Novel and play 11

**Theme**

**Ending**

The sun caps each gentle wave. . . . She looks around and sees the blue forests rising up, like reassuring arms around her shoulders, embracing her as she wishes someone once embraced York and all the others.

“Sometimes I imagine what you looked like in your robes,” she suddenly says.

He looks startled.

“But I like you better this way,” she continues. “I think I can see you now.”

They are curled in a white bed under a steep eave, readying for sleep, and he is raising his face to watch her drift away. He is seeing her as if for the first time, how relaxed she looks, as if her entire body has found forgiveness from pain.

Mama and I examined [Miranda’s] amazing body and found only that ridiculous tail. My heart died. Arty would despise her.

[Chick] turned away—and the fire came. The flames spouted from him—pale as light—bursting outward from his belly. . . . Arty and Al and Chick and the twins—gone dustward as the coals rid themselves of that terrible heat.

3.

The beginning scenes: “rotting ranch houses,” the heroine’s innate “meanness,” shirts with “mustardy armpits,” and “drunk landlady eyes”.

The last scene:

No screams, no shotguns, no wild bluejay cries. Just listen to the quiet. . . . I just wanted to be some woman, heading back home to Over There That Way.

4.

“Your presence upsets [Adrian].

“I’m sorry,” I replied. “The last thing I want to do is upset him. I don’t want to upset anyone any more. Ever.”

I thought of a cresting wave of water, lit by a moon, rushing past and vanishing upstream. . . .

I was told love should be unconditional. That’s the rule, everyone says so. But if love has no boundaries, no limits, no conditions, why should anyone try to do the right thing, ever?

In the distance, I hear the sweetest sound of all. It is a bird singing. Maybe it is one of the soft-tufted night birds, come to say goodbye. It is the most beautiful thing I have heard in many years, prettier than bells, and I know this trip was worth it just to hear that sound.

5.

The very first time I saw her, it was the back of her head I saw, and there was something lovely about it, the angles of it. Like a shiny, hard corn kernel or a riverbed fossil. She had what the Victorians would call a finely shaped head.

The other morning I woke up next to her, and I studied the back of her skull. I tried to read her thoughts. For once I didn’t feel like I was staring into the sun.

Troubleshooting

**Causality**

Reggie crossed through the kitchen and opened the cupboard. He was starving and wanted some canned food. ↔ Reggie was starving and wanted some canned food. He crossed through the kitchen and opened the cupboard.

Suzanne stepped into the shower. She needed to relax. As the water washed over her, she thought of the time she nearly drowned when she was nine. She let the water rinse across her skin. Finally shuddering, she hastily toweled herself dry after turning off the faucet, and tried not to think about that traumatic day at the lake.

→

**Beginning**

**1.**

Reynaldo’s first memory was of his mother, the Contessa, dressing for an evening of card playing. That night, the scandalous Marquis vin Diesel came to pick her up in his elegant horse-drawn Louis Quinze broll. The sight of the matched Angora geldings in the gathering dusk, harnessed in ampersands and cornices after the fashion of the day, would forever be burned into Reynaldo’s memory.

“Good night, sweet Prince,” his mother called from the door. “Do sleep thou tightly.”

“I entreat thee and simper, mother, stay!” baby Reynaldo said, gesturing at the fearful dark behind the damasked street lamps. “Doth there be not danger?”

“Oh, that is a silly Leviathan of thy youthful imaginings,” his mother scoffed uproariously, and pulled the door to. She returned later that night unharmed, and gave him a caramel merkin she’d won in a final tempestuous hand of *vingt-fromage*.

2.

Thirty-five years later, Reynaldo tumbled out of bed, laughing heartily at his manservant Hugo, and went about his morning toilette.

Soon, glistening with ambergris and jauntily sprinkling himself with exotic tars and raisins, Reynaldo called out, “No need to tune the pangolin this morning, Hugo, for I have decided to cancel my lesson and rendezvous with the Infanta for shuttlecocks.”

Now that he had finally reached Paris, Chip understood why they called it the City of Lights. It was the lights! There was something special about Paris that was indescribable It was so different than being back home in Terre Haute. There was something he couldn’t put his finger on, a certain. . . *je ne sais quoi*! He finally understood what they meant by that!

He bit into his Big Mac and, just as he’d always known it would, even a Big Mac tasted different here—the difference was unbelievable! It was something he had entirely missed out on all his life. . . until now. It was awesome.

Ah, Paris! City of Lights!

Anna put her arms around her brother and held him close. He could smell her faint perfume, and the warmth of her body made all his troubles drain away. She had filled out since going away to college, and the gentle, persistent pressure of her breasts was distinct through her thin T-shirt. He let her go at last and said, with a slight blush, “Why can’t I talk to Amanda the way I talk to you?”

Anna laughed but couldn’t meet his eyes. “I don’t know. Maybe ’cause she’s beautiful?”

Hal choked on his response. To him, no one could ever be as beautiful as his little sister. If only she could see herself as others saw her! But he drove these ideas from his head. He had to concentrate on his troubles with Amanda, even if he was beginning to suspect he would have to look elsewhere for the real passion he was determined to find.

**Complications**

As the water crept up higher and higher, Jack realized the hydraulics had failed, and he would have to swim under water the length of the now-submerged hallway if he was to save Synthya. The situation looked hopeless. Fortunately, the years Jack had spent among the pearl divers of the South Pacific following a shipwreck had trained him to hold his breath for nearly fourteen minutes, surpassing the ability of most Westerners.

It might have seemed more natural for him to have waited for Lubricia to come out of the bathroom, and had his way with her. At least he could have explained why he was leaving. It would have been possible for him to leave a note, even. But his intimacy issues and his inability to sit through long descriptions of meaningless actions, had made him leave without saying goodbye. He could still call her from this phone booth he was passing. No, that one looked too dirty. Maybe a different phone booth, this one coming up? Really, though, he hated using them at all; they just ate your change and the call never went through. Besides, he had his cell phone with him.

Should he call? What if she was still in the bathroom, brushing each tooth individually? No, better that he. . . .