

Mary & Myra

A DRAMA BY

Catherine Filloux



Playscripts

Copyright Protection. This play (the "Play") is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, and the Berne Convention.

Reservation of Rights. All rights to this Play are strictly reserved, including, without limitation, professional and amateur stage performance rights; motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video, and sound recording rights; rights to all other forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction now known or yet to be invented, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, photocopying, and information storage and retrieval systems; and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

Performance Licensing and Royalty Payments. Amateur and stock performance rights to this Play are controlled exclusively by Playscripts, Inc. ("Playscripts"). No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this Play without obtaining advance written permission from Playscripts. Required royalty fees for performing this Play are specified online at the Playscripts website (www.playscripts.com). Such royalty fees may be subject to change without notice. Although this book may have been obtained for a particular licensed performance, such performance rights, if any, are not transferable. Required royalties must be paid every time the Play is performed before any audience, whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. All licensing requests and inquiries concerning amateur and stock performance rights should be addressed to Playscripts (see contact information on opposite page).

Inquiries concerning all other rights should be addressed to Playscripts, as well; such inquiries will be communicated to the author and the author's agent, as applicable.

Restriction of Alterations. There shall be no deletions, alterations, or changes of any kind made to the Play, including the changing of character gender, the cutting of dialogue, the cutting of music, or the alteration of objectionable language, unless directly authorized by Playscripts. The title of the Play shall not be altered.

Author Credit. Any individual or group receiving permission to produce this Play is required to give credit to the author as the sole and exclusive author of the Play. This obligation applies to the title page of every program distributed in connection with performances of the Play, and in any instance that the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing, or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and of a font size at least 50% as large as the largest letter used in the title of the Play. No person, firm, or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the author. The name of the author may not be abbreviated or otherwise altered from the form in which it appears in this Play.

Publisher Attribution. All programs, advertisements, and other printed material distributed or published in connection with the amateur or stock production of the Play shall include the following notice:

**Produced by special arrangement with Playscripts, Inc.
(www.playscripts.com)**

Prohibition of Unauthorized Copying. Any unauthorized copying of this book or excerpts from this book is strictly forbidden by law. Except as otherwise permitted by applicable law, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including, without limitation, photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Playscripts.

Statement of Non-affiliation. This Play may include references to brand names and trademarks owned by third parties, and may include references to public figures. Playscripts is not necessarily affiliated with these public figures, or with the owners of such trademarks and brand names. Such references are included solely for parody, political comment, or other permitted purposes.

Permissions for Sound Recordings and Musical Works. This Play may contain directions calling for the performance of a portion, or all, of a musical work not included in the Play's score, or performance of a sound recording of such a musical work. Playscripts has not obtained permissions to perform such works. The producer of this Play is advised to obtain such permissions, if required in the context of the production. The producer is directed to the websites of the U.S. Copyright Office (www.copyright.gov), ASCAP (www.ascap.com), BMI (www.bmi.com), and NMPA (www.nmpa.org) for further information on the need to obtain permissions, and on procedures for obtaining such permissions.

The Rules in Brief

- DO NOT perform this Play without obtaining prior permission from Playscripts, and without paying the required royalty.
- DO NOT photocopy, scan, or otherwise duplicate any part of this book.
- DO NOT alter the text of the Play, change a character's gender, delete any dialogue, cut any music, or alter any objectionable language, unless explicitly authorized by Playscripts.
- DO provide the required credit to the author(s) and the required attribution to Playscripts in all programs and promotional literature associated with any performance of this Play.

Copyright Basics

This Play is protected by United States and international copyright law. These laws ensure that authors are rewarded for creating new and vital dramatic work, and protect them against theft and abuse of their work.

A play is a piece of property, fully owned by the author, just like a house or car. You must obtain permission to use this property, and must pay a royalty fee for the privilege—whether or not you charge an admission fee. Playscripts collects these required payments on behalf of the author.

Anyone who violates an author's copyright is liable as a copyright infringer under United States and international law. Playscripts and the author are entitled to institute legal action for any such infringement, which can subject the infringer to actual damages, statutory damages, and attorneys' fees. A court may impose statutory damages of up to \$150,000 for willful copyright infringements. U.S. copyright law also provides for possible criminal sanctions. Visit the website of the U.S. Copyright Office (www.copyright.gov) for more information.

THE BOTTOM LINE: If you break copyright law, you are robbing a playwright and opening yourself to expensive legal action. Follow the rules, and when in doubt, ask us.

To Ed Herendeen

Cast of Characters

MARY TODD LINCOLN, 56, the widow of President Abraham Lincoln; Kentucky accent

MYRA BRADWELL, 44, America's first woman lawyer; a prominent figure in the "woman suffrage" movement; sterling New England background

Place

Bellevue Place, a private insane asylum in Batavia, Illinois

Production Notes

Act I:

Scene 1: July 29, 1875

Scene 2: Eight days later: August 6

Act II:

Scene 3: Eleven days later: August 18

Scene 4: Twenty days later: September 8

Historical Note:

On May 20, 1875 Mary Todd Lincoln was sent to an insane asylum by her only living son, Robert Todd Lincoln, and her friend, Myra Bradwell, came to her aid.

Details of Mary's trial and confinement can be found in the public record. However, in 1928 the attorneys for Robert's estate purchased all correspondence between Mary and Myra, from Myra's granddaughter, and destroyed it.

Acknowledgments

Mary and Myra was originally produced at the Contemporary American Theater Festival in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, Producing Director, Ed Herendeen. Directed by Lou Jacobs, the cast and staff were as follows:

MARY TODD LINCOLN..... Rosemary Knowler
MYRA BRADWELL..... Babo Harrison

Set Design.....Markas Henry
Lighting Design..... Michael Foster
Costume Design Moe Schell
Sound Design..... Kevin Lloyd
Stage Manager Karen A. Storms
Assistant Stage Manager Alison Wolocko
Casting Beverly D. Marable
Understudy for Myra Bradwell Brandy Burre

All production groups performing this play are required to include the following credits on the title page of every program:

Originally Produced at the Contemporary American Theater Festival, Shepherdstown, West Virginia, Producing Director, Ed Herendeen



Babo Harrison and Rosemary Knower in the World Premiere of *Mary & Myra* at the Contemporary American Theater Festival in Shepherdstown, West Virginia (2000). Photo: Ken Cobb.

MARY AND MYRA

by Catherine Filloux

ACT I Prologue

(MARY TODD LINCOLN, 56, is bathed in red light as she enters her small room, wearing long widow weeds, an intricate veil / bonnet with flowers and a large ribbon at her throat. The door slams shut and she rushes to try the door which is now bolted. Suddenly from above we hear the horrifying shrieks of a woman. MARY hurries to the barred window, clutching herself. A slot in the door slides open and eyes watch her from the other side. MARY ducks as the red light fades.)

Scene 1 July 29, 1875

(It is afternoon as MARY dusts a black bonnet, hearing loud, consistent pounding on the ceiling. Her room has a ragtag writing desk, a bed which appears higher than usual and an unusual amount of carpet-covered footstools. The set is framed and constructed with steamer trunks. MARY calls upward.)

MARY TODD. Mrs. Wheeler, I can hear you! There's nothin' I can do. The nurse'll bring you some chloral, but I'd be careful! Better perhaps to accept the "Bellevue remedy... Mrs. Wheeler, dear, I can hear you..."

(There is a knock on the door. Before MARY can open it, MYRA BRADWELL, 44, statuesque, elaborately coifed, storms into the room, carrying her briefcase.)

MARY TODD. Pray, God! My dear Myra, never has a soul been happier to see you...

MYRA BRADWELL. My poor, dear girl, how are you? How are they treating you?

(MARY starts to kiss MYRA's face, then begins to hit her.)

MARY TODD. Why have you not come earlier? I have written and written. Where have you been?

MYRA BRADWELL. Your son Robert forbids all visits, intercepts all letters.

MARY TODD. (*In anguish:*) What has happened to my son?

MYRA BRADWELL. Robert has taken the popular recourse of Men of our Age. He has locked you away so you won't annoy him. A deep injustice has been done to you. James and I know you are not insane and we will get you out.

MARY TODD. Oh, how is your dear and *gentle* husband James?

MYRA BRADWELL. Occupied at the court today, but I assure you he will help in any way he can.

MARY TODD. (*The hostess:*) I do apologize, sit, there is not one acceptable chair. Do you know they had the audacity to give me a rocker? (*Softly; to herself:*) Red. (*Looking at MYRA's dress:*) You are beautifully arrayed – the fallin' leaf color was the rage of the Continent. Shall I ask my attendant to bring a small collation?

MYRA BRADWELL. We hardly need a small collation in an asylum. Now, look at me. Dr. Patterson has allowed us only ten minutes. (*Trying to look at her eyes.*) Be still.

MARY TODD. (*Embarrassed:*) Oh, MY GREAT BLOAT! I am quite an exuberance of flesh.

(MARY *hides.*)

MYRA BRADWELL. Come out of there. I only worry that you are on fire in that wool dress. Are they giving you medicine?

MARY TODD. I have ordered a lawn dress from town. The crepe...

(MARY *finds a fabric sample.*)

MARY TODD. Feel, abysmal...

MYRA BRADWELL. Mrs. Lincoln, am I speaking to a woman under the influence of strong medicine?!

MARY TODD. No, rest assured, I accept nothin' but the "Bellevue remedy."

MYRA BRADWELL. "The Bellevue remedy"?

MARY TODD. Eggnog with two teaspoons of Whiskey. (*Looking to the slot; lowering her voice;*) But I hear Dr. Patterson killed a patient with one-hundred-ten grains Chloral Hydrate. I never go near it!

MYRA BRADWELL. Very wise.

MARY TODD. At most, a little Beer...

MYRA BRADWELL. Your eyes, they do not look well.

MARY TODD. I blink too often. (*Rubbing her eyes; red from crying.*) You stopped writin' to me long ago, Myra. You ceased to invite me to your illustrious dinners.

MYRA BRADWELL. Now, let me tell you my plan!

MARY TODD. Did you not hear me?

MYRA BRADWELL. I will induce the public to have your case re-opened! The way your son conducted the trial is illegal and I will make him pay. Now, you must quickly answer my questions so I can build your case. Dr. Patterson is watching the clock...

MARY TODD. The "Patriarch."

(*MYRA takes a newspaper from her briefcase.*)

MYRA BRADWELL. Yes, after you smuggled your letter to me, I came here immediately. The "Patriarch" would not let me in. I was forced to write an anonymous article in a local paper, discrediting the doctor.

(*MARY prepares to clip the article with her blunt scissors.*)

MARY TODD. (*Reading.*) "No One Allowed to See Widow. Remarkable Interview With Her Physician and JAILER." You are clever!

MYRA BRADWELL. I have no choice. Now, these doctors at the trial who declared you insane, *when* did they examine you?

MARY TODD. They never EXAMINED me. They don't even know me.

MYRA BRADWELL. They never examined you?!

MARY TODD. They are Robert's friends. (*Confidentially:*) I try to be on my best behavior with Robert and the Patriarch, but it's KILLIN' ME. At the dinners — which the doctor's wife insists I share because I am after all Famous — the Patterson son speaks only of *gynecology*.

MYRA BRADWELL. What?!

MARY TODD. They are all so proud of his new specialty. He's the first gynecologist in the land.

MYRA BRADWELL. Your propensity to wander is especially trying, Mrs. Lincoln. I am in a deep crisis at the paper.

MARY TODD. Oh, my, you still own that paper?

MYRA BRADWELL. Every lawyer in the country reads it, and I have already written about you in it.

(In anticipation MARY picks up her scissors.)

MARY TODD. You wrote about me in your paper?

MYRA BRADWELL. Yes, I will not let the public forget you.

MARY TODD. Do you have a copy?

(MYRA gives her the paper.)

MYRA BRADWELL. Yes. *Now* I will report in my column that Robert chooses doctors who do not SEE patients before diagnosing them!

MARY TODD. Oh bring me a copy of that too!

MYRA BRADWELL. Now *why* did your lawyer call not one single witness for you?

MARY TODD. Because he wasn't MY lawyer. He was chosen by Robert so I wouldn't get it into my head to find some mischievous lawyer to make trouble.

(MYRA holds out her hand.)

MYRA BRADWELL. I am she.

MARY TODD. Pardon me?

MYRA BRADWELL. I am your “mischievous lawyer.”

MARY TODD. But you were denied the right to practice—you’re a woman.

MYRA BRADWELL. Women have been admitted in other states. My law journal has acquired such dimensions I have little time for a practice and I do not need the title of “Attorney” to know I *am* one.

MARY TODD. A woman’s sphere is the hearth and home, Mrs. Bradwell. Our raisin’ money together for the wounded durin’ the war was ambitious enough!

MYRA BRADWELL. I fear this is not a good topic for us. Now, I came to your Hotel directly after your trial. I was turned away by guards. To think that it was then that you tried to...

(MYRA stops herself.)

MARY TODD. Tried to what?

MYRA BRADWELL. Take your own life, my poor darling queen.

MARY TODD. I never tried to take my own life! Who in god’s name told you that?

(MYRA takes a newspaper clipping from her folder.)

MYRA BRADWELL. *(Quoting:)* “Another Sad Chapter For The Demented Widow. Mary Lincoln Attempts To Poison Herself.”

MARY TODD. Let me see this paper! My Heavens, The Chicago Inter Ocean?

MYRA BRADWELL. Are you absolutely sure you did not go to three different pharmacies trying to get opium?

MARY TODD. I think I would remember, Mrs. Bradwell, if I went to get OPIUM... Had I planned to kill myself it would have been long ago. You know Robert’s former law partner OWNS the Inter Ocean.

MYRA BRADWELL. Oh my Lord, he is more evil than I imagined. What could you have done to the boy?

MARY TODD. I have done nothin' to the boy. You hardly seem to be the one to talk...

MYRA BRADWELL. That's enough. We will not stray from the course!

MARY TODD. And who, pray tell, charts this beauteous course? YOU?

(MARY holds the window bars. Outside the window, there is a net.)

MARY TODD. They say I am here until my reason is restored, but I never lost my reason so I wonder how long I'll stay?

MYRA BRADWELL. *(Making a note.)* The bars on the windows, I will speak to the doctor.

MARY TODD. Robert has all my money 'n deludes himself thinkin' this is a country club though it's clear it's *third class*. He invents my suicide in this paper. *(Pointing down:)* But sends me to a place where there's a Net down below to catch me!

MYRA BRADWELL. I must ask you strictly as a formality, Mrs. Lincoln, how is your mind?

MARY TODD. I am bent with sorrow. Hacked to pieces with Neuralgia. Famished by the bland diet—the doctor believes spice excites the nerves—they don't even know how to make a proper Griddle Cake—I'm longin' to buy a new bonnet—all mine are soiled from dust—

MYRA BRADWELL. ANSWER THE QUESTION!

MARY TODD. But I am not insane...I have simply not talked to ANYONE in so long. We lost touch, Myra...

(We hear screaming and MARY hyperventilates.)

MARY TODD. Oh! Heaven! Listen! Mrs. Munger? Last night she stole a carvin' knife from the kitchen and...stabbed herself below the navel. When I went down this mornin', they were cleanin' the...

(She cannot say it. The room is faintly washed in red.)

MARY TODD. In the water closet, all over. (*Whispering:*) Red... The attendant told me it was Mrs. Munger...

(*She looks to the slot in the door.*)

MARY TODD. I pay an additional price for a private attendant but she spies on me through the slot for the doctor.

MYRA BRADWELL. Unlawful.

MARY TODD. I try to appear NORMAL to Dr. Patterson, sayin' politely hello, but sometimes I try so hard I say hello three times in five minutes, and he certainly must think I'm BIZARRE...

(*MARY picks up some turnips.*)

MARY TODD. He's fixated on the vegetables in the garden and seems to think you show high "moral" character if you pick some for your own dinner.

MYRA BRADWELL. That is his treatment?

(*MYRA looks around the room.*)

MYRA BRADWELL. Why are there so many footstools?

MARY TODD. I hoped to have a séance but this place has proved surprisin'ly free of mediums—or spirits...

MYRA BRADWELL. I strongly urge against any talk of *spiritualism*.

MARY TODD. This hateful room turns all the spirits away...

MYRA BRADWELL. In the minds of these doctors, spiritualism is one with insanity. They call it "theomania."

MARY TODD. Oh yes, the Patriarch accuses me of both Theomania and Monomania. Couldn't you perhaps help me to arrange a séance?

MYRA BRADWELL. Absolutely not. You are exasperating!

MARY TODD. Tell me how is your home? Is your poor daughter Bessie doin' better?

MYRA BRADWELL. What do you mean is she doing better?! She is a valedictorian at school.

MARY TODD. When I think you had two...

MYRA BRADWELL. Now at the trial, what your family doctor claimed you said about *the Indian* rearranging wires in your head? I need to hear *your* side of the story.

(MARY *looks in a trunk.*)

MARY TODD. I have beautiful Chantilly curtains for Bessie, bought but never used.

MYRA BRADWELL. Yes I read about all the curtains you are buying for the home you do not have.

MARY TODD. How do you know what home I have? You've failed to contact me for more than a year.

MYRA BRADWELL. MRS. LINCOLN! The family doctor.

(MARY *sees a carte-de-visite in her trunk.*)

MARY TODD. When Tom Thumb and his new bride visited the White House, the Great One leaned down to shake the dwarf-General's hand...

MYRA BRADWELL. Wires in your head. WHO WAS THE INDIAN?

MARY TODD. *You* remember, Pinkie, our spirit guide?

MYRA BRADWELL. NO I DO NOT REMEMBER PINKIE! YOU ARE INFURIATING!

MARY TODD. I see that your aggressive nature has only accelerated, Myra. It is a true shame... It simply FEELS as if durin' my headaches strings are bein' pulled through my eyes. I did not truly believe there was an INDIAN doin' the maneuverin'.

MYRA BRADWELL. Again, I beseech you not to discuss spiritualism with the doctors, nor with your son.

MARY TODD. Aren't you a spiritualist, Myra?

MYRA BRADWELL. No, I am not.

MARY TODD. But we went to so many séances together. Remember how we'd park the black barouche on a side street and pray no one recognized us?

MYRA BRADWELL. No, I do not remember.

MARY TODD. Didn't you say "how insignificant all worldly honors are when we are thus so severely tried..."

MYRA BRADWELL. Do not start!

MARY TODD. (*A litany:*) If we could only realize how far happier they are now in heaven than on earth..."

MYRA BRADWELL. Soon you will make me lose my reason and then we will *both* be RAVING MANIACS.

(*This stops MARY cold.*)

MARY TODD. Please, you may leave now.

MYRA BRADWELL. You are not listening to me.

MARY TODD. GO!

(*A beat.*)

MYRA BRADWELL. You are right, my child had died. I took comfort in the séances but I always knew it was the mediums disguised as spirits coming out of the little cabinets...

MARY TODD. But you spoke to little Myra on the Other Side, I was there...

MYRA BRADWELL. ...Please I would ask you not to say her name.

MARY TODD. Little "Myra's" name? But it is your name. "*Myra.*"

MYRA BRADWELL. Now you have said it twice.

MARY TODD. Myra, your little girl was a bein' far too precious for earth...

MYRA BRADWELL. (*Firmly:*) Now promise me not to mention Pinkie or any other Indian. The Voices you heard outside your hotel room?

MARY TODD. Pinkerton detectives Robert hired to follow me...

MYRA BRADWELL. So you would not further humiliate him...

(A knock on the door.)

MYRA BRADWELL. These are the rules of the game.

MARY TODD. What game?

MYRA BRADWELL. One—you must be consistently pleasant to your son.

MARY TODD. OH, I WANT TO CHOKE HIM!

MYRA BRADWELL. Second, to everything the doctor says you answer, "I think this fair and right." Repeat.

MARY TODD. *(In disbelief:)* I think this fair and right?

MYRA BRADWELL. Fine. Third, nothing will be said about Robert's invention of your suicide.

MARY TODD. WHY WOULD HE DO IT? I've given him all the income of the house where you and I were once neighbors—First Lady of the Land, then a boarder in roomin' houses. I've also given him loans for his crooked investments. *(Catches herself:)* Shhhshhh.

MYRA BRADWELL. In your letter you mentioned these crooked investments.

(MARY jumps.)

MARY TODD. If he knew I wrote to you he would BLAST me...

MYRA BRADWELL. What are these investments?

MARY TODD. Sanctified information.

MYRA BRADWELL. Tell me. If we could cast doubt on your son's integrity it would help...Mary?

MARY TODD. *(Pretending:)* I'm afraid I didn't hear.

MYRA BRADWELL. This is no comedy. I am in need of ammunition.

(MARY is silent.)

MYRA BRADWELL. I'll find out the secret myself.

MARY TODD. No, you won't.

MYRA BRADWELL. Your son represents the most influential men in Chicago. I can beat him, but you must help me.

(MARY obeys playfully, picking up the turnips.)

MARY TODD. Oh, Dr. Patterson, I so love to harvest my own vegetables here at the asylum...

MYRA BRADWELL. Hold my hand.

MARY TODD. You have a fine perfume.

(MYRA takes a perfume vial from her briefcase and gives it to her.)

MYRA BRADWELL. Your fight for your pension, the sale of your old clothes, your obsessive concern for your son's safety have all HUMILIATED him. Stop, it only proves to make him meaner.

MARY TODD. How d'you know this?

MYRA BRADWELL. The papers told me it everyday, Mrs. Lincoln. Everyone knows.

MARY TODD. The Great One and I lost our mamas when we were small—we wanted so much that our children not have miserable childhoods, we let 'em play FREE...

MYRA BRADWELL. We will launch our own counterattack. When does Dr. Patterson visit his office on Doctor's Row?

MARY TODD. Every single Saturday...

MYRA BRADWELL. Good. A reporter friend will come to interview you. You have a sister in Springfield, do you not? I will write to her...

(MYRA packs her briefcase.)

MYRA BRADWELL. And now my dear girl I must run to the depot...

MARY TODD. Won't you stay?...

(MYRA opens to a page of a legal brief.)

MYRA BRADWELL. What do you see on this page? Are there *words*?

MARY TODD. No it is blank.

MYRA BRADWELL. Exactly. The printers in my legal-brief trade demand to be paid for *blank pages*, as well. I have fired them all and called the Times for non-union men. (*Proudly:*) I must go, even during the Great Fire my paper got out...

MARY TODD. Ah, the Fire! Standin' together, you and I, in Lake Michigan, watchin' Chicago burn. To think your poor Bessie ran into the flamin' buildin'.

MYRA BRADWELL. I will ask you NEVER to mention the Fire.

MARY TODD. *You* just did. I'm very worried, Myra, there seems to be a bevy of topics I'm not at liberty to mention...

(*MYRA puts on her hat and gloves.*)

MYRA BRADWELL. I would not want to miss the last train and be forced to stay in this primitive, little town. Please forgive me, I meant no harm...

(*MARY looks out the window at the night, which is starting to fall.*)

MARY TODD. At night there's a different Order which descends here. I'm so thoroughly chilled. My limbs.

MYRA BRADWELL. Tell me goodbye.

MARY TODD. The perfume will make me think of you. *You will go straight home and not return to the office.*

MYRA BRADWELL. I will return to the office or my paper will not come out.

MARY TODD. You spend too much time away from your home—James and Bessie suffer. Do you still have the cats? *They* must suffer. A few days here in the country would do you extreme good.

MYRA BRADWELL. Yes, Eggnog and Whiskey, it is a perpetual Christmas!

(*There is a loud knock on the door.*)

MYRA BRADWELL. Oh, no, I hope he did not hear!

MARY TODD. When will you return? Promise me it will be in a few days. Write to me, tell me exactly *when*. Tell me everythin'. Collect every single newspaper with my name in it. They give me no privacy.

MYRA BRADWELL. Do not worry. (*She takes her hand.*) I am your "mischievous lawyer." I hold that above all else.

MARY TODD. My son Tad's spirit has stopped comin'. My All hovers but I do not see him.

MYRA BRADWELL. YOU DO NOT LISTEN!

(*MARY looks in the mirror, as she puts on a strange jacket.*)

MARY TODD. Robert has always wanted me to be someone I'm not. I can only be who I am.

MYRA BRADWELL. But you can make small adjustments to attain what you NEED.

(*MARY refers to MYRA in the mirror.*)

MARY TODD. And one day the small adjustments are so big you're no longer who you are, Myra.

MYRA BRADWELL. Hush, what is that you are wearing?!

MARY TODD. My gardenin' coat. I'm forced to dig up potatoes so the doctor will think I'm well. Will you please bring me some fabric samples?

MYRA BRADWELL. Yes...

MARY TODD. Now go and do it quickly or I will SCREAM. Too long in this bin and you start to do what everyone else does.

(*MYRA leaves. MARY goes to a trunk, taking out a stuffed eagle and other items – using her byzantine but logical filing system.*)

MARY TODD. Tad's military costume? ...purchased in sixty two? How he loved the regalia! ...Ah, here!

(*She unwraps a gun as lights fade.*)

Scene 2
Eight days later: August 6

(There are all sorts of vegetables in the room now, corn on the cob, eggplant, carrots, beets, etc. MARY is going through her trunks, occasionally adding a small accessory to her mourning costume. She repeats a phrase, trying to say it convincingly.)

MARY TODD. "I think this fair and right. I think this fair and right. Yes, Sir, I think this fair and right."

(There is pounding on the ceiling. She calls upward.)

MARY TODD. GIVE HER SOME CHLORAL AND LET HER SLEEP FOR GOD'S SAKE!

(She goes to the barred window, putting out her arms, as if to fly.)

MARY TODD. Like a child. Into the White... Like a cloud...

(MARY jumps into the air as MYRA enters, holding her briefcase, a lawn dress, a suitcase, newspapers, etc.)

MYRA BRADWELL. What are you doing?

MARY TODD. Not one thing.

(MARY begins to hit MYRA as in the first scene. MYRA raises her briefcase to shield herself.)

MARY TODD. You have stayed away EIGHT DAYS. You have not written.

(MYRA's shoe is wet.)

MYRA BRADWELL. I passed a patient, Mrs. Johnston? She urinated on my shoe with the explanation that God imposes higher duties than cleanliness.

MARY TODD. Yes, Mrs. Johnston's angry. Her husband's put her here...

(MARY gives MYRA a cloth to wipe her shoe. MYRA looks to the window.)

MYRA BRADWELL. They have not removed the bars?

(MYRA gives MARY a letter.)

MYRA BRADWELL. Excellent news, your sister responded. She agrees that you can live with her when I get you out. Here is the lawn dress you ordered in the village.

MARY TODD. It is a HORRID color.

MYRA BRADWELL. It is black.

MARY TODD. When you have lost a husband and three sons you come to know Black. I insist on the BLACKEST.

MYRA BRADWELL. Why not try it on? Right away.

MARY TODD. No, I shall return it.

(MYRA hands MARY a stack of newspapers.)

MYRA BRADWELL. My column about your son's choice of quack doctors is on the top!

(MARY gets her scissors.)

MYRA BRADWELL. The doctor just told me you insist on corn bread every morning, leave it untouched and call for rolls. You order griddle cakes for supper but call for corn bread...

MARY TODD. To everythin' the doctor says now, I answer, "I think this fair and right." It is RAVAGIN' me...

MYRA BRADWELL. Try harder.

(MYRA puts down some fruit.)

MYRA BRADWELL. The strawberries are from my friend Belva Lockwood.

MARY TODD. Strawberries are pleasant for invalids...

MYRA BRADWELL. Belva's been rejected to practice law. The justices say barring women from the supreme court goes back to the days of England, so I am writing a bill asking all male attorneys to wear gowns and periwigs. *(She looks around.)* It is DISMAL in here.

MARY TODD. It is dismal because it is a NUT HOUSE.

(MARY looks out the window.)

MARY TODD. Sometimes it feels as if fallin' into that White Net would be my redemption. Myra, I AM NOT MAD BUT SOON SHALL BE! I assure you I have strange leanin's...

MYRA BRADWELL. Perhaps we should keep the bars.

(MARY returns to her trunks.)

MARY TODD. I'm still searchin' for the curtains for Bessie. I'm confused as to their placement...

MYRA BRADWELL. I have received some very distressing news.

(MARY takes a book from the trunk and offers it to MYRA.)

MARY TODD. "Into each life some rain must fall." There is no doubt that Longfellow is a spiritualist...*New England Tragedies.*

MYRA BRADWELL. None other than *You* paid for the Pinkerton detectives who followed you all these years and for the doctors who certified you Insane.

MARY TODD. I never paid a cent.

MYRA BRADWELL. You did not know you paid, but your son took the money from your estate.

MARY TODD. THIS CANNOT BE TRUE.

(MYRA shows MARY the paperwork.)

MYRA BRADWELL. I wrote to the executor. *You* paid thousands.

(MARY suddenly becomes violent, hitting furniture.)

MARY TODD. WHY SHOULD HE DO THIS TO ME? I DON'T UNDERSTAND! What have I done to so upset the boy?

MYRA BRADWELL. Please, stop at once, you will bring the attendants.

(MARY pounds on the window bars. MYRA tries to restrain her.)

MYRA BRADWELL. *That is enough, Mrs. Lincoln.*

MARY TODD. Let me go...

MYRA BRADWELL. You are not improving.

MARY TODD. I'm deterioratin'!

(MARY continues to flail as MYRA wrestles her to the floor.)

MYRA BRADWELL. You are no match for me, Mary, I'm twice your size and younger.

(MARY punches MYRA.)

MARY TODD. LEAVE ME ALONE OR I'LL BITE YOU!

(MYRA pins MARY's arm behind her back.)

MYRA BRADWELL. Stop moving or I will spank you. If you want to get out, you must make NO FUSS! DO YOU WANT TO GET OUT? ANSWER ME!

(MARY's movements diminish.)

MYRA BRADWELL. I will expose your son's illegal use of your money in my next column. I will bring you a copy.

(MARY lies face down on the floor sobbing.)

MARY TODD. I nursed him. I washed him. I sewed all of his clothes. He was a cross-eyed boy, now he's A BIG FAT PIG!

(MARY and MYRA lie next to each other on the floor.)

MYRA BRADWELL. Shhshh, do not speak. It will be easier... *(Ironically:)* For everyone...

MARY TODD. I want to speak. I want to SCREAM! I'M SO ANGRY!

(MYRA puts her hand over MARY's mouth.)

MYRA BRADWELL. Are you finished? *(Appeasing her:)* I will force Robert to give us immediate reimbursement. I told Bessie about the curtains. She would be pleased to have them.

MARY TODD. White lace curtains blowin' in the wind, the smell of balsam and pine... To think poor Bessie went into that flamin' buildin', it's a wonder she survived!

MYRA BRADWELL. MRS. LINCOLN, THAT IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.

MARY TODD. James said he tried to hold her back but she ran in to please you...

MYRA BRADWELL. James and I do not discuss the Fire!

MARY TODD. A husband and wife must discuss everythin', I told you, that day in the shops...

MYRA BRADWELL. I will not listen...

MARY TODD. Myra, I tried to warn you, Bessie is sufferin'...

MYRA BRADWELL. Please!

MARY TODD. I simply want to help...

MYRA BRADWELL. I cannot discuss this.

MARY TODD. Since that day, you have treated me as a *stranger*. And now suddenly you are here...You're shakin'.

(MYRA looks around the room.)

MYRA BRADWELL. Is it wise to keep so many Vegetables?

MARY TODD. Here, they are the crownin' mark of sanity. Won't you answer me?

MYRA BRADWELL. Is she watching us through the slot?

MARY TODD. Pay no attention. You must start by givin' up your work at the paper.

MYRA BRADWELL. How can I give up my work at the paper? I AM the paper. I told the men I would not allow dictation by the Union and they came crawling back.

MARY TODD. You are so strong-minded it's a wonder James finds you attractive *in the least* ...

MYRA BRADWELL. He finds me *very* attractive.

MARY TODD. Oh!... You are a wicked girl.

MYRA BRADWELL. Did your "Great One" find you so?

MARY TODD. He could not help himself.

MYRA BRADWELL. It must have been hard to kiss such a GOD.

MARY TODD. He said the Todd women were *someethin'*.

MYRA BRADWELL. He had more than one?

MARY TODD. He accompanied my sister to a few balls. I fortunately do not know the particulars. (*Sensually:*) My husband was a slow man in all things.

MYRA BRADWELL. Well James always finds me attractive. No matter how late at night I work, he's always ready.

MARY TODD. Why did the good Lord make you so fortunate?

MYRA BRADWELL. Why should he not? I am not like one of those strident, unmarried suffragettes.

(MYRA takes fabric and ribbon samples from an A.T. Stewart package.)

MYRA BRADWELL. Tomorrow MR. WILKIE, our reporter, arrives on the eleven o' clock train. If you promise you will behave, I will show you the samples.

MARY TODD. (*Going wild:*) Oh, I cannot overcome my weakness for velvets! (*Holding a sample to the light:*) This tarlatan lights up beautifully! It is to be flounced, *qu'en pensez vous?* I will enjoy it because it's a variety not figured...

(She makes a pile of samples.)

MARY TODD. I would be grateful for four black widow's caps made of this heavy mournin' silk, richly trimmed with black crepe myrtle—very distingué lookin'. This exact shade or I do not want it. Help me measure my head with this string...

(MYRA measures MARY's head, as MARY's fabric frenzy builds.)

MARY TODD. One cap should be adorned with this Mary Louise blue ribbon, most bewitchedly piquant—but they must not ask me over five dollars for it. One black watered silk and a berth point of lace trimmed with swan's-down. Oh, this bombazine and this merino with tiny flowers would be just sweet enough to eat—and this black illusion *à la vierge!* For the veils, the very finest 'n the blackest 'n the lightest. (*Checking a trunk:*) Oh an ermine fan with silver

spangles would go nicely with my chinchilla set, sable cape, cuffs and muff... I must look for my shawl pin ball and chain!

MYRA BRADWELL. I have never known a woman quite so resourceful.

MARY TODD. My grandmother Jane wove her weddin' dress from Weeds. As a girl I made hoops for my skirt from willow Reeds.

(MARY pulls out a huge white hooped skirt from a trunk. MYRA gets papers from her briefcase.)

MYRA BRADWELL. FRANC WILKIE arrives in the morning, we have work.

(MARY gets out her money.)

MARY TODD. The name sounds familiar, the War days?

MYRA BRADWELL. You met him at the White House. He was at the Times.

MARY TODD. Yes, in sixty-two. I met him once for a minute. I met so many men. Here's the money for the caps. *(Taking back a few coins.)* I cannot part with the pennies, I've a weakness for my All's profile. *(Trying to give her money:)* Now, I've always been very careful about money matters—you never accept anythin' from me, why?

MYRA BRADWELL. Mr. Wilkie will be interviewing you.

MARY TODD. Have you cleared it with the PATER? You should know that I am the one who pays for your sins AFTER YOU LEAVE.

MYRA BRADWELL. MR. Patterson—I refuse to dignify him as a "DOCTOR"—will be absent. He *leaves* on Saturdays.

MARY TODD. I'm expectin' a visit from General Farnsworth. He was a dear friend of my husband's. You gave me no notice of your arrival, I can't always be at your disposal...

MYRA BRADWELL. May I at least open a window?

MARY TODD. They're locked shut. General Farnsworth was there on *The Night*. You know, the rocker in which my husband sat That Night? The curtains? The fabric in the box? It was all red. Like the inside of a doll house.

(The room is faintly washed in red. MYRA looks at MARY, who is lost in her reverie.)

MYRA BRADWELL. When does General Farnsworth arrive?

(MARY returns to her trunks as the red fades.)

MARY TODD. The General is an ardent spiritualist. I'm hopin' he will recommend a medium in the area.

MYRA BRADWELL. MRS. LINCOLN!

MARY TODD. You're not the only friend I smuggled letters to. *(Taking out porcelain.)* Have I shown you the Haviland Solferino plates?

MYRA BRADWELL. Yes, of course! Many times. I love them.

MARY TODD. You've never seen the plates. Lyin' does not become you. Perhaps it was a "White Lie"?

MYRA BRADWELL. *No, it was a real lie.* You must put on a fresh dress for the General—with your reputation for fashion. How can you bear that wool?

MARY TODD. I am cold.

MYRA BRADWELL. You are cold, in August?

(MARY takes the strawberries and gets into bed.)

MYRA BRADWELL. What are you doing? You are fully dressed. Get out of the bed instantly, it deviates from MR. Patterson's notion of "moral behavior." OUT!

(MYRA pulls MARY out. MARY holds up the stuffed eagle.)

MARY TODD. The bird's missin' a foot.

(MYRA reads aloud from her writing paper.)

MYRA BRADWELL. "Occasionally some word has come up to the great busy world, concerning the condition of the LADY in whom

all American people feel a kindly interest. The Lady whose "*afternoon of life*" is filled with such a Chilly Atmosphere..."

MARY TODD. AFTERNOON OF LIFE? Is that from Whittier?

MYRA BRADWELL. (*Continuing:*) "Recently a representative of the Times in quest of scientific facts by means of Personal Observation..."

MARY TODD. WHAT ARE YOU DOIN'?

MYRA BRADWELL. I am writing Franc Wilkie's article. I am a journalist, I will fight your son with what I do best—in the PRESS. I will also choose the print date. When we are finished your son will *beg for mercy*.

MARY TODD. THIS cheers me up... As a "lawyer" I was worried about you.

MYRA BRADWELL. What did you say?

MARY TODD. The Supreme Court invoked the "Law of the Creator," forbiddin' you to practice.

MYRA BRADWELL. I passed the bar exam with the Highest Honors, Mrs. Lincoln. I did better than ANY MAN.

MARY TODD. The *Supreme* Court of the Land must be right, Myra. Not to mention the CREATOR. (*She points up to the Creator:*) I was worried to have a lawyer-that-isn't-a-lawyer representin' me.

MYRA BRADWELL. I AM a lawyer! In other states I could practice so what is the difference?

MARY TODD. The difference is the LAW.

MYRA BRADWELL. SO GET ANOTHER LAWYER!

MARY TODD. Truth is I need whoever I can get. And if you are a non-lawyer so be it, you are after all a Journalist of *Some* Repute.

MYRA BRADWELL. AND YOU HAVE CRITICIZED ME FOR THAT AS WELL!

MARY TODD. This is certainly not an attractive side. You have changed...

MYRA BRADWELL. YOU BELIEVE A WOMAN SHOULD NOT WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME. Have you given these ancient canons any real, sensible THOUGHT?

MARY TODD. My only real, sensible thought is I'M ANGRY AT MY SON. SO ANGRY I'M THINKIN' OF THE UNSPEAKABLE. Forgive me, if I hurt you. Let's write the article!

MYRA BRADWELL. When does the General arrive?

MARY TODD. HE DOES NOT ARRIVE. I LIED — A Great Sin — but still only a "White Lie" as he may have come since I invited him...

MYRA BRADWELL. Your mind, Mrs. Lincoln, is something quite hard to fathom...

MARY TODD. I lied TO MAKE MYSELF SEEM MORE POPULAR. All right?

MYRA BRADWELL. In a mental institution you wanted to seem more popular? You fail to see the large picture...

MARY TODD. CARRY ON WITH THE ARTICLE.

MYRA BRADWELL. (*Writing quickly:*) "The Times representative visited the institution of Dr. Patterson and, whilst there, was introduced to Mrs. Lincoln by... (*Pointing to herself:*) Me. "A mutual..." Nameless..." Friend who happened to be there..."

MARY TODD. Friend?

MYRA BRADWELL. Tomorrow you will come down to meet Wilkie. Make *no reference* to him as a newspaperman — simply treat him as an old friend. Invite him up to see the view and we will stay here "in conference" for about two hours. Is that understood?

(MARY *removes keys hidden in her petticoat.*)

MARY TODD. I would like you to take these keys and hide 'em.

MYRA BRADWELL. What are they?

MARY TODD. Keys to all my trunks at Robert's. Should anythin' happen to me.

MYRA BRADWELL. You must keep them. When you get out...

MARY TODD. He will block me, I know it! HE'S YOUNG IN AGE BUT OLD IN SIN!

MYRA BRADWELL. Please, be calm. I will stay with you here tonight, I have already received permission from your doctor.

MARY TODD. YOU ARE STAYIN' HERE TONIGHT?!

MYRA BRADWELL. Yes, we see Wilkie in the morning.

(MARY *hugs* MYRA.)

MARY TODD. Hooray! You are an angel. I adore you...

MYRA BRADWELL. (*Extricating herself*;) Excuse me...

MARY TODD. Thank you, thank you. I'll try to behave.

(MYRA *scribbles*.)

MYRA BRADWELL. "The lady appeared in very good spirits and her mind was clear and lucid."

MARY TODD. "Clear and *sprightly*."

MYRA BRADWELL. "Clear and *sprightly*. She invited the gentleman to her room to obtain a view of the pastoral landscape..."

MARY TODD. HIDDEN BEHIND BARS!

MYRA BRADWELL. (*Putting her off*;) Later... "Concerning Mr. Lincoln she related anecdotes illustrating his extreme good nature..."

MARY TODD. He tended towards melancholy...

MYRA BRADWELL. "And conversed about the assassination..."

MARY TODD. General Farnsworth was present at his bedside That Fateful Night...

MYRA BRADWELL. Where did you go with Tad in Europe?

MARY TODD. France, England...

MYRA BRADWELL. "Her visit to England was alluded to and *thoroughly discussed*. Tad was with her and she alluded..."

MARY TODD. That's "alluded" twice, dear...

MYRA BRADWELL. "To the child now dead but whose memory is very dear to her..."

MARY TODD. "She showed all the warmth and affection a fond mother might be expected to exhibit..."

MYRA BRADWELL. "There was however NOT A SIGN OF WEAKNESS." We will make that a headline. "Or any abnormal manifestations of mind visible..."

(MARY *opens her desk drawer and takes out the gun, showing it to MYRA.*)

MARY TODD. I plan to kill my son when next he visits. I told you I had leanin's.

MYRA BRADWELL. FOR HEAVEN'S SAKES! Where did you get that gun?

MARY TODD. I bought it from Gus Gumpert's store in Philadelphia to go with Tad's military costume.

MYRA BRADWELL. Is it loaded?

(MARY *hasn't thought of this.*)

MARY TODD. Well, aren't most guns? At least in Lexington Kentucky — where I was born — guns were loaded.

MYRA BRADWELL. Give it to me. (*Exploding:*) What is Wilkie going to say IF HE SEES YOU HAVE A GUN?!

MARY TODD. People regard me as crazy. If I say the moon is made of green cheese they heartily agree.

MYRA BRADWELL. Give me that. You are ruining my case.

MARY TODD. Ah, so now it is *your* case!

MYRA BRADWELL. If the doctor sees it he is going to send you up to the VERY TOP and you are never coming down.

MARY TODD. My son and Husband's friends have forgotten that despite their POWER, the Great One stays the man I love and the father of my children. They cannot take that away from me...I know I'm not an easy person, I have my foibles.

MYRA BRADWELL. I had not noticed...

MARY TODD. Why wouldn't he just leave me be and let me live my little life?

MYRA BRADWELL. Because men like Robert are used to *getting their way*. (*Trying to take the gun:*) You are making me hyperventilate.

MARY TODD. That happens to me...

MYRA BRADWELL. Trust me with the gun until I go.

MARY TODD. What would *you* do, Mrs. Bradwell, if your own child saw you suffer through the deaths of your three Sons and the shootin' of your Husband? Put you on trial for Insanity and sent you *here*? (*Looking around:*) Is this the kind of place to send someone you care for?...

MYRA BRADWELL. Put your arms around me, Mary.

MARY TODD. This is how I know he doesn't love me... What if your firstborn little Myra had done this to you?

MYRA BRADWELL. Please do not say her name, I asked you not to...

MARY TODD. Oh, dear, I am such a *fool*.

(MYRA *holds* MARY.)

MYRA BRADWELL. I love you, my pet, and I will care for you. I promise.

(MARY *cries in her arms as MYRA takes the gun.*)

MYRA BRADWELL. Thank you.

MARY TODD. As a boy Robert used to try walkin' in his father's gigantic boots. He's been tryin' it all his life, poor thing...

(MYRA *unloads bullets from the gun, taking a deep breath.*)

MYRA BRADWELL. What would you like to do if you could do ANYTHING AT ALL?

(MARY *thinks a moment.*)

MARY TODD. I would like to jump on this bed.

MYRA BRADWELL. ...Then do. Is it a good mattress?

MARY TODD. I bought my own mattresses...I would like for you to jump with me.

MYRA BRADWELL. (*Cynically:*) Of course.

MARY TODD. Take off your shoes. They're stained anyway.

MYRA BRADWELL. You make things worse for yourself.

MARY TODD. I ALWAYS HAVE.

(MARY takes off her shoes as MYRA puts away the gun.)

MARY TODD. You did say "ANYTHIN' AT ALL"?

MYRA BRADWELL. Yes, I sadly did.

(MARY gets up on the bed.)

MYRA BRADWELL. Wait.

(MYRA covers the slot in the door with the gardening coat.)

MARY TODD. I am waitin'.

MYRA BRADWELL. I would rather not.

MARY TODD. Promise is a promise. I'll make a scene.

MYRA BRADWELL. Alas.

(MYRA takes off her shoes, as MARY begins jumping.)

MARY TODD. It's not a bad mattress. Has a certain give.

(MARY puts out her arms as she jumps.)

MYRA BRADWELL. What are you doing?

MARY TODD. SOMETHIN' YOU NEVER SEEM TO FEEL THE NEED TO DO. LET GO!

(MYRA gets up on the bed, as MARY jumps, holding out her arms.)

MARY TODD. You're as still as a corpse.

(MYRA begins to jump tentatively, then gets caught up in the action. The two women laugh.)

MARY TODD. A serious newspaper lady. What would your subscribers say? Or those TOUGH UNION MEN?

MYRA BRADWELL. Please do not tell them.

MARY TODD. You'll see, once you start it's like a ball of yarn unravelin'...!

(MARY jumps higher, encouraging MYRA.)

MARY TODD. Higher...higher... Unknit that threatenin' brow!

(MARY hoots gleefully.)

MARY TODD. Yahoo! You are spendin' the night!

MYRA BRADWELL. At Bellevue with the Lunatics!

(MARY throws a pillow at her.)

MYRA BRADWELL. Don't.

MARY TODD. You began it.

(MYRA hits MARY with a pillow.)

MYRA BRADWELL. You began it.

MARY TODD. You continued it.

MYRA BRADWELL. You are hurting me.

MARY TODD. With a feather pillow?

MYRA BRADWELL. Stop!

MARY TODD. You stop! Such an important lady, jumpin' on a bed!

MYRA BRADWELL. And a First Lady!

MARY TODD. A former First, now a Beast of Yore. My ankles feel like twigs. It's a wonder they hold me up at all.

MYRA BRADWELL. My stomach hurts.

MARY TODD. Mine as well. I feel a bit indisposed.

(There is a knock on the door.)

FEMALE VOICE. Ma'am, Mrs. Lincoln? Is everything all right?

MARY TODD. *(Calling:)* Perfect!

MYRA BRADWELL. *(Under her breath:)* Delightful.

(MARY gets off the bed.)

MARY TODD. *(Touching MYRA:)* I could never fire a gun. They do give you a sense of control. *(Going to the door.)* Please excuse me, you know I have a weak bladder.

(MARY exits. MYRA holds her stomach, unsettled. She begins to rifle in MARY's desk drawers, searching through letters and papers.)

A wild scream. MYRA rushes to the window. She shivers, gazing at the light through the bars. Sound of a train whistle. It slowly fades.

She heads back to the open desk drawers, snooping, as MARY re-enters.)

MARY TODD. You will find no investment secrets.

MYRA BRADWELL. You scared me with that gun. You must trust me in the future...

(MARY goes to the window bars and looks out at the night, as MYRA writes.)

MYRA BRADWELL. "There was some light through the bars to which she called the attention of the gentleman. She said they seemed to menace her with the idea that she was imprisoned..."

(Another scream.)

MARY TODD. They're force-feedin' Minnie Judd.

MYRA BRADWELL. They force-feed patients?

MARY TODD. Tiny Minnie weighs less than eighty.

(MARY joins MYRA, who stops writing.)

MYRA BRADWELL. "She was apprehensive that the presence of insane people in the house whose wild cries she heard might affect her mind...so as to unseat her reason."

(MARY is all business, as she dictates to MYRA.)

MARY TODD. Write. "Mrs. Lincoln specially dwelt on her friendship with MR. SEWARD." In capitals. In Wilkie's day the Times was a Seward paper. In your article we must speak highly of Seward. (*Dictating:*) "It was the habit of the Secretary to dine with the Lincolns three times a week." I DESPISE Seward but this will help our cause.

And in my visit to England we must mention Mr. Motley. Mrs. Lincoln told how badly she felt when *Motley* was removed by PRESIDENT GRANT as Minister of England." Motley was Charles Sumner's choice and this will show my deep allegiance to Sumner, and GIVE A GOOD JAB TO THAT SMALL SPECIMEN OF HUMANITY, GRANT!

MYRA BRADWELL. (*Impressed:*) "She keenly described the characters she met abroad, showing great powers of analysis."

(*There is a knock on the door and a tray is thrust through a slot. MYRA takes a plate stacked high with vegetables, another stacked with corn bread.*)

MARY TODD. I ASKED FOR GRIDDLE CAKES!

MYRA BRADWELL. *Take the bread.* Remember what I told you?

MARY TODD. RETURN THE PLATE!

(*MYRA opens the door and hands back the plate.*)

MYRA BRADWELL. I am sorry, Mrs. Lincoln is not hungry tonight.

MARY TODD. I'M FAMISHED.

(*MYRA listens to the person outside.*)

MYRA BRADWELL. (*To MARY:*) She would like to know if you want anything else.

MARY TODD. God forbid.

(*MYRA thinks, then speaks to the person outside.*)

MYRA BRADWELL. Uh, please, if you would be so kind as to bring the patient, um, ONE GENEROUS CUP of the "Bellevue remedy." That will suffice, thank you very much.

(MYRA closes the door.)

MYRA BRADWELL. IF THEY GIVE YOU GRIDDLE CAKES, TAKE GRIDDLE CAKES.

MARY TODD. They did not give me griddle cakes, they gave me corn bread!

MYRA BRADWELL. Just accept everything pleasantly.

MARY TODD. Do you know how long I've been here? Seventy eight days.

MYRA BRADWELL. Are you here for the cuisine, Mrs. Lincoln? Take whatever is needed to get out.

MARY TODD. I will get out on my terms, Mrs. Bradwell.

MYRA BRADWELL. On your terms? From an asylum?

(MARY takes the china plates from the trunk and puts the vegetables on them.)

MARY TODD. Shall we eat on the Haviland?

(A knock; MYRA opens the door, taking a plate stacked high with rolls, and a large cup.)

(MYRA listens to the person outside.)

MYRA BRADWELL. *(To MARY:)* She is asking if you would like anything else.

MARY TODD. Simply my small glass of Ale before bed, thank you.

MYRA BRADWELL. TWO ALES PLEASE.

(MYRA closes the door. MARY looks at the plate.)

MARY TODD. ROLLS?

(MYRA downs the cup of the Bellevue remedy in one desperate gulp.)

MARY TODD. Halt, that's WHISKEY!

MYRA BRADWELL. Ahhgghh.

MARY TODD. You scare me...

MYRA BRADWELL. *Now, listen carefully.* When I return to Chicago I will visit Robert at his office, our final maneuver...

(MARY hands MYRA a plate of vegetables, showing her the china.)

MARY TODD. The gold border with the two lines signifies the union of North and South.

(A knock on the door, MYRA flings it open and grabs the two glasses of ale. MYRA listens to the person outside as MARY returns to her trunks.)

MYRA BRADWELL. *(To MARY:)* Your "bedtime ale."

(MYRA listens again.)

MYRA BRADWELL. She wants "The Key"?

(MARY hands out a key, shutting the door.)

MYRA BRADWELL. What was that for?

MARY TODD. To lock us in.

(We hear the click of the lock. MYRA takes a swig of ale. MARY finds a pen in a trunk.)

MARY TODD. This is the PEN my husband used to sign the Emancipation Proclamation...

MYRA BRADWELL. WOULD THAT IT SIGN OURS!

(MYRA downs the ale.)

MARY TODD. I would like you to take the Pen for your dear husband James. I have never seen you drink.

MYRA BRADWELL. I do not.

MARY TODD. The Ale is for bedtime.

MYRA BRADWELL. *(Drinking:)* I am afraid I am quite overcome suddenly.

MARY TODD. A woman at night should always be fresh. This kind of harsh overwork is akin to devil worship.

MYRA BRADWELL. I will pretend I did not hear that.

MARY TODD. Be nice to James. Please take the pen.

MYRA BRADWELL. I will meet Wilkie at the station, you will make NO REFERENCE to him as a newspaperman.

MARY TODD. Let me give you one of my peau de soie night-gowns.

(MYRA changes for bed, staying in her undergarments.)

MYRA BRADWELL. No, thank you. *(Under her breath:)* We are not quite the same size...

MARY TODD. There is one small problem I failed to tell you about.

MYRA BRADWELL. I am not particularly surprised.

MARY TODD. I usually leave the place next to me in the bed for the President.

MYRA BRADWELL. ...Oh, of course.

(The two women prepare for bed.)

MARY TODD. Let me contemplate this for a moment...

(MYRA has finished her ale.)

MYRA BRADWELL. May I have a bit of your Ale?

MARY TODD. Leave me a swallow.

(MARY touches the side of the bed where the spirit of the President usually sleeps.)

MARY TODD. I suppose I could talk to him...I am sure he would understand if this once he relinquished his place.

MYRA BRADWELL. Especially if he knew how TIRED I was.

MARY TODD. Would you like to speak to him yourself?

MYRA BRADWELL. Perhaps it would be better if it came from you.

MARY TODD. Yes, you are right, as always.

(MARY goes to the window and communicates with the spirit of the president. MYRA looks at the pen that signed the Emancipation Proclamation.)

MARY TODD. He is in agreement. He sends you his deepest regards. He always liked you.

MYRA BRADWELL. I liked him... Is this the correct side of the bed?

MARY TODD. Yes. Oh dear, my Ale has completely disappeared. You are worryin' me, dear Myra. I thought you practiced temperance.

(MARY and MYRA get into bed.)

MYRA BRADWELL. I did. When you come downstairs tomorrow to greet Wilkie, what will you do?

MARY TODD. I'll say it's nice to finally see a NEWSPAPERMAN who can tell the world the truth.

MYRA BRADWELL. YOU WILL GREET HIM AS AN OLD FRIEND!

MARY TODD. But that's a lie... You know, my husband refused to even say, "I am delighted to see you," if he wasn't in fact *delighted*. One mistruth leads to another.

MYRA BRADWELL. JUST SAY "HELLO." ASK HIM UP TO SEE THE VIEW.

MARY TODD. Has the eggnog gone to your head?

(MYRA covers her face with the sheet.)

MARY TODD. Do you mind if I glance quickly at my sister's letter? ...Goodnight.

(MARY reads the letter as a bell is heard in the hall. The slot opens and eyes look through. MARY lies down and the lights go out. Suddenly in darkness there is a drawn-out gunshot. Smoke and red light

slowly wash the room. The red rocking chair appears, as MARY stares.)

MARY TODD. Red, on red.

(She looks at her hands. They are soaked with blood.)

MARY TODD. Oh...

(MYRA wakes and sees MARY sitting, staring at her hands.)

MYRA BRADWELL. What has happened to you, Mary?

(MYRA tries to take MARY's hands in her own.)

MARY TODD. ...Stop, I will soil you...the blood...

(MYRA takes MARY's hands, as the nightmare fades. MARY continues to look at her hands.

MARY gets out of bed and goes to the window. She looks out at the moon. MYRA joins her.)

MYRA BRADWELL. Do you have these memories oft?

MARY TODD. ...it'was seein' the blood – downstairs in the wash-room – that's made it all come back. After Mrs. Munger used the knife... *And all of our reminiscing...*

(MARY and MYRA look out the barred window.)

MARY TODD. The moon is red.

(A piercing scream from the room above as lights fade to a red moon.)

End of Act I

ACT II

Prologue

(MARY sleeps, dressed in a black peau de soie nightgown.)

(Suddenly a light floods the foot of her bed. The spirit who appears to her is a vaporous cloud. MARY gets up.)

MARY TODD. Tad, is that you...? My sunshine, my darlin' boy? I thought this *despised room* was repellin' you all. My heart bleeds at the return of these anniversaries...

(She searches through a trunk, finding some stockings.)

MARY TODD. I offered Mrs. Wheeler's boy a pair of your stockin's today. I told the boy I'd bought 'em 'specially for him. The Patriarch reproached me. *Lies* are forbidden as part of his "moral treatment." I asked him if he'd ever heard of a *White Lie*? "It's a lie so Light and Lovely it pleases." He no doubt passed it off as *Insanity*... Not one great sorrow ever approached the agony of losin' you. You who in your tender treatment reminded me of your beloved father—my All.

(Another spirit appears at the foot of the bed.)

MARY TODD. Come closer...Willie, my sweet son? You cannot dream of the comfort this gives me, to see you. I am bowed to the earth with great sorrow...

(She takes a dress from a trunk.)

MARY TODD. I wore these black flounces at the White House ball, but they were for YOU as you lay dyin' 'n God was punishin' me for my Worldliness. Only the Grave can soften this Grief.

(She replaces the dress in the trunk and a dusty cloud bursts forth.)

MARY TODD. Oh, I have such a terror of moths...

(The net outside the window billows and another spirit appears.)

MARY TODD. Little Aleck?! My precious lamb, you were too young to fight. Lord, this is quite a *SHOWIN'* tonight!

(We hear the long, low wail of a woman. The spirits instantly disappear. MARY rushes to the window.)

MARY TODD. The New Patient? (*Whispering:*) I need to get out...Eighty nine days...

(She looks at the window, where the bars have been removed. She turns, seeing eyes spying on her through the slot.)

MARY TODD. Hide me, O my Savior, hide me! (*Ironically:*) Yes, this is the epitome of Restful.

(Lights fade.)

Scene 3 Eleven days later: August 18

(It is late afternoon and raining, as MARY stands at her open front door, still in her black peau de soie nightgown, her hair down and tousled. She addresses someone who's just left.)

MARY TODD. HOW DARE YOU GO ON VACATION! YOU FORGOT TAD'S ANNIVERSARY! YOU ARE A DIRTY DOG, ROBERT! A DIRTY, DIRTY DOG!

(Items from the trunks are on the floor around the room. MARY gathers some feminine objects and exits.)

(After a moment MYRA, exhausted and looking slightly less polished, hurries in, carrying an umbrella, her suitcase, newspapers, and a bouquet of flowers. She looks for MARY, adjusts her hair in the mirror and wipes her brow. She finds something to put the flowers in, then straightens the unmade bed as MARY reenters. MYRA hands her the lawn dress.)

MYRA BRADWELL. It is nearly evening. You are not dressed. What has happened to you?

MARY TODD. I find no reason to get dressed anymore.

MYRA BRADWELL. You went out in your nightgown? That is against the doctor's "moral behavior."

MARY TODD. What does he know of "morality"? I brought the New Patient some trinkets to lift her gloom...

MYRA BRADWELL. *Stay away from the patients.* It paints you in a poor light. (*Looking at the disarray:*) Why are you emptying your trunks?

MARY TODD. INVENTORY.

(MYRA *tries to wrestle off* MARY's gown.)

MYRA BRADWELL. YOU CANNOT STAY IN YOUR NIGHT CLOTHES. Downstairs they are saying you are *capricious*.

MARY TODD. I don't care if they're sayin' I'm a limb of Satan lopin' down the broad, high road. It's a sanitarium, I'll REST if I want to. And if I want to dance 'round the garden in my nightgown in the rain I will do so.

MYRA BRADWELL. Please do not dance around the garden!

MARY TODD. Have you no imagination, no WIT?

(MYRA *gets the gown off.*)

MYRA BRADWELL. You are less plump...

MARY TODD. The logical result of STARVATION.

MYRA BRADWELL. You must really wash, Mrs. Lincoln. Do you not want to get out of here?

MARY TODD. You are insultin', Mrs. Bradwell. I HAVE HEARD NOTHIN' FROM YOU IN ELEVEN DAYS!

MYRA BRADWELL. Let us tie your corset, quickly. I am on my way to Wisconsin to meet Miss Goodell...

MARY TODD. (*Deeply hurt:*) WISCONSIN!? Did you truly say Wisconsin?

MYRA BRADWELL. Yes, the state has denied Miss Goodell the right to practice. She needs me.

MARY TODD. PRAY, THEN, GO! GO TO WISCONSIN! DO NOT WASTE ANOTHER MINUTE! I'M RELEASIN' YOU AS MY LAWYER—OR WHATEVER YOU ARE. PLEASE DEPART!

(MYRA *refers to a recent newspaper.*)

MYRA BRADWELL. I accuse Mr. Patterson in my column of denying your postal rights and threaten a habeus corpus.

(MARY *stares at MYRA as she ties her corset.*)

MARY TODD. You look unwell, Mrs. Bradwell. The dark circles under your eyes? Oh, these new steel-busk'd corsets are hateful.

MYRA BRADWELL. Have you tried the health bustle? Less heating on the spine.

MARY TODD. I've tried nothin'. This is no fashion show. Are you gettin' enough rest?

MYRA BRADWELL. I have just been appointed to the convention in Chicago. Susan B. Anthony came to me yesterday...

MARY TODD. Ah, your *great* friend!

MYRA BRADWELL. She is miffed because I have chosen to go with Lucy Stone and the moderate ladies. I gave Miss Anthony a seat on the platform to assuage her, I barely fit you in. (*Getting the dress.*) Come, we are wasting time...

MARY TODD. Your time is far too precious to be spent with Minions like me! There are *bigger* women who need you more.

(MARY *frisbees MYRA's new flowers out the window.*)

MYRA BRADWELL. Why, the bars have been removed.

MARY TODD. Conveniently. I may simply be one of your causes, Myra, but I pray you to remember I *reside* here. Every mornin' I wake to the knowledge that I'm LOCKED UP. CHAINED. You suddenly arrive like the Archangel. I can feel your body radiatin' with the world outside. It pains me.

(MYRA *holds out her arms.*)

MYRA BRADWELL. My dear girl, embrace me...

MARY TODD. Absolutely not. You're all artifice. A carefully orchestrated instrument of manipulation.

(MYRA *tries to get the lawn dress on MARY.*)

MYRA BRADWELL. I met with your son...

MARY TODD. Yes, he was just here.

MYRA BRADWELL. At his office, he accused me of being a high priestess in a gang of spiritualists. I convinced him *no*. Your son has threatened to destroy my paper.

(MARY looks to the door.)

MARY TODD. He says my sister's suddenly TOO SICK to receive me...

MYRA BRADWELL. He MADE ME A PROMISE you could go to your sister's, but then he heard I brought WILKIE here. He wrote me a lethal letter. Your son is very vindictive... His waistline has certainly expanded...

MARY TODD. Yes. When the Patriarch learned that Wilkie was here, *I* was put in solitary quarters. He threatened to send me UP TO THE MOST CRAMPED OF ATTIC GARRETS. To a place where "A WOMAN CANNOT EVEN STAND UP STRAIGHT—EVEN A SHORT WOMAN." I withheld that we also WROTE Wilkie's article.

MYRA BRADWELL. We simply drafted it. *I saw* your sister in Springfield, she invites you and you will go! ROBERT IS LYING.

MARY TODD. He says *my* lyin' should be put down to Insanity. He's left FOR VACATION with his family, TO RYE!

(MYRA has finished arranging the lawn dress and brandishes a piece of silverware, as MARY escapes to her trunks.)

MYRA BRADWELL. Do you recognize this SILVER SPOON? You had a séance before your trial and gave the rest of the service to a CLAIRVOYANT?

MARY TODD. Yes, I gave it to her with EXTREME AND UTTER SATISFACTION.

MYRA BRADWELL. Robert ADORED the service. He has the spoons.

MARY TODD. I could care less if he has the NUT PICKS...

MYRA BRADWELL. You will tell me who is this clairvoyant and I will return the service to Robert to appease him!

MARY TODD. I WILL NOT! I see my son has manipulated you well.

(MYRA physically forces the name out of MARY. It comes out in a peep.)

MARY TODD. Mrs. Farwell.

MYRA BRADWELL. Your hair, let me brush it...

MARY TODD. Lookin' at yours, I would prefer not. *(Going through a trunk:)* I can't find the Chantilly curtains for Bessie...

MYRA BRADWELL. Robert RETURNED them. He returned ALL the curtains you purchased in Chicago.

MARY TODD. Impossible! I am beyond LOATHIN'...

MYRA BRADWELL. My daughter will not mind.

MARY TODD. I'm not thinkin' of Bessie! Oh my Lord he brought those curtains back to all the shopkeepers? If I had committed murder in every city in this blessed union I could not be more vilified.

(MYRA fixes MARY's hair.)

MYRA BRADWELL. If I may be so bold Mrs. Lincoln, what were the MYRIAD OF CURTAINS for?

MARY TODD. You may be so bold. I planned to purchase a cottage in Wisconsin. Finally unpack my things, settle there.

MYRA BRADWELL. *(Surprised:)* In Wisconsin?

MARY TODD. Yes. Where you are going.

(MYRA takes a pin from her own hair and puts it in MARY's.)

MARY TODD. In Clear View.

MYRA BRADWELL. The spiritual camp?

MARY TODD. I liked the mountain-air, my windows open to the smell of balsam and pine—white lace curtains blowin' in the wind.

A home. That's all I ever wanted. (*With deep anxiety:*) What have I done?

(MYRA shows MARY in the mirror.)

MYRA BRADWELL. Here, see how much more respectable you look.

MARY TODD. (*Raw:*) I am sad.

MYRA BRADWELL. (*Understanding:*) So the curtains were not for some imaginary home after all...

MARY TODD. No they were not. Please send my deepest apologies to your poor daughter Bessie. No one likes to get their hopes up, especially her...

MYRA BRADWELL. You will not bring Bessie up again. I will say it once and for all, I sent her into no burning building.

MARY TODD. Myra, your whole family is sufferin'. James told me Bessie bravely entered the *Legal News* to retrieve your subscription lists. *To get your love.*

MYRA BRADWELL. James knows perfectly well I would never have sent her in. She went to the paper with him—there was no fire in that part of the city. I asked them to get the lists without knowing it would spread!

MARY TODD. This is what I tried to say that day in the shops, out of respect, love. Bessie would do anythin' for you because you have never shown her the love you showed... (*Starting to say "Myra":*) ...*That one...*the unnamable daughter...

MYRA BRADWELL. STOP.

MARY TODD. You fail to see what's right in front of you. Bessie, the people who love you...

MYRA BRADWELL. What do *you* see? I am fighting tirelessly to protect you, but you continue to behave as a selfish, impetuous lady, lost in the dust of her memories.

MARY TODD. You must know you've kept a special place in your heart for little Myra.

MYRA BRADWELL. You are one to speak? With a son who hates you so completely?

(The two women look at one another. MARY draws the blinds, takes a book and gets into bed.)

MARY TODD. You must have more important cases.

(MYRA storms out. After a moment she reenters.)

MYRA BRADWELL. Mary, the secret about his crooked investments? Is there not something we can use? Think about all the terrible things he has done. Would it not please you to make *him* suffer a little?

MARY TODD. No it would not please me. I am his mother. Together, he and I have been through hell. I know what it's like to be maligned by the press. I will not sink so low. He's suffered enough.

MYRA BRADWELL. By putting you here, your son has chosen the cheapest way to manage you until the day he gets complete control of your estate. And you are protecting him?

MARY TODD. A good mother does.

MYRA BRADWELL. I am simply being just. Do you know the Chicago Bar Association, which I myself founded will not let me IN? AND NOW YOUR SON IS AFTER ME.

(MYRA quickly puts items back in the trunks.)

MYRA BRADWELL. Bellevue by the way is going bankrupt. That is why the doctor is so scared of bad press.

MARY TODD. I suppose they'll dump us into the garden and leave us to live off the GRASS. Please close the door on your way out.

MYRA BRADWELL. Mrs. Lincoln, after we print the Wilkie article, I promise *the public* will rally to your aid...

MARY TODD. The public despises me.

MYRA BRADWELL. Nonsense. And I told the press your release can be obtained without appeal to the law. Which is a direct threat to your son. I also said Patterson signed your certificate of recovery.

MARY TODD. Your techniques are disingenuous.

MYRA BRADWELL. *Any deceit is permissible if the ends are noble.*

(MARY sees MYRA putting away her things.)

MARY TODD. PLEASE, YOU ARE UPSETTIN' THE ORDER OF MY TRUNKS!

MYRA BRADWELL. The *order* ?

MARY TODD. Yes, there is a GREAT AND INFINITE ORDER.

MYRA BRADWELL. Your sister confided that you and Robert's wife have a bitter misunderstanding which is at the source of Robert's anger.

MARY TODD. I don't wish to speak ill.

MYRA BRADWELL. I must know, so I can help you.

MARY TODD. I loved Robert's wife but *entre nous* she is enamored of the "flowin' bowl".

MYRA BRADWELL. The "flowin' bowl"?

MARY TODD. Liquor.

MYRA BRADWELL. Are you certain?

MARY TODD. At her home I picked up a wrong cup. That cup is always by her side. I said somethin' only because she's havin' a second child. How might a "little life" feel, trapped inside a mother's stomach, showered day-in, day-out with champagne?

MYRA BRADWELL. It might feel very nice – but that is besides the point...

MARY TODD. She's not addressed me since.

MYRA BRADWELL. She was always a quiet sort.

MARY TODD. Oh, yes! Robert prefers QUIET above all else. His wife briefly broke up housekeepin' after I mentioned the WINE. He has such a horror of bein' talked about! My son now blames me for her sin as well as all my own sins which are infinite.

MYRA BRADWELL. Well, she did play the harp divinely.

MARY TODD. Are you here with us at all? What could a HARP possibly have to do with anythin'? I'm dyin' inside, Myra...I love my son.

MYRA BRADWELL. Then it would have been best Mrs. Lincoln not to say the truth.

MARY TODD. You are just like my son. *A lawyer.*

MYRA BRADWELL. Well, that secret will not help us much.

MARY TODD. Shouldn't you be goin' to the depot? What about Wisconsin?

MYRA BRADWELL. Yes, I will ride all night. Please tell me your son's investment secret, for our sake...

MARY TODD. No.

MYRA BRADWELL. Have you had recurrences of the kind you had the night I slept here?

(A beat.)

MARY TODD. Since *The Red Night*, for ten years, I have always had the dreams...I do not believe they will ever disappear...Myra, there are memories that cannot be forgotten. That leave an *imprint* on the mind.

(MARY goes to the window. It is twilight.)

MARY TODD. And love as deep as the sea...It is *I* who approved my husband's body guard. I made no investigation of him. He was drinkin' at the bar The Night the president was shot.

MYRA BRADWELL. You are not responsible.

MARY TODD. Every joy in my life has been followed by a sorrow. I was too happy in the White House, Willie died. The war was won, Mr. Lincoln... My pension finally came, Tad.

MYRA BRADWELL. It only appears this way in times of grief...

MARY TODD. ONE SONG was dedicated to me...

MYRA BRADWELL. A polka, was it?

MARY TODD. A FUNERAL MARCH... By Sousa the Elder. A DIRGE.

(MARY begins to hum the funeral march as she takes steps, walking backwards across the room.)

MYRA BRADWELL. I will go, Miss Goodell is such a BRAVE SOLDIER... You must be seen downstairs... Mary, why are you doing that?

MARY TODD. Mammy Sally told us walkin' backwards at twilight would help the dead to return... When we were children...

MYRA BRADWELL. Please, stop.

(MARY finds a candle in her trunk and lights it.)

MARY TODD. Last night for Tad's fourth anniversary, he and Willie appeared at the foot of my bed. They brought with them my half-brother, Little Aleck, killed in the confederate army...

MYRA BRADWELL. I promise you, you will be free. If we must, James and I will call a court hearing.

(MYRA picks up her suitcase.)

MARY TODD. The truth is I envy you your freedom to go, Myra.

(MARY takes out a piece of jewelry.)

MARY TODD. Pass my imperfections lightly by and excuse so miserable a production. Durin' my midnight watches I have searched for this. It's a bracelet... Abraham gave it to me for my birthday. I was forty four. Set with a pearl... You are forty four...

MYRA BRADWELL. No, no, keep it...

MARY TODD. It will give me great happiness to think of you wearin' it...in Wisconsin. Would that I were that age...

MYRA BRADWELL. No, adieu.

(MYRA goes to kiss her.)

MARY TODD. Get out and never come back.

MYRA BRADWELL. Mrs. Lincoln...?

MARY TODD. You are a hateful woman. An *ingrate*...

MYRA BRADWELL. I am rushed...

MARY TODD. You are cold. Cold as ice. Impenetrable. I feel sorry for your husband. I feel sure the picture you paint of domestic bliss is false.

MYRA BRADWELL. You are a fool. I have thought that for a time but I never said it. You conduct yourself as a clown. Your actions show no forethought.

MARY TODD. Ah, yes forethought! For you all is a refined calculation. How sad to live one's life that way...

MYRA BRADWELL. How sad to live one's life this way. Afraid to go out, abandoning the very standards of cleanliness and femininity...

MARY TODD. I AM FAR FROM AFRAID TO GO OUTSIDE! I simply have no reason to go. What would be the purpose?

MYRA BRADWELL. The purpose would be to show the staff that you are well so this case can be won.

MARY TODD. Why should I have to prove I'm sane?

MYRA BRADWELL. Because you have a history of eccentric acts. Bombarding congressmen with letters for your pension?

MARY TODD. What was I to do? I deserved one and now I have set a precedent for other poor first ladies.

MYRA BRADWELL. Selling your old White House fineries?

MARY TODD. Empress Eugénie did it in France to grand success.

MYRA BRADWELL. Sending your son telegrams believing he was dying.

MARY TODD. Everyone else has.

MYRA BRADWELL. You are not a logical person.

MARY TODD. And you are too logical. Your heart must have shriveled to the size of a pea while your manly mind has swollen to a pumpkin.

MYRA BRADWELL. You are a vain woman. You say you despise the press but you scour the papers for your name!

MARY TODD. Yes, that is a morbid flaw...

MYRA BRADWELL. You regularly disobey the rules.

MARY TODD. If I had not *smuggled* a letter to you, you never would've come.

MYRA BRADWELL. I came repeatedly. I was turned away. I kept coming and coming until I saw you. On July twenty ninth.

MARY TODD. You know the date. To what end did you come?

MYRA BRADWELL. To make you FREE.

MARY TODD. To make a name for yourself as a lawyer. I was your callin' card.

MYRA BRADWELL. I will leave now, I have nothing more.

MARY TODD. Please, wait, you *have* helped me. I'm too sharp-tongued...

MYRA BRADWELL. You have no vision. You are a woman who drifts.

MARY TODD. (*Self-deprecating:*) I have been called a wanderin' woman, but never "a woman who drifts" ...

MYRA BRADWELL. Sometimes I ask myself if you *are*...

MARY TODD. Crazy? You may say it... "Sanity" is not easy to define, Myra. It is a vast territory with the tallest of mountains and the lowest of caves...

(MYRA exits. After a time MARY throws the bracelet out the window, very far. She turns and blows out the candle.)

(She begins to walk backwards like a little girl, completely lost.)

MARY TODD. ...Every Friday the jay bird goes to hell to tell the devil our doin's... And what shall he say of me? I am low-down. I only hope all who died will lift me.

(We hear the sound of children playing.)

MARY TODD. My mother, dead when I was six. In childbirth. How she must have suffered. She made such a good home. Searchin' for her in Heaven— "WHITE against the evenin' star".

(Light shines down on a footstool.)

MARY TODD. And then Mammy Sally, a slave. My true mother. Taught me how spirits can return... In night's softest drafts.

(The net billows. Light shines down on another footstool. MARY stands with the spirits of her mothers, gaining some peace.)

(Lights fade.)

Scene 4

Twenty days later: September 8

(The room has been tidied. MYRA'S usual suitcase and a large bouquet of roses sit on the desk.)

MARY is well-groomed and wearing the lawn dress, as she clips articles from fresh newspapers. MYRA hurries in, brandishing a folder. She is perspiring and worn, a different woman.)

MYRA BRADWELL. WHEN IN GOD'S NAME DID THEY MAKE YOU SEE THIS MCFARLAND? JUST WHEN I'D FINALLY SUCCEEDED!

(MARY holds up the front page of a paper.)

MARY TODD. The Wilkie article turned out beautifully, if we don't say so ourselves! Word for word as we wrote it...

MYRA BRADWELL. *(Enraged:)* WHEN DID YOU SEE DR. MCFARLAND? I just heard he was here.

(MARY holds up other articles.)

MARY TODD. Dr. Patterson says, here, I can go! The public says, "Let her be released!" ...

(MYRA goes to MARY.)

MYRA BRADWELL. I am serious, I will find a sharp instrument and I will harm you with it!

MARY TODD. Myra, you worry me. (*Confused:*) When you say a sharp instrument...?

(*MYRA seems to turn into a wild beast, all her polish gone.*)

MYRA BRADWELL. WHEN DID YOU SEE HIM?

MARY TODD. Oh, my! I saw him yesterday. Your dress is soiled, your hair usually so coifed...

MYRA BRADWELL. YOU KNOW MCFARLAND IS THE MAN WHO LOCKED UP MY CLIENT LIZ PACKARD? He's the former president of the Association of Medical Superintendents of the American Institute for the Insane.

MARY TODD. Anyone with such a title must be mad!

(*MYRA hits MARY with the folder.*)

MYRA BRADWELL. WHAT—I SHUDDER TO HEAR—HAPPENED WHEN HE SAW YOU?

MARY TODD. He began by sayin' it is not often he meets First Ladies! I said, well with the way they are treated, he'll doubtless meet MORE and MORE. He assured me he was here in the STRICTEST SECRECY, and I graciously told him there was no need, since the entire nation knew when I so much as PASSED WIND. He asked me the Date—which I couldn't remember since I stopped countin' long ago. The Day of the Week, I didn't happen to know either. When he asked me the State I lived in I said "An Anxious One," and when he asked me the Country I confidently threw out "CHINA." For the Planet I told him Venus, and he stopped before Galaxy and Universe!

(*As MYRA reads from the folder, she loses control.*)

MYRA BRADWELL. "He doubts the safety of your visit to Springfield, fearing a desire for further adventure will take possession of your mind. There are features of your case that give him grave apprehension..."

MARY TODD. Are you breathin' sufficiently?

MYRA BRADWELL. “Unless the utmost quietude is observed for the few ensuing months, beyond which ALL REASONABLE HOPE OF RESTORATION MUST BE ABANDONED.”

(MYRA takes the bouquet of roses and drops them out the window.)

MYRA BRADWELL. Your son is downstairs now arranging a SECOND VISIT from Dr. McDill—Superintendent of the WISCONSIN State Hospital for the Insane...

MARY TODD. Sit, before you faint...

MYRA BRADWELL. *You* paid three hundred and forty one dollars for your little *divertissement* with McFarland, not to mention what *I* have paid. You have nullified all that I’ve done, all that I am.

MARY TODD. Rest a moment...

MYRA BRADWELL. After what you accused me of at my last visit, I would never have returned for *you*. Your son has threatened to destroy my journal. I WILL RETALIATE.

MARY TODD. ...I hit bottom at your last visit, there was perhaps one advantage, I could go no lower. I feel surprisin’ly better now...

MYRA BRADWELL. You are mad! Only a madwoman would have done what you did. McFarland is a FEARSOME enemy. I know it first hand. Do you know how he diagnosed Liz Packard as insane? HE TOOK HER PULSE!

MARY TODD. You should’ve seen his red face. He’s quite a well-fed individual...

(MYRA goes at MARY with the blunt scissors.)

MYRA BRADWELL. Do you know how many women have been placed in asylums? Isabella Hooker, Sophia Vanderbilt—after she gave her husband twelve children—Anna Dickinson. IT WAS ONE OF THE INJUSTICES I AIMED TO CORRECT!

(MARY speaks with great dignity and simplicity.)

MARY TODD. I am finished playin’ their game. I don’t care. There is a niche for my coffin next to my husband’s. That’s all I hope for...

MYRA BRADWELL. DON'T SPEAK TO ME ABOUT YOUR HUSBAND! Who could this Great One possibly have been? Certainly not a Human.

MARY TODD. If these machinations that you insist on playing must be done with my son—my own blood—I want no part of it. Let me rot away here in this house. It seems more sane to me than outside.

MYRA BRADWELL. It has nothing to do with *you* anymore. It is MY case and I WILL WIN IT. James and I will think of something.

MARY TODD. Ah, your James, so devoted a man.

MYRA BRADWELL. Be quiet. Don't talk to me.

(MYRA goes to the window.)

MYRA BRADWELL. It has been the most atrocious of days...

(MARY returns to her newspapers.)

MYRA BRADWELL. Since I chose to go with Lucy Stone, I've had a great falling out with Miss Susan B. Anthony. Miss Anthony has told me that in her great "History of Woman Suffrage" I will be left out. In the Table of Contents the tips of readers' fingers will pass from "B" to "C", without a mention of "Bradwell". In a hundred years Myra Bradwell will be a woman no one has heard of... A *blank page*...

(A beat.)

MARY TODD. You know, sometimes when you run, Myra—you run away... I believe you mean well with your causes. But you fight so often with the opposite sex you've become it.

MYRA BRADWELL. I have fought endlessly for justice, placing the law ahead of myself on every occasion and they have ignored me, trampled on me, placed obstacle after obstacle in my path. I AM FURIOUS. Give me the secret about your son.

MARY TODD. No, I can't...

MYRA BRADWELL. Please, Mary, I beg you. Do it for our sake, for our dignity.

MARY TODD. No...

MYRA BRADWELL. Your son has not been kind. It is a known fact throughout Chicago that he and his cronies make raucous jests about you at their “stag” parties. He speaks of you as a crazy old Witch, a feeble-minded Loon. Too many hours soaking your wrinkled, pachyderm skin in mineral baths have turned you into a SOD—a blithering HAG. And his blasphemies become the whispered gossip the next morning of the wives in the highest social circles. He actually *feeds* the papers with this filth. He says, you were a terrible wife to your husband and a worse mother... Witness the fact that he is the only one who escaped your curse... As the good book commands, your son has Honored his Father, but with his Mother he has fallen quite short. I can assure you Robert does not HONOR you or love you.

MARY TODD. When Robert was born to us, we were not rich. It was in a cramped boardin’ house—men playin’ cards the night away—my husband doin’ the circuit, rarely home. But I can tell you that on the day of his birth his father and I were never happier. He was a source of great wonder to us. We were a circle—the three. Robert was my firstborn and I have to this day held in him all the hopes a mother could have. Three of my sons were taken but he *stayed*. I vowed to protect him as a *treasure*, which he is...was...to me. He’s a hard-headed boy but I always thought he’d come ‘round—see the error of his ways.

(*A beat.*)

MARY TODD. Tell my son that I will expose his disastrous real estate schemes with JOHN FORSYTHE to the papers, if he doesn’t let me go.

MYRA BRADWELL. *The John Forsythe? The racketeer?*

MARY TODD. Yes, Robert squandered a loan from me on Forsythe’s shady buildin’ contracts. Robert would do anythin’ rather than have his name discredited in the press. I believe this information will serve you well.

MYRA BRADWELL. (*In wonder:*) You had so much hope for your firstborn. I had the same...

(MYRA goes to the window and looks out.)

MYRA BRADWELL. You are right about my daughter, Myra. I never recovered from her death, and I have only myself to blame for it... I'd just had little Bessie... That day Myra had been out to rally the girls in the neighborhood, to circulate a petition against the confederate army, think of that! Her father had written the tract for her. It said anyone who betrayed the union would be tarred and feathered. All day she and her girls were gathering signatures from neighbors. That night she caught a terrible chill. You know, it took her fifty two days to die. I sat with her through all of them...I never came back...from that day...

MARY TODD. (*Gently:*) Oh, so now you are such an all-powerful lady you control the weather and the atmosphere? You alone caused the wind and the rain to go in and chill her little body? I'm sure you must have dressed her exceedingly well. I know you, and I know you would've seen to that.

MYRA BRADWELL. ...She was so strong, I took her for granted. I was preoccupied with the baby...

MARY TODD. You are not responsible for the weather. In the same way I'm not responsible for the body guard drinkin' on the night my husband was killed...

MYRA BRADWELL. ...It was tempting fate to name her after me... Vanity.

MARY TODD. Love. You have a husband who loves you so much, he will do anythin' for you. Let you name your daughter after yourself...

MYRA BRADWELL. A husband who won't forgive me. (*A beat.*) I think of her... Running across the snow... The sky is blue, from the cold...

(*A beat.*)

MYRA BRADWELL. I'd like my husband back... He always watches me with Bessie. She wants to please me so much. I try... I can't be myself with her.

MARY TODD. She will always want to please you. She will spend her life doin' so... You will have to go through Bessie, to get to James.

(There is a knock on the door. MARY goes to answer it. She listens to someone outside the door.)

MARY TODD. My attendant says Robert asks for you in the Patriarch's office. It's urgent... You should go.

MYRA BRADWELL. It's Dr. McDill from Wisconsin.

MARY TODD. The closest I'm gonna get to that state... I believe—despite the disingenuousness you all practice in your field—that you have the true spirit of reform, Myra. Though I am an old-fashioned lady, I am not unintelligent. In a different life perhaps I would have done somethin' altogether surprisin'...

MYRA BRADWELL. You've been surprising in this one, Mrs. Lincoln.

(MYRA takes MARY's hands.)

MYRA BRADWELL. Thank you.

(MYRA exits. MARY pages through Dr. McFarland's report, then dumps it out the window. Pages fly.)

(She opens a package on the desk and inspects her four widow's caps. She holds them up to the light, testing the seams and the ribbons.)

(She tries a cap on, but then takes it off and throws it out the window.)

(She gets into bed, singing a hymn softly.)

MARY TODD. "There are Angels hoverin' around..."

(MYRA enters the room. She stands in the doorway.)

MARY TODD. You must return the caps. They are not well sewn.

(MYRA is frozen. MARY goes to her.)

MARY TODD. Are they sendin' McDill? It's not your fault if they're sendin' me up to the lightless attic...Myra, shall I get you a

glass of ice water? You know in Germany it was impossible to get one...

MYRA BRADWELL. They want you to go!

MARY TODD. What?

MYRA BRADWELL. Mr. Patterson tells Robert it would be well if you could go *at once*. I believe the signed-certificate strategy and the bad press have tipped the scales. He also adds he simply doesn't like you.

(MARY goes to the window.)

MARY TODD. Out?

MYRA BRADWELL. Yes.

MARY TODD. Into the world. To the shops?

(MARY goes to MYRA.)

MARY TODD. Oh, my little Myra...

(MARY helps Myra to sit on the bed.)

MARY TODD. Rest, a moment. Put your feet up. The strain has been too much for you, my girl—this is perhaps why the Creator said no to us bein' lawyers—I will stop. I am incorrigible. My Husband said that. No more about my Husband. The Great One. (*Hitting herself.*) I will try to be less selfish, more rational. Like you.

(MARY hurries to a trunk. MYRA's tempo slows down.)

MYRA BRADWELL. I said I would ask if you would see Robert.

MARY TODD. ...Is he angry?

MYRA BRADWELL. Well, I took him aside and said we would be obliged to expose his dealings with Forsythe in the press. Let us simply say extreme caution is necessary when speaking to him.

(MARY locates cigarettes in her trunk.)

MARY TODD. These are almost sufficiently temptin' to induce strong minded women to resort to them in a case of emergency.

(She offers MYRA a cigarette and takes one for herself. MARY lights them both and they smoke on the bed.)

MARY TODD. I'm always amazed how everythin' in these trunks has a divine purpose.

MYRA BRADWELL. It is impressive... Your official release will be in three days. You'll take the nine 'o clock train to Chicago, then Robert and you will board the fifteen forty for your sister's in Springfield.

MARY TODD. Oh, what a ride.

MYRA BRADWELL. *(Slowly.)* Robert says to take only *one* trunk. Since he knows you'll be back. I told him you'll take as many trunks as you want. And I have copies of all your keys.

MARY TODD. You seem to be windin' down like a clock...

MYRA BRADWELL. I'm very tired...

MARY TODD. Of course, my girl, rest. When Robert returns my money, I'll appoint my own conservator and go to Pau in France. I find it necessary to place the ocean between him and me. Any country without waffles, batter cakes, egg corn bread, biscuits, light rolls, buckwheat cakes is a gastronomic desert. It's a curiosity to see how angry these French people can become. The most unprincipled, heartless, avaricious people on the face of the earth. With the exception of a few, I detest them all. Yet the BAROMETRIC PRES-SURE there is constant and I speak French. *(Looking at MYRA:)* I have never seen you like that.

MYRA BRADWELL. Like what?

MARY TODD. Leanin' back, your feet raised. It becomes you. Your face is at rest, your eyes shown off, you have a nice mouth when you aren't pursin' it... You are an extremely handsome woman. A paragon of your sex.

MYRA BRADWELL. I am breathing...

MARY TODD. You are smokin'.

(They laugh.)

MYRA BRADWELL. I shall stay with you for dinner.

MARY TODD. No. Never stay at Bellevue one minute longer than you need. Go home... To James and Bessie...

MYRA BRADWELL. ...You know she is so tall now, she towers above me...

MARY TODD. Impossible. You are a MASTODON. Almost MASCULINE in stature.

MYRA BRADWELL. Bessie is a painter, of oils. She speaks French and German... What will I do?

(MYRA puts out her cigarette and goes to the window.)

MARY TODD. Try to avoid what I have done...

(MARY joins MYRA at the window.)

MARY TODD. I pushed him away, Myra...In many ways I found Robert a *stranger*... I did not bend to him, try...I was the woman I am, and refused.

(A beat; to MYRA:)

MARY TODD. There is still time...The cost is great, I can assure you.

MYRA BRADWELL. I came to you because you were a case that would make me noticed.

MARY TODD. Hush...

MYRA BRADWELL. ...The bracelet you offered me. From your husband. I would be honored to have it, Mary. I was a fool.

MARY TODD. The bracelet is gone... It no longer exists.

(MARY goes to her desk drawer and takes out objects.)

MARY TODD. There is the pen that signed the Emancipation Proclamation, and this is a bloodstone seal presented to the Great One by the Sultan of Turkey... James should have it, it's brawny. He is a man of great distinction. Admit to him you never should've asked Bessie to run into the fire—even though you knew she would only do it if she could... Men like to think they are right... The pen is for you...for your emancipations...

MYRA BRADWELL. I will place it on my desk at the paper and sign with it every document that passes over.

(MYRA moves to the desk and gets her suitcase.)

MARY TODD. Give me your hand, Myra...I have learned the Hard Way that THIS... *(She squeezes MYRA's hand.)* Is the only "Great History" we have. You're right here—in the middle of it.

MYRA BRADWELL. When you visit Chicago you will come to us and dine. We will write to each other...

MARY TODD. In the night of my life as I wander the earth lookin' at horizons that LEVEL ME, takin' drinks that leave my throat SCORCHED, listnin' to music that only BLUNTS my mind, I will think of you as a LIGHT...I adore you. You have saved my life.

(MYRA kisses MARY goodbye.)

MARY TODD. Find the key to unlock her, search for it and I assure you it will unearth a gift you did not expect. I can say this because I did not.

(MYRA waits a moment, then exits, leaving the door open behind her.)

(MARY stands waiting, then slowly starts to walk backwards towards the door.)

(A shaft of red light as we hear the sound of a train getting louder and louder.)

(The door shuts. The red light deepens as we see MARY's eyes looking at us through the slot. We hear her hyperventilating. Blackout.)

End of Play

Full-length plays from Playscripts, Inc.



Memory House

by Kathleen Tolan

- Comedy/Drama
- Full-length, 80-90 mins
- 2 females
- Working sink; working oven and stove; counter or table; couch; shelves.

One winter night a woman bakes a pie as a girl tries to finish her college essay. As the deadline looms, unexamined issues of the girl's adoption from Russia, the rupture of her parents divorce, and the fear of leaving home break through the surface as the mother cajoles, deflects, and maneuvers around her own feelings of sadness and loss. Unfolding in real time, *Memory House* is about a young and an older woman who are forced to grapple with the past as they face an uncertain future.

Five Flights

by Adam Bock

- Comedy/Drama
- Full-length, 85-95 mins
- 3 females, 3 males
- Bare stage

Siblings Ed and Adele inherit an enormous aviary that their late father built for his deceased wife

whose soul, he believed, had transformed into the body of a wren. The grown children are faced with the dilemma of what to do with the crumbling structure – sister-in-law Jane wants to build tidy new houses; friend Olivia wants to build The Church of the Fifth Day honoring birds and the Fifth Day of creation; Ed wants to let the building fall to the ground. Folded into this debate are issues of religious conviction, fear of commitment, the way Russian ballet resembles a hockey game, and the courtship of Ed by Tom, a gay professional hockey player.



Order online at: **www.playscripts.com**

Full-length plays from Playscripts, Inc.



Permanent Collection

by Thomas Gibbons

Drama

Full-length, 115-125 minutes

3 females, 3 males

Soon after African-American businessman Sterling North becomes the new director of the Morris Foundation, he discovers that this world-famous art collection includes several significant African sculptures tucked away in storage. His proposal to add them to the public galleries is opposed by the foundation's long-time education director, who is loyal to the idiosyncratic wishes of the late Dr. Morris. Spurred on by a zealous local journalist, this clash quickly escalates to public accusations of racism and a bitter struggle for control of the collection. *Permanent Collection* is a searing examination of racial politics that ultimately asks how much space – literally and figuratively – the white world gives to African-Americans. What is the cost of failing to view the world through another's eyes?

The Marriage of Miss Hollywood and King Neptune

by Robert Schenkkan

Comedy

Full-length, 110-130 mins

5 females, 13 males (18-30 actors possible, gender flexible)

Hollywood, 1929. Sly-as-a-fox talent agent Manny Weisenberg has got a problem. Several. His biggest client, Bob "Whiplash" McCord – a British classical actor trapped playing a silent cowboy hero – wants out of his contract. Manny's girlfriend Cherie, an aspiring actress, wants out of LA. And local gangster Joey Bananas wants to break Manny's legs for default of certain debts. Manny's solution is to create the greatest seaside pageant ever seen: "The Marriage of Miss Hollywood and King Neptune." A screwball comedy à la Kaufman and Hart, set against the backdrop of early Hollywood and classic LA political corruption.

Order online at: www.playscripts.com

Full-length plays from Playscripts, Inc.



Swimming in the Shallows

by Adam Bock

Comedy, 80-85 minutes

3 females, 3 males

Barb finds out that Buddhist monks in Thailand only own eight things – and wonders if that is all she wants. She starts giving away her things but her husband Bob keeps buying her new ones. Donna wants Carla Carla to marry her, but Carla Carla doesn't like that Donna smokes. Nick meets a shark at the aquarium – they go on a date to the beach and Nick tries not to sleep with the shark too fast. Plus dream sequences. Plus a wedding.

The Internationalist

by Anne Washburn

Enigmatic comedy

95-105 minutes

2 females, 4 males



Lowell, an American on a business trip, is met at the airport by a beautiful colleague. They spend the night together and he thinks he's in one of those great American movies where you go to a foreign land and there's romance and adventure and the experience changes you. The next day at the office he discovers that he's not in one of those movies, he's in one of those foreign films where nothing is as it seems, where there is no moral, and most importantly: no subtitles.

Order online at: **www.playscripts.com**

This author is a resident playwright at New Dramatists.

About New Dramatists

Founded in 1949 by a playwright, Michaela O'Harra, New Dramatists is a unique resource for the American theatre. The company is dedicated to the playwright and serves as an artistic home, research and development center, and national writers colony. The company finds and nurtures new talent through a competitive selection process and a seven-year playwright development program tailored to the writers' individual needs.

New Dramatists gives writers the tools that they need—time, generous theatre space, a pool of talented and experienced actors and directors, writing equipment, meeting space, and a gifted peer community—to grow artistically and strengthen their commitment to theatre. The company augments this central focus on artistic growth through programs that advocate and distribute each writer's work to theatre producers, through grants and fellowships, and with annual playwriting retreats in Lake Placid and New York City, and exchange programs with the Royal National Theatre of Great Britain, the Australian National Playwrights Conference in Sydney, and theatres in Hungary, Serbia, and The Czech Republic.

Writers pay nothing to join and participate in New Dramatists. In return for this gift of time and resources, member playwrights write and create new works for the theatre. The company organizes an average of 100 readings and workshops of new plays and musicals by its members each season.

This unique organization has fostered the work of over 500 playwrights early in their careers, such as: August Wilson, William Inge, Robert Anderson, John Guare, Maria Irene Fornes, John Patrick Shanley, Emily Mann, Horton Foote, James Baldwin, Donald Margulies, Paula Vogel, Mac Wellman, Joe Masteroff, Suzan-Lori Parks, Nilo Cruz, and Doug Wright.

Resident playwrights and alumni have won 13 Pulitzer Prizes, including the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for Drama to alumnus Doug Wright, 24 Tony® Awards, 59 Obie Awards, 18 Drama Desk Awards, and 12 Susan Smith Blackburn Awards. On June 3rd 2001, New Dramatists was the recipient of a special Tony® Honor for Excellence in Theatre.

New Dramatists

Developing American Playwrights Since 1949

424 West 44th Street, New York, NY 10036

