

DESPAIR'S BOOK OF DREAMS  
AND THE  
SOMETIMES RADIO

BY

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SOMETIMES RADIO

Cast of Characters

Connie

Girl in the Hospital

The Blind Woman

The Moaning Poet

Spirit

Ghost

The Band: disguised as a hat rack, a dead plant and a lampshade.

### Scene

CONNIE's room is dark and strange. It's in the basement. His windows are weird and high up in the room, tower-like. Everything seems to point and reach upward, even the exposed pipes are like spires. He comes down stairs to get in. The light outside changes as day and night pass but he normally has the windows blocked out with quilts and old curtains so it's not that noticeable. As an antenna, he's run a wire from his radio up through the vent pipe of his toilet and all through the vents on every floor above him, then out onto the roof where it's attached to a larger pole planted there, like a flagpole, a lightning rod or a neon sign or something. The Radio is down center, covered. Later, when CONNIE uncovers it, we'll see that it's an impressive, large cabinet piece from the 1930's in a state of total disrepair. There are wires thread all throughout it, tubes and hunks of wood are attached in all different manner. And the finish is totally wrecked. Scrap re-enforce the body where panels are damaged or missing. Also in his room there is a closet, a bed, a trunk and toolbox, a gas can and a mirror, which isn't really a mirror but a window. And there's his toilet, like I said. The opening music begins very simply, and gradually the objects come alive. The clothes in the closet begin to sway, the trunk slowly opens and some shadows pass behind the mirror. Magic. Somehow the radio shifts and begins to glow beneath its cover. There is a spark near the toilet. We hear a Broadcast creep in over the music, in static. It repeats like a looped tape.

#### THE MOANING POET (Broadcast)

Okay folks, you are again the captive, for an evening, of The Moaning Poet. Shall we begin? Okay folks, you are again the captive, for an evening, of The Moaning Poet. Shall we begin? Okay folks, you are again the captive, for an evening, of The Moaning Poet. Shall ---

(A door slams. The stage goes dark. All movement stops. We hear footsteps on the stairs and finally CONNIE enters, home from work. He switches on a bare light bulb that flashes and burns out. He goes to the trunk, opens the lid, which slammed closed with the door a moment ago and takes out a new bulb which he uses to fix the light. He switches it on, no problem, removes his overcoat and goes to the toilet to wash his hands. He passes the window, mirrored by a SPIRIT dressed just like him. He pours a cup of coffee and starts his record player. He sings along.)

(GF#EmAC) (AC) (ACG)

G            F#            Em                            A                            C  
I tune in late. I tune in low.    You said, "You disappoint me." And there is a song here.

G            F#            Em                            A            C  
 Standin on top of the Word. You say you'll wake me up cause I don't hear you.

A    C   A C    G F# Em

But I do. I do. I do.

(in a dramatic twang)

And I'm so lonesome I could cry.

(He laughs.)

#### CONNIE

Not really. Okay, really. Ah you know, a man living all by himself he's always wondering what everybody else is up to. What people on the street are doing and that sort of thing. You can get to focusing on what's missing. In your life or wherever. You get to focusing on all that and pretty soon you don't think about much else. Just what's missing. What you're missing. And fore long you don't talk that much cause you feel like you might need the little bit you got left - and it ain't that much to give away anyway. And them that used to be your friends and so forth, well they get tired of that pretty quick. And they move on. I guess that's where I'm at. You know. I'm just trying to get it figured out is all. I write a little bit of poetry sometimes, about how I'm feeling. I'd like to read you one, if I could.

(pulling a tiny scrap of paper from his pocket)

It's short.

(He steps to a microphone and reads aloud.)

Despair is a field freshly plowed. Just dark and laying there, waiting, with God all around and everywhere. And God close to death. But not in the ground just yet.

(CONNIE crosses to the Radio and yanks off the cover. After a few moments admiring it, he hurries to the closet for his workcoat and hat. On the way back he remembers his magnifying glasses and puts them on.)

I stopped listening to the radio when they stopped making them cool to look at. But I knew it would do me good to have some voices around here so I got this one. It don't work. Not yet. It's kind of under restoration. Like me. One day I'll finish though. Be re-finished. Like new. But better than new. It'll be rare, and have experience. It was free. But I still think it's pretty cool. I think I'll sweep the floor.

(CONNIE removes his glasses, seizes the broom and begins to sweep. His broom looks crazy and makes noise. The sweeping is a sort of dance accompanied by the sound of the broom against the floor and an occasional hop and hum to accent the movement. The band sneaks in too. As CONNIE sweeps, and the band plays, the SPIRIT and GHOST sneak out of the closet wearing some of his clothes.

It looks like the clothes have come alive. They waltz. CONNIE suddenly stops when he notices the SPIRIT and GHOST. The music unwinds. GHOST exits immediately but the SPIRIT lingers before retreating into the closet. A few seconds of silent disbelief before CONNIE dashes toward the closet, with his broom. He pokes at the clothes, but no spirits, just clothes.)

Seems like my clothes got a mind of their own.

(CONNIE puts the broom away. And checks the closet once more. He also kicks at his laundry pile. Finally he looks up toward the windows.)

It's very late at night now. I'm certain. Nothing like that could ever happen during the day. It would never happen like that unless it was very, very late at night. Nothing like that happens unless everyone else is asleep. Ah, but there ain't no one else here. And I'm awake. I know I'm awake. I know because I never go to sleep. I never go to sleep because I have to work all the time. I don't have to, you know, but they pay me. And what can compare with that? Do the angels think less of me because I work for my pay, because I obey from time to time? I doubt it.

(CONNIE walks over to his bed, which is covered in tools and other crap. He carefully selects a couple of strange gadgets - and a screwdriver - and goes to work on the Radio.)

When I was a little boy I had this awful dream. I was in this awful parade. The first section was Longing, the next in line Despair. And after him was loneliness. Every sadness marching there. And bringing up the rear, a dancing clown. Since then I've had a real hard time relaxing and gettin ready for bed. I was small then and could walk real slow but our house was small too, and soon I reached my small room. Once inside I had to stop every loophole. Yep. I had to close the window, close the curtains, check the closet, put some extra clothes on. I had to dig my own grave in that little bed and bury myself in blankets before returning to the uncertain world of dreams. I tried to wear my father's nightshirt once and pretend I was a grown up, but I was always naked there and newly born. (beat) Okay. So it's not only my work that keeps the sleep away. But I'm alright. You do what you do.

(He stands and heads to the toilet to rinse his hands.)

You do what you do.

(Suddenly he has an idea for a song. He bangs out a rhythm on the gas can, grabs his guitar from the bed and begins.)

(F#A) (EF#) (F#AF#E)

F#

Me? I'm fine if everybody wants to sleep all night.

A F# A F#

But me? I'm alright. I never thought of that as usual.

E F# E F#

You do what you do. If everybody has a chance they will too.

F# A F# E

F# A F# A F#

Me? I'm alright but this portion makes it hard sometimes.

F# A F# A F#

And maybe I'm not the silent type cause I know which here faults are mine.

E F# E F#

You see it all the time. If everybody has a chance they'll sign.

F#GA

F# A F# A F#

Me? I'm fine if everybody wants to fall in line. I ain't got time.

F# E F#

And a good parade is hard to find. Look out when you lay down.

E F#

Not everybody loves a dancing clown

F#GA

But a clown could dance. A clown should dance.

(CONNIE sets off on a eerie clown dance. Gradually the music fades away and he recovers himself, sheepishly.)

They say if you don't ever dream you'll go crazy, but I don't think that's necessarily true. I can't see how a dream could be so powerful. I can't see how a single dream could make a man crazy. I know for a fact that they can't keep a hold of you forever. Look, when I used to fall into those ugly spells I found I could think on something peaceful and real and free myself. That memory would drop, like a rope let down to draw me up, and away I'd go from what I never could've escaped alone. My favorite memory saved me.

(beat)

No, I don't need to go racing off to get dead - or to have a dream.

(The Radio begins to crackle and static. A voice comes through.)

Listen! It's working.

### GIRL IN THE HOSPITAL

February 8th. Dear Diary, We're all lost in here at night. Everything changes and the nights in here are dark. Like a grave. And even the stars are usually lost. When they do come out they're distant and brittle. These empty stars are like friends at a funeral staring down at you dark and dead through sunlight and blades of grass. The nights don't just divide the day here, they swallow it. All of it. Nothing escapes the night here but sleep. Mom, Dad, I miss you. I really do. Sometimes when I'm writing I imagine that you can hear it. That you're in this book with me, listening. That you can hear me. Hear my heart. That's what I imagine sometimes.

(The signal statics out and is gone. CONNIE is upset. He paces the room then passes the mirror and stops. SPIRIT is on the other side imitating him. After a few movents together CONNIE turns away, shaken. And he looks toward the radio.)

### CONNIE

I'm a whole lot closer than I thought. A whole lot closer. I'm gonna be done sooner, much sooner. It's true. Yep. Wow. I didn't expect anything like this. Not this soon. But I don't really know what to expect anymore. And who could blame me? See let me tell you why those clothes there make me nervous. One night after work I was at home by myself. Just sitting in the laundry you know when all of a sudden everything changed. I knew that I had been unhappy. And I knew that I had been spending a lot of time alone. And maybe not sleeping quite enough, probably and drinking too much coffee. But the things that changed didn't have to do with coffee or sleep or even loneliness. It's just that I was suddenly, desperately afraid. And filled with the feeling that I was collapsing. It was a terrible state, like I said. And then I saw some things. I saw a shadow in my window, a version of myself wandered by. See that's not the first time my closet's come alive. And it's weird. But it never once occurred to me that I was having a nervous breakdown or that I was in real trouble because I thought that well, here I am, right here in the midst of some, well, the Great Fall. And all these other desperate characters I see flying by are falling angels, just like me. They look like me at least. All white man shaped. But then they started to disappear and I knew for the first time in my life that nothing could be done about it. No one was gonna save us. Is this my story? I don't know. A dream? I don't know. But I'll tell you what. I heard a howling that night. Like a desert bird. A weird cry like a troubled prophet dodging demons, it might've been me even. But I heard it. And then, like an echo, old, another voice. Not a voice exactly - more like a whisper from some old machine. Some living static of blood and board. "If I read from this book," it hissed, "if I turned it on, every piece of clothing in your closet would come alive while you were asleep. And in the morning you would find it hanging there in the dark, afraid. And you would take it down and make rags of all of it. And then stop talking. " So I just stopped talking. And started working.

(CONNIE crosses to the trunk and gently unpacks a delicate piece for the Radio. As he installs it the broadcast begins, startling him.)

THE BLIND WOMAN

Remember when you used to be a writer?

THE MOANING POET

I'm still a writer.

(SPIRIT dressed as THE MOANING POET enters and begins to play along with the conversation.)

THE BLIND WOMAN

You don't ever write anymore.

THE MOANING POET

Oh but I do.

THE BLIND WOMAN

When? I never see you writing. I never see any of your writing. And I'm not totally blind.

THE MOANING POET

You don't see it because it's in here.

(gesture to his head)

And in here.

(gesture toward his heart)

And I do it all day long while I'm at work.

THE BLIND WOMAN

That's not writing, that's thinking.

THE MOANING POET

No, I think of it, then I write it. I just don't write it down.

THE BLIND WOMAN

It's not writing, okay?

THE MOANING POET

Well it's not okay. It's exactly the same thing I did before only now I don't use paper. I still got the words. And I got them just the way I want them.

(GHOST dressed as THE BLIND WOMAN enters.)

## THE BLIND WOMAN

Well you don't show them to anyone.

## THE MOANING POET

How would I show them to anyone? Break open my head?

## THE BLIND WOMAN

You could break open your heart.

## THE MOANING POET

I already have.

(Signal fades)

## CONNIE

(To SPIRIT and GHOST)

Okay, okay. Wait. Hey, it's okay. I'm not afraid of you. You can be here. Okay?

(SPIRIT and GHOST watch him for a moment  
and then retreat.)

Okay then. Just go on.

(back toward the radio)

He broke his heart right open and she didn't even notice. Oh my.

(He pulls a scrap of paper from his other pocket  
and steps to a mic.)

Despair is a dark bird that floats, weightless, she undoes everything and empties you like open sky.

(CONNIE starts around the room collecting things.)

If that crazy radio'll go one way then it'll go the other too. Right? Yep. I think it's clear by now that what's occurring here is not ordinary no matter how you look at it. I'm gonna get all my talk back stuff together and make it ready. Cause I can talk back. And I'll tell you somethin while I do.

(He begins plugging in cables and arranging things,  
working. He goes to the bed and finds a hammer.)

I used to have this wife. And one night she got into my tools. That night, while I slept, she took out a nail and hammered it down into my chest. Down through my heart. To hold it there. I guess. So she could come back for it later. So she could come back for me. For the rest of me. If she wanted. When she never came back I had to go down into my own heart and find that nail and free myself. Free myself from under it and try to heal up. But it didn't happen all right away you understand. There was a lot of stuff to think about first. So I went out into the yard. I like to go out there and just think about stuff. I get turned on in the yard.

(He finishes connecting the cables.)

Okay. I think this might be it. Okay then. Hum. What should I do? Hello? Test. Yep.

(Expertly, he grabs his ukulele from a shelf nearby.)

I'll play em a song. About how I always feel in the yard.

(GF#EC) (F#EFC) (GFEC)

G F# E  
 There in a corner, somewhere in my yard, I'm waiting for the contact  
 C G F#  
 Plug me in and get me started. I feel you out here flying, then I find you in the sky  
 E# C  
 And I know that I could follow if I killed the light and downed my power lines

F# E F C

G F# E  
 So . . . here goes. You're something, the way you keep me dry. We can be high.  
 C G F#  
 You can be found so high around rain on your face. I know you're a woman  
 E C F#  
 By the way you move. The way you move me.

EFC

G F#/D E C  
 I'm waiting to get off on you. Waiting, waiting, waiting. Send your signal through.  
 G F#/D E C  
 Waiting to get off on you. Waiting waiting waitng. I tell you what . . . I remember.

GF#EC

G F# E C  
 Alone. Open. I know. I'm listening. And I won't forget. I don't regret it.  
 G F# E C  
 You come so much. You came to touch me. And you find me empty.  
 G F#/D E C  
 Waiting to get off on you. Waiting, waiting, waiting. Send your signal through.  
 G F#/D E C  
 Waiting to get off on you. Waiting waiting waitng. I tell you what . . . I remember.  
 G F#/D E C  
 Waiting to get off on you. Waiting, waiting, waiting. Send your signal through.  
 G F#/D C  
 Waiting to get off on you. You're the most alive of all . . .

(Broadcast begins)

### GIRL IN THE HOSPITAL

Thursday. Middle of the night. Dear Diary, One night I woke up and went naked out into the yard. Believe it or not. No one noticed. I went out looking at the clouds and the sky, and I stood there, a nude in the wind, and I knew then that something inside of me was gone. I knew that if I reached in and felt around that I wouldn't find it. I'd only find empty. I knew that, but I didn't do it because I didn't want to know for sure. I stood out there awhile, lit like a stone by the moon, and I wanted to cry as everything else inside of me began to disappear. Then I went back inside.

### CONNIE

I stood out there a while lit like a stone by the light of the moon and I wanted to cry as everything else inside of me died. I stood out there lit like a stone by the moon. Lit like a stone. She sounds just like me!

(to the Radio)

We're like prophets. And even in confusion your beauty, undiminished, hangs easily from a star.

(CONNIE waits for a response but it doesn't come.  
Finally he gathers himself up and then notices his  
ridiculous bed.)

I don't think I slept that much before but, you know, now I don't hardly even need to. I don't have to rest for work or nothin. Because I quit. And I don't have to change my clothes that much either cause I never leave the house. I do though, change my clothes. Just to be more certain that time's passing. Some people see that and call it a pile a laundry. I call it a clock. Lookit, a real old guy don't ever change his clothes much. You can tell when he's gettin kind of crazy cause he stops keepin track of things. Like changing clothes. Same problem with the cops even. They loose track on account of wearing the same clothes all the time. It'll make you crazy. And angry angry angry and very confused. And scared. They got the same kinda cars too. Need more chaos. More violence. More chaos. So scared and angry! Got . . . to . . . get . . . free . . . from . . . this . . . monotony. Yow!

(CONNIE scrambles toward the laundry pile for a  
different set of clothes. He finds a bright red scarf  
and quickly winds it around his neck.)

I like to do it a little different you know. A scarf or something. Hey listen . . .

(The Radio buzzes, sparks, and then comes on. The  
music is familiar.)

Yes! Yes! Rotandapot! Rotandapot! Yes!

(During the broadcast, SPIRIT and GHOST enter  
and silently portray parts of the story.)

### THE MOANING POET

Habit was a student. He watched the sun go down on Rialdabon hill. He watched the sun also rise. Day from day. Week from week. Year after year. Habit was in love with a girl on Rialdabon hill. And he imagined he could see her.

### THE MOANING POET (Cont.)

Breasts, neck, throat and shoulders, her waistline and the decline just below her ass. All this he saw in the shape of her house. And one day he would get her out. Every spring there was a grand event, a great design on Rialdabon hill. In this season there was music any beating heart could not resist. Habit was a student of music and he wished to go to the ball and so he set a planning. But his mind ran dry though his eyes were wet as ever. So he went to see Rotandapot, a man who kept a shop just below the pepper grove out on elegant way. Rotandapot was an elegant man and his shop had, as long as anyone could remember, been the only one on elegant way. Business was good. Though no one had seen more than a single patron in his shop at any given time, apparently they spent when they visited because they all came out looking relieved - a relief that Habit knew came only after giving something precious away. Because his mind had gone dry, and because it was late in the winter, and because he was still very much in love, Habit went to see Rotandapot. He went to see him at his shop, just below the pepper grove. Rotandapot welcomed Habit with a fabulous grin and served him a cup of tea. "Tell me what you're hot about Habit. You've got certain sparks all in your hair." "It's the girl on Rialdabon hill. I'm mad about the girl on Rialdabon hill. I see her love-joy-longing in the sky." "Yes, Habit, so do I." Replied Rotandapot. "What I need is to get into the party in the spring. If you had an invitation I could buy . . . well, that would be the thing." "No I don't think that's the best idea, it's far too obvious. You need to be a phantom if you want to get the girl. You need to be a phantom in the world." "I need some clothes?" "You understand me perfectly." And then the two went hand in hand around the shop, Habit and Rotandapot, picking things out. When they had finished, hours later, they stood before a mirror. Rotandapot calculating the cost, and Habit like a ghost. Both silent. An hour past and then another but it was no bother. The beauty in that room held them together. The beauty in that room was light. Then Habit started, softly, to cry. And both of them knew why. And they held each other one hour more. "You know that I am poor" said Habit, "and that my family is poor and that I have no way to pay. You know that," Habit said again and looked him in the eye. "And yet you let me in your shop today. You let me fall in love with what I cannot buy." "Have you come to tempt me boy?" said Rotandapot. And then they both began to laugh. Nervously at first and then a lot. "Look here!" the elegant one proposed, and stared into the mirror. "I made these clothes for you. That's what brought you here. They are yours today. They were yours the day I made them. Yet there is one thing that I desire and it's quite a lot to ask." "Anything." Habit rasped. "I'd like to conquer your reflection. I'd savor it and keep it near. This day I'd honor where you stand, in these new clothes made by my hand. Please consider. Would you grant me that?" "It's not much to live without." Habit shook. "Not when I have her to look at." Rotandapot was still. The girl in the house on Rialdabon Hill sat bolt upright in bed and was ill. One last look at himself in the clothes, at the mirror, at the shop, and then he let go. And he hurried home to watch the sun set in the west. His mind gone wet at last. Spring was coming fast. On the day of the dance he sat alone at his desk, and hauled the figure on Rialdabon hill deep into his chest. Hard, he swallowed tears, for once held them back. And drew the image madly, on a single sheet of paper, lit like skin across his back. He watched the sun fall red and orange and burn into the ocean sill.

THE MOANING POET (Cont.)

He started up the steps to the house of the girl on Rialdabon hill. Fast into his arms she fell in a ballroom full of mirrors. And then a cry of horror, hoarse, as he sadly disappeared.

CONNIE

Oh God. I never heard the end before. I hate that. It's a shame. It's a shame. That Rotandapot, he's a devil. A dark devil making trades like that. Taking people's shadows. I call it the poetry of stone. Yep. You know, "She showed me a stone so beautiful that I longed to die by it." That stone was her heart, polished and hard.

(CONNIE wanders over to the Radio and retrieves his ukulele. He places it back on the shelf carefully and covers it with his red scarf.)

Remember I told you about my wife? Well I heard she poked her eye out. She must've seen something she didn't like. Maybe she popped it out like Habit's reflection and traded it for something real good. It's crazy what people'll do now days. What they give away. It's crazy.

(SPIRIT passes behind the mirror)

Is that me? No. Then who? Is this my story? No. Then whose? Whose wings are these hung high upon my back? Whose height is this? I wonder. Whose gasoline? Whose sparks and vapors are these that raise me up? Alight. Alive. On fire. Whose wings? How high? How hot? Who am I? Huh?

(Suddenly the radio crackles and comes on.)

THE MOANING POET

Heretic, wizard, soothsayer, fool!

CONNIE (shocked)

What?

THE MOANING POET

Doubter, reprobate, villain, buffoon. Insomniac!

CONNIE

Heyyyyy!

THE MOANING POET

There was a great howl of despair just before the madness began. And you could see in his eyes that for weeks there had been no sleep. And every waking dream was weak - and only made it worse. You could feel the curse upon him. You could feel the hurt he furnished. He was a whole family of weeping - a dedication keeping. But never sleeping. Out!

CONNIE (agitated)

A phantom never goes to bed. A phantom doesn't do any dreaming or anything. Every thought a phantom has is a dream, see? That's what dreams are - phantom thoughts. When you dream you're like a phantom for a little bit, but not asleep. A phantom never goes to bed. Doesn't sleep at all either. Is this my story? I don't think so. I fell in love with a woman who was not my wife. Then I married her and fell in love again. Two loves, one woman. Two women, one love. Is that not right? Do the angels think less of me? I doubt it.

(He snatches a crowbar from the bed and returns vigorously to work on the Radio.)

Was a lotta work getting that nail out. It was set you know, down in there deep. Couldn't hardly even get at it for a long long time.

(getting more intense)

Had to come back to it a whole bunch of times. Really had to try to pry that motherfucker loose. Can't hardly get a hold on it. Have to use any fuckin thing I can to get my hands on it. Any thing at all - had to use it. Had to. And it hurt! Goddamn!

(CONNIE slams the crowbar to the floor.)

Noise.

(AF#) (EGF#)

A F# A  
I can't see too clear right now and I'm not sure what you need.

F# A  
She said I'll hold you close to my left eye and fall asleep in your extremities.

EGF# EGF# EGF# A  
And kiss you on the mouth. Yeah I'll kiss you on the mouth. You fall on your broad back  
F# A

F# A  
You come to make a world in me, a shape for us to roam.

EGF# EGF#  
You kind of made a world in me, a brand new haunted home.

F# A  
But I still want to live there though. Built on your broad back. Built on your broad back

F# A  
I kissed you on the mouth. You took away my breath I swear.

EGF# EGF#  
I kissed you on the mouth. But then you disappear.

EGF# EGF#  
I slid my arm beneath your back and looked into your face

EGF# EGF#  
As hard as I could hunger I demand for us this place

F#  
I think we ought to build a house where I can kiss you on your mouth

I can kiss you on the mouth. I can kiss you on the mouth.

CONNIE

I built a whole house for myself with that one nail. A whole house that I was driven out of . . . and now this black nothing, this thing without even a real name, follows me wherever I go.

(SPIRIT enters, dressed as Death.)

I assume you've come for me.

(SPIRIT shakes his head. CONNIE is relieved)

Sit down then. I'm working.

(SPIRIT sits on CONNIE's toilet and watches him fool with wires that spark and buzz until the broadcast begins)

THE BLIND WOMAN

Tell me a story.

THE MOANING POET

No, I don't think so.

THE BLIND WOMAN

Come on.

THE MOANING POET

No.

THE BLIND WOMAN

Come on. Get off of the toilet and tell me a story.

(Astonished, SPIRIT stands up and retreats.)

THE MOANING POET

Alright. There once was a student named Habit. And he was in love with a girl on Rialdabon hill --

(CONNIE turns the Radio off.)

CONNIE

No. Too sad. That one's too sad. I don't want to disappear. I don't want you to disappear. I want to remember you beautiful. I want everything to be beautiful. Nothing less. I'll remake it all if I have to. Right here in my house. With you here warm to live with.

(CONNIE looks to SPIRIT. SPIRIT exits.)

(AmFG) (CAmF) (CGF)

Am F G Am F G Am F G  
 You might dance and fill me still with you only. Well, with you by me.  
 F Am F G  
 Across the sky in one short flight. All your daytime glistens.  
 Am F G Am F G  
 I will watch you lay here for just another few minutes. Stay. Another short visit.  
 C Am C Am F  
 One breath in - one smile. One breath out - one bright angel was mine for awhile.  
 Am F G Am F G Am F G F  
 Your eyes dance and fill me sent from you only spent with you by me  
 C Am C Am F  
 One breath in - one smile. One breath out - one bright angel was mine for awhile.

CGF

(Again CONNIE dances. He gathers a hammer and a set of large shears using them to conduct. The broadcast begins as the music fades)

#### GIRL IN THE HOSPITAL:

There's a storm outside. Can you hear it momma? It's got lightning in it. And electricity. I don't think I'll ever go to sleep. Don't ever leave. Okay, mom? I don't need much - I just want something warm to live with. I think I'm gonna write all night this time.

(Exhausted and sad, CONNIE lays down to sleep. SPIRIT and GHOST gather around to protect and watch over him. They motion one another to be quiet. There is a knock at the door that startles SPIRIT and GHOST but they remain. There comes another knock. And then silence.)

(Lights down)

#### INTERMISSION

(Lights up)

(CONNIE, scared awake by a nightmare,  
leaps up, rejuvenated and a little confused.)

CONNIE

That fucking ghost would never take his hand away from his face. And what's more, he always wore a nightshirt that I know was stolen. Now it's getting light outside and I misplace my book of dreams and I imagine I'll forget someday and not know where to find myself.

(SPIRIT enters.)

Oh hello.

(SPIRIT can't talk.)

You can't talk.

(SPIRIT points to the radio.)

That's my radio.

(SPIRIT shakes its head.)

Yes it is. That's my radio.

(SPIRIT shakes its head.)

It's not your radio.

(SPIRIT shakes its head vigorously. Hand on its mouth, it motions backward as if to what CONNIE said before.)

I'm sorry about the nightshirt. I don't know that it was stolen.

(SPIRIT shakes his head. He wants to reveal something more. CONNIE guessing . . .)

It's not my radio . . . it's my book of dreams.

(SPIRIT nods and still more.)

If I forget, I find myself there.

(SPIRIT nods.)

It's me!

(SPIRIT nods. Yes! Yes! Yes! and then leaves.)

Weird.

(CONNIE goes back and turns on the radio,  
scanning the frequencies.)

I stopped listening to the radio when they stopped making them cool to look at. In my opinion, they sound a whole lot different now

THE BLIND WOMAN

Listen and I'll tell you just how it was. Trust me. There was not plenty of anything but empty in those days. Pockets, plates, and promises rattled in the wind. There was never any good but the one spring dance at my house on Rialdabon hill-

(CONNIE changes frequencies.)

## GIRL IN THE HOSPITAL

When I'm lonesome I think about a big black bird that flies dry out of the sea and covers me in shadow-

## CONNIE

I got a big shadow too. It takes me over sometimes, and makes me follow it around.

## GIRL IN THE HOSPITAL

I know deep down the bird is a woman. I know she is a woman because she collects me like a child. She feeds me with her thoughts when I am suffering. I met a blind man in here today. I told him I was afraid of the dark and he just laughed. He laughed and said the dark was his wife.

## CONNIE/GIRL IN THE HOSPITAL

Don't ever leave okay? There's a storm outside. Do you hear it?

## CONNIE

(turning away from the Radio)

I don't need much.

## GIRL IN THE HOSPITAL

Someone warm to live with-

## CONNIE

Somebody's telling me stories.

## GIRL IN THE HOSPITAL

I hate to be away from you. I measure time only from when I last saw you or heard your voice to now and from now until the next time I see you or hear your voice.

(CONNIE changes the frequency.)

## THE BLIND WOMAN

Let me give you some history, a statement of loneliness in past tense. The last thing I ever really saw was me there alone in that big dancing room. A fallen woman in her brightest costume. I felt him, my love, my heart. I held him against my chest. I didn't see him, but I didn't need to; I knew he was there. I closed my eyes. Habit.

(CONNIE sits back to listen.)

I lost my heart. How could I say look a little deeper? It's just a little piece, a piece of me gone - I can go on. I lost my heart. How could I? It's just my heart. Oh look, my heart is gone. We can overlook that, right? Oh look, another little piece of me missing - it's just my sight. I might get by without my sight. Can we take our faults, I said, one each at least, and throw them off a cliff? Or would they just fly back over us and re-attach themselves? Oh look, are those wings hung upon your back?

(SPIRIT enters, dressed as Cupid, to cheer CONNIE up.)

CONNIE

(banishing SPIRIT)

No.

(SPIRIT retreats.)

THE BLIND WOMAN

It's not your fault, you were my heart. Would you fly back up?

(beat)

In a weak moment I sank. I broke every mirror in the room. That day, there was something missing. I closed my eyes when we were dancing. When I looked up I couldn't see you. Your bright shadow, your reflection, went away. Except one little piece of you, in glass, it stayed. That piece of your reflection lives alone in my left eye. And I don't use it for anything else. I have a child now.

(CONNIE recoils from the Radio. The signal fades. He rushes to the toilet to rinse his face and notices GIRL IN THE HOSPITAL in the mirror. Standing in front of her he can tell they look something alike. They move together for a moment until CONNIE steps aside, behind the wall. When he returns she is gone.)

CONNIE

Yeah. I built a whole house for myself with that one nail. Then I escaped the woman. I leapt out of her shadow into a brilliant light. But I wound up under the world. And I woke up alone. And strange. At home. Where no one knows me. You don't know that about me. This is my story. You don't get to tell it.

(to the audience)

I couldn't go back to sleep so I went for a walk.

(SPIRIT enters.)

And right off the top I saw The Witnesses. There and to the left a little bit. That's where I saw them. All huddled and in confusion. Like angels exposed with their nightshirts cut open. According to the rules. According to them, just following the rules. I didn't dare go any further but I didn't dare turn back. And as I said, they were The Witnesses. Hello . . .!

(“Hello” echoes back. GHOST enters.)

I took another couple of steps and I looked down at the road. There I seen a scorpion sting himself to death. I didn't really want to see that. Not right then at the start of my dark walk. “I see a strange thing comin and it has no name,” they said. No name? No. No. I have a name. Let's go!

(CONNIE, SPIRIT and GHOST take off, moving throughout the space.)

CONNIE (cont.)

I went down - through a circle, and then down some stairs. And down another circle and then down a ladder and down on a rope until I fell upon a door.

(They freeze.)

A door that opened onto a city. A city of ash and suffering. A crowded place lit by longing and desire. A whole hall of shadows. Your first instinct, upon entering such a hell, is to feel self-conscious and outnumbered. But it's liberating to walk in the crowded streets like a phantom. Dining on voices. Yep. Just listening.

(Again they move.)

But down again, another circle - getting hotter - down, down, down! And to the side a little, over now, a rocky slope. Rickety rickety and boom!

(SPIRIT and GHOST stop.)

The fourth circle I found was perfect. Light and darkness were the two great images and where they met somewhere deep down in my middle, a shadow formed. Mysterious. You ought to feel what it's like to live with a shadow in your middle, like a puddle. A hole with dirty water in my middle. But without the water. Yep. You see now that's my phantom nature. It's my disembodied spirit that battles light in the night. Mystical. But then I slipped!

(They move again.)

And down down down again. A tunnel, then a bridge, then another rocky slope. A thick muck. Murky. I could barely walk. I shouted! I couldn't talk. And then I stopped.

(beat)

It's my shadow there. My companion. Inseparable. I follow that black devil by the sound of his wings. But I lost track of which was bird and which was sky. They both looked the same, the bird and the shadow on the ground. Except the shadow didn't have no eyes. Only holes. It's me in there. It's me. A little distorted and totally, utterly without substance. Eeeeeeee!

(CONNIE races to hide behind SPIRIT and GHOST.)

Hey you down in that hole. Can you hear? Can you hear me up here? Is there anything at all? Will you answer me? And from the hole I answer. And ask myself, what is this unknown power that opposes me, this presence hovering over me in the dark? I don't even recognize my own work.

(to SPIRIT and GHOST)

Am I a human being or just some hungry ghost out here - some hungry witness - under the world?

(Suddenly the Radio is on.)

THE BLIND WOMAN

My job is now to forget. My job now, to forget. Now my job to forget. Yes.

(CONNIE scampers to the Radio. SPIRIT and GHOST leave.)

CONNIE

What's your name?

## THE BLIND WOMAN

Yes it's true that I'm blind.

## CONNIE

Did you poke your eye out?

## THE BLIND WOMAN

A long time ago. I didn't need to see him. I recognized my lover by his step. In fact, I read his mind through that simple music. The music of his step. He was a student of music. And it wasn't hard to find his heart, either. I couldn't see him in the mirror but it wasn't hard to find his heart.

## CONNIE

What? What?

## THE BLIND WOMAN

No, I couldn't see him in the mirror but it wasn't hard to feel his heart.

## CONNIE

Say your name.

## THE BLIND WOMAN

I couldn't see him in the mirror but it wasn't hard. No. I couldn't see him---

## CONNIE

Hey! Can you even hear me? Who are you talking to there?

(silence)

Fuck!

(CONNIE careens around the room searching for something to still him. SPIRIT enters.)

Go away.

(SPIRIT shakes its head.)

Then play your game and leave.

(SPIRIT stares at CONNIE, then at the Radio just as the broadcast begins.)

## THE MOANING POET

This is no game, man. This is all real. Trust me. If that woman is your wife, and she's blind, then you're the dark. You're the dark! You're the dark!

## CONNIE

Okay. Okay. Okay then. Just a minute. I remember. I need some spell or something. It's just like before. I need a curse to release me. I need a rope let down to me. I can remember. I can, to get me out. I need some magic! I grew up in Kansas.



## CONNIE (cont.)

I think I'll take this little fortune and add it to my stash. See I keep a little book thing here wherein I record what the spirits say to me. I'm serious. My first entry is here one morning when I got woken up by a spirit who said "well?" and then he moved on. Pretty soon I was hearing things like "Fuck! Fuck! Water in the coffee!" And all sorts of things. You wouldn't believe it. Sometimes I worry that I am the last man.

(SPIRIT enters and presents CONNIE with a fortune cookie.)

I guess you're ready to communicate.

(CONNIE opens the cookie and reads . . .)

"You will finally solve a difficult problem that will mean much to you." Oh really, what's her name?

(SPIRIT exits.)

Is this my story? I guess it is. Of course it is.

(Broadcast)

## GIRL IN THE HOSPITAL

Welcome back to the Adventures of an Abandoned Child. It's nighttime. And I truly must have lost my mind, or at least control of it, for I have just tried to pray. I wanted to ask God to help me but all I had were words. Stark useless words that rattled first and then fell onto the floor beside me and rolled off into a corner and underneath the bed to die. Everyone smokes in here. The halls are filled with smoke, circling and grey. There isn't even anywhere for it to go. It's as trapped and confused as the patients. I know if we could, the smoke and I would make friends and sneak out together through a vent and live like clouds in the night sky.

## CONNIE

And so would I. So would I.

(GHOST and SPIRIT enter.)

And so would you, my weird little friends. We would all go soaring through the sky on some lit up dream. Wouldn't we? You're all so quiet.

(SPIRIT and GHOST nod.)

I think you have too many rules. But you don't care what I think do you?

(They shake their heads.)

Don't you know I'm like a prophet. I'm Saint Connie the one and only! I'm ---

(There comes a loud knock on the door. SPIRIT and GHOST exit quickly. CONNIE looks at the door but doesn't answer it. Instead, he rushes to the pile of clothes a grabs a bunch.)

I always respond to threats, real or perceived, in this case, with clothes. A man's gotta have his clothes you know. You need the right clothes to do the job right. Right? See I got nail hammering clothes. I got my poetical clothes. I got radio clothes. I got clothes that do tricks and freak me out. And I got my not answering the door clothes.

(He puts on his "not answering the door" clothes.)

CONNIE (cont.)

Remember I told you about telling time by your clothes? Well not only can you tell time by your clothes but occasionally I even remember what I'm supposed to be doing by consulting with my clothes. Now, for example, I believe I'm supposed to be at work. Yep. But that's okay, I'm working here.

(CONNIE goes to the bed for tools. Broadcast begins.)

THE BLIND WOMAN

Connie? Connie?

(CONNIE looks toward the audience and all around.)

Connie it's me.

(CONNIE stops. He recognizes the voice.)

Connie it's me. How are you? I need to talk to you Connie. I need to talk right now. It's about the baby. Connie? It's me. Are you there? How are you?

CONNIE

How am I? How am I? Well, my heart still beats. But it's broken.

THE BLIND WOMAN

I'm sorry.

CONNIE

My blood flows. But it boils too. What's wrong with the baby?

THE BLIND WOMAN (reproachfully)

Connie.

CONNIE

How am I supposed to feel? I didn't plan these visions. I didn't plan to have my heart broken and not think of anything else. You said I disappointed you. What's wrong with the baby?

(Silence)

Are you still there? Nope. I didn't think so.

(Silence)

THE BLIND WOMAN

Connie?

CONNIE

No!

(He kicks the Radio and breaks it, then begins pulling the guts from it.)

Go on! My memory! My story! My baby! You go! You go! Whose wings are these now?! Whose height is this? Whose gasoline? Whose sparks and vapors raise me up?

CONNIE (Cont.)

Whose wings? How hot? How high? Who am I? I'll know my own work when I hear it. And so far I ain't heard shit.

(A book falls from a shelf and lands heavily at CONNIE's feet. He picks it up cautiously and reads a line aloud.)

"What you risk reveals what you value." What I risk? Goddamn!

(CONNIE throws the book.)

What have I not risked? What have I not risked? Look at me! I'm dirty, I'm tired, I'm ugly, I'm stupid. I'm guilty of everything! I played. I lost. I can't believe that's not righteous. I can't believe that's not how you do it. Hey you . . . I'm here. Look at me here. Look at me! I need some help.

CONNIE/THE BLIND WOMAN

I need some help.

THE BLIND WOMAN

I told him.

CONNIE/THE BLIND WOMAN

I need some help!

(This broadcast is unusual. As the song plays, it draws CONNIE to the Radio where a bright light spills out through its cracks and holes. CONNIE moves slowly through the light and seems almost healed by it.)

Come you broken angels rise, loose your swords and lift your eyes  
One torn voice long echoing, tonight will find its harmony.  
Through the dark and chaos come Grace brought safe and Grace led home  
Promised word my song secures my sheild and portion life endures.

(CONNIE hurriedly scribbles some notes on a scrap of paper as the song fades.)

CONNIE

Wow. I guess it lives on batteries and light. It don't need a body at all. May I?

(CONNIE leaps atop the Radio and reads from the scrap. THE MOANING POET enters, echoing several of CONNIE's lines)

## CONNIE (Cont.)

There's a wire live and silent  
run inside my shoulder bone  
strung hot and held tight  
it keeps me up late

live, connected  
I'm in this state of unrest  
nature put it here  
electricity to test  
nature put it here and made me  
wear it like a monster  
like a new machine of daylight  
in the weather

That's what got me. A new machine whose daylight hit me. Lit me in a rush of blood like pastel fire. And I saw. I saw God. And that was just about too much you know? I mean you don't get a view like that and then just get out of the way. So I didn't. Didn't even try. You were here. I looked him right in his face. And that's not an easy thing to do. But I'm still here. I'm still a man. Flesh and starlight. Spirit and fresh water.

(CONNIE comes down from the radio, takes a long drink and looks up.)

Thanks for the song.

(Moonlight streams through the window. CONNIE crosses slowly into it.)

I find myself under the moon, out of the house and hungry, surrounded by cats like witnesses waiting for me to begin. Yep. Cats. And a chicken in the middle of the night. I thought I ought to stay outside awhile. Maybe God would show up and turn me on. Constantinopolis. When he did come. He rode in to my yard on a storm. He mellowed, "Connie, I want to know you." Hmm. I thought, that's okay. But then he smiled so suddenly and I forgot what I was thinking. I just smiled back at him - at her now. And I knew I had to tell her something.

(CONNIE counts off the song like a conductor.)

(GD) (DG) (F#/DG)

G D  
Isn't it something how I been? Now I begin to restore. Oh the circus was so boring.

G D  
Yeah the curtain is worn. But it's not like it's magic. It's not like you hid.

It's not like I see you at all in your dark flight around all my late night.

G D G  
I was ready to fall. Then you come to me and hold, hold, hold.

D G F#/D G F#/D  
Yeah you come to me and hold, hold, hold.

G  
Isn't it stunning. Isn't it queer to be stranded with something so near?  
D  
You like a church mouse while I hollow my house. Why not let em all hear  
G  
D G D G  
That you come to me ? and hold, hold, hold. Yeah you come to me and hold, hold, hold.

"I thought you were supposed to be a poet" God said. Was I? Was I? Yes! I was! I was a poet! But today I just want to talk okay? I'm just trying to talk today. "Okay then, talk." Well I've spoken with spirits before and I'm alright with that. As you know, it's been my destiny to live for years in the company of spirits and I've conversed about this, frequently. I got spirits who are mesmerists and spirits who are magic practicers. No problem. A stranger gave me a bucket of starlight and I smiled back at it. And I promised to help her with her sight. Oh sweetheart, I'm so sorry. I don't know what happened. I escaped a woman wearing a crown of total electricity. She ran me down to the river though all ears and brow and scowling. Yeah, you see me now. I have an impulse here toward biblicism and the fantastic. Like I said though. I went out on a hunt. I went down and around everywhere alone. You saw me. You saw me here in my home. Hell I just wanted to talk to someone. And I wanted to go to the lake. Spirits! Spirits of the lake? Here we go! But it don't work like that does it? I stood out in the yard hoping that my clothes would stay on but they didn't and the moonlight flew like rain scooting down my back and right into the crack of my ass. That was really something! I stood out in the yard like that little girl, nude in the wind. God confided in me then. He said "Connie, a friend of mine wrote a book of spells and filled it with shadows. Then she wore it out. And no one tried to stop her, no one told her to slow down." I don't know what the fuck you are talking about! I told him honestly. And, whose the poet now?! Just quiet then. For awhile. "Well what language do you use?" He finally asked. I don't know what language it is God, just whichever one comes singing from my heart, I figure it'll do. But he wasn't there. But he wasn't gone either. Disappeared - but still . . . on air.

(CONNIE jumps back onto the Radio.)

There are no rules about what you see at night! There are no rules! Unless they're secret rules. And secret rules are like no rules at all. So what if I hear the witnesses. So what if they talk about me. So what if they say "have you seen him, Constantinopolis, the visionary, the carpenter? Have you seen him standing on the thing, on the book of dreams vibrating, have you seen him? Ha! He hasn't even written in it yet because he's never been to sleep. Insomniacs don't have dreams!" But I sing right back at them. Who cares what you say? Who cares about you? Not me. Not me. Not me.

(CONNIE climbs down from the Radio.)

And besides,

(gesturing to his chest)

we all know this book's not empty, don't we?

(beat)

## CONNIE (Cont.)

Finally, at midnight, the fever broke. It had been a fever of the brain and I took a breath. I drew it in deeply. Just as deeply as anything I had ever done. And I felt that breath for awhile. It felt good. And I felt full. I remember when I was inside my mother's belly. I know now how people vibrate on the inside, and how they smell. I remember how it sounds in there as well. There is no other rhythm.

(inhale)

And I held it there.

(exhale)

And I felt the heart beat a couple of times. Dun - dunt. Dun - dunt. My heart had not abandoned me. What's real doesn't change and die, they don't come and go. And I wish I was still there, in the belly of that whale, intact, a pre-human - a spirit in a stranger's bucket of starlight. Dun - dunt. And I heard that nail fall and hit the floor. My heart has no need to hold it anymore. I'm newly born. I escaped a woman, wearing a crown of total electricity that almost ground me down. Ears and brow. And I know her still. When I stand on that old radio that's exactly how I feel.

(onto the Radio)

Straddling the pages of my past, and the promises, and God. I breath 'em all in, safe and unbowed, full again, and found, all risen up and ready to flood.

(CONNIE steps down from the Radio and looks around his room. The music plays. He begins to straighten up the place, making small connections with various objects as he puts them in their place.)

(C/GEm)

C/G      Em C/G      Em C/G      Em C/G      Em C/G      Em C/G  
 Rest after this. Relax into me. I will meet you. I'll be there. I'll be there. I'll be there.  
 C/G      Em C/G      Em C/G      Em C/G      Em C/G      Em C/G      Em  
 Bottomless. Radiant. Overthrown. That's me there. It's me there. Me there.

## GIRL IN THE HOSPITAL

I hear you.

(CONNIE and GIRL IN THE HOSPITAL make eye contact for a moment and then she disappears.)

## THE BLIND WOMAN

I hear you.

(CONNIE turns and acknowledges THE BLIND WOMAN. She disappears.)

## THE MOANING POET

I hear you.

(CONNIE smiles. THE MOANING POET nods casually and disappears. The silence is broken by a knock on the door.)

CONNIE

Come in.

(Lights down. Music up.)

THE END