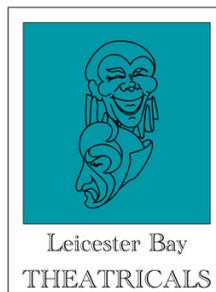


**PERUSAL SCRIPT**



A Play in Verse by  
**J.D. Newman**



Newport, Maine

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## **DeGRUCHY'S MANTLE**

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## **CAST OF CHARACTERS (7f 2m)**

Need ages of daughters, or at least to be listed in birth order

### **Madame DeGruchy**

**Beatrice** (*BAY-uh-TREECE*) -- 17

**Rosette** (*row-ZET*) -- 18

**Lea** (*LAY-uh*) -- 16

**Monique** (*mow-NEEK*) -- 14

**Josephine** (*JZO-zuh-FEEN*) -- 8

**Older Josephine** -- 20

**Claude** (*Cload, like toad*) Older brother, enamored of each of the daughters in turn

**Pierre** -- Younger brother, enamored of Monique

**NOTE ON THE SETTING, COSTUMES and PRESENTATION:** *The play may be presented with as much or as little naturalistic detail as the director chooses and as the theatre space demands. The stage may be mostly empty, establishing a simple environment in which the magic of the play may be created. The set may simply create the impression of the roughness and brittleness of the pastoral setting. The set may also portray the stone farmhouse and all the other elements with all of their rustic detail. The tree, for example, may be represented by a simple step ladder, by an arrangement of ropes and netting, or by a naturalistic set piece. The daughters may be dressed in peasant clothing or they may wear costumes as simple as leotards and dance skirts. The transformations may be represented by movement alone, by ritualistic masks, or by detailed costumes and make-up. Thus, everything that is described in the stage directions of this script may be established through pantomime, through impressionistic representations, or through naturalistic set and prop pieces.*

**DeGRUCHY'S MANTLE** by J. D. Newman. 7 females and 2 males. 75 minutes. Newman's first verse drama, *DeGruchy's Mantle* tells the story of a widow who leaves her magic mantle to her five teenage daughters just before her death. The daughters make a series of foolish wishes that cause a series of enchantments. It is up to the youngest daughter, magically aged through the mantle's power, who must restore her sisters and take charge of her mother's gift. The play calls for a cast of six young women, two young men, and one older woman. It runs approximately 75 minutes without intermission. The play requires a simple exterior setting that could be either realistic or suggestive. *DeGruchy's Mantle* received a Meritorious Achievement Award in the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival's Region VIII playwriting competition. It subsequently premiered in the University of Utah's Lab Theatre and became the first play that Newman directed at Highland High School.  
**Order # 3120**

## DeGRUCHY'S MANTLE

**Scene One -- SETTING:** *There is a doorway to one side of the stage, representing the entrance to the DeGruchy's stone farmhouse. A low porch extends out from the doorway. On the opposite side of the stage, there is watering trough and beside it are a wooden bucket and a barrel full of dirty dishes. There is a large oak tree upstage center which is capable of supporting MONIQUE and CLAUDE. Several acorns are attached to the branches of the tree. There is a bench downstage center with a small stick nearby. Stools may be placed at different locations in the yard.*

**AT RISE:** *MADAME DeGRUCHY steps out of the house and onto the porch, surveying the yard. ROSETTE, BEATRICE, LEA, and MONIQUE follow her. Around her is wrapped the magic mantle, which gives her the strength SHE needs to take a last look at her home and to bid farewell to her daughters. The daughters are somber, but none of them dares cry. MADAME DeGRUCHY moves away from her daughters, approaches the tree, and begins to caress its trunk.*

**MADAME DeGRUCHY:** The tree has cast its colored mantle off;

I too must cast the mantle from my limbs.

A hundred furs made up this magic robe

As well as blossoms sealed in the wax...

I only hope that wisdom finds these furs.

*(MADAME DeGRUCHY starts to wilt. The daughters approach her, but SHE assures them that SHE is fine. SHE seats herself on the bench and gathers the four eldest daughters around her.)*

Rosette! Beatrice! Lea! Monique! Josephine? Josephine!

*(JOSEPHINE, unaware of her mother's condition, bounds joyfully into the yard.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** Mama?\*You called?

*(\*The second syllable of "mama" is stressed.)*

**MADAME DeGRUCHY:** Josephine, my cub, come talk with me.

*(SHE takes JOSEPHINE under the mantle like a mother bird taking her young one under her wing.)*

You must be cold.

**JOSEPHINE:** *(laughs)* I'm warm when I can run!

**MADAME DeGRUCHY:** My little one, what mantle do I wear?

**JOSEPHINE:** The mantle of a hundred furs, mama.

**MADAME DeGRUCHY:** And do you understand its magic pow'r?

**JOSEPHINE:** It keeps us warm and keeps us safe from harm.

**MADAME DeGRUCHY:** Your father brought it to me in his ship.

It's made of furs from many birds and beasts.

**JOSEPHINE:** And flowers too!

**MADAME DeGRUCHY:** Yes, blossoms seal'd in wax.

Now Josephine, behold the naked tree.

*(SHE points toward the tree.)*

It doesn't have a robe to keep it warm.  
It wore a robe more colorful than mine,  
But where's its robe?

**JOSEPHINE:** It fell upon the earth.

**MADAME DeGRUCHY:** And from the earth, the springtime flowers grow.

It's autumntime, and now the season's come  
To cast my robe upon the stoney soil.

**JOSEPHINE:** Mama, I still don't understand. Explain!

**MADAME DeGRUCHY:** Your father went the way of all the sea;

Now I must go the way of all the earth.

*(MADAME DeGRUCHY moves to the trough and washes herself ceremoniously. JOSEPHINE stares at her mother and whispers to her sisters.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** What's wrong with her?

**ROSETTE:** She's dying, Josephine.

**JOSEPHINE:** *(laughs)* Rosette, she can't. She's much too young to die.

**BEATRICE:** In many places, she would be too young,

But here in Normandy, a life is short.

**LEA:** The sun is seldom shining through the rain,

And in the gloom, a spirit yearns for light.

**MONIQUE:** The people grow as stoney as the soil

But daily rain soon wears the stones away.

**MADAME DeGRUCHY:** *(approaching her daughters)* The light we bear forever seeks the sun.

It seems to draw us off this mortal land.

You're young and strong. You rarely feel its pull

But I have felt it pulling me for years.

**JOSEPHINE:** Mama, stop teasing me! You'll never die!

**BEATRICE:** The man of death is blind as I am blind.

**LEA:** He takes the young and elderly alike.

He took my lover long before his time.

**MONIQUE:** Her aging heart gave out today at dawn.

Death granted her a day to say goodbye.

**JOSEPHINE:** Mama, are they all telling me the truth?

**MADAME DeGRUCHY:** Yes, my love. This is my life's last day.

Your father stood before me in the night.

He bade me come and join him at his side

And I'll obey before the morning's through.

The magic of the mantle gives me strength.

Without it, I could not get out of bed

But soon the mantle will not be enough.

I'll ask you, daughters, not to mourn my death.

In Normandy, there isn't time to mourn.

The point is not that I will go away

But that you still remain to carry on.

**ROSETTE:** Mama, I cannot run the farm alone.

Pray, bid my sisters help me!

**MADAME DeGRUCHY:** (*authoritatively*) They shall help!

Obeys Rosette. She'll be your guardian.

**ROSETTE:** I cannot give them everything, Mama.

There's certain gifts that only you can give.

I love all men, but cannot judge their hearts.

I need your wise discretion.

**MADAME DeGRUCHY:** You shall learn

To judge your suitors by their honest deeds.

**BEATRICE:** You need to help me, mother! I am blind.

**MADAME DeGRUCHY:** In time, you'll learn to see without your eyes.

**LEA:** My lover, Meleager\*, taught me to hunt

(*\*pronounced MEL-uh-ZJAY*)

And pull a bow as well as any man.

But you have tried to teach me women's skills.

Without you, I won't gain your skill and grace.

I'll never learn the manners of a maid!

**MADAME DeGRUCHY:** In strength, my Lea, you shall find your grace.

**MONIQUE:** Without your chiding, I could read all day

And live within a world of fantasy.

**MADAME DeGRUCHY:** Monique, your limbs will lift you to the clouds.

**JOSEPHINE:** You cannot leave!

**MADAME DeGRUCHY:** I must!

**JOSEPHINE:** It isn't fair!

My sisters had a mother growing up.

You cannot leave until I'm grown up too!

**MADAME DeGRUCHY:** I pray that life will spare you growing pains.

(*pause*)

I know, my girls, that you are not complete.

You're like the crescent moon which yet shall swell.

I wish that I could stay and help you grow,

But I will leave you something in my stead.

(*SHE passes by ROSETTE and wraps the mantle around both herself and JOSEPHINE.*)

To you, my cub, I leave my magic robe.

In wisdom, you are well beyond your years

And wisely will you use its special charm.

Do you remember how I said it works?

**JOSEPHINE:** You said the robe would keep me safe from harm.

**MADAME DeGRUCHY:** *(nodding)* The robe will keep you safe. What else, my love?

**JOSEPHINE:** You said the robe can make a wish come true.

**MADAME DeGRUCHY:** If you will wear the robe and touch the pelt

Of any of the beasts, its gift is yours.

I've taught you all about its magic pow'r.

Now the task is yours to use it well.

With wisdom, it will grant the gifts you lack.

With foolishness, its gifts become a curse.

The pelts and petals worn by beasts and blooms

Shall bless you, daughters, as you learn and grow.

*(MADAME DeGRUCHY places the mantle on JOSEPHINE's shoulders, removing herself from under the mantle, knowing that SHE will die momentarily. The lights fade to black.)*

**END OF SCENE ONE**

**Scene 2 -- AT RISE:** *A day has passed. It is almost noon. The rhythmic sound of shovels is heard before the lights come up. As the lights come up, the daughters surround their mothers' grave as CLAUDE and PIERRE finish filling in the hole. ROSETTE nods to PIERRE and CLAUDE and they walk away. JOSEPHINE is wrapped in the mantle. At a Normand funeral, the mourners often cast a handful of dust on the grave as a symbol of their acceptance of the death. According to this tradition, ROSETTE picks up a handful of dust, crosses herself with it, and sprinkles it on the grave.*

**ROSETTE:** From dust we are, to dust we must return.

*(LEA and MONIQUE guide BEATRICE to their mother's grave. BEATRICE takes a handful of dust and sprinkles it over the general area of the grave, hoping it lands where it should.)*

**BEATRICE:** I'm glad I never saw my mother's face

Without the light of living in her eyes.

Her light is not extinguished, merely gone.

Into a place which mortal eyes can't see.

**LEA:** You're holding on to phantoms, Beatrice.

*(LEA takes two handfuls of dust and tosses them into the air, watching the dust as it lingers in the air.)*

The dust we are dissolves into the air.

It disappears. It's never seen again.

*(LEA approaches BEATRICE.)*

The things I say are painful to your ears,

But pain is worse if you cannot let go.

**BEATRICE:** Then why do mortals live?

**LEA:** *(SHE turns away)* I wish I knew.

**MONIQUE:** I still believe.

PERUSAL SCRIPT DeGruchy's Mantle by J.D. Newman

*(MONIQUE kneels beside the grave. It takes some effort for her to set down her cane and work her way to the ground. JOSEPHINE kneels across from MONIQUE. MONIQUE cups some dust in her hand and stares at it for a moment, refusing to break down. JOSEPHINE does the same in imitation.)*

It's time to let her go.

*(MONIQUE tips her hand and lets the dust filter slowly through her fingers. MONIQUE struggles to rise. When her sisters aren't looking, JOSEPHINE hides the handful of dust in her skirt pocket. BEATRICE, LEA, and MONIQUE go into the house. JOSEPHINE remains on the ground, looking over her mother's grave. ROSETTE stands behind her.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** It isn't right, Rosette. It isn't time!

**ROSETTE:** Our mother wanted us to carry on.

Come help me, Josephine. Let's fold the wash.

*(JOSEPHINE does not move.)*

It's easier to bear the pain with work.

*(Still JOSEPHINE does not move. ROSETTE touches JOSEPHINE softly on the shoulder. JOSEPHINE remains on the ground wrapped in the mantle. As JOSEPHINE speaks, ROSETTE brings a basket of dry laundry from the house.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** "The pelts and petals worm by beasts and blooms

Shall bless you, daughters, as you learn and grow."

Rosette, what do you know about the robe?

**ROSETTE:** Mama once told me something of its charm.

*(SHE folds the wash.)*

The mantle has a hundred creatures' skins

And you can gain the virtue of the beast

Who wore the skin throughout its mortal life.

**JOSEPHINE:** Then it's a mantle full of magic charm!

**ROSETTE:** Mama was superstitious, Josephine.

**JOSEPHINE:** You mean to say the mantle has no pow'r?

**ROSETTE:** Mama would never try her magic robe. I honestly do not believe it works.

**JOSEPHINE:** I know mama would never lie to me.

**ROSETTE:** She didn't lie. She didn't understand.

**JOSEPHINE:** I still believe that it's a magic robe!

**ROSETTE:** *(approaches JOSEPHINE.)* What matters is that it is beautiful!

It was our mother's special gift to you.

Our father brought it here from overseas

And mother wore it after father drowned.

The mantle will remind you of them both.

**JOSEPHINE:** *(turns away.)* Mama told me...

**ROSETTE:** *(grabs JOSEPHINE by the shoulders.)* Now Josephine, you've grown a lot today.

You've learned that life can end quite suddenly

And now you need to learn another truth.

Our mother's mantle wasn't fur or flow'r.

Her mantle was the weight upon her back  
Of raising us five daughters all alone.  
Now we must share the heavy mantle's weight.  
*(JOSEPHINE turns away.)*

We all must work, or else we won't survive.

**JOSEPHINE:** The mantle's charm will keep us safe from harm.

**ROSETTE:** You're dreaming now! That's fine, but come and work.

*(JOSEPHINE doesn't move.)*

**ROSETTE:** If you will not believe the words I speak,

Then I must show you that my words are true!

*(SHE snatches the edge of the mantle and twirls JOSEPHINE out of it. ROSETTE strokes the rose petals as SHE makes her wish.)*

I wish I had the blessing of this rose  
And by the mantle's magic, make it so!

**JOSEPHINE:** *(grabs the mantle and wraps up in it again.)* Mama gave me the robe! It's mine, Rosette!

She said that only I could make it work!

**ROSETTE:** But don't you see? The mantle doesn't work!

**JOSEPHINE:** Perhaps its spell is slow.

**ROSETTE:** There is no spell!

I feel no petals blooming on my lips,  
No rosy fragrance blowing from my cheek.

*(ROSETTE kneels in front of JOSEPHINE, placing her hands on her sister's shoulders.)*

The time has come to lose your fantasies.

Take off the robe and help me with the chores.

**JOSEPHINE:** The robe is mine! I will not take it off!

**ROSETTE:** *(stands.)* Then I must take away your fantasies.

*(ROSETTE attempts to pull JOSEPHINE out of the robe again. JOSEPHINE clutches it tight and breaks free of ROSETTE.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** If you will try to take the robe from me,

Then I will make a wish to make me strong.

*(SHE strokes the patch of bear's fur on the mantle.)*

A mighty bear once wore this shaggy coat.

I wish myself the blessing of the bear.

**ROSETTE:** Now Josephine, come give the robe to me

Or I will come and pull it from your back.

**JOSEPHINE:** I still refuse!

**ROSETTE:** Then I will take the robe.

*(SHE tries to steal the robe, but JOSEPHINE's grip is too firm.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** I hold the robe as bears protect their skins!

**ROSETTE:** *(stepping back.)* Then stay within your silly, childish dreams!

The sooner you decide to grow and change

The sooner you'll be free from childish pain.

*(JOSEPHINE falls into ROSETTE's arms.)*

Josephine? You've fainted... Are you well?

*(ROSETTE cradles JOSEPHINE.)*

You're sleeping, little sister. Do you dream?

*(ROSETTE sighs.)*

Would we all could dream a child's dream.

**CLAUDE:** *(HE enters, sniffing.)* There is a lack of fragrance in the air.

At noon, I tend to smell the scent of lunch.

*(ROSETTE does not look at CLAUDE as SHE places JOSEPHINE on the porch.)*

**ROSETTE:** Oh, Claude, it's been a long day for us all.

My sisters are still finishing your meal.

Go work a while more and then come back.

**CLAUDE:** A working farmhand has to fill his gut

Or else he'll starve and never do your work.

**ROSETTE:** *(wearily)* Then sit and rest a while, if you must.

**CLAUDE:** Your little sister's right. It's time to nap.

*(HE reclines, sniffs the air, and rises.)*

Why is it that I smell a rose's scent?

The thorny bushes haven't bloomed for weeks.

**ROSETTE:** It's your imagination playing tricks.

**CLAUDE:** I'm sure of it... Indeed, it is a rose!

**ROSETTE:** Perhaps its scent has lingered in the air.

**CLAUDE:** *(sniffs behind ROSETTE's neck.)*

Rosette, it seems you wear a rose perfume.

**ROSETTE:** You know my family can't afford perfume.

*(ROSETTE starts to leave. CLAUDE grabs her shoulders from behind.)*

**CLAUDE:** You are the rose that man cannot resist.

**ROSETTE:** *(touched)* Why, Claude, you've grown poetic all at once.

**CLAUDE:** Enchanted by your scent, I'll say much more.

It makes a poet out of any man.

*(CLAUDE kisses ROSETTE's neck passionately.)*

**ROSETTE:** My mother always told me you were false.

How can I know if poets are sincere?

**CLAUDE:** I'll seal my words upon your petal lips.

*(CLAUDE kisses ROSETTE passionately. SHE savors it a minute and then pulls away.)*

**ROSETTE:** Claude, please go back to work.

*(CLAUDE puts his arm on ROSETTE's shoulder.)*

**CLAUDE:** And leave you here to mourn all by yourself?

**ROSETTE:** *(pulling away)* I'd rather be alone...

**CLAUDE:** Here, come to me.

*(They sit on the bench together. ROSETTE rests her head on CLAUDE's shoulder, wanting to cry.)*

Rosette, be calm. I'm here to comfort you.

*(HE caresses ROSETTE's cheeks.)*

Your rosy skin so... Ouch!

*(HE pricks his finger on ROSETTE's arm. SHE looks up at him.)*

**ROSETTE:** What's wrong?

**CLAUDE:** Why, nothing's wrong. Just rest your head.

*(HE pulls ROSETTE passionately to his chest and pricks himself again. ROSETTE looks up.)*

**ROSETTE:** You flinched.

**CLAUDE:** I found a straight-pin in your dress.

**ROSETTE:** I'm sure I'd be aware if it were there.

*(CLAUDE touches ROSETTE's arm cautiously and discovers many thorns.)*

**CLAUDE:** It feels as though you wore a hundred pins!

**ROSETTE:** They haven't pricked me yet.

**CLAUDE:** But they are there!

Roll up your sleeve, Rosette, and let me see.

**ROSETTE:** There's nothing there. I certainly should know.

*(SHE rolls up her sleeves and discovers the thorns.)*

Now what on earth are those?

**CLAUDE:** I've never seen a growth like that before.

**ROSETTE:** *(SHE touches the thorns.)* They're sharp as rosebush thorns!

**CLAUDE:** I think I'll work a while more 'till lunch.

*(CLAUDE starts off for the fields, but ROSETTE confronts him and prevents him from going.)*

**ROSETTE:** Now wait, my friend. You didn't want to work.

**CLAUDE:** I'm rested now, so call when lunch is served.

**ROSETTE:** *(moves CLAUDE backwards.)*

You wanted to caress my tender skin

But now that it has thorns, you run away?

**CLAUDE:** Rosette, I...

**ROSETTE:** You comforted my heart in your embrace

And suddenly you leave me all alone?

**CLAUDE:** Sound the call for lunch and I will come.

*(HE breaks away and heads for the fields.)*

**ROSETTE:** *(calls after him.)* You dog! You heartless dog!

*(BEATRICE steps out of the house. SHE carries a bowl full of dough ready for kneading, along with a small sack of flour.)*

**BEATRICE:** The farmhands' lunch is ready.

**ROSETTE:** Let them wait!

The 'hands can eat it cold, for all I care.

**BEATRICE:** You told me that you were in love with Claude.

**ROSETTE:** No, Beatrice. The man has proven false.

**BEATRICE:** Here, help me knead this dough.

*(SHE sits on the bench.)*

**ROSETTE:** I'll wash my hands.

*(SHE rolls up her sleeves and washes her hands at the pump. SHE discovers more thorns.)*

**BEATRICE:** That's strange. I still smell roses in the yard.

Do you see any roses in the yard?

**ROSETTE:** No rose but me.

*(SHE smiles, sadly.)*

Claude said I was his rose.

*(SHE approaches BEATRICE. ROSETTE makes her sister touch a thorn on her arm.)*

Beatrice, do you know what this is?

**BEATRICE:** Why, that's a thorn upon a rosebush stem.

**ROSETTE:** That thorn is growing here upon my arm.

Sister, I'm not sure what happened here.

I tried to prove to Josephine that she

Was wrong and that the mantle had no charm.

*(ROSETTE and BEATRICE divide the dough and knead.)*

**BEATRICE:** You didn't think that mother's mantle worked?

**ROSETTE:** I wished the rose's blessing on myself.

**BEATRICE:** Apparently, the cloak has worked its charm.

I thought the mantle fell to Josephine.

**ROSETTE:** I took the robe from her to prove my point.

**BEATRICE:** Our sister's right. Our mother spoke the truth.

So then, did little Josephine run off?

**ROSETTE:** She's sleeping there behind you on the porch.

**BEATRICE:** She very seldom naps.

**ROSETTE:** The day's been long.

*(SHE sighs.)*

She wished the gift of bears upon herself.

**BEATRICE:** The gift of bears?

**ROSETTE:** At first it made her strong,

But then she fell asleep within my arms.

**BEATRICE:** Why, don't you see? She's hibernating now!

**ROSETTE:** And so that's why she's sleeping there so sound?

**BEATRICE:** What other explanation can you find?

**ROSETTE:** I didn't think that human beings could change.

**BEATRICE:** We're not made of the dust; We're made of clay.

We're flexible. We take on many forms.

The tadpole in the pond is soon a frog.

The caterpillar's soon a butterfly.

**ROSETTE:** The little girl too soon becomes a maid.

**BEATRICE:** The acorn planted deep beneath the dust  
Will eat the clay and make itself a tree,  
And as the seasons change, the tree will grow.  
It lives and dies a hundred lives and deaths  
And changes, growing stronger every year.

*(pause)*

Is Josephine becoming like a bear?

**ROSETTE:** She's still the little girl she always was.  
I cannot understand the mantle's charm.

**BEATRICE:** It seems to give the gift without the form.  
The mantle gave you scent and thorns to wear,  
But you are not transformed into a rose,  
And Josephine is sleeping like a bear  
But I don't think she'll grow a shaggy coat.

**ROSETTE:** At any rate, she needs to go inside.  
Lea!

*(ROSETTE rolls down her sleeves. LEA comes out of the house.)*

**LEA:** Why won't the hands come eat?

**ROSETTE:** I'm mad at Claude!

*(SHE picks up JOSEPHINE and hands her to LEA.)*

I need you to take Josephine inside.

**LEA:** She's fast asleep.

She doesn't often nap.

**ROSETTE:** She'll sleep a good, long spell this afternoon.

*(LEA takes JOSEPHINE inside, leaving the mantle on the porch.)*

At least there's one less sister's mouth to feed.

*(pause)*

I'm sorry.

**BEATRICE:** She'll sleep a quiet winter, then awake.

**ROSETTE:** But I'm afraid my thorns will stay with me.

*(SHE sighs.)*

It's for the best.

**BEATRICE:** Rosette, are you content with what you have?

**ROSETTE:** Not quite content, but things could be much worse.

**BEATRICE:** Wait! Listen!

*(The two sisters set down the dough.)*

**ROSETTE:** I don't hear a sound...

**BEATRICE:** Then wait.

*(A distant swallow is heard.)*

A swallow in the fall... How curious!

I thought they all had flown away 'till spring.

**ROSETTE:** You heard it long before I heard its song.

Your ears are strong.

**BEATRICE:** I listen well. That's all.

*(pause)*

Rosette, I'm very jealous of that bird.

**ROSETTE:** But why?

**BEATRICE:** The bird can see.

*(SHE sighs and moves to the pump, washing her hands.)*

It isn't right to envy birds and beasts.

I'll keep my peace.

**ROSETTE:** I often wonder why it was that you

Should lose the gift you always treasured most.

**BEATRICE:** It's sinful that I covet what I lack.

The springtime gave; the autumn took away.

**ROSETTE:** But you have learned to manage very well.

Our mother's final blessing as she died

Was that you'd learn to see without your eyes.

**BEATRICE:** But I don't understand how that could be.

**ROSETTE:** *(takes the mantle to BEATRICE.)*

She blessed me that I'd learn to judge men's hearts

And by the mantle's magic, it is so.

**BEATRICE:** Will all our gifts come through the magic robe?

**ROSETTE:** It worked for me.

**BEATRICE:** And what of Josephine?

**ROSETTE** *(covers BEATRICE with the mantle.)*

The blessing she received concerns her growth.

Until she's grown, we probably won't know.

**BEATRICE:** Perhaps it's worth the risk. What should I wish?

*(ROSETTE places BEATRICE's fingers on the bat's wing in the mantle.)*

**ROSETTE:** This sturdy wing once made an eagle soar.

Perhaps its gift will give you eagle eyes.

**BEATRICE:** There are no feathers on this creature's wing.

**ROSETTE:** Perhaps they're lost from flying near the sun.

**BEATRICE:** But I'm not sure that it's an eagle's wing

And we don't understand the mantle's pow'r.

**ROSETTE:** A mother's gift could never harm her child.

**BEATRICE:** *(Convinced, SHE touches the bat wing.)*

I wish upon myself my mother's gift:

The vision of the bird that wore this wing.

*(SHE hears the swallow and follows it with her ears.)*

The swallow's back. I soon will see its flight.

**ROSETTE:** *(grabs BEATRICE's hand.)*

The light should slowly fade into your eyes.

**BEATRICE:** There's nothing yet.

**ROSETTE:** Sometimes it takes a while.

**BEATRICE:** A beam of light should reach my eye quite soon...

**ROSETTE:** I'm sure the mantle's blessing will be yours!

**BEATRICE:** Still the darkness lingers...

**ROSETTE:** Don't lose faith!

**BEATRICE:** Still I lack my vision...

*(The bird's song ends suddenly. SHE strokes the bat's wing and her expression changes. ROSETTE stares at her.)*

**ROSETTE:** Beatrice?

**BEATRICE:** It will not come. The ray of light won't come.

**ROSETTE:** Patience, sister, patience...

**BEATRICE:** *(with stoic acceptance)*

I know myself, Rosette. The light won't come.

With my disease, I knew I'd lose my sight.

I knew that I would never see again.

**ROSETTE:** You had the faith to ask the mantle's blessing....

**BEATRICE:** I tried to lie against the truth I knew.

**ROSETTE:** Still the light might...

**BEATRICE:** No.

*(SHE places ROSETTE's hand on the bat's wing.)*

I should've recognized this sturdy wing,

The wing not of a bird but of a beast.

I wished the gift of bats upon myself!

**ROSETTE:** *(regretfully)* Beatrice, I...

**BEATRICE:** *(comfortingly)* You only sought to give me mother's gift.

Cheer up, Rosette.

*(SHE laughs slightly.)*

The gift of bats can do no harm to me.

**ROSETTE:** Raising you on wings of hope...

**BEATRICE:** Come on! Let's take a stroll.

*(SHE offers ROSETTE her arm.)*

Describe to me the colors of the fall.

**ROSETTE:** *(taking BEATRICE's arm.)*

If you'll describe the music of the leaves.

*(ROSETTE and BEATRICE go for a stroll, arm in arm. MONIQUE comes out of the house and calls to the farmhands.)*

**MONIQUE:** Claude! Pierre! Come in! Your lunch is served!

**LEA:** *(brings out two bowls and sets them on the porch.)*

They'll eat it on the porch.

**MONIQUE:** Why not inside?

**LEA:** I don't want them to waken Josephine.

*(LEA and MONIQUE go back into the house. CLAUDE and PIERRE enter.)*

**CLAUDE:** And what is this? We're being served outside?!

*(HE kneels on all fours and sniffs the food.)*

They serve me here as if I were a dog.

**PIERRE:** To eat outside is no concern to me.

**CLAUDE:** *(contemplating)* I still might soften LEA: with my words...

Rosette is growing wiser to my ploys,

But I won't chase that damsel anymore!

**PIERRE:** Why not? Does she now see you as you are?

**CLAUDE:** You're wise, Pierre.

*(HE pushes PIERRE off balance.)*

Too wise for your own good.

**PIERRE:** Not wise enough. I wish I were in school.

**CLAUDE:** Come on now, brother. Realize your place!

*(HE slaps PIERRE on the back.)*

You know you're just a farmhand, just like me.

**PIERRE:** What stops a 'hand from learning how to read?

**CLAUDE:** It's useless! All a farmhand needs is arms!

*(CLAUDE wrestles PIERRE to the ground. LEA and MONIQUE hear the scuffle and come out of the house.)*

**MONIQUE:** *(to CLAUDE)* You're older than Pierre! Leave him alone!

*(LEA pushes CLAUDE off of PIERRE with her foot. PIERRE retreats.)*

**PIERRE:** Defeated by a gentle damsel, Claude?

**CLAUDE:** She's not so gentle.

**PIERRE:** You're just not so strong!

*(CLAUDE starts for PIERRE, but LEA stands between the brothers.)*

**LEA:** *(almost singing)* Now will you kindly wash your hands for lunch?

*(LEA smiles triumphantly at CLAUDE. Defeated, CLAUDE washes his hands at the pump.)*

**CLAUDE:** *(bitterly)* We can't accept this disrespect from you.

We'll leave your farm unless you treat us right.

**PIERRE:** He's speaking for himself alone.

**CLAUDE:** *(threateningly)* Pierre!

**LEA:** Well, come into the kitchen, if you must,

But you must promise not to make a noise.

**CLAUDE:** *(casts one more look at PIERRE.)* Yes ma'am!

*(CLAUDE goes inside with LEA, taking his bowl with him. PIERRE goes to the trough and washes his hands. MONIQUE joins him, pulling a book from her skirt pocket.)*

**MONIQUE:** Voila!

**PIERRE:** Monique! You've brought me something else to read!

*(HE dries his hands quickly on his clothing and clutches the book hungrily in his hand.)*

**MONIQUE:** My teacher lent it to me.

**PIERRE:** Moliere!

*(HE holds the book out to MONIQUE.)*

But I can't read it well. Read it to me!

**MONIQUE:** *(takes the book and they sit on the bench.)*

I'll read you half and you read half to me.

The Miser. I'm Elise and you're Valere.

**PIERRE:** Alright.

"Charming Elise, you become mel... melan...

**MONIQUE:** *(patiently)* Melancholy.

**PIERRE:** Ah yes!

*(HE nods as if he is familiar with the word. His expression changes. HE almost whispers.)*

And what does melancholy mean?

**MONIQUE:** It's sadness...

*(SHE looks toward her mother's grave.)*

Tears that never leave the heart.

**PIERRE:** I'm sorry.

*(HE closes the book.)*

I forgot about your mother.

**MONIQUE:** *(approaches her mother's grave.)*

I haven't cried a single tear today.

Our mother taught us all to carry on.

I'm like a stone that tears would soon erode.

Our mother always taught us to be strong.

**PIERRE:** She raised you well. You're very strong, Monique.

**MONIQUE:** I'm softer than a Norman girl should be.

I seem quite strong, like limbs of winter trees...

*(SHE holds the cane tight. The cane slips and MONIQUE falls. Her eyes start to tear. SHE tries to hide her tears from PIERRE. SHE takes a deep breath and fighting her tears, SHE speaks.)*

I'm tough, but far too brittle for this clime.

*(PIERRE does not approach MONIQUE, speaking to her from where HE is.)*

**PIERRE:** Monique, you need to feel the loss and pain.

**MONIQUE:** But not to bend and snap and melt in tears!

**PIERRE:** Monique, you're not the only fragile one.

**MONIQUE:** You're tough, Pierre. You wrestled there with Claude!

**PIERRE:** I don't enjoy it as a man should do.

I take the falls but don't enjoy the pain.

**MONIQUE:** *(approaches PIERRE.)*

I'm not like you, Pierre. I spend my life

Within a world of paper fantasy  
Instead of fighting through the world of stone.

*(SHE grabs PIERRE's hands unwittingly.)*

You work the land with steady hands, Pierre.  
I read whenever I have any time.

*(SHE drops PIERRE's hands and stares at her own.)*

A damsel's mind is nothing to a man.  
He seeks her for her hands or for her form.

**PIERRE:** Monique, there's certain men who disagree:

Some men who find a maiden's mind a gem;  
Some boys who gentle damsels teach to read;  
Some boys who love those damsels when they've grown.

*(MONIQUE turns. PIERRE hands her the book.)*

We're still too young to talk of courting yet,  
But someday I intend to seek your hand.

*(HE kisses MONIQUE's hand. SHE smiles approvingly. Suddenly, the door to the house flies open and CLAUDE tumbles out and rolls on the ground. PIERRE and MONIQUE separate, MONIQUE replacing the book in her pocket.)*

**CLAUDE:** But Lea, I was silent in the house!

**LEA:** You made no noise but tried to kiss my neck!

**CLAUDE:** *(approaches LEA defiantly.)*

A risk no man of brains would ever take!  
*(HE turns to go and LEA kicks him from behind.)*

**LEA:** A man of brains would have more decency!

*(SHE grabs CLAUDE by the collar.)*

Rosette said you mistreated her today.  
It's quite unkind to treat a maiden so.  
She wrote you off, so now you start on me.  
Rosette rebels; her sister's just as fair!

*(SHE drops CLAUDE and picks him up again.)*

My gentleman, you must be more polite.  
*(SHE kisses CLAUDE on the nose and drops him.)*

Come, Monique.  
*(CLAUDE starts to rise. LEA and MONIQUE go into the house, MONIQUE giving one last knowing smile to PIERRE.)*

**CLAUDE:** She kissed me on the nose. She's softening.

That lady's still the apple of my eye.  
*(HE gets up, rather painfully.)*

**PIERRE:** And soon the apple of your blackened eyes.

An hour ago, you still pursued Rosette.

**CLAUDE:** *(absently)* One maiden's quite the same as all the rest.

**PIERRE:** So what has turned the vision of your heart?

I think that your intentions aren't quite pure.

*(CLAUDE looks at PIERRE threateningly, washing himself off at the trough.)*

**CLAUDE:** The girls cannot protect you now, Pierre.

I'll strike you down if you're still talking wise!

**PIERRE:** I'll take the fall if truth offends you, Claude.

*(CLAUDE simmers as PIERRE paces around him.)*

**PIERRE:** There's other motivations in your heart.

One day Rosette's the heavens and the stars;

The next her sister's equally as fair.

She throws you down, but still you won't give up.

**CLAUDE:** I will not say...

*(PIERRE grabs CLAUDE's arm and twists it behind his back.)*

And who taught you that move?

**PIERRE:** Lea taught it to me so I could

Defend myself against your greater strength.

**CLAUDE:** You're taking lessons from a stupid maid?

**PIERRE:** It's better than to let her pin me down.

Now, what's the motivation in your love?

**CLAUDE:** Alright, I'll talk! I swear! Just let me go.

*(PIERRE releases CLAUDE who rubs his arm.)*

She'll have to show me how she does that move.

**PIERRE:** You want the land.

*(CLAUDE turns.)*

Yes, that is what you seek.

Madame\* DeGruchy's gone, so now you seek

To gain the farm as Lea's dow'ery.

*(\*The second syllable is stressed.)*

**CLAUDE:** You'll never prove that that is what I seek!

**PIERRE:** The eldest is the one who would assure

The farm would fall to you and no one else.

**CLAUDE:** But now no man would ever wed Rosette.

**PIERRE:** Why not? You sought her hand an hour ago.

**CLAUDE:** But now her arms are covered up with thorns.

**PIERRE:** What sort of thorns?

**CLAUDE:** They're strange and ugly growths!

**PIERRE:** You don't believe a man could love in spite

Of thorns and touch Rosette with tenderness?

**CLAUDE:** There's few such men, and none in Normandy.

**PIERRE:** And why did Beatrice not catch your eye?

**CLAUDE:** She has no eye to catch.

**PIERRE:** Claude, hold your tongue!

**CLAUDE:** It's true! No need denying what is fact.

**PIERRE:** So Beatrice would not suit any man?

**CLAUDE:** To me, she looks as pretty as Rosette,  
But who would want a wife who cannot look?

*(The brothers square off.)*

**PIERRE:** The hearts of men are not as blind as yours.

You've always tried to teach me manly ways,  
But Claude, your brother follows you no more!

*(PIERRE heads inside. CLAUDE follows.)*

**CLAUDE:** So then you'll be a farmhand all your life!

If you were wise then you would court Monique.

*(PIERRE turns. CLAUDE laughs.)*

Ah yes, Pierre, already you have wooed  
The tender ear of Lea's sister! Yes!

**PIERRE:** It isn't what it seems...

**CLAUDE:** I understand.

You're just the same as your old bother Claude.

*(HE slaps PIERRE on the back.)*

**PIERRE:** That's not the truth!

**CLAUDE:** *(puts his arm around PIERRE.)* Of course not, brother dear.

You do not love Monique?

**PIERRE:** Not as you think.

**CLAUDE:** You wouldn't mind if I should woo Monique?

**PIERRE:** You stay away from her! You understand?

**CLAUDE:** I understand just fine. You're just like me.

Monique is merely means to gain the land.

*(PIERRE tries to protest, but can say nothing.)*

**CLAUDE:** You'll say no more of my intentions to

The sisters or I'll tell Monique the truth.

**PIERRE:** Monique is like a sister to me, Claude.

**CLAUDE:** Then let me woo your sister, Frere Pierre.

If she is like a sister as you say,

Then swear to me you'll never seek her hand.

**PIERRE:** There is no need to...

**CLAUDE:** *(twists PIERRE's arm behind his back.)* Swear!

**PIERRE:** I'll take your oath if you'll leave her alone.

**CLAUDE:** *(lets PIERRE go.)* Alright, I swear I'll never woo Monique.

Now your turn.

*(PIERRE swallows hard and almost speaks. LEA: comes out of the house with a bag.)*

**LEA:** Claude, I put your lunch inside this bag.

**CLAUDE:** The soup and all?

**LEA:** *(kneads the bag.)* It's all inside the bag.

**CLAUDE:** I might as well go work.

*(HE grabs the bag and stares at PIERRE.)*

Not worth the fight.

*(HE starts for the fields.)*

**PIERRE:** And do you have a sack of lunch for me?

**LEA:** Monique invites you in to eat with her.

**CLAUDE:** *(whispering to PIERRE from behind)*

You still insist that you're not courting her?

I took your oath. You must live up to mine

Or I will tell Monique...

**PIERRE:** *(to LEA)* Put my lunch into a bag as well.

**LEA:** *(curtseying)* Your wish is my command, my gentleman.

*(SHE goes into the house.)*

**PIERRE:** You swore that you would leave Monique alone.

**CLAUDE:** I will, but if you break your vow, she's mine!

*(HE starts to leave again. MONIQUE comes out of the house, confused.)*

**MONIQUE:** Pierre, I said that you could eat with me.

**PIERRE:** I would, but I still have some work to do.

**MONIQUE:** It's not just lunch. We'll read some Moliere.

**PIERRE:** Monique, I must return to work.

*(HE looks away from MONIQUE.)*

**MONIQUE:** Pierre!

*(PIERRE leaves without looking at MONIQUE.)*

**LEA:** *(emerges with a sack.)* Voila! Another sack of scrambled lunch.

**MONIQUE:** Pierre has left without a bite to eat.

**LEA:** He never misses lunch.

**MONIQUE:** I know. It's strange.

I think that I offended him somehow.

**LEA:** No, not Pierre. He's always been your friend.

**MONIQUE:** *(nodding)* He's like the brother who I never had.

**LEA:** A brother once, but now he is in love.

**MONIQUE:** With me?!

**LEA:** Indeed with you!

**MONIQUE:** I'm far to young.

**LEA:** Perhaps for courting, but you're not too young

To love a gentle boy who treats you well.

**MONIQUE:** If he's in love, then why did he run off?

**LEA:** Oh, who can tell with men? I surely can't!

*(LEA lifts up the mantle.)*

**MONIQUE:** I've often wondered how the mantle works.

**LEA:** Or if it works. I still maintain my doubts.

**MONIQUE:** But Lea, if it worked, what would you wish?

**LEA:** (*wraps herself in the mantle.*)

I've many wishes, none of which is right

For Normand girls to wish. I'll keep my peace.

**MONIQUE:** I'll tell you my wish if you tell me yours.

**15 more pages to the end of the play**

Perusal Only