

HANNAH. I'm sure I have no idea. (She snatches the letter from EFFY and puts it in her pocket. EFFY stares at HANNAH. After a beat.) I don't think I'll open it just yet. (Sighed! EFFY hugs out.) Here Shelby, you open it!

(Excited, SHELBY opens the envelope and presents HANNAH with the enclosed cash.)

SHELBY. One hundred dollars!... (Music under.) "Dear Mrs. Ferguson, I saw the article about your contest last night when I couldn't sleep. The reason I couldn't sleep is because my family is falling apart. My husband walked out last year and left me with our high school boy. If I don't do something soon, I'm afraid I may lose my son, too. Maybe if I could take us off to someplace like yours in Gilead, that won't happen..."

HANNAH. (Dismissively, as she walks away.) If they're all gonna sound like that to hell with it. Shelby, you can go home now. We're done here.

SHELBY. (To PERCY.) Cate'll be waiting anyway. Night then.

PERCY. Night, Shel.

(SHELBY exits.)

HANNAH. (Holding PERCY a towel.) Make sure you wrap that loaf up good. I gotta get off this leg.

PERCY. Still pretty tender?

HANNAH. Sure enough considering the doctor keeps telling me how good it's healing.

PERCY. You think if a wound goes real deep, that the healing can feel just as bad as what caused it?

HANNAH. ... Might be. (Starts toward her room. Music begins.) Might be.

PERCY. (Reaches out to touch HANNAH's shoulder.) Hannah...

HANNAH. (Pulls away sharply; then says, not unkindly.) Good-night.

(PERCY takes the bread out to the porch. Light fades on her. HANNAH makes her way up to the bedroom as she sings.)

OLD FAMILIAR ACHES AND PAINS,
COTS AND SCRAPES AND SOUVENIRS.
EVERYBODY HAS A FEW
COLLECTED OVER DAYS AND YEARS.

ALL AT ONCE, A PAIN WILL COME
LIKE SOME FORGOTTEN LULLABY,
THE WHISPER FROM A CHILDHOOD WOUND
WHEN I FIRST LEARNED HOW NOT TO CRY.

TEARS WON'T MAKE IT GO AWAY/
YEARS WILL PASS AND I'LL REMEMBER.

MY LIFE HAS BEEN WHAT IT HAS BEEN,
NO ONE NEEDS TO PITY ME.
AND IF I FALL AND FALL AGAIN
I DON'T WANT ANY SYMPATHY.

FOR GOOD, FOR BAD, FOREVERMORE,
SOMEDAY I'LL LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP,
AND I WILL HAVE JUST ONE REGRET,
A SECRET I WILL ALWAYS KEEP.

AND ON THAT NIGHT THE PAIN WILL COME,
LIKE SOME FORGOTTEN LULLABY
THAT MOTHERS SING TO MISSING SONS
WHEN THEY'VE FORGOTTEN HOW TO CRY.

(HANNAH lies down and light fades on her. Light rises on porch area. PERCY sets the bread down and drives the ax into the stump. In the shadows behind PERCY we can just make out the silhouette of a male figure watching her. As PERCY makes her way back toward the door, she catches sight of the figure and stops short with a gasp. In the lantern light, his shadow looms above PERCY. It is the VISITOR. Although frightened, PERCY quickly composes herself and stands her ground.)

PERCY. You gonna do something to me, why don't you just come ahead and do it? I'm right here, ain't I? (The VISITOR stands still for a moment, then holds up a small feather and sets it down on the stump. He steps back.) Okay then. (She picks up the feather.) A feather? That's real nice. Thank you. (The VISITOR stands motionless.) You scared me, that's all. I didn't see you there. Didja get them loaves of bread I left? I could bring you somethin' different if you want. I know how it is eating the same thing till you can't stand the sight of it no more. Would you like that? (The VISITOR doesn't answer.) My name's Percy. You got a name? (The VISITOR doesn't answer.) I think I'll call you 'Johnny B,' okay? Johnny B. How would that do?

END.

WOMEN ADDITION - PERCY MONOLOGUES

BOTH WOMEN & MEN ADDITION -

(The prison bars swing open and PERCY steps out.)

RING AROUND THE MOON,
BIGGER WORLD THAN ME.
READY OR NOT, HERE I GO,
OLLY OLY OXEN FREE...
OLLY OLY OXEN FREE.

(PERCY changes her prisoner's jacket for a plain coat and scarf.
Clutching a small suitcase, she crosses downstairs.)

TWO STEPS FOLLOW ONE,
ONE STEP FOLLOWS TWO.
A TICKET IN MY HAND,
A BUS TO SOMEWHERE NEW.
A CIRCLE ON A MAP,
COUNT THE MILES TO GO
ON THE ROAD TO GILEAD
DOWN A HIGHWAY I DON'T KNOW.

IT'S ONE MILE TURNING TWO,
THREE MILES TURNS TO FOUR,
FIVE MILES TURNS TO FIFTY
THEN A HUNDRED MILES MORE.
BUS ROLLS TO A STOP,
DRIVER TURNS TO ME,
'THIS IS GILEAD...
WHAT THERE IS IS WHAT YOU SEE.'

A RING AROUND THE MOON,
BIGGER WORLD THAN ME.
READY OR NOT, HERE I COME,
OLLY OLY OXEN FREE...

(Lights reveal SHERIFF JOE SUTTER. He flips through documents
in a file. PERCY crosses to him. Music continues under.)

JOE. So — Perchance Talbot. Perchance. What kinda name is
that?

PERCY. Percy'll do. Warden Halverson said he was gonna call.

JOE. Yeah, sure, I got a call from the prison. But to be honest,
Miss Talbot, if the bus hadn't left, I'da put you back on it.

PERCY. Somethin' wrong with this place?

JOE. Crises, look around you. Gilead's a ghost town. There's

BEGIN →

nothing here.

PERCY. The warden said that —
JOE. I really don't care what the warden said, Miss Talbot. He's
not the one freezing his ass off at this bus stop, now is he?

PERCY. No sir.
JOE. So why Gilead? (PERCY is silent.) Miss Talbot, it's my
job to know why you're here ... okay?

(PERCY hesitantly reaches into an inside pocket and hands him a
carefully folded piece of paper)

PERCY. Well, sir, I ... cut this picture from an old travel book
someone donated at the prison.

JOE. (Reads picture caption.) "Autumn colors along Copper
Creek near Gilead, Wisconsin." (Hands picture back to her.) You're a
little late.

PERCY. Creek ain't dried up has it?
JOE. It's frozen. And the fall colors are long gone.
PERCY. (Not very sure of herself.) I hope to be here when they
come back.

JOE. Yep, well, in the meantime I don't know what the hell I'm
gonna do with you. (Looks around as if for an answer. Tries to sip his
coffee.) Damn ... my coffee's cold. Grab your suitcase.

(HE leads PERCY along, describing the town to her almost
don't hear his words. Instead, we hear PERCY's concerns.)

PERCY.
BEHIND THE WINDOW GLASS
THERE ARE FACES I CAN'T SEE.
I FEEL THEM AS WE PASS,
PEEKIN' OUT TO STARE AT ME
ALONG THE SILENT STREETS
THROUGH A CURTAIN OF NEW SNOW,
IN THE TOWN OF GILEAD...

JOE. Good. There's a light on over at the Spitfire.

PERCY. The Spitfire?
JOE. It's your best chance for a job, and apart from the local jail
it's the only guest room in town. Looks like Hannah's burning the
midnight oil.

(Music swells as the Spitfire is revealed. We see HANNAH
FERGUSON, a gray-haired old woman of about seventy years

END.