

Welcome to Hell

A play in two acts

By Janet Preus

with prose poems by Jane Sanderson and contributions by Josh Will

Janet Preus
2531 Grand Ave. S., #100
Minneapolis, MN 55405
janet@janetpreus.com; 651-271-6550



CHARACTERS

SHE A smart, attractive, professional, fifty-something woman. She appears younger. Was in a relationship with **HE** for a long time.

HE The same approximate age and also a professional. Although he's an abusive personality, he is often charming and can be quite likeable, if he chooses to be.

THE VOICES:

The voices should provide darkly comic relief, especially the Telephone Voice of Hell. These can be played audio recordings, video recordings, or live, but they do not participate physically in the action.

TELEPHONE VOICE of HELL: female and obnoxiously soothing.

A VOICE ABOUT THE MONSTER: male or female

DR. MORRISON: male, patronizing, a psychiatrist

JUDGE: male, gruff, older

ANOTHER VOICE: male or female

THE OTHER WOMAN

RALPH: a therapist, upbeat and cheerful

A PSYCHOLOGIST: male or female

TELEPHONE VOICE (DOUG): male, doesn't care about his job

SETTING

Hell, the present

At rise, it appears to be cell-like spaces, sparsely furnished, if at all, and indistinguishable in time or space. There are boxes piled up, filled with things that belong to "He."

Act I.

Lights dim up on half the stage to reveal SHE on her phone. HE remains in shadow and SHE doesn't know he's there.

SHE

(Laughing)

That's hilarious! Oh, I love that! Oh, yeah. ... that's good. Yeah ... ok ...

(Laughing, she can't seem to stop.)

Yeah ... I'll see you around six, then. Perfect. Is David coming? ... Fine with me. Ok, sure. Oh, man, that cracks me up! Well, of course David is welcome. He's the only guy I know who's fine with the three of us. ... Geez, it's just a hamburger.

(Phone rings)

Hold on a sec ...

(She answers)

Hello?

(SHE interrupts the voice, apparently because she doesn't hear it. The audience hears slightly better than SHE would appear to. It continues as if SHE isn't speaking.)

TELEPHONE VOICE

Welcome to Hell. Please choose from the following options. To speak to the person with whom you would least like to spend eternity, press 1. To speak to a customer service representative, press 2. To return to the main menu-

SHE

Hello? ... I'm sorry, I can't hear you. ... Hello? ... I can barely hear/see you.

(SHE returns to her call with Gail.)

That was weird. I could sort of hear/see something, but I have no idea who. So, anyway, thanks a lot for calling. Yeah, ok. ... see you ...

(The call has been cut off.)

Gail? ... Oh, good grief!

She waits two beats, it rings again and she presumes it's Gail calling back. She answers. The voice is slightly louder this time, but she still thinks it's nothing.

TELEPHONE VOICE

Welcome to Hell. Please choose from the following options.

SHE

Hello?

(SHE looks at her phone to see who called and clearly doesn't recognize the number.)

I can't hear you. ... You sound really, really far away.

TELEPHONE VOICE

To speak to the person with whom you would least like to spend eternity, press 1. To speak to a customer service representative, press 2. To return to the main menu, press 3.

SHE

Sorry!

She gives up and hangs up on the call. She may pull out a lipstick and apply some, run her fingers through her hair, straighten her jacket, or may change an article of clothing (something casual), fixing up as if getting ready to go somewhere. Her phone rings again. This time before she answers, the voice starts speaking. She hears it vaguely, as if there's a radio playing faintly in the room, and then (at last) clearly.

TELEPHONE VOICE

Welcome to Hell. Please choose from the following options. To speak to the person with whom you would least like to spend eternity, press 1. To speak to a customer service representative, press 2. To return to the main menu press 3.

(She presses 3.)

Invalid entry. To speak to the person with whom you would least like to spend eternity, press 1. To speak to a customer service representative, press 2. To return to the main menu, press 3.

(She presses 3.)

Welcome to Hell. Please choose from the following options. To speak to the person with whom you would least like to spend eternity...

She hangs up. She thinks. Her phone rings again. She lets it ring, but finally can't resist answering it.

SHE

Hello? Gail? Oh, my gosh! What time is it? ... It is?

(Pause while Gail talks.)

Yeah, I'm fine! Sure! Wait! Wait! David will call you back! My phone is acting so weird.

(The phone goes dead.)

Gail ... Gail?

(She slams it down. A few seconds pass, she hears nothing, and it rings again. She answers immediately. She is unnerved.)

Gail?

TELEPHONE VOICE

Welcome to Hell. Please choose....

SHE

(She ends the call. It rings immediately; it's Gail.)

Hi! I'm so glad you called back!

(She laughs.)

I know, I just talked to you, but ... no, no, I'm fine. Yeah, no, I'm fine. Really. I'm good. ... Yeah. Really. No, no, I'm not with him. Nope. I'm just fine. ... Gail? Gail, no, wait! Can you hear/see me now? I can't hear/see you anymore. Ok, I can hear you, now. Oh, thank God! Yes, I'm ok. Really. Thank you so much for putting up with me! I don't know what I'd do without you! I always feel so much better after I talk to you.

(Laughing)

Well, except this phone call! ... Gail? ... Gail?

(To herself)

Oh, no. Not again.

TELEPHONE VOICE

(Audible, but not exactly clear. The audience, however, must hear this, even if she is not so sure.)

Welcome to Hell. Please choose, or you're going to run out of options.

SHE

What is the matter with this phone!! I hate Verizon!

HE

There's nothing wrong with the phone, girly girl, but you're a mess.

SHE

(She doesn't yet realize that he's there.)

What?

HE

Seriously. You are a wreck. Can't stick with anything for shit. You always say you're going to do something, buuut ...

SHE

God almighty, this is insane. He can't be here. And where ... am I? Well, I'm ok. I'm ... ok. I'm fine. I can figure this out.

(pause)

It just doesn't make sense. ... But I'll figure it out. I'm ok. I'll figure it out.

(Pause.)

What if he *is* here? Oh, God, why do I feel like I wanna throw up. Oh, shit ...

TELEPHONE VOICE

Welcome to Hell. Please choose from the following options.

Lights dim up on the other half of the stage.
She looks at her phone. She's rattled.

HE

I'll be damned. Look who's here.

SHE

How did you get my cell number?

HE

I pressed "1".

SHE

Very funny.

HE

It worked. What are you doing here anyway? Really, I'm surprised.

SHE

What am *I* doing here? What about you? ... Wait a minute ... It didn't even ring.

HE

Welcome to Hell!

SHE

Is that where we are. What is this, anyway? How long have you been here?

HE

I don't know. One day's like the next – until you showed up. Figured you would,
(Under his breath)

Crazy bitch.

SHE

You've been drinking.

HE

There you go already. You just got here!

SHE

You have. ...

(Pause)

I'm sorry.

HE

You have such a problem if I have a drink.

SHE

I'm sorry! Never mind! What ... What's going on? ... How did you get here?

HE

Now, that's a much larger question.

SHE

Well, we can't stay here. I have to get you out of here.

HE

Now, where did that come from?

SHE

(Referring to the boxes)

What's all this stuff? Is this your stuff?

HE

Yeah, it's mine.

SHE

What, are you staying? ... Can we talk about what's going on here? I mean, it's been a while. Years? I think it's been years. How long has it been? God! Yeah, we should talk.

(It's important to make it clear that one of the actors playing He is not the monster. They are both "He.")

HE

Go ahead and talk. I got this monster around here and he loves that. Word food. You know... "We need to talk"... "I really need to talk." Mmmmm. Monster hungry.

Lights dim on her.

A VOICE ABOUT THE MONSTER

Excuse me... excuse me.

HE

You want me?

A VOICE ABOUT THE MONSTER

Yes. There's a monster here who says he's yours. (beat) Do you have a monster?

HE

Well, uh ... What does he look like?

A VOICE ABOUT THE MONSTER

Like you, actually.

HE

What does he want?

A VOICE ABOUT THE MONSTER

He said he has a lot of horrible feelings about you. (beat) He needs to know where you want him to put them.

HE

He knows where to put them.

(He looks at her.)

He knows.

SHE

I've been here before, haven't I. (beat) Could we talk about it?

HE

Go ahead! Talk away! Talk, talk, talk!

SHE

(She hesitates and then takes out a newspaper clipping.)

Don't you want to talk about things? Please, I'll listen.

HE

I thought *you* wanted to talk.

SHE

Not to myself!

HE

Well, which is it?

SHE

I want to show you something I found.

She hands him the clipping, and he glances at it.

HE

This is her idea of starting a “meaningful conversation.” Good god.

(He unfolds it and speaks to the audience. Shawn looks over James’ shoulder to read it.)

She’s had this a long time. Who reads newspapers anymore?

(referring to the news clipping)

Never mind that she’s dead.

(Reading)

The warning signs of an abusive personality by none other than Ann Landers herself. Some of you might be old enough to remember Ann Landers. Or you can Google her. You can find anything on the Internet. Even here. Number One: “A push for quick involvement.” Nah.

(He scratches it off the list.)

Number Two: “Jealousy.” Na.. I don’t know. Number Three: “Controlling.” I thought they were *all* that one. Number Four: “Unrealistic expectations.” She’s the one with unrealistic expectations.

(He mumbles his way through.)

“Makes everyone else responsible for his feelings... ya-da, ya-da, ya-da... “Verbal abuse”. Oh, good grief! At least I didn’t beat her!

(She dials his phone, it rings and he answers.)

What!

(She hangs up. He looks at the number and then at her.)

SHE

Can we talk about this ... please?

HE

The phone service here sucks. You learn to live with it.

SHE

I didn’t mean that.

HE

Ok, what is it this time, then?

SHE

Last night ... I think it was ... last night?

HE

You can’t keep anything straight.

SHE

You were like, crazed. Do you know that? You stood outside the bedroom door and just

screamed. Do you even know that you did that? (beat) You put your fist through the door!

HE

Yeah. Sorry about that. No, really, you're right. I'm going to do something about it. Just, ... let me handle it.

SHE

Yeah, you should've handled it instead of punching a hole in it.

HE

What?

SHE

The door. You should have used the handle if you wanted to get in. It was a joke.

HE

Well, it's not funny.

SHE

It was kind of funny.

HE

You think it's funny that you got me so angry that I would hit something?

SHE

Are you saying it's my fault?

HE

Well, I don't just blow up for no reason.

SHE

Actually...

HE

Great! So, I'm the one to blame.

SHE

No, I'm sorry. It was a dumb joke.

HE

No, a dumb joke is "A guy walks into a bar. Second guy uses the door." Yours was just stupid.

SHE

I don't want to argue about this.

HE

Too late.

SHE

Fine. I think you have a problem, and you need help! I'll help. I'll come back and go through all of it with you-

HE

(No longer laid back, he turns on her.)

Oh, oh, yeah! You'll "help" Sure, you don't need help, do you, Miss Perfect? And you're always right!

SHE

It's not a matter of me being right. You just don't see-

HE

I don't "see?" That's it? Right. But you see – you see everything. The omniscient one! Just let it go! Can you ever let anything go! You push and push. It's just ... sick!

SHE

It's sick to want us to at least be decent to each other?

HE

Oh, now I'm not decent? Listen, missy, you listen to me! You don't know what you're talking about. There are rocks in my gut. Do you know what that feels like, Miss Perfect? Well, you tell me! You seem to know everything! But you don't really know everything, do you? In fact, you don't know anything about me! Nothing! **THERE ARE ROCKS IN MY GUT!** Do you know what that feels like, huh? Do you? No, you don't! You don't know! God! Miss Prissy Perfect **BITCH! UNBELIEVABLE!**

SHE

Never mind. Just ... stop. We'll talk, maybe ...never mind.

HE

No! You started this! Why do you do this? Huh? What's your problem? Oh, wait. You don't have any problems, because you're perfect.

SHE

I've never said I was perfect. Why do you say that?

HE

Where were you all day? Running around with all your little friends? What the hell are you doing, anyway? You know what? You're hopeless! Just embarrassing, that's what. I am embarrassed for you. I can't believe how stupid ... Goddam idiotic. Really unbelievable.

SHE

Please! It's ok! I'm sorry! I don't understand everything, I know that-

HE

I do everything for you! Everything! You have a great house, don't have to work much; basically, you can do whatever you want ... with your ... friends. Why do I do all this? Why do you think I do all this for you?

(All what? She is confused about time and place.)

You have NO CLUE! Oh, hell.

(He opens a beer, then with a smirk ...)

Miss Perfect.

SHE

(The panic begins for her ...)

It's just words, I know, but. ... Maybe he's right. I should just let things go. Really. I am sort of a ... Oh, god, oh, god.

(Major anxiety starts to grip her.)

Ohhhh, god. There it is! There's that ... uh, uh, I don't know! Presence, or something. I can do this. I can. I'll just talk my way through it ... Oh, god this ... this ... monster! It's like this ... *thing* ... over me. Can't it just GO? God! And where the hell *am* I?!

(She's toughing her way through it with all the determination she can muster, but it's a major effort.)

Oh, I wish it was just tomorrow. ... Tonight! The next MINUTE!

(hollering)

I'm smothering! God! Go! Away!

(Weaker)

Please ... go away.

(Pause. She thinks and tries to regain her equilibrium.)

I gotta go away. That's what. I need to get away.

HE

But she'll be back. She always comes back. She can't make it without me. So, this penguin walks into a bar.

SHE

Stop.

HE

And the penguin asks the bartender-

SHE

I'm always having to make decisions even when I don't know what I should do.

HE

That's for sure. Anyway, he asks the bartender, "Have you seen my dad?" Bartender says, "I don't know, what does he look like?"

SHE

(About her own dilemma. She's not paying attention.)

I don't get it.

HE

See, it's a penguin and his dad would look like a-

SHE

Do you know what is the matter with you?

HE

No, but I bet you do. A chimpanzee walks into a bar.

(This time she just looks at him and lets him continue.)

The chimp orders a beer ... You always say that.

SHE

I didn't say anything. ... Where were you? Where *are* you?

HE

Can you just drop it?

SHE

Can't you just tell me?

HE

You make everything so damn complicated.

SHE

No, it's very simple.

HE

Nothing's ever good enough for you. The perfect bitch.

SHE

Just come home when you say you're coming home. And please don't call me that. I really hate it.

HE

(mocking tone)

Miss Perfect.

SHE

I just want to get along. That would be enough. I want to feel safe. I want you to find me... endearing. My faults would be charming. That would be enough.

HE

I want, I want. Enough Enough... gobble, gobble. Num, num, num!

SHE

I feel like-

HE

Oh, you and your goddam feelings! I have feelings, too! I'm just not going to say anything.

SHE

Promise?

(Pause)

Aah! Heaven!

The following dialog should be quick and light.
Neither should seem angry.

HE

(Taunting, sing-songy)

I'm still heeere!

SHE

That was three words.

HE

I didn't promise.

SHE

Three more.

HE

Give it up!

SHE

Three again!

HE

I'm amazed.

SHE

How do you do, Amazed. I thought you were Obnoxious.

HE

We're just two trains running on different tracks. I need a beer.

(A six-pack appears in his cell. No indication of who delivers it. He opens one and takes a drink.)

And that's about all I can say for this place.

SHE

Oh. I'll take a bottle of Courvoisier.

(One diet coke appears.)

So that's how this works.

HE

Life isn't fair. Hell isn't either.

Lights dim on him and up on her. Her phone rings. She answers but hangs up and tosses it down. It rings again. Same routine. The third time, she answers.

TELEPHONE VOICE

Welcome to Hell. Please choose from the following options. To skip the main menu, and go to our directory, press four.

(SHE presses 4.)

To speak to a therapist, press 1.

(SHE presses 1.)

For Group Therapy, press 1. For Aromatherapy, press 2. For massage therapy, press 3. For Gene therapy, press 4. For counseling therapy, press 5.

(She presses 5)

For a Psychologist, press 1. For a garden-variety therapist, press 2. For a life coach, press 3. If you don't know the difference, press 4. If you know the name of the person you want, press 5.

(She presses 5)

Please say the name of your therapist after the tone.

There's no tone.

SHE

Morrison.

TELEPHONE VOICE

Please wait for the tone.

There's no tone.

SHE

Morrison.

TELEPHONE VOICE

Please wait for the tone.

There's no tone.

SHE

MORRISON!!!

TELEPHONE

There is no one in our directory by that name. There is a "Doctor" Morrison. He didn't go to medical school for all those years to NOT have you address him as "Doctor" Morrison. Please hold while we connect.

DR. MORRISON

Hello?

SHE

Doctor Morrison?

DR. MORRISON

(In an artificially soothing voice.)

How are you feeling? Did you have a good day?

SHE

Dr. Morrison?

DR. MORRISON

Yes? ... How are you?

SHE

I'm in Hell! How do you think I am?

DR. MORRISON

I understand. I'm glad we could talk today. You seem really stressed. Just take a deep breath and try to relax each muscle of your body, one at a time.

SHE

Yes, I'm stressed. Wouldn't you be if you just found out you were spending eternity with a ... a monster!

DR. MORRISON

Can you tell me how that makes you feel?

SHE

(To herself)

I'm losin' it here.

(To the phone)

Are you kidding? C'mon! I just wake up the phone rings and some voice says-

DR. MORRISON

Good. Good. Remember to take care of yourself. You can do that, can't you?

SHE

Not in this place, I-

DR. MORRISON

Did you two have a good talk after our session together last time?

SHE

Excuse me?

DR. MORRISON

Did you have a good talk?

SHE

(Quickly and ingenuously. Follow the punctuation or lack of it.)

Oh, ... yeah ... sure. Me and the grizzly bear went out for coffee and had a pleasant chat about going away for a romantic weekend without his other women relaxing on the deck after he's come home from the Legion with a dozen rum 'n cokes in him, and sharing a few jokes from his buddies at the bar before we turned off the light and cuddled until we went to sleep which planet are you on at the moment?

DR. MORRISON

You need to take care of yourself. You can have a pleasant time on the deck by yourself, can't you? You don't need him to make you happy.

SHE

Am I talking to myself?

(Pause. Faking sadness to the extreme)

An 800-pound cockroach ate my refrigerator today. I just bought that refrigerator, too, and I really liked it. It was my Mother's Day present. He said we couldn't afford it, but I didn't care, so I bought it for myself. And now it's gone.

DR. MORRISON

So you're feeling bad about that?

SHE

(Calmly, with sarcasm.)

Yeah ... I'm feeling bad about that.

Light change so it has the effect of lights going out.

SHE

Hey! Hold on! What happened? ... I'm in the dark here!

A WOMAN'S VOICE

Annoying, isn't it?

During the following, the boxes appear to slide across the floor. Other boxes are stacked up higher. Loud noises as boxes are dropped. The overall effect is to wall her in, or create a kind of maze, and it's getting claustrophobic.

SHE

What's going on? Where *am* I?

A WOMAN'S VOICE

In a room. A big room. HE is here, too.

SHE

HE IS? Where!

A WOMAN'S VOICE

Are you worried? What are you worried about?

SHE

I – I – I - don't know! ... (softer) I don't know.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Pretty ridiculous, then, I'd say.

SHE

I just don't know ... I'm not sure where I am. I don't like it in here.

Loud sound of something heavy dropping, such as a pallet of boxes. It startles her and she calls out. It echoes, and then it's silent.

SHE

What was that?

SHE

How in hell did I get here?

WOMAN'S VOICE

That's a rhetorical question, right?

Another loud noise. It reverberates.

SHE

I think there's somebody else in here. There's somebody else here.

WOMAN'S VOICE

I mean, what do you think he's going to do to you? ... Call you names? (chuckling)

SHE

I just never *know* what he's going to do. ... but it doesn't stop. Ever! It'll just keep going until

(she hesitates)

one of us is dead.

WOMAN'S VOICE

What "this?" A dark room ... a few "boxes" ...

SHE

(Struggling)

I don't know. It's stupid. Maybe something'll happen.

(Pause)

I could disappear in here. I could just disappear, you know.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Well, he's not going to kill you. (chuckling) What good are you then?

SHE

So, welcome to Hell. ... Just breathe. Just ... just ... Oh, shit! I'm not going to throw up ... and I'm not going to cry. Not going to. Damn. ... Oh, damn.

She fumbles around and finally finds her cell phone. The lights dim up on him.

HE

What are you so worked up about?

SHE

I'm not worked up.

HE

Really. Could've fooled me.

The following dialog should be quick, light banter, not yelling. The words say one thing and the tone another.

SHE

I really don't like it when you do this.

HE

Do what? I didn't do anything.

SHE

Is this your stuff? Wouldn't you like to get rid of it?

HE

It means something to me. Big deal. Gotta put it somewhere.

SHE

I don't want it. Any of it. I really don't like it when-

HE

You don't like anything about me.

SHE

You don't like my friends.

HE

You harass me when I drive.

SHE

You harass me all the time.

HE

You don't like to play cards. Not really.

SHE

You don't like salad. Not really.

HE

You don't like sex. Not really. (beat) Not at all. You don't like the car I bought you.

SHE

Are you serious? You bought it for yourself.

HE

You think I'm fat.

SHE

Don't ask for answers if you don't want to hear them.

HE

It's an opinion.

SHE

It's a fact. Just like how you hated my cat. Now he's dead.

HE

I hate **all** cats! I like dogs. Big dogs.

SHE

I love horses.

HE

I'm scared of horses, actually. But you're not. (beat) You're not scared of anything, are you?

SHE

No. ... I'm not.

HE

You're tough.

SHE

You're strange.

HE

Well, thank you.

Quick pause. Then they pick it up again.
Fast dialog with tight cues.

SHE

I have practice tonight.

HE

You're always running around with all your little friends.

SHE

I have practice. We should talk.

HE

You are always, always late.

I don't think I'll be too late tonight.

SHE

Whatever.

HE

You forgot to pick up Rex at the vet.

SHE

My secretary called.

HE

Who?

SHE

Who called or who's my secretary?

HE

I have to go. Where were you? You left the office at 3:00.

SHE

I get more done in an hour than you get done all day.

HE

Are you listening?

SHE

What?

HE

Bitch.

(under his breath)

He doesn't move. Pause. Light change.

If you have another room on the other side of the wall, you can go there. If you have only one room you can stay in it or leave – there is a door.

SHE

If there is someone in your bed or
If you're in bed alone,
You can stay in it or
Get up.

HE

SHE

You with your legacy murky or clear you
With your dream barely glimpsed at dawn:
You get up from your bed to dark or
Bright. You leave your room with fear or hope.

HE

You can stay in it or get
up. You can stay in
it or leave.

SHE

There is a floor beneath the bed.
There is a door in the wall of the room.
This is what you know.

Her telephone rings. She lets it ring a long
time and it stops. It immediately starts
ringing again and she answers it, it would
appear just to get it to stop.

TELEPHONE VOICE (and VP)

Welcome to Hell. Please choose from the following options. For sales, press 1; for high-
pressure sales, press 2; for accounts payable, press 3; to speak to an old enemy, press 4.

(She puts her phone on speaker and paces around.)

To speak to the person who fired you from your last job, press 5; to speak to any of your
former lovers, press 6. For faster service...

(She runs back to her phone.)

Stay on the line. ... to get your day in court, press 7.

(She presses 7 on her phone.)

JUDGE'S VOICE (James/Shawn)

Please state your name for the court.

SHE

(She's thrown off for a bit, since the voice is there
immediately. She doesn't seem to notice comments by HE
in the dialog with the Judge.)

I ... I ... oh, God. I don't think I can remember. Umm... Wait, of course I know my
own name. I know who I am. I just didn't expect anyone to ask.

JUDGE'S VOICE

Never mind. It doesn't matter anyway. Stand up and hear the charges against you.

SHE

By whom?

JUDGE'S VOICE

By your man – the one you said you'd love and obey.

SHE

I didn't say, "obey."

JUDGE'S VOICE

All right, then. Agree with.

SHE

I don't think I said that, either

JUDGE'S VOICE

(He more or less rattles this off.)

Support, then. Stand by. Hold up. Admire. Show respect for. Acquiesce to, graciously. Be a doormat now and then. Wink at his (beat) indiscretions. Be a lady in public and a whore in the bedroom. Give him his space, do his errands – cheerfully. Drop what you're doing to accompany him, stall your dreams, stifle your goals, pursue your interests alone, so you won't expect him to have an interest in what interests you.

SHE

(While wrapping her arms, or putting one or both into slings to indicate they're injured.)

I plead for mercy.

JUDGE'S VOICE

You can't do that.

SHE

Why not?

JUDGE'S VOICE, HE
(together)

It's guilty or not.

SHE

Is it? Is life like that, then?

JUDGE'S VOICE

This courtroom is.

SHE

Can I think about it?

JUDGE'S VOICE

Not anymore. As far as this court is concerned, you are either guilty of something or not. He is either guilty-

SHE

I get it, I get it. (beat) Why do I have to go first?

JUDGE'S VOICE

The charges against you were filed first and longest, and most often, and have the most compelling evidence – and I know him. You have your arms all wrapped up and you're probably faking it. I can't really see anything wrong with you.

SHE

But, your honor, I don't agree with most of what you said.

JUDGE'S VOICE

Well, what *do* you think, then?

SHE

Well, Your Honor-

JUDGE'S VOICE

Hold on, sweetie.

(Muttering)

Goddam it! Caught my robe under the chair.

(To SHE)

Now what do you think this is about?

SHE

Well, it's a little hard to explain-

HE

This should be good.

JUDGE'S VOICE

Are you prepared?

HE

Good luck with that.

SHE

Umm ...

JUDGE'S VOICE

Mostly people show up in my courtroom prepared, sweetheart.

SHE

Of course. It's about abuse. Battering-

JUDGE'S VOICE

(Shuffling papers around)

Got some medical documents? 911 records?

SHE

Verbal abuse.

HE

(Snickering)

Shit.

JUDGE'S VOICE

What, he just yell at ya?

HE laughs out loud.

SHE

Emotional abuse.

JUDGE'S VOICE

He didn't break your arms or something?

HE stands, threatening, may approach her.

SHE

Well, no and yes.

HE

(He backs off)

Typical.

JUDGE'S VOICE

Well, which is it?

HE takes a threatening position near her.

SHE

Your Honor, if I walked into this courtroom with both my arms all wrapped up, and I told you that my husband broke both my arms, you'd say, "That's battering! He can't do that!" Right?

JUDGE'S VOICE

More or less.

SHE

Well, that's true. More or less. But he was never charged.

HE

Oh, come ON!

SHE

In fact, nobody seemed to notice them at all, really, and it just seemed like nobody wanted to know about my problems.

JUDGE'S VOICE

Is this going somewhere?

SHE

(She forges ahead.)

I was all beat up inside. Sometimes I could hardly breathe without the ache here,
(She indicates, as best she can with sore arms — a comical moment — her heart or chest)
crawling up to my throat and smothering me. But still no one noticed. The odd thing is that I didn't question this, but I did wonder if maybe I was just disappearing, that the real me was evaporating inside myself, and that's why nobody could see.

JUDGE'S VOICE

Pul-lease, sister! Get your turds herded and go!

During the next speech, HE gestures "talk, talk" about her.

SHE

But my arms eventually got better. They were never exactly right, but I could use them, for the most part, and I was feeling almost normal. Then this issue came up and I knew I would have to be in the same room with him, facing legal issues that turned our years together into a math problem. "If you get this much and I get this percentage of what you get ..."

JUDGE'S VOICE

Stick to the point, please.

HE gestures agreement with the Judge.

SHE

My arms started aching again.

HE

This is crazy.

SHE

There was swelling and tenderness if I even touched them. It got so bad that I had to put my arms in slings again because walking around jostled them so that I couldn't handle the pain.

JUDGE'S VOICE

Well, good God, why didn't you tell anybody?

SHE

Tell them what? And just who would "them" be?"

JUDGE'S VOICE, HE

(together)

Oh, for cryin' out loud -

SHE

(Getting a little desperate. She's not getting through ...)

What could I possibly tell "them" that would matter? He'd done a pretty good job of convincing me that it was at least partly my fault, that in fact I had instigated it by doing the very things that I knew would provoke him.

JUDGE'S VOICE

Well, did you?

SHE

(She hesitates. The Judge waits.)

That's ... impossible for me to say.

JUDGE'S VOICE

Really.

HIS phone rings. It keeps ringing, while SHE takes the wraps off her arms and collects herself. HE sees that SHE is calling, although she hasn't dialed her phone, and he shuts it off without answering it. HE takes out a book, sits down and opens it.

HE

Once upon a time, there was a woman who lived with a man ...

SHE

And his monster.

HE

The man told himself ... The woman told herself ... things.

SHE

(SHE goes to a book that looks just like the one he has, touches it in a meaningful way, eventually opens it, but it is clear this is extraordinarily painful for her.)

She liked the lies she told herself about the man.

HE may keep his eyes on the book throughout this segment.

HE

The woman told herself ... things.

SHE

He really *did* love her, beneath his con games, threats, derision. He had promised to rescue her from herself in the end.

HE

She liked the lies she told herself about the man.

He puts a book mark in the book and puts it down. During her next speech, HE pays little attention. He may be on his phone, gets a beer, waits it out.

SHE

(In this speech, we should have the impression that she is thinking it up as she goes. It should build to an intense, emotional climax at "... crash to the ground!" when she's at the end of her tether. But, by that time, she's committed and has to see it through, embarrassed, exhausted and angry all at once – and sobbing. She has closed the book, but never puts it down.)

I could barely get up and get my kids off to school and get to work. I had all I could do to stop at the grocery store and figure out something for supper while he was at the VFW buying out a tip jar and downing 15 or more rum and cokes — or sitting in his deer stand and then meeting a local girl at a bar down the road. I **had** to get up and change the sheets that he had pee'd in when he came home drunk — that would be way early in the morning — and then get up and get the kids off to school and make arrangements to get a sitter so we could go to some fundraiser or another and I could present myself to my little town as a woman who had it all and had it all together. This life of ordinary, everyday tasks that kept me running from morning 'til night held me up— like wind underneath me! A constant wind that lifted me up above the dangerous earth. If it ever stopped blowing I would crash to the ground!

(Brief pause.)

Then, finally, it did. I thought I was losing it. I am not proud of who I was then, and I wanted my kids to look up to me. It was a bad time. And he pounced on it. There wasn't much left for him to do when I moved out, but he did what he could. If you have broken arms—if that's what it is, it hurts when someone just bumps them a little. It hurts a lot. And more than anything, you want everything to just stop hurting. Just! Stop! Hurting!

(She pauses, as if to look at the Judge. You want her to be able to see him.)

SHE glances at the book from time to time, but eventually she puts it down. It is clear that SHE doesn't need to read from it anymore. SHE knows the story. SHE can barely recite it as she chokes back emotion. But SHE is determined to get to the end of the recitation, which SHE does.

HE

So she stayed in the house he made for her in the middle of the forest and he would visit her to exhibit his own singular expressions of affection. He starved her so that she stayed grateful for anything he tossed her.

The mother and father, the brothers and sisters of the girl, searched for her – But eventually gave up.

SHE

Though her absence puzzled and grieved them, they needed to plant their gardens, raise their children, find a god they could believe in.

HE

There was a war; then a period of peace. The parents died.

SHE

The siblings stopped telling their children about the aunt who mysteriously disappeared.

HE

From time to time – instinctively – they would start a story, “Once upon a time there was an old woman in a house in the middle of the forest,”

SHE

“Once upon a time.....”

but it would trail off, end with a sigh,
when they couldn't remember
her name.

They close their books together.

SHE

I knew it. It could happen. I could just disappear. I could.

JUDGE'S VOICE

(He takes a deep breath.)

Go on.

SHE

(This, too, gets her emotionally wound up again.)

When he had come home drunk, often in the middle of the night, he expected sex, of course. The thought of that was disgusting. That just angered him more, so I locked him out of the bedroom, and let him hurl whatever abuses at it that he wished. Sometimes it was his fist that he hurled, and eventually he broke the door. But by that time, I felt nothing. ...

(indicating her heart)

in here. I just wanted him to go away so I could sleep, and that was the most frightening time of all. I had already let go. The whirlwind was dying down, the wind was letting up, and I was going to fall to the earth in a mighty splat. Nobody saw this happen, or even suspected, probably. Nobody could see my ... broken arms because ...

JUDGE'S VOICE

Yes?

SHE

He didn't actually break my **arms**. Why do I feel like this, then? Your Honor, you tell me. Why do I hurt when he didn't break my arms?

Light change. Short pause.

Her phone rings. With little interest, SHE answers it, but doesn't say anything.

A TELEPHONE VOICE

Welcome to Hell. Please choose from the following options, but listen carefully as some options have changed. To speak to the person next to you, press 1.

SHE

That's stupid.

TELEPHONE VOICE

I said listen carefully. To speak to a customer service representative, press 2. To return to the main menu, press 3. To get out of Hell, press 4.

(This gets her attention. SHE presses 4.)

To get out of Hell this year, press 1. To get out of Hell this week, press 2. To get out of Hell today, press 3.

(SHE does. HE moves boxes to make a “door” or hallway.)

You have successfully activated the get out of Hell free code. Goodbye.

HE

Well, it’s been nice talking to you.

SHE

You heard that?

HE

Weird, isn’t it?

SHE

You’re coming, aren’t you?

HE

Naa, I don’t think so. ... I ... can’t.

SHE

What? I’m not going to just leave you here! Let’s go!

HE

Sorry. That was **your** phone call.

SHE

What? No! Please! We have to get out of here!

HE

(He’s serious for once.)

No, I’m sorry. I am. It was Hell here without you.

SHE

I was here, and it was still Hell!

HE

Was it? ... I’ll do better. Just ... just ... let it go.

(He starts singing the “Frozen” theme. She rolls her eyes.)

I know. I just don't quit, do I?

SHE

No. Nothing's changed.

HE

You like it, though, right?

SHE

Maybe to a point.

HE

Remember that trailer we lived in that first year? Everything was green – the refrig, the curtains, the shag carpet. We used to have a bonfire in the backyard and drink beer with that math teacher. What was his name?

SHE

I don't know. He had black curly hair.

HE

And he'd let out a howl and all the coon hounds in the neighborhood would start howling. It was funny! There were a lot of coon hounds. We had fun. You didn't care how many beers I'd had. ... R'member that?

SHE

Yeah. Sure. I .. uh ... miss being young like that.

Pause. They look at each other.

HE

We went out shooting crows, too. With him. He loved that.

SHE

I didn't shoot any.

HE

That was fun. ... fun times. R'member? What was that guy's name?

SHE

Does it really matter? ... Do I matter?

HE

I just remembered a good one. These two monsters walk into an Irish bar....

SHE

Please.

(With some urgency)
Did you hear what I said?

HE
(About the joke.)
Naa. Wasn't that good. A grasshopper hops into a bar.
His phone rings.

SHE
You can leave. You can. We'll go together.
His phone stops ringing.

HE
You don't know what you're saying. ... No, you don't.

(While she puts on a coat and gets her purse and phone.)
New coat?

SHE
Someone gave it to me.

HE
You look good ... hot.

SHE
Well, it's that time of my life, maybe.

HE
(He's telling a joke but this time it doesn't sound like it.)
Anyway, the bartender says, "You're quite a celebrity around here. We've even got a drink named after you. "The grasshopper says, "You've got a drink named Steve?"

SHE
Please. You don't have to live like this!

His phone rings.

HE
Oh, you mean I'm better off living like you?

SHE
Please don't. I want you to come, too. Don't stay like this, please!

He answers his phone.

HE

Like what?

TELEPHONE VOICE

Welcome to Hell. Please choose from the following options, but listen carefully as some options have changed. To speak to the person next to you, press 1. To speak to a customer service representative, press 2. To return to the main menu, press 3. To get out of Hell, press 4.

He looks at her. The words, “There. Is. A. Door.” are projected and simultaneously heard in what could be called a loud whisper. It reverberates as the words melt and the lights fade to black.

- END ACT I -

ACT II

It is exactly the same scene as the beginning of Act I. Lights dim up on half the stage to barely reveal that there is a man, HE, sleeping. Then lights dim up on another area to reveal SHE, who is on the phone. It's an intense conversation.

SHE

You know what, Gail? He really can't help it, but I just want to hear him say it, you know? Say, I'm right!

(SHE laughs. Pause. She continues, more subdued.)

Oh, yeah, he'll say it. ... and, wham! Sucker-punched.

(Pause.)

Well, I'm not surprised, when I think about it later. I mean, when I think. It's not like it's anything new, but ...

A WOMAN'S VOICE

Why don't you just leave?

SHE, LIVE

Gail? ... Gail?... Hello?

(She realizes that Gail is no longer on the line.)

WOMAN'S VOICE

Just leave.

(Slight pause.)

Something wrong with that?

SHE

(Laughing)

Just "leave" Hell. Well, that's good. People don't visit Hell, you know, or move here and then retire in Arizona after they're done living in Hell.

WOMAN'S VOICE

I thought it was one of your options.

SHE

Yeah, well. Bad timing. Just ... not the right time. I mean, compared to a lot of people, my life is ... I mean, I should be ok. Really.

(Pause.)

I love my house. ...

(SHE roams the space, touching things as if they were meaningful things in her house.)

We do things together. Sometimes we do things together.

(Pause. This is getting too close to the bone.)

There are the kids. ... Oh, my god, the kids.

(She struggles, forcing back tears.)

I ... would get up in the morning and they wouldn't be there, not every day. It's worth that? ... Really?

(Her cell phone rings, and rings and rings, but she's crying. Finally she answers it.)

Hello?

A TELEPHONE VOICE

Welcome to Hell.

SHE

(SHE blows her nose, wipes her eyes.)

Hellooo, shithead.

TELEPHONE VOICE

Please choose from the following options. To speak to the person with whom you would least like to spend eternity, press 1. To speak to a customer service representative, press 2. To return to the main menu, press 3.

SHE

(She presses 3. With false cheer)

Ok!

TELEPHONE VOICE

Invalid entry. To speak to the person with whom you would least like to spend eternity, press 1. To speak to a customer service repre-

She hangs up her phone.

SHE

I now know where the idea for automated phone systems came from.

(SHE looks at her phone, closes her eyes. Her phone rings again. She lets it ring, but finally can't resist answering it.)

Hello?

(No response)

Hello?

(SHE presses a number several times.)

TELEPHONE VOICE

I did not understand your selection. To return to the main menu -

(SHE presses 1.)

I did not understand your selection. I choose to not understand anything you choose. Welcome to Hell. Please choose. I will choose for you. Welcome to Hell-

SHE

No, I don't think you get to choose for me. Goodbye.

(SHE puts the phone down.)

There is a brief moment of silence, then...

TELEPHONE VOICE

I said, "I will choose for you." Please hold.

SHE

What in the hell?

(She picks up the phone and hits "end." A familiar pop song plays for a bit while the Telephone Voice character rocks out to the music.)

TELEPHONE VOICE

Thank you for waiting. Since you didn't respond, option #1 has been chosen for you. Good-bye.

SHE

Wait! What? What was option #1 again?

Blackout.

...Goddammit.

HE

Well, I'll be damned. Look who's back.

SHE

Look who never left.

HE

I didn't choose to.

SHE

Wait a minute. It didn't even ring.

HE

Welcome to Hell!

SHE

How long have you been here?

HE

I don't know. One day's like the next.

Really. (pause) Where's your – SHE

Monster? He's here somewhere. HE

The following dialog should not be played as a yelling kind of argument, until the stage direction for him to throw something, hard. Then things take a sinister turn.

You've been drinking. SHE

Oh, my God, you just got here! HE

You have. SHE

You have such a problem with this. I just like bars, remember? HE

Oh, so you remember that. There's quite a bit that you don't. SHE

Well, that's bullshit. HE

That last night, I think it was. What did you say that last time on the phone to me? SHE

I didn't talk to you on the phone. HE

You did. Would you like to know what you said? You said, "That was your phone call." I said, "You don't have to live like this." SHE

Like what? HE

We should probably talk about it. SHE

HE

Sure we can talk, but guess what's going to happen. You're going to hit on something, and off we go.

HE throws something, hard.

SHE

You don't scare me.

HE goes to move boxes.

Why don't you get rid of this stuff.

HE

It's mine. I want it.

SHE

Why?

HE

(Mocking her) Why? ...Go ahead and talk. Talk, talk, talk. Yum, yum, yum!

A VOICE ABOUT THE MONSTER

Excuse me... excuse me.

HE

You want me?

A VOICE ABOUT THE MONSTER

Yes. There's a monster here who says he's yours. (beat) Do you have a monster?

HE

What does this one look like?

SHE

Yes! He has a monster!

HE

You heard that?

A VOICE ABOUT THE MONSTER

Heeee ... looks like you.

HE

What does he want?

A VOICE ABOUT THE MONSTER

He has a lot of horrible feelings about you. (beat) He needs to know where you want him

to put them.

HE

(Yelling)

He knows where to put them, so put them there! ... She can handle it.

Her phone rings. She answers but hangs up immediately and tosses it down. It rings again. Same routine. The third time, she answers.

TELEPHONE VOICE

Welcome to Hell. Please choose from the following options. To skip the main menu, and go to our directory, press four.

SHE

Uh, you called me.

TELEPHONE VOICE

To speak to your therapist, press one.

SHE

(She presses 1.)

Hello?

DR. MORRISON'S VOICE

(In an artificially soothing voice.)

Hi. How are you feeling? Did you have a good day?

SHE

Dr. Morrison?

DR. MORRISON'S VOICE

Yes? How are you?

SHE

Well, I'm stressed.

DR. MORRISON'S VOICE

You seem stressed. (Beat.) Tell me what's bothering you.

SHE

There's a monster here with me. Again.

DR. MORRISON'S VOICE

I see. And how does that make you feel?

SHE

...Stressed.

DR. MORRISON'S VOICE

I see.

SHE

Because I have to carry the weight of that monster around with me whenever it shows up, and I never know when that will be.

DR. MORRISON'S VOICE

Uh-huh.

SHE

...and I'm tired of doing it.

DR. MORRISON'S VOICE

Ok. So, what I hear you saying is that there is a monster – something that feels like a monster - with you. Again. And you are tired of having to carry that weight around with you.

SHE

Yes, that is what I said, although you missed the part about never knowing when the monster will show up. You see, that gets unnerving because-

DR. MORRISON'S VOICE

Ok, let's stop here for today. I think we've made some real progress.

SHE

I'm just getting started.

DR. MORRISON'S VOICE

Baby steps.

SHE

But I'm still stressed.

DR. MORRISON'S VOICE

You should try to relax. Have you ever been hypnotized?

SHE

No.

DR. MORRISON'S VOICE

Would you be willing to try it?

SHE

Sure, but...

DR. MORRISON'S VOICE

Good. Good.

SHE

But the monster.....

DR. MORRISON'S VOICE

I want you to sit back, close your eyes and just let go of everything.

She leans back, but sits up almost immediately.

SHE

Dr. Morrison? The monster's still here ...

DR. MORRISON'S VOICE

You are going to relax now.

SHE

Did you hear what I said?

DR. MORRISON'S VOICE

We're relaxing. We're not talking.

SHE

Relaxing will not make the monster go away!

DR. MORRISON'S VOICE (some distortion)

The monster the monster the monster

SHE

Don't you get it?

DR. MORRISON'S VOICE and TELEPHONE VOICE (distortion)

(They don't speak this exactly together. The words are recognizable, but it sounds like a recording gone awry with scrambled VP.)

The monster, the monster. Welcome to hell, to hell, to hell, hello, hello, choose to hell please choose monster monster hello and welcome. Hell hello to hell and back to hell choose the monster and here we go to hell again.

SHE
(Practically attacking her phone.)

Oh, come **on!** Stop!

(It stops.)

It stopped. I said stop and it stopped. (4 beats) I need to say “stop” more!

Light change.

HE

“I need a beer”

(Immediately a bottle of something imported and expensive appears in his cell. He opens one and takes a drink.)

And that’s about all I can say for this place.

SHE

(A can of cheap beer appears in her cell.)

So that’s how this works.

HE, SHE

(Together)

Life isn’t fair. Hell isn’t either.

(She dials his phone, it rings and he answers it.)

HE

What!

SHE hangs up – quite deliberately. HE looks at the number and glances toward her. In the following dialog to “I’m leaving,” SHE says her lines as if she’s remembering a previous conversation, in part. HE is in the moment.

SHE

I had practice that night.

HE

You’re always running around with all your little friends.

SHE

Don’t have to. I choose to. I have practice.

HE

You are always, always late.

SHE

I didn’t think I’d be too late.

HE

Whatever. You forgot to pick up Rex at the vet.

SHE

N, **you** forgot to pick up Rex at the vet because you were at the Legion buying out a tip jar and now you can pay for the extra day. I have to go.

HE

What kind of a woman are you, anyway?

SHE

A busy one.

HE

Have to be around all your little friends-

SHE

And you have to be around all your drinking buddies.

HE

I get more done in an hour than you get done all day.

SHE

Then I guess you'd have time to pick up Rex.

(She busies herself with something and appears to be ignoring him.)

HE

I'm leaving.

(He doesn't move.)

I'm leaving. Did you hear me? I'm LEAVING!

(She pays no attention.)

I've had enough of this. You're so fuckin' impossible. I'm leaving.

SHE

So, go. You said you're leaving, so leave.

HE

You can't make it without me. You'll never last. I'll get Rex. Yeah, I'll pick up the dog. I got time, because I get things done. You can't get anything done. Can't make a decision. Your life will be a train wreck from day one. Always apologizing, but nothing changes. Nothing! What the hell are you going to do without me, huh? Just what do you think you're going to do?

SHE looks at him and shrugs.

HE

See! You don't know!

SHE

(calmly)

And the monster returns.

HE

Monster? Is that it? I'm a monster. Does this sound like a monster? I take her out, see. We're at this bar. There's lots of people around we know. I'm not gonna just hang on her all night. There's people there I know, so I'm just supposed to act like I don't know 'em? Clients! You know? She ends up talking to some guy. Smiling at him, laughing. Pissed me off. What's she trying to do? I don't know him. I'm talking to a client. Young lady. So, after a while, here she comes and says, "I'm ready to go." She's got her coat on, her hands stuffed in her pockets. This young lady is smirking at her. It was so damn embarrassing. So I put an arm around my wife, give her a smooch, you know, and introduce her. "Hi" ... "Hi ..." You know. Dumb nice-talk shit. She pulls away and says, "Well, I'm leaving. You coming?" Well, no, I'm not leaving. I'm just warming up. Lots of people to talk to. I'm buying 'em drinks. Yeah, I've had a few. So's everybody else. After a while, place is clearing out and I'm moving toward the door, and there she is! She hasn't left. She's just sitting there. Scowling. Looking like a damn crabby grandma. She says I said all kinds of bad shit on the way home. I don't remember. If she said I did, I did. Big deal. Can't she just let it go? I'd had a few. Seriously!

(To her.)

You can't ever let anything go! Get over it! Everything I do for you! It's never enough! I'll never be good enough for you!

SHE

For me? I've never said that.

HE

You don't have to. It's obvious. It's how you operate. I know who you are.

SHE

Do you.

HE

The monster. Maybe that's you, huh?

SHE

Then why does he look like you?

HE

You'll get nothing from me! Nothing! I know how this works. Don't expect to get

anything! (hollering) YOU. CAN'T. MAKE IT. WITHOUT ME!

Light change.

SHE

If you have another room on the other side of the wall, you can go there. If you have only one room you can stay in it or leave – there is a door.
If there is someone in your bed or
if you're in bed alone,

HE

You can stay in it

SHE

Or get up.

(Projections of doors begin to dim up.)

HE

You can stay in it! You can stay! You can!
Stay! You can stay in it or leave!
Stay in it or leave!
There is a door!

(hollering, and breathing hard)

There **is a floor!** Beneath the bed
There is a floor.
There is a **door** in the **wall** of the **room!**

SHE

Didn't I just say this?

HE

GOD! You're IMPOSSIBLE! ... I can't say anything! You know everything. You tell me! You know everything! Oh, hell. Bitch!

SHE

(While he's saying "bitch.")

Uh-uh. No. Can't call me that.

He opens another beer and drinks.

SHE

(Without emotion)

Words. ... The monster. ... Talk. ... Maybe tomorrow it will be over.

(Moving wearily about her space.)

Can I make it until tomorrow? Can I make it through the rest of my life? Can I?

(She dials her phone. More or less, it's something – just something – she can do and get a different response.)

Gail? Can you hear me ok? Gail?

(There's no answer.)

Dr. Morrison? Hello?

(No response. She keeps trying different people, who appear on the VP screen, smile, maybe wave at her or shrug, but say nothing and fade away.)

I'm here! Wait! Can't you see me? I'm really here! I am!

(This could accelerate to all sorts of people – pictures of people, anybody at all. It doesn't matter. The point is that nobody sees or hears her. She *is* disappearing.)

I'm disappearing. I am. I really think I'm disappearing!

TELEPHONE VOICE

Welcome to Hell.

SHE

I wasn't calling you!

TELEPHONE VOICE

Is anyone there?

SHE

I wasn't calling you.

TELEPHONE VOICE

Is anyone there? Hello? Are you there?

SHE

No, I'm not here. I'm just – oh, I don't know – a nothing. A disappearing nothing.

TELEPHONE VOICE

Hello?

SHE

Goodbye.

TELEPHONE VOICE

Please choose-

SHE

I said I wasn't calling you.

TELEPHONE VOICE

Please choose-

(The sound of numbers being dialed, which is interrupted.)

SHE

Quit interrupting! Seriously!

She hits another key and another and another and another. Each time she hits a key, the TELEPHONE VOICE says, "Goodbye."

TELEPHONE VOICE

Goodbye. Goodbye. Goodbye. (etc.)

(She finally stops. Pause.)

Hello, are you still there?

SHE

Yes! I'm still here!

TELEPHONE VOICE

If you're still there and would like to speak with a representative, please say "yes."

SHE

Yes.

TELEPHONE VOICE

I'm sorry, I didn't understand you. If would like to speak with a representative, please say "yes."

SHE

Yes!

TELEPHONE VOICE

I'm sorry, I didn't understand you.

SHE

Yes!

TELEPHONE VOICE

I'm sorry you're having trouble. Would you like to end this conversation?

SHE

No!

TELEPHONE VOICE

You have responded "No." You've chosen *not* to speak to a representative. Goodbye.

Shit. SHE

Light change.

HE
(Opens a beer or pours a drink.)
A neutron walks into a bar and asks, "How much for a beer?" The bartender replies "For you? No charge."

Bad. SHE

HE
A guy walks into a bar in Cork, in Ireland, and asks the barman: "What's the quickest way to get to Dublin?" "Are you walking or driving?" asks the barman. "Driving," says the guy. "That's the quickest way," says the barman.

WOMAN'S VOICE
That's sort of funny ...

HE
The guys at the Legion Bar loved it.

In the following dialog She is pleading with him, frustrated and hurt more than angry.

SHE
Where were you? When you called me, where were you?

HE
I didn't call you.

SHE
But ... you *did*.

WOMAN'S VOICE
He said he didn't call you, sweetie.

HE
I was busy. With a client.

SHE
Right. A client. That wasn't the question.

HE

But that doesn't count. Nope. Not good enough.

SHE

Where were you? Why is it so impossible for you to answer that?

HE

Nothing is ever good enough. You're so perfect. The perfect bitch.

SHE

(She tries to cut him off, but he still gets the word out.)

You can't call me that.

HE

I just did, Miss ... Perfect.

SHE

(Now she's had enough.)

I would like to make one thing clear, just in case you didn't get it yet. I do not like the word "bitch," unless it's referring to a female dog. *I* will not be called ... that. Where was I ... I was wondering what it would be like to just feel safe. Maybe that would be enough. Enough to be ... content, anyway. ... I just want-

HE

I want, I want. Enough Enough... gobble, gobble. Words wordswordswordswords! I want MORE WORDS! ... MORE WORDS. I said I want more words! Words! Exclamation point! ... Exclamation point!

He mimes, top to bottom, drawing an enormous exclamation point, emphasizing the period/dot with a...

HE (James)

Bam! Do you understand or are you deaf?

SHE

You better watch yourself."

HE makes the exclamation point behind SHE's back.

SHE

Go away.

Short pause. HE bangs on the door. SFX

Go away.

SHE

HE pounds on the door. SFX. He keeps
pounding and kicking at the “door.”

Please go away.

SHE
(Almost under her breath.)

HE stops pounding, but doesn’t “go away.”

I’m just not going to say anything.

HE

Promise!

SHE
(Screaming)

Aah! Heaven!

(She indicates the pounding has stopped.)

I’m still heeere!

HE
(Taunting, sing-song.)

That was three words. I knew you couldn’t keep your promise.

SHE

I didn’t promise.

HE

Three more.

SHE

Give it up!

HE

Three again!

SHE

The. Perfect. Bitch.

HE

Ok.

SHE

(She approaches his side, and holds up 1, 2, 3 fingers – one with each word.)

Give ... it ... up!

HE

(He does the same.)

Oh ... fuck ... off.

SHE

Well, at least you're consistent, I have to say.

(She asks this calmly. In fact, it's as much to herself as a question to him.)

So, who is she? Or is it ... they?

A WOMAN'S VOICE

Why do you stay with her?

HE

It's not that simple.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Don't make it so complicated.

HE

I'm not making anything complicated. Look, let's not talk about her.

He starts toward the boxes.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Sure. Fine with me.

HE

(He stops, turns back DS. This is in reference to She, since He got some pushback from the Woman, He takes some time with this.)

Her eyes are blue. Really, really blue. I've never seen such blue eyes. Just ... very blue.

Blackout effect (whatever can be managed with the VP screen and still see Canae's hands. VP is acting wonky again.)

SHE

Oh, no ... oh, no. Not again.

He starts moving boxes again in a subtly threatening way. They slide across the floor, and create the effect of closing off her space.

The boxes. What is in all those boxes, anyway? ...
(under her breath)

Oh, I hate this. So ... pointless.

Aren't you tired of hauling this around? This ... this ... garbage?

Loud sound of something heavy dropping, such as a pallet of boxes. It startles her and she calls out. It echos.

Turn the lights back up! Seriously!

Boxes move closer.

Just turn them up! I'm not going to sucker for this, now turn 'em on!

(Nothing happens. Softer)

C'mon. ... Please. I want to see ... just where he is. That's all..

WOMAN'S VOICE

Well, at least he's not going to kill you. I think we've established that.

SHE

Oh, crap. That monster feeling ... My stomach is flipping over again.

A WOMAN'S VOICE

C'mon, you're all right.

SHE

Blech, I dunno.

A WOMAN'S VOICE

You're not going to puke, are you? Geez, I hate that!

SHE

You! *You* hate that?

(She lets out a sigh.)

Naw, I'm not pukin'. You're safe, lady voice. Whoever you are.

Lights dim up a little on him. He gets a book, sits down, opens it, looks over at her to see if she is doing the same, but she knows this part by heart.

HE

Once upon a time, there was a woman who lived with a man-

SHE

And his monster.

HE

The man told himself ... The woman told herself ... things. She liked the lies she told herself about the man. He really did love her.

SHE

Beneath his con games, threats, derision. He had promised to rescue her from herself in the end.

HE

So she stayed in the house he made for her in the middle of the forest and he would visit her to exhibit his own singular expressions of affection. He starved her so that she stayed grateful for-

SHE

Hey, hey, hey! Just wait ... Wait a minute! She did not stay in some damn house in the woods! She did not! She didn't!

HE

Grateful for anything he tossed her.

SHE

Whaaat!

HE

Once upon a time there was an old woman in a house in the middle of the forest-

SHE

Hey! Hold it!

HE

Once upon a time-

SHE

I said hold it! First of all, she's not old.

HE

(Insistent)

This old woman stayed in the house *he* made for her in the middle of the forest ... That's what the poem says.

SHE

Really? What if she didn't?

HE

But, she did. What about the forest, that house in the forest?

SHE

Stop speaking in metaphors. You're not that creative. This house may not offer her any protection ... In fact, it's isolating.

HE

That's not what the house represents.

SHE

Oh?

HE

No. And the forest ...

SHE

A bunch of trees.

HE

Oh, it represents something. They searched for her.

SHE

But she had disappeared.

HE

She'll come back. She'll go back to it ... to *his* house ... in the forest.

SHE

Oh, really? But will she go back forever? And what if she doesn't? Then what will he do?

TELEPHONE VOICE

(With a particularly taunting tone. It is meant for him, not her, and he knows it and reacts.)

Welcome to Hell.

Light change.

SHE

What IS this place?

HE

You should know; you live here.

SHE

Why would anybody stay here? And what's with the boxes! Cripes! I mean, seriously!

HE

Leave 'em alone. Do you know what's in them?

SHE

Do you? Oh, for cripes sake! I don't care what's in the boxes!

(She starts shoving the boxes upstage, closer to the wings –
out of her way, in any case.)

Just get them outa here! I can't BREATHE!

(Her phone rings and rings, but she doesn't answer.)

Shut up, lady!

(She hears the Telephone Voice anyway.)

TELEPHONE VOICE

Welcome to Hell. Please choose-

SHE

(She stops moving boxes and finds her phone. To the
telephone voice.)

No, I don't think so. I'm not choosing. And this time you're going to stop, because I just
don't believe you anymore.

HE

You'll miss the point-

SHE

There IS no point!

HE, and THE TELEPHONE VOICE

Welcome to Hell. Listen carefully as some options have changed. I said listen to me. Are
you listening? No, you never listen. You're pathetic. Why can't you listen?

SHE

I am listening. I listen all the time. That's the trouble. I listen to you. When I listen to
you, I feel like ... But you're not listening, *are* you? Nobody listens, because I'm not
really there. Not really. Because I'm ... well, disappearing. (slower) And *that's* hell. ...
Well, I'm *not* going to disappear, or acquiesce, or try to understand, even. It would be
easier to give in. It would be. Maybe I only have this minute, but by God, it's *my* minute,
and I'm going to have it! I'll find a way to get through it, and then the next minute, and
the next ... and the next, and then the rest of the day.

HE

If you have a day.

SHE

I have it! I have this minute! And maybe even tomorrow! Maybe I do! This minute, the next. Just get started and then keep going.

HE

I don't think He is ever going to understand.

SHE

I don't either. So I'll just ... go on.

TELEPHONE VOICE

(Translator reappears, but it's obvious she's been doing something else – filing her nails, texting on her phone, something – and misses her cue.)

Welcome to Hell. Please choose from the following options. For sales, press 1; for high-pressure sales, press 2; for accounts payable, press 3; to speak to an old enemy, press 4.

She puts her phone on speaker and paces.

To speak to the person who fired you from your last job, press 5; to speak to any of your former lovers, press 6. To selectively but permanently erase the past from memory and start your life anew, please press 7.

She runs back to her phone.

Please enter the year you would like to start over from, then press star.

She enters four numbers then stops.

SHE

Wait, is this a star?

TELEPHONE VOICE

Are you still there? Please enter the year you would like to start over from, then press star.

SHE

I'm trying!

HE

Why bother.

She enters the phone numbers and then hesitantly pushes a fifth button.

TELEPHONE VOICE

This action has been cancelled. Main menu. To speak to the person who fired you from your last job, press 5; to speak to any of your former lovers, press 6.

SHE

Wait, where's option seven?

She pushes "7."

TELEPHONE VOICE

I'm sorry. Invalid entry.

SHE

Dammit!

TELEPHONE VOICE

Please hold for an operator. Your wait time is

(3 beats. They all stop.)

Forever!

SHE

Very funny.

TELEPHONE VOICE

To have us call you when the next representative is available, please press "9."

SHE pushes 9.

Thank you. We'll call you back at this number within (beat) 24 hours. (beat) Maybe.

HE

Good luck with that.

JUDGE'S VOICE

Please state your name for the court.

SHE

Oh, my god. This shit just comes out of nowhere! What?

HE

Just give him your name. I think you can manage that.

SHE

Um ... uh ...

JUDGE'S VOICE
(A nasty cough to clear his throat)

This is a court of law. Shape up, hon.

SHE

How'd I get here again?

HE

Oh, my god.

JUDGE'S VOICE

Mmm ... heard that one before.

SHE

No, really, Your Honor.

JUDGE'S VOICE

Yeah, really. Your name?

SHE

Uh ...

HE

“Clueless?”

JUDGE'S VOICE

Never mind.

SHE

Your Honor?

JUDGE'S VOICE

Hold on, sweetie.

(Muttering to himself. Sound of shuffling papers.)

Oh. It's you again. Miss Perfect. Thought you'd disappeared.

SHE

I thought I had, too. Uh, that's not my name.

JUDGE'S VOICE

Doesn't matter anyway.

SHE

I really didn't want to be here, again, Your Honor.

HE

That's hilarious.

JUDGE'S VOICE

Nobody does.

SHE

I was working on getting out of here.

HE

She'll never leave.

JUDGE'S VOICE

Yup. And we have a schedule to follow. What are you doing here?

SHE

That's what I want to ask you! I guess I needed to go somewhere – do something – to, uh, resolve this, and I just ended up here.

JUDGE'S VOICE

That's a little vague, but let's run with it.

(Shuffles more papers.)

Go ahead.

SHE

Go ahead?

JUDGE'S VOICE

Well, you're here. Say something!

SHE

Am I the plaintiff or defendant?

JUDGE'S VOICE

What do you think you are?

SHE

Oh. Aha. I think I get it now.

HE

Doubt it.

JUDGE'S VOICE

(Loud and disgusting smoker's cough.)

So, how are your arms?

SHE

Better. I think they're better.

JUDGE'S VOICE

What is it you want?

(Brief pause. Given the opportunity at last, she's having trouble articulating it.)

Well?

SHE

The impossible.

JUDGE'S VOICE

Now, that's your problem.

SHE

My problem?

JUDGE'S VOICE

That's right.

SHE

But, I thought ...

JUDGE'S VOICE

What did you think?

SHE

This is a court of law, and ...

JUDGE'S VOICE

Justice will be done, right?

SHE

Yes, I suppose.

JUDGE'S VOICE

For whom?

HE

Exactly.

SHE

Maybe you could help, and you and I could make him understand. He'll feel bad for all of this! I just know it! I'm sure of it! He does really love me ... in his way. He'll understand some day. By that time, I won't care.

JUDGE'S VOICE

When he feels bad?

SHE

Yeah. I want him to feel bad! No, really feel it! Feel really, really bad, like I have.

JUDGE'S VOICE

Is that why you're here?

SHE

I don't know. Maybe. But it's not what you think.

JUDGE'S VOICE

(Warbling it with an unstifled yawn.)

It never is.

SHE

We'll cry and we'll make up. And-

HE laughs.

JUDGE'S VOICE

Court's adjourned until one o'clock.

SHE

But I was in the middle of making a point.

JUDGE'S VOICE

You were in the middle of making a point-LESS. Ha!

He laughs harder.

SHE

You know, I don't believe what I said, either.

(Her phone rings.)

And, uh, making him feel like me seems like a lot of work.

JUDGE'S VOICE

It's amazing how smart people get in front of the bench.

Her phone rings.

SHE

I'm sorry, I've been waiting for this call. I really need to answer this.

JUDGE'S VOICE

Really?

SHE

(Her phone rings again.)

If I don't do this now...

JUDGE'S VOICE

Fine. I could really use a quick bite. And a nap.

SHE

(She answers.)

Hello? Yes?

TELEPHONE VOICE

Hi, this is your credit card company. No need to be alarmed, but we've noticed some recent activity on your Discover card. To continue, please enter your 16-digit card number, along with the 3-digit PIN and your social security...

She hangs up. Her phone immediately rings again. She puts it up to her ear, but doesn't say anything.

TELEPHONE VOICE

Aren't you going to say "hello?"

SHE

No.

She ends the call.

HE

She's always been like this.

It rings again. With little interest, she "answers," but doesn't say anything.

A TELEPHONE VOICE

You are receiving a call from

(The voice changes.)

...Doug...

(Voice changes back)

Press one to accept.

SHE presses one.

A TELEPHONE VOICE (DOUG)

Hello, this is Doug. Welcome to Hell, how may I be of service?

SHE

Finally! Thank you for calling back.

A TELEPHONE VOICE (DOUG)

How may I be of service?

SHE

Yes, well ... I was on hold and a "*permanently erasing my past from memory and starting my life anew*" option came up.

A TELEPHONE VOICE (DOUG)

Option seven?

SHE

Option seven, yes!

A TELEPHONE VOICE (DOUG)

Yeah, we no longer offer option seven.

SHE

What? Why?

A TELEPHONE VOICE (DOUG)

We no longer offer option seven.

SHE

Why not?

A TELEPHONE VOICE (DOUG)

I'm sorry, but you had your chance.

SHE

I tried but I didn't know what you meant by the star!

A TELEPHONE VOICE (DOUG)

I'm sorry, I have no idea what you're talking about. May I put you on hold, please?

But the call is disconnected. Phone click.

A TELEPHONE VOICE

Please choose from the following options, but listen carefully as some options have changed. To speak to the person next to you, press 1.

SHE

That's still stupid.

A TELEPHONE VOICE

To speak to a professional who really can help you, spell or say the person's name.

SHE

(She covers the phone and says partly to herself and partly to the audience.)

Damn ... who ... Ralph. Ralph! I'll call Ralph! He's such a good guy. Best therapist ever. He'll try something.

(Into the phone, very distinctly)

Ralph Andreson. (An-DRAY-son)

A TELEPHONE VOICE

Did you say ... Ralph Anderson?

SHE

No, Ralph Andreson.

A TELEPHONE VOICE

Did you say ... Ralph Dreeson?

SHE

No. Ralph Andreson.

A TELEPHONE VOICE

Did you say ... Ralph Fadrayson?

SHE

Oh, for GOD'S SAKE!

A TELEPHONE VOICE

There is no one in our directory by *that* name! Press three for our directory and spell the last name of the person you are trying to reach.

SHE

Fine!

(Her finger is poised over the keypad.)

Wait a minute ... ok, the keypad ... Oh, hell. Let's see ... A ... N ... where's N! Five is J-K-L, ok six. ... D, D, D ...

(Her phone rings and it startles her.)

Holy crap!

(She answers it immediately.)

RALPH (James/Shawn)

Hi, did you call me? I heard you called?

SHE

Ralph! I was trying to, yes.

RALPH

After our meeting last time, when He called Lakeview?

SHE

Ok ...

RALPH

They called me back and he has an appointment – well, it's for both of you – and you'll see a supervisor from Prairie City.

SHE

Really, why?

RALPH

A supervisor.

SHE

I asked why.

Ralph's call is cut off and the
Psychologist/supervisor appears. SHE is in
the following scene but is ignored.

HE

See what I mean, Ms. psychologist-lady-I've-only-just-met? We're just two trains running on different tracks,

SHE

He's always said that. Get's him off the hook! It's like this: I want a husband and he wants his mother. Oh, and access to alcohol at all times.

PSYCHOLOGIST'S VOICE (Erin/Canae)

So, how many drinks would you say you have a day?

HE

Oh, maybe a couple-

SHE

Dozen.

PSYCHOLOGIST'S VOICE

You're quite social, aren't you. I think you just like bars.

HE

Nothin' wrong with that.

SHE

Really? What *would* you call someone who "just likes bars?" A lot.

PSYCHOLOGIST'S VOICE

I don't think treatment is warranted here.

HE

(to himself)

Fuckin' waste of time.

SHE

But your colleague here at the Center ... yesterday she said ... she recommended a program. She thinks--

PSYCHOLOGIST'S VOICE

We'll never crack this nut and we have to keep our success ratio up there, you know. You understand.

HE

Yup, I sure do.

SHE

This is how you decide the future of someone's life?

PSYCHOLOGIST'S VOICE

You should address this and work together. But ... we're not going to participate.

SHE

That's it?

HE

You know, we're just two trains running on different tracks.

SHE

That's an excuse, you idiots!

(Reference his comment, but to the Psychologist's Voice.)

Don't you get it!

(Pause. No response)

Hellooo?

PSYCHOLOGIST'S VOICE

Goodbye.

SHE

Jesus, Mary and Joseph. (beat) I'm done.

SHE is now active in the scene. Now it's the
Psychologist's Voice that's ignored.

HE

What would make you stay?

SHE

I won't stay.

PSYCHOLOGIST'S VOICE

Goodbye.

HE

I just won't drink around you.

SHE

You won't drink at all.

PSYCHOLOGIST'S VOICE

Goodbye.

SHE

(To the Psychologist's Voice)

Will you stop? You're not helping!

HE

Well, what if-

SHE

No. There is no more "what if."

HE

Who's being unreasonable now?

SHE

I am. I am going to be unreasonable. Do you know how unreasonable I'm going to be?
I'm going to be so unreasonable-

(Her telephone rings and keeps ringing. She ignores it.)

That I'm going to decide what I'm going to do regardless of what you, or that damn
telephone voice, or any other voice says. I do not have to be reasonable anymore! It is
time for me to be **un**reasonable! Really fucking unreasonable! Like so unreasonable that I
don't even listen to you anymore. You don't have a thing to say that I need to hear! Not
anymore! That's how unreasonable I'm going to be! You, the telephone lady voice, Dr.

Morrison, the old-fart judge and all the other voices in my head, or coming through the walls or wherever **in Hell** they are! I am going to be so unreasonable that I will not be listening to any of them – ever again! Because **THEY ARE ALL NUTS!** (beat) **AND SO ARE YOU!**

(She finally answers the phone.)

SHUT! UP!

The ringing stops and the voice is quiet for a moment. They all hold in place.

TELEPHONE VOICE

To get out of Hell, press any key ...

She shuts the phone off and throws the phone down.

HE

Here we go again. I know. I know what's going on.

SHE

No, I don't think you do. I really don't.

HE

You don't understand.

SHE

Probably not, but I have tried.

HE

No, really, you are fundamentally clueless.

SHE

Stop.

HE

That's one.

SHE

Stop.

HE

Two.

SHE

Stop, stop, stop!

HE

Three, four, five.

SHE

Stop, stop, stop ...

(She continues to say stop, very fast and he continues to try to keep up counting, until she stops saying, "stop.")

HE

I lost track.

SHE

Of a lot of things.

HE

Those others ... all the others ...

SHE

Oh, I know. But I don't want to hear about 'em.

HE

But they ...

SHE

No! I'm not interested.

HE

(Tosses this off)

Why don't you just stay? You're going to be alone.

SHE

Maybe.

HE

I won't.

SHE

I'm sure you won't. You couldn't handle it.

HE

Are you kidding? I'll be fine. I'm the master of my domain.

SHE

(She gestures around.)

This? This is what you're master of?

I got everything I need right here. HE

There's just you. SHE

For now. HE

Aha. ... I need to get out of here. SHE

She starts to leave. He panics.

Don't go! HE

Why not? SHE

Because ... you'll be scared. HE

You're right. SHE

You'll make mistakes. HE

I probably will. SHE

You won't know how to live without me. HE

Easier than figuring out how to live *with* you. I can't fix you. SHE

Fix me! Fix me? Ha! ***You're*** broken! HE

I know. That's why I have to go. SHE

Remember when I got you that deer rifle? HE

SHE

What?

HE

What don't you get? Ri-fle. We had to change the safety so it was left-handed.

SHE

What are you getting at?

HE

You were a good shot. Kind of freaked us out when it ... went off ... that one opening morning of deer season. R'member that? Long time ago. You were loading it by the truck before we walked to our stands. It just went off. I think you got a doe that year, right?

(She doesn't answer. She's baffled by the turn in the conversation.)

But you didn't shoot the fawn that was with it. And it cried, you said.

SHE

You told me I should have shot it. That it will never make it through the winter.

HE

Oh, so you do remember. I always wondered about that morning.

SHE

And what were you wondering?

HE

Well ... (a little laugh). A gun goes off in the dark. Makes you jumpy.

SHE

I told you that gun needed to be adjusted. The safety wasn't ... right.

HE

No, it wasn't, was it? If you have another room on the other side of the wall, you can go there. If you have only one room,

SHE

You can stay in it, or leave.

(pause)

There is a door.

HE

If there is someone in your bed.

Or if you're in bed alone. SHE

You can stay in it. HE

Or get up. SHE

You can stay in it. HE

Or leave.
There is a door. SHE

She puts on a judge's robe.

All rise. A BOOMING VOICE, played live by James/Shawn

Waits for response from the audience, but there probably isn't one.

I said, All RISE! And that means all!
(Maybe nobody stands.)
Aw, screw it, let's siddown.

SHE may pick up a gavel and pound it a good one. It's louder and reverberates more than it possibly could.

Approach the bench, asshole. SHE

Your honor, I don't think ... HE
(He smirks.)

No, you don't, and that's your problem. I said, 'come here' and I called you an asshole, because this is a court of law and we deal with facts. You weren't expecting this, were you? Well, neither was I, but the difference is that I'm ready and you're not. SHE

Ready? For what? HE

SHE

For what's next. For a door to open, let's say?

He picks up a yellow legal pad full of notes and turns over pages, as if looking for something, in a hurry. Could be an iPad. Meanwhile, projections of doors dim up – extremely slowly.

SHE

You won't need that.

HE

What's the claim against me?

SHE

You're going to have about as much to go on as I've had. Fair, no?

(She waits, but there is no response, so she continues.)

So, how do you plead?

HE

Uh, Your ... Honor, I have always respected and observed appropriate decorum in the courtroom, and-

SHE

In a courtroom, maybe. Everywhere else, not so much. But if you want a gold star for the chart on the refrigerator, we can arrange that. Did you have a point?

HE

My point is certainly clear to everyone here ...

SHE

Oh, really? Except me, and I'm the one who counts.

HE

In the interest of fairness-

SHE

Ha! You're hilarious. Fairness. Life isn't fair, Hell isn't either. I'm no longer sure just where I am or where I'll end up, but I'm already getting used to this robe. In fact, it looks different around here.

(She explores her surroundings a bit, and stops to take note of the place she will exit momentarily.)

Well. ... well, well. (beat) Now, let's get on with it!

HE
(His phone rings.)

May I?

(HE puts it up to his ear, but doesn't respond.)

Lights fade on her. She removes the robe during the following Telephone Voice speech.

TELEPHONE VOICE

Welcome to Hell. Please choose from the following options, but listen carefully as some options have changed. To speak to a customer service representative, press 2. To return to the main menu, press 3. To get out of Hell, press 4.

(He looks her direction and presses 4.)

Invalid entry. To get out of Hell, press 4.

(He presses 4.)

Invalid entry. Goodbye.

HE

Lemme tell ya a good one. A guy with dyslexia walks into a bra.

(He chuckles through this joke.)

A bra. Dyslexia. That's funny. ... A guy walks into a bar with a slab of asphalt under his arm and says, "A beer please, and one for the road." Gotta be drunk for that one.

By this time the projected doors are very clear. SHE looks at them, walks to one of them, and turns back to him.

SHE

There is a door!

HE

You know ... That doesn't sound like, "I want you to come, too."

SHE

There is a door in the wall of the room! ... You can stay in it, or leave!

SHE

(She is looking at the door she's chosen.)

There *is* a door!

HE

This is what *you* know.

(Slower, and fighting back some honest emotion.)

So, this amnesiac walks into a bar,

(Fighting to finish the joke ... Huge struggle)

and he asks the bartender, see ... So, he asks the bartender

(Significant pause.)

“Do I ... uh ... Do I come here often?”

SHE exits.
Fade to Black.

- END OF PLAY -