

# March On!

or

## The Strange Case of The Sole Surviving Suffragist

by Fengar Gael

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*“Women of the Nation, this is the time to fight,  
this is the time to demonstrate our sisterhood,  
our spirit, our courage, and our will.*

*It is women for women now,  
and shall be till the fight is won.”*

Inez Milholland

*“Oh, Rebellious Woman,  
in you the world looks in hope,  
upon you has fallen the glorious task of bringing liberty  
to the earth and all the inhabitants thereof.”*

Matilda Joslyn Gage

*“There will never be silence until women  
have the same rights everywhere on this green earth.”*

Elizabeth Cady Stanton

*“Men, their rights, and nothing more;  
Women their rights, and nothing less.”*

Susan B. Anthony

**CHARACTERS:** (a minimum ensemble of five women and one man)

DOCTOR ELIZA STRIDER, a podiatrist

OLIVIA WALKER, a high school music teacher

DOREEN WALKER, Olivia's sister, a gallerist

WILMA MAY RHODES, a public librarian, age 50s

LILY PEARL RHODES, Wilma's daughter, a museum guide, age 20s

LYDIA MORGAN MILES, a deceased British born suffragist, age 20s

TREVOR AMBERLY, an African American author and professor, age 20s

DOCTOR BEATRICE TREADWELL, a neurologist

DOCTOR ANNA LOPER, a psychologist

NOTE: Lily Pearl Rhodes and Lydia Morgan Miles are played by the same actor.

***POSSIBLE SUGGESTED DOUBLING:***

Olivia Walker/Doctor Anna Loper

Doreen Walker/Doctor Beatrice Treadwell

***NOTE:*** With the exception of Lydia Morgan Miles, the characters speak with Southern dialects. The characters can be of any race; however, Trevor Amberly is black and Wilma May Rhodes and her daughter, Lily Pearl, are white.

**TIME:** The centennial of women's suffrage: 2020

**PLACE:** Atlanta, Georgia: an assembly hall, a hospital, a parlor, and an office.

## PROLOGUE

(Atlanta, Georgia: Above the stage of an assembly hall hangs a banner reading “Centennial Suffrage Parade.” In the center of the stage stands ELIZA STRIDER dressed in a long skirt, wide brimmed hat, and “Votes for Women” suffragist sash. SHE clutches a bullhorn, lifts it to her lips, and speaks directly to the audience.)

ELIZA

Ladies! Ladies and gentlemen! Your attention please!

(ELIZA puts down the bullhorn.)

ELIZA

Can y’all hear me without the bullhorn? (*pause*) Good! Now most of y’all know me, but for those who don’t, I’m Eliza Strider, Chair of the Centennial Suffrage Parade Committee. Before we start out, I want to thank the volunteers who made our signs, sashes and banners, and the rest of you for making a personal appearance. I notice some men among you which is much appreciated ‘cause we welcome the whole of humanity -- whatever your race, age, gender or ethnicity! And thanks to our social networks we’ve extended an invitation to every citizen in the great state of Georgia! Now a grand parade needs a grand marshal to lead it, so we invited our mayor, then our governor, followed by our senators and representatives, and each and every one declined, which is why we’re holding a raffle. Those of you who signed up at the door were given a ticket with a number, so Olivia, if you’d be so kind as to bring up the bucket, I’ll take the liberty of selecting our lucky leader!

(OLIVIA WALKER, also dressed as a suffragist approaches with a bucket. ELIZA closes her eyes and draws forth a ticket.)

ELIZA

Number forty-five! Will the holder of the winning ticket please approach!

(LILY PEARL RHODES, a shy young woman wearing a suffragist sash over a blouse and slacks, approaches the stage, grasping her ticket.)

ELIZA

Hello there, please step on up. And your number is...?

LILY

(*mumbling*) Forty-five.

ELIZA

That's right. Now please tell us your name.

LILY

*(mumbling)* Lily Pearl Rhodes.

ELIZA

Speak up, darlin' so we can hear you.

LILY

Lily Pearl Rhodes.

ELIZA

And where are you from?

LILY

I...I live here in Atlanta, in Chandler Park.

ELIZA

Well, congratulations, Lily! You're the Honorary Grand Marshal of our Centennial Suffrage Parade! So are you ready to start high stepping clear across the city?

LILY

Yes, ma'am, I...I'll try my best.

*(DOREEN WALKER, also dressed as a suffragist, steps onto the stage to stand beside LILY and OLIVIA as ELIZA turns to the audience of marchers.)*

ELIZA

Now before we head out, Olivia and Doreen Walker are going to teach us our marching song, so be brave, be proud, and sing loud!

OLIVIA

Y'all have a copy of the song on the back of your pamphlets, and if you can read the notes, feel free to sing along!

DOREEN

And if you can harmonize, please do so!

*(OLIVIA and DOREEN begin singing, becoming increasingly bolder.)*

OLIVIA and DOREEN

*WE ARE WOMEN OF TODAY  
PRAISING WOMEN OF THE PAST..*

(ELIZA and LILY join in the song.)

OLIVIA, DOREEN, ELIZA and LILY

*...HOPING WOMEN OF THE FUTURE  
WILL MAKE TOMORROWS LAST!  
WE MARCH SO THAT OUR COLLEAGUES  
FIND GENDER PARITY;  
WE MARCH FOR DREAMS OF LIVING,  
WITH TRUE EQUALITY!*

*MARCH ON (MARCH ON),  
MARCH ON (MARCH ON),  
OUR MISSION IS UNFURLED;  
MARCH ON (MARCH ON),  
MARCH ON (MARCH ON),  
WOMEN SAVE THE WORLD!*

OLIVIA

Once, again now!

OLIVIA, DOREEN, ELIZA, and LILY

*MARCH ON (MARCH ON),  
MARCH ON (MARCH ON),  
OUR MISSION IS UNFURLED;  
MARCH ON (MARCH ON)...*

(Lights flash as a violent explosion resounds! Echoing screams are heard as LILY, ELIZA, DOREEN and OLIVIA spin wildly, their arms flailing. The last to fall is LILY whose body twitches convulsively before she collapses. The screams fade to sobs as sirens are heard approaching from a distance and lights black out.)

**SCENE 1**

(Seven weeks later, on the stage of the assembly hall, the Centennial Suffrage Parade banner hangs in tattered shreds. WILMA MAY RHODES, a well dressed middle aged woman, approaches the audience to speak.)

WILMA

Hello, my name is Wilma Mae Rhodes. I'm told that I'm addressing the police officers and volunteers joining the search for my daughter, Lily Pearl, who was last seen near Peachtree Plaza. It's been seven weeks, but you may remember her being on stage during the explosion. If not, y'all have copies of her photograph, and Captain Springer suggested that it might help to describe the distinct character traits which emerged from the moment she finally woke.

(The lighting alters as WILMA enters a hospital room where LILY is lying in bed. WILMA sits on one side while TREVOR AMBERLY, a young black man, is seated on the other side, scanning his phone. Now LILY has become LYDIA and speaks with a British accent.)

LILY/LYDIA

*(groaning)* Uhhhhhhhh...

WILMA

Lily...? Lilly Pearl!

LILY/LYDIA

Ohhhhhhh...

WILMA

Oh, thank the Lord! Darlin', can you hear me?

LILY/LYDIA

Yes.

(TREVOR reaches to touch LILY/LYDIA.)

TREVOR

Lily, sweetheart...

LILY/LYDIA

No!

WILMA

*(to Trevor)* Shush, don't scare her! *(pause)* Oh, please, Lily, say something.

LILY/LYDIA

*(pause, slowly)* It's so bright, like a thousand candles worth of light...

TREVOR

What's wrong with your voice?

LILY/LYDIA

Who are you?

TREVOR

You're not serious...?

LILY/LYDIA

*(to Wilma)* Do I know you?

WILMA

I'm your mother and this is Trevor.

LILY/LYDIA

Who?

WILMA

Trevor Amberly, your fiancé.

LILY/LYDIA

My what...?

TREVOR

You heard your mama. Do you know your own name?

LILY/LYDIA

Lydia.

TREVOR

No, sweetheart, you're Lily Pearl Rhodes. You've survived a bomb that killed eighty-three outright and injured over a hundred.

LILY/LYDIA

A bomb...



WILMA

Trevor, be an angel and fetch the doctor.

(TREVOR departs and LILY/LYDIA sits up and scans the room with wonderment.)

LILY/LYDIA

Oh, dear God...

WILMA

Shhhh, darling, just lie back and thank the lord you're alive.

LILY/LYDIA

How long have I been here?

WILMA

Five days.

LILY/LYDIA

Did you say you're my mother...?

WILMA

That's right.

LILY/LYDIA

You can't be; she died twenty years ago.

(DOCTOR BEATRICE TREADWELL enters, clasping her I-Pad, followed by TREVOR.)

DOCTOR TREADWELL

Well, hello there, welcome back! I'm Doctor Treadwell and Mister Amberly here tells me you're feeling a bit confused which is perfectly normal. (*scanning her notes*) We took X-rays and everything's fine except for some bruises, sprained ankles, and a mild concussion which can cause temporary cognitive impairment. (*pause*) Now if you don't mind, I'm going to ask a few questions: Do you know where you are?

LILY/LYDIA

In hell...?

TREVOR

Ha, ha!

WILMA

Ssshush!

DOCTOR TREADWELL

You're in a hospital. Do you know what city you're in?

LILY/LYDIA

Worcester, Massachusetts.

TREVOR

*(to Wilma)* Worcester...?

DOCTOR TREADWELL

Do you know who the president is?

LILY/LYDIA

Millard Fillmore.

TREVOR

Jesus...

WILMA

Oh, lord.

LILY/LYDIA

Is that not correct?

DOCTOR TREADWELL

What year is it?

LILY/LYDIA

1850.

DOCTOR TREADWELL

Can you tell us your name?

LILY/LYDIA

Lydia Morgan Miles. Why? What's happening?

DOCTOR TREADWELL

Please lie back and try to relax; you're among friends.

LILY/LYDIA

They are *not* my friends, and what are these machines?

DOCTOR TREADWELL

They're electronic monitors that track your vital signs.

LILY/LYDIA

My what...?

DOCTOR TREADWELL

They measure your temperature, heart rate, blood pressure...

LILY/LYDIA

What?!

DOCTOR TREADWELL

Now, now, there's no need to be afraid; take a deep breath.

(LILY/LYDIA takes a breath and sighs.)

DOCTOR TREADWELL

You'll soon be aware that you're at Hillside Hospital in the city of Atlanta, Georgia, in the year two thousand and twenty. Your name is Lily Pearl Rhodes; you were preparing to march in the Centennial Suffrage Parade when a bomb exploded which caused you to fall and lose consciousness. Has anything I've said sound familiar?

LILY/LYDIA

Suffrage. I...I was at a convention in Worcester, Massachusetts.

DOCTOR TREADWELL

*(pause)* So you were involved in the women's movement...?

LILY/LYDIA

Yes, I'm a suffragist and abolitionist.

WILMA

*(to Doctor Treadwell)* Do you believe this...?

DOCTOR TREADWELL

What matters is that Lily believes it. *(pause)* Now I'm going to ask you to look into this mirror and see if you recognize yourself.

(DOCTOR TREADWELL offers LILY/LYDIA a hand mirror. SHE stares in awe, patting her face and hair.)

LILY/LYDIA

Oh, good heavens! I...I never had such smooth skin; and this untidy mop should be gray and knotted at the nape; and I...I have all my teeth! I can see without spectacles!

TREVOR

Lily, darling, you're twenty-six, and we're engaged to be married in October.

LILY/LYDIA

No, sir, I'm nearly fifty, and you're a...a Negro!

DOCTOR TREADWELL

*(pause)* Can you tell me the last thing you remember?

LILY/LYDIA

As I said, I...I was in Worcester, despite Arthur's disapproval.

DOCTOR TREADWELL

Who's Arthur?

LILY/LYDIA

My husband. We have a daughter, Minerva.

DOCTOR TREADWELL

What was your last conscious memory?

LILY/LYDIA

*(pause)* We ladies were standing in front of Brinley Hall distributing handbills. There were some boys -- a gang of street ruffians. They were cursing, throwing rocks, and then I heard a deafening sound and felt a searing pain in my chest. After that I...I fell, and everything went black. *(pause)* If I'm not Lydia, then did she die? If Lydia's dead, are you dead too?

DOCTOR TREADWELL

No, dear, we're all very much alive.

TREVOR

Who is Lydia? Where is she from?

LILY/LYDIA

Lydia Morgan Marsh of twenty-seven Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts.

TREVOR

You sound English.

LILY/LYDIA

My family moved to Boston from London. I was twenty when my father was offered a position at Harvard's Medical College.

DOCTOR TREADWELL

Your father was a doctor?

LILY/LYDIA

Doctor Cornelius Morgan.

WILMA

Lily, darling, I'm afraid what you're saying just isn't true.

TREVOR

But maybe it was; maybe Lily's remembering a former life. I'm serious! There are theologians and philosophers -- even physicists -- who believe that our spiritual bodies might have lived many mortal lives.

WILMA

You mean reincarnation -- like the Buddhists and Hindus?

TREVOR

That's right.

WILMA

But we're Christians!

TREVOR

*(to Doctor Treadwell)* Doctor, is it possible that the explosion in this life traumatized Lily into recalling an explosion in her past life? And what if that memory's so vivid she thinks it's happening right here and now.

DOCTOR TREADWELL

I don't care to speculate until we do more tests. I've dealt with many traumatized patients and quite a few preferred to live in the past -- though always as themselves.

WILMA

Well, please bring her back to the present. *(to Lily/Lydia)* If you don't mind, I'm going to keep calling you Lily.

DOCTOR TREADWELL

*(to Lily/Lydia)* Last Saturday when the bomb exploded, you were on stage with three other women. One of them fractured her femur, but the other two have only minor injuries and have been in our chapel keeping vigil for you and other victims. Perhaps their presence will help jog your mind back -- or should I say forward -- to the twenty-first century. Would you mind if they paid a visit?

LILY/LYDIA

No.

DOCTOR TREADWELL

I'll see if they're still here.

LILY/LYDIA

You're leaving...?

DOCTOR TREADWELL

Afraid so. Since the bombing, the entire staff is swamped with casualties, but don't you worry, I'll be checking in later.

(DOCTOR TREADWELL departs.)

LILY/LYDIA

*(to Wilma)* Why is he staring into that little black box?

WILMA

*(whispering)* Because he's weak-willed and can't help himself.

TREVOR

I heard that. *(to Lily/Lydia)* This box is called a smart phone which allows me to call and write our friends even if they live clear across the city. This way I'm letting them know you're awake.

LILY/LYDIA

I...I don't understand.

TREVOR

Shall I demonstrate?

WILMA

Later! No need to confuse her with any more gadgets!

LILY/LYDIA

*(to Wilma)* I...I must inquire: I assume since the doctor is a woman that there has been progress.

WILMA

Oh, heavens yes! Slavery has ended, and women have had the vote since nineteen-twenty. Of course they had to vote for men -- until recently.

LILY/LYDIA

Why did it take so long?

WILMA

Why do you think?

LILY/LYDIA

Because men thought women too feeble-minded to mark a ballot?

WILMA

Maybe, but I believe it's just in their nature to hoard their power.

LILY/LYDIA

I...I'm so thirsty.

(WILMA pours half a glass from a pitcher of water and hands it to Lily.)

WILMA

Here, dear. I'll get a fresh pitcher.

LILY/LYDIA

No! Oh, please don't leave! (*pointing*) Don't leave me with him!

WILMA

Trevor, dear, if you don't mind, would you fetch Lily a fresh pitcher of water with ice?

TREVOR

All right, but...

WILMA

Please, just do it! Sorry, I don't mean to snap, but feel free to take your time.

(TREVOR grasps the pitcher and departs leaving WILMA with LILY/LYDIA who stares into the mirror.)

LILY/LYDIA

Who is this winsome waif?

WILMA

You're my daughter, the belle of the ball.

LILY/LYDIA

Even the sores on my tongue are gone and the rash on my neck.

WILMA

You were ill...?

LILY/LYDIA

My doctor said it was only a matter of weeks before the lesions spread.

WILMA

What was wrong with you?

LILY/LYDIA

Cupid's curse -- from being mauled, molested, and treated with vile toxins.

WILMA

What toxins?

LILY/LYDIA

Mercurous chloride and potassium arsenite.

WILMA

*(pause)* I assume you're describing what's known as a venereal disease.

LILY/LYDIA

Even knowing his condition, even after his carbuncles showed, Arthur refused to leave me alone.

WILMA

Well, now we can cure such afflictions with medicines called antibiotics.

LILY/LYDIA

Thank heaven for that!

WILMA

What about your daughter; was she aware...?

LILY/LYDIA

Oh, lord, no. We were advised to send Minerva to a boarding school in London. *(pause)* If you're Lily's mother, then who is her father?



WILMA

He was a judge who passed away last year. Lily's our only child and she adored him.

LILY/LYDIA

*(pause)* How long has Lily known her betrothed?

WILMA

Nearly two years now, though his truest love is his phone. But in all fairness I must say he's from a very distinguished family. He's also a published author and tenure track professor at Spelman College -- considered to be a good catch.

LILY/LYDIA

Even though he's...?

WILMA

Times have changed, dear.

LILY/LYDIA

*(she sighs)* I'm afraid I feel nothing but mortal dread of all men. Does Lily live with you?

WILMA

She does indeed, in a fine old colonial shaded by splendid magnolias. It's just the two of us and our housekeeper, Caroline.

LILY/LYDIA

Does Lily wear trousers like you and the doctor?

WILMA

She does indeed.

LILY/LYDIA

What does Lily do with her days?

WILMA

She fills every blessed minute. Even though she's shy, she's a docent -- volunteer tour guide at Atlanta's most prestigious art museum.

LILY/LYDIA

So she doesn't earn her own wages?

WILMA

No, but she sings in the church choir, is a member of the Botanical Garden Club, and Footlight Players -- that's our local community theatre.

LILY/LYDIA

So she's an actress on the stage?

WILMA

No, she paints the scenery and sews costumes, but truth be told, I thought she might be acting when you said you were Lydia.

LILY/LYDIA

But you believe me now?

WILMA

Well, I'm not sure. You claim to have spent your youth in London before the reign of Queen Victoria.

LILY/LYDIA

Yes, and when King George died along with his sons, we still kept close watch on the royal family, especially the Queen.

WILMA

She had a long reign which we call the Victorian Age. Do you remember how many children she had?

LILY/LYDIA

I see you're testing me, but I know she had little Victoria, then Edward, Alice, Alfred, Helena -- I can't recall the rest but there were seven.

WILMA

She had two more after you died.

LILY/LYDIA

Good heavens!

WILMA

You must have missed living in London.

LILY/LYDIA

Not really. Boston women were even more impassioned, more devoted to the cause of suffrage and equal rights -- perhaps because they never had queens.

(TREVOR enters with a pitcher of water followed by OLIVIA with her arm in a sling, and ELIZA limping.)

TREVOR

Hey, I just ran into the ladies who were with you on the stage.

ELIZA

Do we look familiar?

LILY/LYDIA

No.

ELIZA

Well, I'm Eliza and this is Olivia. Doctor Treadwell told us you believe yourself to be a genuine suffragist.

LILY/LYDIA

Indeed I am.

ELIZA

Honey, if that's true then you're a treasure trove of history!

OLIVA

Did you know the pioneers, Elizabeth Stanton and Susan Anthony?

ELIZA

And Lucy Stone and Sojourner Truth!

LILY/LYDIA

I only met Mrs. Stanton briefly but was aware of the others' reputations, and of course I knew of their petitions and plans to march.

ELIZA

Well, we're still marching -- to protect what you fought for and what my daughters take for granted. But don't think your efforts were futile; most women's lives today are better than they were -- thanks to inventions like washing machines.

OLIVIA

Vacuum cleaners and refrigerators.

WILMA

You've noticed we have better dentistry.

ELIZA

Yeah, and surgeries to replace knees, hips, hearts; plus our toilets flush and microwaves can cook a meal in seconds.

TREVOR

We have T Vs, computers, satellites. (*holding up his phone*) Whole libraries can be accessed on this little screen.

OLIVIA

And we travel by planes and rockets -- men have walked on the moon!

LILY/LYDIA

Men but not women...?

OLIVIA

Not yet, but women have careers and make their own money.

LILY/LYDIA

I was taught the skills of a surgeon and apothecary, but was forbidden to keep my meager earnings in a bank.

ELIZA

Well, now we can be bankers! We own homes and attend universities. I'm a doctor, Olivia's a teacher, and my cousin Shelby's a state representative.

OLIVIA

Women even join the army and run for president.

LILY/LYDIA

Really? How many women have been presidents?

ELIZA

None.

WILMA

None.

OLIVIA

None.

OLIVIA

After the last election my Great Granny wept, knowing she wouldn't live long enough to see a woman president. At least we had a black one.

LILY/LYDIA

A Negro president...?

OLIVIA

Yes, but we don't use that word anymore.

LILY/LYDIA

What word?

TREVOR

*(pause)* Negro.

WILMA

We say black or African American.

ELIZA

We're all just plain Americans, but truth be told, men of any color from any place are still more respected than women. Some days I swear the true curse of womankind is mankind. They live to betray women!

TREVOR

Spoken like a woman scorned.

ELIZA

True enough, but our former presidential candidate was betrayed so often by so many, I wouldn't blame her for shooting the whole damn lot of them!

WILMA

Really now...

OLIVIA

Ha, ha!

ELIZA

I'm serious! *(to Lily/Lydia)* She's one of the reasons we weren't just marching to celebrate the centennial. We're forming a brand new political party: the WSW,...

ELIZA

...Women Save the World!

OLIVIA

Women Save the World!

*(ELIZA opens her purse to retrieve and distribute pamphlets.)*

ELIZA

Here's our pamphlet which contains our mission and strategy. The WSW starts right here in Atlanta and plans to expand to a national movement, and from there who knows?

LILY/LYDIA

That's very...ambitious.

ELIZA

Hell yes! We embrace the values of total equality which means complete bodily autonomy and more women running for office 'cause if we don't change the gender imbalance of power; if we don't depose the macho militaristic men of the world, then we could all be blown to oblivion!

OLIVIA

As we've witnessed with our own eyes!

WILMA

May the souls of the departed rest in peace,...

WILMA

...Amen.

TREVOR

Amen.

OLIVIA

Amen!

ELIZA

Amen!

ELIZA

*(pause, to Lily/Lydia)* Our armies have developed much more effective ways of killing each other than in your day -- which is why world wide gender equality should top every agenda of every country.

LILY/LYDIA

You speak of "equality" but after centuries of oppression, aren't you weary of wanting mere equality? Perhaps it's time for an *imbalance* with women in power for a change.

ELIZA

Oh, honey, I like the way you think, and yeah, it's way past time! The trouble is women are dealing with obstinate, well heeled, well armed men who love playing war games, so we tend to forge ahead one step at a time.

LILY/LYDIA

But you've been stepping such a long long time, hundreds of years, thousands of miles. Aren't you weary of stepping?

ELIZA

Oh, hell yes, but here we are in this city in this time when female solidarity is what it's all about: a New Age of Enlightenment.

OLIVIA

We even have our own anthem. Would you like to hear it?

LILY/LYDIA

Yes, please.

TREVOR

Now...?

WILMA

*(whispering to Trevor)* It might jog her memory.

TREVOR

Right.

OLIVIA

The song's on the back of our pamphlets. If you can read the notes, sing along.

*WE ARE WOMEN OF TODAY*

*PRAISING WOMEN OF THE PAST..*

(ELIZA, WILMA, and LILY/LYDIA join in the song.)

OLIVIA, ELIZA, WILMA, LILY/LYDIA

*...HOPING WOMEN OF THE FUTURE*

*WILL MAKE TOMORROWS LAST!*

*WE MARCH SO THAT OUR COLLEAGUES*

*FIND GENDER PARITY;*

*WE MARCH FOR DREAMS OF LIVING,*

*WITH TRUE EQUALITY!*

*MARCH ON (MARCH ON),*

*MARCH ON (MARCH ON),*

*OUR MISSION IS UNFURLED;*

(TREVOR joins the women.)

OLIVIA, ELIZA, WILMA, LILY/LYDIA, TREVOR

*MARCH ON (MARCH ON),*

*MARCH ON (MARCH ON),*

*WOMEN SAVE THE WORLD!*

LILY/LYDIA

Oh, how splendid, how spirited!

OLIVIA

You have a lovely voice, Lydia.

WILMA

That's Lily's voice.

TREVOR

We both sing in a choir.

LILY/LYDIA

So did I. *(to Eliza and Olivia)* I assume you're still determined to march, that you refuse to let a bomb stop you.

ELIZA

Hell yes! The parade must go on! ‘Course we’ll postpone till a respectful time has passed for the dead to be buried and for survivors to recover, though some are too traumatized to march any time soon.

LILY/LYDIA

*(to Eliza)* Have the police apprehended the villains?

ELIZA

Not yet. The trouble is there’s too many nut jobs out there who’d be happy to kill anyone causing traffic to be rerouted. All anyone knows is that the bomb was dropped, not tossed, so they suspect a drone.

LILY/LYDIA

A drone...?

ELIZA

A laser guided plane that looks like a big black bug. It flies in the sky and can drop containers full of explosives.

*(TREVOR taps his phone to display a drone image, then turns the screen to LILY/LYDIA.)*

TREVOR

Here’s what it looks like.

ELIZA

There’s no pilot which means it could belong to some psycho targeting all of us or just one person. What we can’t forget is that the parade was meant to honor the suffragists, brave women like you who were stoned, starved, and thrown in prisons. They’d never let a bomb stop them and neither will we!

OLIVIA

Eliza’s right, and despite what’s happened, I’m glad we chose you to lead the parade.

LILY/LYDIA

Really...? I was chosen to lead the parade?

ELIZA

Hell yes! We had a raffle and your ticket was drawn, so you’re our grand marshal!

WILMA

That’s why you were on stage; that’s why you’re still alive!



ELIZA

That's right.

OLIVIA

Thank the Lord!

OLIVIA

*(to Lily/Lydia)* Is there anything we can do for you?

LILY/LYDIA

You could bring me some proper clothes. *(to Wilma)* I shall need a long skirt, a chemisette, pantalettes, and some combs for my hair.

WILMA

I'll do my best, and once you're discharged, we'll drive home through the city. It might help you remember.

TREVOR

I could take her in my Mercedes. *(to Lily/Lydia)* It's a metal machine that moves ten times faster than a galloping horse.

LILY/LYDIA

No, thank you. Forgive me, sir, but we are not that well acquainted.

TREVOR

*(he sighs)* Whatever you say...

ELIZA

We should warn you that our streets are no longer full of horses and carriages, and our store windows display products you won't recognize.

OLIVIA

Wait till you see our supermarkets! You can buy your chickens plucked, your fish frozen, and fresh fruits and vegetables all year long.

TREVOR

And you'll see men and women of every color intermingling as equals.

WILMA

Well, let's hope by the time she leaves, she'll be Lily again.

ELIZA

But shouldn't we take advantage of her current perspective? I mean, if she actually remembers what life was like back then.

LILY/LYDIA

Oh, I doubt that my perspective would enlighten anyone; I was mostly housebound.

OLIVIA

But you knew Elizabeth Cady Stanton!

LILY/LYDIA

Only through brief social encounters.

WILMA

Which was when exactly?

LILY/LYDIA

Two years ago when I visited my cousin Jane in Seneca Falls.

OLIVIA

Seneca Falls! You were at Seneca Falls!

LILY/LYDIA

I helped host Jane's tea parties which is where I was introduced to Mrs. Stanton, though I was only one of many ladies in attendance. They were always writing appeals and petitions -- so much ink falling on blind eyes.

OLIVIA

But still how thrilling -- to be alive when it all began!

LILY/LYDIA

Indeed there was a rare cordiality, a true sense of sisterhood -- to be among so many women who refused to succumb to despair. My own husband disapproved of wives working never mind voting. I waited until he was traveling to treat my patients or visit their homes.

ELIZA

What kind of doctor were you?

LILY/LYDIA

I treated the maladies of desperate women.

ELIZA

Desperate how...?

LILY/LYDIA

In ways only women are desperate. I was a skilled surgeon, but also prepared my own preventatives as well as potions to induce extractions.

WILMA

Extractions...? You mean abortions...?

LILY/LYDIA

I mean expulsions of the unborn and unwanted.

OLIVIA

Oh, my...

ELIZA

What sort of potions?

LILY/LYDIA

Botanical herbs such as pennyroyal, angelica root, black and blue cohosh...

WILMA

Please stop! We're pro-life! Lily doesn't condone the slaughter of innocents!

ELIZA

Apparently Lydia's more progressive. *(to Lydia)* Today we have options you never had.

WILMA

Lily believes in the sanctity of life! In ensoulment from the moment of conception! *(to Lily/Lydia)* Look at me; we're devout Christians! We belong to the Ebenezer Baptist Church which is where you and Trevor will be married.

LILY/LYDIA

I told you I'm already married to Arthur Miles who is bald, bearded, and white!

WILMA

Was he aware of your practice?

LILY/LYDIA

Heavens no! To Arthur my life never extended beyond tea parties, choir practice, and literary salons.

TREVOR

Well, I'm not Arthur and when Lily's married, she'll have the freedom to be whatever she wants to be and go wherever she pleases.

LILY/LYDIA

*(to Trevor)* And what do you do with your freedom, sir?

TREVOR

I teach on weekdays and spend weekends writing. Sometimes I play tennis and golf, and Lily and I attend theaters, museums, and church functions with friends. So what about Arthur; what did he do with his freedom?

LILY/LYDIA

Arthur specialized in textiles, lumber, and tobacco. He often accompanied shipments from the port of Boston to the continent where he indulged his depraved appetites. I prayed for his ships to sink!

OLIVIA

*(pause)* What do you mean by “depraved appetites”?

(DOCTOR TREADWELL enters.)

DOCTOR TREADWELL

Hello there, how are we feeling? Are we still...?

LILY/LYDIA

Yes.

WILMA

Yes.

DOCTOR TREADWELL

*(pause)* Now that you’re awake and conscious, I’ve scheduled a brain scan.

LILY/LYDIA

What?!

DOCTOR TREADWELL

Relax, you simply lie supine and a machine takes pictures.

LILY/LYDIA

Through my skull...?

DOCTOR TREADWELL

That’s right, but you won’t feel a thing. An aide will be by to escort you to the third floor.

ELIZA

I can escort her; I know where to go.

DOCTOR TREADWELL

Good. Then we’ll see you in a few minutes.

(DOCTOR TREADWELL departs.)

LILY/LYDIA

I...I cannot leave wearing this; it's indecent.

WILMA

Don't worry, I brought your robe.

LILY/LYDIA

He has to leave!

TREVOR

Fine. I'll be in the lobby.

(TREVOR departs as WILMA hands Lily/Lydia a long robe. The WOMEN sense her modesty and turn away as SHE removes her hospital gown and dons the robe.)

LILY/LYDIA

*(to Eliza and Olivia)* Do you still want me to lead the parade?

ELIZA

Of course, more than ever! You're the last living suffragist!

(ELIZA takes LILY/LYDIA's hand and they depart; then WILMA turns to OLIVIA.)

WILMA

She's not "the last living suffragist!" She's dead! And she's stealing my daughter's life!

OLIVIA

That may be true, but while she's here, shouldn't we hear what her life was like?

WILMA

No! We should pray to high heaven that she's gone as soon as possible!

(OLIVIA departs to the sound of marching boots and shadowy images of MARCHING WOMEN.)

**SCENE 2**

(The sounds and images fade as WILMA returns to the assembly hall to continue addressing the police and volunteers.)

WILMA

I'm told some of you volunteers still think that Lydia is a cunning charade, but even my own doubts were dispelled by her complete ignorance of life in this century. She didn't even know how to flip a light switch, though she was quick to appreciate air conditioning and other amenities. Her first days home were spent reading newspapers and exploring the house, including Lily's chest of drawers, trying to find appropriate undergarments. I'm happy to say I've had the consolation of curious friends, and Trevor's been the soul of patience, teaching Lydia to type and use the computer.

(As WILMA continues, SHE enters a parlor where LILY/LYDIA now appears wearing a long dark skirt and silk blouse with her hair pinned up in a chignon. SHE stands, delighting in an automatic retractable umbrella while TREVOR sits nearby.)

WILMA

On the third day she was willing to see Trevor again. When he called, I explained that *(turning to Trevor)* Lily insists I be present as chaperone.

LILY/LYDIA

Lydia! My name is Lydia! *(opening the umbrella)* Oh, isn't this a marvel?! Just a touch of a button and it snaps open, ha, ha!

TREVOR

And keeps you dry.

(LILY/LYDIA closes the umbrella and sighs.)

LILY/LYDIA

I realize you miss Lily, but I'm here for now, and grateful she was blessed with a gracious home, and a body free from the ravages of disease.

TREVOR

Were you ill...?

LILY/LYDIA

*(to Wilma)* You haven't told him?

WILMA

No, and neither should you.

TREVOR

Tell me what?

WILMA

Never you mind! Now Lydia, Trevor has done some investigating and has some news for you about yourself.

(TREVOR taps his smart phone.)

TREVOR

I found your obituary in the archives of the Boston Daily Journal.

WILMA

Go on, Trevor, read it.

TREVOR

“Lydia Morgan Miles perished in Worcester Massachusetts on October 24th, 1850, from an explosive device thrown by James Trotter who was also armed with a Colt Walker revolver. Two other ladies were wounded, but survived. Lydia’s remains were returned to Boston and buried at the Mount Auburn Cemetery. Her husband was quoted as saying: “Lydia is yet another martyr for the misguided cause of women’s suffrage.”

LILY/LYDIA

I’ll wager the old lecher packed me in a pine box with no headstone.

WILMA

Go on, read the rest.

TREVOR

“Lydia was a charming lady of many talents whose voice graced Saint Michael’s church choir and whose melodious verse enriched our local literature with several volumes, including the highly praised Olympian Nights.” (*glancing up*) So you were also a poet...?

LILY/LYDIA

An obscure scribbler.

TREVOR

*(pause, reading)* “Lydia is survived by two sisters, her husband, Arthur, and daughter, Minerva.” *(pause)* According to the Boston City Hall of Vital Records, you were married in 1837 to Arthur Percival Miles who died in 1851, leaving a daughter, Minerva, age thirteen. I assume Minerva continued her education in London until she moved to New York City and married Walter Clarke in 1864.

LILY/LYDIA

*(she sighs)* She must have been a beautiful bride.

TREVOR

They had a son named Horatio.

LILY/LYDIA

I could have been a grandmother!

TREVOR

Horatio married and had a son named Weldon who died in 1960. Weldon and his wife, Ramona, had a daughter named after his great grandmother, Minerva. She died in a crash in 1990, but also had a daughter named Minerva who had a daughter, Minerva, born in 1998 whose last address was Brooklyn, New York.

LILY/LYDIA

So many Minervas!

TREVOR

I’m afraid there’s no subsequent record of your own Minerva. It’s possible she left the country, and the latest Minerva doesn’t seem to have any online presence, but she’s twenty-two, and could be living under another name in another state or country.

LILY/LYDIA

Well, my Minerva never cared for her name; she always insisted we call her Minnie.

TREVOR

What interests me is that you’re not descended from either side of Lily’s family, so it seems that souls travel randomly from one lifetime to the next, that our genetic heritage is not a relevant indicator of our spiritual destinies.

WILMA

So when we die, our souls fly into some giant celestial gum ball machine and are shot down any which way?



TREVOR

Maybe. I'm just saying we could've been men or women of any race from any family from any country.

LILY/LYDIA

It certainly seems random if you consider how little Lily and I have in common -- except that we're both women and sing in choirs. *(to Wilma)* Will Lily lose her position as a docent because of me?

WILMA

No, she's on indefinite sick leave, but they want her back as soon as she...returns.

LILY/LYDIA

You mean as soon I depart. *(pause)* Did it ever occur to you that Lily might prefer being absent? You assume that I'm responsible for my appearance, but what if Lily summoned me? Is there some unpleasantness about her life that you haven't told me?

WILMA

No!

TREVOR

No,...

TREVOR

...though she didn't always confide in me, but she seemed happy; we had...plans.

LILY/LYDIA

No offense, sir, but perhaps Lily does not wish to marry. If her soul lived my life then she has already endured the odious poison of masculine power, the vile indignity of being treated like a child. And what about the lives in between mine and Lily's? There could have been as few as three or as many as five or more if they died in infancy.

TREVOR

Or none. What if there's a waiting room, a limbo where souls wander till they're ready to rejoin humanity or pass on to the realm of angels.

LILY/LYDIA

So you believe in angels?

TREVOR

Well,...yes.

WILMA

Angels and devils -- they all play a part in the faith of true Christians. Now Lydia, it occurred to us that some physical contact with someone Lily loved might help to...to rouse her, so we wondered if you'd permit Trevor to hold your hand?

(TREVOR reaches out his hand.)

LILY/LYDIA

If you touch me, I shall scream!

TREVOR

I...I'm sorry; I didn't mean to offend...

LILY/LYDIA

Why would anyone want to touch me?

TREVOR

Because you're...beautiful.

LILY/LYDIA

You mean Lily's beautiful.

WILMA

Of course that's what he means, which is why we want her back where she belongs.

LILY/LYDIA

*(to Trevor)* Aside from her beauty, what was it about Lily you found so attractive?

TREVOR

She's kind, charming yet modest; she loves art and music, and has the warmest, most luminous smile; and her eyes are so bright they seem to radiate light.

LILY/LYDIA

So she's a goddess: the sweet Queen of Heaven and Earth!

TREVOR

She is to me. I think it's her attitude: She's actually hopeful, confident about the future for women -- which is why she signed up to join the parade. So did I, but she didn't want me there.

LILY/LYDIA

Oh...? Why ever not?

TREVOR

She insisted that suffrage was a woman's cause, and I said that many men support women's rights, so it's our cause too. Then she snapped at me, said she wanted to do something on her own for a change. It was one of the few times we argued, but she probably saved my life.

LILY/LYDIA

Could Lily have known the parade would be bombed?

WILMA

That's absurd!

TREVOR

What are you suggesting...?

LILY/LYDIA

Perhaps her woman's intuition...?

TREVOR

No way. She's a pacifist, not a catastrophist.

WILMA

You know, you really have a perverse mind!

TREVOR

You obviously don't know Lily the way we do.

WILMA

We cherish her; we love her!

TREVOR

We miss her.

LILY/LYDIA

And she wasn't plagued with the pox.

TREVOR

The what...?

LILY/LYDIA

The pox, pox, pox!

WILMA

*(she sighs)* Yes, Trevor, Lydia had syphilis.

LILY/LYDIA

Perhaps that will dampen your amorous fires, ha, ha!

WILMA

She was infected by her own husband.

LILY/LYDIA

You can't imagine the torment: Arthur half mad with pain and oozing lesions, but still stalking me like a rabid dog. I kept a knife by my side at all times. Truth be told, I'm grateful I died; I was spared having to endure a scandalous, degrading decline.

TREVOR

*(pause)* I...I'm sorry you suffered.

LILY/LYDIA

Some lives leave deeper, darker tracks than others.

TREVOR

Wasn't there anything good about your life?

LILY/LYDIA

My Minnie of course, and my parents were kind and my patients grateful. In Boston I found congenial female companions who shared my views on suffrage and slavery.

TREVOR

Since you were an abolitionist, you must've heard of Frederick Douglass.

LILY/LYDIA

Of course! He often came to Boston to speak at our Freedom Forums. He was an eloquent preacher, and everyone in the city was reading his biography.

TREVOR

Did Arthur share your political views?

LILY/LYDIA

Heavens no. He was pro-slavery but since it was illegal in Massachusetts, he settled for servants -- though his tantrums drove most of them away.

WILMA

Why on earth did you marry him?

LILY/LYDIA

I was a spinster of thirty-four, and Arthur was a dashing adventurer who had amassed a bloody fortune. Only my father suspected him of harboring a lowly character, though our courtship and first few years were civil enough.

TREVOR

What happened?

LILY/LYDIA

Whiskey happened. Between voyages, his vile, vindictive side would surface. He was cross and demanding that I cater to his manly needs -- especially after imbibing to excess.

WILMA

So he was also an alcoholic.

LILY/LYDIA

If that's what you call a drunken sot.

WILMA

Yes, and the only cure is abstinence.

LILY/LYDIA

Are there no medicinal remedies?

WILMA

No, they have meetings and faith in redemption.

TREVOR

How did you learn your profession -- treating your patients?

LILY/LYDIA

Father was a practicing physician as well as a professor, and mother bore six children. I was the oldest and begged father to let me observe how the last two were born. Then when mother was fifty and pregnant again, she was convinced the child was defective. That's when I witnessed Father extracting a malformed fetus that expired after a single breath.

WILMA

So it was never baptized...?

LILY/LYDIA

No, but I cannot believe that creature was ever endowed with a soul, but if it was then its soul was relieved of the burden of beastliness.

TREVOR

That must've been...distressing.

LILY/LYDIA

Yes, but when I didn't faint, Father was so impressed he asked me to be his assistant. After that I worked beside him until I married. I only started my own practice when one of our maids became pregnant from Arthur. She was not discreet and my reputation spread till I could hardly keep up with the demands for my services -- always the result of forced fornications.

WILMA

Weren't you ever arrested or imprisoned?

LILY/LYDIA

Never. *(pause)* Clearly, you find me repellent.

WILMA

I'm repelled by your "services."

LILY/LYDIA

*(to Trevor)* Are you also repelled?

TREVOR

I'm just grateful you're...yourself; I mean that you're not Lily. In fact, you don't even look alike with your hair like that.

LILY/LYDIA

Do you find it unappealing?

TREVOR

No, it suits you. *(pause)* Do you ever feel a sense of her presence? I mean, now that you're in her home, wearing her clothes, sleeping in her bed.

LILY/LYDIA

No. Nothing about her is familiar, especially her body with its fuller lips and smaller ears, and it still bleeds and has scattered moles and a red heart on her thigh.

WILMA

That's her tattoo, the result of a childish impulse and pressure from her cousin, Jolene. Girls these days are always marking themselves as if they were chalkboards. When they get older they'll want such foolishness erased!

TREVOR

Is there anything about our time and place that's familiar?

LILY/LYDIA

The trees and flowers, and (*to Wilma*) your furnishings and Persian rugs; the classical music you play and some of the books in your excellent library. That's something Lydia and I have in common: we're avid readers.

WILMA

Yes, Lydia's read Shakespeare, Austen, Dickens, Trollope, the Bronte Sisters...

LILY/LYDIA

Dickens is my favorite!

TREVOR

He's one of mine as well.

WILMA

Now Lydia, I hope you don't mind, but Doctor Treadwell has arranged for you to see a therapist who specializes in regressive hypnosis and is willing to take your case. Now there's no need to worry; it's totally harmless and you'll be aware of everything you say.

TREVOR

When is the appointment?

WILMA

Tomorrow afternoon.

TREVOR

Would you mind if I joined you?

LILY/LYDIA

Why?

TREVOR

Because when Lily returns, I want to be there to welcome her.

LILY/LYDIA

But what if she doesn't return? Hasn't it occurred to you that there's a good reason for me to remain?

WILMA

No.

TREVOR

What reason?

LILY/LYDIA

To lead the parade!

WILMA  
That's ridiculous!

TREVOR  
(*mumbling*) Oh, Jesus...

WILMA  
Any fool can lead a parade!

TREVOR  
I agree, that's *not* sufficient reason.

LILY/LYDIA  
Perhaps not to you, but it means the world to the women organizing it. The parade isn't just women marching; it's the power they feel when they're together; it's the potential of that power to transform the world!

WILMA  
My God, woman, you really are a dreamer.

TREVOR  
I still think when the bomb exploded here in Atlanta, you were traumatized into rekindling memories of an explosion from Lily's past life as Lydia.

LILY/LYDIA  
But what if it's more than that; what if Lily needs me -- my experience, my energy and convictions. All I know is that every morning I wake up staring at my feet, thinking how on earth do I make them move? What force within me is guiding them, and will they be strong enough to lead the parade? (*to Wilma*) In fact, it's past time for my daily stroll, but don't trouble yourselves to escort me.

WILMA  
Don't forget to put on a jacket.

(LILY/LYDIA leaves the room as WILMA turns to TREVOR.)

WILMA  
She still refuses to dress like the rest of us.

TREVOR  
How are you coping?

WILMA  
Not well; she's started sleepwalking.



TREVOR

Oh, no...

WILMA

Oh, yes! Three nights ago around one o'clock, she stepped out the front door and into the street -- barefoot and wearing my flannel nightie! Some neighbors saw her and led her home. Of course, I'm saying she's still traumatized, and to make matters worse, she doesn't just walk; she sings that damn anthem! Doctor Treadwell gave me a prescription which I'm going to slip into her wine tonight. I've put new locks on the front and back doors, but last night she went out the window.

TREVOR

You're kidding?

WILMA

On top of everything else she's ruining Lily's feet; they're full of blisters. She refuses to use her moisturizers and has a ravenous appetite so she's put on a few pounds, but it's this sleep walking that has me at my wits end. What if she's hit by a car or attacked and abducted?!

TREVOR

We'll have to get one of those tracking bracelets.

WILMA

Last night was the worst: I slept too soundly and god knows how many miles she'd walked before I called the police who found her on Oakland Avenue. She was drawing a crowd, and some were taking pictures -- recording videos.

TREVOR

Oh, God, no. Did they post them on the Internet?

WILMA

Bite your tongue! I haven't dared to look.

(TREVOR retrieves his smartphone from a pocket.)

TREVOR

Let's check under "woman sleepwalking in Atlanta."

(TREVOR taps the keys, swipes the screen, then stops as THEY both stare, then gasp.)

WILMA  
Oh, my Lord...

TREVOR  
Sssshit!

TREVOR  
Should we show her?

WILMA  
No! God no!

(While TREVOR and WILMA continue gazing in horror at the phone, LILY/LYDIA appears transformed: she's wearing slacks, a jacket and her hair loosened and long. SHE clears her throat to let them know she's arrived.)

LILY/LYDIA  
Ahem...

TREVOR  
Lily...?

WILMA  
Oh, Lily! Lily, darlin' ...

(WILMA rushes to embrace LILY/LYDIA who steps back.)

LILY/LYDIA  
Stop! Sorry, but I'm still Lydia.

(WILMA backs away.)

LILY/LYDIA  
(to Trevor) You look like you've seen a ghost, ha, ha!

TREVOR  
You look exactly like...

WILMA  
It's very disconcerting!

LILY/LYDIA  
You told me not to draw attention to myself.

WILMA  
Yes, but I'd prefer you distinguish yourself as Lydia, so please keep your hair pinned up! Now excuse me while I get my coat.

LILY/LYDIA  
Please don't bother; I'm quite capable of taking a stroll on my own.

WILMA

But I'd rather you didn't.

TREVOR

I can walk with her, *(to Lydia)* if you don't mind.

WILMA

Yes, why don't you let him? *(to Trevor)* Or you could take a drive, show Lydia some of our historic landmarks -- since she missed the civil war.

TREVOR

Not to mention two World Wars, Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan...

WILMA

Don't forget nine eleven!

TREVOR

Right, I'll explain.

LILY/LYDIA

In some ways the world hasn't changed, has it? It's still controlled by despots who value their arsenals more than the arts.

TREVOR

Yes, well, come on then; I'll give you a tour.

*(TREVOR and LILY depart to echoing footsteps and images of MARCHERS.)*

### SCENE 3

*(The images fade as WILMA faces the audience.)*

WILMA

It's been seven weeks since Lily lost her mind and now we've lost her body, but those of you who knew Lily may recall how she frequented the city's historic treasures so I suggest you look there first. As for Lydia, nothing inspired signs of recognition but she did agree to see Doctor Loper who consented to forego doctor-patient privacy, and allowed Trevor and me to witness her session.

*(Lights reveal an office where DOCTOR ANNA LOPER is seated across from LILY/LYDIA. WILMA joins TREVOR seated to the side. LILY/LYDIA still wears slacks, but her hair is pinned up.)*

WILMA

First the doctor asked Lydia if she was...

WILMA

...comfortable.

DOCTOR LOPER

Comfortable...?

LILY/LYDIA

Yes.

DOCTOR LOPER

Most clients employ me to find the source of their phobias by summoning memories of past lives. This is the first time I'm being asked to summon the present from the past, so this will be an adventure for us both.

LILY/LYDIA

For you it may be an adventure; for me it's an extinction -- although I'm dead already, ha, ha!

DOCTOR LOPER

*(pause)* According to your records, the explosion triggered a dissociative fugue state in which Lily lost access to her current identity and replaced it with Lydia -- though the fact that Lydia actually existed has your doctors flummoxed.

LILY/LYDIA

The tiger replaced the mouse or should I say the sinner replaced the saint, ha, ha!

DOCTOR LOPER

Is that how you see yourself?

LILY/LYDIA

No, I see myself as a wayward soul that has passed through many lives -- like those Russian nesting dolls Wilma keeps in the library. Each doll contains a smaller doll tucked inside, and the last is the size of a thimble.

DOCTOR LOPER

Ah, so one of the dolls popped out of order and we are trying to tuck her back in...?

LILY/LYDIA

So it seems.

DOCTOR LOPER

*(pause)* Now Lydia, I am going to play some music to help you relax.

(DOCTOR LOPER turns on a recording device that plays soft, repetitious tones.)

DOCTOR LOPER

Close your eyes and imagine inhaling pure country air scented by a field of freshly mowed grass. The air makes you want to exhale all your anxiety from your toes to the top of your head where there is a halo hovering. Now try to imagine its light spreading and falling around you, cocooning your entire body, then passing through your skin into every muscle, bone, and tissue until you yourself are emanating this light. Do you see it?

LILY/LYDIA

Yes.

DOCTOR LOPER

Is the light warming you?

LILY/LYDIA

Yes.

DOCTOR LOPER

Is it making you sleepy?

LILY/LYDIA

Yes.

TREVOR

Yes....

(WILMA nudges TREVOR who blinks himself awake.)

DOCTOR LOPER

Now I'm going to count down from ten. As I do you will descend into a deep state of subconsciousness where you will have access to the lives that came after Lydia Morgan Miles until you reach Lily Pearl Rhodes. Now let us count down from ten, nine...

DOCTOR LOPER

...eight, seven, six, five, four, three...

LILY/LYDIA

Eight, seven, six, five, four, three...

(LILY/LYDIA begins whispering in French.)

LILY/LYDIA

Il n'y a pas de pain! Nous avons besoin de pain!

DOCTOR LOPER

What...? What are you saying?

LILY/LYDIA

Il n'y a pas de pain! Nous avons besoin de pain!

WILMA

She's saying "There's no bread. We need bread."

(LILY/LYDIA stands, speaking louder, then paces.)

LILY/LYDIA

Nous mourons! Nous mourons!

WILMA

We are dying, we are dying.

DOCTOR LOPER

Ask her where she is?

WILMA

Où allez-vous?

LILY/LYDIA

Les rues de Paris.

WILMA

The streets of Paris.

DOCTOR LOPER

Ask her what year it is?

WILMA

En quelle année sommes-nous?

LILY/LYDIA

Dix-sept quatre vingt neuf.

WILMA

Seventeen eighty nine.

TREVOR

Damn! She's gone backwards!

DOCTOR LOPER

(to Trevor) Shhhh! (to Wilma) Ask her if she is alone?

WILMA

Es-tu seule?

LILY/LYDIA

Non, nous sommes des centaines à nous diriger vers le palais.

WILMA

She's with hundreds of others headed for the palace. Quel palais?

LILY/LYDIA

Versailles.

WILMA

Oh my Lord! She means the march of the women of Versailles!

(LILY/LYDIA starts to march in circles, shouting.)

LILY/LYDIA

Nous mourons! Nous mourons!

TREVOR

Shouldn't you be stopping her?!

LILY/LYDIA

Nous mourons! Nous Mourons!

DOCTOR LOPER

Not yet.

(LILY/LYDIA marches out of the room, shouting.)

LILY/LYDIA

Nous mourons! Nous Mourons!

TREVOR

Where's she going?!

LILY/LYDIA

Nous mourons! Nous Mourons!

DOCTOR LOPER

Let's follow and see.

(The shouting fades as DOCTOR LOPER and TREVOR follow LILY/LYDIA, leaving WILMA alone to face the audience.)

WILMA

Picture the three of us trailing Lydia up and down the corridor like raving lunatics. Finally Doctor Loper led her back to the clinic and the twenty-first century. Well, she can speak for herself since she consented to address you personally.

(WILMA departs as DOCTOR LOPER approaches.)

DOCTOR LOPER

As Mrs. Rhodes mentioned, instead of moving ahead, Lydia took quantum leaps backwards, but then continued forward until her birth as Lydia Morgan Miles in 1803.

(LILY/LYDIA appears seated as DOCTOR LOPER continues speaking, approaching her in the recent past.)

DOCTOR LOPER

The last time I saw Lydia was during a private session. She spoke of seeing...

DOCTOR LOPER  
....shadows.

LILY/LYDIA  
Shadows...

LILY/LYDIA

...in my dreams, shadows of women all around me -- hundreds of women.

(Faint boot marching sounds are heard growing louder.)

LILY/LYDIA

They're crawling up from the earth, then walking in endless lines in different directions: north, south, east, west, lines of women, always women, passing through farms, forests, cities, the streets, through walls into rooms...

(LILY/LYDIA stands, covering her ears as the marching sounds fade.)

LILY/LYDIA

Stop! Stop!

(The marching sounds cease.)

LILY/LYDIA

They're gone -- thank god!

(LILY/LYDIA takes a deep breath.)



DOCTOR LOPER

Please, sit down. Can I get you some water?

LILY/LYDIA

Don't you have something stronger?

DOCTOR LOPER

I can give you a sedative.

LILY/LYDIA

I meant whiskey or wine.

DOCTOR LOPER

That would be very unprofessional.

LILY/LYDIA

Oh, please! Look at me; I'm shaking! I don't want your drugs!

DOCTOR LOPER

Alcohol is a drug.

LILY/LYDIA

A benevolent brew, just a quick swig -- otherwise I won't say another bloody word!

DOCTOR LOPER

Well, all right, but I don't approve. I only have some peppermint schnapps, but it's eighty proof so sip slowly.

(DOCTOR LOPER speaks while retrieving a bottle from her desk drawer and pouring a glass of schnapps.)

DOCTOR LOPER

Can you tell me more about the shadows: were they benign? Did you feel threatened?

LILY/LYDIA

No, I...I felt responsible, as if they needed me.

DOCTOR LOPER

*(pause)* Where do you think they were going?

LILY/LYDIA

Everywhere or nowhere or maybe they were lost -- like women lost to history as if they never existed.

(DOCTOR LOPER hands the glass of schnapps to LILY/LYDIA who swills it down, then sighs.)

DOCTOR LOPER

Feeling better?

LILY/LYDIA

*(she nods)* So what do you think, Doctor? You're always asking me; now I'm asking you.

DOCTOR LOPER

*(pause)* I think that in life after mortal life you were an ardent activist. You've lived through many marches, walked many miles for many causes which explains your compulsion to keep doing the thing that most connects you to your soulful self.

LILY/LYDIA

Marching...? Ha, ha, ha, ha!

DOCTOR LOPE

To be honest, I admire you. I hope you don't mind, but I would like to write an article about your journey -- perhaps even a book.

LILY/LYDIA

You won't portrayed me as an intruder, a demonic trespasser?

DOCTOR LOPER

Oh, no, as heroic -- a genuine manifested regression. Of course, I would want to include your life in Boston, your unhappy marriage, and Mrs. Rhodes mentioned that you were trained by your father to treat pregnant women.

LILY/LYDIA

Ha! I was an abortionist! Your government would have me hanged!

DOCTOR LOPER

We don't hang people anymore, but tell me, Lydia, why do you think you're still here?

LILY/LYDIA

To lead the parade!

DOCTOR LOPER

But it was Lily who drew the lucky number; she was supposed to lead the parade.

LILY/LYDIA

But she didn't stay, did she? Wilma and Trevor think it's my fault, that I purposely surfaced while Lily was in a coma, but what if Lily lacked the courage and stamina to march? Or what if she wanted to show me how things have changed; or what if she'd simply grown weary of living in your dark, depraved world?

DOCTOR LOPER

So you think our world is depraved?

LILY/LYDIA

Worse, it's dying! I watch the news; I know the earth is burning, turning fields and forests into deserts; wreaking wanton destruction of trees, bees, and butterflies! I've seen the polluted oceans; the migrations of outcasts; the widening economic inequalities threatening anarchy everywhere!

DOCTOR LOPER

*(pause)* It's true that things are certainly not ideal but neither was the world you left: lifespans were shorter because people were poorer, sicker, more oppressed; and the country was divided and headed towards civil war.

LILY/LYDIA

Yes! And it's still divided and at war, only now armies fight with more lethal weapons -- like the drone that bombed the parade!

DOCTOR LOPER

Ah, but to be an activist you have to be an optimist; you have to believe things can change, and marching is an expression of hope -- a community of faith in a meaningful cause.

LILY/LYDIA

But why is my cause the same today as when I was a suffragist? Why is there still so much fear and hatred of women with power? What I resent is how people assume that being a suffragist should make me virtuous, as if I could soar above my circumstances and not make horrid mistakes. But what I really loathe is watching Wilma and Trevor watching me, secretly whispering, "Come back, Lily, come back before Lydia turns you into a monster." Wilma thinks I'm ruining Lily's body because I don't use her beauty balms; I drink too much wine at dinner; and I've gained twelve pounds from too many sweets. Wilma says getting fat is my way of leaving an impression, of letting Lily know I was here. Of course, I could have done worse, but why give her an excuse to hate me even more?

DOCTOR LOPER

What do you mean you could have done worse?

LILY/LYDIA

I could pull out Lily's teeth or sever a finger; I even thought of gouging out an eye -- why Doctor, you've gone white as a sheet!

DOCTOR LOPER

You can't be serious.

LILY/LYDIA

Clearly, you think I'm incapable of such thoughts. Shame on me, shame, shame, shame! Well, they're words, not deeds, only words, and isn't Lily's body as fetching as ever?

DOCTOR LOPER

I'm certain she'd be considered attractive by many young men.

LILY/LYDIA

What about older men, or even a woman like you, Doctor?

(LILY/LYDIA strokes DOCTOR LOPER'S arm,  
but the DOCTOR steps back.)

DOCTOR LOPER

That would be inappropriate, and try to remember that Lily is engaged.

LILY/LYDIA

To that goosecap Trevor! Surely with this body she could have found someone smarter, richer, and more mature.

DOCTOR LOPER

Trevor seems like a fine, devoted young man, and don't forget: he's much younger than you.

LILY/LYDIA

Younger and needier, greedier, and black! In my day colored men wouldn't dream of courting white women. If Lily and Trevor ever marry, he could become one of those groping, grasping husbands, and poor Lily will find herself concocting poisons to dispatch him.

DOCTOR LOPER

*(she sighs)* I hope you're not clairvoyant.

LILY/LYDIA

No, just spiteful. It's so tedious being with people who want me dead, especially when I'm just starting to enjoy being alive. I even heard Wilma telling Trevor I was Hyde to Lily's Jekyll so I searched their names and discovered she was referring to a novel called The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde.

DOCTOR LOPER

I know it well, a classic psychological thriller.

LILY/LYDIA

I read the entire text in one sitting. Do you recall how a clerk compared Doctor Jekyll's penmanship to Mister Hyde's? How he noticed they were similar?

DOCTOR LOPER

Yes, now that you mention it.

LILY/LYDIA

Well, I asked Wilma for a sample of Lily's writing to see if my own was similar, so she found Lily's journal in the drawer of her bedside table. Our scripts weren't the least bit alike, but the page Wilma selected was a week before the parade, which is when Lily expressed feelings for a fellow docent. She called it "a crush."

DOCTOR LOPER

Oh, dear...

LILY/LYDIA

The next page revealed they'd had carnal relations, but that wasn't what distressed poor Wilma.

DOCTOR LOPER

*(pause)* Go on.

LILY/LYDIA

The crush involved a woman named Charlotte. *(pause)* Lily wrote that she must be more attracted to women since Charlotte was all she could think about. On the next four pages all she wrote was Charlotte, Charlotte, Charlotte. *(she sighs)* I actually felt a pang of pity for Trevor, and tried to explain to Wilma that if Lily was anything like me, then it was perfectly natural to prefer women to men, but that didn't mean she wouldn't marry Trevor.

DOCTOR LOPER

I doubt that was very consoling.

LILY/LYDIA

She made me swear not to tell a living soul, yet here I am I'm telling you. It must be the schnapps loosening my tongue.

DOCTOR LOPER

Please try to be discreet. Such revelations are the risks one takes when invading the privacy of a journal.

(LILY/LYDIA retrieves a booklet from her purse.)

LILY/LYDIA

Would you like to see my writing? I've composed an ode to the fleet footed goddess Atalanta.

DOCTOR LOPER

Why don't you save it for our next session.

LILY/LYDIA

If I'm still here...

DOCTOR LOPER

Is there a reason you might not be?

LILY/LYDIA

*(pause)* It started last week when I was slipping into Lily's undergarments. They're silky and much more comfortable than corsets and crinolines.

(LILY/LYDIA, increasingly tipsy, clasps her breasts in her hands.)

LILY/LYDIA

She has drawers full of these delicate cups that suspend the breasts called brassieres. Of course, being a woman you know all about them. The one I'm wearing is black satin which I purchased myself with Lily's credit card. Would you like to see it?

DOCTOR LOPER

No. Now what were you saying about not being here?

(LILY/LYDIA ceases clasping her breasts and sighs.)

LILY/LYDIA

I was naked, staring into the mirror when I had a fleeting sensation of not recognizing my reflection -- as if an imposter had intervened. So what if it's Lily reclaiming her body?

DOCTOR LOPER

Does this happen often?

LILY/LYDIA

Lately at night, after dinner and a few glasses of wine, but the image isn't sharp; the edges are softened, then after I blink, the edges return and I'm myself again. What do you think it means?

DOCTOR LOPER

I'm not sure, aside from the obvious -- that you should drink less and avoid mirrors. *(glancing at her watch)* Ah, now I'm afraid our session is over for today.

LILY/LYDIA

You can't wait to be rid of me!

DOCTOR LOPER

That's not true; you always give me something to think about, and if and when you do leave, you will be missed.

LILY/LYDIA

Ha! Even some of my followers still think I'm Lily -- that she's play acting.

DOCTOR LOPER

If that's true then it's the most stellar performance in the history of theatre.

LILY/LYDIA

Ha, ha, ha!

*(LILY/LYDIA departs laughing as DOCTOR LOPER faces the audience of volunteers.)*

DOCTOR LOPER

Believing as I do in the transmigration of souls, I concluded that Lily possesses the soul of a mid-nineteenth century activist who's attempting to adjust to our advanced culture. Naturally, I am very distressed to hear she's missing.

*(Foot stomping MARCHERS are heard, their shadows sweeping by as DOCTOR LOPER leaves the stage.)*

**SCENE 4**

(WILMA returns to the stage in a fury.)

WILMA

Before we continue, I must say that Doctor Loper had no right to reveal the contents of a patient's private journal! It's unethical and unconscionable!! *(pause)* And now let's hear what Eliza Strider has to report since has her own perspective.

(ELIZA steps onto the stage.)

ELIZA

Just last week Olivia, Doreen, and I were visiting Lydia to see if she was sufficiently recovered to serve as our grand marshal.

(ELIZA enters the parlor where WILMA, OLIVIA, DOREEN, LILY/LYDIA and TREVOR are seated.)

ELIZA

Wilma was present along with Trevor Amberly, who had met with...

ELIZA

...the commissioner.

TREVOR

The commissioner...

TREVOR

...still thinks you should wait a few more months, but since you insist on marching, he promises a police escort.

ELIZA

Great! They can direct traffic.

LILY/LYDIA

Will the escort be equestrian? Uniformed men on horses can be quite impressive.

OLIVIA

I agree!

DOREEN

Oh, yes, I love a man on a horse!

TREVOR

Well, I can ask. The commissioner also mentioned that your front lines need protection, and he's offered the use of their bullet proof vests.



ELIZA

What?! You're not serious...?

TREVOR

Not just vests. The army donated one of their surplus tanks to the department, and they're loaning it to your parade.

ELIZA

Please tell me you're joking.

LILY/LYDIA

What is a tank?

ELIZA

A huge, hulking metal-plated canon!

TREVOR

Actually it's an armored vehicle that moves on tracks and carries machine guns.

(TREVOR taps his phone to display a picture of a tank.)

TREVOR

That's a typical tank.

LILY/LYDIA

What an ungainly beast!

TREVOR

Yeah, but it can fire hundreds of bullets in rapid succession.

ELIZA

That's not the image we want to project.

OLIVIA

Maybe we could use it as a float, put it in front, covered with streamers.

DOREEN

Yes! And the WSW banner!

ELIZA

Good thinking, girls!

OLIVIA

Lydia could be seated on top as The Last Living Suffragist!

WILMA

I wish you'd stop calling her that! She's *not* living; she's a temporary...apparition.

LILY/LYDIA

She means "aberration" -- an unwanted infestation.

WILMA

I never said that!

LILY/LYDIA

She hates me.

WILMA

I do not!

LILY/LYDIA

You do so!

ELIZA

Now ladies...

LILY/LYDIA

Oh, I don't mind; I'd feel the same if my daughter had been ousted by a witch.

WILMA

I don't think of you as a witch.

LILY/LYDIA

Bollocks!

DOREEN

I know! We'll call you "The Sole Surviving Suffragist!" Sole could be spelled both ways!

ELIZA

Fine!

LILY/LYDIA

How very clever.

LILY/LYDIA

What should I wear?

ELIZA

Whatever you used to wear, and we'll find a bucket hat.

DOREEN

And a suffrage sash!

OLIVIA

Our volunteer band is growing by the day, and our senators and representatives are marching as well!

DOREEN

We'll even have television coverage and be recorded for future streaming.

LILY/LYDIA

How marvelous!

ELIZA

Yeah, but how pathetic that we had to be bombed to get any attention. Of course it helps that you've become a celebrity.

LILY/LYDIA

Ha! You mean my sleepwalking videos have "gone viral" to quote Trevor. Reporters are constantly calling, upsetting poor Wilma because I'm not a refined, soft spoken lady like her precious Lily Pearl.

WILMA

You certainly are not.

LILY/LYDIA

Because I speak the truth! I tell them outright how Lily's life is paradise compared to the perdition of my past. Trust me ladies you'd be witches too if you had to endure the hell of limited expectations -- not to mention the pox infesting my body and mind.

WILMA

You've certainly adapted to the computer age. *(to the women)* You should see Lydia type, pounding out her opinions a mile a minute -- getting all the radicals riled up.

LILY/LYDIA

Yes, I'm rallying the minions, recruiting more marchers for the parade.

ELIZA

We women can be just as angry and pro-active as men.

OLIVIA

But rarely as violent.

LILY/LYDIA

That's because we're more resilient. *(to Trevor)* You men don't have bodies that force you to compromise your freedom every month; you don't feel the bloody flux of Mother Nature who humbles and imprisons us in our homes. Of course now women have much better methods of coping, but for me it was a loathsome injustice.

OLIVIA

I can imagine...

LILY/LYDIA

Can you?! Can you truly imagine the piles of bloodied rags, counting the days to pass, never mind a lifetime of feeling like chattel. The tragedy of women and all their unspent riches, all the gifts they might have given if doors had been opened instead of locked.

DOREEN

It's so depressing...

LILY/LYDIA

But that was then; today I feel blessed to be among you, to know there are whole new legions of women turned warriors -- the great army I once joined in life and am now leading in death. So you see, I've been building my strength, walking every day, preparing to march miles. Even so, I fear I might falter, but if I'm seated on a tank, such strength won't matter, will it?

TREVOR

Nope.

DOREEN

No, it won't.

ELIZA

No indeed!

OLIVIA

You have such a lovely voice, we're hoping you'll use the bullhorn to lead the singing.

LILY/LYDIA

Of course!

WILMA

If y'all don't mind, I'd like to sit next to Lydia. As Lily's mother I feel responsible for her safety, to protect her in case someone starts shooting, *(to Lily/Lydia)* which is why we should wear those bullet proof vests.

LILY/LYDIA

Never! After a lifetime of corsets, I shall never again succumb to the constraints of the oppressors. If I'm shot, then at least I died fearless and unfettered.

WILMA

If you're shot, Lily dies, and I won't allow it!

TREVOR

Neither will I!

LILY/LYDIA

Then we shall do the shooting! Are the guns on the tank equipped to be fired?

(Pause as THEY stare at LILY/LYDIA in horror.)

DOREEN

*(whispering to Olivia)* She's joking, right?

ELIZA

We're a peaceful, law abiding procession, so we won't be shooting anyone!

LILY/LYDIA

Never forget you were bombed; innocent people were killed. You should be vigilant and prepared to fight!

ELIZA

But we don't even know who we're fighting! The police haven't identified much less captured the bomber!

LILY/LYDIA

Which means he's still out there and what if there are several? What if it's a diabolical cabal intent on thwarting your ambitions, destroying your party! Clearly they intend to maim you or worse -- wipe you off the face of the earth!

OLIVIA

My goodness.

DOREEN

Oh, lord...

TREVOR

Jesus...

ELIZA

Look, we're all upset, but the WSW is non-violent. One of our primary goals is a world without wars, without guns!

DOREEN

Amen!

OLIVIA

Maybe the tank isn't such a good idea...

ELIZA

*(to Trevor)* Just make sure it's not loaded!

LILY/LYDIA

I thought we had the same vision, that we're idealists who want to triumph, to turn this mad bad world upside down!

ELIZA

That's right, we're idealists, not fanatics -- there's a difference!

OLIVIA

Come on, ladies, let's go home.

*(OLIVIA, exits followed by DOREEN, WILMA, and ELIZA who turns to the volunteers.)*

ELIZA

Later I realized I'd made the mistake of thinking of Lydia as a symbol instead of a separate human being with her own ideas, and even though she scared the hell out of me, I admired her spunk. The minute I heard she'd disappeared, I started looking, taking my dogs along. There have been sightings reported at Crowne Plaza, The Fox Theatre, and Victoria's Secret at Lenox Square, but whenever I think I'm close, it turns out to be someone else.

*(ELIZA departs to the sounds and shadows of MARCHERS.)*

## SCENE 5

*(WILMA returns to the stage.)*

WILMA

After I escorted the ladies to the door, I decided to leave Lydia and Trevor alone for the first time since their tour of the city. Trevor is here with us today and willing to share his own impressions.

*(WILMA departs as TREVOR steps forward and faces the audience. As HE speaks, he reenters the parlor where LILY/LYDIA remains seated.)*

TREVOR

To be honest, Lydia was usually hostile. Whenever I came too close, she'd say...

TREVOR

...keep your distance.

LILY/LYDIA

Keep your distance,...

LILY/LYDIA

...or I'll scream!

TREVOR

You don't feel any...?

LILY/LYDIA

Forgive me, sir, but I disliked you from the moment we met. Of course, I realize you're still drawn to me, to Lily's body, even though I've added a number to her dress size.

TREVOR

She looks fine to me.

LILY/LYDIA

Fine enough to arouse your amorous appetites? You were certainly smitten.

TREVOR

Yes, well, we were close, very...compatible.

LILY/LYDIA

And Lily felt the same...? You never suspected her of consorting with clandestine lovers?

TREVOR

Believe it or not she said she found me irresistible.

LILY/LYDIA

Ha! You men are so vain, so gullible!

TREVOR

And you're so bitter you can't even imagine men and women being the best of friends, never mind lovers.

LILY/LYDIA

Can you blame me? In my day carnal intercourse was a degrading torment. Only prudery and propriety protected women, but that still failed to save us from assaults, infections, and impregnations!

TREVOR

So you hate men...?

LILY/LYDIA

Especially the ones who hate women! But look at you: so dashing, so hale and hearty, always the stoic single male surrounded by women, always attempting to be civil when you're hoping I vanish -- poof!

TREVOR

It's not that I want you to "vanish," it's just that I...I miss Lily. If you're holding on to her, I wish you'd let go.

LILY/LYDIA

As I told that priggish doctor, I am *not* holding on! I'm not as strong or substantial as you think, but neither are you.

TREVOR

Yes, you've certainly shaken my sense of myself as only...myself.

LILY/LYDIA

*(pause)* If I leave, do you think Lily will remember me?

TREVOR

I don't know, but if you're asking will she have acquired your memories, then I hope not.

LILY/LYDIA

Tell me, Trevor, have I had any positive influence?

TREVOR

Well,...yes. You've brought Wilma and me closer, and we both appreciate how you've validated our position on abortion: that souls pass from life to life and some even remember being unborn -- so you yourself are living proof that abortion is murder.

LILY/LYDIA

Rubbish! I only recall the slippery slide down canals and into the arms of midwives. But why would souls enter wombs until they're about to be born, until they're certain their bodies will emerge intact.

TREVOR

*(pause, he sighs)* Well, I guess we'll have to agree to disagree, but we also appreciate how you notice everything we take for granted like zippers, toasters, retractable umbrellas, and everyone enjoys it when you tell us what life was like: how you lit your rooms with oil lamps, how you washed your clothes, cooked your suppers...



LILY/LYDIA

How children were exploited; how the slave trade flourished; how it was unthinkable for a black man to court a lily white Lily.

TREVOR

*(pause)* You claim to have been an abolitionist, so why does it bother you so much?

LILY/LYDIA

I suppose I didn't expect the races to interbreed so boldly. People in my time had more boundaries and bigotries.

TREVOR

Oh, we still have our bigotries, but since you asked if you've had any positive influence, I should also mention that you've inspired me: I'm writing a novel.

LILY/LYDIA

Is it like The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde? Only yours would be The Strange Case of the Insufferable Suffragist, ha, ha! You and Doctor Loper are both writing books; both profiting from my presence -- both attempting to immortalize yourselves through me.

TREVOR

Doctor Loper's writing a book...?

LILY/LYDIA

A metaphysical monograph. Rest assured it will be a tedious tome, yet another allegory of the divided self.

TREVOR

Well, my book will also be about the politics of the South -- when it was completely controlled by white supremacists. In any case, I was hoping you wouldn't mind.

LILY/LYDIA

If I did, there isn't much I could do -- unless I decide to open a vein and write the definitive version myself.

TREVOR

Are you serious? I mean, are you really considering...?

LILY/LYDIA

Why not? After all, how else can I salvage my reputation, explain the pathos of my plight?

TREVOR

I wasn't planning on maligning you.

LILY/LYDIA

But you think I'm a harpy from hell. You can't imagine me feeling empathy, but you're wrong. I adored my daughter, Minnie, and would've died for her -- if only I'd lived.

TREVOR

I confess it's hard to imagine you as a mother.

LILY/LYDIA

Thanks to Minnie, I finally realized the advantage of being a woman, of possessing the power to incubate and create fellow creatures -- from womb to tomb, all destined to die. How could we be so careless, so cruel? No wonder men hate us.

TREVOR

But there's so much to be grateful for -- to love about life. *(pause)* Minnie must've been devastated when you died. I'm sorry I couldn't find out more about her. Did she inspire your poems?

LILY/LYDIA

Six of my sonnets. They were published and displayed on the local poets shelf in Brattles Book Shop. By now it will be stocked by other poets -- if it still exists.

TREVOR

Do you think you could remember them ?

LILY/LYDIA

I will certainly try since you're kind enough to ask. *(pause)* Wilma mentioned that you published a collection of stories. Would you permit me to read them?

TREVOR

I'd be happy to give you a copy, though they're nothing like Dickens. In fact, since you seem to be here indefinitely, I was thinking of introducing you to some literature of the twentieth century. I was making a list of popular modern classics that you might enjoy including novels like To Kill a Mockingbird and Brooklyn, The Kite Runner, Prodigal Summer, Normal People, and hundreds -- thousands -- more, and most are in mother's library.

LILY/LYDIA

Thank you, that's very considerate. *(pause)* Where has Wilma gone? Why has she left us alone so long?

TREVOR

I suspect she did it intentionally.

LILY/LYDIA

Ha! She thinks if you touch me, then Lily will surface -- come bobbing up like a cork in a bucket. *(pause)* Tell me, Trevor, have you ever looked elsewhere for a potential mate?

TREVOR

If you mean did I date other women before Lily, then yes.

LILY/LYDIA

Black women?

TREVOR

Yes.

LILY/LYDIA

Hmmm. Did it ever occur to you that when Lily discouraged you from joining the parade, she was meeting someone else -- a tryst with another marcher?

TREVOR

Not until this moment. Look, Lily isn't you, but if you're really one of her past lives, then I'm glad you didn't affect her character -- her inner beauty.

LILY/LYDIA

Ha! What you really miss is her *outer* beauty, your access to her body. So have you penetrated the sacred sanctum of Lily's womanhood?

TREVOR

If you mean have we made love, then yes, many times, but I miss everything about her. When you replaced Lily, when you took her away, you also took a part of me. *(pause)* Of all the people I've ever known, she meant the most to me.

LILY/LYDIA

But do you ever wonder if you meant the most to Lily? Could you ever open your heart to another woman, one who might love you more?

TREVOR

Maybe, though I doubt if anyone could love me more, especially since I'm not all that lovable -- which is why I was surprised she loved me back.

LILY/LYDIA

Why aren't you lovable?

TREVOR

Because I spend most of my free time alone, holed up in my house writing or brooding and bemoaning the fate of the free world. Then my sister, Carmel, breezed into town and dragged me into joining a museum tour of the Impressionists. That's when I met Lily who opened my eyes and my...my heart.

(Now LYDIA slips into the southern voice of LILY.)

LILY/LYDIA

*(as Lily)* Oh, my dear, my sweet boy.

TREVOR

What...? Did you just...?

LILY/LYDIA

*(as Lydia)* Yes! Wilma keeps showing me videos so I've heard Lily's voice.

TREVOR

Please don't do that again! It's cruel, especially since it's obvious you're still Lydia. And please stop implying that Lily doesn't love me.

LILY/LYDIA

I'm only saying you should consider courting someone who feels the same, someone better.

TREVOR

There is no one better! And how would you know what she feels?! You're not her!

LILY/LYDIA

Then you no longer feel the urge to fornicate?

TREVOR

I didn't say that...

LILY/LYDIA

Well, I confess to feeling more warmly towards you. *(pause)* Much to my surprise, I'm actually beginning to find you attractive, so I suppose we could start by holding hands.

TREVOR

Ha, ha! You can't be serious?!

(LILY/LYDIA grasps TREVOR'S hands.)

LILY/LYDIA

I've never touched a colored man's hands before. *(pause, smiling)* I like them; they're warm and strong, and you always smell nice -- not like sweat or tobacco. *(pause, in Lily's voice)* Do you like holding hands?

TREVOR

What do you think you're doing?

LILY/LYDIA

*(as Lily)* I'm attempting to seduce you, my dear. Now why don't we go to my room and remove our clothing.

TREVOR

Are you saying you're willing to...?

LILY/LYDIA

*(as Lily)* Shhhush! Shall we start with a kiss?

(LILY/LYDIA moves closer to TREVOR who starts to respond, then steps back.)

TREVOR

I...I can't! I can't seem to... I'm sorry, but I don't trust you; I'm afraid making love to you would feel like a...a betrayal. Now please stop pretending to be Lily!

LILY/LYDIA

*(pause, as Lydia)* Fine, have it your way. Besides, I'm old enough to be your mother, ha, ha! *(she sighs)* Nobody ever loved me as much as you love Lily.

(LILY/LYDIA starts walking off.)

TREVOR

Where are you going?

LILY/LYDIA

To find pen and paper. Then I shall retreat to the library to launch my memoir!

(LILY/LYDIA puts her hand to her forehead and takes a deep breath.)

TREVOR

Are you all right?

LILY/LYDIA

Yes, it's just a headache from staring at that bloody screen all day -- unless of course I'm dwindling, slipping back to my place.

TREVOR

In the nesting dolls...?

LILY/LYDIA

Oh, don't look so pleased!

TREVOR

I...I'm sorry.

LILY/LYDIA

Forgive me, Trevor, but I intend to stay long enough to lead the parade, although there's something I must say.

TREVOR

Yes...?

LILY/LYDIA

You're wrong to claim you're not lovable. Whatever happens to me, I hope someday you'll have everything your great good heart desires.

(LILY/LYDIA starts to leave.)

TREVOR

Wait!

LILY/LYDIA

Yes...? What is it?

TREVOR

Come here.

(TREVOR clasps LILY/LYDIA'S hand, pulling her closer then kisses her deeply, soulfully, drawing forth her life's breath as SHE trembles, her legs becoming wobbly. SHE pulls away, gasping.)

TREVOR  
Are you all right? Lydia...?

(LILY/LYDIA turns in wide eyed shock, grasps her throat and dashes from the room as TREVOR calls after her.)

TREVOR  
Lydia! I...I'm sorry, I didn't mean... (*mumbling*) Oh, Jesus...

(TREVOR shakes his head and sighs, as lights alter and HE turns to face the audience.)

TREVOR  
She ran to her room and locked the door. It occurred to me that maybe Wilma's theory was right and my kiss was drawing Lily's soul to the surface, so I waited hoping she'd emerge, but after several hours I went home. By the next morning she'd vanished.

(TREVOR departs to the sound of marching boots.)

## SCENE 6

(WILMA steps on stage as the marching fades and OLIVIA steps up to join her.)

WILMA  
Now Olivia Walker has some insights she'd like to share, and I'm pleased to report new leads coming in. (*scanning her phone, reading*) A woman resembling Lily was seen near Shep's Hardware, the Greyhound Bus Station, and...

OLIVIA  
Oh, my God! Look, look! There she is!

(OLIVIA points down the aisle.)

WILMA  
Lily...?

(LILY limps towards the stage, her unpinned hair and clothing unkempt. SHE is escorted by DOREEN who clutches Lily's arm.)

WILMA  
Lily is that you?

LILY

Mama...?

WILMA

Oh, thank the Lord! It's Lily, my Lily Pearl!

(WILMA approaches LILY, followed by TREVOR, OLIVIA and ELIZA. Mother and daughter embrace as WILMA weeps with joy. Then LILY steps back, noticing TREVOR who clasps her hand.)

LILY

Trevor...?

TREVOR

Yes, sweetheart, you're home.

ELIZA

Where on earth have you been?!

(LILY turns to DOREEN.)

LILY

Where was I...?

DOREEN

At a trashy tattoo parlor on Ponce de Leon. The windows were open so your howls were drawing a crowd. Don't you remember?

LILY

No...

DOREEN

The man in charge said you slept till he finished. Then when he shook you awake, you screamed like a wild banshee.

LILY

What...?

DOREEN

Oh, Lily, honey, don't you know? Oh, go on, unbutton your blouse and see for yourself.



(LILY slowly unbuttons her blouse revealing a vivid red heart tattooed above her breast. SHE glances down, wide-eyed and shrieks!)

LILY

Ohhhh, ohhhhhh, noooooooooo....

TREVOR  
Oh, Jesus....

WILMA  
Oh, Lily, you didn't!

OLIVIA  
Oh, my God...

ELIZA  
Hush, child, hush!

WILMA  
Cover yourself!

(LILY buttons her blouse.)

LILY  
Oh, Lord, what...? What have I done? How...? How could I...?

DOREEN  
The man said you paid cash.

LILY  
What...?!

DOREEN  
He swore you asked for a big red heart on your chest.

TREVOR  
Lily, honey, it's not your fault.

WILMA  
It's her witchy way of leaving a memento!

TREVOR  
That's right, it wasn't you, Lily; it was...

TREVOR  
...Lydia.

WILMA  
Lydia!

OLIVIA  
Lydia.

ELIZA  
Lydia!

LILY  
Who's Lydia...?

WILMA

Never you mind, just follow me!

(THEY start to leave, then LILY notices the audience.)

LILY

Wait! Who...? Who are all these people?

WILMA

They're some of the volunteers who joined the search; the entire city's been looking for you! Now let's go home, darlin'.

(WILMA clasps LILY'S hand. THEY leave, followed by TREVOR, DOREEN and OLIVIA as ELIZA turns to the audience.)

ELIZA

Well, it looks like we finally found our grand marshal, but before y'all leave, remember we're meeting here next Saturday at noon -- come rain or shine!

(Patriotic band music is heard as the tattered Centennial Parade banner is replaced by an unmarred one.)

### **EPILOGUE**

(On a bright sunny day, ELIZA, DOREEN, OLIVIA, WILMA and LILY enter the stage dressed as historic suffragists. ELIZA steps forward.)

ELIZA

Today the whole nation is watching as we march yet again. Now before we set out, our grand marshal, Lily Pearl Rhodes, has a few words to say.

(LILY steps on stage wearing a suffrage era hat and sash.)

LILY

First I want to thank y'all for taking part in the search for me. These past few days I've undergone some tests, but can't remember much past winning the raffle, singing our anthem, then boom, boom! If it weren't for all the pictures and videos, I wouldn't believe the tales I've been told.

ELIZA

*(pause)* Go on! Tell them the rest!

LILY

People keep insisting I'm not the same old Lily, and it's true I've changed. In fact, I've given up my volunteer work and postponed the wedding to concentrate on my political career. That's right, you heard me: With the support of the WSW, I'm hoping to collect the required signatures to run for City Council, then eventually I hope to run for mayor, then governor, and maybe even president. So you see how eager I am to heal and reclaim my life, to take on the world, and lead the parade!

(LILY starts singing.)

LILY

*WE ARE WOMEN OF TODAY  
PRAISING WOMEN OF THE PAST..*

(ELIZA, OLIVIA, DOREEN, WILMA join in the song,  
marching in place.)

LILY, WILMA, OLIVIA, DOREEN, ELIZA

*...HOPING WOMEN OF THE FUTURE  
WILL MAKE TOMORROWS LAST!  
WE MARCH SO THAT OUR COLLEAGUES  
FIND GENDER PARITY;  
WE MARCH FOR DREAMS OF LIVING,  
WITH TRUE EQUALITY!*

*MARCH ON (MARCH ON),  
MARCH ON (MARCH ON),  
OUR MISSION IS UNFURLED;  
MARCH ON (MARCH ON),  
MARCH ON (MARCH ON),  
WOMEN SAVE THE WORLD!  
**WOMEN SAVE THE WORLD!***

(The WOMEN march off singing as the lights on the  
assembly hall dim to black.)

*End of Play*

# Women Save The World

Words and Music By Sheilah Rae

1 C 2 F C

We are wo - men of to - day prais - ing wo - men of the past, Hop - ing

3 F 4 Dm G 5 F

wo - men of the fu - ture can make to - mor - rows last. We march so that our col - leagues find

6 Em A7 7 Dm 8 G

gen - der par - i - ty. We march for dreams of liv - ing with true e - qua - li - ty! March

9 C 10 C 11 F 12 C

on, (March on) March on! (March on) — Our mis - sion is un - furled! March

13 C C/B 14 Am 15 Dm G

on, (March on) March on! (March on) Wo - men save the

16 C 17 C C/B 18 Am

world! March on, (March on) March on! (March on)

19 Dm G 20 C 21 Dm G 22 C

Wo - men save the world! Wo - men save the world!