

THE HARROWING

A Rhapsody on a Theme by Mary Shelley

by Wim Coleman

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Synopsis

Justine, the nanny for a wealthy family in Switzerland, is awakened one night by a mysterious Demon who has strangled the little boy in her care. The Demon carries her to a glacier, where she tries to kill herself by leaping into a crevasse. The Demon saves her, and they soon become lovers. The next morning in her bedroom, she and the Demon say their final farewells.

This action is intercut with subsequent events. Watched over by a Nun, Justine is in a jail cell awaiting her hanging for the little boy's murder. Justine is visited by Victor, the boy's older brother, and Elizabeth, Victor's cousin and fiancée (Victor is also the Demon's creator). In the end, Justine is eager and ready for hanging. She tells the Nun that she is pregnant with the Demon's child, whom she hopes will free the damned from hell and be a scourge to the living.

NOTE:

Four of the characters in *The Harrowing* are drawn from Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*. The Demon is Victor Frankenstein's creation; Elizabeth is Victor's cousin and fiancée; Justine Moritz is the nanny for the Frankenstein family; in the novel, she is found guilty and hanged for murdering the child in her care—a murder the Demon actually committed. The Nun is not based on any character in the novel. Although *The Harrowing* is freely inspired by Chapters 7, 8, and 16 of the 1831 version of *Frankenstein* (Chapters 6 and 7, Vol. 1, and Chapter 8, Vol. 2, of the 1818 version), it relates a very different series of events. In short, it is an original work and *not* an adaptation.

SETTINGS:

In and around a family manor in Switzerland  
A jail cell in Switzerland  
The Mer de Glace, the glacier on the northern slope of Mont Blanc

TIME:

Around 1800

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

JUSTINE, a young servant woman  
DEMON, Victor's creation  
NUN, of indeterminate age  
ELIZABETH, a young woman, Victor's cousin  
VICTOR, a young man, Demon's creator

Nontraditional casting is encouraged, as is nonrealistic staging with minimal scenery.  
Elizabeth and Victor may be played by the same actor.

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*The Harrowing* was originally developed in 2022 as part of the Theatre at St. John's Cyber Salon, hosted weekly by Mark Erson. The first half of the play was presented on April 20, 2022, via Zoom for the Cyber Salon, with the late Everett Quinton as the Demon.

A staged reading of the entire play was performed in New York on October 2, 2023, at the Theater for the New City as part of its New City, New Blood Readings Series. The reading was directed with original music by Daniel Neiden with the following readers:

JUSTINE .....Jenne Vath  
DEMON .....Beth Dodye Bass  
NUN ..... Sally Plass  
ELIZABETH/VICTOR .....Karen Oughtred

I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.  
But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.  
—Psalms 82:6-7 (KJV)

“What may not be expected in a country of eternal light?”  
—Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

\*

In memory of Everett Quinton

1.

*(JUSTINE's bedroom; she is fast asleep in bed; a shaft of moonlight spills in through a window. DEMON enters, robed and hooded, his face unseen. He walks to the bed and touches JUSTINE on the shoulder. She wakes with a gasp.)*

JUSTINE. Who's there?

*(DEMON stands silently beside her bed.)*

JUSTINE. Who are you?

What are you doing here?

Whoever you are, don't try to scare me, because you can't.

I was dreaming just now. I was in a forest, and all the animals were running away to hide. They knew something awful was coming. The whole forest got still and scared, pretending to be asleep, or dead, and I didn't understand, I didn't know what was coming, until it came, an avalanche of night, black and starless, crashing silent down out of the mountains. The night buried me and crushed me. I couldn't breathe. I died. I dreamed my own death.

So don't try to scare me, whoever you are.

I'm dead already, or I should be.

*(DEMON produces a gold locket and holds it by a chain in front of JUSTINE's face, where it shines in the moonlight.)*

JUSTINE. The locket.

The locket Mistress Caroline ...

*(DEMON snaps the locket open to reveal a miniature portrait of a woman; JUSTINE takes it in her hands and looks at it.)*

JUSTINE. ... gave ... little William ...

*(DEMON pulls the locket out of her hand.)*

JUSTINE. Are you ... ?

Oh, Mistress Caroline, is it you?

Have you come back?

Oh, please say it's you. I've missed you so much.

But I'm being rude.

You taught me better manners.

How do you do, ma'am?

How have you been?

How is ... ?

How is heaven?

*(Pause)*

JUSTINE. Won't you talk to me?

Tell me about heaven.

I think it must be cold in heaven. It's warm here in this house, but there's no love, and there's no joy either since you left us, and every room is so full of lies, and I'm so alone without you here. I think real love must be cold. I wish the house was colder.

*(DEMON steps away from the bed toward the door, dangling the locket in the moonlight.)*

JUSTINE. Do you want me to come with you? Oh, please, please, take me with you. Take me where it's cold and there's love and joy forever. I don't care if it's heaven or hell, I'm ready to die. Take me away from here.

*(JUSTINE climbs out of bed and puts on a robe and slippers; DEMON moves toward the bedroom door.)*

JUSTINE. But wait. I can't go yet. I've got to look in on your little boy. Poor thing, he'll be the only one who misses me. I hate waking him when it's so late, he'll be so upset. But I've got to say goodbye to him and try to explain. I hope he'll understand, but he's so little. Can you explain it to him, please? Please, come there with me.

*(JUSTINE exits, followed by DEMON.)*

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2.

*(JUSTINE's jail cell; JUSTINE is kneeling; NUN is pacing.)*

NUN. No.

JUSTINE. Bless me, Sister, and hear my confession.

NUN. I can't do that.

JUSTINE. Give me my penance, and forgive me.

NUN. You confessed to the priest already.

JUSTINE. I lied. My confession was a lie.

NUN. Then we'll call for the priest again.

JUSTINE. The priest, the priest! Bless me, Father, for I stole sweets from the kitchen! I don't want the priest. He's heard my sins all my life. Oh, bless me, Father, for I was born, and I picked flowers without asking, and sometimes I shirked my chores. No, the priest is worse than useless, God's smirking busybody, and he already knows more than he has any business knowing, how I nodded asleep during mass, and I sometimes forgot to pray, and I was born without anyone's permission. And I told little lies and big ones, and I hid in Mistress Caroline's room and put on her jewelry, and I pretended to be better than I was, a lady, and when Mistress Caroline died I said angry things to God, blaming him and telling him he was cruel, and I was born into a world that never wanted me. But I can't tell the priest what I really did. Can't we keep this between us? You and me and the Holy Virgin? It's too awful for men's ears,

only a woman can stand to hear it. The priest would die if he heard it. I think it would kill Jesus—or even God, if he knew.

NUN. God knows your sin already, child. He sees everything.

JUSTINE. You're wrong. He doesn't see everything. He doesn't see the worst things, I'm sure of it. He doesn't see—you and me right now.

NUN. Child, you're raving. You don't know what you're saying. If you need to make another confession, we've got to call the priest. Right now.

JUSTINE. No.

NUN. *Right now.* You've only got a short time to live.

*(Pause)*

NUN. Should I? Call for the priest?

*(Pause)*

NUN. You have visitors. You know who they are.

JUSTINE. Send them in.

NUN. No, the jailer says they can only come in to see you one at a time. Which do you want to see first?

JUSTINE. I don't care.

NUN. Decide.

JUSTINE. Let them decide.

\*

3.

*(The nursery; JUSTINE and DEMON enter. JUSTINE looks into the child's bed, which is empty.)*

JUSTINE. He's gone.

Go ahead and scold me, I know, this is my fault.

But it's not as bad as you think. This happens sometimes, and he's always all right. He goes out at night in his sleep to catch fireflies, climbs out the window—look, it's open right now. We sometimes find him roaming the grounds early in the morning. This wouldn't happen if he slept in my room, or I slept in his.

I keep telling the old master he should sleep in my room, it's safer than the nursery. He won't listen, you know how he is. Still, I shouldn't take no for an answer.

I'm ashamed, ma'am, and I'm so sorry, but I'm sure he's safe, please don't worry, and don't think of us badly.

*(pause)*

You're not Mistress Caroline, are you?

*(pause)*

Have you taken him ... like you've come to take me?

No, please, tell me that's not true.

He's just a little boy, and he doesn't want to die, he isn't ready.

He's still happy here with the living.

*(pause)*

Where is little William? Do you know?

*(pause)*

I'm not afraid. I don't know who you are, but I think I've been waiting for you.

I've been anxious for you to come. I have always expected ... a beautiful *something* after so many ... ugly things.

*(DEMON silently beckons.)*

JUSTINE. Yes. Yes, I'll come with you. I'll do anything you ask. I'm your servant, whoever you are.

*(DEMON exits, followed by JUSTINE.)*

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4.

*(JUSTINE's jail cell. JUSTINE and ELIZABETH sit on stools; NUN stands nearby watching and listening. JUSTINE is stitching a piece of clothing.)*

ELIZABETH. Justine. Look at me.

*(JUSTINE does so.)*

ELIZABETH. All these years together, since we were children, and I never saw the evil in your eyes. I had no idea.

*(JUSTINE chuckles, then resumes stitching.)*

ELIZABETH. Why did you do it?

JUSTINE. I told you.

ELIZABETH. No, you told the court. I'm sure you must have lied.

JUSTINE. I didn't lie. I killed him for his little locket, the one with your aunt's picture in it. I'd wanted it for a long time, but he wouldn't give it to me.

ELIZABETH. You carried his body home in the morning laughing at what you'd done.

JUSTINE. I wanted you all to see.

*(JUSTINE abruptly tears the stitches she's been making.)*

ELIZABETH. Why do you always do that? Sew and then tear, sew and tear, over and over?

(JUSTINE *begins stitching again.*)

ELIZABETH. You must hate all of us very much.

JUSTINE. Oh, yes.

ELIZABETH (*to NUN*). Could you please leave us alone?

NUN (*calling through door*). Jailor!

JUSTINE. No, Sister. I told you before. I want you to stay. (*to ELIZABETH*) Now you know how it feels to lose a little one. My first memory is my father carrying a tiny coffin on his head while tears streamed down his face. I watched my brothers and sisters die one by one until Father died too. Now you know what it's like.

ELIZABETH. How dare you? Aunt Caroline took you in as a little girl. She saved you from a life at the looms and that monster mother of yours. She treated you like her daughter. And now you've killed her little boy. Why? You were his nanny. Didn't you love him? Weren't we always good to you?

JUSTINE. You treated me like a scullery maid. You and Victor.

ELIZABETH. That's not true.

JUSTINE. It's all right, that's what I really was.

ELIZABETH. I treated you like a sister.

(JUSTINE *chuckles again.*)

JUSTINE. When are you going to marry my cousin?

ELIZABETH. He's not your cousin.

JUSTINE. Oh, I beg your pardon. He's *your* cousin. He's always treated you like a sister. When is your wedding going to be?

ELIZABETH. Do you think Victor and I can even think of such a thing until ... ?

JUSTINE. Until I'm safely hanged?

ELIZABETH. It ... will be soon ... I hope.

(JUSTINE *tears the cloth again, then starts stitching again.*)

JUSTINE (*to NUN*). Sister, I want you to take my confession now.

NUN. I told you that's impossible.

JUSTINE. With God all things are possible. Didn't Jesus say that?

NUN (*to ELIZABETH*). Young madam, could you please talk sense to her?

JUSTINE. She knows nothing about it. She's not of our faith.

ELIZABETH (*rising from her stool*). I should go.

JUSTINE. No. Stay. I want you to hear it.

NUN. Girl, this is blasphemy.

JUSTINE. It's the way I want it. These are the last moments of my life. I give the orders at long last, just this once, and you'll obey me. Both of you stay. I command it.

(ELIZABETH and NUN stand staring at JUSTINE.)

JUSTINE. Now listen.

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5.

(JUSTINE follows DEMON into a night filled with sparkling fireflies and chirping crickets. Little William's body is nearby, covered with a blanket. JUSTINE stops following.)

JUSTINE. Wait.

(DEMON keeps walking.)

JUSTINE. Wait, I said.

(DEMON stops and looks at her.)

JUSTINE. I won't follow you any farther. I don't know who you are. Do you really know where he is? How do I know you'll take me to him?

(DEMON again holds out the open locket toward her.)

JUSTINE. You showed me that before. Where did you get it?

(DEMON points to the dead body; JUSTINE walks toward it; she stoops down over it, then pulls back the blanket to reveal William's face; she gasps with horror, then slips into shock and confusion.)

JUSTINE. William! Oh, my sweet little boy, my sweet little Willy, what are you doing here? Are you asleep? No, no, not yet, your eyes are still open, but you'll sleep soon, just look at you, you're too sleepy to stay awake. (*touching William's hair*) What a wise little boy you are. You'd rather sleep out here in the open than in that house so full of lies and hate, you even brought your blanket to keep off the dew. But close your eyes, stop staring. I'll put you to sleep with a song and lie down beside you and sleep here myself.

(*she sings*)

Hear the cricket in the night  
singing you to sleep;  
sleep deep, sleep tight,  
the cricket sings the whole night through  
a sleeping song for you.

(*still singing, she shuts his eyes with her fingers*)

The stars above are bright, too bright

so shut your eyes, don't peep;  
sleep deep, sweet sprite,  
the cricket sings the whole night through  
a sleeping song for you.

DEMON. This isn't sleep.

JUSTINE (*shuddering*). I know. Yes, yes, I know.

(JUSTINE *starts to laugh.*)

DEMON. Are you crying?

JUSTINE. No. No, God help me, I'm not crying. Some devil must be poking at my sides  
where I'm most tender.

(JUSTINE *laughs more uncontrollably*)

DEMON. I wish I could laugh.

JUSTINE. It's wrong.

DEMON. Laughter is always wrong. That is its glory.

JUSTINE (*wavering between laughing and sobbing, stroking William's hair*). Sweet boy,  
sweet Willy, tell me what death is like. I want so much to know. So many questions  
you used to ask me of an evening walk! Do you know all the answers now? Do you  
know why fireflies can't sing like crickets?

DEMON. He asked me questions too.

JUSTINE. "Why can't crickets flash like fireflies?"

DEMON. "Why can't the stars sing like crickets?"

JUSTINE. "Why can't the stars blink like fireflies?" (*tracing a firefly's flight with her  
finger*). He said fireflies wrote messages in the air, and he could read them.

DEMON. Yes, they drew faces in the air, he told me.

JUSTINE. And it was true.

I remember seeing them do it years ago.

Now I can only see them when they flash in the dark, and then they're gone.

But when I was little and my eyes were new ...

Their flashes hung in the air, stretching like gossamer spun by spiders. They drew  
shapes in the air, and if there were enough of them I'd see faces ...

But not anymore.

When I was little and my eyes were new ...

DEMON. He wasn't afraid when I showed him my face, and he didn't hate me. He was  
afraid of something else. "Don't tell Father you saw me here," he said. "I'm supposed  
to be in bed." He was afraid of what his father might do. Do you know why?

(JUSTINE is now weeping with anger and grief.)

JUSTINE. Why did you kill him?

DEMON. He told me his name. It was a god's name. He was a god—the brother of the god who made me.

JUSTINE. He was just a little boy.

DEMON. I struck him down when he said his name. I didn't know a god could die. It's good to know. Now that I know, I'll kill all the gods. They do nothing but harm. A god made me, then left me all alone. I came here looking for him to punish him, and now I know I can kill him. As soon as he hears I killed his brother-god, my maker will come to this place. I'll be waiting here to kill him. (*kneeling beside JUSTINE*) Is this the first time you've seen someone who's dead?

JUSTINE. Oh, no. I've seen many dead. Mostly children.

DEMON. How does it feel to look upon a dead child?

JUSTINE. It's ... not like looking at one who's alive. A dead child fills me with much more ...

DEMON. Wonder?

JUSTINE. I suppose.

DEMON. They make you laugh.

JUSTINE. This one does.

DEMON. It must be wonderful to be dead. I don't believe I can die. I wish I could.

JUSTINE. Won't you kill me too?

DEMON. Are you a god?

JUSTINE. No.

DEMON. I won't kill you then.

JUSTINE. Why not?

DEMON. Because I do not hate you.

JUSTINE. What can I do to make you hate me? Everyone else hates me. I've been hated all my life, hated for being born, hated because I'm alive, hated by those who talk most of their love, but they won't kill me, they're much too cruel to do me such a favor, even God won't kill me, so you've got to do it, like you did it for the boy, I beg of you, end this wretched life of mine.

DEMON. I do not hate you.

JUSTINE. Then kill me out of lovingkindness. Kill me because I want you to.

*(Silence)*

JUSTINE. Show me your face.

DEMON. No.

JUSTINE. You showed it to him.

DEMON. You're not a god like him. You'll be frightened. You'll hate me.

JUSTINE. I won't be frightened. I won't hate you. Show me.

DEMON. Not here. Not now.

JUSTINE. When, then? And where?

DEMON. Soon. And wherever you wish. My ways are fleet and swift. I cannot fly, but my feet carry me faster than wings. Even the birds fall behind in my wake, and I leave them weeping and keening with shame and disgrace. Wherever you want most to go, I can take you there before the night is over. Just tell me where.

JUSTINE *(taking his hand)*. Take me where it's cold. Take me where there's love. Take me where everything is dead.

DEMON *(putting William's blanket around her shoulders and guiding her away)*. I know of such a place. Come with me.

JUSTINE *(looking at William's body)*. When I was little and my eyes were new ...

DEMON. Leave him. He is happy now.

*(DEMON sweeps JUSTINE into his arms and carries her away.)*

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6.

*(JUSTINE's jail cell, with JUSTINE, NUN, and ELIZABETH; JUSTINE stands between ELIZABETH and the door.)*

ELIZABETH. I want to go.

JUSTINE. No.

ELIZABETH. Let me go.

JUSTINE. Not until you've listened.

ELIZABETH. I've heard enough.

JUSTINE. You haven't heard anything.

ELIZABETH. There's nothing but evil in your heart.

JUSTINE. Sit down.

(ELIZABETH *sits on the stool.*)

JUSTINE. Have you ever been to your uncle's factory?

ELIZABETH. You know I have. You and Victor and I used to play in the meadow nearby, and we'd always—

JUSTINE (*interrupting*). But you were never inside?

ELIZABETH. No.

JUSTINE. I used to work there.

ELIZABETH. I know.

JUSTINE. I started when I was seven.

ELIZABETH. I know.

JUSTINE. I worked there until your aunt ... saved me.

ELIZABETH. I know.

JUSTINE. I was almost nine then.

ELIZABETH. Please let me go.

JUSTINE (*to NUN*). What about you, sister? Can you see the factory from the convent?

NUN. Oh, yes.

JUSTINE. And what do you think of it?

NUN. Oh, maybe I shouldn't say this, but ...

JUSTINE. Well?

NUN. ... it's very beautiful, especially at night, like ...

JUSTINE. Like what?

NUN. ... a cathedral with blazing windows that outshine the moon, and rounded dark clouds billowing to heaven out of tall hollow steeples, and a rumble of steam like an organ raising up a hymn, and bells to begin and end each day, like matins and vespers, but what does it matter what I think of it?

JUSTINE (*to ELIZABETH*). And what about you? You used to pretend it was a palace, and there was a ball going on inside, with beautiful people in masks and costumes, dancing to their hearts' content.

ELIZABETH. I don't remember that.

JUSTINE. How well do you know the man you're about to marry?

ELIZABETH. You know that too.

JUSTINE. Do I? Tell me.

ELIZABETH. I've known him since we were children. So have you.

JUSTINE. But what do you know of him ... as a man?

ELIZABETH (*rising to her feet*). Please, I want to go.

JUSTINE. No.

NUN (*to ELIZABETH*). Just call for the jailor and go, young madam. Her soul is troubled. You can do nothing to help her.

JUSTINE (*to NUN*). She's going to stay and listen. (*to ELIZABETH*) Sit down.

(*ELIZABETH sits again; JUSTINE resumes stitching.*)

JUSTINE. One night when the I was thirteen the master came to my bedroom.

I don't mean the old master.

I mean the young master, Victor, not his father.

Your Victor.

Your cousin.

The man who will be your husband.

He was panting, and shaking, and red-faced, and scared, and he said his father sent him to me because he was going away to school, and it was time for him to become a man, and his father told him it was either me or the brothel, and I was safer, and cleaner, and he wouldn't get sick with me, because I was a virgin.

And of course I was.

And young Victor, he promised me, if there were—consequences—his father said I would be taken care of, and my baby too. I didn't know what he meant. I didn't know what he was there to do. But Victor got ... beside me and ... on top of me and then ... there was this prying and pushing and ...

I ... disappeared, I went somewhere else, I ...

I was in the mill again, and the machines were roaring too loud for me to call for help, and ...

I wasn't myself anymore ...

... not the girl whose hands raced and ached day after day to go as fast as the engines that crippled Mother to death.

No, I ...

... *became* ...

... the warp threads rushing off the warp beam, overtop of the whip roll, spreading out over the loom as the shuttle leaped back and forth and yanked the weft threads between the parted strands of me, taut and shaking, while the wide driving belt whipped the shafts in their endless spinning, so much force, and the heddles' eyes stared unblinking, never forgiving, and the beater packed the threads together into a tight weave, but instead of a gathering rolling fulness of fresh clean cloth tumbling together, there came a ...

(*ripping the cloth*)

... *tearing*, a ...

*(ripping the cloth)*

... *ripping* of ...

*(ripping the cloth; pause)*

... and then I was me again, and everything was still and quiet, and Victor was gone, and I hurt, and I bled for days, but ...

... there were no consequences.

*(Silence)*

ELIZABETH. I saw how you looked at him.

JUSTINE. I stopped looking after that. I don't think our eyes met ever again.

ELIZABETH. I always knew you wanted him.

JUSTINE. You knew that, did you?

ELIZABETH. You took him away from me.

NUN *(to ELIZABETH)*. It wasn't her fault.

ELIZABETH *(to JUSTINE)*. You are a devil from the bowels of hell. And soon ... you'll go back to hell, where you belong.

*(ELIZABETH rushes to door.)*

ELIZABETH *(calling outside)*. Jailer!

JUSTINE. Don't go, dear friend! I haven't begun my confession!

ELIZABETH *(calling outside)*. I'm ready to leave!

\*

7.

*(The Mer de Glace, the glacier on the northern slope of Mont Blanc; DEMON enters with JUSTINE in his arms; she is limp and delirious, and her eyes are glazed.)*

DEMON. We're here, just look. Everything is cold and loving and dead.

JUSTINE. It's so hot.

DEMON. No, it's cold. Wake up. You fainted while I carried you. Look where we are.

JUSTINE. The air is like steam boiling out of a kettle.

DEMON. Don't you feel how cold it is?

JUSTINE. I'm scared, Mother.

DEMON. What? No, I'm not your mother. Don't be scared.

JUSTINE. Is this where I'm going to work at the looms?

DEMON. Looms? I don't understand.

JUSTINE. Mother, I can't breathe. It's like I'm drowning.

DEMON. You're safe. Look around.

JUSTINE (*closing her eyes*). No, I can't look. I'm so scared, Mother. This building is going to eat us both alive. This building *is* alive. Can't you hear its steel heart beating—boom, boom, boom? It groans and hisses as it breathes. Such a sin, for men to create a living thing of stone and steel, so hungry for bodies and souls it can never eat its fill of them.

*(Supporting JUSTINE with one arm, DEMON has reached down and scooped up some snow in his free hand; he gently rubs the snow on JUSTINE's cheek.)*

DEMON. There. Don't you feel it?

JUSTINE (*opening her eyes*). Oh. How cold.

DEMON. What did I tell you? Just look.

JUSTINE (*standing on her own*). I've heard of this place. It's the river of ice that rolls down the mountainside.

DEMON. It's where you asked me to bring you—where it's cold, and there's love, and everything is dead. This is where the giants died and left their bones, piled high and so very, very deep.

JUSTINE. This is a river of ice.

DEMON. No, we're standing on the giants' bones.

JUSTINE. What giants?

DEMON. You must know about the giants.

JUSTINE. Why?

DEMON. Because *I* know about the giants.

JUSTINE. Oh.

DEMON. They were first creatures who lived on the earth. The uncreated ones, in the time before gods. The earth gave them birth. They grew out of the earth like trees.

JUSTINE. Grew up from roots in the ground?

DEMON. Yes, but they got tired of standing still. They yearned to wander. They pulled their roots out of the ground and turned them into feet. They walked the earth. But there was no creation, nothing to see or do, no point at all in wandering. They were better off ...

JUSTINE. Rooted?

DEMON. Yes, but they could never be ...

JUSTINE. Rooted again?

DEMON. Yes, and each one of them felt so lonely.

JUSTINE. But there were other giants.

DEMON. It didn't matter. They couldn't touch each other.

JUSTINE. Why not?

DEMON. Because they were never created. What's not created can't touch or be touched. They were all alone, each and every one, in their empty wanderings. And their hearts broke one by one, and they came stumbling to this place. They lay down in this valley and died, one upon the other, untold numbers of them, until they lay as deep as the sea.

JUSTINE. And then the uncreated sun appeared.

DEMON. Yes.

JUSTINE. And the sun baked their bones white.

DEMON. Yes.

JUSTINE. And then the uncreated wind began to blow.

DEMON. Yes.

JUSTINE. And the wind cooled their bones.

DEMON. Yes.

JUSTINE. And now their bones have turned to ice, and they're not lonely anymore, they keep each other cold in a valley of frozen love.

DEMON. How did you know?

JUSTINE. Because *you* know.

*(Pause)*

JUSTINE. Show me your face.

DEMON. You'll be afraid. You'll run away.

JUSTINE. Oh, no. I'm through with all that. I'll never be scared again. And I'm tired of running.

*(DEMON slowly pulls back his hood and reveals himself; JUSTINE stares for a moment, then laughs.)*

DEMON. What's the matter?

JUSTINE. I see myself. This might as well be ... my face.

DEMON. It's the only face I have.

JUSTINE (*touching his face tenderly*). Then never mind. It'll have to do. For both of us.

(*The glacier groans.*)

JUSTINE. Listen. The giants' bones are crying for us. They're sad for us. They know how lonely we are.

DEMON. But there are two of us.

JUSTINE. Yes, but there's a loneliness so terrible it takes two people to feel it.

(*A crevasse opens at their feet with a roar.*)

JUSTINE. Oh, look, the bones have ripped apart and torn a way for us into their world! How kind of them, how ... sweet! "Come down here with us," the bones are crying. "We'll give you love, we'll keep you cold, forever and ever, cold without end, amen."

(*JUSTINE jumps into the crevasse, but DEMON grips her by wrist and won't let her fall; JUSTINE hangs over the abyss.*)

JUSTINE. Let go of me.

DEMON. No.

JUSTINE. Let go of me and follow me.

DEMON. I can't.

JUSTINE. Why not?

DEMON. You'll die.

JUSTINE. You'll die too.

DEMON. I don't know how to die.

JUSTINE. I can teach you.

DEMON. Not if you're dead.

JUSTINE. We'll both die if we fall.

DEMON. I want to die, but I can't, I can't.

(*DEMON pulls JUSTINE up onto the brink of the crevasse, where she stands again.*)

DEMON. Don't leave me alone in this world where there is no other living thing but you.

JUSTINE (*dazed*). Your face is my face.

DEMON. And your face is mine.

\*

8.

*(JUSTINE's jail cell; VICTOR stands and JUSTINE sits; they face away from each other.)*

JUSTINE. Victor. Tell the sister to come back.

VICTOR. No.

JUSTINE. I haven't confessed.

VICTOR. You've confessed too much. We've got to talk alone.

*(Pause; JUSTINE starts stitching again.)*

VICTOR. You lied at the trial.

JUSTINE. Did I?

VICTOR. Why did you lie?

JUSTINE. I've said what I've said. I killed him for the little locket with your mother's picture. It's done. I'm going to be hanged for it.

VICTOR. I can't let that happen.

JUSTINE. Oh, but you will, Victor. There's nothing to be done.

VICTOR. You didn't kill him for his locket.

*(JUSTINE pauses stitching and turns toward VICTOR.)*

JUSTINE. Look at me.

*(Their eyes meet.)*

JUSTINE. There. Do you feel it? How strange it is? It's been so long since we've looked at each other, years maybe, I'd forgotten what color your eyes were. Did you forget the color of mine? Your eyes look tired. So much reading and studying and ... looking at things. How do mine look? Oh, how far apart we two have gotten, such a shame. Why do you suppose that is?

*(JUSTINE tears the stitches; VICTOR shudders; JUSTINE stitches again.)*

JUSTINE. No, I didn't kill him for the little locket. I ought to have known you wouldn't believe that part of it. You know me better than that. To tell the truth, I don't know why I did it. I've gone mad, I suppose. I must have gone mad long ago, only no one noticed it, not even me, although maybe you knew all along. Did you? Know I was mad? Can you tell me ... what drove me mad?

Because I would like very much to know.

*(JUSTINE tears the stitches; VICTOR shudders; JUSTINE sets the stitching aside and stands.)*

JUSTINE. Do you remember that oak tree where you and Elizabeth and I used to play together? We climbed and climbed. Oh, those were the days, weren't they? Such fine

days. We dared each other to climb higher, and you got angry because I climbed the highest—but not angry at *me*, you said, you were only angry at the tree for liking me better, or at least that’s what you said, it was such a childish thing, you were such a baby.

I saw so much from those high branches—our house, the houses in the village, the mill pouring out its smoke, the river and the snowy mountains far away, and on some days I could see the river of ice, or at least I thought I did, and the world almost made sense in a way.

Wouldn’t it be fun to climb it again together?

VICTOR. It’s not there anymore.

JUSTINE. Oh, you’re right, it’s not, I’d almost forgotten. But what happened to it? Did some mean old woodsman come along and chop it down to spite our house and make us children sad? Or were you so angry with the tree, you ... made it go away? And what about its trunk and branches? Where did they disappear to?

VICTOR. You remember.

JUSTINE. Yes, now that I think of it, I do. There was a terrible thunderstorm, wasn’t there? I’ve never heard such crashing, such ripping and tearing. And there was one thunderbolt so huge and so close and loud, it blazed us all blind and awake in our rooms, and then the echoing darkness slammed down as hard as a rock before it all started again.

And we three went out to look the next morning, remember?

You and me and Elizabeth, remember?

And there was nothing left of the tree but ribbons of wood, remember?

And Elizabeth asked, “What could have done this?” Remember?

And you told us about some sort of power you’d read about in books, a power so much greater than God ...

VICTOR. Without thought or purpose.

JUSTINE. That’s right.

VICTOR. What happened that night changed me forever. It rendered my world meaningless. All creation was undone, as if it had never been. There could be no learning, no knowledge, no wisdom, no good, no evil, only a swirling maelstrom of chaos, mad and idiotic. Blind power was the only force in the universe. And I wondered—how would it feel to be greater than God, to be the master of that power? How would it feel to be the first creator of the world? How would it feel to ... *mean*?

JUSTINE. And now do you know how it feels?

William was a little god, did you know that? Who’d have thought a god could die? But I felt all that power seeping out of his body through my fingers as I squeezed his throat shut tight. I felt strong for a moment, almost like a god myself. But then he was gone, and I was weak again, like I’ve always been.

VICTOR. I know you didn’t kill him.

JUSTINE. How do you know?

VICTOR. Because I know who did. I met him on the road on my way home. He told me he'd done it.

JUSTINE. But he didn't kill you.

VICTOR. No.

JUSTINE. I'd thought he would have killed you.

VICTOR. He'd hoped to kill me. But he was glad to see me in such pain. William was dead, and you were accused and sentenced to hang, and untold horrors still lay ahead, and I was the fiend who'd brought it upon us, and he read the pain in my eyes, and he smiled at me, and he promised me a thousand torments, and a long, long life of pain.

JUSTINE. Did he tell you about me? Maybe just a little.

VICTOR. What did he do to you to make you lie for him?

(JUSTINE *laughs.*)

JUSTINE. I'm sorry. I don't suppose it's funny. It's just ... oh, it's just such a question, if you only knew. I can't help but laugh.

VICTOR. I won't let you die.

JUSTINE. And what can stop me?

VICTOR. Tell the court the truth.

JUSTINE. I don't know the whole truth.

VICTOR. Say you lied. Say you're innocent. You loved the boy. You'd never have done anything to hurt him. Just say that.

JUSTINE. Who'll believe me? I'm nobody. My life never mattered to a single living soul. But you're somebody. You've got a good name. Your life matters. *You* tell them the truth. They'll believe you. Or won't they? Surely it won't do any harm to try.

What's stopping you?

At least you could tell *me*.

VICTOR. I can't.

JUSTINE. Why not? Are you afraid I'll give away your secret? Oh, my. Are you afraid I'll *tell*? Don't be silly. I promise, I'll keep as mum as the grave. Just tell me, how did it feel ... to do what you did?

(*Pause*)

VICTOR. I was a hero. When I stretched a sinew of muscle over a shank of hard bare bone, making the bone bend to the strength of my taut will, I became Ulysses stringing his bow—the bow the wicked suitors were too flaccid and weak to string. And when I shot the bolt of life into the being's body, I fired Ulysses' arrow straight

through the row of axe heads, and I was strong enough to slaughter all the foes and woes of humankind, and rich enough to bestow a hundred thousand million blessings upon all multitudes yet to walk upon the earth.

But then, when my work was completed ... I wasn't a hero anymore, just a god, merely a god. And like Jehovah after six days of creation, I fell weak and tired, in need of one eternal day of rest so I could shrink away into nothingness, never to create again. For that is the truth about Jehovah—his seventh day will never end, he will go on forever resting and ruining his creation while mortals suffer and make each other suffer for his transgression.

There are things God was meant to leave alone. We are such things.  
I don't suppose you understand.

JUSTINE. No, how could I?

*(VICTOR holds out his hand to her.)*

VICTOR. Here. Touch this hand.

*(JUSTINE takes his hand.)*

VICTOR. How strong does it feel to you? It's so weak and limp, I can barely open and close it anymore. I'll never make a fist again. Your own hand is stronger, and you've never taken nor given life. You've never been a god.

JUSTINE *(letting go of his hand)*. Go away now.

VICTOR. Justine—

JUSTINE. Just go. I've got so much to tell the holy sister. You mustn't hear it. And don't worry about me. I don't know where my journey will take me, but it can't be any worse than where I've been.

Go now, I said.

And don't despair.

You'll never be alone again. He will always be right there with you, your loyal companion at your side, even when you can't see him.

*(JUSTINE touches VICTOR's face.)*

JUSTINE. He will be with you on your wedding night.

\*

9.

*(JUSTINE and DEMON are sitting in the moonlight on the spread-out blanket. They are having a sort of picnic, eating berries and nuts. DEMON is drinking straight from a bottle of wine. William's body lies nearby, exactly as it was before. JUSTINE looks over at the body and smiles.)*

JUSTINE. Willy, dear, won't you wake up? You must be hungry. Would you like to join us for something to eat?

DEMON. He isn't asleep.

JUSTINE. I know. But let me have my little lie. I have so few of them left. The world is getting crowded with truth. Sleep on, sweet Willy, don't let us grownups disturb you.

*(JUSTINE and DEMON eat a few bites.)*

JUSTINE. Where did you get these nuts?

DEMON. I took them.

JUSTINE. From where?

DEMON. A tree.

*(JUSTINE and DEMON eat some more.)*

JUSTINE. What about these berries?

DEMON. I took them.

JUSTINE. From where?

DEMON. Some bushes.

*(DEMON passes the bottle to JUSTINE, and she drinks from it.)*

JUSTINE. Where did you get this wine?

DEMON. From a house.

JUSTINE. *Inside* a house?

DEMON. Yes.

JUSTINE. How did you get inside?

DEMON. I just went in.

JUSTINE. Did you take the wine, or did you ... ask somebody for it?

DEMON. I don't understand.

JUSTINE. Was anybody in the house?

DEMON. No.

JUSTINE. Where did you find the wine in the house?

DEMON. On a table.

JUSTINE. You shouldn't take things from houses like that.

DEMON. But I took nuts from the tree.

JUSTINE. I know, but—

DEMON. I took berries from the bushes.

JUSTINE. I mean from *people*. You shouldn't take things from people like that.

DEMON. Oh. (*drinks from the bottle*) I don't think I understand. I was hungry, and I needed something to eat. There were nuts on the tree and berries in the bushes. What could I do but take them? I was thirsty and I needed something to drink. There was wine in the house, so I took it. What was I supposed to do?

JUSTINE. You should have asked the people who lived there if you could have it.

DEMON. Would they have given it to me?

JUSTINE. I ... don't know.

DEMON. Do people ... often ... give things to others?

*(Silence; JUSTINE takes the bottle from him and drinks from it.)*

JUSTINE. You were right and I was wrong. It's best to take. Everybody takes, and nobody's likely to give you anything, even if you ask. People have been taking things from me my whole life without asking. They don't give anything back, even when I ask.

I suppose that's why I have so little.

I don't do enough taking.

I should have known, the truth was all around me.

Taking is the way the world works.

What a fool I was.

*(JUSTINE takes long swallow of wine, then passes the bottle to the DEMON.)*

JUSTINE. I'm going to be drunk. You should get drunk too.

DEMON. Drunk?

JUSTINE. You'll know it when you feel it.

*(Silence)*

DEMON. Was it wrong of me ... to give you things? Nuts and berries and wine, I mean?

JUSTINE. Oh, no, no, no, it was the sweetest thing in the world! There is nothing sweeter than to give. I think it's because giving is so rare. And people who give are always so ... lonely.

*(DEMON hands JUSTINE the locket he stole.)*

DEMON. Here. Let me give you this. I was wrong to take it from the little god. You should have it.

JUSTINE. Thank you.

*(touching his face)*

You are ... so beautiful ... when you give. I wish I had something to give to you.

DEMON. Are you crying?

JUSTINE. Yes.

(DEMON *takes JUSTINE by the hand; JUSTINE shudders with fear and draws momentarily away from him; silence; then she offers him her hand again.*)

JUSTINE. Here.

DEMON. No.

JUSTINE. It's all right.

DEMON. I'm afraid.

JUSTINE. Why?

DEMON. I feel something very strange. It's like hunger, it's like thirst, but it's different, and I don't know what it is.

JUSTINE. You *want*.

DEMON. Yes, I want. I look at you and I touch you and I ... ache with want.

JUSTINE. Once at home I saw two spiders in a web tangle themselves in each other's crooked little arms and press each other's bellies close. Outside of an afternoon I saw two dragonflies locked tight together in flight, obeying nothing but the breeze. On the riverbank I saw two snakes lose themselves twisting in knots together.

DEMON. So ... did they *want* too?

JUSTINE (*taking DEMON by the hand*). Yes, and so do I. Right now, the same as you. It's called temptation. Everybody feels it. Even Jesus was tempted.

DEMON. Jesus?

JUSTINE. A perfect man. Our Savior. The Son of God.

DEMON. Oh. What do you do when you feel temptation?

JUSTINE. You're supposed to fight it.

DEMON. Fight it?

JUSTINE. Resist it. Because it pulls at you, and you're not supposed to give in to it. They say it's evil, and it comes from the devil.

DEMON. The devil?

JUSTINE. An evil angel. He lives in hell and rules there. He wants us to sin so he can take our souls.

DEMON. Souls?

JUSTINE. Yes, souls, I ... well, I don't really know what they are. A part of us that lasts forever, I suppose. They say Jesus resisted the devil's temptations, he triumphed over

sin and evil for all our sake. But I don't always do that—triumph over sin and evil, I mean. Sometimes I give in to temptation. And I'm never ...

DEMON. What?

JUSTINE. Sorry. Afterwards. Even though I tell the priest I'm sorry. I lie to him. I suppose I'm like a spider or a dragonfly or a snake that way. They don't care. Neither do I. Neither should you.

DEMON. I'm afraid.

JUSTINE (*caressing him gently*). Yes, you poor thing, you're supposed to feel that way. The fear comes from God. Fear is supposed to make you resist. Jesus must have felt it too—fear, I mean. But be brave. Be strong. The flesh is strong. Don't be afraid. Let go. Give in to it, and so will I. We'll stitch each other whole. And neither one of us will feel sorry, ever again.

DEMON. I don't want to hurt you.

JUSTINE. You won't hurt me. I'm through with being hurt.  
(*glancing at the dead body*)  
Sweet Willy—you mustn't look.

(JUSTINE and DEMON *fold into one another's arms.*)

\*

10.

(JUSTINE's jail cell. JUSTINE and NUN are sitting together. Badly shaken, NUN is murmuring a prayer under her breath.)

JUSTINE. You mustn't tell anybody.

NUN. Tell them what? I don't believe a word of it.

JUSTINE. Then why are you praying?

(NUN *finishes murmuring her prayer and crosses herself*)

NUN. Why did you tell me?

JUSTINE. I had to confess.

NUN. Not to me. Never to me.

JUSTINE. Who, then?

NUN. I don't know. No one. You are lost. I'm lost too, just for hearing you. You are minutes away from hanging. Why couldn't you have kept quiet?

JUSTINE. Won't you forgive me?

NUN. For what? Giving yourself to that unholy monstrous fiend?

JUSTINE. But now you know I didn't kill little William.

NUN. But he did! An innocent little boy! Did you really believe his lies about who he really was?

JUSTINE. Victor told me the same thing just now.

NUN. Then he also lied. A man cannot give life to unliving flesh.

JUSTINE. What is he, then?

NUN. You lay with one of the Nephilim, the children of the heavenly host and the daughters of men. Haven't you ever heard the story? Wicked rebel angels went a-whoring after the wanton daughters of murderous Cain, and they birthed the monstrous giants called Nephilim. You lay with the spawn of an unholy union. And your deed was unholy.

JUSTINE. Then what about the child in my belly?

NUN. A child?

Sweet merciful Mother of God!

*(She prays again.)*

JUSTINE. It's the only thing I'll die sorry for—that she has to die with me. Does she deserve it? I can't imagine why.

NUN *(crossing herself)*. Are you sure of it?

JUSTINE. As sure as I'm sure I'm going to be hanged.

NUN. And it's a good thing you will be. Your child is a fiend, fit only to be born in hell.

JUSTINE. Foolish woman. What do you know about hell?

NUN. Much. I've been there many times. When my faith falters, and wickedness calls, and I forget to fear God, the red-robed Angel of Fright descends upon my dreaming, mounted on a stallion wild and aflame. He sweeps me up into his saddle and bears me down into hell, so I may witness all the torments there. When I am returned to my bed before morning, I'm fearful and cringing and virtuous again for weeks afterward.

JUSTINE. But is it even possible—to give birth in hell?

NUN. Oh, yes, but ... Oh, I mustn't tell you.

JUSTINE. What is it?

NUN. In hell, all whores and adulterers and even male fornicators must suffer the agonies of childbirth endlessly through all eternity. And the infernal midwives are greatly to be feared. They have lengthy curved fingers and long razor-sharp nails. They reach into the ripe full womb and claw at it inside and rip it to pieces, but the unborn child is as savage a devil as they are, and he lashes back with claws of his own, fighting the

midwives until they drag him into the putrid stinking air, and the fornicator lies in dismembered pieces.

JUSTINE (*chuckling*). Don't tell me what happens next. I think I can guess. The seamstresses of hell stitch together the hacked-up body with red-hot needles and spools of barbed and thorny thread, and they seed another baby into the butchered womb and the whole thing happens again and again and again, forever and ever. And do you think that's what will become of me? Oh, no, I don't think so. It's not nearly awful enough. I am starting to make ... other plans. But tell me—who have you seen in hell? My father, maybe? My mother? My brothers and sisters? Mistress Caroline?

NUN. I wouldn't know them if I saw them. But I have seen multitudes of the writhing damned.

JUSTINE. Have you seen children in hell?

(NUN *nods*)

JUSTINE. Then maybe even little Willy is on his way there right now. Or maybe he's there already.

NUN. Few are the souls who escape the eternal fire.

JUSTINE. Didn't even Jesus go to hell?

NUN. What? No. Oh, well, yes, I suppose. For three days after he was crucified. But he was never one of the damned. He had to go there because not everyone who was in hell belonged there. Even the souls of the just were forfeit before Christ's sacrifice. But ... oh, what a wonderful story, surely you've heard it! At midnight after he died on the cross, a great light broke forth in hell's depths, and a voice called out like thunder, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." And the brass gates and the iron bars fell crushed and broken into pieces. And what do you suppose happened next? Christ walked into hell, just as easy as you please. And he loosed all the patriarchs and prophets and martyrs from their chains. And they called out in rapture, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, and his mercy lasts forever." And Christ anointed Adam with oil and took him by the wrist, and Eve as well, and he leaped out of hell with them, and the prophets and martyrs and patriarchs followed them into Paradise.

JUSTINE. The prophets and martyrs.

NUN. Yes.

JUSTINE. And the patriarchs.

NUN. Yes, like Adam and Noah and ...

JUSTINE. Abraham.

NUN. That's right.

JUSTINE. Who was ready to slaughter his little boy like a sheep just to make God happy.

NUN. Because he feared God, my child.

JUSTINE. What about the others?

NUN. Others?

JUSTINE. The unjust.

NUN. Well ... of course ... if you mean the liars and adulterers, the thieves and blasphemers, the murderers and the idolators ...

JUSTINE. I mean all those who are as wicked as I am.

NUN. Christ left them there to burn.

JUSTINE. But why?

NUN. Because they are righteously damned. They deserved it. They'll eternally burn and weep and gnash their teeth in the lake of fire of the outer darkness. Such is the fate of all sinners who die unredeemed and unrepentant.

JUSTINE. You're *wrong!*

They've got to be saved. The very worst of them most of all. And now I know why I was born, what I must do. Hell yearns for me and my unborn daughter. The hosts of the damned await her birth.

NUN (*covering her ears*). I'm not listening.

JUSTINE. And my daughter will love the damned with the coldness of love, and with the innocence that comes only from sin and pain and evil, and she will take up a sword and shield and lead them as an army out of hell to destroy this world and all who are good and virtuous.

(NUN *prays frantically.*)

JUSTINE. And when the good are all dead, the world will fall still and dark and cold, and the firefly will sing, and the cricket will shine, and they'll strike together like flint, sparkling and singing, and the stars will join in their song, and they'll light up a new paradise for the righteously damned. This ugly old world will die, and a beautiful new one will begin.

(NUN *rushes to the door and calls out through the bars.*)

NUN (*calling through the bars*). Jailer! Come!

JUSTINE. Yes, bring the jailor.

NUN (*calling through the bars*). Get me out of here!

JUSTINE. And call for the hangman too.

NUN (*calling*). Hangman! Come and save me!

JUSTINE. You're not safe while I'm alive.

NUN (*calling*). Jailor, hangman!

JUSTINE. Only my hanging can save you.

NUN (*calling*). Sweet Jesus, please!

JUSTINE. Say it.

NUN (*calling*). Hang her!

JUSTINE. Louder.

NUN (*calling*). Hang her now!

JUSTINE. There's not a minute to spare.

NUN (*calling*). Hang her before she kills me!

JUSTINE. I can't die soon enough.

NUN (*calling*). Hang her before she drags me to hell!

JUSTINE. Take me away from the hateful living.

NUN (*calling*). Hang her before she damns us all!

JUSTINE. I'm needed in hell.

NUN (*calling*). Hang her, for the love of God!

JUSTINE (*laughing*). Yes, for the love of God.<sup>1</sup>

\*

11.

*(JUSTINE's bedroom; she is asleep in bed; DEMON approaches the door to leave quietly, but she awakens. A single cricket is heard chirping.)*

JUSTINE. Where are you going?

DEMON. Away.

JUSTINE. But why?

DEMON. It's morning.

JUSTINE. It's still dark.

DEMON. Birds are singing. They start singing with the sun. I hear it every day.

JUSTINE. But I still hear a cricket.

DEMON. Just one cricket, all alone inside here with us. People will wake up soon. You know I mustn't be here then.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix for an alternate staging of this scene.

(JUSTINE *pulls her robe around her and gets out of bed.*)

JUSTINE. Are you going to leave me here?

DEMON. What else can I do?

JUSTINE. Take me with you. I'll go wherever you go.

DEMON. That would be wrong. You have a life here among your kind. I can't take you away from that.

JUSTINE. I have no life here. And I have no kind except—

DEMON. I'm not your kind.

JUSTINE. I don't understand. Don't you want me to be with you?

DEMON. I'm not your kind.

JUSTINE. Oh, I see. I'm not strong. I'm not swift. I'm weak and clumsy. You're better off without me. I'd be a burden. You don't want me.

DEMON. Don't say that.

JUSTINE. I'll be so lonely. We'll both be so lonely.

DEMON. I belong lonely.

JUSTINE. But will you be happy?

DEMON. I don't belong happy.

JUSTINE. Don't I make you happy?

DEMON. Do I make *you* happy?

JUSTINE. You make me ... I don't know what it's called. But I know the dead are happy, and William is happy, and I wish you would kill me and make me happy, but you will never do that, so ... stay just a little longer. Please.

DEMON. It's morning.

JUSTINE. If it's morning, why is the cricket still singing?

DEMON. It's a song of loneliness, with no other crickets near. This cricket is a lonely god.

JUSTINE. It's too little to be a god.

DEMON. Only the little gods are good gods. Gods must always be smaller than what they make. Bigger gods make bigger and uglier things. The littlest gods make better and finer things, and more beautiful. This cricket's work still lies ahead.

JUSTINE. Tell me.

DEMON. You're just trying to keep me here.

JUSTINE. So what if I am? Tell me just a little more.

DEMON. The cricket calls out for the firefly. Someday the firefly will come. The firefly is another god. They'll exchange gifts. The cricket will sparkle and the firefly will sing. And out of their shine and their song they will make a happy new world in the sky.

JUSTINE (*laughing*). What makes you say such a thing?

DEMON. I know it.

JUSTINE. It's true, then?

DEMON. Of course it's true.

JUSTINE. How do you know?

DEMON. I just ... know.

JUSTINE. So it's true because you think it?

DEMON. How can it be anything else?

JUSTINE. Sweet friend, I worry for you. How will you get along without me? There's so much you don't understand. Not everything you think is true. Or real. Shut your eyes.

(DEMON *does so.*)

JUSTINE. Now think about a bottle of wine and some nuts and berries. (*pause*) Have you done it? Can you see it?

(DEMON *nods.*)

JUSTINE. Now open your eyes.

(DEMON *does so.*)

JUSTINE. Where is the wine? Where are the nuts and berries?

DEMON. They're gone.

JUSTINE. They weren't there. Not like before when we really had them to eat. They were only in your thoughts this time. Your thoughts are full of things that aren't real or true. The world is full of real things, true things—things you can't even think about, or know about, until they are there and they find you, and if you don't take care and be watchful —

DEMON (*interrupting*). But I *must* believe ... in the wine and nuts and berries, and the cricket and the firefly, and your happiness most of all. I must believe you will find your kind, or your kind will come looking for you. Yes, they are looking, and they will be here soon, and they will find you. They are beautiful winged creatures with bright smiling faces who will fly down from the clouds seeking you, and you will grow wings of your own, for you are of their kind, and you will fly away with them

and dwell forever in that beautiful cold world the cricket and the firefly will make in the sky.

JUSTINE. Heaven, you mean.

DEMON. I don't know its name.

JUSTINE. It's called heaven. I can't go there.

DEMON. Why not?

JUSTINE. I've committed a sin even God can't forgive.

DEMON. I don't understand. Do you have to be forgiven to go to heaven?

JUSTINE. Oh, yes.

DEMON. Then let me forgive you. I'll forgive you for everything.

JUSTINE. You can't do that.

DEMON. Why not?

JUSTINE. Have I wronged you?

DEMON. No.

JUSTINE. You can't forgive someone who hasn't wronged you.

DEMON. Why not?

JUSTINE. I don't think you know what forgiveness means.

DEMON. No, but I do forgive you. Whatever it means, I forgive you.

JUSTINE. Even for things I'd do all over again?

DEMON. Especially those things. Please let me forgive you. I can't go on unless you let me forgive you.

JUSTINE. Well then ... I am truly among the blessed.

*(pause; glancing toward the window)*

I see light now. The cricket isn't singing anymore. You'd better go.

DEMON. I've never ... gone away ... from anyone before. What do people say when they go away? What's the right word?

JUSTINE. For you and me there is no such word. Go now.

DEMON. But—

JUSTINE. Please. Just go.

*(DEMON hesitates.)*

DEMON. You will be there when I think of you.

*(DEMON leaves; JUSTINE walks to the window and looks out.)*

JUSTINE. Wake up, little William. It's time for me to bring you home.

END OF PLAY.

APPENDIX

The ending of Scene 10 may be staged with the following stage directions:

... This ugly old world will die, and a beautiful new one will begin.

*(NUN rushes to the door and calls out through the bars; JUSTINE rolls the cloth she has been stitching into a makeshift rope.)*

NUN *(calling through the bars)*. Jailer! Come!

JUSTINE. Yes, bring the jailor.

NUN *(calling through the bars)*. Get me out of here!

JUSTINE. And call for the hangman too.

NUN *(calling)*. Hangman! Come and save me!

JUSTINE. You're not safe while I'm alive.

*(VOICES are heard of an angry crowd outside calling for JUSTINE's death: "Hang her!" "Death to the child killer!" "Kill her!" etc.)*

NUN *(calling)*. Jailer, hangman!

JUSTINE. Only my hanging can save you.

NUN *(calling)*. Sweet Jesus, please!

JUSTINE. Say it.

NUN *(calling)*. Hang her!

JUSTINE. Louder.

NUN *(calling)*. Hang her now!

JUSTINE. There's not a minute to spare.

NUN *(calling)*. Hang her before she kills me!

JUSTINE. I can't die soon enough.

NUN *(calling)*. Hang her before she drags me to hell!

*(JUSTINE puts the makeshift rope around her neck.)*

JUSTINE. Take me away from the hateful living.

NUN *(calling)*. Hang her before she damns us all!

JUSTINE. I'm needed in hell.

NUN *(calling)*. Hang her, for the love of God!

JUSTINE *(laughing)*. Yes, for the love of God.

*(JUSTINE hangs herself.)*