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By Degrees

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BY DEGREES

By

Audrey Minutolo

B.A. University of Maine, 1999

A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

(in English)

The Graduate School

The University of Maine

December, 2001

Advisory Committee:

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BY DEGREES

By Audrey Minutolo

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Richard Brucher

An Abstract of the Thesis Presented
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
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By Degrees, a play in three acts that depicts a woman who slowly learns her life lessons over three time periods: the 1850s, the 1950s, and the 1610s. Although each era presents very different expectations for women, the character's journey toward independence occurs despite the limitations of the time period. The character becomes more conscious of her choices; each time she becomes slightly more aware of her power to choose, her limitations become freedoms, responsibilities become pleasure, discontent becomes fulfillment. As she progresses through the different time periods, she changes from Susannah to Suzanne to Lady Susan, and experiences different kinds of relationships, both romantic and maternal, to eventually discover that she has found serenity in love, in motherhood, and especially in herself. She learns of her own capabilities "by degrees"; in each act she becomes increasingly cognizant of her choices; consequently, in her last lifetime, she chooses what is most appropriate for herself and becomes more content with her surroundings and circumstances.

In structure and style, each of the three acts of the play works toward increasing enlightenment. Drawing from literature of the 19th century, Act I weaves together both sentimentalism and naturalism. Act I chronicles the life of a commonplace housewife of the 1850s who is controlled by her environment. Susannah must sustain her family on a

barren island many miles offshore while her husband keeps the lighthouse; her inner anguish over seeking “sustenance”, both physical and emotional, culminates in desperation and an attempt to exercise her free will. Her environment and her family manage to thwart her feeble attempts at trying to provide herself with a solution for her yearnings.

Melodramatic in style, Act I presents us with our heroine at the bottom of the spiral, a place from where she cannot yet see her way out.¹

Susannah is propelled into Act II as Suzanne, a young black student at Ohio State University. To parallel her new surroundings of slightly fewer limitations than Susannah had, the melodrama of Act I leads into modern drama of Act II. Act II’s structure specifically mirrors Adrienne Kennedy’s play *The Ohio State Murders*, with the present Suzanne Alexander narrating her experiences of the past. The structure works as a transition phase for our heroine: the inaction of Susannah in Act I moves into the passive action of Act II. Suzanne of 1950, like Susannah, is still dangerously vulnerable and her decisions reflect this. The tension of Act II provides the drama required to force the protagonist to her next phase.

Act III differs stylistically from the first two acts. Where the first two acts reveal the protagonist as she is caught up in the drama of her own life, Act III unveils Lady Susan, a woman in Renaissance England who is resolute in the protection of herself and her daughters. The comedic style reflects a much lighter situation; Lady Susan’s emergence as an individual allows for a less conventional, less stringent plot line. Caryl Churchill’s plays *Top Girls* and *Cloud Nine* have inspired the structure and style of *By Degrees*; the product reflects character movement over three time periods and three dramatic styles: melodramatic, dramatic, and comedic, respectively.

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ACT I

Characters:

SUSANNAH BARTER A lighthouse keeper's wife

CLEMENT BARTER The lighthouse keeper

CHLOE BARTER, their daughter

MURRAY BRADDOCK, Chloe's fiancée

SETTING: 1850's lighthouse keeper's cottage on Mount Desert Rock off the coast of Maine. The cottage is adjacent to the lighthouse. The windows of the house show intermittent dark and light from the flashings of the lighthouse beacon. There is no pattern to the flashes as the beacon is being repaired and tested.

Furnishings within the house include two ladderback chairs, a rocker, a spinning wheel and stool, a loom, wooden farmhouse table with folding leaves, fireplace/hearth with iron kettle, mantel with some pewter, broom in corner, and a tall clock, audibly ticking.

We also hear a bell buoy in the background.

SCENE 1: SUSANNAH is rolling out dough on a pastry cloth on the table. She lifts her hands in a routine way so that, with each turn of the rolling pin, her wedding ring clicks on the rolling pin as she works. CHLOE is playing with a handmade "dolls" — merely buoys with uncarded wool for hair and some quilt cloth scraps for clothing.

CHLOE: I am terribly hungry, Mother. When might we have our supper?

SUSANNAH: I have it prepared. You can set the table, but we have to wait for your father. There's a storm coming and the beacon wasn't working this morning.

CHLOE: He'll fix it. He always does.

SUSANNAH: Mmm.

CHLOE: Besides, the bell buoy is working fine. I've heard it clanging all day.

SUSANNAH: Chloe, I'm tired. Just tend to your doll. Your father will tend to
the lighthouse.

CHLOE: Yes, Mama.

SUSANNAH completes the dough, lays it in the pie plate. Goes stage left to a door that leads to the "cellar". Comes up with apples in her apron.

SUSANNAH: *(Holds up an apple)* If I could grow a tree out here, these would be fresh. Guess these will have to do for now, and I'll just have to wait for another boat from the mainland.

CHLOE: When does the next boat come, Mama?

SUSANNAH: I don't know, Chloe. We'll just have to wait and see. *(Under her breath)*
Wait and see.

CHLOE watches her mother cutting apples in frustration, then turns her attention back to her dolls.

CHLOE: *(Speaking for one of her dolls)* There, there, my little darling. Come now. You're the cleverest girl I ever did meet. Why look! We could go to that fine store to buy provisions right now. *(Chloe gets up and goes to the pantry and comes out with a piece of hard cheese; she shows her dolls)* Look Emmeline — cheese.

SUSANNAH *stops to watch her daughter mastering the movements of the dolls. She goes to the hearth and begins to poke at the embers, trying to revive the fire. She looks back at Chloe nibbling on the cheese. She is overcome by emotion.*

CHLOE: Mama?

SUSANNAH: (*Working the pie.*) Yes, Chloe?

CHLOE: Would you have married Papa if you had known that when you set up housekeeping that you'd be out here on the island with me?

SUSANNAH: What could you possibly mean?

CHLOE: Would you have married Papa if you knew that it would be like this?

SUSANNAH: By the time I learned what island life was really like, Chloe, it was too late, and I didn't have any choice. (*Pause.*) But I suppose that's the way the world is. You set yourself on a path, then Providence takes over. Sometimes you don't know when your own choices stop and the Lord's begins.

CHLOE: (*Pause*) Don't you think it's God's will that you're here on the island?

SUSANNAH: If my life had gone the way God's will had intended, we would have been washed away in the past two storms.

CHLOE: God didn't want that, Mother. If He had, the house wouldn't be standing. Besides, the island is a good place. (*Holding her mother's hand, with hope*) I like watching you baking our pies and making cheese. I like dipping candles with you, and going out into the garden in the summer to pick the vegetables. I like to fill the basket until it's overflowing.

SUSANNAH: (*Smiling at her daughter*) I declare, you always do see the bright side of things, Chloe. I do like gathering our vegetables for a fine meal. It's just that when the weather's between seasons like it is today, I begin to wonder what God intends for us creatures here on earth. Your father, out there, practically blowin' away in that gale. Just makes my heart heavy, that's all.

CHLOE: Why, Mama? I try to help you.

SUSANNAH: (*Patting her daughter's hand and moving away*) You do, Chloe. You do.

I'm just a little discouraged. You and I in here, waiting our days away. Maybe I'm just weary from all this waiting.

CHLOE: What do you have to wait for, Mama?

SUSANNAH: (*Long pause*) You know, Chloe. I just don't know.

CHLOE: (*Pause.*) Well, then, let's not wait! (*Pulling SUSANNAH away from her work and beginning to dance.*) Come on, Mama! Dance with me.

SUSANNAH: No, Chloe, we really shouldn't. (*She looks around as if she is worried someone is watching.*)

CHLOE: Here. Like this. (*She lifts SUSANNAH's arms and twirls.*)

SUSANNAH *looks around again, shrugs her shoulders, and twirls a few times.*

SUSANNAH *and CHLOE laugh together.*

CHLOE: You see? Isn't this grand?

SUSANNAH: (*Laughing*) A splendid idea. (*Spirited.*) Oh, I feel as though I've let the demons out!

CLEMENT, *wearing a wet slicker, enters. SUSANNAH stops. At first he has a slight smile and shakes his head, but then his countenance changes to fulfill what is expected of him.*

CLEMENT: (*Firm, but not angry.*) Well, now, you'd better put them back in.

CHLOE: Come dance with us, Papa. Look at how I can twirl!

CLEMENT: Just a quick whirl, Chloe. (*Picking her up and twirling her around.*) But I've got work to do. There's plenty to do other than dance.

CHLOE: Twirl, Mama. Mama, let Papa twirl you.

CHLOE *leans over and pulls* SUSANNAH *close*. SUSANNAH *puts her arms around* CLEMENT *and* CHLOE, *but* CLEMENT *only pats* SUSANNAH *on the shoulder, then gently pushes her away*.

CLEMENT: Not now, not now. There won't be any more dancing this evening, Chloe.

(Giving CHLOE a kiss, then putting her down. To SUSANNAH:) I'll be in the lighthouse.

SUSANNAH: *(Trying to stay cheerful.)* It's suppertime. Let's eat, shall we?

CLEMENT: Mmm. Got a little more work to do. Could you wait just a bit? Keep it warm and I'll be in shortly.

SUSANNAH: But . . .

CLEMENT *exits*.

CHLOE *goes* STAGE RIGHT *and looks out the window to watch her father*.

SUSANNAH *watches* CHLOE. SUSANNAH *becomes overwhelmed, sits at the table, pulls out a handkerchief, and holds it against her eyes*.

SCENE II: *Ten years later*. SUSANNAH *sits in her rocker near the fire, fast asleep*. *Although a bit more tired, she looks essentially the same as the previous scene*. The clock shows 3:00 a.m. The prisms of the lighthouse cast shadows of equal periods of dark and light. The flame from the hearth glows brightly. CHLOE, now seventeen and a handsome young woman, enters stage left with a candle and rushes to the hearth where she puts on a

hot mitt, grasps the kettle off the iron hanger, and places it on the cooler stones in front of the hearth. She walks over to SUSANNAH.

CHLOE: Mother? (*She gently shakes SUSANNAH's shoulder*) Mother?

SUSANNAH: (*Wakes with a bit of a start and looks at CHLOE.*) Dearest Chloe! The look on your face . . . Did I frighten you?

CHLOE: What are you doing out here? It's the middle of the night. I thought it was midnight and you were still up, but it's so late.

SUSANNAH: I couldn't sleep. My thoughts kept me awake.

CHLOE: Were you making tea? You've boiled the kettle dry. The flame in the hearth gets so hot. Shall I make some for you now?

SUSANNAH: No, thank you. Not now. I couldn't settle down earlier.

CHLOE: When I have trouble sleeping, I try to find a comfortable place in my bed and just snuggle in. Then I can go to sleep.

SUSANNAH: Do you? Oh, that does sound lovely. I tried that for hours, but I just couldn't get comfortable.

CHLOE: Shall I read some poetry?

SUSANNAH: I think not tonight, dear. I do love poetry . . . (*She hesitates as if remembering something.*) What is that line from "Seaweed" that I like so much? Longfellow, isn't it?

CHLOE: The line about emotion? Yes . . . (*Remembering.*) "So when storms of wild emotion/ Strike the ocean/Of the poet's soul . . .".

SUSANNAH: Mmm. That's lovely, but I'm thinking of one line where the words are repeated over and over.

CHLOE: Drifting? "Ever drifting, drifting, drifting/On the shifting/Currents of the restless heart"?

SUSANNAH: Yes! That's exactly it. There's something so familiar about that line.

SUSANNAH *rises and goes to the table and opens a letter.*

CHLOE: Why did you come out here? It's cold. Why not stay warm and safe under the covers?

SUSANNAH: My feet were bitter cold. I thought that I might come warm them by the fire and write a letter to Aunt Louise. Apparently I did warm up — I slept soundly for a bit.

CHLOE: Did you finish your letter?

SUSANNAH: I did, but there's one word I couldn't remember. (SUSANNAH *rises, and the two go to the table where SUSANNAH opens the letter*) Your recitation reminded me: "periphery". (She *writes*) I want to make my words sound sweet and smooth. Like poetry.

CHLOE: Perhaps you and Papa . . .

SUSANNAH: There's so much to learn! (Stretching her arms out and gesturing toward herself) I would like to absorb the knowledge — to have it surround me and wash over me . . . like it is at sunrise sometimes in the summer — a gentle mist on my face.

CHLOE: Father would help you write whatever you might like to.

SUSANNAH: (Comes back to the moment.) Perhaps. (SUSANNAH *folds the letter, picks it up from the table, starts to seal it with her tongue, but stops*) Maybe I'll write more tomorrow. (To CHLOE.) I wonder where Aunt Louise is now. There's no keeping that sister of mine in one place. Do you think she might have traveled to New Hampshire again? (Voice *wavering*.) She has already been to Boston twice earlier in the year.

CHLOE: What's upsetting you, Mother?

SUSANNAH: I long to go places like that. I can only dream of the places Aunt Louise has been. (Looking at the front of the envelope) Even Brunswick looks so far away. Aunt Louise said she'll take a steamer to Europe next summer. (Looking

out the blackened window and sighing) It seems that the only way to get anywhere is by crossing the ocean. If I must, then I long to travel on a steamer.

CHLOE: Oh, Mother. You do have such beautiful dreams. But our lives have fishing boats and Coast Guard ships, not steamships.

SUSANNAH: It's as if that's what makes me discontent. But I know you're right. It's what your father says, too. *(Pause)* I'll send this off. *(Pause, back to a dreamy state)* I think of the many directions it will go to get to Aunt Louise. *(Looking directly at CHLOE, almost pleading)* Chloe, there is a part of me that sits up in the middle of the night, night after night, waiting to go somewhere. *(Pragmatic)* . . . I suppose this letter will have to be my substitute.

CHLOE: It's late, Mother, and we have much to do in the morning. Let us go to bed.

SUSANNAH: I'll just sit up for a few more minutes.

CHLOE: *(Concerned.)* I understand. I want you to be in bed within the hour, however. You need your rest.

SUSANNAH: Indeed, darling. You are so good to me.

CHLOE *kisses* SUSANNAH *on the cheek*. SUSANNAH *closes her eyes as she accepts the kiss*. *In her face, we see the tremendous pleasure and pain that she derives from her daughter's love.*

End of scene.

SCENE III: *The next day.*

CHLOE *stands at the hearth stirring the contents in the iron kettle*. SUSANNAH *enters stage right from the outdoors*.

SUSANNAH: Lord have mercy! That wind is blowing a gale again! I don't think I've seen a Nor'easter this early in the season. (SUSANNAH *places the basket on the table.*) That's the last of the string beans. That plot of sandy soil will be the death of me; I swear it! When was the last time that basket was full Chloe? It's been years since we've had a decent yield out of that garden. I can't get it to grow a blessed thing with all those stones in the soil. What am I saying? There is no soil; it's all stones, shells, and sand.

CHLOE: Papa said he'd go to the mainland to buy some provisions. How much do you think we'll need to supplement our own food supply?

SUSANNAH: That sounds like a promising sort of word, doesn't it. Supplement. What exactly does it mean?

CHLOE: To add to something.

SUSANNAH: You keep teaching me, Chloe. (*Brightly.*) Chloe, you supplement my days.

CHLOE: (*Gently laughing.*) Thank you, Mama. I'm glad I add to your life.

SUSANNAH: You don't just add to my life. You are my life. I don't know what I'd do if you weren't here.

CHLOE: But I'm not going to be here forever, Mama. Eventually Murray and I will be married and I'll go to live with him.

SUSANNAH: You've got to have a greater dream than living with Murray Braddock. Besides, you won't be living with Murray. You'll be living with the Braddock family.

CHLOE: We have time before we're married. And Mrs. Braddock will be a wonderful part of my life. She's a good woman, Mama. She was a teacher once; you would like her.

SUSANNAH: I'm sure I will. (*Hurt and melancholic*) Well, I do know that it just

won't be the same. (*Getting anxious*) We'll never get to see you; you know your father rarely goes anywhere. He won't go out to the mainland but for the wedding itself.

CHLOE: I know.

SUSANNAH: And what about trying to visit? One day, I may never make it back home.

The ocean is your father's life, but it's not mine, and I don't fancy getting on a boat every time I want to see you.

CHLOE: It will be fine, Mama. You have to remember that we'll all be there to welcome you.

SUSANNAH: We?

CHLOE: The Braddocks and I.

SUSANNAH: He's been courting you by rowing thirteen miles from the mainland for three months and you're already one of them? You're Chloe Barter and don't you forget it. (*Walking away*) A sailor. What kind of life can he give?

CHLOE: He's not a sailor. And I'm hopeful that he'll give me the same kind of life you've had with Papa. Full and rich with children and . . .

SUSANNAH: That's what frightens me most.

CHLOE: What does?

SUSANNAH: That he'll give you the same life I've had with your father.

CHLOE: What do you mean? Don't you want me to be happy, Mama?

SUSANNAH: (*Turns away and hesitates.*) It's like the garden, Chloe. I go and pull weeds and throw stones to clear a good bit of soil to hoe. I do the planting and tend the seedlings. But the weeds grow faster than the vegetables. And every time a storm comes, the soil washes away. I keep pulling the weeds and scraping up soil from the rocks, but every year there are more weeds and sand and shells and less soil. Little by little I see that it's come down to thistles and thorns growing out of the rocks.

CHLOE: (*Coming up behind her mother, placing her hands on her mother's shoulders, and laying her head on her mother's back*) Oh, Mama! That's so sad. Papa loves you. Really he does.

The two embrace. Door stage right opens and in walks CLEMENT. He places a wooden bucket on the table. SUSANNAH picks it up and re-places it on a stool near the door.

CLEMENT: Why'd you put it over there? I need to fill it with rags.

SUSANNAH: Because I didn't want it on the table where we're going to eat dinner.

(Walking back to the table and picking up the letter off the table) And you got my letter to Louise wet.

CLEMENT: Here. Hand me the bucket. I'll take it back out.

SUSANNAH: You're going back out? Again? You just got in! You've been out there all day.

CLEMENT: There's a kerosene leak. If I'm not careful, I won't be able to keep the beacon lit tonight.

CHLOE: And you must keep that beacon lit, Papa. I don't mean to jest, but it was a fine way to catch a husband, don't you think? Murray saw the beacon and came to capture my heart.

SUSANNAH *crosses her arms and leaves the room.*

CLEMENT: What's unsettling your mother?

CHLOE: She's restless. Perhaps because Murray is coming tomorrow.

CLEMENT: Ah, yes. You must be quite excited to go to the mainland and meet his family.

CHLOE: Oh, I am, Papa. But what will she do when I'm gone? I mean . . . married.

The winters are so long.

CLEMENT: (*Sitting down with the newspaper.*) She'll have the spring to look forward to.

CHLOE: I think she finds anticipation more painful than rewarding.

CLEMENT: She's always looking for something other than what's here, your mother. I've tried to make her feel appreciated, but she still acts like this isn't her home.

CLEMENT *puts the newspaper up in front of his face.* CHLOE *exits to the bedroom.*

CLEMENT *rises and crosses to table. He picks up the letter, sees it is unsealed. He looks around to see if SUSANNAH or CHLOE are in the room. He crosses DOWNSTAGE LEFT and reads the letter. His face shows confusion and shock. SUSANNAH emerges from the room, obviously having been crying. CLEMENT hides the letter in the newspaper and sits.*

SUSANNAH: (*Speaking to CLEMENT, trying to make conversation.*) You have the newspaper, I see. (*Wiping her hands in her apron.*) Is that from your trip to Southwest Harbor yesterday?

CLEMENT: (*Putting the newspaper in front of his face.*) Mm.

SUSANNAH: News changes so fast. So much going on everywhere.

CLEMENT: (*Silence.*)

SUSANNAH: Did you go to Janson's and get me the candle wicking?

CLEMENT: (*Still speaking from behind his newspaper.*) Left it in the boathouse.

SUSANNAH: I do need to make some candles. We're almost out.

CLEMENT *remains silent.*

SUSANNAH: (*Exasperated.*) Talk to me.

CLEMENT: What do you want me to say?

SUSANNAH: (*Crosses to one of the ladder back chairs and stands behind it, holding onto the top.*) I don't know. Anything, I suppose.

CLEMENT: Like what?

SUSANNAH: I said I don't know. (*Pause.*) How about Chloe. (*Pause.*) What do you think of Murray taking her back to the mainland?

CLEMENT: Murray Braddock is a fine young man.

SUSANNAH: I suppose. (*Hesitating.*) Rowing thirteen miles to see her should account for something.

CLEMENT: Mmm.

SUSANNAH: (*Tapping on the wooden chair back. Pause.*) Chloe says that I'll like Mrs. Braddock.

CLEMENT: Clara Braddock is a busy-body nag, with a hen-pecked husband. You don't want her as a friend.

SUSANNAH: (*Walking around and sitting in the ladder back.*) I don't?

CLEMENT: No, you don't.

SUSANNAH: No. I suppose you're right.

CLEMENT: (*Long pause. Pulling down the newspaper and sitting up in his chair.*) And I want you to stop writing those ridiculous letters to your sister. You don't need her either.

SUSANNAH: But I love my sister; I rarely see her.

CLEMENT: It's a good thing.

SUSANNAH: What do you mean? I have to write to her; it's the only way I can keep in contact. I have a letter over . . . (*SUSANNAH points to the table and sees the letter is gone.*) Where's the letter?

CLEMENT *puts the newspaper in front of his face again.*

SUSANNAH: (*Rising.*) Where is the letter to Louise? (*Voice rising.*) Where is my letter to my sister?

CHLOE: (*Emerges from the bedroom.*) What's wrong Mother?

SUSANNAH: I can't find my letter to Aunt Louise.

CHLOE: You left it on the table last night.

SUSANNAH: But it's not there. (*Getting emotional.*) I have to find that letter.

CHLOE: Just write her another.

SUSANNAH: You don't understand. I have to have THAT one. Where could it be?

CLEMENT: (*Nonchalantly.*) Maybe it blew into the fire.

SUSANNAH: (*Placing one hand at her temple and wincing.*) No. (*Then aware, to CLEMENT.*) You. You read it. You read my letter.

CHLOE: But it would still be there.

SUSANNAH: I know what you've done, Mr. Barter. Please don't insult me.

CLEMENT: (*Rising out of his chair.*) Insult you? (*The letter drops to the floor. He picks it up and points it at SUSANNAH*) What is this nonsense, Susannah? (*He reads from the letter.*) "His silence / takes from me. Refraining and enduring/crackling and sparking/ embers glow on the periphery" Or maybe this one: "no nourishment / in the pantry". (*Confused, worried, and angry*) What is this mumbo-jumbo, Susannah? You make it sound as though I don't provide for you. But I do. What more do you want?

SUSANNAH: You're right. (*Ashamed.*) Perhaps if I didn't want so much.

CLEMENT: (*With understanding, as if SUSANNAH has understood him.*) That's right. We have all we need here. We have a beautiful home, and a lovely daughter, and anything man could ever want.

SUSANNAH: You're right, Clem. I'll stop wanting. (*Pause*) I thought . . . I just thought . . .

CLEMENT: Remember: busy hands. . .

SUSANNAH: Work.

CLEMENT: Yes, work. The lighthouse must stay lit every day and every night.

SUSANNAH: No rest for the weary.

CLEMENT: (*Standing.*) What's got into you? Do you think it's easy to watch the horizon for twelve to sixteen hours straight?

SUSANNAH: (*Standing up and approaching him.*) Then why don't we make a change? Go somewhere? Do something else?

CLEMENT: What would I do? I'm fifty years old. What else would I do, Susannah?

SUSANNAH: Heavens! You could do anything! You could become a captain.

CLEMENT: Good Lord, Susannah. I can't just go out and become a captain. Besides, the Coast Guard pays us well. We've lived well here.

SUSANNAH: But it's not too late, Clem. What about farming? Or fishing? You know the sea and fish as well as anyone. We could live on the coast and see Chloe whenever we wanted. We're going to have grandchildren soon. I'll need to be there for her for the lying-in and. . .

CLEMENT: Where the devil *do* you get these ideas, Susannah? We're not going anywhere and that's that.

SUSANNAH: Forever? (*She sinks back into the chair and stares straight ahead.*)

CLEMENT: Not forever. Only until I'm replaced.

SUSANNAH: (*Brightening*) When would that be?

CLEMENT: I don't know. All you care about is leaving. How can you feel that way? It's exciting to live out here. The island and ocean are teeming with life!

SUSANNAH: (*Choked with emotion.*) Exciting? Is it exciting bringing up a barrel of frozen cider from the cellar and waiting two days for it to thaw? Is it exciting to not be able to draw water from the well because it's either gone dry in summer or frozen in winter? Is it exciting to come light the fire in the morning, only to find

that frost crystals have formed on the embers because it's so cold? Exciting, Clem?

It's exhausting. That's what it is. *(Pause.)* I'm just plain worn out.

CLEMENT: *(Irritated.)* So am I, Susannah. So am I. *(Pause.)* I don't know what else to say.

CLEMENT and SUSANNAH sit in silence for several seconds. Tears stream down SUSANNAH's cheeks. CLEMENT looks bewildered and finally gets up and exits. SUSANNAH remains and continues to silently cry.

Lights fade.

SCENE IV: *The next day.*

SUSANNAH and CHLOE are in the cottage packing up a bag for CHLOE. SUSANNAH closes a trunk. She fusses with CHLOE's shawl and bonnet.

SUSANNAH: *(Beginning to weep.)* My child. What shall I do without you, Chloe?

What shall I do?

CHLOE: I'm only going to the mainland for a few days, Mother.

SUSANNAH: Oh, Chloe! This life is too much for me. I lose all hope when I think that I'll have to stay out here. For now it's a few days, but soon it will be for years and years. *(She slips into a reverie.)* I was in hopes that you might . . .

CHLOE: That I might what?

SUSANNAH: I have such anxiety here, Chloe. Please. Let me come with you.

CHLOE: Today? Now? Father and Murray are checking the boat now and preparing it for our departure.

SUSANNAH: Please. Take me with you.

CHLOE: But, Mama. . .

SUSANNAH: I can't stay here and wait.

CHLOE: Mama, you're not making any sense. I'm going down to the boathouse now.

(CHLOE *kisses* SUSANNAH's *cheek*.) I'll see you in a few days, dear Mother.

CHLOE *exits*. SUSANNAH *panics*. She *retrieves a carpet bag and several articles of clothing from the bedroom*. She *places the bag on the table and begins to pack*.

MURRAY and CLEMENT enter.

CLEMENT: (*Looking at Susannah*.) What are you doing?

SUSANNAH: Putting my things into the bag.

CLEMENT: Where are you going?

SUSANNAH: I'm going with Chloe.

CLEMENT: What? You can't go anywhere.

SUSANNAH: I am in despair with every waking moment, Clem.

CLEMENT: But you've got work to do.

SUSANNAH: (*She stops packing*) Work. Working and waiting. All these years, I've waited for you every evening to come out of the lighthouse, but when you come in, I feel as though I'm only another piece of furniture or machinery that works for you. All these years, I've waited for Chloe to grow up. I grieve the passage of time, yet the days are endlessly long in the waiting.

CLEMENT: What are you saying?

SUSANNAH *crosses her arms tightly in front of her, showing her discomfort*.

MURRAY: I think I'll just take Chloe's bag down to the boat now.

CLEMENT: Right. I'll be right down to help you and Chloe off. (*To MURRAY under his breath .*) After I talk some sense into my wife.

MURRAY *exits*.

CLEMENT: You're staying here, Susannah. Today and every other day.

SUSANNAH: I can't wait another day away, Clem. Regardless of his kind nature, Murray is robbing me of the one cherished treasure I have — our Chloe. Even one more day of waiting — of being pushed away — I . . . I . . .

CLEMENT: But she's a young woman now. Let her be. She's got to make her way in the world that will be different from your way and mine.

SUSANNAH: (*Finishes packing and heads for the door.*) No, Clem. I'm going. I've been a good wife. A proper wife. I've done all I can do. But now I need to be a proper mother and take care of my child.

CLEMENT: (*Pulling her back.*) You're not making any sense, Susannah. You can't go with them.

SUSANNAH: (*Turning.*) Perhaps . . . you could take me somewhere? Would you?

CLEMENT: (*Defeated.*) You always want to leave. You always want more. Remember the Scripture, Susannah: "Thou shalt not want." We have everything we need.

SUSANNAH: (*Imploring*) I thought . . . I thought if perhaps I could go with Chloe for a few days, then perhaps I could find it.

CLEMENT: Find what? What are you looking for?

SUSANNAH: (*Long pause.*) Sustenance.

CLEMENT: Sustenance? (*Making a sweeping gesture.*) We have all we could ever want to eat. Have we ever been without food?

SUSANNAH: No.

CLEMENT: Then what? What makes you want to leave?

SUSANNAH: (*Trancelike*) There is no . . . no nourishment.

CLEMENT: (*Confused.*) Nourishment? What are you talking about?

SUSANNAH: There's nothing here. Nothing to work with.

CLEMENT: There is plenty of work, Susannah; you just don't keep yourself busy enough. Idle hands are the devil's playground.

SUSANNAH: (*Desperate*) Please, Clement. I'm begging you. I go in circles on this island, looking at the same gray granite, smelling the damp air, hearing the same relentless screeches from those gulls, (*introspectively*) feeling that same empty feeling inside every time I look out the window. Change only happens when something gets blown up on shore in a storm. But even that's always the same — just another splintered board or a buoy blown off its mooring. Please, Clem. Get me off this island — I must get off this island.

CLEMENT: (*Trying to make truth from his vague promise.*) Yes . . . Sometime.

SUSANNAH: Sometime? (*Beginning to panic.*) I need to go . . . (*Gathering her bag.*) I need to go now. I'm going with Chloe and Murray.

CLEMENT: (*Turning away and shaking his head.*) No. You will stay here and that's final. It's only four days.

SUSANNAH *stands with her head bowed, tears streaming down her cheeks.* SUSANNAH *begins to pace in a circle. She holds her head in her hands and tugs at her hair.*

SUSANNAH: Four days. . . . Four years. I must. . . I . . . I cannot . . .

CLEMENT *watches.*

SUSANNAH: (*Hysterical.*) I have to leave. I have to. I'm going. I'm leaving. . .

SUSANNAH *exits*. CLEMENT *follows her to the door. He places his hands on either side of the door jamb, as if to stop himself, lowers his head, and slaps the wood hard once.*

CLEMENT: Damn!

CLEMENT *crosses to center stage and sits with his head in his hands.*
Several moments pass. CLEMENT paces the room. Finally, SUSANNAH reenters, dazed.

SUSANNAH: They left. They left without me.

CLEMENT: They didn't leave you. It's just a few days, Susannah. (*Trying to console her.*) There's no point in going anywhere right now anyway. We'll only be on the island for a while longer. (*Encouragingly.*) Then when I'm replaced — in another ten years or so — we can go somewhere. But until then, this is our life.

SUSANNAH: Ten years? (*She sinks into a chair and stares straight ahead.*) Ten years.
You may as well have tossed me into prison and thrown away the key.

Lights fade.

ACT II

Based on the play *The Ohio State Murders* by Adrienne Kennedy

CHARACTERS:

SUZANNE ALEXANDER (1950) The young writer as a student attending Ohio State

SUZANNE ALEXANDER (Present) A well-known black writer visiting Ohio State to
give a talk on the imagery in her work

ROBERT HAMPSHIRE An English professor at Ohio State

SUZANNE'S FATHER

SETTING: 1950's Bookstore at Ohio State University

SUZANNE (present) : *(Spoken from off-stage; stage is dark except for two burning candles, center stage):* I thought I had escaped oppression. *(Pause.)* I've tried to tell what happened to me during the four years I was at Ohio State, but I have not been able to admit to myself what happened those few times when I was with Robert Hampshire. To remember what happened is to invalidate the essence of my being and denigrate the memory of my twin daughters. What happened to me was pleasure — pleasure that turned into pain beyond imagining.

Lights come up. SUZANNE ALEXANDER, present and past, walk on from stage right. Each woman blows out a candle. ROBERT HAMPSHIRE then walks on from stage left.

SUZANNE and ROBERT HAMPSHIRE stand together in front of the bookstore stacks. Suzanne wears a blue twin set and pleated skirt. HAMPSHIRE's suit is restrictive and unusually formal for a casual outing.

SUZANNE (Present): We met by accident in the bookstore just before the Christmas break. He said he was shopping for a friend, but I looked at the title he held in the crook of his arm, *Native Son*; it seemed an unlikely gift. He asked if I were going home for the holiday. I told him that I would be.

HAMPSHIRE (*With composure*): That's unfortunate. There will be so few here on campus.

SUZANNE (talking over him): I'll be in Akron staying with my parents.

HAMPSHIRE: Yes, it would be lonely for you here. (HAMPSHIRE waits for her reply, but SUZANNE doesn't give one. HAMPSHIRE looks down at the book he's holding and quickly replaces it in the stacks behind him. SUZANNE [1950] watches him.)

SUZANNE (Present): He seemed to read my mind; he put the book back. The next spring when I wrote the notes on Eliot and Wright, I realized the implications of what he had been silently, and overtly, telling me.

HAMPSHIRE: Well, then. (*Fumbling to gain composure.*) It's a pleasure to see you.

SUZANNE smiles, shyly nods, and turns to leave.

HAMPSHIRE: Suzanne . . .

SUZANNE turns quickly.

HAMPSHIRE: It's a shame that the department wouldn't grant you entry into the program. Your writing shows such promise.

SUZANNE: Do you really think so? I thought if I could get your permission, I still might be able to take more English . . .

HAMPSHIRE: (*Talking over her as he walks away.*) You are, indeed, a very gifted writer. Truly brilliant.

SUZANNE (Present): Spoken, the words were stronger, more enchanting than what he had written in the margins of my papers. The words were music to my ears, but it was music accompanied by a knife, reminding me of the rejection of my application. For the past two semesters, I had had the opportunity to delight in every word of every text I had read. Words had seeped in through my pores. I longed to capture suffering and love, passion and heartache, as Hardy and Wilde had done before me, and let my own words come spilling out. Writing about literature seemed so intangible now, just another circumstance in my life that was lost to me. I walked out of the bookstore to the Oval where it was snowing. (SUZANNE [1950] *wraps her soft yellow swing coat around her and walks to stage right, entering on to "campus".*)

SUZANNE (Present): As I left the bookstore, I decided to walk past the sorority houses on The Row to see the holiday decorations; I was caught in a reverie over what he had said about my writing. The dramatic architecture swept me along as I passed house after house, thick ropes of evergreen twisted around their powerful columns. It was snowing hard, blanketing the landscape. When I turned to where I thought the path led back to High Street, I couldn't find it. Then I saw Robert standing by a huge horse chestnut tree so covered in snow it resembled a white wig. He just stood there, watching me. I felt uncomfortable, so out of place. I wanted to run and hide from him. But at the same time, I felt noticed—energized and alive. It stopped snowing.

SUZANNE *approaches, smiling widely. HAMPSHIRE stares at her.*)

SUZANNE: Do you know where the path is that leads back to the Oval? I seem to have lost my direction. I thought the path was right here . . .

HAMPSHIRE: I was just on my way to my office. Come with me. You can warm up there.

SUZANNE (Present): There was no evading his penetrating eyes, eyes that in a flash could pick out my every thought. Just as I had been pulled forward by the architecture along Sorority Row, I could not look away from his eyes any more than the sea could escape the pull of the moon.

HAMPSHIRE *then holds out the crook of his arm for her to hold. SUZANNE looks back and to the side, looking to see if anyone is watching. SUZANNE then takes his arm and they walk through the snow into his office.*

SUZANNE (Present): I wondered what my father might think of this moment. I was hanging on the arm of a white man who, in so many ways, resembled my father. For a flash of a moment, I tried to convince myself that they would be enamored with one another. Both brilliant thinkers, a conversation between my father and Robert had the potential to be exciting. The conversation would have tension, though. It would pull at each of them . . . and at me.

Lights fade.

SCENE II: ROBERT HAMPSHIRE's *office*.

SUZANNE (Present): We went to his office where he took off his coat and threw it over the back of his chair. I followed his lead and took off my coat, placing it on the hook inside the door. He motioned for me to sit. I did.

HAMPSHIRE *motions*; SUZANNE 1950 *sits*. *He puts a tea kettle onto a hot plate.*

SUZANNE (Present): We sat in silence for a moment. He continued to stare at me until I began to ask permission to get into another class.

SUZANNE (1950): Dr. Hampshire . . . I was hoping that I might be able to enter a class in the fall.

SUZANNE (Present): I was hoping that I could somehow reverse the department's refusal to let me declare English as my major. As I leaned forward to speak to him, he quickly leaned forward and placed his hands on either side of my face. He placed his mouth on mine and kissed me with urgency . . . and affection. His mouth opened and . . .

SUZANNE: (*Pulling back quickly and standing up.*) Wha . . . What are you doing?!

HAMPSHIRE: (*Also standing to meet her height.*) I'm sorry. Perhaps I've misunderstood. I thought that when you came back here with me, I thought you wanted . . .

SUZANNE: (*Gathering up her coat.*) I have to go.

HAMPSHIRE: (*Holding her shoulders firmly and turning her to face him.*) I'm sorry. It won't happen again.

SUZANNE (Present): I remember him making a cup of tea for me. His actions seemed

very strange to me: rather than pouring the hot water directly into the cup, he poured it into an almost-empty honey jar, then poured it over the tea bag. He repeated this action until the mug was full. Why not just pour the honey in?

HAMPSHIRE: (*Handing her the cup*) But your writing. I cannot forget the words you used. You wrote about sin and seduction. It appeared that you were speaking to me.

SUZANNE: I was echoing Hardy.

HAMPSHIRE: How could I have . . . my stupidity. Terrible misjudgment.

SUZANNE (Present): He went on this way, mumbling words of self-hatred. He was so inward, as if he weren't apologizing to me at all, but speaking to himself. I didn't know if he was serious, or not.

HAMPSHIRE: (*Regaining composure*) I do so want to help you learn and advance. There is such promise in what you have shown me.

SUZANNE (Present): Promise. Broken. Promises.

HAMPSHIRE: I'll do what I can to help you in your intellectual and academic needs. I'll help you in any way I can.

Lights fade.

SCENE III: SUZANNE's family home at STAGE RIGHT. Rock wall at CENTER STAGE. HAMPSHIRE'S home STAGE LEFT.

SUZANNE *enters, takes off her swing coat, and sits with her parents around an undecorated Christmas tree. She wears a green sweater.*

SUZANNE (Present): When I went home for Christmas that week, I greeted my parents

and placed a few gifts under the tree. I remember thinking of Bobby on Christmas morning. With every gift I opened, his words of approval were wrapped inside. As we sat around the dinner table, I imagined him having a conversation with my father about the 19th century struggle between science and religion. I wondered who would win.

SUZANNE'S FATHER: The belief in God's word resounded throughout the Victorian era. Why, just look at the order, self-discipline, and religious fervor. It was commendable. The popularity of Wesley's hymns is a prime example.

HAMPSHIRE: But you're disregarding the literature of the period. Darwin. Why, even the Romantics tried to liberate themselves from an oppressive God.

SUZANNE'S FATHER: Despite the temptation and sin of people like the Romantics, Professor Hampshire, God grants grace.

HAMPSHIRE: The Romantics merely dealt with the condition of becoming human. Even Thel should have taken the risk and been born.

SUZANNE (1950) swoons as she has in the classroom when listening to Hampshire's lectures.

SUZANNE: I think that the . . .

SUZANNE'S FATHER: Excuse me, Suzanne. The professor and I are talking.

HAMPSHIRE: Please go on, Suzanne. I'm listening.

SUZANNE (Present): (*Reads a T. H. Huxley quotation from book.*) “. . . the materialistic position that there is nothing in the world but matter, force, and necessity, is as utterly devoid of justification as the most baseless of theological dogmas. The fundamental doctrines of materialism, like those of spiritualism, and most other ‘isms’, lie outside the limits of philosophical inquiry.”

While SUZANNE (Present) reads quotation, SUZANNE (1950) leaves her family home and walk CENTER STAGE. HAMPSHIRE goes STAGE RIGHT and waits in the wings.

SUZANNE (Present): When I arrived back at campus the next week, I walked hour upon hour along the path, on High Street, and through the maze of Sorority Row, hoping he would see me. He did.

HAMPSHIRE: (*Running after Suzanne and grabbing her by the arm*): You're here. I thought you had gone away. I was so hoping to see you. It would be a pleasure to have your company on my way home this afternoon.

HAMPSHIRE *and* SUZANNE *walk arm in arm.*

SUZANNE (Present): He seemed so easy to talk to. So open. I felt secure with him. I didn't know him well.

HAMPSHIRE: (*Pointing*) Look, a hawk.

SUZANNE *and* HAMPSHIRE *gaze up at the sky.*

SUZANNE (Present): In 1978, I went to the 2nd International Symposium on Native American Indians. One paper being presented was about the transformative powers of hawk totems. The young woman presenting said that hawks could awaken visionary power. She also said that the hawk was a fearless bird, that it will even take on poisonous snakes.

YOUNG WOMAN: (Off-stage) We can associate hawks with the mystery and magic of the predator and prey. The hawk can reflect the intensity of physical and emotional forces, as well as symbolizing the darker moments of expression. Its adaptable diet helps it to survive, and it adopts strong defenses against those it sees as intruders on its home. Generally, the red-tail hawk mates for life, and the female lays two eggs in the spring.

The two walk across the stage and stop.

SUZANNE (1950): This is your house?

SUZANNE and HAMPSHIRE *walk around a rock wall, and up the steps into his house.*

SUZANNE: (*Looking around his house.*) A puzzle of Van Gogh's self-portrait.

HAMPSHIRE: Don't touch that. There are several pieces from his hat and lapel that I need to find. (*Drawing her away.*) Come here. What do you see?

SUZANNE (Present): I felt as if I had made a terrible mistake. Then he showed me a wall filled with recordings of all the great musicians – Mozart, Handel, Haydn, Mendelsohn, Bach, Tchaikovsky, Beethoven. He took one of records off the shelf, pulled it out of its sleeve, and placed it on the phonograph. It was Adagio, Concerto in A. The clarinet seemed to be speaking to me.

Music plays. Whispers come from off stage.

VOICES: (*Whispering*) Relax. Reelaaaax.

SUZANNE *bends over slightly to try to find the missing pieces.* HAMPSHIRE *comes from behind and grabs her.*

HAMPSHIRE: You are delicious. I loved a woman once. You remind me so much of her. (*Grabs her by the shoulders and turns her around, burying his face in her neck.*) You are so exotic. Intoxicating. You make me feel so . . . alive.

SUZANNE (Present): He asked me to be his Blue Angel. Not until I saw the

film several years later, did I know what he meant. I was chaste, but Robert saw me as temptation that taunted him. He wanted me for it. . . . and hated me for it.

HAMPSHIRE: Your writing — your intelligence captivates me.

HAMPSHIRE leans forward to kiss her; this time she accepts. Still kissing, the two make their way to the floor. Lights fade on the couple.

SUZANNE (Present): I went home that night and dreamed of a banquet in a castle. I had been identified as a witch. A woman sat high above the banquet table on a wide beam, laughing at me, pointing her long red fingernails at me. There were broken rootbeer lollipops scattered on the floor.

Lights fade.

SCENE IV: ROBERT HAMPSHIRE's house.

SUZANNE (1950) *enters* STAGE LEFT. *She wears a red sweater.*

SUZANNE: All the hours of imagining what might be possible seemed so unrealistic when we were together. It was not loving and tender, but harsh and cruel. After we had made love that first afternoon, the words he spoke did not resemble what he had said earlier. He ignored me. And when he did speak:

HAMPSHIRE: Please say nothing of this to anyone.

SUZANNE (Present): I went to the bathroom and closed the door. I had committed the unspeakable. A pain that began in the pit of my stomach welled up into my throat and came rushing out as tears. After I left, I forgot that he had tried to silence me.

The next day when I went back to his house, it all began again. He spoke so eloquently about my writing.

HAMPSHIRE: (*Mixing a drink and handing it to SUZANNE*) You have a superb command of language.

SUZANNE (Present): He charmed me again.

SUZANNE (1950): Please, Robert . . .

SUZANNE (1950) *isolates herself at STAGE RIGHT*. HAMPSHIRE *exits STAGE LEFT*.

SUZANNE (Present): And afterward, it was the same. He left me alone in his study.

The situation was so awkward, so I looked at his books. Titles that, at the time, had no meaning, but throughout later years recounted my own story back to me in various ways. Pamela. Clarissa. Madame Bovary. Tess. Pamphilia and Amphilanthus. Books filled with poetry.

SUZANNE (1950): (*Reading*) And how can body, laid in that white rush, / But feel the strange heart beating where it lies? // A shudder in the loins engenders there / The broken wall, the burning roof and tower.

SUZANNE (Present): Years later, I read excerpts from Jessie Daniel Ames. (*She reads from a book.*) “White men have said over and over – and we have believed it because it was repeated so often – that not only was there no such thing as a chaste negro woman, but that a negro woman could not be assaulted, that it was never against her will.

SUZANNE (Present): The experience I had encountered with Robert Hampshire lay printed in every book in his library. My perverted secret printed in other people’s poems and novels. I ran out of the study, out of his house, on to High Street all the way to my dorm.

SUZANNE (1950) *leaves his house, running.*

HAMPSHIRE: (*Enters quickly from STAGE LEFT*) Where are you going?

SUZANNE (Present): I did not know that secrets could be revealed even if you don't tell.

Lights fade.

Curtains close.

INTERMISSION

ACT III

Characters:

LADY SUSAN HEREHENCE – A young widow

ROSEBUD and MARY – Lady Susan's twin daughters

SIR EDWARDS – A knight

ENJOIMEN NAU – Sir Edwards' page; a Moor

LADY EMMENGARDE – Sir Edwards' wife

SIR BARTER HEREHENCE – Lady Susan's dead husband

SIR RINGWOLD – a suitor

JUDGE VENERABLE – the magistrate

ELENA SCANDALMONGER – a citizen and friend of Lady Emmengarde

MADAM BREST O'PLENTY – the court astrologer

SETTING: *A high summer day, deep in the thick woods of England, year of our Lord, 1610. A lady of the court, LADY SUSAN, and her daughters sit in velvet chairs on a low balcony, STAGE RIGHT, playing a game of cards. An open glade stands STAGE LEFT.*

SCENE 1: A Question of Honor

ROSEBUD: We're missing one.

MARY: Which one?

ROSEBUD: The King of Hearts.

MARY: *(Examining a card.)* What is this?

LADY. SUSAN: The King of Diamonds. 'Tis the wrong king.

MARY: How can it be wrong? 'Tis a king.

LADY SUSAN: One cannot have just any king. A heart is a heart and a diamond is a diamond.

ROSEBUD: Which king is it then?

LADY SUSAN: The name is inscribed.

MARY: (*Looking at the card*) Edward the II. *He* was a king; are you sure he will not do?

ROSEBUD: Did you not hear Mother? 'Tis the King of Diamonds.

LADY SUSAN: Rose marks a good point, Mary. You cannot substitute any old king, Edward or otherwise.

ROSEBUD: Please, Mother, let us begin!

MARY: Good sister, we still lack the King of Hearts.

LADY SUSAN: Here, Mary, hand me a card.

MARY: (*Handing LADY SUSAN the King of Diamonds card*) Look at how his codpiece is drawn, Mother.

LADY SUSAN: Not the diamonds, Mary!

ROSEBUD: Surely the story cannot be true. A hot poker?

MARY: (*screams and holds her hands to her ears as she speaks*) Speak not so base, Rose! Thy words sear!

LADY SUSAN: Hush't! That will be quite enough, girls. (*Placing the card back in the pile*) Let us use the joker; they are harmless and filled with amusement — perhaps a worthy diversion for a moment of mirth. (*She lifts the joker card*) He'll make a fine King of Hearts. (*She lifts her quill and begins to draw hearts in the corners of the card.*)

Sound of hoofbeats off stage. LADY SUSAN and DAUGHTERS look up. Hoofbeats die off. Enter quickly, SIR EDWARDS, a knight of rank. He is of a strong, yet gentle demeanor.

SIR EDWARDS: *(Looking up to the balcony)* Good day, m'lady. I heard a scream.

(Sizing up the scene) I see you require my assistance.

LADY SUSAN: *(Looking around to see what he sees)* Forsooth, kind sir; we're in no need. On the contrary: we engage ourselves in a game.

SIR EDWARDS: A game? Oh, I do like gaming. Thou shalt find games dangerous, m'lady. One such as yourself needs protection from just such perilous risks. I shall protect you.

LADY SUSAN: *(Puzzled)* I' faith, sir, I speak not of the games you speak of.

I enjoy a fair quality of merriment, but I have had quite enough of insincerity. I provide myself and my darlings with the security we need.

SIR EDWARDS: Indeed.

LADY SUSAN: How com'st thou here? Were you directed hither to our manor?

SIR EDWARDS: I ventured not far from my own estate when I heard your daughter cry out, and I thought it my duty to make inquiry after you.

LADY SUSAN: Hast thou now found us safe?

SIR EDWARDS: How now?

LADY SUSAN: There. Thou hast made inquiry after me. You are free to go.

SIR EDWARDS: No, I must rescue you first.

ROSEBUD and MARY: Oh, Mother! How wonderful! A knight has come to rescue us!

LADY SUSAN: Hush't, my darlings. We're in no need of a rescue. I'm quite sure of it. *(To SIR EDWARDS.)* What do they call you, good knight?

SIR EDWARDS: Edwards, m'lady.

ROSEBUD: 'Tis an Edward, Mother! He would make a fine King of Hearts.

LADY SUSAN: That will be quite enough from you, young lady.

SIR EDWARDS: And you, madam. What may I call thee?

LADY SUSAN: Herehence.

SIR EDWARDS: Yes. herehence. What shall I call thee here . . .henceforth?

LADYSUSAN: No, Herehence.

SIR EDWARDS: All right then: what shall I call thee herehence?

LADY SUSAN: No, silly. Herehence is my name. Lady Susan Herehence. And these
are my lovely daughters.

SIR EDWARDS: And where is your husband, m'lady. Sir Herehence, is it? Might I
inquire: is he within?

LADY SUSAN: (*Aside*) He hasn't been within for quite some time. I dare not
let this man know too much. He seems very forward, indeed. (*To SIR
EDWARDS*) My husband is out.

SIR EDWARDS: Out, m'lady? How long has he been gone?

MARY: Three years.

SIR EDWARDS: Three years! Dreadful! Where is he?

LADY SUSAN: I know not.

SIR EDWARDS: Then, you are most certainly in need of my assistance, m'lady.

(*Announcing*) 'Tis a day for a rescue! (*He looks around*) (*Aside*) Confounded
page. Where is the pageantry when I need it?

LADY SUSAN: This is all terribly noble of you, Sir Edwards. Truly. But I'm quite sure
that such generous gallantry is not called for.

SIR EDWARDS: (*Not paying attention as he tries to negotiate his way up the balcony*)
Yes, yes. Quite. No need for thanks just yet. (*He struggles, stops, and steps back
to look up at LADY SUSAN*) Might you throw me a rope so that I could climb up
and rescue thee and thine?

LADY SUSAN *laughs at his innocence and dismisses the maidens to the castle.* LADY SUSAN *throws him a rope, and he fumbles his way up.*

SIR EDWARDS: Ah, there we are. Now, shall I take you down, then?

LADY SUSAN: I think not. I'm quite content where I am, thank you.

SIR EDWARDS: Right. *(He looks around.)* Well, then. Are you quite sure you don't need to be rescued?

LADY SUSAN: Quite.

SIR EDWARDS: I merely wanted to help.

LADY SUSAN: Indeed. And a lovely thought it was.

SIR EDWARDS: Ah . . . so . . . I presume my work here is done?

LADY SUSAN: Yes, I believe so. But thank you ever so much.

SIR EDWARDS: *(He looks at the rope and the balcony, then back at LADY SUSAN)*
May I use the stairs?

LADY SUSAN *looks lovingly at the knight. She gestures toward the balcony doors, and he exits.* SIR EDWARDS *emerges from the castle and looks up at the balcony where LADY SUSAN stands.*

SIR EDWARDS: There is something about you, madam, that makes me want to protect you. And I will. *(With magnificence)* I pledge myself to you, m'lady.

LADY SUSAN: Pledge?

SIR EDWARDS: Yes. And 't' will be in thy honor that I quest.

LADY SUSAN: Shouldn't you be questing for the goodness of the kingdom?

SIR EDWARDS: Indeed. For the honor of the kingdom. Thou being the primary resident, of course. I make my promise to thee: I shall return whenever you are in need of protection. *(He bows gallantly)* Now, m'lady. I must away.

SIR EDWARDS *exits UPSTAGE LEFT behind balcony set.* LADY SUSAN *remains on the balcony.*

LADY SUSAN: Shall I resist his affections? No one need assist me. Although he so suitably attempts to advance my wellbeing, noble knights so often advance the wrong notion; they are not as they say they are. I thought my husband a goodly and kind man, but as time went on, he revealed himself to be more concerned with work than with our daughters or me. Faith! Since my husband's death, Sir Ringwold proved himself a comforting soul with a kind ear and delightful compliments. *(Sigh)* But his intentions proved to be unscrupulous and roguish. I heard news come lately that even the scullery maid received his affections. But this Edwards. He seems a fine fellow. I am certain his intentions run pure. His heart holds no foul storms that have confused me before. I shall wait until the moon is full, and then I shall know more.

LADY SUSAN *exits through the balcony doors.*

Enter SIR EDWARDS, STAGE LEFT, in a pastoral setting in his own kingdom where his page, a young and handsome Moor, waits for him. They know each other well and are at ease.

ENJOIMEN: Ah, Sire! How now?

SIR EDWARDS: A fine afternoon, is it not, Enjoimen? The sky is blue, the leaves are green, and I . . . I am smitten!

ENJOIMEN: This cannot be, Sire.

SIR EDWARDS: No? *(He sniffs the air)* What is that smell?

ENJOIMEN: Smell, Sire?

SIR EDWARDS: Smell, Enjoimen, smell. It fills my nose. It reminds me of the Crusades
and the markets of the East.

ENJOIMEN: You like it, Sire?

SIR EDWARDS: Like it? It's not a question of liking it. It's a question of what it is.

ENJOIMEN: Patchouli.

SIR EDWARDS: Bless you.

ENJOIMEN: Sire? I said ... Patchouli.

SIR EDWARDS: You have a cold, Enjoimen? You just sneezed.

ENJOIMEN: Oh Sire ... you are a jester. I am wearing it.

SIR EDWARDS: You are wearing it? What on Earth for? You are not a lady of the court!
You are of fine quality, but you smell like a dessert! T'would be better to let
Nature's blessings fill our nostrils.

ENJOIMEN: As you like it, Sire. But it soothes me.

SIR EDWARDS: Enjoimen. We must talk. These are not words fit for a page. And
what is that plume you are wearing?

ENJOIMEN: You like it, Sire? I thought it wore fair with the leaves and the sky.

SIR EDWARDS: Heaven forbid. What am I to do with you?

ENJOIMEN: Anything you like, Sire. You know I am yours.

SIR EDWARDS: Will you stop it?! Sometimes, I have grave concerns. You have now got
me flustered. Let us rest. The steeds are tied up in yon glade.

ENJOIMEN: By the brook?

SIR EDWARDS: By the brook, yes. I would like to have had the grandeur of trumpets
when I was with Lady Susan . . .

ENJOIMEN: Lady Susan, sire?

SIR EDWARDS: Yes . . .yes, but we shall speak of trumpets later. Next time, just come
and help me get off.

ENJOIMEN: Sire?

SIR EDWARDS: My horse, Enjoimen. My horse!

SIR EDWARDS *sits in the glade, CENTER STAGE. ENJOIMEN NAU follows.*

SIR EDWARDS: Ah, I'm all knotted. I have much to think about.

ENJOIMEN: Shall I rub your back, Sire?

SIR EDWARDS: That would be delightful. (SIR EDWARDS *quickly scans the deserted glen and takes off his waistcoat and shirt*) Thank you Enjoimen.

(ENJOIMEN *pulls a vial from his saddlebag and begins to rub oil onto his back*)

SIR EDWARDS: That is wonderful, Enjoimen. Harder. Right there. hmmmmmmmm ...
where did you learn this art?

ENJOIMEN: In the East, Sire, before you rescued me.

SIR EDWARDS: You learnt well, Enjoimen. Hmmmmmmmmmmmm.

(LADY SUSAN *and her DAUGHTERS suddenly appear UPSTAGE near the glade, unbeknownst to the pair.*)

SIR EDWARDS: Stop it, Enjoimen.

ENJOIMEN: Sire?

SIR EDWARDS: You blew in my ear.

ENJOIMEN: Oh Sire, I did NOT. It was the summer breeze.

SIR EDWARDS: You silly boy. Now, do my arms . . . What's that? (SIR EDWARDS *leaps to his feet, doublet hanging, and grabs his broad sword and a dagger.*) Who goes there?

LADY SUSAN: Why Sire, it is I and my darlings.

SIR EDWARDS: Madam you put yourself in grave danger coming up on a knight like that.

LADY SUSAN: And you, Sire, put yourself in grave danger standing half-naked like that before me. And before my daughters, too.

ENJOIMEN: We were just resting, Madam. I was massaging his Lordship.

SIR EDWARDS: (*Introducing ENJOIMEN and LADY SUSAN*) M'Lady: my page, Enjoimen Nau. (*ENJOIMEN tries to continue to massage the knight*) For God's sake, Enjoimen, will you stop it. Madam, I assure you, I do apologize. Do you see?

The daughters giggle together. SIR EDWARDS seizes ENJOIMEN's plume from him and tries to cover himself.

LADY SUSAN: Every inch, in faith!

I say, Sir Edwards, we shall not linger,
for now, we must leave you to Enjoimen's fingers.

LADY SUSAN *and her* DAUGHTERS exit STAGE LEFT.

SIR EDWARDS: No, m'lady. Please stay. (*He sees that she has gone and turns to ENJOIMEN*) Confound it, man! Do you see what you've done?

ENJOIMEN: Yes, Sire. It looks quite pleasing all oily like that. I have done quite a nice job, haven't I.

SIR EDWARDS: Not that, you ninny! You've scared her off! That was Lady Susan.

ENJOIMEN: Lady Susan? Who is Lady Susan?

SIR EDWARDS: (*Gazing off*) The woman I have pledged to protect. (*He begins to dress*)

Come, Enjoimen. Let us practice the art of the bow.

ENJOIMEN *holds a quiver while SIR EDWARDS draws on his bow. ENJOIMEN looks on admiringly, gently stroking the shaft of the next arrow.*

ENJOIMEN: Oh, oh! Good shot, Sire! Oooh. Look. You got two apples, Sire.

SIR EDWARDS: Thank you, Enjoimen. It was a rather good shot, I declare. I appreciate your enthusiasm but I wish you wouldn't bounce up and down like that. A simple 'shot' will do. And try to keep the squealing down. You know Lady Emmengarde; her temper runs hotter than a poker. Oh, pox upon it! You have a shot. It is time you learnt with expertise.

ENJOIMEN: May I, Sire? May I?

SIR EDWARDS: You may if you stop that infernal bouncing. Here. Hold the bow. Lay the shaft thus. Let me help you.

ENJOIMEN: You're so strong, Sire.

SIR EDWARDS: Together, pull. That's it. Pull. Now see if you can hit the apple to the left of the one I just pierced.

ENJOIMEN: *(Grunting under the strain)* I can't ... seem ... to *(sudden sound of bow string being released)* Ughh.

SIR EDWARDS: Great heavens, Enjoimen. I declare I have schooled you well. That is quite remarkable! *(There is a sound of arrow whistling into the distance followed by a muted meow and a furry thud)* And I believe you got something Enjoimen. We shall make a hunter of you yet, my boy.

ENJOIMEN: Sire, I fear ...

SIR EDWARDS: Mine eyes are not what they once were, Enjoimen, but it looks like that was the shot of a God. Ha!

LADY EMMENGARDE, *a strikingly beautiful woman, appears at a turret window.*

EMMENGARDE: Husband? Enjoimen? Did you hear that noise?

SIR EDWARDS: Noise Madam? Are we under seige? Enjoimen, my broadsword at
once!

ENJOIMEN: (*Whispering*) I believe, Sire, that you left it in the glade of Lady Susan's
estate... .

With a sweep of his hand, SIR EDWARDS cuts off ENJOIMEN.

SIR EDWARDS: Quite, m'lady, fear not.

EMMENGARDE: No, you oafs, a meow. A cat. I've lost Babylon, but I thought I heard
him just now.

ENJOIMEN: Heaven save me. I've killed . . .

EMMENGARDE: What are you saying down there? Both of you are behaving most oddly
today.

ENJ./ EDWARDS: Madam?

EMMENGARDE: I shall come down this instant.

SIR EDWARDS: (*To ENJOIMEN*) You kissed my fingers.

ENJOIMEN: Respect, Sire. I fear I've killed Babylon. And Lady Emmengarde.

SIR EDWARDS: Nay, it is you and I who shall be killed, Enjoimen. The fury of Lady
Emmengarde can conceive the most dangerous of plots. Now get down there and
bring me that damned animal before her Ladyship arrives. Anon!

ENJOIMEN: Aye, Sire.

ENJOIMEN *exits in search of Babylon the cat.* EMMENGARDE *descends from the turret
and enters* STAGE LEFT.

EMMENGARDE: (*Stands and stares at SIR EDWARDS*) You seem . . . different.

SIR EDWARDS: (*Turns and walks away from her and stares off*) Not me, m'lady. I am the model for consistency.

EMMENGARDE: Joke not with me, Edwards. I shan't tolerate it today.

SIR EDWARDS: (*Only half serious*) Begging your forgiveness, Wife. (*He pauses; she sizes him up.*)

EMMENGARDE: The air is fine, is it not?

SIR EDWARDS: Aye, if one likes it cold.

EMMENGARDE: Take heed, husband. Your company provokes me.

SIR EDWARDS: (*Ignoring her comment*) Oh, Heaven forbid Enjoimen's findings.

EMMENGARDE: What? What say'st thou? (*Furious*) You must do something about the servants, Edwards. A fortnight ago, I spoke to you about this; they listen not to me. Do something!

SIR EDWARDS: (*Aside*) Ah, the air is brisk, indeed. I feel inclement weather coming on; a storm is brewing.

EMMENGARDE: Thou speak'st not a word to me. Speak, I say! Wilt thou bring thyself to do something about the servants?

SIR EDWARDS: The servants will arrange themselves in their posts as necessary. There is no need for us to impose rules upon their behavior.

EMMENGARDE: (*Speaking through clenched teeth*) But of course, we must. It is our duty! One must impose rules; it is the done thing.

SIR EDWARDS: Happy is the man who is left alone.

EMMENGARDE: I am incensed!

SIR EDWARDS: (*Aside, sniffing the air*) Incense? Odd. It doesn't smell like Enjoimen.

EMMENGARDE: (*Furious*) What? What say'st thou? Speak to me directly, I say.

SIR EDWARDS: Anger thyself not, Wife. (*Walking away*) Your venomous words

roll off now. I shall walk away and allow you to rail on me no longer.

EMMENGARDE: Edwards! I demand that you tell me . . . *(Her eyes dart at him with cruelty; she stifles an angry scream, and walks CENTER STAGE out of earshot from the two men)*

A gasping ENJOIMEN returns to SIR EDWARDS side.

ENJOIMEN: Here, Sire. Dead.

SIR EDWARDS: Quick, Enjoimen, put it down here.

ENJOIMEN: Your hose, Sire?

SIR EDWARDS: Yes, yes. *(They work together, untying the points of Sir Edwards' hose and doublet to push the dead Babylon down his hose)* Now, help me with my doublet.

While ENJOIMEN and SIR EDWARDS work together to put the dead Babylon down SIR EDWARDS' hose, EMMENGARDE speaks an aside CENTER STAGE.

EMMENGARDE: What hath brought on this obstinacy in my husband? What is the cause thereof? He is resolute, unlike himself. I must tread carefully, for something in him has changed.

SIR EDWARDS: *(At STAGE LEFT, to ENJOIMEN)* Yes. Hmm. Still warm. Let me adjust my codpiece. There.

ENJOIMEN: Just in time. Here comes . . . Sire . . . may the Lord help us.

EMMENGARDE: *(Walking to STAGE LEFT, speaking to ENJOIMEN)* There you are. And no sign of Babylon?

SIR EDWARDS: No m' Lady.

EMMENGARDE: Enjoimen, what have you been doing? You are completely without

breath and your brow is beaded.

ENJOIMEN: Running, Madam.

EMMENGARDE: (*Giving Sir Edwards a look*) Not fast enough, apparently — not if you could not retrieve my Baby'. (*LADY EMMENGARDE's gaze falls on Sir Edwards' leg*) Sire, what is that?

SIR EDWARDS: That? What?

EMMENGARDE: Your hose!

SIR EDWARDS: (*Looking down at himself*) That! Oh that is my manhood.

EMMENGARDE: My Lord! Edwards!

SIR EDWARDS: It has been some time, madam, perhaps you have ...

EMMENGARDE: But it is down to your knee. And it . . .it just twitched.

SIR EDWARDS: Owwww! Ah ... yes madam, we are trying a new elixir, one that Enjoimen brought with him from Damascus.

EMMENGARDE: That is one elixir we could do without. It moved again! Now I must be off. Pray, you two shall find Babylon.

SIR EDWARDS: (*Aside*) I shall pray indeed! (*To LADY EMMENGARDE*) Verily, Wife.

EMMENGARDE: In the mean, I shall curl up and rest my weary eyes. Sirrah! (*Aside*)
 My marriage hath shackled me down indeed,
 I wish for Sir Edwards to die or flee
 It is in my slumber that I shall find
 A more loving husband: caring and kind.

EMMENGARDE *casts a sharp glance at them and leaves.*

ENJOIMEN: I am struck with how quickly she parts. I think she has a measure about you.

SIR EDWARDS: Yes, Enjoimen. I have made a stand, and Lady Emmengarde perceives this.

ENJOIMEN: Sire, perhaps you should speak with Lady Emmengarde truthfully. In our last lesson, you said that truth was honor and that without honor there was no valor and without valor there could be . . .

SIR EDWARDS: Hear me straight, Enjoimen. Truth and honor are one thing, addressing Lady Emmengarde is quite another. It calls for the utmost skill and delicacy. It is tantamount to dealing with a foreign prince. *(Pause)* No, I did not mean that to sound like that.

ENJOIMEN: She's your wife, Sire. I don't understand.

SIR EDWARDS: Of course you don't. lad. She is my wife, yes, Enjoimen.

ENJOIMEN: But you love Lady Emmengarde, Sire?

SIR EDWARDS: *(He hesitates)* I do . . . of course, she is my wife and one loves wives. But that is not the point.

ENJOIMEN: And Lady Susan?

SIR EDWARDS: Enjoimen, I believe you are the only page in the kingdom who can coax his way inside his master's heart. Sometimes I wish I had simply abandoned you in that market in Damascus.

ENJOIMEN: *(Pouting)* Sire, really. That seems harsh.

SIR EDWARDS: Enough. *(Dreamily)* Yes, I love Lady Susan . . . *(soberly)* but that is quite another matter. Were thou ever to tell that to Lady Emmengarde, we would both burn. Do you hear me? You, Enjoimen, and I we both serve Lady Emmengarde. But in order for me to best serve the kingdom, I must be in top form. If I continue my life the way in which it has been with Lady Emmengarde, I will have no form. Do you understand?

ENJOIMEN: Wilt thou seek solace from Lady Susan?

SIR EDWARDS: Good knights seek truth, Enjoimen. Surely, this is how I shall live.

ENJOIMEN: But you just said that honesty with Lady Emmengarde . . . And your hose, Sire. What was the twitching? Surely that was not thy blood!

SIR EDWARDS: The twitching was Babylon's death throes, you twit! But now he grows cold. I must pull him out. *(He pulls the dead cat out of his hose)* There. Take him to the privvy and put him down, then shovel lime on him.

ENJOIMEN: *(Distressed)* On Baby?

SIR EDWARDS: He's a damned cat, Enjoimen. Now, off to the stables with you, and saddle up the two fastest Arabians and we shall make haste.

ENJOIMEN: For a ride, Sire?

SIR EDWARDS: We are riding to Lady Susan's, Enjoimen. She will save us. She has dozens of cats. Her bedchamber is swarming with them.

ENJOIMEN: Bedchamber, Sire? You . . .

SIR EDWARDS: Enough, Enjoimen. Away . . . take this beast and bring the horses. We must find a Babylon.

ENJOIMEN: Sire, I am confused.

SCENE II: Lady Susan's Day before the Magistrate

LADY SUSAN *stands before the judge, her shoulders trembling beneath her velvet gown. Her countenance wanes, for she is very tired after having had a restless sleep the night before.*

LADY SUSAN: Forsooth Your Honor. I knew not that my appearance here in your court would carry such grave consequence.

JUDGE VENERABLE: The charges brought before you, Madam, require such punishment. Dost thou argue?

LADY SUSAN: I am . . . was merely . . . I wished only to alter my marital status

before the courts. My husband Sir Barter Herehence is gone. Surely a small modification on parchment for a young widow is . . .

VENERABLE: Silence! Altering your marital status requires no quittance. The charges brought before me address entirely another matter.

ELENA: (*Standing up and pointing*) She did it! She did! I saw him climbing her castle walls.

VENERABLE: How dost thou plead, Lady Susan?

LADY SUSAN: Saw who? Pardon me, Your Honor? Plead? I am completely undone, for I know not WHAT I have done!

VENERABLE: Thou hast been accused of . . . (*he reads the parchment again*) — infidelity. What say you?

LADY SUSAN: Infidelity?! No! I have done no such deed. I serve my kingdom well. I serve God.

VENERABLE: Silence! I speak not of vague falsity or disloyalty to your kingdom or God. I am referring to a knight. Were you, or were you not, visited at your estate by a knight?

LADY SUSAN: Your Honor, a good knight did stumble upon my estate recently, but there is no infidelity of any kind.

VENERABLE: But you were seduced.

LADY SUSAN: No, Your Honor!

VENERABLE: Courted, then. (*LADY SUSAN shakes her head.*) Charmed? (*LADY SUSAN shakes her head emphatically*) (*LADY SUSAN does not react.*) Tempted? Captivated? Mesmerized? What say you? Was there nothing?

LADY SUSAN: Indeed, Your Honor, there was.

VENERABLE: There was what? What?! How dare you mock the Magistrate!

LADY SUSAN: With all due respect, Your Honor. I speak not of *that*.

VENERABLE: What is this hornswoggle? You stand accused. Did you, or did you not

entertain a good knight in your chambers?

LADY SUSAN: Pray, Your Honor, I wish it were true that I had a good (k)night in my chambers! But please, allow me to recount the incident.

VENERABLE: (*He hesitates*) Proceed.

LADY SUSAN: You see. . . a knight wandered onto the castle grounds, and he wished to rescue me, a rescue which was not needed. I admit that I spoke with him, yes. But infidelity? That is why I am here. I am a widow.

ELENA: But HE is married. His wife is Lady Emmengarde.

LADY SUSAN: (*Shocked*) Wife? The knight? The knight has a wife? Surely we cannot speak of the same man. Besides, his company seemed a passing fancy. He merely troubled himself to be sure I was safe . . . cared for. I must confess that I enjoyed the attention he bestowed upon me immensely, but he was only pledging to protect me.

VENERABLE: Pledging himself? Haven't you learned that oaths from passing knights are merely words that drift upon the wind?

LADY SUSAN: Well . . . that is not what I meant. It may look as though . . . well . . . but, well . . .

VENERABLE: A well is a place from which to draw water, Lady Susan, but you are drawing mud.

LADY SUSAN: But I am sure that he speaks not just words, Your Honor. He is a true and noble knight. I am certain of it. Besides, I have sworn myself only to a love that is wholesome; this knight, although he displayed a . . . fondness toward me, certainly showed no signs of love.

VENERABLE: How do you plead?

LADY SUSAN: Plead? I plead . . . confusion. I know that I have experienced genuine chivalry, but you tell me that it does not exist. You imply that there is no such thing as truth.

VENERABLE: I am a Magistrate, m'lady, and I assure you that there is no such thing as truth.

LADY SUSAN: Please, your Honor, torment me not! If there is no such thing as truth, you are saying that there is no such thing as true love. I seek someday to have true love. Please, Your Honor, tell me: is there, or is there not, true love?

VENERABLE: Nay! *(He slams his gavel down)* There is no such thing as true love! *(He sees her reaction)* Oh. Oh, dear. Now what have I done? *(He leans over the stand and speaks to her with avuncular sympathy)* I speak from age, young lady, not necessarily from wisdom. There seems to be no such thing as true love. There is marriage, and there is dallying. It appears to me that you have encountered the latter. Fair words are not equal to consummate love. In short, it appears that you have been wooed. *(Adopting a professional demeanor again)* Now, Lady Susan, how do you plead?

LADY SUSAN: Guilty, Your Honor. I suppose I am guilty of believing in love.

ELENA: *(Aside)* I knew it! I told her! I told Emmengarde.

LADY SUSAN: But please Your Honor, do not judge me too harshly.

VENERABLE: That won't be necessary. I shall let Sir Edwards face the consequences of his own accord.

LADY SUSAN: Oh, thank you, Your Honor.

LADY EMMENGARDE *enters* STAGE RIGHT *and stands in the wings.*

VENERABLE: Charges dismissed!

JUDGE VENERABLE *bangs his gavel and exits.* LADY SUSAN *begins to exit* STAGE LEFT, *but turns and listens while* ELENA *remains in the court.*

ELENA: I told Emmengarde that there was another, and now it is proved. But justice is not served! (ELENA *leaves the court area and hastens to*

EMMENGARDE's side and speaks) Have you heard the news, Emmengarde?

EMMENGARDE: (*walking with ELENA CENTER STAGE*) What news?

ELENA: I heard it with my own ears. Justice Venerable found Lady Susan guilty of entertaining Sir Edwards in her chambers.

EMMENGARDE: I knew it! That b . . .

ELENA: But there will be no reproof. She receives no punishment!

EMMENGARDE: It cannot be. There will be a consequence! (*She becomes angry, grabs*

ELENA *by the shoulders, and speaks directly to her*)

Hear me! Be my witness!

If Lady Susan be not guilty

Let Sir Edwards receive my wrath

Now both lovers be forewarned

I am on a rampant path!

LADY EMMENGARDE *and* ELENA *exit* STAGE RIGHT. LADY SUSAN *walks* CENTER STAGE.

LADY SUSAN: It appears that I am not the one who needs protecting. I must alert Sir Edwards of this danger.

LADY SUSAN *sees* LADY EMMENGARDE *approaching and moves* DOWNSTAGE LEFT *to observe*. LADY EMMENGARDE *comes round the corner followed by two ladies in waiting*. SIR EDWARDS *and* ENJOIMEN *enter* STAGE LEFT.

EMMENGARDE: (*Aside*) Ah, there he is. If my lord disobeys and dismisses me yet

again, I shall proclaim my vengeance upon him. *(To SIR EDWARDS)* Come, my lord, my sister and her family are to dine with us.

SIR EDWARDS: Out of the question madam.

ENJOIMEN *looks up admiringly at SIR EDWARDS*

EMMENGARDE: And pray, why might that be?

SIR EDWARDS: Matters of security, my lady. Defense of the realm.

EMMENGARDE: Matters of security! Do you take me for a ninny? Sir Edwards what exactly DO you take me for?

SIR EDWARDS: *(Stepping backwards, eyes on EMMENGARDE)* Enjoimen, fetch the horses.

ENJOIMEN: Right away, Sire.

EMMENGARDE: It's Enjoimen. You make sport with your page, and expect me to step out of the way, is that it?

SIR EDWARDS: You acknowledge the obvious. Yes, Enjoimen will always remain by my side.

EMMENGARDE: You mean to say that there is no room for me by your side?

SIR EDWARDS: *(To Enjoimen)* Bring the horses round to the keep, Enjoimen.

ENJOIMEN: I will, Sire.

EMMENGARDE: *(Stopping ENJOIMEN with one hand)* Wait.

SIR EDWARDS: Madam?

EMMENGARDE: Hear me well, Sir Edwards.

SIR EDWARDS: I have no trouble hearing you, madam.

ENJOIMEN: *(Whispering)* Don't make it worse, Sire.

EMMENGARDE: I am not finished. I am not through.

SIR EDWARDS: Of that I am sure, madam. I trust you implicitly.

ENJOIMEN: (*Whispering*) Sire, please, don't. You are making me uneasy.

EMMENGARDE: You will get what you deserve.

LADY EMMENGARDE *and her ladies in waiting walk center stage.*

EMMENGARDE: (*To her ladies in waiting*) What does he take me for? A fool?

The ladies-in-waiting begin to nod. They see EMMENGARDE's reaction, then shake their heads emphatically.

EMMENGARDE: I am not a fool! I know what he intends. It's that confounded Lady Susan who strikes his fancy. Strike his fancy, indeed! I'll show him how a woman can strike his fancy!

EMMENGARDE *exits.*

ENJOIMEN *and SIR EDWARDS enter DOWNSTAGE LEFT*

ENJOIMEN: I believe we're still being followed.

SIR EDWARDS: Followed?

ENJOIMEN: Sire, see there, in the wood.

LADY SUSAN *enters UPSTAGE LEFT checking behind her.*

SIR EDWARDS: Lady Susan! (*To ENJOIMEN*) You spread fear for no reason, my boy.
It is Lady Susan, here to grace us with her presence.

LADY SUSAN: Quickly, Sir Edwards. You must protect yourself from Emmengarde.

SIR EDWARDS: No need to worry, m'lady.

LADY SUSAN: You do not understand. You must take your page and seek shelter from her.

SIR EDWARDS: Whatever could you mean?

LADY SUSAN: Believe me, Sir Edwards. (*Rushing to leave*) I must go, but trust me. You must away!

LADY SUSAN *exits*.

Arrows begin to fly through the air, whizzing past the two. SIR EDWARDS looks to the wood and dodges. More arrows hiss in a rush of wind around the two men.

SIR EDWARDS: By Jove, yes. This does not look good. I must go speak with Emmengarde. She seems to have taken this a bit too far.

SIR EDWARDS *exits* STAGE RIGHT *momentarily*.

ENJOIMEN: Wait, Sire! Shouldn't you listen to Lady Susan?

SIR EDWARDS: (*Commotion and shouting off stage*) Back, woman! Back, I say!
(*Noises of struggle*) Uh! I've been struck!

SIR EDWARDS *enters with an arrow protruding from his shoulder. The two men crouch down, and ENJOIMEN works to remove the arrow from SIR EDWARDS' shoulder.*

SIR EDWARDS: It's not bad, is it, Enjoimen?

ENJOIMEN: Oh Sire, I hope not.

SIR EDWARDS: Ouch ... gently, Enjoimen. What happened to that delicate touch of yours?

ENJOIMEN: Forgive me, Sire ... there. Just a stitch. It was lucky arrow wasn't any closer, Sire, it would have pierced your heart.

SIR EDWARDS: Luck had nothing to do with it. I tell you that woman is quicker than] one of Lady Susan's cats. She could have put that arrow through my heart as easily as you dance across the floor in that new codpiece of yours.

ENJOIMEN: You like it, Sire?

SIR EDWARDS: Well, Enjoimen, should I ever lose you in the market, I will have no trouble locating you. Ha! Ouch ... and ouch.

ENJOIMEN: There, Sire. All done. Now let me rub your shoulder a little.

SIR EDWARDS: Indeed. *(ENJOIMEN begins to massage him)*

ENJOIMEN: Is that good Sire ?

SIR EDWARDS: *(Drifting off)* She had me pinned to the door by my cape with two arrows and that dirk against my throat before you could say "How goes the kingdom?" That is the type of woman you want to be standing back to back with on the battlefield, not sharing a bed with.

ENJOIMEN: You can sleep with me, Sire.

SIR EDWARDS: Thank you, Enjoimen. I shall save you for times of extreme deprivation.

(SIR EDWARDS opens one eye and casts an amused gaze.)

ENJOIMEN: Sire?

SIR EDWARDS: Enjoimen?

ENJOIMEN: Sire?

SIR EDWARDS: YES, Enjoimen.

ENJOIMEN: About the plan to go away ...

SIR EDWARDS: Yes.

ENJOIMEN: Shall I pack Lady Emmengarde's valise, as well?

SIR EDWARDS: No, Enjoimen, you shall not. Lady Emmengarde will remain here.

ENJOIMEN: (ENJOIMEN *swallows deeply*) Sire? You mean, we're leaving!

SIR EDWARDS: Yes. I believe Lady Susan spoke wisely. We must escape.

ENJOIMEN: Forever? But my things.

SIR EDWARDS: Let's not talk of forever, shall we? Do you too wish to be pinned to a door? We shall away to the hunting lodge by the lake.

ENJOIMEN: Are we going to live there?

SIR EDWARDS: We shall take up residence there for a time, yes.

ENJOIMEN: But Sire. The water ... and it's not clean and there are no cooks.

SIR EDWARDS: You shall clean it, Enjoimen, and we shall take servants.

ENJOIMEN: And what shall I tell Lady Emmengarde?

SIR EDWARDS: You shall tell her nothing.

ENJOIMEN: But Sire, when Lady Emmengarde wants to know something . . .

SIR EDWARDS: Enough. You shall tell her that I have forbidden you to have intercourse with anyone but myself.

ENJOIMEN: Oh, Sire!

SIR EDWARDS: That is not what I meant and you know it.

ENJOIMEN: And Sire, what about Lady Susan? Ouch, Sire ... ow.

SIR EDWARDS: Keep your voice down, you blithering fool. Emmengarde . . .

ENJOIMEN: Very well, Sire.

SIR EDWARDS: Pray, what do you think Lady Emmengarde might be thinking, trying to kill me like that?

ENJOIMEN: Well, Sire, it is not always easy to tell what Lady Emmengarde is thinking.

SIR EDWARDS: Hm. How perceptive of you, Enjoimen. Now, enough of this. We shall go to the lodge tonight. I shall ride ahead and you shall follow with the horses

and two servants.

ENJOIMEN: Very good,Sire.

SCENE III: Through the Houses

STAGE RIGHT: LADY SUSAN's *balcony*. CENTER UPSTAGE: *arched kitchen door of LADY SUSAN's manor..* STAGE LEFT: *arched, double doors of the estate chapel.* DOWNSTAGE RIGHT: *a table where MADAM BREST O'PLENTY, the court astrologer is seated. On the table sits an inkwell, a quill, and a piece of parchment.* LADY SUSAN *enters* , breathless, STAGE RIGHT *and seats herself at the table.*

MDM BREST O'PLENTY: Come in, come in, my dear. Come and sit. What troubles thee?

LADY SUSAN: I must consult you, Madam Brest O'Plenty. I swore that if my difficulties had not been resolved by the night of the full moon, I would come to you.

MDM BREST O'PLENTY You seem distraught, m'lady. What seems to be the problem?

LADY SUSAN: I was quite hoping that you might be able to inform me. Might we consult the planets?

MDM BREST O'PLENTY Why, yes! Yes, of course. (MADAME BREST O'PLENTY *rummages behind her and places on the table a protractor, and begins charting.*)

MDM BREST O'PLENTY: Mmmmm.

LADY SUSAN: Yes?

MDM BREST O'PLENTY: Oh, my . . .

LADY SUSAN: What is it?

MDM BREST O'PLENTY: (*She takes in a sharp breath*) Indeed!

LADY SUSAN: (*Getting very anxious now*) What is it, Madam? What do you see?

MDM BREST O'PLENTY: Let me see. You have a transit occurring thatYes. Here is your Sun. The fourth house. The house of the home. And here. Uranus in the twelfth house. Mmmm.

LADY SUSAN: What is it? Does this not bode well for me?

MDM BREST O'PLENTY: Mmm. Liberation. Refreshing and favorable paths. Helping others. But not before a painful encounter. (*She pauses*) Pisces is strong.

LADY SUSAN: Yes?

MDM BREST O'PLENTY: . . . what is illusory for others brings into being something quite genuine for you.

LADY SUSAN: Are you saying this is all a reverie?

MDM BREST O'PLENTY: Quite the opposite. Fear not, my dear. You know what you are doing is right. Mmmm. And here. Moon conjunct Jupiter.

LADY SUSAN: Thus. . . ?

MDM BREST O'PLENTY: You have a guardian angel. All you need to do is to continue to listen to the wisdom of the planets, my dear. And listen with your heart. The moon and the stars guide you.

LADY SUSAN: What I'm doing is right. Pisces. Thank you, Madam Brest O'Plenty. Thank you ever so much. Now I must go and check on my daughters.

LADY SUSAN *walks toward her balcony. She calls to her children:*

LADY SUSAN: Rosebud! Marie? Are you within?

SIR RINGWOLD, *played by the same actor as ROBERT HAMPSHIRE in ACT II, enters through the balcony doors.*

SIR RINGWOLD: I am here, Lady Susan. How lovely to see you.

LADY SUSAN: Ringwold?! What brings you here?

SIR RINGWOLD: *(As she speaks, he comes down the steps quickly and faces LADY SUSAN. RINGWOLD tries to hold her hands, but she pulls away.)* Ah, Your Ladyship.

You are vital to the continuance of my heartbeat. My seat of passion. My center of being. I visualize your every movement. Please, let us away to your chambers where we can reawaken moments of bliss.

LADY SUSAN: I pray thee tell me, Ringwold: art thou so bold? You may think this a kind favor to pursue my affections yet again, but it is of no courtesy to me. I shall not compromise myself; I've discovered the truth about you. I wish there to be nothing betwixt us.

SIR RINGWOLD: *(He raises his eyebrows in surprise and delight.)* Indeed, m'lady! *(He begins unbuttoning his codpiece)*

LADY SUSAN: No, Ringwold! Enough! Take your leave.

SIR RINGWOLD: Are you dismissing me? It cannot be. You are my sweet.

LADY SUSAN: No longer.

SIR RINGWOLD: My delicacy. My morsel.

LADY SUSAN: Take note, good knight, that I do not melt in your presence.

SIR RINGWOLD: But you are the eternal flame in my heart.

LADY SUSAN: Quite the contrary, good sir. Your flame burns on passion alone and it matters not the identity of the recipient — your affections are as mutable as a wildfire in the wind. It is not me whom you seek; rather, any young maid would do. I stand fast and hold true to myself. I beg, fare thee well.

SIR EDWARDS *enters STAGE LEFT watches from the edge of the wings.* SIR RINGWOLD *begins to take his exit by crossing the entire stage.*

SIR RINGWOLD: I am dismayed by your protestations. (RINGWOLD *wraps his arms around her and eagerly tries to kiss her*) Oh, you fair creature. (*Predatorily*) Come now, give us a kiss.

LADY SUSAN: (*She pushes him away and turns her face away from him*) I shall do no such thing. Quit thy cunning act that you bestow upon all the maids. I reject thy wish for conquest over me. When compared to your folly, I see that it is love, not lust, that will give me the abundance and richness that I seek. (*With pain*) I now see that I have been had by you.

SIR RINGWOLD: (*Aside, with cunning*) Yes, I had you.

LADY SUSAN: Please, take your leave.

SIR RINGWOLD: (*Stepping back*) Oh, Mistress Herehence, your words cause such damage; you inflict pain upon my heart. You may believe otherwise, but you captivate me. I shan't ever stop wishing for your love.

LADY SUSAN: Indeed. Be sure to repeat those words to the scullery maid when next you see her.

SIR RINGWOLD: (*Eyebrows shooting up in surprise, then regaining composure*) Dost thou mistrust me? Thy injurious words seep deeply to the center of my soul. How can it be? I humbly beg your forgiveness.

LADY SUSAN: Please, Ringwold. Enough. (LADY SUSAN *exits through the balcony doors.*)

SIR RINGWOLD: (*Sadly*) I shall take your leave, Madam. But not without melancholy.

He begins to exit STAGE LEFT, sees SIR EDWARDS and stops. SIR RINGWOLD scrutinizes SIR EDWARDS, and then exits. ENJOIMEN joins SIR EDWARDS and the two walk CENTER STAGE.

SIR EDWARDS: Quite. That creature was Sir Ringwold's horse after all, Enjoimen. You again prove yourself a perceptive lad.

ENJOIMEN: Thank you, Sire. Shall you go in, Sire, to speak with Lady Susan?

SIR EDWARDS: I think today that perhaps you should go in. I would not wish to embarrass her Ladyship in any way. You, however, may. Tell her that I am out of sorts and I need some guidance from Lady Susan. *(He pauses)* Enjoimen, you will go to the southern door, and ask for entry.

ENJOIMEN: But, Sire, wouldn't it be better if YOU were the one asking for entry? You are, after all, the one who wants to be with Lady Susan.

SIR EDWARDS: I do entreat you. Hurry up and do as I ask, so that we might be able to escape Lady Emmengarde's reproach.

ENJOIMEN *goes to the south door at UPSTAGE CENTER and knocks. A plain, but lovely, scullery maid comes to the door.*

ENJOIMEN: I . . . I . . . ah . . . um. . . . *(He turns to look at Sir Edwards and shrugs his shoulders. Sir Edwards motions for him to go in. Enjoimen turns back to the maid.)*

SCULLERY MAID: *(Curtseying)* How'd ye do, sir? May I help?

ENJOIMEN: *(Puffing up his chest.)* Wench, I've been told I must enter the south door.

SCULLERY MAID: *(Looks over both shoulders, and squeals.)* Aye!! Do enter! *(She grabs ENJOIMEN by the wrists and tries to pull him within. He pulls away.)*

ENJOIMEN: *(Running back to SIR EDWARDS)* Sire, I find myself experiencing something new. What could it be?

SIR EDWARDS: It's a woman, Enjoimen. Go and ask for entry and we shall be on our way.

ENJOIMEN: What, sire? You couldn't mean?! Oh, Sire, a feeling envelops me. I . . .

I'm afraid that if I go in, happen what will, I may choose never to come out.

SIR EDWARDS: Enjoimen, what are you saying? Come on, come on. This shouldn't take forever.

ENJOIMEN: It is possible that it may, Sire. But as you say, Sire, let's not speak of forever, shall we? *(He takes SIR EDWARDS hand and shakes it enthusiastically and turns to the scullery maid.)* I shall be sure to tell Lady Susan that you wish to see her, Sire. Good luck to you. *(To the scullery maid)* Now where were we, miss? Ah, yes. I wish to gain entry through your south door.

SCULLERY MAID: Oooo, indeed, kind sir! Come with me! *(She grabs his hands, and, as before, pulls him within. This time she succeeds and slams the doors.)*

SIR EDWARDS *stands, bewildered, and walks about in disbelief.*

SIR EDWARDS: What? What is this? I do not understand. I fear I may have lost Enjoimen to . . . to a woman!

LADY SUSAN *appears at her balcony.*

LADY SUSAN: Edwards? You wish to see me? Are you all right?

SIR EDWARDS: Yes! Yes, Lady Susan! I beseech you, allow me to speak with you.

LADY SUSAN *comes down from the balcony and joins SIR EDWARDS CENTER STAGE.*

LADY SUSAN: What is it, m'lord? Is it Emmengarde?

SIR EDWARDS: Yes. . . I mean, no. It is Enjoimen, m'lady. *(Earnestly)* I fear I have lost him. He has been by my side since I rescued him from the bustling markets of

the East. I knew when I first saw him that I could not leave him in the streets to fend for himself. I knew I could nurture and guide him, and cultivate his skills as a page. But he craved a closeness that I could not give. I did not know he would move on.

An arrow goes whizzing past the two. LADY SUSAN grabs SIR EDWARDS by the hand, and pulls him toward chapel doors at CENTER STAGE. As they stand on the front steps of the estate chapel, they lean against the doors, breathing hard.

SIR EDWARDS: Where is Enjoimen when I need him?

LADY SUSAN: Hush't. Stand close! (*Whispering.*) You're nearly pierced with an arrow, and your first thought is of Enjoimen?

SIR EDWARDS: Grief and fear surround me, m'lady. Enjoimen has abandoned me. And I cannot foresee the depths of Lady Emmengarde's reproach. And the emergence of Sir Ringwold from your castle. I am confused. My thoughts come, but not in order.

LADY SUSAN: Worry not about Sir Ringwold, for he is unconscionable, merciless, and cunning. We are at holy place. Let us go within to seek mercy and guidance for love's sake. And, Sir Edwards, have faith that Sir Ringwold would fry and burn at the doors of a church.

A noise startles the two.

SIR EDWARDS: Emmengarde! Quickly! We must away! (*SIR EDWARDS falls to his knees* CENTER STAGE.)

LADY SUSAN: Why prayeth you?

SIR EDWARDS: I have many practical points to consider, m'lady. 'Tis possible that Lady

Emmengarde will have me ousted from my estate, which my father often reminded me was founded by my Saxon ancestors. I could continue to live at the hunting lodge, but I would be alone.

LADY SUSAN: Why, you could live here with me.

SIR EDWARDS: But I have yet to truly woo you. How long would that take?

LADY SUSAN: (*Aside*) Oh, resist it, Susan! It is the Tempter. But nay! Only I know what I feel. 'Tis true love. (*To SIR EDWARDS*) You need not woo me. 'Tis already done. I love thee.

SIR EDWARDS: You would be willing to take such tremendous risks for me?

LADY SUSAN: Naturally. Even if it means that I am the one who fries and burns at the church doors.

SIR EDWARDS: No one has ever loved me this way before.

LADY SUSAN: Nor I. I have heard the sadness in your heart, the honest love you feel. You need not worry. I will be by your side. Enjoimen is a fine lad and he will always be there for you, too.

SIR EDWARDS: But he has left me.

LADY SUSAN: Fear not. He is a true friend. He will do what is best for himself, and you will gain confidence knowing that what you have done helped him achieve what he longed for. You gave him something that he might not otherwise have had. You passed along your experience, and he is a better man for it. It will come back to you.

SIR EDWARDS: I am confused. What you say is about loyalty . . . and reciprocity. Everything you say . . . you speak Truth. You . . . you are . . . (*Taking her by the hands*) I know not how it happened, m'lady, but I . . . I have fallen in love with you. It happened quite by accident, I assure you.

LADY SUSAN: Although I perceive your capacity for love and understanding, how am I to know if your intentions are true? You have a wife, dear sir, and although my

feelings for you pose equal measure, I know not what to do.

SIR EDWARDS: I know not, either. I am, however, resolute in my feelings for you, m'lady. I can only say that I wish us to be together. Forever. I love thee.

LADY SUSAN: I know not what to say.

Suddenly, from the edge of the wood UPSTAGE LEFT, LADY EMMENGARDE, dressed as a man, sneaks up behind Sir Edwards and holds a blade to his neck.

EMMENGARDE: I'll tell thee what to say. Confess thy service to witchcraft, wench!

Admit that you have bewitched my husband and caused domestic strife. *(She doubles over with stomach cramps and cries out in pain)* Why else comest thou hither, husband? The business that thou hast with Lady Susan is sorcery, is it not?

SIR EDWARDS: Not sorcery no. But the spirits have touched us. We have experienced the sublime.

EMMENGARDE: Silence! I do not want to hear it! *(She cries out in pain again as she holds her stomach)*

SIR EDWARDS: M'Lady! What pains you?

EMMENGARDE: You! *You* cause me every morsel of distress. Trying to replace that cat for my Baby'. I found Baby's body in the privy! How dare thee?!

SIR EDWARDS: *(He looks as far left as he can without moving his neck)* How is it that you are here? What do you intend?

EMMENGARDE: You answer me not! I want . . . *(She cries out in pain)*

SIR EDWARDS: What is wrong, Wife?

EMMENGARDE: I, husband, intended to feed you with the sustenance you so deserved.

SIR EDWARDS: What mean you?

EMMENGARDE: Our cook offered me mead, then fed me a vile fish of my own making.

SIR EDWARDS: Whatever do you mean?

LADY SUSAN: (*Gasping and serious*) A fish? Vile? (*She hesitates as if recalling something*) Pieces will be strong . . .vile! Evil! You! You were going to poison him! (*To SIR EDWARDS, with levity*) And you. Must you call her 'Wife', Sir Edwards? You cannot love me truly *and* allow her to continue her title of 'Wife'.

SIR EDWARDS *looks back and forth several times to LADY SUSAN and LADY EMMENGARDE.*

SIR EDWARDS: (*Knife still at his throat; to LADY SUSAN*) Just a moment, my love. (*To EMMENGARDE*) You intended to feed me a poisoned fish? Surely you did not want to kill me.

EMMENGARDE: Indeed I did! And next time, I shall be sure to use more than that insignificant dram given to me by that cursed apothecary.

SIR EDWARDS: There will not be a next time, Emmengarde; I intend . . .

EMMENGARDE: That will be Ganymede to you, Sir Edwards. By mine honor, for once you are right: there will not need be a next time, for I have chosen to live my life in the wood, without the burden and humiliation thou hath issued me.

LADY SUSAN: He wished not to humiliate you . . .

EMMENGARDE: (*For a moment, she takes the knife from SIR EDWARDS throat and points it at LADY SUSAN*) You! You stay out of this you sluttish imp!

LADY SUSAN: Had you treated him as one should treat a hu . . .

SIR EDWARDS: I beseech you!

EMMENGARDE: Beseech me, indeed! (*She places the knife on his throat again*)

SIR EDWARDS: Lady Susan is right. My intention was not to make you falter, but attempt to know myself. I knew no constancy from thee (*Aside*) only constant railings. But Lady Susan has taught another form of constancy. I need . . .

EMMENGARDE: I take little delight in your needs, Sir Edwards.

LADY SUSAN: You must listen to reason.

EMMENGARDE: Reason? There is no reason! Thou hast brought me to ruin.

(Emotionally, to SIR EDWARDS) You react not to my words, nor my pleas. You bring upon me an anger that equals the wrath of the gods. You make me want to — *(through clenched teeth)* to . . . kill you! *(Emotionally again)* But tried though I have — elixirs and potions, arrows and poisons — you will not die for me.

(Stands up, resolute) Therefore, I have chosen to love Elena now. I think I might have chosen you, Lady Susan, but it seems my husband picked you first. It is all for the best. Elena and I shall live out our lives in the forest. *(Deviously)* I would, however, like to give it one last go. For you lovers: I shower upon you the gift of love!

EMMENGARDE *throws out a ball of white powder that covers the two*; SIR EDWARDS and LADY SUSAN *collapse to the ground and are left lying unconscious*,

CENTER STAGE. EMMENGARDE, *laughing maniacally, and exits through the woods, UPSTAGE LEFT*. LADY SUSAN, *struggles to her feet, and follows EMMENGARDE*.

ENJOIMEN *enters through the southern door, UPSTAGE CENTER*.

ENJOIMEN *sees SIR EDWARDS, picks up his head, begins mopping his brow, and talking to him in soothing tones*. ENJOIMEN *is clearly concerned for his master*.

SIR EDWARDS: *(Eyes closed, still a little delirious)* Ha, there now, it will take more than some white dust to stop me! Or a few arrows, or even a poison fish! Yes, I know I should be dead, but . . .

ENJOIMEN: Sire, steady yourself. You need to rest.

SIR EDWARDS: *(Eyes opening)* My darling, is that you?

ENJOIMEN: *(Blushing slightly, eye lids batting)* Yes, Sire, it is.

SIR EDWARDS: *(Suddenly gaining consciousness)* Enjoimen! No, not you, you oaf!

Lady Susan. Where is she?

ENJOIMEN: She is not here, Sire.

SIR EDWARDS: How can that be? She was here just a moment ago.

ENJOIMEN: Perhaps she left with Sir Ringwold or her husband.

SIR EDWARDS: What on earth do you mean? She told me that she was done with Sir Ringwold and her husband is dead.ⁱ Is he not? Enjoimen? (*Sir Edwards rises to his feet.*)

ENJOIMEN: Sire. You are recovered! You are so strong. I thought for one moment (*tears come into Enjoimen's eyes*) that I had lost you.

SIR EDWARDS: And I you, my boy. I'm happy to see you, lad, but enough of this sissying. By mine honor, I am a man smitten. What speakest thou of Lady Susan having left with Ringwold or her husband? Sir Barter Herehence? He is dead! You serve me with a bad trick.

ENJOIMEN: The scullery maid told me everything, Sire. We thought he had died in the War, Sire, but apparently he became interested in breeding horses and he purchased an island in the Red Sea where he breeds them and sells them to princes throughout the kingdom.

SIR EDWARDS: And he didn't see fit to tell Lady Susan?

ENJOIMEN: Nay. I fear he remained there for some years. Then news arrived of Sir Ringwold's attentions, and he flew into a fury and rode 3,000 leagues . . .

SIR EDWARDS: To reclaim Lady Susan!

ENJOIMEN: Forsooth, Sire, 'twould be reasonable, but apparently not. He believed that Sir Ringwold might sell off the stables, and he had hoped to bring back some of his prize stallions. The thought of Sir Ringwold eyeing his breeding stock drove him to distraction.

SIR EDWARDS: Ha! His breeding stock. In my conscience, I had knowledge that Sir Barter Herehence was mad. What of Lady Susan? Does this man not know beauty

and truth? Does he not know what he had?

ENJOIMEN: Apparently not, Sire. 'Tis rumored he keeps a retinue of boys.

SIR EDWARDS: Boys? Enjoimen, you are not thinking of leaving me again, are you?

ENJOIMEN: Forsooth, Sire, no!

SIR EDWARDS: Let me be advised, Enjoimen: what happened to me?

ENJOIMEN: You do not remember, Sire?

SIR EDWARDS: I do not. That is why I asked, is it not?

ENJOIMEN: Is it not, what?

SIR EDWARDS: What?

ENJOIMEN: That's what I said, Sire!

SIR EDWARDS: Sometimes, Enjoimen, I could almost take a whip to you.

ENJOIMEN: Oh, Sire! Oil me first!

SIR EDWARDS: Enjoimen! You are in heat today, I swear. And I am undone!

ENJOIMEN: *(Looking to Sir Edwards' codpiece)* Sire, allow me. *(His hand reaches forward to Sir Edwards' codpiece)*

SIR EDWARDS: Off you, you Nancy Boy! You rascal! Now tell me, what happened?

ENJOIMEN: Lady Susan's husband and Sir Ringwold. When the scullery maid took me to the woods. . .

SIR EDWARDS: The maid took you to the woods? Enjoimen, my boy! I knew you had potential . . .

ENJOIMEN: I'm afraid not, Sire. But when she took me there, I saw Sir Ringwold and Sir Herehence fighting madly about the stallions.

SIR EDWARDS: Where are they now?

ENJOIMEN: Gone, Sire. I watched them argue and fight until they disappeared over Dragon Hill. It appeared they would not be coming back soon.

SIR EDWARDS: So all is not lost?

ENJOIMEN: I'm afraid 'lost' would be the appropriate word, Sire, yes. Lady

Emmengarde . . .

SIR EDWARDS: 'Zounds! I knew she'd be back for vengeance.

ENJOIMEN: No, Sire. She and Lady Elena were wandering around the forest, completely unfit to find their way back. They looked lost, indeed. I saw them clinging to one another and tried to shout out to them, but they were unable to hear me.

SIR EDWARDS: (*Aside*) She never did hear anything anyone ever said. Could it not be better, Enjoimen?!

ENJOIMEN: She is not going to ...?

SIR EDWARDS: She is not.

ENJOIMEN: Is not ...?

SIR EDWARDS: Indeed.

ENJOIMEN: Sire?

SIR EDWARDS: Spare me thy inquisitions. Let me explain: I am free to . . . (*at this point the sound of hooves approaching causes Sir Edwards to turn. Enter LADY SUSAN.*)

SIR EDWARDS: Lady Susan. My true love!

LADY SUSAN: (*LADY SUSAN smiles and walks close to SIR EDWARDS. She removes her riding glove and runs a finger down his cheek*) They are gone.

SIR EDWARDS: Yes, yes. Enjoimen was just explaining. Herehence and Ringwold; Emmengarde and Elena. But . . .wait! How did you know?

LADY SUSAN: Let us just say that I have been given a choice, and I have made mine.

SIR EDWARDS: What do you mean?

ENJOIMEN: (*Shuffling about uneasily and whistling*) Sire, I think she means. . .

SIR EDWARDS: If you thought just once a day, Enjoimen, I would mind not.

ENJOIMEN: I thought, Sire, that I might take a stroll and perhaps, gather some flowers.

SIR EDWARDS: Gather some flowers?!

ENJOIMEN: (*Enjoimen fixes Sir Edwards with a firm glare*) Yes, Sire. I would gather some flowers while you ...

SIR EDWARDS: Quite. Yes. A splendid idea. You gather some flowers.

ENJOIMEN *exits*.

SIR EDWARDS: I fear I do not understand. What choice? Are you leaving with Ringwold? Your husband Herehence?

LADY SUSAN: Fear not, Sir Edwards. *I* feared that if I opened my heart one more time, that my humors would come spilling out, and there, at the very end of my entrails, would be my heart, broken and wounded, but still throbbing — trodden on, but still wanting love. I had to make a choice: to stop loving, or to put forth my trust. I cannot stop loving. I have my daughters whom I love tremendously. And when I met you, Sir Edwards, . . . I knew not what to do. No one had ever pledged himself to me and equaled my belief in constancy. Therefore, what of us? What shall we do?

SIR EDWARDS: Let us live out our lives together, m'lady.

LADY SUSAN: In faith, are you true?

SIR EDWARDS: Put forth your trust. Forsooth, m'lady, if my love were represented as a noise you'd be deaf; a color, you'd be blind; a cup of tea, you'd be peeing for eternity.

LADY SUSAN: Peeing, Sir Edwards? Now that you mention it, hast thou a chamber pot? I must go.

SIR EDWARDS: No, no. I mean my love for you overflows.

LADY SUSAN: Yes, I understand. Mine, too. With all my heart.

SIR EDWARDS: Let us away, then. Perhaps a farm. A farm, yes. Away from

noise. Where we would be hay farmers. Can you not see it, m'lady? We could make hay, day after day after day —

MARY *and* ROSEBUD *enter* STAGE RIGHT.

MARY/ROSEBUD: Mother! Sir Edwards!

MARY *goes and stands next to the two of them.*

ROSEBUD: Here you are, Mother! Finally! We've come to tell you: we found the card.

You were right. It could not be just any old Edward; it was Edward I. Good king Longshanks. (*She looks back at ROSEBUD who encouragingly nods*) But it appears that you have chosen an Edwards of your own.

MARY *walks between the two of them, takes their hands, and places them together.*

LADY SUSAN *looks down at her daughter and smiles.*

MARY: You have found the true King of Hearts.

[Finis.]

APPENDIX

Circles, Spirals, and Other Journey Pathways

Dorothy Parker once said that life isn't one thing after another; it's the same damned thing over and over. She was partially correct in her assessment — life's journey is circular — but perhaps the sphere is more spiral in shape: each time we go around, the circle rises and the view broadens, allowing us incrementally to expand our understanding of life. Such is the case in *By Degrees*, a play in three acts that depicts a woman who slowly learns her life lessons over three time periods: the 1850s, the 1950s, and the 1610s. Although each era presents very different expectations for women, the character's journey toward independence occurs despite the limitations of the time period. The character becomes more conscious of her choices; each time she becomes slightly more aware of her power to choose, her limitations become freedoms, responsibilities become pleasure, discontent becomes fulfillment. As she progresses through the different time periods, she changes from Susannah to Suzanne to Lady Susan, and experiences different kinds of relationships, both romantic and maternal, to eventually discover that she has found serenity in love, in motherhood, and especially in herself. She learns of her own capabilities “by degrees”; in each act she increasingly cognizant of her choices, and consequently, in her last lifetime, she chooses what is most appropriate for herself and becomes more content with her surroundings and circumstances.

In structure and style, each of the three acts of the play works toward increasing enlightenment. Drawing from literature of the 19th century, Act I chronicles the life of a commonplace housewife of the 1850s who is controlled by her environment. Susannah must sustain her family on a barren island many miles offshore while her husband keeps the lighthouse; her inner anguish over seeking “sustenance”, both physical and emotional,

culminates in desperation and an attempt to exercise her free will. Her environment and her family manage to thwart her feeble attempts at trying to provide herself with a solution for her yearnings. The naturalistic genre of Act I appropriately depicts the themes of survival and determinism, but there are moments when Susannah's daughter Chloe represents sentimental innocence and didactic morality. Although she gives Susannah opportunities to find fulfillment in God's will, this only creates more tension, because it is not sentimental Providence that Susannah seeks; instead, in spite of what she has been conditioned to believe, she attempts to know a more adventurous, more fulfilling life.

Naturalism allows for a particular bleakness in Act I: the family, from the lower middle class, generally cannot conceive of any other way of life, primarily because of their relationship to their surroundings. This is especially true for Susannah who is held back by her own limitations. In this sense, the genre itself creates the dramatic tension: Susannah is a product of her environment. We cannot moralize her behavior; we need only observe her circumstances and desire to find meaning in her life. Simply put, naturalism places this woman in a most basic struggle: herself against the forces of nature and circumstance, and it represents a basis from which our character can build. Therefore, Act I presents us with our heroine at the bottom of the spiral, a place from where she cannot yet see her way out.

Susannah is propelled into modern life in Act II as Suzanne, a young black student at Ohio State University. Act II's structure specifically mirrors Adrienne Kennedy's play *The Ohio State Murders*, with the present Suzanne Alexander narrating her experiences of the past. The structure works to parallel our character's new surroundings, one where she understands her limitations, in this case her race, but can reflect upon them in a way that Susannah could not. This character mirroring technique shows the progression of the character and her increasing awareness. This self-conscious reflection also exacerbates the tragic plot line, because it is the character in her adulthood analyzing and narrating the reasons for the choices she made in her youth. The structure works as a transition phase

for our heroine: although we know Suzanne of the present has learned her lesson from what happened to her during those fateful encounters with Robert Hampshire so many years before, the Suzanne of 1950, like Susannah, is still dangerously vulnerable, and her decisions reflect this. With the inaction of Susannah in Act I moving into the passive action of Act II, Suzanne's choice to run away provides the movement required to force the protagonist to her next phase.

Act III differs stylistically from the first two acts. Where the first two acts reveal the protagonist as she is caught up in the drama of her own life, Act III unveils Lady Susan, a woman who is resolute in the protection of herself and her daughters. The comedic Jacobean style allows a release from deeply moral codes. Although we see Sir Edwards trying to adhere to this conventional mindset in scene i, Lady Susan's emergence as an individual is borne from the comedic, less conventional plot line. There is a celebratory tone at work, inspired not only by the Jacobean dramatists, but also by Caryl Churchill's plays *Top Girls* and *Cloud Nine*. Churchill's work influenced the overall structure of *By Degrees*; the product reflects character movement over three time periods and three dramatic styles: melodramatic, dramatic, and comedic, respectively.

The structure of the play should be portrayed through repetitive characterization as it emphasizes the protagonist's continual encounters with similar types of people. Because Suzanne in Act II is portrayed as an African American woman, casting will be at the director's discretion. It would be possible to have one woman play all three parts, or between acts, each woman could representatively pass along what she has learned in her past lifetime. For example, Susannah could place a piece of jewelry or other costuming on Suzanne, and likewise between Suzanne, and Lady Susan. However the director chooses to portray the heroine, it should be clear to the audience that it is a "handing off" of experience from one lifetime to another. Other characters will also have dual roles: Clement Barter from Act I "reappears" as Sir Barter Herehence in Act III; Robert Hampshire from Act II reenters as Sir Ringwold in Act III; and Chloe from Act I becomes Mary in Act III.

Although the protagonist has forsaken her wishes and ideals for these others in earlier acts, she does not do so in Act III, demonstrating the movement she has experienced along the journey.

Thematically, each act addresses a different stage in the heroine's growth. The Barter family of Act I is a family governed by their environment, desires, and instincts. As a young wife, Susannah resigns herself to her life on the island. As time goes on, however, she feels the desire to move off the island so that she might experience more of the world. When Susannah receives letters from her sister, we see a Susannah who hopes for the possibility to see a world which she has never seen before. She cannot pinpoint exactly why she suffers, or what she seeks, but she knows she must follow the inkling. When she does attempt to make a change, she is left behind.

Chloe possesses an innocent quality about her and shoulders the responsibility of her mother's unhappiness and suffering with courage. It is obvious even early in the play, however, that the mother and daughter have very different beliefs about life. Chloe attempts to answer some of Susannah's questions of belonging by telling her that she is fulfilling God's will. Susannah responds by saying, "If my life had gone the way God's will had intended, we would have been washed away in the past two storms" (I, i). Susannah's fatalistic attitude collides with Chloe's religiously optimistic viewpoint.

Clement, too, tries to understand Susannah, but his scope of interpretation is limited by his expectations that one is put on the earth to work — work that must be fulfilled without question. For him, Susannah's incessant questioning of life and hope for getting off the island merely place more constraints on him. Susannah's need for "sustenance" and "nourishment" (I, iv) make no sense to him; he believes himself to be a good provider; and he is — on a physical level. But Clement cannot access his emotions; instead, he concerns himself with what is tangible, and therefore explainable. From his point of view, what Susannah wants is neither tangible nor explainable, and therefore Clement objects to her longing for a different way of life.

Act I reveals the first stage in Suzanne's struggle up the spiral. The characters in Act I cannot be judged for their actions; their environment governs their movements — or lack of movement. Susannah Barter's situation is oppressive, but it is not necessarily Clement who oppresses her; it is her circumstances. Her life is constantly influenced by her wish to get off of the island, but her yearnings should not be judged; she desires something but cannot identify it. We cannot admonish her husband Clement either, for he is controlled by his need to maintain the family and clearly operates within what he sees as the confines of his abilities. He recognizes that he has a role to fulfill, and he expects others to fulfill their roles as well. "That lighthouse must stay lit every day and every night . . . You can't go anywhere . . . you've got work to do" (I, iii – iv). Susannah's hunger keeps her from being able to fulfill those expectations without losing her emotional balance, so she seeks various ways within her environment to get control over her feelings of want. She examines religion as a possible explanation; she attempts to express her dissatisfaction through writing; she even tries convincing her husband to get off the island and begin a new life. None of those solutions work, because she cannot yet identify her own yearnings. Susannah represents the first in a building of an incrementally resolute character.

The cyclical nature of Susannah and Clement's conversations mirrors Susannah's confined movements on the island. The relationship between husband and wife shifts very little even though Susannah constantly raises the possibilities for alternative lifestyles. Each time she reexamines their living situation, another, repeated conversation occurs between Susannah and Clement; there is no progression, for she is going in circles. She manifests the thoughts of her fettered mind into her actions at the end of Act I when the stage directions call for Susannah to "pace in a circle" (I, iv). Her efforts toward progressive movement are continually squelched, primarily because she does not understand that she has the power to create her own changes.

Susannah must live vicariously through others; her own movements are so limited by her circumstances that she must move through Chloe and her sister. The letters that Susannah receives from her sister act as torturous reminders that there is a world to be seen and experienced. When Chloe leaves, Susannah makes the excuse that she must be a good mother and follow Chloe, but really Susannah cannot bear the thought of being left behind. This foreshadows Act II, scene iii, in which Robert Hampshire states, “Even Thel should have taken the risk and been born”. Susannah feebly attempts to give birth to a new life by leaving the island with Chloe, but she does not have the courage to take the risk on her own.

Susannah’s relationship with Chloe is a complex one. She wants her love for her daughter to nurture her as much as it nurtures Chloe, but we see early on that Chloe is very much like her father. She doesn’t understand Susannah’s dislike for the island; she also differs from her mother in viewpoint. Chloe believes that God has set each of them on a path and they are to fulfill God’s will while Susannah is much more fatalistic. She tries to reason that she must have set herself on this unfulfilling path, but realizes that it could not have been solely her choice that put her in this place. “. . . I suppose that’s the way the world is. You set yourself on a path, then Providence takes over. Sometimes you don’t know when your own choices stop and the Lord’s begin” (I,i). Susannah wishes to be connected to Chloe and Clement, but realizes that they have wishes and desires that from her own. Susannah’s fear that her daughter will leave manifests when Murray comes to take her away from the island. Chloe states: “Father and Murray are checking the boat now and preparing it for our departure . . . I’m going down to the boathouse” (I, iv). No longer does Chloe represent the obedient child; instead she represents movement off the island — everything Susannah wants for herself but cannot attain. In turn, Susannah tries to claim Chloe as her maternal possession. “I’m going with Chloe . . . Murray is robbing me of the one cherished treasure I have: our Chloe” (I,iv). Chloe is all she has now she is losing her.

The issues regarding possession and ownership were heating up in the 1850s as the issues of slavery came to the fore. Although those issues would have reached Susannah through the news, Clement and Susannah must struggle with the issues of possession within their own environment, especially the limitations of indenture to others. Clement is acutely aware of his service to the Coast Guard and the captains and sailors who count on him to mark the dangers of the coastline. He maintains his duty to the Coast Guard by maintaining the post of the lighthouse keeper; his daily regimen was dictated by protecting others against the sea. Because Susannah so desperately wishes for something more — she believes it is to travel — Clement feels he needs to provide these same sorts of warnings to his wife. Chloe, as a child, observes her mother's awareness of the hierarchy and follows through with this when she plays with her doll. As a young adult, Chloe recognizes the customary rules of becoming a young wife and mother and chooses not to question her future. She is, in that way, more of her father's daughter; she does what is expected of her, whereas Susannah longs to have a voice in her own destiny, but seems unable to do so.

Susannah, too, represents a possession. At the end of Act I, we see the effects of Susannah's role as Clement's wife: she cannot be an individual; she is part of a complex system of island life — a commodity within herself. Without her, the island cannot run smoothly. This act, however, should not be seen as feministic in any way. It is not Clement who holds Susannah back, but more appropriately, Susannah and her environment are what keep her from realizing her individuality. The yield of the garden and sea are far from plentiful, and Susannah feels herself on the brink of starvation; if not physically, then emotionally. Susannah makes an attempt at fulfillment and self-expression by writing a poem, but when Clement reads the letter aloud, we see his questioning behavior, and observe part of the reason for the imprisonment she feels.

Therefore, Act I explores possession of another kind: possession of the mind. Susannah's disorderly conduct at the end of Act I represents the real antagonist. Her

momentary madness shows how terribly vulnerable she really is, as the limitations in her mind spawn hysteria and hysteria, in turn, spawns more imprisonment. Her feelings render her not only vulnerable but perhaps helpless in front of Clement. Clement believes that the chaos upsetting his world could really be restored to order in the end. We don't have a definitive ending for Susannah and Clement, but hysteria operates as a transformation — one that Susannah undergoes because of her need to leave the island. In Act II, her character shifts to Suzanne, and she becomes somewhat more empowered by creating change within her own life through education and choice of action.

Suzanne in Act II is also motivated by her emotions and needs, but unlike Susannah in Act I, Suzanne has broadened her scope of experience. Suzanne goes “in circles”, much as Susannah does; she continually gets lost on the college campus. Her environment does not confine her the way Susannah's does, but her black heritage does keep her from realizing all that she dreams of, especially in her education. But Suzanne has an internal strength that Susannah doesn't, and realizes that she can be more creative with her life. Although she believes that she must wait for others to define her circumstances, Suzanne believes in herself in a way that Susannah could not, primarily because Robert Hampshire recognizes her talent and therefore so could she. Suzanne, therefore, represents the transition character.

The genre of modern drama allows a freedom of structure; in this case, we have dual commentary from Suzanne of the present and Suzanne of the past. The structure uses a character mirroring technique to show the progression of the character and her increasing awareness. She explains the conflict and pain surrounding her relationship with Robert Hampshire; her initial experience with Hampshire, and her mature reaction to those experiences acknowledges that this character is complex, and has learned from her experience. The contemporary structure of imagining back to an earlier part of her life shows that the main character will have learned from her experience.

Like Susannah, Suzanne engages in a life that is both dramatic and tragic, and the modern dramatic genre and dual aspect of Suzanne allows us to sympathize with the choices she has made. The two candles on stage also represent the dualities in the play: Suzanne, past and present, her twin daughters, and Suzanne and Robert. When she blows the candles out, she is not only wishing, but also symbolically extinguishes light from each paired set in some way.

Robert Hampshire takes advantage of young Suzanne's undeveloped sense of self and makes her one of the benefits of his new job. He has no intention of ever putting himself on the line for her, academically or otherwise, but he leads her on, and it is in her hopes and imagination that we see this possibility. What Robert Hampshire lacks in his social skills, he compensates for in his intelligence and his gifts for language and literature — gifts that Suzanne also has, but has only begun to explore. Because he recognizes the same in Suzanne, she becomes aware of her own abilities.

Suzanne is a character whose behaviors become increasingly conscious. Suzanne's first lines, spoken off-stage, describe a time that she does not want to remember, but is willing to face. What she practices in her speech in *The Ohio State Murders* is, we can assume, something she does from a conscious level. Each time she speaks from the present and we see subsequent action on stage, the audience is viewing the greatest depth of "truth" from her perception.

Suzanne's choice is more conscious than that of her predecessor, Susannah. Suzanne's choices are not driven by desperation or hysteria; instead, Suzanne chooses — albeit passively — to be with Robert Hampshire. In *Ohio State Murders*, Suzanne clearly states, "I ran into Professor Hampshire at the bookstore on High Street" (46). She also states "On that same path in one year we would meet" (42). They probably first meet in the bookstore, then on the path just before Christmas break. We know that young black women are discouraged from walking on High Street, and we know that Professor

Hampshire's house is above the ravine near High Street. Therefore, it is clear that she had at least some intention of meeting up with him "on the path".

Costumes, lighting, and literary references in Act II are not Adrienne Kennedy's, but were consciously chosen for *By Degrees*. Costuming and lighting reflect Suzanne's transition from innocence to experience. The soft yellow swing coat depicts Suzanne's innocence. This early in the play, Suzanne possesses a purity and hope that are untainted. As the play goes on, costumes become darker, less innocent. During her second encounter with Robert Hampshire, we see her at Hampshire's house in a red sweater, indicating that the first day she was with him her hymen had been broken. When Suzanne meets Hampshire in the first scene, he is holding *Native Son*; *Lolita* would have seemed a better choice because it deals with a professor who uses his power over a young woman who, it could be argued, has shown an interest in him. But the first publication of the novel was not until 1955 in Paris; the novel was not released in the United States until 1958, therefore the reference would have been an anachronism. Wright's *Native Son* addresses the close ties between power and sexuality; in this case the relationship is between a white woman and black man and ends in murder. In *Ohio State Murders*, the roles are reversed: the white man murders the children he has had with Suzanne. Misogyny and miscegenation combine as Robert Hampshire's catalyst for murder.

The scene at Christmas when Suzanne imagines the possibility of her father and Robert Hampshire having a conversation carries several implications: the two men anchor themselves at opposite poles almost immediately regarding their belief systems. In Suzanne's innocent imagination, even her father refers to him as "Professor Hampshire". This also shows her father's conservative mind and foreshadows his disowning Suzanne later. Suzanne's father refers to Charles Wesley, hymn writer and poet of the late 18th century. Wesley disliked power, prominence, and sin as does Suzanne's father. Reverend Alexander makes his stand by mentioning the piety of the Victorian era, an era based in hypocrisy. Hampshire suggests that the Romantics were humanists (something Suzanne

sees in him early on in their relationship), and adds that the Romantics were merely trying to free themselves from an oppressive God. Suzanne struggles to free herself from the relationship she has with her father, a relationship marked by oppression and loss. This is Susannah's struggle in Act I, as well, and like Clement, Suzanne's father doesn't listen to Suzanne. Suzanne, in this scene, wishfully believes that, unlike her father, Hampshire will listen to her. This scene represents Suzanne's hopes that someone will finally hear her rather than try to silence her. Initially this is true, but we know from *The Ohio State Murders*, however, that later he, like Clement, will not take time to listen. The first evidence of his dismissal of Suzanne is when she is with Hampshire in his office, and he does this again when she tells him that she's pregnant. In Act II, Hampshire makes it very clear that she is to remain silent regarding their relationship. Suzanne rightly refers to the sexual encounter between the two of them as having committed the "unspeakable".

Suzanne would have celebrated Christmas as a) she mentions going home for Christmas and b) Kwanzaa was not generated as an African American winter solstice celebration until the 1960s. When Suzanne says that she cannot look away from his eyes any more than the sea could escape the pull of the moon, she is paraphrasing a line from Camillo's speech to Polixenes in Shakespeare's *A Winter's Tale* (I, ii, 427). This is the same pull that Susannah feels in Act I, but cannot identify. Suzanne feels lured toward the traditional fulfillment of yearnings by having a relationship, but it is tainted by Hampshire's exploitation of Suzanne as "exotic". As a transition character, however, she has the opportunities that education have given her; she knows she does not have to stay, and chooses, in the end, to run away from that which oppresses her.

T. H. Huxley's quotation comes from *On the Physical Basis of Life*. This quotation serves two purposes: 1) it is one of the many statements Huxley made defending science and questioning religion, and 2) Suzanne recognizes that some events and philosophies cannot be questioned. This validates her telling of this story: she is living existentially, however briefly, allowing herself to reveal the "truth" with no repercussions

of judgment. Hampshire alludes to Blake's "Book of Thel", in which a virgin struggles with the choice between remaining innocent or coming to Earth and attaining experience. Thel chooses to retreat, but her virginal feet become tainted by Experience. This, of course, is a problem for both Susannah and Suzanne; in this case, Suzanne's subconscious mind validates, through Hampshire, what she will soon experience.

The reference to Jessie Daniel Ames is important because of Ames' advocacy against rape and the social control against African Americans. A suffragist and civil rights activist, Ames was born in 1883 and graduated from Southwestern University in Texas in 1902, an almost unheard of accomplishment for women at the turn of the century. She was widowed in 1914, and her self-sufficiency led her to found and become president of the Texas League of Voters in 1919, one year before the Nineteenth Amendment was passed. Suzanne exhibits this independence at the end of Act II when she leaves Hampshire's house.

Although Suzanne makes her choices passively, she is an active participant in her own seduction. Suzanne cannot resist Hampshire because he gives her what she longs for: acceptance and approval. Robert's initial seduction lies in his compliments about Suzanne's writing. The effect is captivating, irresistible, and titillating for her – feelings for a passion that she has not yet experienced. When Hampshire offers his arm for her to hold, Suzanne looks around to see if anyone is watching; she willingly takes his arm, showing that she goes into the relationship mindfully and willingly aware. Suzanne longs to write – to capture emotions – just as Hardy and Wilde had done. But she's a black woman in a white man's world, which only adds to her disillusionment later. The broken rootbeer lollipops that she dreams about late in the play represent her loss of innocence. Although the hawk metaphor operates as a portrayal of predator and prey, Suzanne still believes that he can show her how to get what she wants and needs. Therefore, Act II portrays not just predator and prey, or rapist and victim, but charming seducer and the target of his affections.

More than charm drives Robert Hampshire's character. Despite his intellect, Hampshire fixates on a mother he never knew; he craves attention and has an explosive temper. In the initial rendezvous at Hampshire's house, Hampshire says to Suzanne, "I loved a woman once. You remind me of her" (II, iii). The statement is purposefully ambiguous; he could be referring to his mother, or the Indian woman he married and divorced. Something in the essence of his being is missing, and the missing pieces from the puzzle of the self-portrait of Vincent Van Gogh represent Hampshire's heart and his mind — Van Gogh, too, suffered from unrequited love. At first, Suzanne sees past these elements, because her life, too, is marked by loss, and she feels an equal need for attention and is needed by him. He demonstrates his desire for Suzanne, but by the end of Act II, she sees the level of lechery embedded in the relationship.

When Suzanne is in Hampshire's study after their second sexual encounter, she sees two novels by Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, as well as Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* — all novels of seduction. "Pamphilia and Amphilanthus" is a poem by Lady Mary Wroth, whose life, like Suzanne's, was marked by the scandal of having illegitimate children. The excerpt from Yeats's poem, "Leda and the Swan," also exemplifies prurient experience. (And how can body, laid in that white rush, / But feel the strange heart beating where it lies? // A shudder in the loins engenders there / The broken wall, the burning roof and tower) . Leda is seduced — or raped — by Zeus, and gives birth to two sets of twins: Castor and Pollux as well as Helen and Clytemnestra.

Suzanne is living in a time of political consciousness and cultural transformation. Suzanne must define what it is that oppresses her. Like Susannah, she runs away from that which oppresses her; all the while, passive or not, she is making her own decisions. She chooses Hampshire because he recognizes her abilities and talents, something that Clement is not capable of with Susannah. But Hampshire is not capable of consummate love, which is what Suzanne expects of him. She makes conscious choices including

choosing Hampshire, but realizes that he is the wrong choice. She runs away — and this time, she escapes.

In Act III, Susannah/Suzanne reappears in Renaissance England. Jacobean drama may seem an unlikely place to depict an independent woman, but the farcical style of the genre permits a lighthearted setting for our enlightened heroine; she herself can enjoy amusement and levity that the two other characters from the other genres do not allow. Renaissance means rebirth; it represents a time of transition, transition from medieval beliefs, including feudalism and the authority of the church, to the modern world of science and classical learning. Artifacts, literature, treasures, and beliefs from the classical period inspired a movement toward a humanistic view of life. Traditional beliefs of the feudal system were giving way to more egalitarian tenets. Moreover, Elizabeth's reign exacerbated the testing of old political doctrine, and proved that a woman could have the strength to lead her country as a world power.

We think of the ideal Renaissance woman as one who maintained the highest moral behavior including duty, manners, chastity, and submission. Certainly earlier, feudalistic ideals stressed the importance of suppressing the lower orders, including wives and serfs. Marriage and feudalism, at a societal level, regulated the temptations of the flesh and material wealth. The role of this woman upheld the standards of male dominance in England's patriarchal society, for a strong-willed woman contradicted the code of acceptable feminine behavior. Not only that, there were certainly social ramifications if a woman were to break that code, for a forceful and authoritative woman would have been seen as a threat both domestically and politically.

Lady Susan's character appears in an England representative of Thomas Middleton, Ben Jonson, and William Shakespeare. The breakdown of the feudal order in the late 16th century allowed a woman to challenge the domestic and political status quo, and in their city comedies, Middleton, Jonson, and Shakespeare all depicted irresponsible behavior on stage, exaggerating the licentiousness by satire. Act III specifically responds to

Middleton's *A Chaste Maid In Cheapeside* in which Middleton's characters challenge morality and social order. Lady Susan depicts the benefits and consequences of individual choice and the outgrowth of a crumbling social order. Although Lady Susan never goes to the extremes that Middleton's characters do, the Renaissance, in many ways, works as a liberating and nonrestrictive for our protagonist's development.

At the beginning of Act III, we have a woman who represents herself as self-assured and comfortable with her surroundings; a very different character than in the first two acts. The knight who appears, Sir Edwards, believes that she, like other women, needs to be rescued. Following social convention, he tries to solve a problem in a traditional way, revealing the cultural roots of male expectation. He follows the tenets of chivalry, tradition, hierarchy, and privilege, but Lady Susan wants to do for herself, and consciously states that she does not need assistance. "We're in no need of a rescue. I'm quite sure of it . . . I'm quite content where I am, thank you" (III, i). She begins the play content; her characterization, therefore, depicts another kind of journey: that of defining and maintaining truth, and helping and trusting others.

Lady Susan consciously chooses not to be commodified and cares for herself and her daughters. Unlike Susannah's fulfillment of the role of housewife, or Suzanne's wishes to get ahead by any means possible, Lady Susan indicates that she is perfectly capable of protecting herself. "I provide myself and my darlings with the security we need" (III, i). She does not back down when faced with outside judgment, as Susannah does, nor does she fall for cavalier flattery as Suzanne does. She is confident of herself and her choices.

The relationship she holds with her daughters is far different than that of Susannah as well. In the opening of Act III, Lady Susan is playing a game with her daughters; she recognizes that she is content in her life, that she can sit back and enjoy her life. "I enjoy a fair quality of merriment," (III, i). She has liberated herself enough to be able to enjoy the company of others. But she casts a light shadow of her own fear by implying that she does

not wish to be hurt again, “. . . but I have had quite enough of insincerity” (III, i). At this point in the play, Lady Susan cannot trust.

Anything that Susan chooses, she must choose of her own volition, without any societal support. The magistrate represents societal judgment and desire to impose public order and, in spite of his stately power, Lady Susan chooses to tell *her* truth, and questions the judge’s belief of what is true. In this regard, she shows how far she has come: she questions authority. This scene, however, also shows one of the struggles she engages in throughout the play: publicly having to convince others of her beliefs, but through her recitation of her own beliefs, she confirms her beliefs for herself, making her choices from that vantage point. The only public approval Lady Susan receives is from Madame Brest O’Plenty; who confirms that what she is doing is right. Such a brief statement of approval is all Lady Susan needs to follow her own beliefs. In Act I, Susannah tries to follow her own beliefs, too, but she has been chided for being wrong in her own assessments of herself for so long, mostly from her husband. When Susannah does follow the inkling, she feels she has been abandoned; she cannot help but believe that she is misguided in her desires to get off the island. Lady Susan, on the other hand, has lived on her own “for three years” — or three lifetimes — and needs minimal support in her efforts.

Lady Susan works to gain freedom from societal constraints. Lady Susan is no longer in her marriage (perhaps a loveless marriage) but only through the apparent death of Sir Barter Herehence. Legally, she remains chattel, and if she continues to stay married to Herehence, true freedom will continue to elude her. When Lady Susan tries to change her name at court, she finds she is being tried for an entirely different matter: infidelity with Sir Edwards. But as the judge discovers, Sir Edwards has come to Lady Susan of his own accord. He leaves Sir Edwards to the punishment that Emmengarde might give to him. Just as the Barters had experienced, social order must be maintained within the family system.

Another character who deals with the need to break free is Sir Edwards; he recognizes that Lady Emmengarde is his wife, but he is willing to embrace Lady Susan as his guide; he is completely caught up in following his emotions. His ideals are mirrored by those of Lady Susan. Like Susannah, Suzanne, and Susan, Sir Edwards claims he will no longer obey Lady Emmengarde; both have parallel needs for individualism. When Emmengarde tries to impose order onto Edwards so that he, in turn, can impose order on the servants, Edwards challenges her conventional beliefs. Edwards states, "Happy is the man who is left alone" (III, i). He is speaking for himself, but also for Susannah, Suzanne, and Lady Susan: he believes that the best order will come by following private will and choice. Later in the play, Lady Susan recognizes that she has met her equal in this regard, because it has taken her three lifetimes to come to the same assessment.

The mention of Edward II in the beginning of Act III foreshadows the relationship between Enjoimen Nau and Sir Edwards, a relationship that indicates a break from acceptable societal norms. Although men would have enjoyed affectionate relationships during the Renaissance, it is clear that Enjoimen Nau wishes to take his relationship with Sir Edwards to the bedchamber, thus continuing Middleton's questioning of public order and private misrule. The homosexuality is not meant to be a farce; quite the contrary. Although the scenes between the two men are satiric, they serve the purpose of showing that Edwards has many choices. When Lady Susan makes her choice, it is clear that Sir Edwards has made a conscious choice as well.

Other characters also experiment with possible solutions to their own dilemmas. Like Alice Arden in *The Arden of Faversham*, Lady Emmengarde seeks control, and when she does not get it, she recreates her life that she can have the freedom to do as she pleases. In a such a small community (parallel to Faversham), it is easy to conclude that following society's rules would bring reward, but the characters realize community judgment have nothing to do with their feelings. Lady Emmengarde is much like Alice Arden; she is aggressive and opportunistic. She, too, takes out her hostility toward her husband and

continually attempts to kill him. Such personality traits did not serve femininity or domesticity and create difficulties for fear of reproach by the community and the state. She sees escaping to a pastoral setting with another woman as the only way to keep herself from being completely humiliated. In this way, she is an expansion of the Rosalind character from Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Rosalind is a respectable woman intent upon her aims, but coupled with the characterization of Alice Arden, her aims become ambitiously evil and the strategy becomes far more intricate. Rosalind's character, who relied merely on trickery, is now combined with the selfish motives of Alice Arden. Consequently, Lady Emmengarde possesses deep-rooted anger and corruption, filled with wrath and notions of how to kill her husband — to the point of her own undoing. Emmengarde may win a round or two but definitely loses the game.

Emmengarde has the potency that Rosalind gains when she changes her appearance to that of a man. Emmengarde carries with her the same strength that Rosalind carries when she is externally more masculine. Like Rosalind, Emmengarde finds her own courage; she finds her inner strength by playing the part. Emmengarde's weaknesses are not covered with physical disguise but instead with the mask of ruthlessness. Where Rosalind changes her outward appearance and finds strength, Emmengarde looks inward to her potent wrath. As she casts away her conventional attire, we see the development of this obsession and a glimpse into her madness.

Part of the human condition is the need to create freedom for oneself. Like Susannah and Suzanne, Lady Susan, too, experiments with the possible solutions to her dilemmas. And, like the achievements of Elizabeth's reign, Susan's role as an empowered, action-oriented woman is fitting with the genre. Lady Susan is, by no means, Queen Elizabeth, but we can accept Lady Susan as a heroine as she breaks the mold and creates new ideals for individualism.

Our protagonist's journey does, in the end, allow her to uphold her values and choose what she wants: independence and partnership. Her journey has taken her from

her fettered, abstemious island life style, to a prurient, interracial affair, to a setting where extreme licentious behavior or deep-seated morality become her options. She chooses neither, but instead opts to assist another in his plight — a plight she was entangled in for two previous lifetimes. Regardless of the time period she lives in, Susannah/Suzanne/Susan progressively gains experience and strength to do what is right for herself and, therefore, others. She may have gone round and round, as Dorothy Parker suggested, but now the view is more extensive — and much more gratifying.

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