

## **Gloria In Excelsis Deo**

**GLORY DEWITT**

**ADELAIDE ROSE SMITH-CONNELL**

**MAID 1 (HELEN)**

**MAID 2 (LILLIANA)**

**THE NURSE**

**CASSIDY**

**MISTER DEWITT**

**MISSUS DEWITT**

**EZRA PRICE**

**ANTHONY SMITH THE FIRST**

**LOCATION:** An estate by the English seaside.

**TIME:** Loosely Victorian.

# ACT 1

## SCENE ONE:

*(Glory reading from a letter)*

GLORY: Dear Cassidy,

The Lord called to me last night. He told me that He has special plans for me. He tells me that there is a special place for me in Heaven. I went by the farm where Ezra works to say hello, even though I'm not supposed to— mother says it's inappropriate to be alone with your fiancé before the wedding— but it was on the way home from my day classes. But as I was going by the field and in that big weeping willow, I saw this little bird. You know the verse: "His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me." I could hear Him calling to me. I could hear His voice. Ezra, my darling Ezra, was the one who found me next to the pond. He says I was reciting verses but he can't recall which ones. Knee deep in mud, apparently, muttering to myself. I'm so deeply embarrassed, but I could hear His voice in my mind. That's the only thing I can remember. Cassidy, the Lord above spoke to me with His own voice and I knew it as well as I know my baby sister's hands and feet. Hearing His voice is the happiest I have felt since I was a child. Not a single person will believe me but I know it to be true. You must believe me. You must. I will not be at class tomorrow, the doctor's have specified bed rest for at least a day, though I don't quite think anyone believes that I simply had a "fever" as they claim.

You must believe me,

Glory Dewitt

*(She folds up the letter)*

*(Cassidy enters)*

CASSIDY: Glory!

*(She throws her arms around Glory)*

GLORY: Oh, Cassidy. Cass, I'm so glad you're here.

CASSIDY: I've been so frightfully worried. Everyone has! All of our classmates were so confused when you didn't come. I was so relieved to receive your letter. How do you feel?

GLORY: Cass, I feel wonderful. I knew you would understand.

CASSIDY: Understand what?

GLORY: ... My vision, Cassidy. My vision from the Lord.

CASSIDY: Oh. Yes. Of course.

GLORY: It was the most magical thing. I've been told since I was a child how warm and good it is to feel the Lord's presence but I didn't *know*—

CASSIDY: Glory. Didn't the doctor tell you to rest? That it was a fever?

GLORY: Well, yes, they did, but they didn't see what I saw. I *heard His voice*. He says that I am meant for higher things, for special plans that He has. Is that not what we have been told since we were children? We are the daughters of Christ and someday He will call us home? He is calling me home, Cassidy, and who am I to deny His beckoning?

*(Pause. Glory is animated and frightening and passionate. Cassidy is wary, rightfully so)*

CASSIDY: Of course, Glory. And you said Ezra was the one who found you?

GLORY: Yes, my beautiful Ezra. He's such a kind man, you know? I feel so lucky that he chose me; me of all people! And he was so kind to bring me home— I don't know how I ended up in the woods, I can't recall, but I was just so drawn by the voices I heard. Ezra is good to me, though, and got me home safe to Mama and Papa.

CASSIDY: Mhm. The wedding is in two months time, no?

GLORY: So soon, but it seems so far. We both wish it could be tomorrow.

CASSIDY: How lovely. Excuse me, I am going to say hello to your mother. *(she embraces Glory again)* Rest, Glory.

GLORY: I will be back in class soon. I know it.

CASSIDY: Of course, you will.

*(She exits)*

## SCENE TWO:

*(It is a fresh, clear early morning. Glory is walking alone along the beach, quietly, in her nightgown and dressing gown. She is contemplative; silent; dull. She sits down on a stone and opens her Bible, reading a few verses before she closes it and continues her walk. There are the sounds of seagulls cawing and the ocean waves calmly lapping on the shore)*

*(Eventually, a crumpled, soaking wet body is revealed: a woman dressed in men's clothes. Glory does not notice her until she practically trips over her)*

GLORY: Oh! *(she drops to her knees and turns Adelaide onto her back)*

*(Adelaide wakes, rolling onto her side and coughing)*

GLORY: Oh, goodness! Are you alright? You gave me such a fright, how did you get here? Where did you come from? What do you need? Oh gosh, I don't know—

ADELAIDE: Water. Please.

GLORY: Oh, yes, yes of course.

*(She pulls a small flask from her skirt pocket and gives it to Adelaide. Adelaide drinks all of it. They pause there, Adelaide breathing heavily)*

GLORY: Do you think you can walk? If you can, I can take you back to the estate for medical help. If you can't, I'll have to leave you alone which is alright but I'd rather not risk—

ADELAIDE: Please slow down. Give me a moment. I will walk soon.

*(Pause)*

GLORY: Where did you come from?

ADELAIDE: I'd rather not say.

GLORY: It's not an abnormal question, considering the state with which I've found you. Are you quite alright? You seem a bit pale. I ought to get you somewhere warm and dry; one can freeze to death in even these temperatures when wet, you know.

ADELAIDE: Yes. Yes, I know.

*(Pause)*

GLORY: Are you a woman?

*(Adelaide laughs. Adelaide thinks: she sure asks a lot of questions)*

ADELAIDE: I am. Why wouldn't I be?

GLORY: Your— well, your clothing.

ADELAIDE: Oh. Right. Well, clothing does not determine sex, does it? There are still many other womanly attributes that I possess.

GLORY: Yes. Of course. My apologies... are you able to walk now?

ADELAIDE: I believe so. If you help me. I think I might be a bit unsteady on my feet.

GLORY: Of course.

*(She helps Adelaide to her feet)*

GLORY: What are you called, by the way? I feel as if you ought to tell me.

ADELAIDE: You are very strange. My name is Adelaide. Adelaide Rose Connell. What is yours?

GLORY: My name is Glory Dewitt.

ADELAIDE: It's lovely to meet you, Miss Glory Dewitt.

*(Glory blushes. Glory thinks: she is awfully pretty)*

GLORY: Let me show you to the estate.

*(Glory and Adelaide exit)*

**SCENE THREE:**

*(Adelaide, with a shawl thrown over her scene 2 costume, re-enters, reading from a letter)*

ADELAIDE: Dearest mother,

I am happy to report the birth of your grandchild. My son was born late this past Saturday and now sleeps peacefully in his crib. He has been christened Anthony Edgar Smith II. He is a beautiful child and I know that you will love him when you and Papa can travel north to see me, Anthony, and... Anthony the second. I still find it a little strange that I now have Anthony my husband and Anthony my son, but Anthony— the husband, the son cannot yet speak as he is only a day old— says it's tradition and it must be so. You were right about marriage. It isn't as bad as I had thought it would be. Forgive me for all of my unkind words. Please. I cannot bear your silence.

Your loving daughter,

Adelaide Rose Smith

*(Anthony The First enters. Adelaide quickly hides the letter)*

ADELAIDE: Good morning!

ANTHONY: Good morning.

ADELAIDE: The baby is doing well. He's sleeping.

ANTHONY: Good.

ADELAIDE: He rolled over today.

ANTHONY: And?

ADELAIDE: That's good. It means he's developing well.

ANTHONY: I suppose that's good.

ADELAIDE: Yes. Yes, it means he'll grow up strong.

ANTHONY: First try then. Usually it takes a few perished infants before a sturdy one comes along.

ADELAIDE: *(a little horrified)* He is. He's very sturdy. He hardly cries either.

ANTHONY: Good.

ADELAIDE: Good.

ANTHONY: I think I will come see you tonight in your bedroom.

ADELAIDE: Oh. But the... the baby...

ANTHONY: The baby has a nurse, does it not?

ADELAIDE: Yes, of course, my apologies.

*(Anthony exits. Adelaide watches him go, touches her chest, breathing deeply, before she follows him)*

#### **SCENE FOUR:**

*(Interior of an estate mansion. Old wood, old furniture, old clocks; old money. It probably smells like old books as well)*

*(Glory and Adelaide come inside, arm over arm)*

*(Maid 1 and Maid 2 burst onto the scene, and immediately begin to fret over Glory— dialogue overlapping and improvisation is encouraged)*

MAID 1: Miss Glory, you simply cannot wander away like that, you gave us a fright!

MAID 2: Miss Glory, it's dangerous for you to be by yourself, you know this!

GLORY: I'm alright, misses, please.

MAID 1: Who is this?

MAID 2: You've brought a guest!

MAID 1: A wet guest.

MAID 2: A very wet guest.

MAID 1: Does she need new clothes?

MAID 2: We have plenty of new things, but they may be the wrong size.

MAID 1: Something old, then, or something of the—

*(The nurse enters and the maid's quiet immediately.)*

NURSE: Who is this?

GLORY: I found her stranded on the beach, she needed somewhere to go.

NURSE: Oh. How strange. *(to Adelaide:)* What happened to you?

ADELAIDE: I'm afraid I was rather reckless and toppled over the edge of the ship I was taking on my voyage, leaning too far over.

MAID 1: Oh, how horrible! Washed up on a beach, I can't imagine that.

MAID 2: Did no one come to you? How awful.

ADELAIDE: Oh, I'm sure they assumed me dead. But I am quite alive, so that's alright.

NURSE: Come now, let us find you some dry clothes to wear. *(she turns to the maids)* One of you, retrieve a dress and undergarments for... excuse me, what is your name?

ADELAIDE: Adelaide.

NURSE: For Adelaide.

*(Maid 1 shuffles out)*

ADELAIDE: What are you all doing out here then? Rather the middle of nowhere, isn't it?

*(Long pause. Glory is passively silent)*

NURSE: Miss Dewitt is unwell. We are here to accompany her while she remains by the sea.

ADELAIDE: Oh. How... pleasant.

*(Maid 1 re-enters)*

MAID 1: We will have to write to your family immediately. We must tell them you are alive, I would be sick with grief if I thought my daughter or sister or niece had drowned.

MAID 2: Yes, of course, we must!

*(The maids begin to strip Adelaide down to her underclothes. Perhaps she is covered with a curtain or a divider while she changes)*

ADELAIDE: That's very kind but there would be no family to write to, I'm afraid.

MAID 2: Oh, I'm so very sorry. You have no husband? No children? No parents or siblings?

ADELAIDE: None. I never married nor had any children, was an only child, and my mother and father passed away from a fever several years ago. We were estranged from all of my relatives so I don't even know their names to write to them.

NURSE: How unfortunate.

MAID 1: You must stay then, you have nowhere to go! Mustn't she?

MAID 2: Of course. We have ever so many rooms and so much food and I'm sure the doctor's wouldn't mind, would they? We'll have you put up in the room by the parlor. You must stay.

*(They pause, waiting for an answer, but not from Adelaide; they are looking at the nurse)*

NURSE: Adelaide may stay. If she wishes it.

ADELAIDE: I do wish it.

*(Glory is silent as the maids, nurse, and Adelaide exit)*

## **SCENE FIVE:**

*(Glory is reading from a new letter)*

GLORY: Dearest Ezra,

You must forgive me for how I behaved the other day. My family will not believe me when I tell them the truth but you are a man of God and so you must believe me when I say that there is a coming cloud of pain that I see over us all. I have been reading Revelations as of late and I cannot deny its poignance in my visions. Christ will come again. And with him, all will crumble in his path. Like with Noah and his ark, the lands will flood, the world will drown and God is choosing me to speak his coming apocalypse aloud. Christ has risen and will rise again. The Lord speaks to me and He tells me to warn us all, to warn you for you are the one who will see it too. I am afraid. But if no one believes me, I do not know what to do. He loves us all, Ezra, my love, my dearest, you have to believe me. I do not know what to do.

Yours,

Glory Dewitt

*(Ezra enters, reading from his reply letter)*

EZRA: Dear Glory,

I hope you are well. I would advise you to listen to the doctors and stay home. My family is growing uncomfortable with you coming by the house unaccompanied. You are unwell, Glory, and focusing on what has not yet happened will do you no good. Please stay home and rest, as you have been instructed to.

Ezra Price

*(Glory sees Ezra and rushes to him, throwing her arms around him. Ezra extricates himself quickly)*

GLORY: Ezra!

EZRA: Glory. Did you get my letter?

GLORY: I did.

EZRA: And you came here because...?

GLORY: I had to see you. I knew that sending a letter wouldn't convey my feelings clear enough—

EZRA: Glory—

GLORY: I know it must have been frightening to find me the other day, but trust me when I say that I was safe. The Lord was watching over me, Ezra. He has been telling His plans for me, how when the Messiah comes from Heaven, fire will follow in his wake and those who do not follow the instructions He gives me will *burn*. You *must* listen to me.

EZRA: You have been... hearing voices?

GLORY: The *Lord's* voice.

*(Uncomfortable pause)*

EZRA: Glory... you can't come here by yourself anymore.

GLORY: What?

EZRA: It's not proper.

GLORY: But we used to— I always—

EZRA: I would advise you to not talk about your voices so much. There are many men who would think of you oddly.

GLORY: But you don't.

EZRA: (*lying*) No. I— I don't.

GLORY: Ezra, what happened? You're acting so strangely. Last week, we were... what changed? You know I'm a Godly woman, I would never... *lie*.

EZRA: I don't think you're lying.

GLORY: But you don't believe me.

EZRA: I... I think that you are seeing things differently from inside your own head. Your bias tints your perspective.

GLORY: I'm not biased, I'm speaking the truth. People believed Joan of Arc, didn't they? She was a *saint*, how different am I from her? We are both women, both heard voices from the Lord above, and yet you look at me with *disdain*—!

EZRA: Glory! Lower your voice.

GLORY: No! If you love me as you say you do, you would know that I am not simply biased or feverish. *Listen* to me, Ezra.

EZRA: I do love you, Glory, I do... but please don't come by anymore.

(*He exits*)

## **SCENE SIX:**

(*A dining room table; the nurse is sitting at the head, Glory at her right, Adelaide on the left.*

*Adelaide is now in a dress*)

(*They eat*)

ADELAIDE: So who owns this glorious house?

NURSE: That would be Mister Dewitt, Miss Glory's father. This is their estate.

ADELAIDE: Oh, how delightful.

NURSE: Indeed.

*(Spoons clinking, fabric shifting, silence echoing)*

ADELAIDE: And how long have you all been out by the sea? It must be beautiful in the summer, I imagine.

NURSE: Nearly six months, I believe. Would you say so, Miss Dewitt?

*(Glory nods)*

NURSE: Yes, about six months.

ADELAIDE: So you've experienced the summer here then? I've always longed to swim in the ocean in the searing heat. It must be quite invigorating.

GLORY: It's very cold.

ADELAIDE: Yes, I imagine so. Did it get very hot here?

GLORY: No.

ADELAIDE: Oh—

NURSE: The sea is invigorating, you're right. That was part of the doctor's orders when we arrived here: fresh, salty air; cleansing, cold water; a simple lifestyle away from the hubbub of city living.

ADELAIDE: Of course. And has your time here been... helpful, Miss Glory?

*(Glory stares)*

GLORY: Yes.

NURSE: It has been most helpful. You cannot imagine how much improvement there has been in Miss Dewitt's condition since we first arrived.

ADELAIDE: How wonderful.

GLORY: Yes. How wonderful, indeed.

*(Pause)*

ADELAIDE: I... I think that I am growing tired. Might I be shown to a bedroom?

NURSE: Of course. *(She rings a bell and the maid's come tumbling into the room. They had been listening at the door, peeking through the crack)* Please show Miss Adelaide to her bedroom.

MAID 1: Of course!

MAID 2: Follow us, Ma'am.

ADELAIDE: Thank you. *(She watches as Glory and the nurse exit)* Excuse my awful manners—I did not ask you ladies what your names are.

*(The maids glance at one another, surprised)*

MAID 1: Oh. My— my name is Helen.

MAID 2: And mine is Lilliana.

ADELAIDE: Helen and Lilliana. Beautiful names. It's lovely to meet both of you. *(When they say nothing:)* I'm sorry, have I offended either of you?

MAID 1: No, no! We're simply... surprised. People don't tend to ask us our names, that's all.

MAID 2: No one needs a name for a nameless maid. You see?

ADELAIDE: Well, that seems a bit silly to me. You're as much a person as I am.

MAID 2: Of course. You're right, Ma'am.

MAID 1: Come, we'll show you to your room.

*(They all exit)*

## **SCENE SEVEN:**

*(Interior of Glory's bedroom. She is seated on the edge of her bed in her undergarments)*

*(The nurse stands over her, taking notes in a notebook)*

NURSE: *(under her breath)* Patient shows no signs of hallucinations. *(she lifts Glory's right arm and examines her. She does the same on the left)* Patient shows no signs of self injury. *(she takes Glory's chin and moves her face from right to left, right to left, right to left)* Patient complies without struggle. *(she steps back and looks at Glory for a long moment. Glory stares dully back)* Patient is well mannered.

*(The nurse closes the notebook and sets it aside. She makes a gesture that must mean "get dressed now" and Glory begins to put on a nightgown)*

GLORY: What... What have the doctors said recently?

NURSE: Nothing of importance.

GLORY: But surely because I have been so... I am well. Is that not what they wanted?

NURSE: They have not changed your treatment whatsoever. I send them my reports weekly and that is the judgment they have decided on.

GLORY: But— but I've done what they said!

NURSE: That is irrelevant. You may leave when the doctors and your father agree you may do so.

*(Glory seethes)*

*(The nurse leaves)*

*(Glory paces her room, back and forth, back and forth, thinking)*

*(She goes to the window and considers the locks for a moment before moving away)*

*(Finally, she leaves the room)*

## **SCENE EIGHT:**

*(Glory walks down the hall to another door, the guest bedroom door. She does not knock, but slowly opens the door with no warning)*

*(Adelaide is seated on the edge of her bed)*

ADELAIDE: Goodness! You surprised me. (*silence*) Miss Glory?

GLORY: Who are you?

ADELAIDE: Excuse me?

GLORY: *Who are you?* You cannot be who you say you are. Nobody is *nobody*. One doesn't wash up on the beach in trousers for no reason at all.

ADELAIDE: You are quite bold.

GLORY: I am *sick*. Answer me.

ADELAIDE: I... And if I refuse?

GLORY: Then I will sit here on this carpet until you speak the truth.

ADELAIDE: Bold *and* stubborn. Is that how you ended up in this ghost mansion? Did they lock you away for being a rebel? I've heard of women like that— the kinds they send away because they cause too much mischief— I almost was that woman, you know.

GLORY: No. That's not me.

ADELAIDE: Then what are you?

GLORY: I told you: I am sick. Now speak the truth of yourself.

ADELAIDE: I... How am I supposed to know whether you won't run and tell your nurse everything I say?

GLORY: That is your mistake. You think they will believe any single thing I say.

ADELAIDE: Fair enough, I suppose... You want my truth?

GLORY: Yes.

ADELAIDE: Come. Come and sit with me. (*Glory kneels in front of Adelaide, looking up at her*)

Good. Now listen. When I was born they called me a miracle baby. My mother was far older than many think a woman should conceive at and everyone she met told her that the baby would never survive. But I did. I was their last chance at a child, you see? My mother and father, growing elderly, childless and lonesome, and then... me. *Miracle child*, they said. When I grew up and my mother insisted that I marry, despite my own wishes, I had a child of my own. A son.

He was my own miracle baby, the light in the darkness of marriage. He lived a year and two months. I couldn't stand that place all by myself. I couldn't. So I left. Wives do not leave their husbands, Glory, they simply don't. And on that boat, I did not topple from the edge... I threw myself from it, because it was either the sea or a life back in the home where my son died. And I risked the sea. But I lived, so perhaps I still am a miracle child of some kind.

GLORY: Oh.

*(Adelaide touches the top of Glory's head)*

ADELAIDE: Will you tell me your truth now, Glory?

GLORY: I have told you.

ADELAIDE: You do not seem sick to me.

GLORY: They say I am sick in my mind. That I have a weakness of the head.

ADELAIDE: And sending you to the ocean will cure you of this illness?

GLORY: I am starting to believe that they are not going to cure me at all.

ADELAIDE: Oh.

GLORY: *(standing)* I must go.

ADELAIDE: But—

GLORY: I am not supposed to be here, excuse me for my interruption.

*(Glory leaves)*

## **SCENE NINE:**

*(The beach, with accompanying sounds. The nurse comes on, dragging Glory by the arm)*

GLORY: I don't want— not again!

NURSE: The doctor's sent word that you are not progressing fast enough. We will have to increase to twice a week.

GLORY: Please. Please, I've done all you've asked.

NURSE: Stop fussing. You wish to be well, don't you?

GLORY: It doesn't make me well! It doesn't!

NURSE: We are not fit to question what the doctors decide is the correct treatment for you. Take off your dress now.

GLORY: It makes me feel as if I'm dying. My lungs freeze and my throat closes and my body turns to ice and I cannot breathe at all. That can't be the correct treatment if it causes me such pain.

NURSE: Good things come from pain. "*And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*" From Peter, no? Do you believe this?

GLORY: *(shaking)* Yes.

NURSE: Then take off your dress.

*(Glory does)*

NURSE: Lie down.

*(Glory does)*

*(The nurse lays a cloth on top of Glory)*

NURSE: *Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name...*

*(Blackout)*

## ACT 2

### SCENE TEN:

*(Adelaide enters, reading from another letter)*

ADELAIDE: Dearest mother,

I am imploring you to reply to my letters. My son has fallen ill and the doctors fear he will not make it through the night. I do not know what I will do should he pass. I have prayed a dozen times this evening alone, I have done all that the doctors recommended, but they say there is nothing more to do. If I lose Anthony, I have no one else. If you ever cared for me, please— I do not want to be alone in this house.

Your daughter,

Adelaide Rose Smith

*(Anthony The First enters)*

ANTHONY: The boy is dead.

ADELAIDE: What?

ANTHONY: The doctors just announced it. He died about five minutes ago.

ADELAIDE: Why didn't you call me up?

ANTHONY: A woman shouldn't see such things; your souls are far too fragile.

ADELAIDE: He's *my son*.

ANTHONY: Was. Was your son.

ADELAIDE: How— how can you be so callous? He was our boy, *your* heir, and now he's...

ANTHONY: *(sighs)* We'll have to try for another one, won't we? You conceived quickly with the first, so it shouldn't take long this time around either.

ADELAIDE: You are despicable.

ANTHONY: I'm *practical*. Thousands of babies die every year, Adelaide, what makes this one of more importance? There will be more children, rest assured.

ADELAIDE: I won't let you touch me.

*(This finally gives him pause)*

ANTHONY: You cannot stop me.

ADELAIDE: I can scream. I can cry. I can make it very very unpleasant.

ANTHONY: No one will help you.

ADELAIDE: I don't want it. I want you to look at me while you fuck me and know that I am thinking about our dead son and how I was not allowed to be there on his deathbed. I want you to look at my eyes and know that I hate you with every fiber of my being, that I am wishing that your heart explodes within your chest and I never have to hear you speak a—

*(He slaps her. She stumbles, clutching her face)*

ANTHONY: That's enough of that.

ADELAIDE: I hate you.

ANTHONY: I know that.

ADELAIDE: I wish you were dead.

ANTHONY: I know that too. I'll come to your room tonight.

*(He exits)*

*(Pause)*

*(Adelaide cries out, throws a vase onto the ground and shatters it, then frantically begins to clean it up)*

## **SCENE ELEVEN:**

*(Glory lying in bed, like a corpse. After a beat, Adelaide sneaks in)*

ADELAIDE: *(sottovoce)* Glory? Glory, are you asleep? *(She goes to the bed)* I haven't seen you in days. The nurse says you've worsened. *(Waits for an answer. There is none)* I was worried. I don't quite understand why, but I wanted to make sure you were alright. Can you wake up so I know you're alright?

GLORY: I would like to be alone.

ADELAIDE: Did something happen?

GLORY: Nothing that hasn't already.

ADELAIDE: Are you in pain?

GLORY: Not of the physical kind.

*(Pause)*

ADELAIDE: When I was young, my mother used to lie next to me when I was ill. She would hold me and kiss my shoulders and tell me that all would feel better in the morning. I loved her the most then, I think, in the dark and quiet, when she didn't seem to care about propriety. I always felt the safest in the dark.

*(Glory begins to cry)*

*(Adelaide crawls into bed beside her, holding her)*

ADELAIDE: We will survive, Glory. There isn't anything else to do but survive.

GLORY: I don't want to. I don't want to anymore.

ADELAIDE: I know.

GLORY: I was in school, did you know? I was taking classes to become a teacher. I was going to teach children how to write. I went into town every Tuesday and Thursday and took classes. I was going to become licensed and everything.

ADELAIDE: Then what happened?

GLORY: I... I thought God was speaking to me. He told me that I was special. That I needed to warn everyone of the calamity. No one tolerated me. I became... furious... I cut open my skin and screamed that the rapture was coming. I do not remember much after that point but I know that the doctors that came to me decided I should be sent here. It was this or an asylum.

ADELAIDE: And do you still hear God's voice?

GLORY: No. I haven't heard His voice for a long time. But they still won't send me home. I had a fiance, Adelaide, I had a *life*, and I ruined it. I have no one to blame but my foolish self for seeing things that weren't there.

ADELAIDE: You were engaged?

GLORY: I loved him so much. We were supposed to be married months ago. But it's been broken off; he and his parents ended it when I... not long before I was sent away. He didn't even tell me to my face. That's the last letter I've gotten from him.

ADELAIDE: And you love him still?

GLORY: I don't know anymore. It's hard to feel anything at all here.

ADELAIDE: Of course. *(pause)* The nurse is very odd.

GLORY: Looking at her makes my stomach turn.

ADELAIDE: Are her treatments very cruel?

GLORY: Only sometimes. The doctors send her tasks to accomplish and she follows them word for word. Sometimes I am commanded to lie in bed all day and drink only mint tea. Sometimes I must sit naked in the ocean for hours on end. Sometimes I think they will drain so much blood from me that I will run out.

ADELAIDE: You are very brave.

GLORY: I am cowardly; if I were a brave woman, I would have run across the moors and found a new life for myself outside of this heaven-sent hell.

ADELAIDE: *(reaches out and touches Glory's face)* You are brave to me. I have run from my fears and it is not the brave woman's choice. Running only makes us look over our shoulders more, it does not make the path before us clearer.

GLORY: I have nothing left to look back on. I will never leave here, I know it. I have nothing left.

ADELAIDE: You have yourself. You have your mind. You have your soul.

GLORY: A tainted soul.

ADELAIDE: But a soul nonetheless.

GLORY: Some days it feels God has abandoned me. Some days I want to tear my Bible to pieces and throw it into the fireplace and watch it burn. Just as they say my soul will burn. Is that so evil?

*(Adelaide kisses Glory)*

*(They linger)*

*(Glory pulls away and stands)*

ADELAIDE: Glory—

GLORY: I— I can't—

ADELAIDE: Glory, I'm sorry—

GLORY: I— I can't— I must go.

*(she leaves quickly, leaving Adelaide alone in the bed)*

## **SCENE TWELVE:**

*(Maids 1 (Helen) and 2 (Lilliana) enter the parlor, chit-chatting amongst themselves and cleaning up the room, dusting the shelves, arranging the pillows, etc)*

HELEN: It's just awfully strange, isn't it?

LILLIANA: They're *both* so strange.

HELEN: Miss Glory has always been strange admittedly, but Miss Adelaide is properly odd.

LILLIANA: I think it comes when a woman has no vocation. We women grow idle so easily.

HELEN: Absolutely. We must have a purpose; whether it is as a wife or a mother or a maid or a nurse. I think I'd go mad if I did not have tasks to fulfill.

LILLIANA: What do you think a mother bird does when her children fly from the nest?

HELEN: She tends to the father of her chicks.

LILLIANA: What would happen should the father disappear?

HELEN: Gosh, how morbid!

LILLIANA: I just mean—! Simply—! It's realistic, isn't it? Men die, as much as women do.

HELEN: Well... I don't quite know. I suppose... I suppose the mother must find something else to fulfill her purpose.

LILLIANA: But what?

HELEN: She could cook. Or clean. Or find a new husband. There are many things she could do.

LILLIANA: What if she wanted something new?

HELEN: Besides cooking or cleaning or mothering? She could be a seamstress I suppose.

LILLIANA: What if she wanted to be a man?

HELEN: What?

LILLIANA: No— that's not right. What if she wanted to learn a man's vocation? What if she wanted to wear a man's trousers and a man's hat and become an accountant?

HELEN: I don't think—

LILLIANA: I think I should like to be an accountant.

HELEN: You already have a purpose. You do not need another one.

LILLIANA: (*crestfallen*) Oh. Yes. You're right.

(*Pause*)

HELEN: I think I'd like to be a prostitute.

LILLIANA: (*with awe and horror*) A prostitute!

HELEN: Yes. I would wear only silk and lace and would be the most desirable whore in the city. I would wear white like a bride on her wedding day and I would let men deflower me every night and they would tell me how beautiful I am, how wonderful I am, what an honor it is to touch me. I would be very expensive.

LILLIANA: Yes. You would be.

(*Pause*)

HELEN: When women grow idle, we go mad.

LILLIANA: But if Miss Glory was not idle before she came here, how did she become mad?

HELEN: Perhaps she was idle before.

LILLIANA: Perhaps. Miss Adelaide does not seem mad. She seems... lost.

HELEN: We are all lost here. We are all mad here. Just a little bit, I think.

LILLIANA: Do you feel mad, Helen?

HELEN: Yes. Do you, Lilliana?

LILLIANA: Yes.

*(They go back to cleaning)*

### **SCENE THIRTEEN:**

*(Glory on the beach by herself)*

GLORY: *Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily—*

*(Adelaide enters, startling Glory)*

ADELAIDE: Sorry, I'm sorry— I didn't mean to scare you.

GLORY: It's alright. I was only surprised.

*(Awkward pause)*

ADELAIDE: Can I come closer?

GLORY: *(she thinks: No)* Yes.

*(Adelaide sits beside her. They listen to the ocean waves lapping at the shore)*

ADELAIDE: I'm sorry for kissing you.

GLORY: Are you?

ADELAIDE: Are *you*?

GLORY: ... I don't know.

*(Another silence)*

ADELAIDE: Does prayer comfort you?

GLORY: What?

ADELAIDE: You were praying as I arrived. Sometimes I can hear your prayers through the walls at the estate. Do they comfort you?

GLORY: I... I think so. Once, they were my connection to God but I find now... now I simply love

the words. Do you know what I mean? I say them to myself every evening and they remind me of a simple home that I once had— they taste like molasses. They smell like sawdust and my mother's perfume. And I don't know if that is God but... I love them regardless.

ADELAIDE: I've never known God. Not truly. Does that disappoint you?

GLORY: It makes me wonder. But I wonder about many things about you.

ADELAIDE: Such as?

GLORY: Why did you kiss me?

*(Pause)*

ADELAIDE: Sometimes, I have these dreams. I would have them especially when my husband had left me in bed. I would touch my stomach and fall asleep and I would dream of a baby that looked *exactly* like me. With my hair, with my eyes, with my teeth and my eyelashes and my toes and my mouth. I dreamt that I birthed a child all my own. Such a thing cannot exist, I know, but... I dream of a world where it was not necessary for me to suffer to create life... I kissed you because I feel that same way about you. Some part of me believes that being with you is like creating life, and I would not have to suffer to achieve it.

*(Glory kisses Adelaide)*

*(Eventually, Glory is the first to pull away, as if she does not want to)*

GLORY: That feels...

ADELAIDE: Yes?

GLORY: It feels like sanctuary.

*(Adelaide smiles)*

*(She holds out a hand to Glory)*

*(Glory takes it)*

*(They exit hand in hand)*

#### SCENE FOURTEEN:

*(The dinner table, with Glory, Adelaide, and the Nurse sitting together, finishing dinner. Glory and Adelaide are sitting next to each other)*

NURSE: You seem to be in good spirits, Miss Glory.

GLORY: Yes. Lately, I have been feeling... invigorated. Perhaps the sea air has finally been doing me good.

NURSE: I'm due to write to your father and mother soon, they shall be glad to hear that your mood is improving.

GLORY: And my friendship with Adelaide has been most encouraging. I had forgotten that having a true friend with one can be more heartening than even the best medical treatments.

NURSE: Of course.

ADELAIDE: I'm very happy to be helpful. This country house is beautiful, there is nowhere I would rather be.

NURSE: How wonderful. Well, I think I shall retire to the sitting room for the evening.

*(She exits)*

GLORY: It's true, though, what I said.

ADELAIDE: What?

GLORY: Your friendship has been better for me than anything that the doctors have prescribed. I look forward to things now, I feel my heart beating faster, and I can actually linger on my own thoughts. Before I felt that I was moving through syrup every moment of the day, but now... you are a wonder.

ADELAIDE: I... I am happy that I give you happiness, Glory.

GLORY: What is it?

ADELAIDE: How do you mean?

GLORY: You sound... despondent. Are you not happy too?

ADELAIDE: I am very happy. *You* make me happy, Glory. I just... I can't help but worry about the future.

GLORY: There is no future here. This house has stayed the same for months and months. Why should anything change now?

ADELAIDE: Because *you* are changing, Glory. This is not eternity, this house will be empty again someday. And what will we become?

GLORY: We will be happy. We will find a way.

ADELAIDE: I wish I had your hope. Your perseverance. I do not know how to hope without reason to.

GLORY: I have every reason to hope. I look at you and I see only perseverance. Don't you understand? You are every beautiful thing.

ADELAIDE: I trust your heart, so I have to trust your judgment.

GLORY: Yes. Trust me, when I tell you that I love you, and you make me feel brave. Braver than any soldier, than any mother, than any king. You make me feel emboldened and bright and everything that I was ever meant to be.

ADELAIDE: (smiles) Kiss me, Glory.

*(She does, for a long time)*

*(They do not know, they do not see, that the two maids are lingering in the doorway, peeking through the cracked door as they often do)*

ADELAIDE: I love you, Glory. I sinfully love you as I was taught I should not.

*(They leave together)*

*(When they are gone, the maids come stumbling inside, shocked)*

LILLIANA: Good Lord!

HELEN: You can say that again.

LILLIANA: Good Lord!

HELEN: I didn't actually mean— nevermind. What do we do? What are we supposed to do?

LILLIANA: I have no idea. This is entirely unprecedented.

HELEN: I'm just so shocked. Glory is a good, Christian woman, how could she debase herself in such a way?

LILLIANA: Perhaps they really are just close friends. That's what they were saying, wasn't it? It isn't so wrong to be good friends with another woman.

HELEN: They kissed each other on the *mouth*. They used their *tongues*. Did you not see?

LILLIANA: Well... yes...

HELEN: That sort of behavior between a man and a woman would be entirely unacceptable. The woman would be called a harlot and the man would be called a rake.

LILLIANA: I suppose...

HELEN: We must tell the Nurse right away.

LILLIANA: But...

HELEN: Why are you hesitating? This is ridiculous!

LILLIANA: But Glory is getting better! She said it herself: ever since Adelaide has gotten here, she's been improving. If they are torn apart, Glory might become very sick again.

HELEN: That doesn't matter. We witnessed something inappropriate and it's our job to report it.

LILLIANA: Our job is to clean fireplaces, not watch over the mistress of the house. We could pretend we never saw anything, you know? No one would have any clue. It would be easy, Helen, don't you realize?

HELEN: But we shouldn't. If we were good Christian women ourselves, we would go straight to the Nurse and tell her immediately. Aren't you a good Christian woman, Lilliana?

LILLIANA: Well, yes, I try to be.

HELEN: Keeping this secret would surely be a sin in the eyes of the Lord.

LILLIANA: Do you really think so?

HELEN: Absolutely! Lying by omission is still lying and the Lord never condones terrible lies. We must go to the Nurse and tell her what Glory is doing. It's for her own safety. Sinning like this will only hurt her.

LILLIANA: I suppose that's true... they don't seem to be hurting each other. Glory and Adelaide, I mean.

HELEN: Women are not supposed to kiss women like that. It's wrong. Glory is supposed to be married to Ezra Price. If he ever found out she was doing this sort of thing with a woman... he would never marry her. We have to stop it before anything more happens.

LILLIANA: Anything more? They can't have marital relations if they're both women, they don't have the right parts, do they?

HELEN: Don't talk about that!!

LILLIANA: Sorry!

HELEN: We have to finish cleaning this table and then we are going to the Nurse and telling her. It's for the best. Agreed?

*(pause)*

LILLIANA: Agreed.

## **SCENE FIFTEEN:**

*(The nurse writing a letter)*

NURSE: Dear Mister and Missus Dewitt,

I am writing to inform you of the well-being of your daughter. Through the past six and some months, I have taken care of Miss Glory Dewitt, tended to her as I have been informed to by her appointed doctors. While she has made certain progress— there has been a distinct elimination of her fantasies and alternate realities— there has been a development that I felt it was important to keep you informed of. Partway through our time this spring at the estate, we

were joined by a woman in need that we temporarily housed. Adelaide has been respectable so far but I was informed by members of our staff that she has, unfortunately, taken advantage of Glory's weak character and seduced her with sinful pleasure. I hope you understand what I am implying. I invite you to join us at the estate to discuss future treatment for your daughter. Please come visit us at your soonest convenience.

Sincerely,

---

## **SCENE SIXTEEN:**

*(The nurse leading Mister Dewitt and Missus Dewitt into the estate)*

NURSE: Welcome, welcome, thank you so much for coming in such haste.

MISTER: Of course. Where is Glory, then?

NURSE: She should be just upstairs but I'll send a maid to retrieve her and bring her to the dining room.

MISSUS: There's no need. Simply have her collect her things and join us here in the parlor.

NURSE: Oh? Are... are you taking Miss Glory home with you then?

MISSUS: In a way. We'll stop for a short time at our home before we travel North to a women's asylum.

MISTER: It's for the best.

NURSE: Oh. Yes. Of course.

*(She rings a bell and Maid 1(Helen) appears)*

MAID 1: *(curtsies before speaking)* Ma'am?

NURSE: Please inform Glory that she is to gather her things and come downstairs.

MAID 1: Yes Ma'am.

*(She exits)*

NURSE: Do you wish to hear of Miss Glory's progress then?

MISTER: No, I think that is rather unnecessary. Clearly, coming here has been a mistake, leaving her alone to her thoughts. It is a more serious malady that we must get to the bottom of.

NURSE: She has made *some* progress. Small steps in the right direction. It's only now that Adelaide has come—

MISTER: We did not come here for your advice, Madam. We came to collect our daughter.

NURSE: Of course.

*(Pause)*

NURSE: I only worry that some of these establishments would be disheartening to Glory. She's such a tender young lady and—

MISSUS: I believe we know Glory better than you do!

NURSE: Of course. I've only— I believe I may have grown fond of her, that's all. Some of these asylums do not always look after their patients in ways that are complementary to your daughter's nature.

MISTER: And that is *exactly* the problem. Glory's "tender nature" has been her downfall since she was a child; it's about time that was changed. She has a feeble mind that needs to be molded and we've allowed her to run rampant for far too long. You and your superior's advice has gotten us nowhere, Madam, and I will be discounting it. Respectfully.

*(Glory enters, bag in hand, Adelaide trailing behind her)*

GLORY: Mama, Papa, what are you doing here?

MISTER: We've come to take you from this place to somewhere that can truly cure you of this... sickness that has taken over you.

GLORY: What? Where?

MISTER: It doesn't matter. Come, we must go, the carriage is waiting.

GLORY: I... I don't...

ADELAIDE: She doesn't wish to go.

MISSUS: And you are, I assume, the woman that has *infected* our daughter. Tell us your full name.

ADELAIDE: Adelaide Rose Connell.

MISTER: Connell? As in *Gregory* Connell?

ADELAIDE: That's my father. Why?

MISTER: Good God. Your husband has combed the entirety of London to try to find you. How on Earth did you come to be here, of all places?

NURSE: Adelaide did not tell us she *had* a husband.

ADELAIDE: Um— well—

NURSE: Adelaide did not tell us anything about that at all.

ADELAIDE: I'm sorry—

MISSUS: We must send a note to the Smith's and the Connell's, they will have to hear what misdeeds you have been getting up to.

ADELAIDE: No, you mustn't—

MISSUS: Surely we must! Adelaide has done a terrible thing to our Glory and must be sufficiently punished by her husband. We will call another carriage immediately to take her back to London.

*(The room is stunned into silence)*

NURSE: You can go pack your things, Adelaide.

ADELAIDE: *(curtsies)* Of course.

*(Adelaide exits)*

GLORY: I... I will help her.

*(Glory exits as well)*

MISTER: Well? Are you going to offer us tea?

## SCENE SEVENTEEN:

*(Adelaide is packing her trunk, stuffing in a few errant items— there is not much)*

*(Glory enters, frantic)*

GLORY: We— we can't go.

ADELAIDE: What would you suggest instead?

GLORY: I don't know! You ran away once; why not again? We can go together, dress ourselves in rags and find a new city together— we can live on scraps like Dickens and have each other, *really* have each other and not be afraid to.

ADELAIDE: We will always be afraid, Glory.

GLORY: But if we only... if we...

ADELAIDE: There is no world where we are not afraid. Don't you see that? There is nowhere we can run where we will not be found and dragged back, or beaten down worse than we would here. Who would accept us? Perhaps we would be safe for a time, but what happens when they begin to ask questions about the unmarried women in the apartment next door? What if they heard the sound of us at night? What if one sideways glance was noticed?

GLORY: What we do is not illegal.

ADELAIDE: Yes, but it's *sin*.

GLORY: You know *nothing* of sin, Adelaide.

ADELAIDE: I know plenty of sin! And I know more of fear. I know that safety comes in fits and starts and I was safe here for a time, but not anymore. It's time to move on.

GLORY: And me? What do you know of me? Are you simply moving on from me?

*(Pause)*

ADELAIDE: I don't wish to, but it's not my choice.

GLORY: *Make* it your choice. Force it to be so. Run away with me. We can leave through the window right now, take what we can in our pockets and *go*.

ADELAIDE: I can't.

GLORY: (*going to her, clutching to her*) You can. *You can*. Choose me, and we can be happy.

(*When there is no answer from Adelaide:*) I don't know what they'll do to me at an asylum. I may die there. I'm terrified, Adelaide. Please.

(*Adelaide turns and embraces her for a very long time before she pulls away*)

ADELAIDE: I'm sorry.

GLORY: Don't run from me.

ADELAIDE: You were always braver than me. I don't know how to be anything else but cowardly.

GLORY: Don't choose this.

(*Adelaide moves away from her, trunk in hand*)

(*Glory is on her knees*)

GLORY: Adelaide. Please.

(*Adelaide leaves*)

## **SCENE EIGHTEEN:**

GLORY: Dear Adelaide,

I have no paper to write to you with, nor a pen of any kind. I cannot write something tangible to you, but even if I did, I would have no hope of it finding you. They do not let us write letters to our families or our friends and insist that we focus on our healing. I do not think that there is much healing here. But then again, I am well off here, Adelaide, you needn't worry. I am quiet and good-natured and the other patients— many of them older than me— are fond of me. I do not go through the treatments that they do because I am well behaved.

I only write to you in my head, as we take our meals or during prayer time or as I am lying in bed falling asleep. It is frightening here; I hear wailing many nights and wonder if somebody is dreaming or dying. It is cold here, the stones are damp and the fireplace is always empty... I miss my baby sister. I miss my room at the estate. I miss the smell of the ocean, as miserable as I was, it reminds me of you. I miss you, Adelaide, I—

*(A knock interrupts Glory)*

*(Missus Dewitt enters)*

GLORY: Mama?

MISSUS: It's time to come home, darling.

*(Glory rises)*

MISSUS: I'll be waiting in the entrance for you. *(She pulls a letter out)* And this arrived at the house for you some weeks ago.

*(Glory takes it)*

GLORY: I'm... I'm going home? I'm leaving? What changed?

MISSUS: It's what your father wishes.

*(Missus Dewitt leaves)*

*(Glory opens the letter)*

GLORY: To Glory Dewitt,

I am writing to you on the behalf of Adelaide Rose Smith, aged twenty-four at the time of her passing.

*(Something in Glory shatters)*

*(Quiet while she recollects herself)*

Despite the fact that she was married, therefore all of her possessions belonged to Anthony Smith at the time of her demise, she still wrote one; there were several items she wished for you to have. You will not be able to have any of these items in your possession, since

Mister Smith is the true owner of said items, but in an attempt to honor her wishes, I am writing to inform you of your presence in her false will.

In said will, she wrote that you are entitled to: her wedding band, a string of pearls, and a lock of her hair.

Adelaide passed suddenly last month, December the 18th, of complications with the birth of her second child. I was at her side at that time. I do not know who you are, Glory Dewitt, but she loved you well.

Sincerely,

Violet Connell, her mother

*(Glory folds the letter and holds it to her chest)*

**END OF PLAY**