1. SARA

*Bus station. Night. A wall, graffiti-splattered. The muffled squawk of PA announcements.*

***Sara at 16*** *poses as if she has been thrown against the wall. An indie album cover. Harlot make-up, blood-stained camisole.*

*She**begins to transform to* ***Sara at 14****. Wipes off the make-up, puts her hair in a ponytail, parks a ball-cap on it. Puts on a loose-fitting jacket with a sports team insignia on it.*

*Picks up her pink Hello Kitty backpack, and looks around. She looks at the audience.*

Sara if I tell you the story of a runaway

If I tell you

I ran away

What would you think of me

Would you JUMP

What conclusions

from the contusions

Would you make

form

Forming

me

Because you would

would *form* me

wouldn’t you

Trouble at home

Teen harlot

Internet dupe

What if I said

I Say

it’s not always like that

What if I say

I left just left

bad things happen

sometimes

you might say

I had it coming

“Girls these days are too grown up”

or

or

or

Poor thing

Poor girl

VICTIM

Poor me

Poor you

And

What if I say

I OWN THIS

*The voice of an unseen* ***Man****.*

OVM Sara

*She looks up.*

OVM Sara

It’s Sara isn’t it

we’ve been looking for you

Your father’s very worried

I’ve come to take you

Home

Sara Not going

Man Sara

Come on Sara

you DON’T

want to make a fuss

Sara You can’t make me

Sara at 16 *to audience*  Don’t *form* me

from

this

*The* ***Man*** *appears. Hat, coat, back to us. He closes on* ***Sara****.*

Sara at 14Oh

It’s you

*The* ***Man*** *stuns her with a taser. She straightens with the force of the shock and reprises her pose against the wall. Then slides to the ground. The* ***Man*** *picks her up. Looks about. Exits.*

2. ROSE

*Evening. The wall transforms into a nondescript office wall. A tackboard filled with notes.*

*A photo.*

*Non-natural light filters through an unseen window.* ***Rose*** *sits at her desk. It is almost too*

*clean. She untacks the photo and looks at it.*

*The image appears on the projection screen: a little girl of non-European descent looks at the*

*camera with unnerving directness.*

***Rose*** *considers binning the photo. She leans back instead and looks out a window.*

*A scream, skidding tires, the sound of an impact. Breaking glass.*

3. THE STRONGEST

*The image of* ***Rose****’s daughter fades from the screen and is replaced by a school photo of* ***Sara****,*

*in a uniform. It begins to flash on and off at an increasing rhythm, like a strobe.*

*Then, suddenly, it disappears.*

*Darkness. A night sky.*

*Whispers, indistinguishable. Then Voices become audible.*

Roswitha Unit 3365 subsection 13A district 116 branch 4 of The Strongest are met.

Roswitha

Canoness of Gandersheim

Quill of the Lord

presiding.

Called are Hatshepsut of Egypt

daughter and mother of Pharaohs

female male god

Hatshepsut and Pharaoh herself

Roswitha And Pharaoh herself

Announce yourself present

Hatshepsut If you call this spectral form “present” then I am “present”

Roswitha I do. And you are.

Joan of Arc

Maid of Orleans

Sword and shield of the Father

Joan Present! And Ready!

Hatshepsut The girl is so

*vigorous*

Why am I called, Roswitha?

Roswitha *We* are called Hatshepsut

In every race and creed

They seek our aid

Joan Who do we fight? Whose salvation win?

Hatshepsut But why am I burdened with *Christians*?

Surely the Magdalen or Catherine of the Wheel are your common peers

I was a god long before your prophet

Joan Oh right

Egypt

it rings a bell

your gods disappeared didn’t they just

***Vanish***

into dust?

Hatshepsut Their legacy erased by Christian marauders!

Joan The world needs more Crusades

Roswitha Nothing disappears Hatshepsut

and we are proof of that

Now

There is work to do

A young girl calls for our help

Hatshepsut A million girls live lives denied

like flies in summer

too numerous to matter

*Pause. A theatrical sigh.*

Tell the story and I will choose to help or not.

Joan How calls us Canoness?

Roswitha She used the sign.

Her father is from your part of the world Hatshepsut

You might even like her.

Hatshepsut Oh indeed.

Because all the Arab peoples are *exactly* the same.

My gifts are not needed here

Joan Then go! Why don’t you go! Why do we need her, Canoness?

Roswitha She is here of her own volition.

Hatshepsut Girl

my son was five when his father Pharaoh died.

The country in a frenzy.

I took the throne and held it

Twenty years, the best Pharaoh Egypt ever had!

To be a woman was not enough.

I know something about fighting, girl.

I know something about women who fight to speak

fight to breathe

fight to live.

Anyone can fry like a log.

It takes a warrior to run a kingdom of men.

Joan FRY LIKE A LOG!?

My life was short, it’s true

and passion always mastered my logic

I’d never bear a king on earth or anywhere else.

But for every quill pusher

And back chamber schemer

Must be a hand that lifts the sword and wields it

And your hands I know

though they are invisible

are soft

Roswitha You are *both* essential to the enterprise.

Well might you ask what value comes

from a wealthy woman who wrote plays

and ran an abbey she had to found

to find a place

Hatshepsut A scribe.

Without scribes nothing endures, there is no record

So it was in my time.

Joan You bossed around a community of nuns

Bossing the bossy

it’s enough

I take my commands from leaders.

Roswitha Perhaps my value lies

in correlation

past and present bound together like fighting twins

who knows

I serve and that is all.

May we begin

Hatshepsut I allow it. Begin.

Roswitha Joan

you must lend us your body and your strength again

Joan I wield in service of my God and those who seek the Strongest

Hatshepsut Blah Blah Blah

Canoness, *if you* *please*

my remit

Roswitha Pharaoh

place the sign on the wall of your temple

It will be found by one who does not seek it

Nor does this woman know the girl she will assist

But she will be the agent of our endeavour

Hatshepsut *Endeavour*

even the word fatigues me

It will be done

But you Roswitha

will you content yourself with writing merely

Roswitha My role has begun.

Now to the task.

There is no time to waste

The girl is in mortal danger.

Are we agreed? Joan?

Joan There is no other to help her?

Roswitha No other.

Hatshepsut?

Hatshepsut Oh

*certainly*

if it means this meeting is complete

Roswitha Together then

one voice

All Voices HELP TO THOSE WHO SEEK IT

HELP FROM THOSE WHO GIVE IT

OPHELOS

4. BYBLOS

*Day, bright sunlight. The wall becomes visible again. It’s a dirty white, covered in Latin inscriptions.*

*A tapping sound.*

*Suddenly part of the wall comes down with a crash. Another wall stands behind it.*

***Joanie*** *appears in the rising dust, holding a chisel and a mallet, looking horrified. She wears tattered shorts and a Christian Metal T-shirt.*

***Maya*** *rushes in. Stares at the debris. She is dressed like a field archaeologist.*

*The wall is covered in drawings and inscriptions.*

Joanie Ohmigawd ohmigawd ohmigawd

Holy shit holy shit HOLY SHIT

Maya Uh…what happened here?

Joanie Nothing...

I was just working on that frieze like you told me chipping the outer section away like you said I swear Maya then it’s like I saw this little crack this fissure and something behind it so I gave it a whack with the mallet and—

*She gestures at the debris, desolate.*

sorry

Maya You gave it

a *whack*

Joanie I’m not cut out for archaeology

I’m used to hitting people not things

Now I’ve gone and ruined your dig

We’ll probably get kicked out of Lebanon

*Beat* we’re in Lebanon

right?

Maya Seeing as our dig is unauthorised Joanie

I don’t think it really matters

This is interesting, though

Joanie What

Maya You didn’t just destroy a wall.

Look.

***Joanie*** *turns and regards an inscription on the newly revealed underpart of the wall.*

Joanie Holy Mary Magdalen giving head to the apostles. What is it?

Maya Joanie! For a former nun you have an incredible set of curses.

Joanie Daughter of Christ

now lapsed

to be strictly accurate

I have a LOT of aggression to let out.

Evidently...

So what is all this stuff?

Maya Pictograms here. Proto-Canaanite, maybe.

Not Linear B.

A bridge language?

Wait

look here! Holy shit!

Joanie Maya has a potty mouth nyah nyah nyah nyah nyah

Maya No Joanie LOOK

It’s the symbol we saw in Egypt

in the Valley of the Kings

Remember?

Completely unclassified

Joanie So

I didn’t mess up

?

Maya Damn it!

Joanie What?

Maya Take some photographs

quick Joanie

Joanie What? Why?

Maya The guards are coming Joanie that’s why

they won’t let us stay here

and they won’t let us back in

**Come on**!

***Joanie*** *roots in her backpack for her camera*.

Joanie Where is it...

Maya **TAKE THE PHOTOS, JOANIE**

Joanie Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck

okay

*She finds the camera and sets the focus*.

Maya Shoot the whole wall

get all of it

***Joanie*** *fiddles with her camera*. *She backs up.*

Maya What are you doing?

Joanie I can’t find “Panorama”

Maya Okay. Okay. Come closer

take a shot of each quadrant

Joanie What’s a quadrant?

Maya Divide the wall into four sections

one northwest

two northeast

three southwest

four southeast

***Joanie*** *holds out the camera to* ***Maya****.*

Joanie You do it

Maya **NOW JOANIE**

***Joanie*** *shoots several shots in rapid succession. They run.*

5. CRIME SCENE

*Darkness. Shots from* ***Joanie****’s camera appear on the screen in sequence. Several are of the*

*ground. Others contain* ***Joanie****’s fingers or her face peering at the camera. The final shot is of*

*a circle, surrounded by three triangles, each appearing to point inward, towards the circle.*

*The screen image fades. Darkness. The interior of a room. The wall is now spattered with*

*bright paint in many colours. A flashlight beam appears, moving about the space.*

*A second flashlight reveals the bearer of the first.*

Bishop You sure this is the location?

I don’t think this is the location.

Nabil Yes, is the place. 122 Brooks Street second floor.

Bishop Nothing here. My cheeseburger got cold for nothing. C’mon.

***Nabil*** *turns on the lights. Dim fluorescent light illuminates a dingy looking open space with a*

*tall narrow bookcase and an overturned chair and table.*

Bishop Wow. Charming decor. I love what they did with the place.

Nabil The paint is fresh on wall. He wanted to cover something, maybe.

Bishop “He”?

Nabil You have listened the radio report.

Loud screams from woman. Things breaking.

Old lady on street other side watch young woman run away.

Then some seconds

a guy older running also same direction.

Bishop As in, away from here.

Nabil Then must he running back

Not catch her

Understand?

Think “ah, apartment evidence”

Throw paint at wall.

Bishop Jesus, Latif, was that even fricking English?

Nabil I am very tired. You understand, no?

Bishop Only because I know you.

Look at that wall. I’m guessing rave joint. Or crack house.

Nabil Rave? What is Rave?

Bishop All night party. Kids find a warehouse or an empty house.

Ecstasy, synthetic drugs, trance music. You know the scene.

Nabil Witness saw only young girl, man. No others.

Bishop There’s a back entrance, sure as shootin’ .

Okay I make it like this. The landlord comes back, discovers the party. Throws a fit.

The girl disses him, the others split out the back, he chases her out the front.

Nabil What is a “diss”?

Bishop What century do you come from, Latif?

Dissed. Disrespected. All the teens use it.

Nabil I am not teenager.

Young people do not clean so well as this.

Bishop Yeah.

Well, that’s true.

Nabil Crime scene is wiped.

Bishop Is no crime scene. Christ, you got me speaking like you now.

***Nabil*** *takes out a small tool which emits an infra-red light.*

*He slowly plays it along the wall and over the chair.*

Bishop What the hell is that?

Nabil Spectrum light. Show traces for different substance.

Bishop When the hell did the department buy those?

And why didn’t I get one!?

***Nabil*** *focuses on a section of the bookcase.*

Bishop Traces of what?

Nabil Blood. Semen. Human liquids.

Bishop Fancy.

***Nabil*** *focuses the light on the floor.*

Nabil Blood was here. Cleaned. But trace remain.

Bishop Shit.

Nabil Can be tested.

*He takes out a swab and gets a sample of the blood. He places it in a small plastic bag.*

Bishop Okay, I’m impressed, Latif. You’ve been watching CSI. That’s big city policing.

Nabil Was for six months forcèd leave.

I took forensic course on-line. For help find Sara.

Bishop You already made detective, Latif. Don’t try so hard.

*Beat* Man, I *want* one of those thingamies.

Nabil Here is depressions in the wood. Furniture was here.

Bishop Most apartments have furniture in them at some point.

If you don’t live in a *tent*.

Nabil Why no furniture now?

Table. Chair. One chair. Only one.

And this...all books on wall.

Bishop In our culture that’s known as a bookcase, Nabil.

Nabil I am aware.

Old books. History.

Bishop You’re thinking that tells us something?

Nabil Why clean all but leave books behind?

A great hurry. He was a great hurry.

Bishop Hence the running. Good analysis, Columbo.

*Beat*

Look Nabil

You’ve been on stress leave

you might be seeing things that aren’t there. I’m just sayin’ .

You know as well as I do that Rose will be all over us if we waste department resources on a crime that didn’t happen.

I mean so far we have—maybe—a guy who ran after his girlfriend?

We need some grime from the crime, man

Nabil Shakespeare.

Bishop He said that?

*Beat* Oh. The books.

Nabil Shakespeare help me learn English. Reading to Sara.

Bishop You don’t speak like Shakespeare.

***Nabil*** *looks at him*.

Bishop I mean, you don’t rhyme or anything.

And I say *thank* *fuck* *for* *that*.

I mean—Shakespeare

I got stomach aches in high school

Trying to read that stuff

Took some days off

Fucking cunt of a teacher failed me

Nabil You should not speak in such a way of women!

Bishop He was a guy.

He was still a cunt though.

Nabil *Hamlet*.

I read this to Sara, this play. When she was young. Before…

and the *Pericles*. *The Merchant of Venice*.

Bishop You Muslim guys love it when Shylock gets screwed, huh?

Nabil I am Copt Bishop.

Bishop Yeah but that’s your job, not who are.

Anyway if you were driving down a highway

and the Wandering Jew was out there hitchhiking

you wouldn’t pick him up.

Is all I’m saying.

Nabil Look. A page is turned like a dog.

Bishop “Dog-eared”. Jesus.

Nabil Ophelia’s death.

Bishop I know that one. The mad scene.

Nabil She was not mad.

Bishop No?

Nabil No. Sad. No mad.

Sara tell me this.

Sara love her so much, this girl. Ophelia. She write me notes, like postcards.

Say “hello popsie from Denmark, love your Ophelia”

I was confused

is no Denmark here

she would make picture after the name

sun with three points

Bishop Aw, for…Latif, is that what you think this is about? Your daughter?

*Pause*

How long has it been?

Nabil Two years. Three months. Four days.

Bishop I remember. What a ruckus *that* was.

Girls run away all the time, head for the city…

but the force turned this town upside *down* for you, Nabil.

Everyone

I mean *everyone*

was out there looking

Turned this town upside down!

Nothing. Vanished like smoke in the wind.

Then we got that note. She told you to stop looking.

Some anarchist group

Occupy

or something.

Brutal.

Nabil It was not true! She was fourteen!

Bishop Sure. All I‘m saying

you can’t carry that baggage

that *personal* stuff

into a crime scene.

It poisons your mind.

Nabil You are not father.

Bishop You got *that* right.

Well I’ll let you work out your little fixation here

If Rose shuts you down don’t say I didn’t warn you.

I’ll go get that blood sample tested.

Good with you?

***Nabil*** *hands over the blood swab.*

Nabil Good for me.

***Bishop*** *takes the swab and begins to exit.* *He turns at the door.*

Bishop Hey Latif!

Nabil Yes?

Bishop How many women you need to screw in a light bulb?

Nabil I

sorry?

Bishop One. And you don’t need the light bulb. Smile, bub!

*He leaves.* ***Nabil*** *continues to inspect the book. He takes out a small camera and photographs*

*a page. The image from the page, of text with a sun with three triangles pointing inward*

*appears on the screen.*

Nabil Sara, my light

my darling

You were here

6. THE RULES

*Day, interior light.*

***Maya*** *and* ***Professor Lévesque*** *in his office. He is looking through a sheaf of papers.*

*On the wall is projected rows of books. Intermittently, as if a signal has been cut or hacked, grainy video footage of* ***Sara****, a rapidly flickering image that the characters do not see.*

Lévesque Well

These symbols *could* be Proto-Canaanite

Maya That’s what I‘m saying.

Lévesque But this sun-like one doesn’t fit in the evolutionary arc.

Looks a bit like the Armenian “O”.

Which is a long time farther on, of course. Intriguing.

Maya Extrapolating the appearances I’m documenting from different times and cultures—some of them appearing at the same time—it doesn’t seem to be nominative, either.

Lévesque A glyph then?

Maya I’m not sure yet, Dr. Lévesque. I know it’s not Linear B...

It matches the symbol I found in Luxor.

It’s not linked to the signs around it, but I’ve found it in other sites

The symbol showed up in some manuscripts I’ve been looking at too

from medieval monasteries in Armenia and Saxony.

Lévesque But dear girl, whatever caused you to go rooting through medieval manuscripts?

Maya One day a package came by mail—

Lévesque Surely it’s not within any reasonable description of your field of research.

Maya It was a scan from a manuscript kept in an abbey in Saxony.

It had the same symbol on it. No sender listed.

I don’t know how they found me. I move almost every month.

Lévesque No doubt a result of your fellowship being cut.

Maya Yes. There was that.

I’ve come to ask for it back.

Lévesque I see.

Maya This work could be ground-breaking. I need more time.

Lévesque But on what ground?

I know nothing about medieval manuscripts Ms. Goldstar.

Why were these manuscripts sent to you?

Maya I have a website. “Digging Women”.

It’s about women and archaeology

The woman who sent me scans of the manuscripts

was anonymous

She just wrote “find the sign, look for the girl”

Lévesque What does this have to do with archaeology? Or your fellowship?

Maya I found the symbol at the Temple of Hatshepsut first.

Then at Byblos—

Lévesque Ah yes. The infamous wall destruction.

Maya I got sent a photo from a church in Armenia.

This is a photo from a tomb there

Ripsime

a devout woman

She was killed for refusing to give her virginity to the King.

*The photo appears on the wall, of a floor tomb.*

*A woman’s body is carved atop it with the symbol.*

It’s starting to link into something I don’t yet understand.

Lévesque Ms. Goldstar.

Let’s *hypothesize* for a moment.

Shall we?

Maya Uh. Okay

Lévesque Let’s hypothesize that I am sufficiently persuaded by your account of, hmm, *paranormal activity* and its merits with regard to your thesis proposal.

Now then.

Overlooking the fact of these completely unauthorised hunt and peck expeditions you’ve undertaken with a woman with a known criminal record—

Maya Joanie? She wouldn’t hurt a fly. I admit

she has

an impulse resistance issue

Lévesque Even, as I say, overlooking the poor judgment demonstrated in the hiring of such an individual—

Maya She volunteered!

Lévesque And you just opened the door and said

“Welcome, let’s destroy my supervisor’s reputation together—

Here, take this mallet.”

Maya It wasn’t like that she’s not

I’m, look—

There’s no—

Your name never came into it!

Lévesque *Precisely.*

If I may finish.

It’s difficult to imagine any archaeological site licensing an apprentice

whose assistant *revels* in knocking down ancient walls.

Word gets out.

Maya Word doesn’t have to get out!

Does it?

Lévesque But it does, Ms. Goldstar.

Why would I let you demolish my name

the way you take a hammer to ancient walls?

You had no right to be in Byblos at all!

Maya I only did it because the university cut my funding!

Lévesque You failed to produce any written thesis work in over a year.

There was a process. You had the right to appeal. You did not.

Maya I knew what they’d decide.

It’s always fixed.

Lévesque Ms. Goldstar. You are not a victim. You are

the architect of your own demise.

What you fail to grasp is that archaeology isn’t romantic.

It isn’t about having a zany idea and then going out and digging.

That is a child’s fantasy.

In my field you must have allies

People who believe it’s to their advantage to be on your side.

Persuasion must be judiciously employed

Renegades are left to their own devices.

Maya I wrote more than a hundred pages of original research.

Lévesque *Produced*. Which demonstrated

I regret to say

that your scholarship has taken a turn in the direction of the esoteric.

Maya The literature on simultaneous discovery is pretty extensive, Professor.

Unclassified symbols deserve to be investigated, don’t you think?

Lévesque Simultaneous discovery?

Archaeology does not involve the “butterfly effect”, Ms. Goldstar.

If you want to study chaos theory, apply to the mathematics department!

You began with a conclusion, rather than a question.

You are an agenda in search of a smoking gun.

Maya There’s a link. The Valley of the Kings

Byblos

Ripsime’s tomb

Roswitha’s writings

I think women communicate with each other across time and space

Lévesque *Really*.

The esoteric should be confined to the realm of the pseudo-sciences

like *sociology*

Perhaps there is funding available in Women’s Studies?

Maya There is material evidence

archaeological evidence

linking the symbol I found at the Temple of Hatshepsut

to the re-discovered wall in Byblos.

Lévesque “Re-discovered Wall”?

That’s droll.

You knocked a wall down to get to it! A 2000 year-old wall!

Maya That was unfortunate. Yes.

Lévesque The destruction of a Roman artifact was “unfortunate”.

Are you some kind of sociopath, Ms. Goldstar

or merely a cultural philistine?

Maya But it wasn’t destroyed!

What fell was a plaster facing...

I’m convinced it was applied much later

to hide what was *behind* it.

Lévesque Or to write new Latin inscriptions upon the surface.

Maya **Who the fuck** needs another Latin document?

What was underneath was older

and more important

Lévesque You say.

Maya We’d have to carbon-date it, of course, but—

Lévesque And why hide it?

Maya To cover up persecution.

If we can prove the writing around it has something to do with the oppression of women at the time it was written

it would fit with what I’ve found in the manuscripts in Saxony

and Armenia and at Byblos and the Valley of the Kings

Lévesque Ah! The Conspiracy Theory trope.

Who hatched this conspiracy?

Pontius Pilate? Herod?

Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula?

Maya Look

I don’t express myself well I know that but

a conspiracy

I didn’t say that

I said the wall was built to hide something that somebody didn’t like.

I don’t know why. I want to find out why.

That’s why I’m here in front of you begging for my fellowship back.

We can understand its links between pictographic languages and languages like Phoenician and Aramaic better if we decode the wall.

All of it. But

I think the symbol

that symbol

says the same thing from one culture to another.

That’s *amazing*

isn’t it?

Lévesque *Quel circonstance*.

I wonder

Miss Goldstar

What would your father say?

Maya He’d say

“Go take a gander, Maya.

That’s why I named you after an ancient civilisation.”

Lévesque “Take a gander”.

Reuben did have a penchant for the vernacular.

Maya Professor

give me a chance

Lévesque I gave you a chance

Maya Another chance, then!

A last chance

whatever you want to call it.

Give me my fellowship money.

I’ll play by the rules.

I promise.

Lévesque You’re asking me to bend the rules.

Maya I can take criticism

when it’s legitimate

Direction!

I can take direction.

I’ll do everything you tell me to.

Lévesque Is it that important to you?

Maya It isn’t about me. Well it is but—

archaeology makes life better

it helps us understand how we got here

What we did. Why.

Sometimes at the same time, in different places.

I truly believe that.

I think that symbol will turn up elsewhere

I think it has meaning for our understanding of how humans communicate beyond the material world in times of great need

So.

Yes.

It’s that important to me.

Lévesque To address the topic as I understand it

Surely women have continually employed multiple forms of communication

some might say endlessly to great effect

without scrawling symbols on walls?

Maya So have men. Yet we still scrawl.

Lévesque If I reissue your funding, what do you offer in return?

Maya …

I’ll name my first child Pierre-Paul?

Lévesque Speaking of my name

It will appear on every article you manage to write about this

*phenomenon*

Maya You’re my research supervisor. That’s a given.

Lévesque As the author of the research.

Maya Oh

Lévesque Only if the research is credible of course

The same with conference presentations and any books

Which, however unlikely, might be the fruit of this foray into arcana.

Perhaps we’ll make the next Erich Von Dänekin

Are we agreed?

Maya Agreed on what?

What are we agreed on?

That you don’t think my work is valid

Or that you think it has commercial potential?

That you’ll take credit for work I do?

Double the money and extend the duration

My name on each article

every bloody page

as co-author.

Lévesque Assistant.

Maya Co-author.

*He laughs*.

Lévesque You drive a hard bargain Ms. Goldstar

I accept. You have your second chance.

Maya You accept. Great.

Scan the forms and send them to me. I’ll sign.

*She rises quickly and grabs her coat.*

Lévesque Maya

If we’re going to be colleagues it’s important

to establish a *bond*

Maya I don’t…

you want to spit on each other’s palm or something?

Lévesque Close the door.

Let’s test that newfound willingness to obey the rules

*He stands, facing her. She freezes*.

7. OPHELIA

*In one area,* ***Sara at 14****. She wears a clean white slip. White make-up, kewpie-doll lips.*

*Rouge circles on each cheek.*

*She sits on the floor by the bookcase, pulling out books one by one, ritually.*

*She adjusts her clothes unconsciously, trying to make the slip longer.*

*In a second area* ***Rose*** *sits at her desk and adjusts her clothes, waiting.*

Sara 14 Ophelia didn’t escape.

Ophelia didn’t escape.

*She rises swiftly and darts about the room, looking for an opening she hasn’t yet spotted.*

***Nabil*** *enters* ***Rose’s*** *office, followed by* ***Bishop****, eating a sandwich. They pull up chairs and sit.*

Bishop What’s up, Chief?

Rose Detective, put the sandwich away.

Bishop I worked through lunch.

Rose That isn’t my fault.

Bishop I was being a good boy. Keeping my nose to the grindstone, eh?

Rose Put the sandwich away.

*He wolfs down the sandwich and shows his now-empty hands.*

Bishop *Mouth full* Presto!

Rose Constable Latif

I apologise.

We haven’t had a chance to talk since you returned to active duty.

As you know, we have a small force here, and

You were missed.

***Nabil*** *nods. An awkward silence.*

Rose Let’s get started.

Give me an update on the Brooks St. case.

Bishop Not sure it’s a case, Skip. A guy running after a girl.

That’s exciting for *this* town, but

Nabil Was blood on the floor. Cleanèd.

Bishop Latif thinks his daughter is involved.

Just like before he got his stress leave.

***Sara 14*** *opens a book. Reads aloud*

Sara I fear I know you not Sir.

*Hears a noise. Freezes.*

OVM Sara? What’s going on in there?

*Quickly she wipes a finger through her make-up and draws the circle with three inward points in the book. The image of the symbol flashes intermittently on screen, cutting in and out.*

*A noise. She pulls several books from the bookcase. Surrounds herself with them on the floor.*

Rose I’m sorry there’s been no word on Sara, Detective Latif.

Nabil Thank you.

Rose I’m sure she’s still alive.

You received a letter from her?

When was that?

Nabil Since six months.

Rose Yes. Just after we started looking for her again.

There was a tip.

Bishop That was a shocker, eh Skip?

Like a note from some terrorist organisation.

That was that, basically.

I gotta say, Superintendent

all due respect

Latif here has become obsessed with this thing about his daughter.

He’s like a broken record.

Rose You’d feel the same way if you lost a child, Bishop.

Bishop I probably got five or six out there somewhere!

I’m kid—

oh jeez

Sorry skip

Your little girl got run over by a car

ten years ago right

Me and my big mouth

Sorry.

That was a tragedy. I was sick about that.

Rose You weren’t even here then.

Bishop All the same. The Force sticks together, eh?

But here it is, Skip.

Latif, every little thing he sees

it sets him off.

This time it was *Hamlet*, for the love of God.

Nabil Ophelia.

Bishop The last time I checked the play was called “Hamlet”.

Nabil *Ophelia.*

I used to read to her this.

Rose You found the play at the scene?

Bishop With about a hundred other books.

Nabil Book was

dog-ear

I found on floor. Open

where Ophelia have lost everything.

Bishop The mad scene.

Rose She’s not mad.

Bishop *Whatever*.

Skip, we don’t even know it’s a crime scene!

Rose Stop calling me Skip. This is not a curling team.

***Bishop*** *retreats into his chair, sulking.*

On one level Latif I agree with Bishop

We have no indication of a crime at the scene.

I have the blood report.

The blood is canine.

Bishop Oooooh, a dog homicide. My favourite.

So

like I said

we got nothing. Nada. Bupkiss.

***Nabil*** *carefully produces a set of photos in clear plastic folders from his briefcase and hands*

*them to* ***Rose***.

Rose What am I looking at?

Nabil These photographs I took

Look.

Is a drawing, you see? Very faded. Was in the *Hamlet*.

Bishop **What the fuck** Nabil

you going behind my back now?

Nabil You left.

Bishop You couldn’t send me a text?

Nabil I do not own a cellphone!

Bishop ***I’m your effing partner, Latif.***

Well I’m embarrassed Boss

I can’t vouch for this.

Latif could have drawn it himself.

Rose Detective Latif

Nabil

Bishop’s right.

We can’t base any investigation off this.

Bishop I can go back there with Kennedy if you want.

Do it right this time.

Nabil Look! It is faint. She drew quickly. Something greasy.

*He takes out a small plastic bag and hands it to* ***Rose****.*

Here is scraping from the drawing. It is maybe still good.

Bishop Oh boy.

Rose I can’t accept this.

You were alone.

You might have taken it from anywhere.

You know how the regional prosecutors are, Latif.

Bishop Let me go back with Kennedy.

We’ll do a clean sweep. Totally objective.

Rose I’m afraid you’re a long way from established protocol Detective.

*Flickering images of the circle with three points, photos of Sara and her Dad from earlier*

*times, a photo of an adult woman in Middle Eastern dress.*

***Sara at 14****, posing like a broken marionette on the floor against the wall.*

OVM Sara?

What’s all this mess, baby?

*She raises her middle finger.*

OVM You’re new at this.

But you’ll get used to it.

Sara 14 Fuck you!

OVM Sara. Time for bed.

*Beat. She lifts a book to protect herself.*

Nabil There is something more.

***Nabil*** *leans forward with another drawing in a clear plastic liner.*

Nabil This is from Sara

when she was younger

See. Even there is date

Four years ago

she was twelve

***Rose*** *looks at the drawing*. ***Bishop*** *sighs noisily.*

She sign it “Ophelia”. There is a sun. A sun with three triangles.

Rose Alright.

Here’s what we are going to do.

Bishop, you’re on street duty. That’s what you do best.

Check out every homeless person, every pimp, prostitute, dealer and addict on the strip

report back on anything

*anything*

they saw.

You understand me?

A young girl needs food she needs shelter she’d seek out someone

Latif is your partner Bishop

I think his little girl is out there

We’re going to find his little girl

Bishop You got it, Sk—

Boss.

Rose Nabil

I’m sending you back to the apartment.

Kennedy will go with you.

Reshoot the photos again

take the swabs again

make the scene tell you everything it can.

Nabil I know it is her. I know this.

Rose We’ll compare notes tomorrow.

Latif

I’m only going to say this once

A young girl was seen running from the scene.

It might be something. It might be nothing.

But if it’s something

we have a window of opportunity to find her that is narrowing

Get going

both of you.

***Nabil*** *and* ***Bishop*** *rise*. ***Nabil*** *exits quickly.* ***Bishop*** *lingers*.

Bishop Uh...no hard feelings, eh, Boss?

Rose No.

Is that all, Constable?

Bishop I was wondering

Can I get one of those spectrum thingies Nabil has?

Rose Get out of here.

*He does*. *She reaches for the framed photo, resists the impulse. Picks up the drawing instead.*

8. Connections

*An auditorium. At its front edge* ***Maya*** *and* ***Joanie*** *sit dejectedly. A large screen*

*behind them shows blow-ups of the wall and the symbol, as well as pictograms and script*

*samples in Phoenician, Aramaic, Armenian and Old Saxon.*

Maya Not even one person.

Joanie I know. You’d think someone would, like, wander in by accident.

***Maya*** *glares at her*.

I’m just saying! It’s statistically odd.

Maya And yet so predictable.

Joanie That asshole supervisor of yours obviously has a lot of clout.

You want me to go find him and kick him in the balls?

Maya That wouldn’t solve anything.

Joanie It would feel good though.

We’ll get the message out Maya. It’s too important for us to give up now.

So tell me again how it all links up.

Starting with that chick Pharaoh Hot Shot Put. I wasn’t there for that.

Then my bit.

Maya Your bit?

Joanie The Hammer of Thor! She knocks down walls!

So link it up, sister.

When you’re famous they’ll interview me on Archaeology Tonight.

It’ll probably be a community access cable show, but never mind.

***Rose*** *appears at the foot of the stage*.

Rose Yes, please explain your theory, Ms. Goldstar. I’d very much like to hear it.

Maya Sorry. The lecture was cancelled.

If you bought a ticket I’ll give you your money back.

Joanie No one showed up.

Someone is going to lose a testicle as a result.

Rose I’m sorry I’m so late.

There’s a lot on my mind lately.

And I looked up from my desk and it was already eight o’clock

But perhaps it’s best that we talk in private.

Joanie How private?

Maya This is Joanie. She’s been a bit over-protective lately.

I got kicked out of the university.

Joanie Thanks to Professor Scumbag.

Rose I should introduce myself. Superintendent Rose of the city police.

I’m pleased to meet you Joan.

Joanie Joanie.

*They shake hands somewhat awkwardly*.

Rose I’ll be concise.

We’re working on a case

at least I think it’s a case

of a missing person who may have been the victim of a crime.

It may be two people

and two or more crimes

we don’t know.

When I saw the poster for your lecture I was struck by one of the images.

Joan Hot Shot Put.

Rose I beg your pardon? It was this one.

*She points up at the screen to the circle crowned with three inward pointing triangles.*

In fact I have it here.

*She takes out the drawing given to her by* ***Nabil*** *from her purse.*

Joanie Do you, like, have a badge or something?

Cuz I’ve never seen a police chick with a purse.

Maya Joanie.

Rose It’s alright. I’m off-duty, now, of course. Here it is.

*She produces her police I.D.*

Joanie Looks bogus. Or you’re a lot better looking in person.

Maya Superintendent, can I ask you where you got this drawing?

Rose One of my detectives is the father of the young woman who drew it.

There is also this.

*She produces the photo* ***Nabil*** *took at the flat*

Joanie Holy Crap.

Rose We think it was drawn by the same young woman.

Maya I think you’re right.

Rose Why do you say that?

Maya Let me explain what I’m working on.

Joanie I knocked down a wall!

Rose *laughs* We’re always in need of women who knock down walls.

Joanie Hey!High Five, bitch!

*She attempts a high five with* ***Rose****. It fails.*

Maya That symbol stands separate from every known language.

I saw it first in Luxor, at the Temple of Hatshepsut.

I thought it was an aberration

an anomalous glyph created by a distracted or deficient craftsman.

Rose Didn’t her son destroy most of the evidence of her existence?

I apologise.

I’ve been doing some reading to prepare for your lecture.

Maya It’s possible.

He waited 22 years to take what he felt was his rightful place on the throne.

All we know is that someone tried to erase her from history.

They failed, though.

And she left this symbol in a small, out-of-the-way corner of her temple.

The hieroglyphs around it were unusual too.

*She gestures to the screen and presses a key on her computer. The images change to a close-*

*up of the wall from Luxor, followed by that from Byblos. These are intercut with shots of*

***Joanie*** *posing proudly by the wall.*

Joanie We found it in Lebanon, too.

Maya In Byblos.

That’s where the hieroglyphs of the Egyptians took form as an alphabet.

It was always believed that Phoenician was the first alphabet

but the peoples who lived there must have used a bridge script first.

A bridge script departs from its root language and incorporates symbols

to convey thoughts and feelings.

But this symbol doesn’t fit

It’s not part of the bridge language.

I’d seen it in Egypt

it didn’t fit there, either.

I thought I might find it in Byblos.

Joanie And we did!

Rose So you don’t believe it’s part of a common alphabet, then?

Maya The writing is, but the symbol stands alone.

It’s not a letter, and the writing seems to refer to it.

Joanie There’s an old church in Armenia, in the mountains.

A bunch of virgins died there.

That’s the next place we’re going to.

Maya An historian saw my website.

She wrote me that this symbol was etched into the stele of a woman

Ripsime

killed for refusing sex with the King.

She and 36 female Christian votaries

Rose For refusing to be raped, you mean.

Joanie Yes! Maya, I like this chick!

***Joanie*** *punches* ***Rose*** *in the shoulder.*

***Maya*** *changes slides to indicate the stele*.

Joanie A stele is a gravestone.

I looked it up.

Maya A young scholar sent me this old text in Saxon

from the Abbey in Gandersheim where Roswitha was Canoness.

Roswitha wrote the first plays in German

One of them deals with three women who also refuse to be raped

By the Emperor Diocletian’s Governor, Dulcitius.

*She changes the slide on the screen. It’s a page from the ancient manuscript of* ***Dulcitius****, with*

*the sun/triangle sign scrawled into a margin*.

It’s a comedy.

So it’s skipped a few iterations of Indo-European.

Or more likely I’ve missed a lot of places where it will eventually show up.

Joanie She’s looking at Latin next.

Maya Diocletian. The facts of the Saxon text are historically accurate.

I think she learned the story and the symbol from pirated Latin texts.

I think the symbol is about help. Needing it in dire situations.

Rose But none of these women were saved from their fate.

So what does the symbol say?

Maya Maybe no one wrote stories about the ones who were saved.

The good news never plays on the front page, does it?

And maybe the *help* is wider, not assistance, necessarily

Rose Sustenance. So the Canoness was writing to inspire.

Joan Yeah. She sounds cool. I mean, why put it on the stele?

To say “we will fight this shit!”

Or words to that effect

Maya It’s clearly a variation of a sun sign. Look at the three rays.

Rose Could it be the letter “O”?

Maya Well, no. “O” didn’t exist in early languages

Joanie What?

Maya How could I have overlooked that

The letter “O” appeared in early Armenian but

A symbol in the form of an O appeared in Proto-Canaanite

It represented the human eye.

Rose Watching, or being watched.

Joanie Me, that’s a moon. It’s a chick thing.

That’s what I think.

Maya An eye. I missed that.

Thank you, Superintendent

I have some looking up to do now.

Rose “Ophelos”.

Maya Sorry?

Joanie Like, *Hamlet* Ophelos?

No wait that’s wrong.

Rose Two years ago the daughter of one of my detectives ran away.

We think—I think—she is the girl who tried to escape the crime scene. “Ophelia” is the nickname she used with her father.

He used to read “Hamlet” to her.

But I think she knew the real meaning of the word.

Joanie It has a meaning?

Rose *Ophelos* means “help” in ancient Greek.

At the scene there was a book lying on the floor.

A copy of “Hamlet”.

One of the pages was creased at the scene where Ophelia sings

The symbol was drawn there. In what looks like make-up.

Joanie Well nail me to some frickin’ firewood and call me Jesus.

I’m getting tingles Maya.

Maya Damn it! I assumed it was a sun sign variant.

But why would the rays point inward then?

Professor Lévesque was right. My work lacks rigour.

Rose Maybe it’s a matter of trusting your instincts.

Maya My instincts have created this mess.

Rose The Greeks adapted their language to the Phoenician alphabet, did they not?

Maya Yes.

They were in Byblos all the time. Trading.

That’s where they got the papyrus they used for writing.

Rose Trust your instincts, Ms. Goldstar. They’re good ones.

Now I’d like to ask your help.

Joanie Yes!

For what?

Maya? Can we help this chick?

Maya If you think we can help.

Rose I do. Joan—Joanie.

The girl’s name is Sara. She’d be 16 now.

You know the area around the railway yards?

Joan Better than you can imagine.

Rose Look in places you think a girl might hide.

Ask the women who work on the street. The dealers.

Anybody who might have seen her.

Maya—may I call you Maya?

We’ll help you put together a proper public presentation

That way the man who took her won’t suspect

we’re searching

Maya They’ll think I’m just another flighty female academic.

“Chariots of the Gods”

the feminist version.

Rose They will be wrong.

More importantly Sara

if she is out there

She’ll know that we understand

She might contact us

***Joanie*** *raises her hand*.

Joanie Question!

Rose Yes?

Joanie How would chickie know about this symbol?

Rose Ms. Goldstar?

How did it pass from one culture to another

repeating itself in situations of great duress?

Maya That’s something I don’t know.

But it may not have been transmitted.

There’s a concept called “simultaneous discovery”

basically the idea of things being invented at the same time

in different cultures.

The common denominator is need.

I know it sounds…*esoteric*

Rose Joanie, can you trust me?

Joanie If Maya does.

Rose Will you help me Maya?

Maya Yes. You can attract more people than I did tonight.

Rose I’ll get started on that public presentation.

Joanie

can you come back to the station with me now?

Joanie Uh

I’d like to

but I have to return all this equipment.

Maya I can do that, Joanie.

Joanie *No*

actually you can’t

I kind of stole it.

Maya Jesus Joanie!

“What does kind of stole it” mean?

Joanie You going to arrest me?

Rose That’s not a police matter.

Joanie We had no money

I was not going to let that bastard stop you

Maya Okay.

Tell me where you took it from and I’ll

I’ll get it settled.

Somehow.

Joanie Sure?

Maya I still have my Dad’s credit card.

Go.

Joanie Okay then!

“Lead on, MacDuff!”

That’s a Shakespeare, right?

***Rose*** *and* ***Joanie*** *exit.* ***Maya*** *alone.*

*The lights shut off, leaving her in the illumination of the screen.*

Maya Dad, are you out there, somewhere? Am I doing the right thing?

Dad, what did I let myself in for?

*The ghost of her* ***Father*** *appears on the screen, as if from the ghost scene in* ***Hamlet***.

Father Remember me.

Maya I do Dad.

That’s the whole problem.

9. Ophelia

*Night. A single bulb burns inside a room.* ***Sara****, in a man’s long T-shirt, tied to a chair. The*

*circle and three inward facing points painted roughly on the wall. A* ***Man****’s voice is heard.*

Man Sara. Sara.

You disappoint me

After all I did to make a home

for us

You ran away

I brought you back

You shed my blood you cut me Sara.

Did I deserve that?

I did

*Laughs* You always hurt the one you love.

Do you love me

Sara?

***Sara*** *says nothing.*

say you’re sorry.

*She does not reply.*

Such a stubborn little mouse.

Where did all this courage come from?

*She raises her head as if to speak but says nothing.*

Oh well.

Time to pay the piper.

Blood for blood

You’ve caused me trouble Sara.

The cleaning up I had to do before the police came back!

They’re gone Sara

They won’t return Sara

Why would you and I come back

To the scene

of so many crimes

Are you glad to be home Sara?

*Beat* “Cruel to be kind”

Isn’t that what the poet said?

Pain for pain

***Sara*** *shrinks into her chair.*

PART TWO

10. Administrative Matters

*The Abbey at Gandersheim, late 10th century*. ***Roswitha****, the Canoness, faces the* ***Bishop of***

***Hildesheim****.*

Bishop It shall not be, Canoness!

Roswitha I have broken no ordnance, Your Eminence.

Bishop You have produced this—

*He gestures at a pile of manuscripts*.

You think this pleases Him?

This

this *vomit*

*He picks up a sheaf of parchment from the table and flings it to the floor.*

Roswitha Such a flair for the dramatic Otwin.

You could have been a writer.

I’m sure my writing is poor.

But its intent is not heretical.

As you would know if you had actually read it.

*She begins to pick up the sheaf of papers and put them back in their original order.*

Bishop I don’t *need* to read it.

Roswitha Heresy tends to be more an ecclesiastical matter

than ontological

does it not?

Bishop I will shut this abbey down!

Roswitha Nonsense. Listen to yourself.

Think of the plays as texts for young Christians!

The ones too bored to sit through mass

and those unlearned in the *lingua latina*.

Bishop If it was a text, it would be a *text*. Like a *grammar*. That’s a *good* text.

But it is a *play*. Written in a secular language

and plays are explicitly condemned by our church and Our Lord.

Roswitha Tertullian didn’t think so.

Bishop Tertullian condemned the theatre as base and corrupt.

Roswitha After he’d finished seeing every play he could.

Buyer’s remorse, perhaps.

And Augustine—Augustine loved the theatre.

Bishop You cite your Romans but we live in a different time

with different morals.

Roswitha I agree the Romans were not paragons of virtue

but they knew how to reach their people Eminence.

Terence was a former slave

yet he created works applauded by Emperors.

Bishop This is your model?

A heathen playwright who never served the Holy Catholic Church?

Roswitha People require models from outside their little worlds Bishop.

How many of our Biblical tales are legends and myths

borrowed from the Egyptians and others?

Bishop Heresy! Bald, unvarnished heresy!

Roswitha Well

we shall leave the provenance of the Old Testament to another day

and another conversation.

These plays speak to those who see no need to attend our mass.

and that is no heresy.

It is what we are here to do.

Bishop You would publish plays for the illiterate peasants of Ganderseim!

Roswitha Non-readers can be read to.

Bishop Beware the vice of pride, my dear Canoness.

You are a handmaid of the Lord

not of his enemy.

Roswitha This handmaid pays all the bills for this abbey.

Bishop It is your plaything

an indulgence

filled with susceptible women worship you like an idol

Beware: the Devil’s hand writes in your script.

Roswitha I’m sure Your Eminence the Bishop

has a far more sophisticated understanding of theology

than any woman could achieve.

Bishop What? Well. I like to think so. Yes.

Roswitha And you are *powerful*.

Why it’s said

you have the ear of Our Holy Father in Rome

Bishop I should regret having to make use of my influence.

Roswitha Indeed

The Pontiff is well aware of my long history with the Emperor’s father through Gerberga

his niece and my tutor

He also knows you have long coveted Gandersheim

to pay for the losses accumulated during your tenure at Hildesheim

Bishop Benedict is far too busy to attend to such niceties.

Roswitha Nevertheless he is a well-read man

They say

the Holy Father cares about the farthest satellite in his orbit

and anxiously reads despatches

such as a letter

from his faithful servant Roswitha von Gandersheim

illuminating the serious financial irregularities

which have come to light in the diocese.

Bishop You will do no such thing

you would not dare

*She smiles*.

You did!

Roswitha We are in the business of souls Otwin

I make money for his Holiness

You spend it

I acquire souls rude and rough though they may be

And you shun them

It’s just business

Bishop

Bishop You *cunt*

Now it’s laid bare. You dream of my eclipse, Canoness.

To be— *laughs* the first female Bishop of the Christian church?

Roswitha Oh my Eminence

no.

I kiss the hem of your gown and bend my will

to your all-powerful mastery.

You mistake me.

Bishop I confess I understand nothing of what you say.

I am losing my patience!

Roswitha Of course you are.

We are garrulous, we women

and inclined to gild a lily and embroider an extra stitch

into clothes plain and simple.

But you are benevolent

as all great men are

Eminence.

I know you will be gracious and ensure your legacy

as a visionary in the ecclesiastical sphere.

I am a quill of the Lord: let my plays be scriven.

Bishop I *am* benevolent.

Roswitha You are.

*So* benevolent.

Bishop It is a very great favour you ask of me Canoness.

And you have been rude and froward in your remarks.

*She bends on her knee before him*.

Roswitha I beg your forgiveness

Eminence.

Bishop Well

No.

I can’t do it. I’m sorry, Canoness

it’s too much.

You have offended me

and the Holy Catholic Church you serve.

Your plays shall be burned. Tonight.

Prepare the manuscripts. I shall send my men immediately.

Roswitha Prepare them yourself you flaccid wineskin.

Bishop Remember your place!

Roswitha I do remember my place.

It excels yours if morals count for anything.

Bishop A Mother Superior indeed!

Roswitha Get out of my abbey.

Bishop Not until my men arrive to cart this filth away!

Roswitha HELP! Lord save us

the Bishop is attacking me!

Bishop I—WHAT?

*She tears her habit and utters an ear-splitting scream.*

BishopYou—

I am leaving

I *choose* to leave

*He begins to exit hurriedly, and runs straight into a dishevelled young girl who appears in the*

*doorway. She pins him up against the wall. Glares at him. Glances at Roswitha.*

Roswitha Leave him, Johanna.

*The Bishop flees. Then, from a safe distance:*

Bishop Hellfire, Canoness! Be assured it awaits you!

Roswitha Johanna. You were eavesdropping. Again.

Johanna Rev-rev-reverend M-mother? Are you w-w-well?

Roswitha Johanna.

It grieves me to tell you that you are about to leave our holy order.

Johanna B-but wh-wh-why? I d-dint h-h-urt th-th- b-bastard!

Roswitha There’s something I need you to do.

Something important.

But you will need to depart the abbey.

Johanna D-d-ont m-make me l-l-leave!

*She runs to* ***Roswitha*** *and hugs her knees*. *A silence.*

I w-w-wont s-s-surv-vive

Roswitha Nonsense.

There are many ways to serve the Lord Johanna.

Johanna H-ho-ly M-m-m-other, pl-pl-ease! N-no!

Roswitha Stop crying, please.

We must make use of our emotions

not have them use us.

Johanna Y-y-yes, H-h-holy M—m-mother.

Roswitha There are times to feel and times to do.

The Bishop’s men will be here soon.

Johanna D-did h-he h-h-h-urt y-you, f-fat p-p-pig b-bastard?

Roswitha Johanna it must be said that I have always suspected

your mouth is too foul for a Daughter of Christ

You may express yourself more freely in the wider world.

***Johanna*** *clamps a hand over her mouth.* ***Roswitha*** *gently removes it.*

There is no virtue in stifling a woman’s voice.

***Roswitha*** *gets the sheaf of parchment and hands it to* ***Johanna***.

Roswitha Take these. Leave tonight.

My ancestral home is in the town.

Ask its whereabouts and stay there until you receive word from me.

Johanna Are th-th-ese the w-w-words of G-God?

Roswitha Ha! No darling girl. But

they are important words nonetheless.

These are plays Johanna.

Johanna P-p-plays?

Roswitha There was a time

the city’s people gathered to listen

to the issues of the day played out in words

acted by characters from history.

Such tools are needed in contentious times.

Johanna Y-y-you w-write, Ho-holy M-mother!

Roswitha We all are scribes in our own way dear girl

We’d have taught you too if there had been time.

The world is a parchment. Knowledge is freedom.

Johanna F-f-faith is f-f-freedom.

Roswitha Faith frees us from worldly woes it’s true but

when the world imprisons us we must use

what tools we have. Take these manuscripts.

I admit I am over-fond of them

This one tells of Governor Dulcitius

who tried to steal the virtue of three maids.

Johanna So it’s s-s-sad.

Roswitha *laughs* Not so. A comedy!

The Lord mates him with pots and pans instead.

Crowds require sweetness with their savoury.

Now go.

Collect your things and leave through the garden.

*She kisses* ***Johanna*** *on the cheek and shoos her off.*

Roswitha May the Lord bless and keep you! *soft* And my plays.

11. Demons

*The wall becomes part of an alley. Darkness.*

***Maya****, walking alone. The silhouette of a* ***Man*** *appears at the end of the alleyway. She stops.*

Maya Get out of here. I’m going to call the police.

*She takes her mobile out of her bag* *and holds it up.*

You’ve been following me. I saw you.

*The* ***Man*** *shines a flashlight on her face, blinding her. He approaches. She tries to flee.*

Maya HELP! Someone help!

*The flashlight turns onto the face of* ***Nabil****, who holds it. He maintains a small distance.*

Nabil I am not criminal.

Please.

I am police actually.

*He shines the light on his badge*.

Maya What kind of policeman

scares the crap out of a woman walking alone at night?

Nabil What kind of woman walk alone at night?

Maya That’s my right.

Nabil Yes.

But is foolish.

This is a bad place.

We try to protect you.

Maya I don’t want your protection.

Can I go now?

Are you going to arrest me for walking by myself?

Nabil You are Maya Goldstar no?

I must ask you questions.

Maya If you don’t let me walk out of here right now

I’m going to scream for help.

Nabil I am police!

Maya So fucking what!

Nabil I have never made violence on a woman!

Maya So tonight’s the night? You fucking asshole, let me out of here!

*She puts the cellphone back in her bag. Her hand remains there.*

Nabil Listen me. I know you. My daughter—

Maya I’m not your fucking daughter. **HELP**

Nabil No—you must listen me!

*He advances on her. She sprays him with mace. He recoils with a cry.*

***Maya*** *considers what to do. She kicks him in the groin. He falls, in agony.*

*His flashlight rolls on the pavement.*

Maya Fuck you! Fuck me.

Joanie, where are you when I really need you?

*She avoids the writhing figure of* ***Nabil*** *and flees from the scene.*

*Darkness.* ***Nabil****’s groaning turns into* ***Sara****’s groaning.*

*A figure picks up the flashlight and shines it out at the audience. Reflected neon light from a*

*window. When the beam returns to the stage we are in the apartment. Paint on the wall.*

*In the darkness a figure holding what looks like a long knife or short blade sword speaks:*

Joanie Here creepy crawler. Come to Joanie, you fuckin’ loser.

*She beams the light on the wall*.

Joanie The hookers saw you come back you stupid scumbag.

Too cheap to rent a different place or just plain fucking stupid?

I’m betting on option number two.

***Joanie****’s light finds the chair where* ***Sara*** *is slumped, unconscious.*

***Joanie*** *moves to her and checks her pulse. She slaps her face. Not lightly.*

Joanie Sara? Sara! Wake up.

You’re in trouble now scummers.

*She unties* ***Sara*** *and tries to wake her.* ***Sara*** *moves sluggishly.*

***Joanie*** *cuts Sara’s bonds.*

Joanie Come on, Sara. Things to do places to see.

*A sound.* ***Joanie*** *freezes*.

Joanie That you scummers?

The girls told me all about you

Even the pimps don’t like you

*She shines her flashlight about, but sees nothing.*

Joanie Get up Sara. Come on.

***Joanie*** *shines her light around the room as she pushes* ***Sara*** *out of the room. A shadow.*

Joanie Go Sara! Run! Fuck!

*Pause. She raises the knife.*

Just you and me then

I didn’t think you’d turn yourself in.

12. Shakespeare’s Shadow

***Nabil*** *as* ***Polonius****,**pacing. He stares out a window, places hands behind his back.*

*Adjusts clothes. Checks his hair.*

Polonius OPHELIA!

***Sara*** *as* ***Ophelia****, from Act I, Scene 3 of* ***Hamlet****. She enters hastily and bows to her father.*

Ophelia What will my lord?

Polonius What is’t, Ophelia, he hath said to you?

Ophelia So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.

Polonius Marry, well bethought.

‘Tis told me, he hath very oft of late

Given private time to you, and you yourself

Have of your audience been most free and bounteous.

If it be so as ‘tis put on me,

And that in way of caution—I must tell you

You do not understand yourself so clearly

As it behoves my daughter and your honour.

What is between you? Give me up the truth.

Ophelia He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders

Of his affection for me.

Polonius Affection? Pooh! You speak like a green girl,

Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.

Do you believe his tenders, as you call them?

Ophelia I do not know, my lord, what I should think.

Polonius Marry, I’ll teach you. Think yourself a baby,

That you have ta’en these tenders for true pay,

Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more clearly

Or—not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,

Running it thus—you’ll tender me a fool.

Ophelia My lord, he hath importuned me with love

In most honourable fashion.

Polonius Ay, fashion you may call it. Go to, go to.

***Nabil*** *takes off his historical costume.*

Ophelia And hath given countenance to his speech, my lord,

With almost all the holy vows of heaven.

***Sara*** *removes**her historical costume.*

*They now speak with their normal accents. Their movement is contemporary.*

Nabil From this time

Be something scanter of your maiden presence;

Set your entanglements at a higher rate

Than a command to parley.

*He grabs her purse and removes the cellphone from it before returning the purse to her.*

This is for all:

I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth

Have you so slander moment leisure,

And give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet

Look to’t, I charge you. Come your ways.

***Sara*** *makes a grab for her cellphone. She misses. They glare at each other.*

*She attempts to obey:*

Sara My lord, I shall ob—ob-ob-ob-ob-ob-ob

*She runs.*

Nabil Sara!

*Darkness.* ***Sara at 16*** *runs into a pool of light. She is out of breath; her clothes are torn.*

*Three points of light appear in the night sky.*

Roswitha Ophelia

Hatshepsut She must help herself

Joan She has done!

Roswitha OPHELIA

***Sara*** *looks around wildly.*

Sara Who’s there?

Joan Ophelia!

Sara Who are you?

Why are you calling me Ophelia?

Do you know my Dad?

Roswitha Ophelos

Help is asked

help is given.

Hatshepsut She is weak.

Joan You would be weak

if you were kept in a room and beaten

for two years.

Sara Who are you?

Can you help me. Please!

All We are the Strongest.

Joan Sara.

Sara Wait

You sound like that girl who found me

Joan My charge was to aid you.

I held him back until you could run.

Sara He’ll come for me. I know him.

Roswitha You must hide now

Hatshepsut *in Arabic* Are you able to help yourself, girl?

*in Arabic* Do you even remember your native tongue?

Sara *in Arabic* I remember. I can help myself.

Hatshepsut *in Arabic* Perhaps you are not so lost then

Roswitha Now run. Keep running.

Sara Tell my Dad—

*She reconsiders. Runs.*

*Cross-fade to* ***Rose****’s office.* ***Nabil****, red-eyed, sits in a chair.*

Rose Two years. The window is 72 hours for missing persons.

Nabil Or they are dead.

I know this.

Rose I’m sorry. This is

Hard

Isn’t it

Nabil When Sara run away I was crazy.

Sad anger without power to do

Two days three days we search in all places

Where she play. Her friends.

I think sure it was the boy.

Rose I remember.

There was a harassment charge against you from the family.

We managed to get it dropped.

Nabil I was sorry for this.

We had fight me and Sara

over this boy

An Irish name. Connor. Conroy. Like this.

She was too young for this

the lipstick sexy clothes boys calling.

The sexting is called.

On her phone. I saw this

Rose Fourteen is not an innocent age in our culture anymore.

Nabil Culture is wrong for this! Girls boys act like older

knowing nothing.

In my country what soldiers do to girls that think are free

I see I know

Is here no different just no uniform

She go

Sara’s mother go too

back to my country

She is from village. Traditional.

She could not stand it, what they call here the freedom.

Is no freedom. Is tyranny of same.

Same clothes same act same danger

But I stay because here is better. I work

Sara play. Until.

Sara is from here, she is different than me

I know this.

But I was so scarèd.

In my country father can say “Do not do this”.

He must say—it is his duty.

Here I say this is only laughter. She not obey.

A daughter should not laugh

at father who only love her.

Rose You couldn’t keep her locked away forever, Nabil.

God what am I saying. Sorry.

Nabil I am not like him. I want to keep her safe! He—

I never hurt a woman.

Rose Lessons it seems must be learned the hard way.

We blame ourselves for things we can’t prevent.

*She looks involuntarily at the photo on her desk.* ***Nabil*** *notices*.

Rose It’s been ten years now

Sometimes I can’t quite find her in my mind

It scares me to think I might forget

My girl

what she looked like

Nabil She was adopted?

Rose That never mattered.

Nabil You have keep the photograph.

Rose They get away no matter what we do.

Nabil I thought, “I will take her to old country”

She would be safer there

*laughs* How she would have hated this!

Rose Would she be safer?

Nabil No. Fantasy. A mirage.

Danger is the same.

But familiar danger feels better in some way.

Rose You’re right.

Look. Nabil.

I think the danger in this case *is* familiar.

I asked you to meet me after hours

because I don’t think HQ is a safe place

to be talking about this case

Nabil What you mean by this?

Rose This guy stayed out of sight for two years.

He seems to know what moves we make.

I think we have to keep this to you and me.

Nabil You believe Sara was in that room?

Rose I do. Call it an instinct.

I showed Sara’s drawing and the photo you took of the sign

to a young woman. An archaeologist

or at least she’s training to be one.

A very bright young woman with an interesting theory.

Nabil I know this.

Rose Pardon?

Nabil I saw poster for her speak. With website address.

Sign of Sara was there.

I went to talk to her of this.

Rose You didn’t tell me that Nabil.

Nabil It did not happen so well.

After public speak. Was night.

Rose Please don’t tell me you followed her from the auditorium.

Is that where you picked up the limp?

And the red eyes?

Nabil I am ashamed for this.

Rose You should be. You *idiot*.

You followed her at night.

And she panicked, as any woman would

and she *maced* you.

Nabil I did not mean to harm! I had questions!

Rose Are all men congenitally stupid!?

Nabil Is not crime to talk to woman at night.

Rose If you don’t get it, then you deserve what you get.

Nabil So it is my fault!?

Rose It’s no one’s fault. It’s just the way it is.

Nabil I—

*He begins to cry.*

Rose Aw, for—

Don’t do that. Please.

Look. You’re a good person Nabil. I know that.

Ms. Goldstar doesn’t know that.

Would you stop that please?

*She hands him a box of tissues, somewhat aggressively.*

Nabil What is to do?

No father—cannot protect. Not allowed!

No strong emotion. Not allowed!

No weak emotion. Not allowed!

You are boss.

Tell me rules. Must be rules?

***Rose*** *sighs*.

Rose I’m sorry

I find it weird when men cry.

It’s a—

I don’t know.

Can we just proceed?

Nabil Thank you for tissue.

Rose Okay. So.

Ms. Goldstar’s friend Joan—Joanie

I asked her to help us. Unofficially

you understand

She knows that neighbourhood

Still has friends there.

She’ll find something.

Nabil Bishop have do this.

Rose See that’s the thing

I played a hunch.

After the blood sample came back.

Nabil Was dog.

Rose A very old dog.

Buddy is his name.

Nabil You know name of dog?

Rose Nabil

Buddy is Bishop’s dog. You’ve seen him here.

He leaves him at the precinct when he’s working the overnight

That pool of blood at 122 Brooks didn’t come from Buddy

but the sample we tested did

Who headed up the search team the first time Sara disappeared?

Nabil Was me.

Rose There were two teams, right?

The second was led by your partner.

He had an advantage. He knew her.

She wouldn’t resist when he found her.

Nabil Bishop? No—

was always helping.

Visit when I was on leave.

Bad mouth yes. Bad person no.

Rose Latif.

Nabil.

I know this is hard to accept.

I think it was Bishop.

For now it’s just a hunch.

Let’s go back to Brooks.

Okay?

*He rises, begins to turn in different directions.*

Rose Nabil. Nabil! Sit down.

I’m going to ask you to be calm.

We’re going back to that apartment.

There’s work to do. Come on.

*She rises, puts on her jacket. He looks at her as if to ask a question. She exits. He follows.*

13. Necessary Acts

*A blank wall, shattered in the centre.* ***Joan of Arc*** *inside the wall bound to a wooden beam.*

Joan Women of faith and strength

I, the Maid, call you!

Be not afraid as I am not

There is a fire that outlives fire

A power that resists power

A life that gives life

my arm is in your service even as it turns to ash

Speak of me

speak

of how the young are not so young in mind and heart

the old are not so feeble

oppression is not endless

you are not alone

Do not be silent

DO NOT BE SILENT!

*To her tormentors*

Now gentlemen

You must burn me thoroughly

Even my cinders will speak

14. The Wall

*Darkness. Two flashlights play along the wall. The hole has disappeared.*

*An overturned chair lies in the middle of the floor.*

*On the wall is painted “MISSED ME” in large red letters.*

*Dim light illuminates the space.* ***Nabil*** *is limping.*

Rose JOANIE? It’s Rose. Are you here?

Nabil A fight. There was struggle. It is sure.

Rose When she texted me she was going in

she saw a light

I tried to call her but she must have turned her phone off

Nabil To be silent. She know he was here.

Rose He’d have to be crazy to come back here.

Unless he found Sara again.

*She checks the floor*. *Scrapes a liquid substance*.

Rose The blood is still moist; minutes

*Looks at the wall.*

This bastard.

Nabil Blood is in two places. Here is pool.

***Nabil*** *indicates a second pool of blood*.

Rose Restraints on the chair cut with a knife.

Nabil Sara.

Trail of blood to door.

I think him. Hurt. But he can run.

Rose Why do you think it’s his blood?

Nabil Two bloods, two people hurt.

Wait.

If Joanie win would be here.

He win

would not leave with both of them—he could not.

Rose “Missed me”.

**JOANIE!**

Nabil He was fighting.

If he lost he would be here. Joanie too.

And Sara.

Rose **JOANIE?**

Nabil The chair

Sara was free from Joanie’s hand

Then he come.

Rose Oh, God. What have I done?

I told her to check the places only she could look.

I didn’t think she’d end up at the scene.

Nabil It is not good. There is here more blood.

*He examines a trail of blood spatters that leads to the wall*.

Look at the wall.

Rose I can read what he wrote from here, Detective.

Nabil It fades. Paint should be wet, but it has absorbèd into plaster.

Like fresco.

Rose What? Plaster?

Nabil Fresh.

*He begins to punch at it with his flashlight.*

Rose Oh God what’s that smell?

Nabil **SARA? SARA?**

*He tears away a small section of the wall at head-high level. Smoke billows out.*

*When it clears, a charred corpse is revealed within. He tears away the bottom section.*

*The body is tied to a wooden structural beam, its hands behind its back.*

***Rose*** *takes out her cellphone and makes a call.*

Rose This is Inspector Rose Dunatos.

We need a forensics team immediately

122 Brooks second floor

Yes

I know we were here before. No

we don’t need paramedics.

Just

forensics

*She disconnects, puts her phone away. Pause.* ***Nabil*** *is holding himself and rocking.*

Rose Nabil. We don’t know it’s her. We need to be calm.

Please don’t cry.

Damn it. Damn it. Damn it.

15. Memorial

*City street. A wall, decorated with graffiti.* ***Maya****, kneeling, holding a plastic sword.*

Maya They wouldn’t let me in so

I figured the street was the place

You were most at home

So here I am my graveless friend

Your final act of friendship

A second storey job

For a girl you never knew.

*She places the sword against the wall.*

You were never a flower type of girl

I’m so mad at you Joanie!

I’m mad that woman sent you after Sara

I’m mad because you left me

I’m a scaredy cat

you always called me that

You said you’d keep me safe

You said we’d fight the world

You never said you loved me

but you did

The city went and took you

Like they did when you were young

Street cat rooting in the rubbish bins

Life circles us hey chum?

Ash to ash and street to street

You tumbled walls and the walls bit back

*Ophelos*

did you call itwhen the fire rose around you

did you call for me

I bet you’re cussing now

I’ll hear it on the wind

16. Messages

***Rose*** *and* ***Nabil***. *Night. Her office.*

Rose No one knows how we communicate beyond words and worlds

but we do.

I get messages sometimes. In my mind.

When I was young I used to call the voices my “guides”.

They wouldn’t tell me what to do exactly.

It was more like a tone I’d hear.

I’d run through everything that was happening to me

my plans and feelings

I’d hear tones.

I’m sure that sounds bizarre.

Nabil These guides.

They tell you

go back to that room?

Rose It’s not really a source of information like that.

It’s like a surge

or an instinct.

Nabil They tell you Bishop was monster?

Rose Maybe I wasn’t listening.

I’m sorry Detective.

Nabil They tell you to send this girl. This Joanie?

Rose I had a very strong sense she would find Sara

yes

I did know that.

I just pushed it to the back of my mind.

Nabil Then Sara would not be alive.

I must thank you for this.

Rose Look. Latif.

I’m going to resign,

Everything we did was unauthorised.

A young woman placed in harm’s way was

irresponsible

Nabil But who will lead? We must find Sara!

Rose We will.

First we have to find Bishop and get him off the streets.

That’s the priority.

Nabil Your daughter.

Rose Yes?

Nabil These voices did not tell you of her danger?

Rose There’s a lot of danger in the world I suppose.

Too much to keep track of.

Nabil Yes. So much danger.

Why can they not help all the time?

Why only help a little and confuse us?

Why speak at all if you do not say enough?

Rose We are so close to finding her Nabil

Nabil I am not upset.

I try to understand. Voices.

Policemen monsters

Young girls who run away

Young girls who die

Where are rules?

Holy books give no rule for this

Where is book like Shakespeare to tell me what is wise?

How can to live like this? Without rules? Without meaning?

Rose Find Sara. Love her the best way you can.

The whole force will be on this.

You won’t be alone.

***Nabil*** *laughs.*

Nabil Won’t be alone.

17. One Side of the Story

*A bar. Night.* ***Bishop*** *sits at a counter, looking much the worse for wear.*

Bishop Yeah.

Losing my job’s one thing.

Just the fucking half of it.

Man. Fucking cunt-arsed cunt.

Never—and I mean *never*—take a job where a woman is your boss.

*He raises his glass in a toast*.

Uh?

I’m just joking around.

I *like* women.

What? Haha. Yeah.

Brother

I will tell you how I got this fucked-up face.

So.

Fucking chick, man.

Me and my girl, we’re having a—a domestic dispute

and all of a sudden BAM!

The fucking front door comes down

like this chick is Kung Fu Queen or something.

And she’s coming at me saying shit I can’t understand

and she’s got a sword

I’m serious dude

a fucking long sword

and she takes a swing at me and cuts a chunk out of my leg

This story is worth another drink don’t you think?

But you know, I’m a trained guy

I’m a gentleman. I keep my cool.

I was raised to be polite to the ladies you know?

Even when they act like maniacal cunts.

So I say

excuse me Miss

who the fuck are you

and what are you doing breaking into my fucking abode?

You know what she says?

“I forgot to knock, motherfucker.”

*Mouth* on that chick.

And she takes another swing and cuts open my shoulder.

Down I go

screaming for Jesus.

My girl heads for the door.

I grab her leg.

I mean

no fight should ever end with somebody walking out right?

It’s dangerous in my neighbourhood at night. Railway lands.

I was concerned.

But fucking Glenda the Wicked Witch

is standing over me with her sword pointing down at my crotch.

*In a separate area, a flash of light reveals* ***Joan****, in full armour, in the position described.*

Joan Defiler

you must pay the account of your sins.

*The flash snaps out*.

Bishop I tell you man

these little chicks are hard-asses these days

with their rape-classes and what-not.

What’s that?

*I don’t know*.

You know

*I do not know* why my girl didn’t try to protect me.

I do not know.

Man, that hurts.

Anyway

I’m pretty sure the Bitch From Hell is setting up to cut my dick off.

So it’s like whatta they call it

a Robson’s Choice, right?

All the options are bad.

My dick or my girl.

I’m thinking I got one shot. Lose your girl forever or die dickless.

I chose my dick.

I mean I wouldn’t have caught her anyhow

not with my leg cut up.

That’s how I gotta think of it.

So the bitch raises her sword and starts chanting

Some shit about God the Avenger right

*Snap light up on* ***Joan of Arc*** *in same position as before, head raised to the sky*.

Joan O Lord, thou God of vengeance  
thou God of vengeance shine forth!  
Rise up O judge of the earth  
render to the proud their desert!

*Lights on* ***Joanie*** *snap out*.

Bishop I hoof her with my good leg right in the patootie.

It’s only justice right?

That brings her down quick.

Not my proudest moment as a guy

there’s a right way to do these things

but it was effective.

Huh? No

I’d *like* to go back

Let’s just say it was a mess.

No, man. The police can’t help me out.

I know them

they’d figure I was the criminal

A woman went down. Know what I’m sayin’?

Besides

I just want to find my girl. I know we can work things out.

All I dream about is settling back into what we had.

You never know how good things are until they’re gone.

Joni friggin’ Mitchell said that. Ain’t that the truth.

I’m just a romantic, I guess.

How about that drink?

18. Sara

*Bus station.* ***Sara at 16****, alone, leaning against a wall adorned with graffiti as in first scene.*

*She has just finished painting a circle with three triangles pointing inward on the wall.*

*Her words appear on the projection screen as she types in a text message on a cellphone.*

Sara Hello Supt Rose

my name is Sara

the girl UR looking 4

I stole this phone

No good tracing it

Pls send 2 my Dad

who dsnt own a cellphone LOL

thx

Dear Dad

I’m alright

I’m alive anyway

Like Ophelia I couldn’t find a way out

She ran and fell I fell too but I got up

I won’t be back Dad

Maybe some day

But not now

This is my life

I love you

Sara

*She hits “send”. Thinks. Begins another message.*

DAD

TRY 2B HAPPY

UR NOT GOOD AT THAT

WILL B OK

Who knows what future brings

*She hits “send”. Screen out.*

***Sara*** *tosses the phone over the wall. Looks around in all directions.*

*Frowns. Smiles.*

***END***