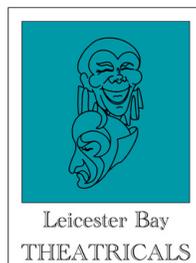


PERUSAL SCRIPT

THE YEARNING SEASON

A Pastoral in Blank Verse by
J.D. Newman



Newport, Maine

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THE YEARNING SEASON

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Cast of Characters (2f 1m)

Jacques -- A farmhand 17-21

Leigh -- A maidservant 16-20

Rochelle -- A lady 18-22

Setting: A Family Farm in Normandy

Time: Late in the Nineteenth Century

Act I, Scene 1 -- Autumn

Act I, Scene 2 -- Winter

Act I, Scene 3 -- Spring

Act I, Scene 4 -- Summer

Act II, Scene 1 -- Morning

Act II, Scene 2 -- Evening

Special Thanks to Jennifer Newman for transcribing the folksongs.

THE YEARNING SEASON by J.D. Newman 2f 1m. About 90 minutes. 1 interior/exterior. Jacques and Leigh have served Monsieur and Madame as farmhand and domestic servant throughout their adolescence. Upon the death of their employers, they are bequeathed: the farm to Jacques, and money for a lady's education to Leigh, both still young and needing assistance to find their stations in life. In a moment of youthful willfulness, they switch inheritances and set aside their feelings for one another. Rochelle, a young lady from town, comes to Leigh for shelter and the two of them work the farm until Rochelle reveals a secret that changes everything Leigh believed about herself. The story, a classic young-love triangle, is based loosely on the Biblical story of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel, and set in the late 19th Century. The dialogue is written in verse; blank verse for those from town and free verse for those from the country. It could be easily produced in an intimate black-box theatre or an improvised found space, or in any other type of theatre. PREMIERE PLAY FILE **Order # 3125**

PRODUCTIONS:

Finalist and Premiere at **Red Rocks College** in Denver by Colorado Dramatists.

READINGS:

Open Eye Theatre -- Margaretville, New York

Orem Public Library -- Orem, Utah

Act I

Scene One -- *Early morning, early autumn, late in the nineteenth century in a farmhouse in Normandy. LEIGH, dressed in her Sunday best, reaches out for a pair of rings attached to a magnetic stone on the hearth. JACQUES enters through the door and tosses LEIGH a small sack of coins.*

JACQUES: I sold it.

LEIGH: Half the land?

JACQUES: (*He nods.*) The gold is yours.

LEIGH: Madame insisted.

JACQUES: You did not resist.

LEIGH: Is it enough?

JACQUES: To educate you? Yes.

LEIGH: Half the land for one small sack of coins...

JACQUES: With learning you could be a man of means.

LEIGH: Sell your half and come with me.

JACQUES: I can't.

LEIGH: You could.

JACQUES: I won't.

The land is sacred; it must be preserved.

We'll heed their dying wishes.

LEIGH: We're alive.

With due respect for the deceased,

The wishes of the living must come first.

JACQUES: They gave the land to us; they had no kin.

We were their hired hand and maid.

We have to pay their price:

Obedience.

Go on.

LEIGH: I could stay.

I'd work the land,

And you could go to school,

Jacques, become a student of the law,

And make your fortune as an advocate...

You could return to me.

I'd wait for you.

Go learn.

JACQUES: Leigh, you cannot work the land!

LEIGH: I could.

JACQUES: You can't.

LEIGH: I would!

I'm strong enough!

(JACQUES places a broom between them.)

JACQUES: Then come and twist the broom.

LEIGH: I'm stronger than you think.

JACQUES: So twist the broom.

LEIGH: I grip the plow as firmly as a man.

JACQUES: Your hands will slip.

(They grip. JACQUES wins.)

JACQUES: You're not strong as me.

You helped but you can't tend the land yourself.

LEIGH: *(She sits at the table with her arm up.)* Hold.

JACQUES: You'll be defeated.

LEIGH: Hold my hand.

JACQUES: I have more muscle.

LEIGH: But I have more will.

(JACQUES takes LEIGH's hand. She defeats him in an arm wrestle.)

JACQUES: You looked me in the eye.

LEIGH: Is that unfair?

JACQUES: I saw you as a woman, Leigh.

LEIGH: I am!

JACQUES: I'd either be a weakling or a brute.

LEIGH: Or else a gentleman.

JACQUES: You have to go.

LEIGH: You'd rather go yourself.

JACQUES: If I obeyed my yearning...

LEIGH: You'd find joy.

JACQUES: But never peace.

(LEIGH tosses JACQUES the gold.)

LEIGH: Jacques, take the gold. Give me the farm.

JACQUES: A woman can't own land.

LEIGH: Why not?

JACQUES: The law...

LEIGH: Laws have exceptions.

JACQUES: Yes...

You could give me the title.

LEIGH: Not a chance!

It must be mine to do with as I please.

JACQUES: It's possible that I could find a way...

LEIGH: *(She tosses him the gold.)* Do so and the gold is yours to spend.

JACQUES: But if you marry....

LEIGH: Why would I do that?

JACQUES: Your husband would inherit all you own.

LEIGH: Then I will never wed.

JACQUES: You'd be a nun,

Like those who raised you in the orphanage?

LEIGH: Not a nun but single and alone.

JACQUES: The lonely land would keep you company?

LEIGH: There's only one to whom I'd give my all,

But if he should become a gentleman,

Would he claim me?

JACQUES: Only if you changed.

LEIGH: Take me as I am or not at all.

JACQUES: Leigh, take back your gold. Our patrons wished...

LEIGH: A happy future for the two of us

And preservation of their sacred land;

These hills that Saint Clair wandered long ago.

Perhaps I'll struggle as I work the farm,

But could you care for pilgrims as they did?

JACQUES: Few pilgrims come these days.

LEIGH: But for those few,

Could you lodge them, feed them, nurture them?

(Beat)

We'll realize our patrons' legacy;

A shrine preserved, a servant lifted up.

Are we not free to trade the roles we fill?

(Beat)

And then, of course, there's us.

JACQUES: There is no us. There's you and there is me.

We're fellow servants, friends, no more.

LEIGH: No, more.

JACQUES: You could go to school and return.

LEIGH: You'd always yearn to know what I had learned,

I'd hide my learning from the man I love.

What value is a treasure in the earth?

JACQUES: So one of us must go and not return.

How do we decide? With arms or brooms?

LEIGH: Either one of us might try to lose.

Let fate decide. We'll toss my golden coin

Madame gave it to me for gratitude.

Face down, I'll go; face up, I'll stay.

JACQUES: A coin?

LEIGH: Don't golden coins determine destinies?

I wonder if the angels in the clouds

Toss coins before they drop the cherubim

And send them winging into mortal life.

JACQUES: There are no coins in Heaven.

LEIGH: Then perhaps

They toss the cherub, see which way he lands.

Face down, he's poor, face up, he's rich.

JACQUES: And if the cherub lands upon his feet?

LEIGH: Then he is free to choose his fate himself.

JACQUES: Toss the coin. Let providence decide.

(She tosses the coin on the table.)

LEIGH: Face up. I stay. You go.

JACQUES: You're certain...

LEIGH: Yes! I hoped it would be so.

Catch the merchants' wagon. Leave me here.

JACQUES: I'll fix the deed. I'll put it in your name.

LEIGH: *(She tosses him the coins.)* I trust you, Jacques. You've never broken word.

JACQUES: The autumn harvest...

LEIGH: I'll take care of it.

Will you regret?

JACQUES: I won't.

LEIGH: You might.

You never felt a spark for me?

JACQUES: No tinder and no air.

LEIGH: Then there is nothing more to say.

JACQUES: Adieu.

(He starts to leave.)

LEIGH: Wait, Jacques!

(Beat)

Take the rings.

JACQUES: The "yearning rings?"

LEIGH: Madame insisted that they stay with us.

Monsieur carved them from lodestone long ago.

They still attract each other and the stone.

JACQUES: Monsieur should have been buried with his ring.

LEIGH: Madame believed that it would draw her down

To join him in the grave. She lived alone

But in the end, she yearned to join her mate.

She willed the rings to us. She hoped they'd draw

Our hands together, neatly bound for life,

When I'd received the schooling she desired.

JACQUES: I'll keep the one...

LEIGH: No, take the pair of them

And give the other to the one you love.

JACQUES: Keep it here.

LEIGH: Will you return?

JACQUES: Who knows what lies ahead?

LEIGH: (*She nods.* We chose our paths. We lose the right to yearn...

JACQUES: But not the yearning...

LEIGH: No.

Good journey, Jacques.

JACQUES: Good living, Leigh.

Find joy.

LEIGH: I will.

(*JACQUES exits with the coins. LEIGH puts on her ring.*)

I might.

(*LEIGH exits to the bedroom. End of scene.*)

Scene 2 -- *Mid-day, mid-winter. Outside the farmhouse, we see ROCHELLE, a well-dressed young woman who wears her hair up. ROCHELLE sings a Normand folksong while struggling to walk in and finally remove her tattered shoes*

ROCHELLE: THE FOUNTAIN FLOWS WHERE FELL SAINT CLAIR

AND MURMURS LIKE AN ENDLESS PRAYER

SO LONELY PILGRIMS WAND'RING THERE

WILL FIND THE PEACE THAT FOUND SAINT CLAIR.

HE SHUNNED THE LADY HE SHOULD WED

WHO LONGED TO TAKE HIM TO HER BED.

SAINT CLAIR WENT CROSS THE SEA INSTEAD

DETERMINED HE WOULD NEVER WED.

FROM ENGLAND CAME TO NORMANDY

AND JOURNEYED FAR FROM HILL TO TREE.

THE BLIND WHO WALK HIS STEPS WILL SEE

AND HARVEST RICH IN NORMANDY.

O ANCIENT HERMIT, NOW I YEARN

MY SIGHT TO FIND, YOUR PEACE TO LEARN

MAY, BY THIS PILGRIMAGE, I EARN

THE SIGHT AND PEACE FOR WHICH I YEARN.

(*LEIGH appears at the threshold, dressed as a peasant with her hair worn down. She places her own coat over ROCHELLE's shoulders and helps her inside.*)

LEIGH: Hail, pilgrim. Rest your feet inside.

ROCHELLE: I thank you, sister.

LEIGH: I am not a nun.

You must be freezing in the winter air.

Your feet are bare to show humility?

ROCHELLE: They only demonstrate my vanity.

I wore my finest shoes. They're fine for town,

But failed walking on your rocky roads.

That's all that's left. My stockings are in shreds.

LEIGH: Wear some woolen socks of mine. Sit down.

ROCHELLE: I can't accept...

LEIGH: I offer what I have.

ROCHELLE: I have much more...

LEIGH: And yet you've journeyed here

To lonely hills to seek for old Saint Clair.

ROCHELLE: Well yes, and no.

LEIGH: You are a pilgrim?

ROCHELLE: Yes.

LEIGH: That's all I need to know.

ROCHELLE: And you are...

LEIGH: Leigh.

ROCHELLE: I am Rochelle...

At least I thought I was.

LEIGH: Let my soup warm up your freezing hands.

ROCHELLE: You work the land?

LEIGH: It's mine. I run the farm.

ROCHELLE: Your husband...

LEIGH: I have none.

ROCHELLE: Your father...

LEIGH: No.

ROCHELLE: Your brother?

LEIGH: I'm alone.

ROCHELLE: Then how can you own land?

LEIGH: I know a clerk.

He fixed the deed. The land is in my name...

I own it with "Monsieur Saint Clair."

He claimed these hills in life.

ROCHELLE: But he's been dead a thousand years.

LEIGH: Yet people seek him still.

My friend swore that Monsieur St. Clair

Maintains his office here.

ROCHELLE: So you and...

LEIGH: That dead hermit own this place!

(Beat)

I shouldn't speak that way. He's honored here.

ROCHELLE: Are these the hills Saint Clair once wandered?

LEIGH: Yes, or so they say,

And so they all believe.

ROCHELLE: Do you believe?

LEIGH: In saints and miracles? I borrow faith

From pilgrims. Wear these boots, my second pair.

ROCHELLE: My feet are hard to fit.

LEIGH: These fit just fine.

ROCHELLE: Miraculous!

LEIGH: I'd hardly call it that.

ROCHELLE: I'm not a pilgrim, in the formal sense.

I'm from the Abbey of the Vows...

LEIGH: I see.

I grew up in the abbey's orphanage.

ROCHELLE: I am a novice, or at least I was.

I ran away this morning, don't ask why.

LEIGH: Share or keep your secrets as you wish.

ROCHELLE: Your soup is excellent.

LEIGH: It nourishes.

ROCHELLE: I treat you like a servant.

LEIGH: Like a host.

ROCHELLE: I mustn't do so, if I am to stay.

LEIGH: How long?

ROCHELLE: Until I find myself again.

LEIGH: As long as that?

ROCHELLE: I'll pull my weight.

LEIGH: You haven't much to pull.

You cook?

ROCHELLE: No, not so well.

LEIGH: You clean?

ROCHELLE: I could...

LEIGH: You gardened where you came from?

ROCHELLE: Just a bit.

Not on the grounds

But in the flower pots.

LEIGH: You're less the rosebush, more the severed bloom.

ROCHELLE: I offer little... nothing.

LEIGH: No, I jest.

Here, have some bread.

ROCHELLE: If I may serve you soup.

LEIGH: I'm never served...

ROCHELLE: Not ever? Try it once.

(ROCHELLE serves LEIGH.)

Was that so difficult?

LEIGH: No. Different.

How's the Abbey of the Vows these days?

ROCHELLE: The same as it has been for centuries

And will be till it crumbles in decay.

I never planned to stay and take my vows...

I only planned to live there for a year...

It's only been nine months...

LEIGH: Nine months.

ROCHELLE: No, don't assume...

I wasn't "great with child," as they say.

LEIGH: The thought had crossed my mind. It's not my place...

ROCHELLE: I went there willingly...

LEIGH: But not to stay.

ROCHELLE: My father said if I refused to wed

The man he chose, he'd cut me off

Or send me to the Abbey of the Vows.

LEIGH: Apparently you chose to disobey.

ROCHELLE: He thought he could control me with his threats.

I took the choice he thought I'd never take.

LEIGH: Did he regret his words?

ROCHELLE: He did indeed,

I told my mother I would stay a year

And then return and say I'd changed my mind.

My father would regret his threatening

And let me marry any man I chose.

I knew he'd miss me more than I'd miss him.

LEIGH: Your mother kept your confidence?

ROCHELLE: Indeed.

When she was young, she faced a choice like mine,

She chose to be a sweet and silent bride.

My father's not unkind, you understand;

Of course, that doesn't mean that he is kind.

My mother's lonely. I'm her only friend.

I can't imagine how she pines for me,

Yet she endures it, knowing I'll return.

LEIGH: Why not go home now? She misses you.

ROCHELLE: I don't know who I am. I've always been

The one I was expected to become.

LEIGH: And so you chose to make a pilgrimage
To find Saint Clair, the patron saint of those
Who flee unwanted marriages.

ROCHELLE: Not quite.

I came because I wanted to find you.

LEIGH: You do not know me.

ROCHELLE: They remember you.

Here, let me clean my bowl.

LEIGH: I like your ways.

ROCHELLE: I'm not your guest.

I'd like to be a partner on your farm.

LEIGH: I will not share the deed...

ROCHELLE: I do not want

To take the land that rightfully is yours,
Well yours, and old Saint Clair's.

I'd earn my keep.

LEIGH: Then I could use your hands.

When you came to the abbey, you renounced
Your worldly dress.

ROCHELLE: And will do so again,

This very dress, in fact.

(LEIGH takes a peasant dress and blouse from the dressing screen and hands them to ROCHELLE.)

LEIGH: Here, try these on.

The laces can be tightened.

ROCHELLE: There's no need.

LEIGH: It's not the habit of a nun,

But none too flattering.

ROCHELLE: It's wonderful!

LEIGH: I'd hardly call it that.

ROCHELLE: I'll go change in a bedroom.

LEIGH: In the spring,

That might be wise, but winter chills the bones.

And there's our only fire. Use the screen.

ROCHELLE: I'll need you to unfasten me.

LEIGH: Ah, yes.

The wealthy women can't escape their clothes

Without assistance from their serving maids.

You're almost free.

ROCHELLE: Unlace the corset too.

LEIGH: How can you breathe in that?

ROCHELLE: Not very well...

(ROCHELLE steps behind the screen.)

LEIGH: The top I've lent you laces up the front
So you can dress yourself.

ROCHELLE: How sensible.

(ROCHELLE hands LEIGH her dress from behind the screen and LEIGH holds it out admiringly.)

LEIGH: This stitching is exquisite.

ROCHELLE: Do you sew?

LEIGH: Enough to keep me clothed.

They kept us sewing in the orphanage.

I recognize fine work.

ROCHELLE: So try it on.

LEIGH: I'm sure it wouldn't fit.

ROCHELLE: But with the corset...

LEIGH: No, I'll pass.

Who bundled you inside of this today?

ROCHELLE: I had a friend who's now upon her knees,

Reciting penance for assisting me.

LEIGH: I wish that I had had a friend like yours.

ROCHELLE: I could prove a friend to you.

LEIGH: You could.

Some have treated me with kindness, yet

No one's ever loved me as their own.

ROCHELLE: The laces cross?

LEIGH: And tie.

ROCHELLE: You have more freedom than I've ever had.

Life confines us in society...

LEIGH: How hard to walk a lady's walk

And talk a lady's idle talk.

(ROCHELLE emerges.)

ROCHELLE: How do I look?

LEIGH: Like maidens artists make.

A sculptor ought to render you in clay.

ROCHELLE: I'm not a statue, though I wish I were.

My father loves a statue more than me...

That isn't really so... I've said too much...

LEIGH: You've let the kitten halfway out the bag

It claws and scratches till you set it free.

ROCHELLE: There is a graveyard by the abbey's gate

The nuns maintain it out of charity.

Within the graveyard stands a girl of clay,

Memorial to one who died at birth.

Her name's Rochelle...

LEIGH: Like you.

ROCHELLE: It's not my name.

I've borrowed it from her, you understand?

LEIGH: I do not follow.

ROCHELLE: She's my father's girl,
The only child of his flesh and blood.
She barely took a single breath of life.
I was adopted and I took her place.
My father, in rare show of sentiment,
Replaced me in my sleeping mother's arms.

LEIGH: She never knew... you never knew...

ROCHELLE: That's right.

I didn't know until three days ago.
The abbess worked me in the record room.
I had been curious...

LEIGH: Like Mother Eve.

ROCHELLE: My real mother had been destitute.

I would have grown up in the orphanage...

LEIGH: With me.

ROCHELLE: That's right, and so I yearned to know

Who I might have become if I'd remained.
That's why I came to spend some time with you.
I don't know who I am. I'm not Rochelle.

LEIGH: Pretend for long enough and you become.

ROCHELLE: I wish I could believe that it is true.

I have no real name.

LEIGH: I'll call you Rose.

Use the name until you find your own.
The winter season's light in labor; spring is heavier.

ROCHELLE: By April, I'll be strong enough to plant,
Before I have to go.

LEIGH: Here, wear my coat; I'll wear Monsieur's.

He doesn't need it now. I'll don his garb,
And act his part.

ROCHELLE: We'll play it. Both of us.

(LEIGH and ROCHELLE leave through the door. End of scene.)

Scene 3 -- *Early morning, early spring. LEIGH and ROCHELLE sing a French folksong as they gather onions, carrots, and potatoes.*

LEIGH AND ROCHELLE:

PERUSAL SCRIPT The Yearning Season by J.D. Newman

WENT THE PRETTY MAIDS FROM LA ROCHELLE,
IN A SHIP OF SILK AND LACE, IN A SHIP OF SILK AND LACE,
AND THEY AIMED IT TOWARD THE RISING SUN,
WITH A LIGHT ON EV'RY FACE,
WITH A LIGHT ON EV'RY GRACE.
O HOW THE SAILS FLY AWAY, HOW THE MAIDENS FLY AWAY.

WEEPS A YOUNG BRUNETTE ON QUARTER DECK
CRYING SALT INTO THE SEA, CRYING SALT INTO THE SEA.
BEGS THE CAPTAIN HEARING HER LAMENT,
“WILL YOU SHARE YOUR TEARS WITH ME?
WILL YOU SHARE YOUR TALE WITH ME?”
O HOW THE SAILS FLY AWAY, HOW THE MAIDENS FLY AWAY.

“HAVE YOU LOST YOUR FATHER, YOUNG BRUNETTE?
HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MOTHER TOO, HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MOTHER TOO?”
“I HAVE LOST NO PARENT, LOST NO SOUL,
BUT MY OPPORTUNITY, JUST MY OPPORTUNITY.”
O HOW THE SAILS FLY AWAY, HOW THE MAIDENS FLY AWAY.

(ROCHELLE's countenance changes as she recalls something and returns abruptly to the house.)

LEIGH: Rose, do not despair. The plow grows easier.

ROCHELLE: It's not the plow.

LEIGH: The winter fruit sustains, spring wheat maintains the deed.

ROCHELLE: I don't eschew the labor.

LEIGH: Are you ill?

ROCHELLE: I'm well enough, in health at least.

LEIGH: Then why the wilt?

ROCHELLE: My mother is alone today... I use that title still.

The mother of my heart, if not my flesh.

LEIGH: Has she not been alone these many months?

ROCHELLE: I realized today's my birthday.

(Beat)

LEIGH: Put the kettle on.

ROCHELLE: My mother's grip on life was never strong.

Gray sky and salty air in Normandy

Can sweep away despairing souls like sand.

LEIGH: Would you return to keep your promises

To help me here through spring?

ROCHELLE: I promise that I will. I'll push the plow

And plant the wheat and all that you require.

LEIGH: Your step-father, or "father of your heart,"

He won't detain you?

ROCHELLE: He will be away.

LEIGH: You can't know that.

ROCHELLE: He always finds excuse

For absence on my anniversary.

I think he spends it with his girl of clay,

The statue of the one I thought I was.

I wish that he would celebrate the girl

Who played her role in life while she was gone.

LEIGH: You are more than clay your father formed...

ROCHELLE: The poet William Shakespeare disagrees.

"A daughter's father should be as a god,

One that composed her beauties, yea and one

To whom she is but a form in clay,

By him imprinted and within his power

To leave the figure or disfigure it."

LEIGH: I never knew my father.

ROCHELLE: So you're free

To shape yourself however pleases you.

LEIGH: Or was I shaped by God or circumstance?

Can any of us know how we were formed?

ROCHELLE: Perhaps we are not clay but cherubim.

When you lived in the abbey's orphanage,

Did you spend hours in the chapel there?

LEIGH: Of course.

They taught us, hoping we would join the nuns.

ROCHELLE: All day I've thought about that chapel wall,

Where cherubim descend on feathered wings...

LEIGH: I know the scene.

ROCHELLE: Perhaps Rochelle and I as cherubim

Bumped one another from our proper falls.

Perhaps she found the cradle meant for me.

Suppose that as we winged our way to earth

We switched directions, traded destinies,

And yet I found my proper lot through fate.

As sheep, how far are we allowed to stray

Before the shepherd's crook corrects our path?

LEIGH: The plow must furrow firmly in its line,

Not veering right or left but straight ahead.

ROCHELLE: I'm speaking about destiny.

LEIGH: Me too!

We plow the earth to which we've been assigned.

ROCHELLE: But you were not assigned to plow at all.

You traded opportunity...

LEIGH: I did.

ROCHELLE: You walk a different course than others planned.

LEIGH: And I have paid. I'm scorned by villagers.

ROCHELLE: Are you surprised? You showed them there's another choice to make.

LEIGH: No man will ever share my hearth

Unless I give him title to my land.

I love to work the land I own myself

But not the loneliness. I'll miss you, Rose.

ROCHELLE: Leigh, you understand why I must go.

My mother's spent these quiet months alone.

She needs companionship, especially now.

LEIGH: First loyalty must be to family...

And I have none... but you.

You're like a sister...

Sister of my heart if not my flesh;

(The kettle whistles.)

Have some cider, Rose.

ROCHELLE: The sun is up.

LEIGH: Warm yourself before you go.

ROCHELLE: I can't.

(Beat)

Leigh, you could go to her.

LEIGH: She waits for you.

ROCHELLE: Listen to me...

LEIGH: Rose, sit down and drink.

ROCHELLE: You have no mirrors...

LEIGH: None.

ROCHELLE: No looking glass...

LEIGH: I know how I'm perceived. Why see my face?

ROCHELLE: If I let down my hair... you see?

Look at our reflections in your cup.

LEIGH: All faces look the same in cider.

ROCHELLE: Look!

(LEIGH looks away.)

Then touch.

(ROCHELLE puts LEIGH's hand on her face.)

You feel this nose? Is it the same as yours?

These cheekbones and this brow? Familiar, yes?

LEIGH: They're similar... I've felt no other face...

ROCHELLE: They are identical, or nearly so.

Just let me say it out; don't interrupt.

The abbey records told me who I was:
The daughter of a girl who fell from grace.
My birthing mother died, her offspring lived,
And not one lonely child but a pair!

LEIGH: Be on your way!

ROCHELLE: A pair of daughters! You and I. You see?
And one of us became a lady. One became a maid.

LEIGH: You and I are sisters?

ROCHELLE: We are twins.

LEIGH: Identical?

ROCHELLE: Or very similar,
And either could replace the true Rochelle.

LEIGH: Say no more to me.

ROCHELLE: You know it's true.
Today's your birthday, is it not?

LEIGH: It is.

ROCHELLE: The life I've lived, it might have been your own,
And I might just as well have landed here.

LEIGH: You'd have obeyed and gone to school
The way Madame desired...

ROCHELLE: But who knows?
I don't know why he chose me and not you.
I might have been the loud or quiet one,
The larger or the smaller, or perhaps
He tossed a golden coin.

LEIGH: You've said enough!

ROCHELLE: Who knows what we'd have been if we'd been switched?

LEIGH: I would have left the mansion and become
An independent woman on a farm!

ROCHELLE: But that's the greatest question of them all:
Are we the clay our circumstances shape,
Or are we substance we've inherited?

LEIGH: Perhaps you're right and we are cherubim.

ROCHELLE: What do you mean?

LEIGH: They seem identical
But each is different when you stare at them.
The mischievous, the brave, the clever one...
We're never empty-handed when we come.
Our shapes are merely clothing for our souls.

ROCHELLE: So why not wear this costume and portray
The lady who you might have been?

LEIGH: I can't.

ROCHELLE: My mother would be comforted...

LEIGH: By lies?

ROCHELLE: You'd feel her love...

LEIGH: For you.

ROCHELLE: Become Rochelle,
At least today and then return to me.
You'd know what might have been...

LEIGH: I couldn't bear to live that other life
And let it go. I can't.

ROCHELLE: You could.

LEIGH: I won't.

(Beat)

Put up your hair.

ROCHELLE: *(She does so.)*

I will return to you.

LEIGH: Your word?

ROCHELLE: Reconsider! Wear the dress!

LEIGH: I thrice refuse the gown.

ROCHELLE: You know your William Shakespeare.

LEIGH: Not like you.

I read him to Madame when she was ill.

(ROCHELLE goes behind the screen.)

ROCHELLE: I hope that it still fits. I've eaten well.

LEIGH: But worked it off.

ROCHELLE: I don't look forward, after being free,
To getting cinched in half by corset strings.
You'll have to pull them for me.

LEIGH: I'll oblige.

ROCHELLE: But still, I wouldn't trade my way of life
For freedom from its hardships and constraints.

LEIGH: Hardships? Ha!

Not ones imposed on you,
But only those you choose to bear.
You're warm, well-fed, and wise.
You fight for way of life, not for your life.
You're safe.

ROCHELLE: But you are free.
You cannot understand my challenges.
Here, take the strings and pull with all your strength.
There, that should do.

LEIGH: Do what?

ROCHELLE: Hold me inside.

LEIGH: If ladies stopped

Submitting to constraints...

ROCHELLE: No woman wants to be the first.

LEIGH: And so

You trap yourselves,

Like lobsters in a pot.

ROCHELLE: The first would have to stand alone.

LEIGH: You'll have to take

My second pair of boots.

ROCHELLE: That's very generous of you.

LEIGH: Of course, you're coming back.

ROCHELLE: Well, yes...

(ROCHELLE emerges, dressed in her finer attire and sits on a chair.)

ROCHELLE: I had forgotten. Once I'm corseted...

LEIGH: Can you not bend

To fasten your own boots?

ROCHELLE: Would you assist?

LEIGH: As if for Cendrillon*? [**Pronounced "SAN-dree-OHN," a French version of Cinderella.*]

I'll fit them on your royal feet.

(LEIGH puts ROCHELLE's boots on her feet.)

ROCHELLE: I'm sorry...

LEIGH: It is fitting for my lot.

ROCHELLE: I've never made you serve me.

LEIGH: True enough.

ROCHELLE: I've pulled my weight and borne my share.

LEIGH: Till now.

ROCHELLE: I'll need my gloves.

(LEIGH fetches ROCHELLE's gloves, takes the ring from her finger, and gives it to ROCHELLE.)

LEIGH: Here, take this ring Madame once gave to me.

It's cut from lodestone. It will draw you back.

ROCHELLE: *(She puts on her gloves over the ring.)* I'll wear it underneath my silken gloves,

A secret token of a promise made...

LEIGH: And kept?

Eat something...

ROCHELLE: No, I can't. My belly's tight.

I have to go before I hesitate.

LEIGH: Then take my cloak.

ROCHELLE: The day is warm enough.

LEIGH: But not for you.

You do not want the shame

Of wearing something rough as me.

ROCHELLE: I have to play my role. I'll keep my pledge.

Farewell. I'll not forget your kindnesses.

(ROCHELLE starts out the door. LEIGH halts her with her words.)

LEIGH: You're family.

The only kin I've known.

My twin, my sister, friend.

(They embrace.)

Go. Enjoy the love I'll never know.

(ROCHELLE exits. End of scene.)

Scene 4 -- *Time passes to a summer evening. LEIGH cooks by the fire and sings.*

LEIGH: SERAPH OF THE SUMMER, HEAR ME SING

YOU SOOTHE THE PAIN OF WINTER'S DEADLY STING.

YOU WARM THE SOUL WHEN DEATH HAS MADE IT COLD.

YOU MAKE US WARM SO TIME CAN MAKE US OLD.

THE SEEDS OF SUMMER BUD AND BLOOM AND GROW

AND IN THE AUTUMN LOSE THEIR LIVING GLOW.

COME MELT AWAY THE WINTER OF MY HEART

WITH ALL YOUR CHARMS AND SWEET ANGELIC ART.

(We hear a storm and a knock at the door. When LEIGH opens it, JACQUES and ROCHELLE stand outside, with JACQUES dressed as a gentleman and ROCHELLE as a lady, both wearing gloves.

LEIGH swallows her surprise.)

LEIGH: Hail strangers.

JACQUES: *(Nodding)* Woman of the house.

LEIGH: You've come as pilgrims?

JACQUES: No, as travelers.

We only seek some shelter from the storm.

Tomorrow we will marry in a church.

We are eloping...

LEIGH: So you're fugitives.

I never turn a stranger out, and you are strangers.

JACQUES: Yes.

We'll pay you handsomely...

LEIGH: Yes, you will pay.

JACQUES: I am Jacques.

ROCHELLE: I am Rochelle.

LEIGH: Your humble servant, Leigh.

(Beat)

You'll wed tomorrow?

ROCHELLE: Yes.

LEIGH: Can you return?

ROCHELLE: What do you mean?

LEIGH: Have you not disobeyed?

Your parents will not disinherit you?

JACQUES: She wears her father like a pinky ring.

She fled into a convent when he tried

To make her marry to the man he chose.

When she came back to him, he vowed if she

Would follow her desires, he'd consent.

LEIGH: He won't be angry that he's been betrayed?

ROCHELLE: He broke the fence and bid the horses stay.

Jacques is not a proper match for me...

A legal clerk without a family.

My father, he could not endorse our match

But pardoning his daughter for her pride

Would cast him as a saint and not a fool.

LEIGH: So strange your fine society would shun a man like him:

Impressive steed, brave colt.

ROCHELLE: He is my father's faithful protégé.

LEIGH: Faithful?!

ROCHELLE: Yes.

LEIGH: Obedient? His trusted hound? His well-trained parrot?

I am teasing you.

The two of you match well, like bookends on his shelf.

ROCHELLE: If you're unwilling to receive us here,

We'll take our lodging elsewhere.

LEIGH: There is no one else nearby.

JACQUES: We thank you for your hospitality.

LEIGH: I have two rooms. Rochelle can sleep with me

And Jacques will have his own, at least tonight,

ROCHELLE: Jacques cannot sleep inside!

JACQUES: But why not?

ROCHELLE: If it's said that we slept underneath the same roof

On the eve of our wedding...

JACQUES: I'll make no protestations, love.

I'll sleep out in the barn if you desire,

Whatever I must do to please Rochelle.

I'll go and get your trunk.

ROCHELLE: I thank you, Sir.

(JACQUES exits.)

LEIGH: You call him "Sir?" The partner of your life?

ROCHELLE: He is a gentleman. A gentle soul. He's from Paris*. [**Pronounced pah-REE.*]

LEIGH: Must I pretend I never knew you, Miss?

ROCHELLE: I came to say I'm sorry.

LEIGH: So it's said.

(Beat)

You're fortunate, Rochelle, or are you Rose?

ROCHELLE: My husband will become an advocate.

He'll represent the commoners...

LEIGH: Like me?

ROCHELLE: My father is his mentor. He's a judge.

LEIGH: And well Jacques judged the perfect mate

To keep him in good grace. Ideal wife. Fine life.

ROCHELLE: He loves me for myself and not my place.

I didn't trust him when he sought my hand,

But when I saw the glow behind his eyes,

I knew he cherished me, and always would.

(Beat)

I broke my promise to return.

LEIGH: You did...

But now you've come.

ROCHELLE: I thought my father would have been away,

Worshipping his daughter's monument,

But he was home. He cried upon my sleeve.

While I was gone, he grew to yearn for me

And I returned, unlike his girl of clay.

He loves me fondly now. I love him too.

LEIGH: You couldn't leave him...

ROCHELLE: No, no after that.

If you'd replaced me, you'd have had to stay.

LEIGH: In sweet captivity, not sour solitude.

ROCHELLE: You would have felt such joy in their embrace.

I'm happy with them, though with one regret...

LEIGH: You kept the life that providence ordained.

ROCHELLE: Providence or chance? I'm fortunate

But not deserving.

LEIGH: Take what fortune grants.

ROCHELLE: He learned his lesson that I must be free

Or else I'd always find a way to flee.

He pledged to let me chose my groom,

And he has kept his word.

(JACQUES knocks and enters.)

JACQUES: Your trunk, my love.

LEIGH: You do not travel light.

ROCHELLE: It's for my wedding and my wedding night.

LEIGH: Save them for tomorrow. There's a nightgown in my room,
If it will not offend your ladyship.

ROCHELLE: You're very generous.

JACQUES: Tonight we sleep apart, tomorrow twain.

ROCHELLE: Goodnight, my love. The night is short. Sweet dreams.

(ROCHELLE and JACQUES kiss and ROCHELLE exits to the bedroom. JACQUES starts to exit.)

LEIGH: Without a word?

JACQUES: *(Bowling)* I thank you for your hospitality.

(Beat)

What would you have me say or do?

LEIGH: More than courtesies or curtsies.

JACQUES: Leigh...

LEIGH: Do not pretend we're strangers.

JACQUES: But we are!

Indeed we knew each other long ago,
But that was in an age that I outgrew.

LEIGH: Did you outgrow your friend?

Did you outgrow the hunts we took?
Did you outgrow the special trust we shared?

JACQUES: That was another time.

LEIGH: But it was not another man.

You taught me how to string a hunting bow
And showed me how to stalk the wild boars.
We shared a trust that men will only share with other men...
And then you left without a thought for me.
You're just like all the others, gentleman.

JACQUES: You wish that I would stoop upon a spade
When I can wield the mallet of a judge?

LEIGH: I'm proud of what you've done. You've changed yourself,
And as a judge you'd be compassionate
To those who are less fortunate than you,
But why can you not tell her who you are?

JACQUES: You know that I cannot expose my roots.
I might lose everything that I have gained.

LEIGH: So in your masquerade your mask has stuck.
I miss the fire in your eyes. I miss the youthful bull.
Where's the mighty hunter that I knew?

JACQUES: I hunt. In fact, I hunted yesterday.

LEIGH: On horseback, with a pack of hungry hounds?

JACQUES: My heart and hunting skills remain the same.
Good night.

(JACQUES heads for the door. LEIGH holds out a broom.)

LEIGH: Twist.

JACQUES: I do not play such peasant games. Farewell.

LEIGH: I dare you, Jacques. Come twist.

JACQUES: I won you ev'ry time at brooms.

LEIGH: Then twist.

JACQUES: I won't embarrass you.

LEIGH: He who seized the serpent, come and twist.

(JACQUES removes his gloves and seizes the broom.)

You wear your yearning ring, though hidden.

JACQUES: Twist!

(JACQUES loses.)

I use my hands for better things than brooms.

My fingers turn the pages of the books

That open up a world you'll never know.

(LEIGH sits at the table and extends her arm for an arm wrestle.)

LEIGH: Grip.

JACQUES: Leigh, I'm strong enough...

LEIGH: Then grip.

JACQUES: My fingers open legal texts...

LEIGH: He who wrestled with the boar, come grip.

(JACQUES takes the position.)

JACQUES: Try your best.

(After a struggle, LEIGH is victorious.)

LEIGH: You're going soft, like apples over-ripe.

(JACQUES sits on the floor and holds out the broom.)

JACQUES: Pull.

LEIGH: A third humiliation?

JACQUES: Come and pull.

LEIGH: You have the weight advantage.

JACQUES: She who was my trusted comrade, pull.

(LEIGH smiles, sits across from JACQUES, grips the broom with both hands, and places her feet against his.)

LEIGH: There's the hearty hunter that I knew

(LEIGH is pulled to her feet, and thus she loses. She continues to grip the broom.)

There's the man and friend I knew before.

(LEIGH pulls JACQUES to his feet. In doing so, the two come face to face and JACQUES looks at LEIGH with budding admiration.)

You never used to look at me that way.

(She looks away.)

Those looks are for the lady that your love.

JACQUES: I miss you, Leigh.

LEIGH: And so you must again.

You can't regret the things you wouldn't change.

JACQUES: I miss my partner.

LEIGH: What's Rochelle?

JACQUES: It's not the same.

LEIGH: Why not?

JACQUES: It's not the same.

LEIGH: You could have had a partner as your wife.

JACQUES: It wouldn't do.

LEIGH: Why not?

JACQUES: It wouldn't do.

LEIGH: Are you not man enough to hold your own?

You need a wife who bends to you?

Who serves you hand and foot? Submissive? Soft?

JACQUES: I am man enough, you can be sure,

But you are not enough a woman.

(LEIGH slaps JACQUES.)

LEIGH: What sort of woman would you have me be?

JACQUES: A woman who respects me as a man.

LEIGH: It's true I wouldn't play the bowing wife,

But deeply would I reverence my man

Because he'd have a reverence for me.

(ROCHELLE appears, her hair still up, dressed in LEIGH's nightdress and robe.)

ROCHELLE: Jacques! You're still here.

JACQUES: I'm leaving now.

(ROCHELLE exits.)

LEIGH: I won't reveal your past.

JACQUES: I thank you, Leigh.

LEIGH: Your wedding...

JACQUES: Will proceed as we have planned.

LEIGH: May I attend?

JACQUES: You think that it would be appropriate?

(She doesn't answer. JACQUES takes his gloves and moves toward the door.)

LEIGH: The woods and wild boars, you conquered them,

Only to be conquered by Rochelle.

(JACQUES exits. ROCHELLE enters.)

ROCHELLE: The man is gone?

LEIGH: Indeed.

(Beat)

Pretend you didn't overhear.

ROCHELLE: Hear what?

(Beat)

I've been pretending all my life.

(Beat)

You could pretend I'm telling you the truth.

(Beat)

You knew each other.

LEIGH: Well.

ROCHELLE: And loved each other?

LEIGH: Some.

ROCHELLE: Is he the clerk who helped you gain your deed?

Your fellow servant who exchanged his land

And gained the education meant for you?

LEIGH: You must have recognized him when you met.

ROCHELLE: Believe me when I say I never knew.

Of all the legal clerks in Cherbourg...

LEIGH: Yet,

You knew that it was possible.

ROCHELLE: Perhaps,

But too improbable to contemplate.

A sad coincidence...

LEIGH: It's more than that.

The two of you were drawn together...

ROCHELLE: Yes.

LEIGH: The yearning ring you wear...

ROCHELLE: It wasn't that.

LEIGH: He wears its mate.

ROCHELLE: I've never seen it.

LEIGH: True. He hides it underneath his glove, like you.

They drew your hands together in the town

And then they drew you here before my hearth.

ROCHELLE: It wasn't magnetism, as you think,

No more than planets pull our destiny,

But there's a reason he was drawn to me.

It's simple. Don't you understand?

LEIGH: Enough!

I will pretend you erred in ignorance,

And yet you stole the only man

Who ever cherished me in any way.

ROCHELLE: You could have followed him to Cherbourg.

LEIGH: No.

I loved the land,

Though not its loneliness.

ROCHELLE: Avenge yourself. Extract your pound of flesh.

LEIGH: A pound of flesh?

ROCHELLE: In William Shakespeare's plays.

A debtor had to lose a pound of flesh,
And yet his creditor could draw no blood.

LEIGH: So the debt was never paid.

ROCHELLE: I've hurt you, Leigh

LEIGH: But not intentionally.

ROCHELLE: You can't absorb this pain, so name your price.

Assert it isn't right to wound you.

LEIGH: No.

They taught forgiveness in the abbey.

ROCHELLE: Yes,

But did you learn it?

LEIGH: Go. You need your sleep.

ROCHELLE: I need to brush my hair. It's warmer here.

LEIGH: I'll brush it for you.

(ROCHELLE takes a knife from the table and holds it out to LEIGH.)

ROCHELLE: Take a pound of hair instead of flesh.

Be satisfied and let me go in peace.

LEIGH: Hand me your brush.

ROCHELLE: He loves my hair. He wouldn't be surprised

If you avenged yourself on his new bride,
Although he wouldn't know it was deserved.
It would relieve his guilt for leaving you.

LEIGH: The brush...

I'd rather lick my wound than taste revenge.

ROCHELLE: The better for yourself; the worse for me.

LEIGH: May I tame your wind-blown hair?

ROCHELLE: You may.

(LEIGH brushes ROCHELLE's hair as she sings.)

"THE POOR SOUL SAT BY A SYCAMORE TREE,
SING WILLOW, ALL A GREEN WILLOW.
HER HAND ON HER BOSOM, HER HEAD ON HER KNEE,
SING WILLOW, WILLOW, WILLOW.
THE FRESH STREAM RAN AND DROWNED HER MOAN;
SING WILLOW, WILLOW, WILLOW.
HER SALT TEARS FELL AND SOFTENED THE STONES...
SING WILLOW, WILLOW, WILLOW."

LEIGH: You never learned that song from me.

ROCHELLE: Another Shakespeare play.

I read them with my mother....

LEIGH: Like I read them to Madame.

ROCHELLE: Did she not love you as a mother would?

LEIGH: I was her servant, not her daughter.

ROCHELLE: She sought your joy.

LEIGH: But I refused her gift.

She yearned for education. I did not.

ROCHELLE: And yet you honored her by staying here.

You nurture pilgrims as she nurtured you.

LEIGH: I've hosted just one pilgrim.

ROCHELLE: It's enough.

LEIGH: You cultivate your hair as I do wheat,

Yours is grass while mine is twisted reeds.

ROCHELLE: You could tame your hair...

LEIGH: There isn't time.

ROCHELLE: A woman does what promises reward.

LEIGH: Your hands and cheeks of ivory,

Your locks of dancing silk,

Your slender form, your eyes.

Why would one like you not be admired?

ROCHELLE: That's what I used to say about my doll.

She's molded from the finest porcelain.

I used to dress her in the finest gowns

And stand her proudly on my highest shelf,

But slowly I became the doll myself.

LEIGH: Pretend for long enough and you become.

ROCHELLE: I realized how lonely she had been,

Observing silently from up above

While underneath her frozen, cheerful gaze,

I'd hug the rag-dolls that could never break.

LEIGH: You tried to play the rag-doll on my farm.

ROCHELLE: I know, but I'm as hard as ivory.

LEIGH: Your gentleman will melt your stony skin.

He'll kiss your cheeks and make them flesh.

He'll warm your hands of glass. He'll light your eyes.

ROCHELLE: We'll see.

LEIGH: The bride must get herself to bed.

ROCHELLE: Tomorrow will you dress me?

LEIGH: Certainly.

ROCHELLE: I always thought my mother would be there

To dress me and bedeck my hair with flow'rs.

LEIGH: I'm not your mother, but I'll do my best

To let Jacques see his angel bride.

Such moments last for life.

What joy awaits.

To bed.

ROCHELLE: I thank you.

(Beat)

Can't you yell at me?

Rebuke me for unfaithfulness and theft?

(Beat)

I understand. Your silence is your price;

Less merciful than screams or blades.

Can I sleep safely while you bear your grudge?

LEIGH: You are my sister and my twin.

You have a room alone.

Go bar your door

Within.

ROCHELLE: You've treated me with mercy. I should not

Distrust you as I have. Forgive me, Leigh.

LEIGH: Goodnight, sweet princess, angels give thee rest.

ROCHELLE: Till morning then.

(ROCHELLE exits. LEIGH sets down the brush, takes the wedding veil from the trunk, and tries it on. She picks up the brush and the knife.)

LEIGH: I'd never wound you, yet I'll take your life.

I'll seize it with your brush and not my knife.

(LEIGH sets down the knife and exits, taking the brush and the camisole and robe from the trunk.)

Blackout.

End of Act I.

14 more pages to the end of the script