stabbed blind unto darkness eternal—  
Beyond story,  
The beating heart in its core,  
Still pumping, still struggling to

Circulate ichor to a body,  
Essence too quickly drained.  
Organs taken out of a living, breathing, being,  
To be stored in urns, mere chamberpots—  
The pieces of my stories,  
Mummified alive in memory,  
Their story souls screaming,  
I, unable, to do anything about it.  
My stories become mere relic,  
Forgotten before they're known,  
My words ephemeral,  
Lost in the midst of a history no one knows.  
Like Pompeii... Like Nagasaki... Like my abandoned works...  
For a writer such as I has no place in the world.  
And, bereft of my passion, I am wounded,  
Having willfully sacrificed my writing,  
I live now at the mercy of the world—  
*(Bows down to beg the streetwalkers for coin.)*  
The alms of others whom the gods  
Looked not upon,  
The pity of others who were  
Never cursed with the Gift,  
The disgust of others  
Who will never understand  
The meaning of sacrificing one's talent,  
Of choosing to live in the world,  
But without a means to live.  
*(Holds out begging hat to empty air. The streetwalkers have already exited.)*

### MARILYN

Why—why are you telling me this?

### THE CHINESE GIRL

To help you accept the sadness all around. So that no matter what happens—even if they tell you you're just dreaming, even if they take away your poems, even if you lose it all, even if *you* find that your dreams are not to be, were *never* to be, even if you have very little time left in the world to discover it—you will not lose... You will not die. You will live. You will live on.

*MARILYN has tears in her eyes.*

*Lights fade.*

### THE CHINESE GIRL

The poetress eternal.

*Blackout.*

Scene 15: Crucification

*Lights fade on so that downstage becomes visible first before upstage. MARILYN stands downstage, her back to the audience. She gazes up at the many empty windows of a tenement tower in Paris. THE CHINESE GIRL stands besides her.*

**MARILYN**

But, what if I sacrifice it completely? That I were no longer to prostitute my talent. Give back the gift of the gods. Shed my distinction divine, let myself fade into the world so that I may live in it.

**THE CHINESE GIRL**

Then it is a living death that you would live in. Your core torn out by your own free will, the part of you that defines you forever lost. As if a soulless body, you will wander the earth seeking the essence you know exist—existed—but which you have not, which you have become forlorn to. Day in and day out, the minutes of your life will blend together so that you cannot tell the difference between night and day, the years will fly by, and the emptiness within you will eat at you, gnaw at you with the lust of voraciousness oblivion, until you, too, become nevermore. Child, you cannot give back the gift of the gods!

**MARILYN**

I don't believe you. I believe in free will, that the Fates are not cruel!

**THE CHINESE GIRL**

*(Gravely.)* You cannot reject yourself. Observe:  
I hereby free myself of my nature. I return my benison from the gods, to the gods, my way with words, mine no longer. I release myself from this life—

*A HOMELESS POET runs charging in. With a look of divine rage, he accuses THE CHINESE GIRL:*

**HOMELESS POET**

You wretched witch. Your infernal words. Your...  
Celestial lies: false hopes, you wrought in me,  
Ones that lifted the grayness of the world,  
Brought back wonder and a fast will to live,  
But ones that had me fast trapped in a cage—  
A world not quite the real. Machinations,  
Yours, to have fooled me so, that I believed,  
That I had my hopes butchered, sautéed, and  
Served a la carte to the deadliest foe:  
I went out into the world with my words,  
And I discovered that the world wanted  
Not my words, none of it. I, too, ill fit,  
Hypnotized by your infernal spell, I  
Stood nude before the world, and I let them  
Sully my verses, my body helpless.

*(Have some sort of Gothic music playing in the background scored in sync with HOMELESS POET'S speech and climaxing in his forthcoming actions.)*

### HOMELESS POET (CONT'D)

Everyone and no one, the blind masses,  
They destroyed me. And, you were the one who  
Told me to share my poetry with the world.  
Even when you yourself already knew.  
Grim fate ahead of me. Exactly yours.

Vendetta, I swore in name of the soul  
The world has stolen from me, the path which  
You pushed me down towards. The one which ends  
*(HE pulls out a dagger. Stabs THE CHINESE GIRL in the heart.)*  
Now! *(HE pulls out a gun & shoots himself in the head.)*

### THE CHINESE GIRL

A dagger to the heart, the gods' response to my presumptuous return of the gift I cannot give back. This life no longer mine, the instant I let go of *it*, the talent mine no longer... I reincarnate.  
*(Dies. Silence follows; end of Gothic music.)*

### MARILYN

My eyes do deceive me. This cannot be.  
Deus ex machina, I do not believe.  
It is all just a big coincidence...  
*(Cries, whimpers, hands over face.)*

*A solo light aglow from the center window on the top level of the tenement tower. The sound of a music box, the notes of wonder. The silhouette of a woman comes into view in the window. The window curtains are unfurled; the shadow turns into a nude woman who looks like EVELYN. MARILYN unfurls her hands and slowly looks up.*

### MARILYN

Eve... Eve Lyn?

*The woman who looks like EVELYN does not respond. The woman disappears momentarily and returns with a wire-hatched trash can filled to the brim with pieces of torn paper. She dumps the paper out of the window. The pieces snow down as if a dry rain. MARILYN is covered with the frost of torn poetry.*

### MARILYN

Evelyn!

*The woman still does not respond. Instead, another window in the tenement tower is aglow with light. Another woman who looks like Evelyn comes to that window. And yet another window comes aglow with light; and yet, another woman who looks like Evelyn comes to the window. The silence of the moment ends when every single window is aglow with light and the image of a woman who looks like the nude Evelyn. All at once, the women each raise wire-hatched trash cans filled to the brim with pieces of torn paper, and they dump it all outside their windows. A blizzard of torn poetry rains on MARILYN. (Gregorian chant fades in.)*

*MARILYN's arms are outstretched, and she stands in the shape of a human cross. She stands deathly still for a moment, and soon, she is covered by a snow of torn poetry.*

*She moves, suddenly, then holds out her arms towards the sky above the tenement tower. As the snow unsettles, it becomes evident that her wrists are bleeding in stigmata. She cries out, not in pain, but in an immense joy.*

*Momentarily, as the Gregorian chant climaxes, she falls to the ground. She lies deathly still.*

*Real snow rains down on her to signify the passage of time. MARILYN becomes covered in snow.*

*POLICE 1 and POLICE 2 come in.*

**POLICE 1**

Stigmata.

**POLICE 2**

Another?

**POLICE 1**

Aye. But, of no worries, dear partner, mine.  
She is merely an urchin of the world.  
Her death, an end to the constant pain of  
Her assembly line life, bereft of core.

*Blackout. Smokescreen, if used, clears.*

Scene 16: Stark Reality

*Lights brighten to the dim twilight of a dilapidated alley. A huge dumpster sits centerstage. There is just the scenery: the luridness of the alley, its forlornness, its lifelessness. No motion on stage for several moments. Absolute silence.*

*A single wilted rose hangs in the air, then falls from above into the dumpster. A wind befalls a smattering of torn poetry. A dry snow falls.*

*Suddenly, there's the sound of a rasping gasp, then a choking cough. MARILYN wakes up in a dumpster in the alley outside her tenement tower.*

*MARILYN's head peeks up from the front side of the dumpster. She rises. It becomes evident that there is a "REPOSSESSED" notice taped onto her. She falls.*

*Silence again. No motion. The world sits still in anticipation. The multimedia projector suddenly blares to life, shedding a surreal light.*

*The projector tells a story of the events preceding this bereft of words:*

*MARILYN enters through the window from the emergency staircase. She makes a few staggering steps to her front door. Bending down, she lifts the mat to find that there is no wad of emergency cash stowed beneath. She staggers to the middle of her room. She looks under the floorboards, but she cannot find her poetry. She backs away in horror. She falls to the floor.*

*MARILYN lies unconscious in a heap in the middle of her evacuated room. MARILYN's landlord finds her sprawled on the bare floor. Landlord tapes a "REPOSSESSED" notice on MARILYN's chest. He lifts her in his arms. He carries her out of her room, through her window. He carries her out into the night.*

*On top of the world, he stands with a look of dire apathy. MARILYN stirs in his arms, and he lifts her over the edge of the metal-frame staircase. He drops her. MARILYN falls, landing in the dumpster.*

**MARILYN**

Darkness, darkness, all around. It is cold,  
A cold beyond any, a piercing ice  
That freezes the marrows in my bones, kills.  
The lone light in the distance forlorn shines,  
Beckons me away from Eternal Moor:  
As if a tragic butterfly, flutters  
In the sky, flies to a glow unnatural,  
Not the sun, as fool Icarus might have,  
But the light of an alleyway bar sign.

Bereft of money, identity, hope.  
The light of “The Styx” is my only dope.

*MARILYN walks into the light of “The Styx.”*

Scene 17: Strip Bar III

*Lights on in the strip bar. Dim. It’s after-hours, thus the emergency-lights are on. The BAR BOSS walks out of the door marked “BOSS.” He has a bottle in his hands, but its top is sealed on, and the precision of his walk makes it obvious that he hasn’t started drinking yet. He sits down in the midst of a bunch of gathered strippers. He sets the bottle down. He looks at MARILYN, who stands a distance apart from the crowd.*

**BAR BOSS**

Maria.

**MARILYN**

Charon.

**BAR BOSS**

Where you been?

*MARILYN is silent.*

**BAR BOSS**

*(Impatiently.)* I asked, where you been? *(He pauses too briefly for a response. Thunderous boom:)* MARIA, WHERE YOU BEEN?

**MARILYN**

*(Non-chalantly.)* College.

**BAR BOSS**

*(Bursts into lewd laughter.)* Nah, you ain't gonna lie to me. I know where you been. And it ain't college. Nah, you ain't the type. You been gone sinnin' like the slut that you are—you been writing and you been idle dreamin'. You been bad, an' I know it all.

**MARILYN**

I went out into the world to learn—

**BAR BOSS**

I heard 'bout them poetry readings uptown at the Heavens. Yeah, I heard 'bout em. You prancin' around to some boor-jersey name like "Marilyn Holloway" an' pretendin' like yo someone you ain't. An' that damn trash you been lettin' outta your mouth, the gutter poem you called "Evelyn." Yeah, I know all 'bout that. Hell—I even know that you got boo'ed an' then thrown outta the Heavens for readin' that shit out loud.

**STRIPPER 1**

Girl, you read poetry out loud? Crazy. You know shit like that ain't supposed to be read out loud.

**BAR BOSS**

Quiet, you. I wasn't done. So you left us all o'a sudden last time—right in the middle of our busiest night jus' so you could go out into some damn café an' read shit like that out loud. Hell, Maria, who do you think you are? *(Pause.)* Who the damn fuck do you think you are? You leavin' us all of a sudden, embarassin' my establishdishment like that, an' then comin' back in as if the whole damn event never happened. *(Pause.)* Who the damn fuck do you think you are?

**BAR BOSS**

You think you're some sort of poet? You think you're some kinda writer? You think you're some sorta modern Shakespeare? You think that? You really honestly seriously fuckin' do? You damn foolish idiot. Nah, you're just some useless git who'd waste my time with words. You some dumb wanna-be dreamer, goin' for what's gotta be the world's stupidest dream, prancin' around goin', 'I wanna be a writer. O-oh, I wanna be a writer.' Why you's nothin' but some dumbshit fickle slut!

*MARILYN turns away and walks towards the exit, struggling to keep her composure.*

**BAR BOSS**

You's always comin' back, an' you's always leavin' early—thinkin' you'd be flyin' off to the Heavens. Dumb git, well you know what? I own the damn Heavens. An' honestly, it's a dumpshit. Imma gonna make it into a strip bar just like I did this one. Yeah, you know? This place usedta be a café, with all 'em dumb boor-jersey idiots sippin' tea and talkin' 'bout shit like how fate rules a person an' there's no damn free will. Yeah, so I'd show 'em free will. How 'bout I kick 'em all out, dump 'em outta Heavens, straight into The Styx. Yeah, it'd be a strip-bar uptown. Imma gonna make money.

*MARILYN leaves, closes door.*

**BAR BOSS**

*(Mutters.)* Idiot git. Damn slime. Too sissy an' without a backbone. Fickle as quicksilver.

*Fade into blackout, with lights dimming out in a circle around BAR BOSS; lights stay on BAR BOSS for a moment, then blackout.*

Scene 18: Silent Exit

*MARILYN is sobbing alone in the alley. It is dark. The light of the bar has been no solace to her.*

*A slice of light cuts across the darkened alley. The side door of the bar opens. STRIPPERS 1-4 file out.*

*STRIPPER 1 goes up to MARILYN, hugs her. The other strippers except STRIPPER 2 come close.*

**STRIPPER 1**

We're born into this life. We do what we gotta do...

**STRIPPER 3**

You oughtn't let Boss Charon's words get to you.

**STRIPPER 4**

Aye, you really shouldn't let him get to you. After all, we're sirens. *(Gestures at their outfits—uniform, the bare claddings of sirens.)* Our lurid beauty mesmerizes, attracts, and we go beyond Medusa. Our hearts are of stone, and thus we do not let the possibility of nostalgia get us. We're not sissies who turn men into stone. We enchant men with our allure, and we lure them off, send them falling down some deep, sharp, chasm. We let them die without pity. We care naught for men. We care not for this world. We are of it, and yet we are apart. We are...

**STRIPPER 3**

As ourselves. Even if we had stone statues of men we conquer, we'd shatter each and every single one. No regrets.

**STRIPPER 4**

Every man falls prey to our trap. His arrogance sends him sprawling helpless into our bosoms, the deadly fangs, the eye of the tiger. He gains a false sense of command, as he rides the wild stallion—and he thinks, for a moment, that he's tamed the beast, gained control of a passion stronger than his will ever be. And, he lets us into his heart. He lets us tear away a part of him. Secretly, in the dark. The more he comes to us, the more of him we gain. And, piece by piece, we gather him up. We devour him, core and all. We savor him, then we spit him out. It is onto the next course, that we go. On and on. It is our way. Our way...

**STRIPPER 1**

We do as we do; we are wont to do what we do. We're here because we got nowhere else to be.

**STRIPPER 4**

But, it is with a purpose, all this. Yes, a purpose. A lust. An infernal desire *not* for pleasures of the flesh, but for the souls of men. It is our secret vendetta against the world that's cornered us so, condemned us to this work of women. The power-hungry man returns home, relaxes, lets go, knowing that he's made the world in his image—that women are in the grungy pits, striving as if cockroaches for dimes and nickels, that the woman he pins beneath him is helpless, a slave of his every command—only to find that that very woman owns every single piece of him. Slave becomes master, and she devours him as if a piece of ugly meat—that is the essence of our task, the greatness and the pettiness all wrought together, one big sticky ball of the world's kismet and desire. *This* is why you should not let his words get to you. You chose this path because you wanted to step out from the world—yet remain in power in it.

**STRIPPER 3**

And, you have become a well-tempered ghoul. (*Softly*) You know we're trapped down here, but we can still force them to their knees, tear out their hearts, bleed them dry, and make them cry.

**STRIPPER 1**

Girl, your heart's made outta stone. Nay, damn kryptonite. Charon can't break it.

**STRIPPER 4**

Now, stop crying, and pull yourself together! (*Pushes a handkerchief into MARILYN's face.*)

*Silence now. STRIPPER 2, who has been standing a distance away contemplating all this, comes forth. The other strippers make way for her, backing up a distance away from MARILYN. STRIPPER 2 and MARILYN stand face to face. STRIPPER 2 edges close, kisses MARILYN on the mouth sensually. STRIPPER 2 backs a small distance away.*

**STRIPPER 2**

Let me tell you the story of my father.  
He—he was a mafia boss—filthy.  
He ate a human head a day—literally—  
Until his hey day: my arranged marriage  
To his rival, his attempt to bridge our differences  
By joining the two warring families.

But, friend Montague was no friend—  
The opposing power took advantage  
Of our blind trust in them—Now that our two  
Families are *truly* alike, as one.  
They killed him, decapitated him, took his whole  
Head off. My fiance's father ate it.

**STRIPPER 2 (CONT'D)**

That night, the faithless Romeo raped me—  
A boor, a mere moor: a shade of evil  
Darker than the night...

The body of a young man.  
The body of his father.  
Two dislocated souls were found dead by the fountain—  
The grand decoration of my home, no longer.  
A bloody mess.  
I had watched *Him* die, the way I'd expected my father to die.  
To die choking, then sputtering, spewing out  
All the evils of the world—his crimes—  
As the bleeding ligaments of his cannibalistic fetish  
Flow out from him as if a new fount:  
No longer a maiden, I did the very thing I'd  
Despised my father for. I killed,  
Brutally, for no great purpose, no ends  
Other than the petty one, the one I  
Cared for no longer: the family honor.

The next day I found myself failing in the Woods.  
Perishing on the Hills, on my knees, head to cry out to Heaven.  
I realized it was too late.  
I couldn't go back.

I went into the city,  
The maiden no longer.  
I went into the city,  
And I let myself die.

I became what I am:  
The maiden-crone to sell my soul  
To live days of hellish hurt,  
To live nights of hellish sin.

I accepted the punishment  
For a crime I cannot undo,  
For the evil in my blood,  
The heritage I've run away from.

*Lights fade out.*

*Stripper 2 is replaced by the Old Lady dressed in  
Stripper 2's outfit.*

*Lights on.*

**OLD LADY**

And I grow old doing my job,  
My punishment eternal,  
The work of soulless women  
Who have naught left but their bodies.

*Lights fade out.*

*The Old Lady is replaced by Stripper 2.*

*Lights on.*

**MARILYN**

That wasn't your father's story. It was yours.

**STRIPPER 2**

Is it? It's my own tale, all right. My quest for sense and meaning in life through self-imposed punishment. It's a path that's been lived by the pious. The flagellants. The monks in Kiev who bury themselves in the earth to resist... But, I am far from holy, and thus I will stop deceiving myself in life. There is no longer a point to my living a life of self-punishment...

But... it's also your story. I'd let you think about it while I die. I've finally earned enough to buy it on the streets. 10 ounces of Potassium Chloride.

**STRIPPER 3**

KCl? You're lacking electrolytes in your body? Girl, ever heard of Gatorade?

**STRIPPER 1**

**STRIPPER 4**

The death row injection? The one that convulses your heart, and...

**STRIPPER 2**

Dunno and yes, but I'd pass on Gatorade. KCl's going to be my new hero. You see... I've decided to quit this mortal coil, and... I'd like to do it the hardest possible way. (*Quietly, a whisper to herself, as she injects herself with KCl. She purposefully misses a vein, injecting directly into her muscle.*) The way that'll hurt for forever.

**MARILYN**

But, you don't deserve it! You...

*STRIPPER 2's eyes bulge. Body convulses. She is beginning to suffer a slow, extremely, painful death.*

**MARILYN**

The poison enters: it flows unto her essence.  
It works its way against her life,  
It squirms through her body  
By way of her founts of ichor,  
Her bloodstream turned unfaithful  
To deliver not pabulum,  
But a killing force.

As if the great wooden horse,  
That fell a mighty citadel,  
The poison worms its way through her,  
A self-imposed punishment,  
So she says...  
To destroy, purely to destroy...  
Utterly to destroy, to wreck  
What could have been great—

**STRIPPER 2**

*(Dying breath:)* To topple an empire,  
End the legacy of a family no longer,  
To escape cruel fate once and forever.  
I—

*STRIPPER 2 falls to floor.*

*STRIPPER 1 crosses herself.*

*STRIPPER 3 prays.*

*Stripper 4 turns away.*

*MARILYN cries.*

*Long silence.*

**MARILYN**

A life. Merely a life. Ephemeral. To have life to live and not wish to live it... It's...  
It's the same mistake I've made... Oh... But now, it's too late... *(Freezes between STRIPPER  
2's fallen body and EVELYN's image.)* She's dead.

**STRIPPER 4**

I... I have to leave. This place *really* isn't for me. I dropped out of my English Lit major to fight  
against male chauvinism and to see the world, but this... This *isn't* the world—it's a reality too  
concentrated, it's too pure yet too impure. I-I can't describe it. It's... I gotta leave.

*STRIPPER 4 leaves. STRIPPER 1 and 3 remain huddled together. MARILYN stands apart from them. STRIPPER 2's body still on floor.*

**MARILYN**

I... I, too, have to go. I need to find her.

**STRIPPER 3**

W-who?

**MARILYN**

My sister. Eve-Lyn. *(She begins to leave.)*

**STRIPPER 1**

W-wait!

**MARILYN**

Yes?

*STRIPPER 1 draws MARILYN close. Quickly, STRIPPER 1 draws out a dagger. Slices MARILYN's palm, and then her own. STRIPPER 1 presses her palm against MARILYN's.*

**STRIPPER 1**

We are blood sisters. Bound together. Fates intertwined. You cannot defy fate—you cannot defy this life. You cannot deny reality. Girl, you gotta get real!

**MARILYN**

*(Horried.)* I have AIDs.

**STRIPPER 1**

*(Silent for a while, solemn.)*

I, too.

*MARILYN runs out. Lights fade on Strippers 1&3.*

Scene 19: Escape, the Artist Condemned

*MARILYN is one of many people of tattered rags aboard a large dilapidated ship. It is a convict ship, for runaways, deserters, and the blacklisted—artists who do not belong in this world. Again, she is easily spotted because she is the only person with rosy cheeks, a natural complexion on her face. Everyone else has grey complexions.*

**HOBO 2**

*(Looks out into the sea from the edge of the ship.)* Oh, I go into the world with hopes that I might be able to paint again. *(Turns towards the audience and HOBO 1.)*

**HOBO 1**

And I, that I might be able to write again. The luxury of... words... words... words of my own.

**MAN**

And I, to mourn the lost of my brother.  
A man such as he, a world such as this.  
He could not exist in this world, alas.  
And I... I did not help make it easy.

**MARILYN**

But... you lived off him.

**MAN**

Yes, and now I have lost my sustenance.  
He died a tragic death. And, I let him...  
killed him...

**HOBO 1**

It is a tale of fighting Gemini.  
Two twins, alike in genes, but unlike in  
Disposition: one an artist, and the  
Other, fated to become a man of  
Wealth, not of his, but of those he'd stolen.

Brother, the artist, grew up in pure bliss,  
For he saw color in the greyest world,  
Breathed life into arid grunge fields of death.  
He made the world in his image, with  
Paint derived from his ichor, thus his world.

Brother, the other, grew up neurotic.  
He desired the thing he could not have:  
An essence he'd sacrificed to his lust:  
Talent, the stuff of IPO's success.  
He scoured the world to devour all talent.

**MAN**

*(Expression degrades from neutral remembering to horror.)*  
He was innocent. Completely so. He...  
He cared not for all the money in the  
World. He cared only for his art, and he'd...  
He'd merely been painting, when they caught him.  
Completely innocent, completely so.

### MAN (CONT'D)

It was the first painting of his that reflected not the world made in the image in his mind, but the world as itself. The painting of the slaughter. The sheer realism embedded in mere brush strokes. The semblance and essence of the moment—immortalized for all time by way of a painting. An image of horror, blood, and gore. Of innocence lost, the children fallen, mulled over by a force greater than death, a malevolence far greater than life.

It was a day of history. June 4, 1989. Tiananmen Square. I was there negotiating a business endeavor that would have secured us the unpaid labor of thousands of little hands—the dear children of big businesses. My brother, he was there as a streetside vagabond. An observer with overgrown hair, faraway eyes, and a face too sun-burnt to reveal his racial identity. He painted with the strokes of a demigod; he rendered truth on paper with a talent too divine.

Although, through cameramen who sacrificed their lives for that of truth's, the gist of the massacre lived on to horrify the world, my brother's truth did not. Nor did he...

After those enslaved by the government cleaned up the streetside gruel made of the once-bodies of college protesters too idealistic, my brother's truth fell prey to the wrong eyes. The same malevolence that had sent the tanks against the children became the ones to decree his fate.

### HOBO 1

Brother, the Artist, painted the world's truth,  
For no audience, other than himself  
And his great insatiable nature,  
To let his paintings devour him, always.

But, in Darker Circles, his vision failed:  
He could not recast Hell as Heaven, and  
His brush fell prey to the truth of time,  
The essence of the moment he could not  
Undo, redraw in his own mind's image.

They took him for a heretic, a fool  
Naïve enough to render truth by paint,  
Image so the crime to humanity,  
As a piece of art too realistic  
To let pass the eyes of judgment nigh.

### MAN

The Chinese government official put in charge of his "hearing" was a master sadist. They called him "Bob." It was rumored that he was schooled in the ancient arts, long forgotten, left behind for a darker time no one cared to remember—the torture rituals of a different dynasty, one where torture was the only key to truth that can save entire cities from siege. In those times, the precise art of inflicting just the right amount of pain was merely a means to a noble end—the sacrifice of the well-being of a certain individual in return for the livelihood—and life—of entire cities.

But, in this era, *that* art of truth became the art of lies—the art of snuffing a man, memorably.

**HOBO 1**

Bob, the master sadist, had witnesses  
In the cruel trial of brother, the Artist.  
He wanted no one to forget the scene.  
He wanted to make sure they know  
The immense, undeniable power  
That was synonymous with government.

He showed those gathered the second sight  
Of brother, the Artist, and those there saw  
The immense, undeniable power  
Wrought in the form of abject truth eschewed  
In his painting. And, although they saw the  
Hand of god, in his strokes, they feared for him.

**MAN**

Bob, the master sadist, tortured my twin...

**HOBO 1**

*Heartless, merciless, cruel beyond all hope:*  
First, he announced that the heretic's hands—  
*Unkempt, soiled, foul traitors to the nation—*  
The tool that wrought libel to the nation—  
Were to be chopped off, fed to the mongrels.

*Heartless, merciless, cruel beyond all hope:*  
Next, he announced that the heretic's mouth—  
*Unkempt, soiled, foul traitors to the nation—*  
The tool that would allow him to speak, scream—  
Was to be knit tightly shut, forced closed, hence—

*Heartless, merciless, cruel beyond all hope:*  
The heretic's eyes, from which he sees world—  
The light from his eyes, which guides his gone hands—  
*Unkempt, soiled, foul traitors to the nation—*  
The tool from which an artist sees and draws—  
Was to be put out forever darkness.

**MAN**

They made me do it. Yes, yes... They made me....

**HOBO 1**

Bob, the master sadist, unplugged champagne,  
The honors passed to his brother's keeper,  
Brother, the other, was given the task:  
He plunged the opener into brother's  
Eyes. First one, and then the other.

**MAN**

It was for the sake of international diplomacy. It was for the purpose of longevity—of my company, my life.

It was either me or my brother.

I had no choice.

**HOBO 1**

Little balls of blood-soaked pain fell to the  
Floor, from the ends of champagne openers,  
Twisted metal unto darkness divine,  
And brother, the artist, could not cry out,  
For his mouths were sealed, by decree of Bob.

His sight lost, his life became one final  
Blazing instant of infinite pain, and  
Then Bob laughed in an ugly, ugly glee.  
He motioned for the blade to come crashing,  
Crashing down on the life of an artist.

And, all became darkness, forever more.

**MAN**

They let me go because they'd already killed me. I'd died when my brother died—I had lived off his talent. I'd lost my source of sustenance, and my time became limited.

But, I adapted. I found other sources of talent, other minds of greatness to devour, whilst fine-tuning the art of raising a corporation unto that of a worldwide enterprise—by means of legal destruction of all competitors. I lived off these occasional flashes of brilliance, like a vampire I depended on them—I lusted for great minds, and I sucked them dry, then left them to die, a pile of dust, useless, essence drained.

And hence I live, a life, but not much of one. A living death, the consequences of my great betrayal, forever mine to repent for. And I, devoid of free will, a puppet of the fates, too cruel.

*Blackout, spotlight leaving MAN a moment later.*

Scene 20: The Siberian Train

*MARILYN is aboard a train. She holds a large folio close to her chest. A MANIAC sits across from her.*

**MANIAC**

You hold that folio to you as if it were the dearest thing in your life.

**MARILYN**

Yes, it holds the most precious jewels of my life... my poetry.

**MANIAC**

Poetry, ha! The direct route to starvation and grief. Quit it. Go out and get a real job.

*MARILYN smiles, but does not respond.*

**MANIAC**

*(Beat. Maniac, talent-lust glint. Holds out gun.)* I would have that folio of yours. I would take it and claim it as *mine*.

**MARILYN**

I would choose poetry rather than life...

**MANIAC**

Then, that shall be it. *(He shoots her.)*

*There is now a gaping wound in her portfolio. Blood oozes out. MARILYN lifts the folio onto her side. It becomes evident that MARILYN is not bleeding. Only her poetry is.*

*The bullet does not penetrate the thousand sheets in MARILYN's folio. (The folio is as if a shield in front of her.) Her poetry saves her.*

*The train speeds by a frozen chasm.*

*MARILYN drops her dead poetry into the chasm.*

*MANIAC screams.*

*Silence, then the MANIAC recomposes himself. He plans his new mode of attack:*

**MANIAC**

Why do you write? To be remembered? Ha! You know it's all a mind-op right? The whole thing of being "remembered" as a part of "history."

It's a conspiracy amongst the historians—they who *rewrite* history. They who are lacking in all things in the realm of talent—thus, they choose not to live in the present, but delve into the past, unto other lives, greater lives. And, if the greatness does not blind them, they may salvage it—to bring to the present of a future era the semblance of your existence. *If* they like you, *if* some decomposed undergrowth in the jungle likes you—and if this foliage chooses to waste his life on studying yours—then, perhaps, you might be remembered.

**MARILYN**

*(Close to tears)* Great men have died as if trees falling alone in a lifeless forest—their greatness ephemeral, not known to a soul after their passing, if even in life. But I... I care not that lesser knaves outwit me in the memories of forever. I... I care only that I have lived a life—a life worth living.

**MANIAC**

Understand that your fate rests on the whim of lesser souls. There is *no* greatness if they can't see it. There is *nothing* if they *choose* to forget you. *Nothing.* *(Pause. Train stops.)* Good day.

*MANIAC exits.*

*MARILYN waits a moment before leaving the train.*

*Blackout.*

Scene 21: Train Station

*MARILYN steps into a Siberian train station. The scenery in the distance is bleak, of grey snow. Nearby, amongst a throng of station people—the ARTIST, the MAN, the STRIPPERS, the BAR BOSS, everyone, though in east European/Siberian costume—there is a PUNISHER (a beheader) and his victim.*

**MARILYN**

I have lived a life worth living. And I *will* find my twin sister... *(coughs a racking fit, blood.)* And, I *will* find my twin sister... *(coughs.)* That radiant magnificence... which *has* to exist... How can I—

*PUNISHER walks by with wheeled guillotine. The victim to be beheaded looks like Evelyn. One of his incoherent ravings about the victim to be beheaded becomes clearly audible:*

**PUNISHER**

A mere mortal, as reality shall prove!

*MARILYN does not notice the PUNISHER & victim.*

**MARILYN**

—have pictured her otherwise? *(Utmost conviction, but turn to audience with lost expression on face.)* She *must* exist! *(Beat.)* And, I am finally here, in the midst of the snowiest, most pristine mountains, to find her!

*Blackout.*