

CAST OF CHARACTERS

5 women, 3 men; (optional “ensemble”)

HEIDI PARKER.....a woman in her mid to late twenties.

BIRD HARRY.....a woman in her fifties or sixties.

KARLA.....a woman in her thirties.

**AMWAY MISSIONARY #1/ BUS DRIVER/
VALET**.....a man

**AMWAY MISSIONARY #2/ METER MAID/
POSSUM/ INFECTED WOMAN**...a woman.

WOMAN IN BLUE.....a woman.

MICK/ HIGHWAY PATROL.....a man.

SUIT/ SHAGGY MAN.....a man.

**Two Young Men, Club Dancers, John,
Surgeons, Nurses, Street People**...the ensemble (*optional)

SETTING

One set which serves as various locales, including A MEDICAL OFFICE, AN OFFICE LOUNGE, HEIDI'S BEDROOM, A NIGHT CLUB, A PARKING LOT, THE INTERIOR OF A BUS, A CITY STREET, A BUS STOP, and A PARK. All locales need only be suggested with a minimum of set pieces, including Heidi's car. It is imperative that transitions are swift and that the play flows continuously. Light and shadow should dictate each environment, as well as the movement between scenes.

*The ensemble, if used, should be woven freely in and around the scenes as the environment, as witnesses, and as catalysts to the action of the play.

PLACE AND TIME

A commuter city during the longest night of the year.

...He alone knows too that I have
begged Him to take away the light
of my understanding, leaving only
enough for me to keep His law, for
anything else is excessive in a woman,
according to some people. And others
say it is even harmful.

Juana Ines De La Cruz
Coherent Light, 1691

Darkness- palpable,
black and painted-
has come upon me.
O Dawn, banish it like a debt.

"Night"
The Rig Veda

One.

Music: Liz Phair Exile in Guyville "Canary".

(WOMAN IN BLUE ENTERS and strolls across the playing area; she hands that day's NEWSPAPER to a patron, smiles, then strolls off. Music fades as HEIDI ENTERS; she stops when she realizes she is being watched by the audience.)

HEIDI

On my way home last night, I saw a woman in a blue dress standing on the corner. I saw trouble.

(She gestures to the PATRON with the NEWSPAPER.)

Is that today's *Times*? My roommate used ours to wipe up after her Pit Bull. Could I...?

(She takes the PAPER and glances through it.)

Thanks. At that time of night, on that corner... You're asking for trouble. I just wanted to see if... Nothing. Not a word.

(pause)

I like to drive late at night. I love the still of measured darkness, it makes you honest. Night reveals this city. People invisible by day are magnified after dark. The lit faces on a passing bus. The cleaning woman going through trash cans in a high-rise. Revelers, rebels, and the righteous, the night finds them. You can see into people's houses when they think no one is looking. You can't do that during daylight-- they see you and behave. You have to be invisible to see. I watch from my car. The woman hanging up the phone just as a man walks into her bedroom. The conversation that makes her cry, then laugh so quickly. The lamp he turns on when they make love.

(pause)

I watch them in their kitchens, stealing a piece of midnight pie, dropping a red glass of wine--

(A GLASS SHATTERS, spoiling her reverie. TWO YOUNG MEN appear in silhouette; they shove one another playfully, toss a softball back and forth; one of them points to HEIDI; they watch her silently.)

I love this city at night, but you don't go certain places. Three a.m., that woman is standing on the corner. In a blue dress. Like a beacon. Like somebody's victim. She should have known.

(The YOUNG MEN laugh; SHE turns to see THEM RUN OFF. The cacophony of the city fills the stage: traffic, radio, boom box, ambulance, dog barking, shouting, singing. LIGHTS CUT OUT on HEIDI.)

Two.

(A flash of bright light, then a black stage.
A pause, then another flash of light.)

BIRD'S VOICE

You see, it's like a, a, a...well, it's like a hollow star, pulsating...or a donut, yes! A radioactive donut, up there in the corner...

(A bright flash of bright light illuminates BIRD HARRY, seated in a chair, eyes wide open. HEIDI, in a lab jacket, jots notes on a clipboard and rotates Bird's seat with each flash.)

BIRD

I can only see it when I look...there, like that. Oh, oh, there it is! Do you see anything? Do you see?

HEIDI

Hold, please.

BIRD

It's gone now. Nothing there. What does it mean, doctor?

HEIDI

I'm not a doctor.

BIRD

Sometimes it doesn't bother me at all, most of the time, but then it shows up. I don't know what it MEANS, nurse.

HEIDI

I'm not a nurse.

BIRD

What ARE you?

HEIDI

I'm an ophthalmological photographer.

BIRD

I'm Bird.

HEIDI

Look straight forward please. Hold.

(A BRIGHT FLASH OF LIGHT FROM THE CAMERA.)

Relax.

BIRD

Do you SEE anything?

HEIDI

I see two eyes.

BIRD

Two eyes. That's a good sign, I suppose. Anything else would give cause to worry.

HEIDI

Look left. Hold please.

(BRIGHT FLASH OF LIGHT.)

Relax.

BIRD

That's the trick, isn't it? No need to worry, give yourself cancer while you try to figure out what's wrong with your eyes. It's not like those curled moving spots you see in your eyes when you stare at a distant wall or into your own darkness. I've had those too.

HEIDI

Muscae volitantes. They're very common. And normal.

BIRD

Normal?

HEIDI

Look up.

BIRD

That's a positive attitude.

HEIDI

Focus upwards, please. Hold.

(BRIGHT FLASH OF LIGHT.)

BIRD

It must be fascinating work, staring into people's eyes.

HEIDI

It's a great way to meet men.

BIRD

Is it?

HEIDI

No.

BIRD

But it's not throats or ears or nostrils or rectums. It's eyes, windows to the soul. Oh yes, they tell every story. Eyes record lives and tuck them into hearts.

HEIDI

I think it's too much information for a first date. Men get very quiet in this chair. We're strangers by the time I'm through.

(BRIGHT FLASH OF LIGHT.)

BIRD

Am I going blind?

HEIDI

I doubt it. Focus right, please.

BIRD

Yes, you're right. No need to dwell. It'll agitate ulcers, inflame shingles, cause piercing gas and the accompanying discomfort that everyone else suffers through you. What is your name?

HEIDI

Heidi.

BIRD

Heidi. That's a name full of caring. I'm a lonely woman, Heidi. Like you.

HEIDI

I'm not lonely, I'm alone. There's a difference.

BIRD

Only to you.

HEIDI

Hold please.

(BRIGHT FLASH OF LIGHT.)

BIRD

Groping in the dark, all by myself. A cane maybe, to tap-tap-tap my way around the mean blackness. Blind people are prey, you know.

HEIDI

You're not blind, Mrs. Harry.

BIRD

It's Bird. When exactly am I going to lose my sight?

HEIDI

You haven't even been diagnosed yet.

BIRD

I could get a dog.

HEIDI

I'm sure you're going to be fine. Now let me show you to the waiting--

BIRD

It's understandable, your haste, your discomfort. I wouldn't want to stand around and watch someone go helpless either. Too much responsibility for strangers. Who needs that? You watch them drink, miss their mouth, wear their coffee like a bleeding stain on their blouse, and think "that's not MY wound." But it hurts, it cuts you anyway.

HEIDI

I think you're over-reacting, Mrs. Harry.

BIRD

It's BIRD.

HEIDI

There's no need--

BIRD

Did you SEE anything in there? Are you just not saying? You are my only witness, can't you tell me?

HEIDI

I just take the pictures, I don't interpret them.

(She leads Bird by the arm.)

BIRD

Cold hands! What is it they say, something about a heart?

KARLA(offstage)
HEIDI, HEIDI, HEIDI-HO!

BIRD
A woman alone has to protect herself. I've got to get ready.
(BIRD EXITS quickly.)

HEIDI
Mrs. Harry, Bird, please--

Three.

(KARLA and HEIDI convene in the medical office
LOUNGE. A table, two chairs, a box of donuts, coffee.
KARLA hovers over the donuts.)

KARLA
And the WORST part of it was, okay, the guy doesn't even know how to put on a SPARE. I mean, PLEASE. So I end up doing it and OF COURSE ruining my Via Spigas while he stands there trying to get his cellular to work, whatanasshole. It was a disaster. THEN he expects me to follow him home in my CAR, in case his spare blows which means I get about fifteen minutes of sleep before I have to show up here because he lives in some balkanized suburb of this godforsaken city and then I'm supposed to find my way back home by what- The STARS? Dating sucks, just kill me already. You look beat. Heavy action at the library last night? Kidding.
(She holds a BEAR CLAW out to HEIDI.)
Please eat this and let me live through you.

HEIDI
I'm not hungry.

KARLA
That's why you're skinny and I'm Karla.
(She runs her finger over it and sucks
the icing off, savoring every bit.)
So, I'm seeing him again tonight. I know, I know, I'll donate my brain to science in the morning. Unlike you, Heidi, some of us have issues. You'll be married with two kids and I'll still be trying to figure out what to do with my hair.

HEIDI
Who said anything about that? I'm not ready for a family.

KARLA
See, you're so good at not needing anyone! You're like "Friday night, hum-de-dum, I think I'll do that last load of laundry and watch 'Survivor' reruns, no big deal ". I mean home alone and you're not even panicked. How do you psyche yourself up?

HEIDI

Low impact aerobics.

KARLA

And you work out too, I hate you. I mean you're so self contained, you don't waste your time with distractions like relationships. That's so great.

(SHE licks her fingers clean.)

I mean, people live their lives waiting for someone to rescue them, like if that someone doesn't come in time they will die, especially women. It makes me want to scream sometimes,

absolutely a shrillfest. God this tastes like garbage, absolute garbage, but what else are we supposed to drink because I NEED CAFFEINE TO BREATHE, okay?

HEIDI

Let me get that for you.

KARLA

It's a myth, that's what, a contentious, sprawling myth, this idea that we "need" someone for "completion". What does that mean, anyway?

(She examines a mammoth jelly donut.)

Jellies always look like road kill to me.

HEIDI

What did you say?

KARLA

Are you going to eat any of these?

HEIDI

Did you see it? Out front-?

KARLA

Oh my god it was a mess.

HEIDI

It crossed right in front of my car.

KARLA

YOU did that?

HEIDI

On my way in this morning. It just stared me down. So I hit it.

KARLA

Why didn't you stop?

(pause)

HEIDI

I don't know.

KARLA

What's a possum doing around here anyhow? Can't they even figure that out, use their senses

KARLA(cont.)

or something? God they're hideous, especially subdivided and hugging the pavement like that. Is your Saturn okay?

HEIDI

Last night I saw something, Karla. This woman was standing on a corner at three a.m.--

(WOMAN IN BLUE appears at the edge of the stage.)

KARLA

Where were you?

(beat)

HEIDI

I was driving.

KARLA

At three in the morning?

(beat)

So, you were "driving"...

HEIDI

And this woman, in this blue dress waved at me and smiled, like...she knew me. She started to walk over to my car.

(The TWO YOUNG MEN appear in shadows at different points of the stage; they call across to one another, whistle, etc.)

And these men-- boys really-- showed up out of nowhere.

FIRST YOUTH

HEY!

SECOND YOUTH

HEY HEY HEY!

FIRST YOUTH

What you think it is, fool? Hey, you feeling me?

SECOND YOUTH

Take a walk man, come on.

HEIDI

They were fooling around, talking.

FIRST YOUTH

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

HEIDI

They started to yell.

SECOND YOUTH

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?

FIRST YOUTH

We got some skin privilege coming!

(WOMAN IN BLUE EXITS swiftly; the TWO YOUTHS
RUN after her, laughing.)

KARLA

And..?

HEIDI

And I drove away.

KARLA

And the point here is..?

HEIDI

I didn't stop.

KARLA

For what? Why in this world would you want to stop? Was she a friend?

HEIDI

I didn't even know her. She was just waving down chaos in that blue dress.

KARLA

Hello, obviously she was looking for "employment". Company, at any rate.

HEIDI

That corner, that time of night.

KARLA

What are you going to say, "Hey, don't do that"? This is America, it's a free country and it's her body.

HEIDI

Yes but. No yes.

KARLA

There's enough to freak out about just taking care of yourself without getting shot, stabbed or overcharged. Life's a bitch, you better be one.

(She starts in on another donut.)

Slap me if I start licking the lid. Why were you following her in the first place?

HEIDI

I wasn't following her. I was just driving. I like to drive.

KARLA

You're funny, Heidi.

(She pulls herself away from the donuts.)

So this guy, Mr. Spare Tire? He's meeting me at a club tonight. It's supposed to be littered with perfect bodies and big hair. I bet the women look gorgeous, too. Anyhow, you never know who you might meet out there so I want you to come with me.

HEIDI

Tonight?

KARLA

It will give us a chance to get to know each other. I bet you're a different person when you leave here. I know I am.

HEIDI

I'm tired when I leave here.

KARLA

It'll be fun! It's one of those clubs that has a different name every night. Like last Friday it was Club Fuck, but tonight it's-- What is it? I don't know, something that's not a verb. It'll have ferns and mirrors, you'll love it.

HEIDI

Actually, I have plans.

KARLA

Laundry keeps, Heidi.

HEIDI

I'm moving tonight. Packing everything I own in the world in my car

and hauling it off to my new place.

KARLA (tempting)

It'll have ferns...

HEIDI

I've never lived on my own. I went from the nest to the dorms to roommate central: rotting food in the fridge, toothpaste cemented to the sink, dirty undies shoved into the sofa. I'm ready to downsize.

KARLA

Tonight?

HEIDI

This really incredible place-- perfect for one-- opened up a few blocks away. The landlord's uptight, but I convinced her I'm the most responsible person on the planet.

KARLA

Don't you ever take time off to be stupid?

HEIDI

I don't want to lose this place, Karla.

KARLA

What if this is the night your savior appears?

HEIDI

My what-?

KARLA

Just come.

HEIDI

I'm busy, Karla.

KARLA

I'll see you there. Heidi. Visualize having a good time.

Music: Voo Doo Daddie's "Minnie the Moocher"
(KARLA EXITS. HEIDI glances at the jelly donut, quickly tosses it and EXITS.)

Four.

(HEIDI is PACKING. She picks up a CAMERA or CELL PHONE, considers a picture of the room, then packs it.)

HEIDI

Your last night in a place you kind of want to celebrate, you know? My roommates are like 'that's so great, you're going to be so close, we're so going to see you'. They so lie. Getting together in this city is it's own career.

(She comes across a DRESS she doesn't recognize as hers...a BLUE DRESS.)

I wasn't looking for trouble. I was just driving by. We don't even know if anything-- I mean I didn't hear her scream, I didn't hear anything. Yes, all my doors are locked. Of course I called the police...when I got home. For what that's worth. Do they ever respond to those calls?

HEIDI(cont.)

They never tell you. I checked the newspaper this morning. I listened to the radio, I watched L.A. Today. I didn't hear a thing, nobody said anything about her. Standing on that corner, in a blue dress, like a signpost. What did she think? In that neighborhood you've got to assume you are the meal, act accordingly. Fight back, save yourself. Do something!

(She quickly shoves the DRESS into a box.)

This is a big deal, right? I'm starting a new life in my own place. I should do something great. I should have fun.

(She grabs her purse and jacket and opens the door.
The sound of SHATTERING GLASS fills the stage.
The LIGHTS CRASH OUT.

Music: Austin Backalley Blue. Sweetman "Grandma".)

Five.

(Club Nuke: Dark, desolate, trendy. No ferns. KARLA comes on, drink and cigarette in hand; she's into it. HEIDI trails behind, sipping her drink; she couldn't be more out of it. *Dancers move in and out of the scene, always on the periphery.*)

KARLA(shouting over music)

WE'RE LUCKY WE GOT A TABLE.

(HEIDI simply looks at her)

IT GETS REAL CROWDED LATER ON. PACKED.

HEIDI
Terrific.

KARLA
WHAT?

HEIDI
THIS ISN'T WHAT I EXPECTED.

KARLA
THIS IS WILD, ISN'T IT?

HEIDI
THIS IS A CAVE, KARLA.

(KARLA glances around the club.)

KARLA
HE'S NOT HERE YET. LET'S GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER.

(THEY sit, sipping their drinks, gazing around the room, not making eye contact.)

KARLA
I almost left without you. Then I thought, well, maybe she didn't hear me. Anyway, I'll pay for the window. That was a pretty big rock, wasn't it?

HEIDI
Yes it was.

KARLA
Thanks for driving. I SWEAR I put enough gas in this morning. Must have inhaled fumes or something.

(Surveying the scene.)
What do you think happened to that guy?

HEIDI
Maybe he changed his mind.

KARLA
Jerk. I could beep him. I know, too desperate. I have his private office number.

HEIDI
Karla--

KARLA

He's only an hour-and-a-half late, give the guy a break. Plus, who knows, you could meet someone who'll change everything. There's one...

(She indicates a Server, *perhaps unseen*.)

Cute. REALLY cute.

(beat)

Oh. It's a waitress. Kind of hard to tell, the shaved head, you know? I guess you see a nice butt--

HEIDI

Looks deceive.

KARLA

I don't know if he knows how to get here. Some of those streets are closed now, gangs and addicts and the homeless fucked it up for the rest of us. God, I hope he doesn't get shot. And I really hope he knows how to dance.

(Calling to the *unseen* server.)

Waiter-? Waitress-? Whatever--

(*Music: techno, electro house, whatever; brain crushing loud*)

HEIDI

This music is giving me a concussion.

KARLA

You're having a good time, aren't you? This should be, you know, memorable and everything.

HEIDI

Sure, Karla. This is great.

(She raises her drink.)

To new adventures. To night!

(MICK materializes and stands near the TWO WOMEN, a drink in his hand. HE smiles self-consciously, then addresses HEIDI.)

MICK

Hey. Uh, excuse me. I was wondering...well, I'd ask you to dance, but I don't know how, so will you marry me?

(The two WOMEN stare at him.)

Just trying to be friendly.

KARLA
Hi, I'm Karla!

MICK
Is that an invitation?

HEIDI
Pardon me?

MICK
Might I join you, perhaps purchase you a drink?

KARLA
Sure!

HEIDI
Karla...

(The MUSIC SHIFTS in tone; the rhythm slows, the
beat eases, but retains a certain eerie quality.
Music: Yma Sumac Mambo "Taki Rari")

MICK
What's your name?

HEIDI
I'm...going.
(She rises.)

MICK
What's your hurry?

KARLA
She's just stretching her legs. She has big veins.

HEIDI
I don't have big veins.

MICK
I find big veins on a woman very attractive. Means more blood is running through them.
That's vital.

HEIDI
I do not have big veins.

MICK

Don't you like men?

HEIDI

I don't like you.

KARLA

Ha, ha, ha! Heidi, Heidi. She's a real joker.

MICK

You're feisty. I like that.

HEIDI

I'm so glad, I'm doing this for you.

(HEIDI gathers her purse.)

Are you coming, Karla?

MICK

Yeah, this place is dead, we should go somewhere else.

HEIDI

My car is full.

KARLA

Heidi's moving tonight.

MICK

Yeah? Where to?

HEIDI

Out of reach.

(KARLA puts a hand on Heidi's shoulder,
shoving her firmly back into her chair.)

KARLA

To new adventures.

(The MUSIC CUTS OUT. A DANCER IN A COAT and
her PARTNER dance in the shadows, gracefully out
of place, moving to some silent music of their own.
Heidi watches them throughout the scene,
strangely mesmerized.)

MICK

You two roommates?

KARLA

We work for an ophthalmologist. An eye doctor? I'm in the lab. She's a photographic technician.

MICK

A photographer?

HEIDI

Not what you're thinking. Fluorescein angiograms. Never mind.

MICK

Hey, I'm fascinated.

KARLA(hopeful)

Maybe diabetic retinopathy runs in your family.

MICK

Maybe. So, you're waiting for someone.

HEIDI

How do you know?

MICK

I'm an observer by nature. Just like you.

HEIDI

I take pictures of people's eyes. That's all.

MICK

I didn't mean your trade. I like your style.

HEIDI

It's meant as a repellent.

MICK

You're a funny girl.

HEIDI

I'm not a "girl". When I was twelve I was a girl.

KARLA

Hope those drinks get here!

MICK

Hey man, I'm not playing you here.

KARLA

Anyone want to dance?

HEIDI

There's no music, Karla.

KARLA

That must be my head pounding.

Music: Austin Backalley Blue Sweetman, "Jest Smoochin"

(The DANCER moves into the light, pressing up against her PARTNER as she lets her coat fall to the floor; She is wearing a revealing BLUE DRESS, identical to the dress Heidi held up earlier...HEIDI rises when she sees this WOMAN.)

HEIDI

That's her...that's the woman I saw.

MICK

Who?

(HEIDI approaches the WOMAN IN BLUE.)

HEIDI

Excuse me? Can I talk to--

Music: Beastie Boys

(A group of DANCERS moves in and sweeps HEIDI up into the hypnotic energy of the loud, pulsing MUSIC, like a storm gathering wind.)

HEIDI

Can you stop-- I just want to know what happened-- Excuse me! I'm trying to talk to--

(The DANCERS squeeze into a tight, writhing mass, immobilizing HEIDI, trapping her in the center. She tries to work her way between bodies, searching.)

KARLA

You go, girl!

HEIDI

I'm not dancing!

(The movement reaches a fever pitch; then, as suddenly as they gathered, the DANCERS disperse, leaving HEIDI alone center stage. She looks for the WOMAN IN BLUE, who is of course, gone. HEIDI quickly gathers her belongings.)

HEIDI

I have to find someone.

KARLA(fierce whisper)

We can't go home yet- It's early.

HEIDI

I'll see you Monday.

(To Mick)

Really nice meeting you.

MICK

Hey pretty, you better watch it. Uppity women like you end up wearing moo moos and clipping articles on cooking for one. I'm just telling you.

KARLA

Lighten up, Heidi! Have some fun.

HEIDI

Being tense serves me.

(HEIDI EXITS quickly.)

KARLA

She's a little tightly strung, but she's nice, once you get to know her. I guess. I really don't know her. You want to dance?

(The MUSIC RISES and LIGHTS FALL.)

Six.

(HEIDI wanders across an empty parking lot; she carries an enormous KEYCHAIN with a whistle, a flashlight, and a can of pepperspray dangling from it. She turns towards the sound of FOOTSTEPS.)

HEIDI

Is someone there? Hello?

(No answer; to the audience:)

Where is the moon when you need it?

(A VALET RUNS ON.)

VALET

Got your ticket, miss?

HEIDI

My--? I parked my car myself.

VALET(snorting)

Good luck.

(HE RUNS OFF.)

HEIDI

Thank you for being so helpful!

(SOMEONE SHOUTS, LAUGHS, then CRIES; shadowy
FIGURES MOVE around, never quite revealed.)

Karla? Is that you?

SOMEONE

Lots of stars out. You know what that means.

HEIDI

I have pepper spray!

(SHE grabs the SPRAYCAN and assumes her
idea of a defense pose; she's watched way
too many reruns of "Police Woman".)

SOMEONE

Thought so.

HEIDI

I took a seminar!

SOMEONE

What if I don't care?

HEIDI

I'll call security!

SOMEONE

Good luck. Time they get here, I could silence you in a million ways.

(SOMEONE emerges from the shadows; it is MICK.)

I'm just talking. No moon. That's why the stars are out.

HEIDI

You-!

MICK

Me, yeah, okay? Look, inside? That wasn't how it was supposed to go.

HEIDI

What do you want?

MICK

I'm just talking to you, that's all.

HEIDI

I have a knife.

MICK

So do I.

HEIDI

I have a gun-- and it's loaded.

MICK

Shit man, I've got a TANK, what are we gonna do now?
What are you protecting yourself from, the whole world? You're one
suspicious woman.

HEIDI

I'm prepared.

MICK

You move like you're separate from everything, like you're in your own
private circle. Me too, I'm always staying inside this circle, see? But tonight I wanted to
step out.

(He executes a bad waltz with an imagined partner.)

HEIDI

What are you doing?

MICK

I get better.

HEIDI

I'm sure you're very-- Look-- Never mind.

MICK

I mind everything. I am mindFULL.

(HE indicates an expanding brain.)

I take things in. I watch and I listen. I use my senses. Don't need a college degree for that.

HEIDI

I'll consider that all the way home.

MICK

Where's home? You don't have to say, it's kind of an esoteric question. I bet you live alone. Yeah, you do. You can make up someone if you want, but you're alone. I can tell.

HEIDI

Where's Karla?

MICK

Relax, man. She's still inside, waiting for someone and talking to anyone. Yeah, she's getting good and drunk so all the separations blend together and then she'll slip under somebody else's skin and live with them for an hour or a night. Sleep in their circle. 'Course, then there's morning. Everyone back in their own ring. You can't fool loneliness, it wakes up before you do. Then it wakes you up.

HEIDI

You know... I'm not at all comfortable pursuing this line of conversation with a complete stranger.

MICK

I'm only partially strange. Mostly we're alike. Two peas in a parking lot. I can tell.

HEIDI

That quickly. You must be very perceptive.

(HE once again indicates an expanding brain.)

Oh, right.

MICK

See, this is the public Heidi. The one who knows good from bad and how to steer clear of riff-raff. This girl's so sharp when she falls down she cuts herself. But I've glimpsed the other one. She doesn't know it all, doesn't have quick answers and fast exits. What she does know, she's keeping to herself. Like a secret, she's waiting to be told. I want to know her.

(pause)

You're listening to me, see? That's nice. It's hard to find that at a place like this. People either talk or run. But you stayed.

HEIDI

I'm only here--

MICK

Because of me. Right?

Don't be nervous, we're getting to know each other, that's all. That's what parked cars are for, to lean against while you get to know someone. Cig?

HEIDI

I don't smoke.

MICK

Neither do I.

(HE holds one out; SHE takes it. THEY light up and lean against a "car".)

HEIDI

I didn't want to come here tonight.

MICK

What else would you be doing?

HEIDI

Thinking.

MICK

You don't get out much, do you? I like you, Heidi.

HEIDI

How do you know my name?

(HE again indicates his mindfulness.)

HEIDI

What's yours?

MICK

Mick.

HEIDI

Mick? Well, Mick.

(pause)

Did you see that woman dancing in the cage? Of course you did. The things she did with her body, like some beautiful insect moving above the rest of us. Her face was so still, so removed...unattached to that perfect, writhing body. Then she'd squat down and start sucking her drink up through a straw. In the midst of this throng of humanity flop-sweating at her feet, as if she wasn't aware she was onstage. Like if she stopped moving she was invisible.

(There is a brief SCUFFLING in the shadows.)

Who's there?

MICK

It's nobody, forget about it.

HEIDI

I'm looking for someone.

MICK

You too?

HEIDI

I better go--

MICK

I'd ask you to dance...

HEIDI

You don't know how.

MICK

Marry me?

HEIDI

Not if you can't dance.

(HE holds out his arms; THEY begin, very slowly, to dance.)

Music: Austin Backalley Blue, Sweetman "Backalley Blue"

After a moment, HEIDI soundlessly steps away from him; she LIGHTS A CIGARETTE and walks among the audience, her eyes on Mick, as he continues to dance alone.)

And then I say and then he says and then I say... And I laugh, ha, ha, ha. And I dance the night away. Far away. And he takes me by my arm...he takes me by my shoulders...and he is looking into my eyes. He says 'I have your secrets'. He's holding me too tight...Let go. He says 'You gave them to me when I was inside of you, now I'm in your head.' And I say I would never do that, I would never let you in like that. And I laugh. I don't remember knowing him, but he says 'I have your recipes. I have your formulas. I have

your ATM number. I know the coding of your DNA, I know your genetic makeup, I know the composition of your infrastructure.'

(She steps back in with him and they resume their dance.)

He says he's going to remake me. He's going to restructure me. He's going to tear me down and put me back together, rearrange my thinking, and my face--

(She pulls away from him.)

I have to go home.

MICK

Was it something I said?

HEIDI

Eventually.

MICK

I gotta tell you something, Heidi. I may not be the most textbook perfect specimen of a man, but I'm suitable for framing, okay? Just look at that.

(HE tenses his body, flexing an arm muscle.)

What do you think?

HEIDI

What do I think-?

MICK

Don't get blonde on me. Touch this muscle.

(She pauses.)

HEIDI

Very impressive.

MICK

You think my muscles separate me from my head? My head MADE that muscle, see? My head TOLD that muscle to be, and then my head TOLD it to keep pumping, so that muscle would get bigger and stronger and more useful than the average muscle. THAT IS SMART. To live in this craptown with bigger, stronger muscles. More of me to survive. Smart muscles, smart head.

MICK(cont.)

I've got an IQ about things, Heidi. See, every inch of you is calling out for someone's comfort.

HEIDI

I didn't ask you to follow me-- You tracked me down.

(She turns to go.)

MICK

People like you already made up their minds. You deserve to be lonely.

HEIDI

I am not lonely!

(She crosses the stage, on a futile search.)

MICK

Lose your car?

HEIDI

I know exactly where it is.

MICK

You think you're tough.

HEIDI

You think you're entitled.

MICK

You know, Heidi-ho, one of these days some guy who's a lot less than me is gonna take that pretty mouth of yours and wrap it around his big fist. Then you'll wish for company, any company. Even me.

(HE is gone. Pause; a noise from the direction he exited.)

HEIDI

What do you want-?

(Four small BRIGHT LIGHTS-- like mini headlights-- approach; TWO AMWAY MISSIONARIES identically dressed in navy business suits and carrying matching briefcases, are revealed. They wear LIGHTS on their head, like miners. Their manner is friendly and brisk.)

MISSIONARY #1

Hello!

MISSIONARY #2

How are you?

HEIDI

Don't come any closer! I'll use this I mean it!

MISSIONARY #1

Nice night.

MISSIONARY #2

The stars are comforting, wouldn't you agree?

(The couple smile warmly.)

MISSIONARY #2

Perhaps we could interest you in something nice for yourself or someone you love. These are some of our favorites.

(She offers HEIDI an attractive bag.)

HEIDI

I don't need any soap.

MISSIONARY #1

We're not just soap anymore!

MISSIONARY#2

Amen!

MISSIONARY #1

Have you noticed that there seems to be a plan behind all things?

HEIDI

What "plan"?

MISSIONARY #1

Things aren't always what they seem. The city unfolds upon itself, streets run into other streets, overheads hide them, alleyways cross and criss-cross, so that you will not know which is which.

MISSIONARY #2

Leave plenty of time in your doings and be prepared to go another way, to do something not planned if that is where the streets lead you.

(She hands HEIDI a pamphlet.)

MISSIONARY #1

Deceptions are everywhere.

MISSIONARY #2

Don't believe everything you hear.

MISSIONARY #1

Don't believe what you see in the newspaper.

MISSIONARY #2

Or on television.

MISSIONARY #1

Or on the cereal box.

MISSIONARY #2

Or in front of you.

MISSIONARY #1 & MISSIONARY #2

Believe us.

(THEY smile beatifically.)

HEIDI(reading)

"There is a woman who stands alone at the intersection of love and fear. She is of no age. Her body is her history and on it lies the grime of sin so thick it cannot be removed or hidden. You have seen her, I am certain."

MISSIONARY #2

Do you ever get the subconscious yet unnerving sensation that civilization is a big no-no just driving around in circles?

HEIDI

What exactly are you selling?

MISSIONARY #1

You have to ask yourself 'What are you lacking?'

MISSIONARY #2

We let our bodies go the way of our minds. We tend to forget our own strange and illusory experience.

HEIDI

I don't need your product. Or your preaching. Excuse me.

MISSIONARY #1

There's no getting around it. Our bodies are pierced with mortality. Our legs are fear and our arms are time. We are constantly threatened, in every instant.

MISSIONARY #2

Morning, noon, and night.

MISSIONARY #1

Especially night. The One Infinite Power is a blind archer, impartial as the atmosphere.

MISSIONARY #1 & MISSIONARY #2

AMEN.

HEIDI

I am not interested in your propaganda! You are fear-mongers all done up like soap-people and I'm not buying it.

(She throws the pamphlet to the ground.
MISSIONARY #1 picks it up, carefully dusting it off.)

MISSIONARY #1

Everything around us points in our direction, shaking us and pleading 'Who are you? Where do you stand?' But we cannot recognize. We are blind. We burrow deep into ourselves.

MISSIONARY #2

The walls close in. Divinity is imprisoned. Apathy is flamed. Indifference is death.

HEIDI

What COWARDS, preying on a woman alone in a place like this. Shame on you! Perhaps in the future you could pick wiser sale tactics!

MISSIONARY #1

Watch out.

MISSIONARY #2

Be alarmed.

MISSIONARY#1 & #2

BEGIN!

Music: Liz Phair Exhile in Guyville "Johnny Sunshine".
(The MISSIONARIES snap out their LIGHTS and EXIT into the shadows. The night denizens begin to emerge, filtering across the stage as HEIDI EXITS.)

Seven.

(Music fades as HEIDI "drives" on.)

HEIDI

Am I neon, am I flytape? Don't you find it disturbing? You walk past someone on the street and think 'is this the moment he's going to snap? Plunge a knife into my chest? Or will he start

HEIDI

talking gibberish and vomit on me.' You feel violated just going out to mail a letter, like 'is my life worth this correspondence?'

(Music: Phillip Glass Two Pages)

This is one of those in between sections of the city that defy the Brother's Thomas. No signs. They've been swiped by kids in speeding cars who toss entire streets out the window onto lawns and freeways.

WOMAN IN BLUE (in the audience)
YOU CRAZY BITCH, WHY DON'T YOU WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING?

HEIDI
What are you-?

(The WOMAN IN BLUE steps from the crowd directly into the glare of the HEADLIGHTS.)

WOMAN IN BLUE
You trying to kill someone?

HEIDI
WATCH OUT!

(A SQUEAL OF BRAKES, a FLASH OF LIGHT...then blackness. A moment, then BIRD WANDERS ON, carrying a LANTERN or TORCH and holding onto one end of a very long LEASH; she wears a BRIGHT SCARF around her neck.)

BIRD
Oh dear. Are you hurt?

(HEIDI is lying on the ground, near a FURRY LUMP to which BIRD'S LEASH is attached.)

HEIDI
Who did I hit?

BIRD
You hit a roadblock.

HEIDI
Thank god. I thought I...

BIRD
My dog was doing his business on the roadblock. You hit my dog.

HEIDI
I hit your dog?!

BIRD

Full frontal.

HEIDI

I didn't see a dog. Is he...

(BIRD tugs on the LEASH.)

BIRD

Oh yes.

HEIDI

I'm sorry.

BIRD

Just got him, too. Poor old Thor. Or Rex. I hadn't settled on his name. I thought he looked more like a Thor.

HEIDI

I didn't see him at all.

BIRD

He looks more like a Rex, now, for some reason. Poor Rex.

HEIDI

First a possum, now a dog...

BIRD

He was so sweet. And house trained, so they tell me. I think they always tell you that, just to get rid of them. Then you get them home and find out different. You've just got to love them, that's all. They get scared and they're going to chew, it's their nature. They urinate on your furniture, eat you out of house and home. Either way, you've just got to love them.

(She removes her scarf and covers the dead dog.)

HEIDI

Do I know you?

BIRD

People always think that. I'm just friendly that way.

HEIDI

My name is Heidi.

BIRD

That's a name full of caring.

HEIDI

That's what you said!

BIRD

I'm usually right that way.

HEIDI

I looked into your eyes--

BIRD

You're the technical one! You warned me of my impending blindness.
So nice of you to come see me.

HEIDI

I never said you were going blind--

BIRD

Bird. I got a second opinion. My doctor suspects it's a brain tumor.

HEIDI

A tumor? Is he sure?

BIRD

Dr. York is very knowledgeable. I took Thor in the minute I got him and
Dr. York gave him a complete physical. A clean bill of health. I told him about my
radioactive donuts. He was very concerned.

HEIDI

Bird, you can't get a diagnosis by your vet--

BIRD

Until the lawsuit he was a distinguished neurosurgeon!

(She looks up into the heavens.)

I will miss stars. Before my eyes go, I'd like to see another climb back into the sky.

HEIDI

You mean a comet.

BIRD

But not a comet. Last night I saw a blazing light climb up the night sky!
I saw a star fall upwards. One brave star.

HEIDI

Stars don't ascend, Bird. They shoot or fall. They combust into tiny
burning fragments and disappear into big black holes.

BIRD

Perhaps it's a warning, a new normal.

HEIDI

Or vitreous gel inside the eye, rubbing against the retina.

BIRD

Galileo thought comets were optical illusions. But one can be grateful for illusions. It's much nicer to see in dreams, don't you think?

(VALET RUNS ONSTAGE, eagerly approaching Heidi.)

VALET

Valet service tonight, miss?

HEIDI

What-?

VALET

I can park that for you.

HEIDI

I'm not staying.

VALET

No problem. Have a nice night!

(HE RUNS OFF. BIRD goes over to the dog pile.)

BIRD

Poor thing, for the short time I had him he was my constant companion. Now he's pavement.

HEIDI

It's late-- my watch is gone... The band must have broken when I hit--

BIRD

Rex.

HEIDI

I'm really sorry about that. Look, everything I own is in this car. I need to get to my new place. Do you want a lift somewhere?

BIRD

I'll stay with my dog.

(HEIDI gets into her "car"; she tries the ignition. No luck.)

BIRD

You can stay with me tonight, I have room...now.

HEIDI

What I really need to do is call triple "A". Can I use your phone?

BIRD

That would be a trick. All I get is static and radio waves. The lines are old, my late husband laid them. Maybe that's him trying to get through.

(A man in a SUIT appears, carrying a CELL PHONE and an expensive BRIEFCASE.)

HEIDI

A savior! Excuse me sir, can I please use your cellphone? I'm moving. I need to let my landlord know--

SUIT

I'm waiting for a call. Three-way conference, Very Big Deal. Can't miss this.

HEIDI

I'll only take a minute.

SUIT

Do you know what a minute is? It's my career. They're not going to WAIT for me. I'm a Dixie cup, I'm dispensable, they'll toss me. Movers and shakers, that's who'll inherit the earth, and the meek shall inherit the tip. They're gonna keep moving and shaking and they'll roll right over me and they'll find the next one and I'll be chasing after them, yeah, going after the Big Banana, climbing over the worker bees, stepping on the nameless faces, grabbing onto Suit-tails, pulling my hair out and wagging my tail like, like, like it's a dog-eat-dog world out there and they have the keys to the doghouse and I'm looking for a place to call home!

BIRD

Maybe you should rest.

SUIT

I can't rest, I can't sleep, I can't miss this...I can't...

(He shivers, clutches his briefcase like a doll to his chest.)

BIRD

Poor thing.

HEIDI(whispering)

I think he's dangerous.

BIRD

He's frightened.

HEIDI

A scared animal will turn on you.

(SUIT begins to rock back and forth.)

SUIT

Talk to me. I don't want to be disconnected. I need to hear voices attached to vocal cords and bloodstreams and meaning. I don't want to be on hold. I want to be held. I WANT TO BE HELD. They don't care about me-- not like you. You're so human. That's beautiful. That's so goddamned beautiful!

(He falls to the ground and weeps.)

I need...I need...

HEIDI

A phone call, we know.

SUIT

...contact. Could you hold me?

HEIDI

What--?

SUIT

Just for a minute. You can use my phone. Don't make me beg. I always end up begging or borrowing or stealing. Don't make me do that this time. And don't lie to me.

(He whimpers; he leans up against HER like a puppy dog; she awkwardly pats him on the head.)

SUIT

That's nice. You start to hope for an earthquake or a riot, any disaster, just to get out and meet your neighbors.

HEIDI(false cheer)

Hello. I'm new to the area.

(HE stands and extends a hand, revived.)

SUIT

Howdy, neighbor. I live just down the street. If you need anything-- anything at all-- just ask.

HEIDI

Actually my car won't start. I was wondering if--

(HE strides over to the "car".)

SUIT

What happened here?

HEIDI

I accidentally hit--

BIRD

Thor.

(SUIT flings open the door.)

SUIT

Your door isn't locked. Always lock your door.

HEIDI

Normally I do--

SUIT

Bet it's the battery.

HEIDI

That battery is--

SUIT

You can't be too careful. I'll tell you, after what happened to my car.

BIRD

What happened?

SUIT

I'll tell you.

(He opens his brief case and takes out a pair of JUMPER CABLES; throughout this section he attaches one end of the cables to Heidi's car battery.)

They destroyed it. Smashed the front windshield, they smashed the back windshield. They lit a bonfire with my registration and made confetti of Central and Northern

California. They abused my sunscreen and bled ketchup on my Blaupunkt. Nothing is sacred.

HEIDI

You can't live in this city without a car, it's like your heart.

BIRD

Why do people do such cruel things?

SUIT(conspiratorially)

Because I didn't RESCUE them. They are attempting to hold ME responsible for their tragedy. I am not WELFARE. I am not the WORLD BANK. This entire neighborhood is being invaded by planet-stricken squatters! Three different fellows, never seen 'em before, approached me today asking for change. "Change?" I said. "Why don't you WORK for a change?" These foreigners misunderstand the concept of a free market. They take it literally.

(He grasps the unattached cable clips in his hands.)

Let's try 'er.

HEIDI

Aren't you going to attach those to--

SUIT

Go ahead, start 'er up.

(HEIDI reluctantly gets into the car.)

Ohhh yes. They had that secretive, contemptuous, third-world look. Those people are pouring through this city like some thick disease, talking in malignant tongues, smearing their hostility across the petrified face of this bedridden community.

(He licks his hands, then grasps the cables and brings the points together; SPARKS SHOOT OUT, smoking and sputtering wildly.)

HEIDI

Are you all right?

(HE grimaces as the voltage shoots through his body.)

SUIT

It's THEM we should be worried about. They're trying to mix it all up, breed it into US. Their VIOLENCE, their CULTURE. It makes me SICK! It makes me want to hunt down those putrid animals and hang them upside down until their yellow eyes bleed and their pus-bloated stomachs fall up into their un-American throats!

(The "car" starts: *this could be done musically with improvised vocals*. SUIT collapses. HEIDI gets out of the car; she and BIRD rush over to the smoking body.)

BIRD

Oh my. Do you think he needs--

HEIDI

Don't touch him, he's charged.

BIRD

What now?

HEIDI

We should call the police.

SUIT(weakly, from the ground)

The police..? You think they're going to protect and serve us? No media blitz here, no medal of valor here...

BIRD

At least he's alive...or running.

SUIT

Nooooo, we're on our own...we have to protect ourselves...we have to get organized.

(He rises, slowly.)

HEIDI

Get in the car, Bird.

BIRD

But he's not--

HEIDI

Just do that for me, all right?

(BIRD goes over to the running "car" and gets inside. SUIT works his way to a standing position.)

Look, sir, you need to chill. I mean, it's none of my business--

SUIT

It's all my business. I captain the neighborhood watch.

HEIDI

Bird and I need to get going. So thank you for the...jump...

SUIT

I need your cooperation.

HEIDI

I don't want to get involved.

SUIT

We share a zip code, we share asphalt, you ARE involved. Let me ask you: What's your name?

HEIDI

Heidi Parker.

(HE speaks into a hidden MICROPHONE.)

SUIT

Subject identified.

(During the following he makes his way to her car.)

You see Heidi, those people didn't KNOW me, it was easy for them to shatter me. Only someone unfamiliar with your face and your life and how hard you work and your debts and your dog could do something so uncaring, so violent...

HEIDI

I think you should report them immediately.

SUIT

Yes. Let me ask you: What is your business here?

HEIDI

I told you, I'm moving.

(HE opens the car door and goes through her boxes.)

SUIT

TV., stereo, VCR... Camera. These are your "things"? Where were you tonight?

HEIDI

I was at a club. What are you doing?

SUIT

A "club"?

HEIDI

Music, dancing, second-hand smoke.

SUIT

A lady of the evening. Only trouble's out this time of night.

HEIDI

Get away from my car!

SUIT

Everyone else is barricaded inside, shades down, curtains drawn, alarms activated.
Everyone

SUIT(cont.)

else is safe at home, but you, you are OUT. Anyone out this time of night is asking for it. Or looking for it. Which are you?

(He gets in the car.)

HEIDI

Believe me, I am attempting to be someone who is safe at home, but you will not let me get there. Now get out of my car!

SUIT

Covert answers indicate guilt.

HEIDI

You have a disturbed mind!

SUIT

I live in the world. It's a disturbing place. It concerns me that you aren't more disturbed. That disturbs me.

HEIDI

Come on Bird, let's go find a pay phone.

(SUIT reaches into his BRIEFCASE and grabs
a HAMMER, a SPADE, a SCREWDRIVER; he
holds them up, defiant.)

Get out of the car, Bird-- he's a crazy!

SUIT

Arbitrary destruction, capricious violence, random carelessness. Is that how you do it?

(He gouges the headrest viciously, growling; BIRD ducks under the seat. He begins to chew on the upholstery.)

BIRD

Oh my!

HEIDI

Bird, look out!

(HE holds up a map and begins to sing as
he wildly jabs the screwdriver through it.)

What are you doing?!

SUIT

"I have often walked down these streets before...
(The VALET RUNS ON.)

VALET

Valet service, miss?

HEIDI

Are you blind? Look what he's doing!

VALET

You're being helped already. Okay.

(VALET RUNS OFF.)

HEIDI

No, he's not-- no, don't go!

SUIT

But the pavement always stayed beneath my feet before.."
(HE rips the map into many tiny pieces and
tosses them in the air like confetti.)

HEIDI

Stop it, you're breaking everything!

SUIT

"All at once am I...several stories high..."
(He pounds on the boxes, crushing the contents.)

HEIDI

I have pepper spray! STOP THAT OR I'LL SHOOT!

SUIT

"Knowing I'm on the street where you live!"

(SHE takes expert aim, misdirects the nozzle,
and SPRAYS HERSELF fully in the face with
the burning substance. She covers her eyes,
staggering backwards.)

HEIDI

My eyes-- it's burning-- someone help me!

(SUIT steps away from the car, brushing
his hands off, straightening his suit.)

SUIT

Maybe you'll pick your targets more wisely in the future "Heidi Parker".
You had better get far away from this neighborhood. And stay gone.

HEIDI

I'm going to call the cops and you are going to be so arrested! You can't do this to people
you LUNATIC!

SUIT

"Nokia". Foreign.

(HE picks up a CAMERA that has fallen
from a box and puts it in his briefcase.)

Not a bad take.

HEIDI

You should be WATCHED!

SUIT

You should see yourself. Pathetic.

(He turns to go, then pauses.)

It's a dog-eat-dog world out there. Always lock your doors!