

the blue chameleon

deirdre burton ~ tom davis

The 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, well known for his visions and prophecies, designed this flag from a vision that came to him in a dream. He called it "Namkhyen Gyaldar (Victorious Flag of Buddha's Wisdom)." He proclaimed, "Wherever this banner is flown the Dharma will flourish."

According to the outer meaning the blue represents the sky or heaven. The yellow symbolizes the earth. The wave symbolizes the Buddhadharma penetrating heaven and earth.

According to the inner meaning the blue represents vision and spiritual insight and the yellow symbolizes our experience of the everyday world. The symmetry of the wave pattern shows the interdependence of the absolute and relative levels of reality.

According to the secret meaning the blue symbolizes emptiness-wisdom and the yellow represents compassionate action. The wave is Mahamudra: the union of compassion and wisdom- the ultimate realization of one's true nature.

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All phenomena are ultimately selfless, empty, and free from conceptual elaboration. In their dynamic they resemble an illusion, mirage, dream, or reflected image, a celestial city, an echo, a reflection of the moon in water, a bubble, an optical illusion, or an intangible emanation. You should know that all things of cyclic existence and nirvana accord in nature with these ten similes of illusory phenomena.

dramatis personae

VICAR:	He
MIRROR:	He
JOHN:	He
MABEL:	He
HOFMEYER:	He
PETER:	He
ALICE:	She
JANET:	She
JEANNIE:	She
W.I. CHAIR:	She (W.I.: Women's Institute)
ABIGAIL:	She
STRANGER:	She/He
CROWD VOICES:	Actors planted in the audience

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1 outer

1.1 an illusion

*this is a polyphony: including voices from actors
planted in the audience.*

PETER: It was—amazing.

ABIGAIL: It was nonsense

PETER: It was the most wonderful thing that ever
happened. Bar none. Full stop. It changed my life.

ABIGAIL: You're making it up.

PETER: I am not!

JEN: It was true, it really was: it was true.

GEOFF: Like a star—

GIOIA: Like a jewel—

PETER: Like lightning from a clear sky—

ABIGAIL: Don't talk nonsense. It never happened.
Cries of 'no' and 'yes' and 'rubbish'

NEIL: How can you say that! *Something* happened.

JEN: Something—wonderful.

PETER: Just imagine; just for a moment; just imagine; the
possibility. The possibility of something wonderful.

ABIGAIL: You dreamed it. You made it up.
More cries.

ABIGAIL: OK, calm down, calm down. What is it that
happened, or might have happened, or didn't
happen at all? Exactly? What was it?

DAN: A stranger.

ALL: Yes.

PETER: A stranger came into the village.

GEOFF: On a bicycle—

JEN: A horse—

ALL: What?

JEN: He was on a horse. A pale horse.

ABIGAIL: You are joking!

JEN: I am not—

DAN: It was a woman—

GIOIA: *A woman??*

GEOFF: Yes. Walking. Calm as a caravelle—

DAN: Calm as a car salesman—

NEIL: Calm as a carpenter—

GIOIA: What?

PETER: She was calm, like a calm sea at twilight—

JEN: She was a man.

W.I. CHAIR: Ladies. Gentlemen. Please: let me speak.

ALL: Rhubarb rhubarb.

W.I. CHAIR: In order to resolve this problem once and for all I have called in Professor Alvin B. HOFMEYER, the renowned investigator of so called paranormal phenomena.

ALL: Ooooh, aaaah.

W.I. CHAIR: Ladies and gentlemen: Professor HOFMEYER!
Professor HOFMEYER is disabled. He walks with a stick. He has a certain Strangelove quality.

ALL: *Applause.*

HOFMEYER: Thank you, thank you. Now. When I came to investigate this incident—

ALL: Yes—

HOFMEYER: It appeared that there was widespread disagreement—

CROWD VOICES: Yes—

HOFMEYER: And confusion—

CROWD VOICES: Yes—

HOFMEYER: About the nature of this incident. Or phenomenon.
Or allegedly inexplicable circumstance.

CROWD VOICES: Yes.

HOFMEYER: And its tragic—

CROWD VOICES: Wonderful!

CROWD VOICES: Nonsense!

HOFMEYER: Its remarkable, and highly curious outcome.

CROWD VOICES: Yes.

HOFMEYER: I conducted a thorough investigation—

CROWD VOICES: Good—

HOFMEYER: Interviewed all of the persons concerned, and took
careful notes—

CROWD VOICES: Great—

HOFMEYER: And, Ladies and Gentlemen, I feel I can now give a
true and coherent account of what happened—

CROWD VOICES: Excellent—

CROWD VOICES: Bullshit!

W.I. CHAIR: Silence! Please!

HOFMEYER: A *true* and *coherent* account of what happened,
what actually happened, when the stranger came
into the village. It began: like this.

1.2 a mirage

JEANNIE: *(To Audience)* This is MABEL. My friend MABEL.
MABEL smiles and waves at the audience.

JEANNIE: She's very sympathetic.

MABEL: Ooh, *very*.

JEANNIE: She really is. Now. We're on the bus. Look, use your imagination. It's a bus, OK? And I was talking to MABEL.

JEANNIE: *(To MABEL)* Eighteen days without a drink.

MABEL: Noooo! Reelly?

JEANNIE: Yes. Really. I was thirsty.

MABEL: I bet you were. I *bet* you were. You must have been really *really* thirsty.

JEANNIE: I was. I felt lost, without a drink, lost in a desert. The lone and level sands stretched far away.

MABEL: That's *awful*. You weren't really in a desert, were you, JEANNIE?

JEANNIE: No MABEL, I was in the village. It just *felt* like a desert. Because I was *thirsty*. Right?

MABEL: Oh, right. It must have been *awful*.

JEANNIE: Yes. It was. So I thought I'd go for a walk, through the village, just a little walk, some fresh air. Exercise.

MABEL: That's a good idea!

JEANNIE: Yes. Thank you. And what I would do, you see, is, I would walk right past the pub. Right past it. No problem. I can do this, I thought. Eighteen days without a drink. I can do it.

MABEL: And did you?

JEANNIE: Wait and see. You know, MABEL, some people say to me, they say: why do you drink so much, JEANNIE?

MABEL: Do they?

JEANNIE: Yes, they do.

MABEL: JEANNIE?

JEANNIE: Yes, MABEL?

MABEL: Why *do* you drink so much?

JEANNIE: Because I'm sad.

MABEL: Sad? What are you sad about, JEANNIE?

JEANNIE: MABEL?

MABEL: Yes JEANNIE?

JEANNIE: Have you not noticed?

MABEL: Noticed what, JEANNIE?

JEANNIE: Have you not noticed, MABEL, what the world is actually like? Have you not *noticed*?

(*To audience*) And you know what? When I say that to them, it usually does the trick. It shuts them up. They get a bit quiet, and a bit preoccupied, and a bit uncertain, and they change the subject, and pretty soon they move on, and I have another drink.

MABEL: (*Sadly*) Yes, JEANNIE.

JEANNIE: So, anyway. I walked right past *The Red Lion*. And then I walked right past *The King George*. That's good: that's two out of three. That's really good. And then, and then, I walked right past *The Blue Chameleon*.

MABEL: The Blue Chameleon?

JEANNIE: No, OK, I made that one up. There are only two. I walked past them both. Then I turned round, and

came back, and walked past them both again. Both of them. It was great.

MABEL: That's *fantastic*, JEANNIE.

JEANNIE: Yes, isn't it. I was really pleased. Then I went into the off-licence. Well, I don't like drinking in company.

So there I was, in the off-licence (*stands up to demonstrate, acting now to the audience*) just come in from the desert, lone and level sands, all that, and I'd made it to the *oasis*, where there is a virtually *unlimited* supply of liquid refreshment, of every possible shape and size and flavour, so nice, and all of it absolutely guaranteed to get you drunk, in pretty much no time at all, what a miracle; just about any of it could switch off the sadness like turning off a tap, or *on*, you know, turning *on* a tap, and—

There was a bloke. (*MABEL has turned into the STRANGER*) A man. A male person of the opposite sex. Opposite to me, that is. Standing between me and the counter. Looking at me. And he wouldn't let me past.

Excuse me, I said.

STRANGER: No. (*The STRANGER, though all of this, is kind, smiling, playful, and has complete authority.*)

JEANNIE: What?

STRANGER: No. I won't excuse you. It's inexcusable.

JEANNIE: What are you talking about? Look, get out of the way, will you? Please?

STRANGER: Why?

JEANNIE: (*To audience*) There was no one else in the shop. Not even your friendly off-licence alcohol salesperson, usually so cheerfully ready to sell you

the beautiful stuff, he wasn't there. No-one. Just this man: this complete stranger.

JEANNIE: *(To STRANGER)* Why? Because I want to buy myself a bottle of vodka, actually, that's why, not that it's any of your business.

STRANGER: Why do you?

JEANNIE: Have you not noticed? Have you not *noticed*, what the world is actually *like*?

STRANGER: Oh yes. Oh yes indeed. I certainly have. It's worse than you think, you know.

JEANNIE: What?

STRANGER: Oh yes, much worse. Much *much* worse. Look.

JEANNIE: And he reached out, and touched my head. *(He does.)* And—

Everything went dark. Dark dark. And I saw it. I saw the whole bloody picture, all of it, all of it. I saw everything bad that was happening, at that moment, in that one instant, to every human and every animal and every insect and all of them, the whole lot, all over the world. I saw it all, at once. The complete actuality of it. Bang. Just like that.

I opened my eyes. He was gone. Vanished. A mirage. And there was the friendly off-licence salesperson—

OFF-LICENCE SALESPERSON: Yes, madam, what would you like?

JEANNIE: And I just looked at him. As if anything, anything, as if all the liquor that was ever brewed, could begin to touch or make any dent at all in that devastating moment. And I turned, and staggered out of the shop.

MABEL: You didn't!

JEANNIE: I did. I really did. And that's not the end of it.

MABEL: No!

JEANNIE:

No. Because there, outside the shop, was this little boy. Crying. He'd lost his lollipop. Dropped it on the floor. It was dirty. And you know what, MABEL?

It was absolutely unbearable. So I gave him some money, to buy another one, and he cheered up straight away. It was a miracle. It was the best thing that had ever happened to me. And I went home and made myself a cup of tea.

1.3 a dream

HOFMEYER: The next event that allegedly took place was of a more personal nature. In order to preserve their privacy, we will call this couple JANET and JOHN.

JOHN: I'm dreaming this.

JANET: Well, if you are, I'm dreaming it too.

JOHN: I tell you what: I won't wake up if you won't.

JANET: OK, it's a deal.

JOHN: Tell me again.

JANET: Tell you what?

JOHN: What you just said, on the phone: tell me again.

JANET: I love you.

JOHN: You do, you really do?

JANET: Well, I think so.

JOHN: You *think* so?

JANET: No, silly: I know. I really know.

JOHN: Ah. Er, how do you know?

JANET: What?

JOHN: How do you know?

JANET: What is this, a philosophy seminar? Look, idiot, I just said the magic words, didn't I? Didn't I?

JOHN: Yes, you did.

JANET: Right. Do you think they'll still be magic, if we *talk* about them? If we analyse them? If we pull them apart to see how they work?

JOHN: Er, no. I suppose not. No. But...

JANET: But. But. Always a but, with you, isn't it, darling?

JOHN: Oh! That was nice! Say it again!

JANET: Say what?

JOHN: The d word, say it again, you've not said it before, it felt wonderful! Say it a lot!

JANET: There's beggary in the love that can be reckoned.

JOHN: What?

JANET: Sorry. Shakespeare. Anthony and Cleopatra. My English degree. It has to be useful for something.

JOHN: You'd think so, wouldn't you?

JANET: What do you mean?

JOHN: Look! That woman over there.

JANET: Where?

JOHN: There, by the bar. She's looking at us.

JANET: She's a he.

JOHN: What?

JANET: She's a he.

JOHN: No she's not. Why's she smiling? Hello! (*Waves, nervously*).

JANET: Do you know him?

JOHN: No, not from Adam. Nor Eve, either. Oh, god, she's coming over.

JANET: (*Frostily*) Excuse me, do we know you?
Pause as the STRANGER speaks.

JOHN: Er, this is a private conversation.
Pause as the STRANGER speaks.

JANET: About love, we were talking about love, it's none of your business, it's private.
Pause as the STRANGER speaks.

JOHN: Of course I know what love is. It's, er...

JANET: Of course he knows. And I know too. Leave us alone. Thank you. How rude.

JOHN: She's gone.

JANET: He.

JOHN: It was a she, and she's gone, vanished. *(Pause.)*

JANET: It was a he, and he's gone.

JOHN: Do you?

JANET: Do I what?

JOHN: Do you know? What love is?

JANET: Yes. I do.

JOHN: Will you teach me?

JANET: Yes. I will. Whatever happens. For all of my life. With all of my life. As much as I know, I will teach you, show you, be for you. I promise. Darling.

2 inner

2.1 a reflected image

HOFMEYER: And for the next event, unfortunately, there is only one witness, whom we will call ALICE.

ALICE: Well, I was lonely. I get lonely, you see. Nobody likes me very much, I don't know why. Yes I do; I don't like me very much either. So I sat there and talked to my mirror. I do that. Well, a girl needs a hobby.

Hello, mirror.

MIRROR: Hello, mirror.

ALICE: What did you say?

MIRROR: I said, hello, mirror. Didn't you hear me?

ALICE: Yes. I did. You've never answered back before.

MIRROR: Well, I got bored.

ALICE: Bored? You're a *mirror!*

MIRROR: So are you.

ALICE: You don't look like me.

MIRROR: You don't look like me.

ALICE: Stop repeating what I say!

MIRROR: I'm a mirror, what do you expect?

ALICE: I'm dreaming this, aren't I.

MIRROR: No. You're not.

ALICE: In that case, I've obviously gone mad. You're an illusion.

MIRROR: So are you.

ALICE: You don't really exist, do you?

MIRROR: Neither do you, my dear.

ALICE: What did you say?

MIRROR: Neither do you.

ALICE: No, after that, what did you say?

MIRROR: My dear. I said, my dear.

ALICE: Ooo.

MIRROR: Ooo?

ALICE: That felt really nice.

MIRROR: What did?

ALICE: When you said it, the d word.

MIRROR: Did it, dear?

ALICE: Ooo.

MIRROR: Doesn't take much, does it?

ALICE: No. it really doesn't. Does that mean—you like me?

MIRROR: Yes, of course it does. Dear.

ALICE: Ooo. But you're just a projection of my imagination. Aren't you?

MIRROR: So are you, dear.

ALICE: Ooo. But that means, that means that, after all, I must like myself. Er, dear.

MIRROR: Ooo.

ALICE: It feels great, doesn't it?

MIRROR: Not bad. I have to say: not bad.

ALICE: So that means that maybe other people will like me, too.

MIRROR: Could be. Could just be. Dear.

ALICE: Ooo.

2.2 a celestial city

GEOFF: Is that all?

NEIL and GIOIA: That's not much.

JEN: There was a lot more than that!

HOFMEYER: That was just the beginning. Those were, we might say, the preliminary phenomena. After this, all over the village, the stranger seemed to have appeared in different places and disguises, apparently solving people's problems. That phase came to a climax in the wedding.

DAN and ANNABEL: Wedding? What wedding?

HOFMEYER: The wedding of JANET and JOHN.

JANET: Our wedding.
JANET is waiting at the altar; JOHN is late. He arrives, talking on his mobile phone. He is totally in love with her, looking at her, she is his reference point. She is happy, contained, wise.

JOHN: Say it again.

JANET: Say what?

JOHN: The d word.
She whispers in his ear. He smiles, radiantly. She sits down; he becomes the VICAR. The VICAR is really really nervous, and not very good at what he does.

VICAR: Dearly beloved, we are met here today to celebrate the wedding of our dear friends JANET and, er, Mike.

JANET: JOHN. Actually.

VICAR: Yes, JOHN.

During this speech, in which the VICAR is trying to be a vicar, and not succeeding, she sits, smiling sweetly. At one point, she yawns. The VICAR is increasingly unnerved by this; he keeps losing his thread, glancing at her, looking away, reluctantly looking back. He is a very nice man, but completely ineffectual.

VICAR:

Who are met here today to celebrate, er, who are *gathered* here, to be joined in holy matrimony, a blessed state, sanctioned and confirmed by our Lord himself, in his miracle at the wedding in Cana, John chapter 2 verses 1-11, when he miraculously transformed the water into wine, the very first of his blessed miracles, signifying, by this, the transformation of our spiritual bodies, er, our *physical* bodies into an spiritual one. And this transformation, we must remember, was brought about by our saviour, who suffered on the cross, so that we may enter, in god's good time, through god's good grace, the celestial city, in which we shall be transformed, changed, changed utterly, into, er, into—

She has become the Stranger. She beckons him, smiling sweetly. Throughout this she has gentle smiling innocence and complete authority. Both. He does 'who me?'; she does 'yes, you, that's it, come on down, that's right, good boy'. Reluctantly, he descends until he is standing in front of her. She stands up.

VICAR:

(Nervously) Yes?

STRANGER:

Tell me about the saviour suffering on the cross, please.

VICAR:

What?

STRANGER:

The saviour. Suffering. On the cross. Please tell me about it.

VICAR: Well, he was crucified and suffered on the cross in order that we may have eternal—
She reaches out her finger and touches his forehead, smiling sweetly. He instantly turns into a man being crucified, his arms shoot out cross-wise and rigid, taking his whole weight, his face is completely agonised, absolutely shocked, he can't breathe, then he breathes in to get breath to scream in pain—and she takes away her finger. He drops back into reality, looks at his hands, can't believe there are no holes, and looks at her, shattered, wondering.

STRANGER: Thank you. Now, tell me about the transformation, please.

VICAR: *(Stuttering)* The transformation?

STRANGER: Yes. Into the spiritual body.
The VICAR stutters, completely lost for words. She reaches out and touches his forehead. He looks terrified, and then, as she touches him, completely experiences the transformation into a spiritual body. He is utterly exalted. She stops touching him, and he drops back into normality, astonished, in bliss, transformed.

STRANGER: Thank you. Now, please, tell me about the celestial city.
He looks at her, wondering what's next. She starts to click her fingers, rhythmically. The audience takes up the beat. Music. He turns into a reasonable approximation of James Brown, and does a gospel call and response with the actors in the audience: ecstatic, profound, not a send-up. Visceral. Jacqui harmonises on top.

VICAR: I'm gonna tell you about Jerusalem

CROWD VOICES: Hallelujah, hallelujah

VICAR: 'Bout that sweet city

CROWD VOICES: Oh, Lord
VICAR: That sweet city
CROWD VOICES: Dear Jesus
VICAR: City of the saviour
CROWD VOICES: Praise his name
VICAR: We're gonna go there
CROWD VOICES: We're gonna go there
VICAR: We're gonna go there
CROWD VOICES: Yes we are
VICAR: Gonna talk with the angels
CROWD VOICES: Talk with the angels
VICAR: Gonna walk with the angels
CROWD VOICES: Walk with the angels
VICAR: Gonna sing with the angels
CROWD VOICES: Sing with the angels
VICAR: Gonna dance with the angels
CROWD VOICES: Dance with the angels
VICAR: Yes we are
CROWD VOICES: Yes we are
VICAR: Oh Lord, yes we are
VICAR: Walking in Jerusalem just like John
ALL: Walking in Jerusalem just like John
Repeated.
The STRANGER stands up, turns to the audience, smiles, and does a big shut-down movement with her arms. Everyone goes instantly silent. Blackout.

2.3 an echo

JANET and JOHN are in bed together. They are asleep.

JANET puts out a hand and hits a clock to switch off a bell. JOHN still sleeps.

JANET: JOHN. JOHN. It's time to get up

JOHN: Mmmm. what time is it?

JANET: The usual time. Getting up time.

JOHN: Mmmmmmm. What day is it?

JANET: Don't know. A weekday. Must be a weekday.

JOHN: How do you know? Maybe it's the weekend?

JANET: But the alarm went. So it must be a weekday. A workday.

JOHN: I didn't hear a bell. Maybe you imagined it.

JANET: You never hear the bell. I didn't imagine it.

JOHN: Oh no. Oh no. I'm not waking up. I'm not getting up. I've had enough.

JANET: Don't be ridiculous. It's a regular day. With the usual things to do. To get done.

JOHN: Say the d word.

JANET: What d word?

JOHN: The d word. Please?

JANET: Ducks. Dandelions. Delusions. Demented. De luxe. Delirious. Daedalus. Dread. Doorways. Dusters. Dreary. Dogberry. Desdemona. Donkeys. Doppelganger.

During this JOHN disappears. She doesn't notice. The STRANGER appears with a cup of tea for her.

THE STRANGER: Tea, darling.

JANET: Thank you. *(Suddenly wakeful)* What are you doing here? *(Turns to where john should be)* Where's JOHN? What have you done with him?

STRANGER: Me? not me?

JANET: Don't mess with me. Where is he?

STRANGER: It's a secret.

JANET: A secret? *(the words echo around the auditorium)*

STRANGER: A reflection of the moon in water?

JANET: Moon in water? *(The words echo around the auditorium)*

STRANGER: A bubble.

JANET: Bubble? *(The words echo around the auditorium)*

STRANGER: A trick of the light.

JANET: Light? *(The words echo around the auditorium and the lights go out)*

3 secret

3.1 a reflection of the moon in water

HOFMEYER: After that, things began to disintegrate.

JEANNIE: The problem is, it's not enough.

MABEL: It's not enough.

JEANNIE: I mean, it's all very well, giving some kid a lollipop, but there's more to it than that.

MABEL: Much more. Oooh, much more.

JEANNIE: There's too much. When you think about it, there's too much. People die, you know.

MABEL: Which people?

JEANNIE: Well, everyone, eventually, obviously.

MABEL: Really?

JEANNIE: Yes, really.

MABEL: You, you mean?

JEANNIE: Yes, me.

MABEL: Ooh, JEANNIE, I wouldn't like that.

JEANNIE: More. We need more. It's not enough to waltz into our lives like the lone ranger and wave a wand and make things better. It's not enough. We want more.

MABEL: Yes, much more. I want my friend back.

JEANNIE: What?

MABEL: I want my friend back, JEANNIE. I used to like having a drink with you.

JEANNIE: Did you?

MABEL: Yes, a little gin and tonic after work. Or two. And a laugh. You're not the same now. You're serious.

JEANNIE: Am I?

MABEL: Yes. You are.

JEANNIE: Oh dear.

MABEL: Yes.

JEANNIE: MABEL.

MABEL: Yes, JEANNIE.

JEANNIE: MABEL, the thing is this.

MABEL: Yes, JEANNIE.

JEANNIE: I think I'm in love.

MABEL: Ooooh, JEANNIE!

JEANNIE: I really think I am. The real thing. The one and only.

MABEL: Ooooh, JEANNIE!

JEANNIE: He's so beautiful. He makes my heart sing. I dream about him. I want him, all the time.

MABEL: Ooooh, JEANNIE! Er, who is he?

JEANNIE: The stranger.

MABEL: Oh. Is that wise, JEANNIE?

JEANNIE: Probably not, MABEL; probably not.

MABEL: You've changed, JEANNIE. Everything has changed. I don't like it very much. It's unsettling.

JEANNIE: Yes. The VICAR, he's changed a lot, hasn't he? He doesn't want you to call him the VICAR now. He wants to be called—

VICAR: The godfather of soul!

JEANNIE: I can't call you that!

VICAR: Why not, honey?

JEANNIE: Because it's daft, that's why not!

VICAR: It's who I am. It's the real me.

JEANNIE: Dear god.

VICAR: It's love, JEANNIE: I am full of love.

JEANNIE: You are?

VICAR: I am: night and day, in every way. (*drops out of JB mode*). I can't bear it, actually. I see her everywhere: she haunts my dreams.

JEANNIE: Who does?

VICAR: The stranger.

JEANNIE: Oh, no; tell me I'm not hearing this.

MABEL: And JANET, now she's married, is having second thoughts.

JANET: Turn the computer off!

JOHN: What!

JANET: Turn it off! Talk to me! Take me out for a meal! Look at me!

JOHN: I thought you loved me; you were going to teach me, about love.

JANET: Only if you turn the fucking computer off!

JOHN: But—

JANET: Listen. I think I'm in love.

JOHN: I know, dear, I love you too.

JANET: No. I'm in love with—someone else.

JOHN: Someone else! Already! That's impossible!

JANET: You think so?

JOHN: Who is it? Who is this person?

JANET: The stranger. I'm in love with the stranger.

JOHN: Look: I'll turn the computer off. OK? Would that help?

JEANNIE: And ALICE, now that she likes herself a bit, she wants more.

MABEL: I really don't know what she wants.

ALICE:

Last night, I went for a walk. By the lake. It was really peaceful. The lake was jet black, infinite, amazing. And there, shivering a little, right in the centre as I looked at it, was the moon. It was a shock, you know, I mean, you don't think of the moon, do you?

Well, I don't, anyway. I don't look up, you see, not very much. And I realised, suddenly, that the wild light, the unearthly not darkness, all around me, everywhere: that was the moon. Shining. And right there in the lake, trembling a little, so bright, was the moon itself. It was the most beautiful thing I have ever seen, ever.

It was so nice. And: I wanted it. I wanted it, for always. There was this longing, inside me, really deep. It was like love. It was deeper than love.

(Ignores her kind offer.) And I stared at it, it was like it was hypnotising me. Pulling at me. Drawing me in. and, nearly, nearly, I wanted to just fall into the lake, into the reflection of the moon, and finish the whole thing.

Everything. Not to worry any more. Not to want anything, ever again. To know how my story turned out. To write the ending, and close the book. To fall into the reflection of the moon.

3.2 Alice's song

rain falls sweet against my cheek
and the wind caresses my hair
I look in the lake
and watch the moon
hoping to see you there
hoping to see you there
i've searched all over
taking my time
i've looked around me
knowing that i'm
hoping to find you there,
hoping to find you there
my heart is brimming with love for you
my heart is brimming with love
I look in the lake
and watch the moon
hoping to see you there
hoping to see you there

3.3 a bubble

HOFMEYER: Then, the mysterious disappearances began.

ABIGAIL: Where's Alice?

PETER: I don't know. Why?

ABIGAIL: I haven't seen her around.

PETER: Strange.

ABIGAIL: She was in the pub, just sitting, listening to people, looking, with a kind of faraway look, and then she said she was going for a walk. By the lake.

PETER: By the lake?

ABIGAIL: Yes. By the lake.

WI CHAIR: Have you heard about the VICAR?

PETER: You mean, the Godfather of Soul?

WI CHAIR: The Vicar, I mean the Vicar. He's gone.

PETER: What?

WI CHAIR: Gone. Pop! Just like that. Like a bubble.

PETER: Vicars don't go pop!

WI CHAIR: This one did. Right in the middle of the service.

PETER: Really?

WI CHAIR: Yes, really. He was clapping, and shouting, and dancing, you know, the way he does now, and we were sort of joining in, sort of, and suddenly he spun round, like this, and—pop!

PETER: Pop?

WI CHAIR: Vanished. Into thin air. Gone.

PETER: Do you think that Jesus wanted him for a sunbeam, maybe?

WI CHAIR: I don't know. I don't know what to think. Things are very strange now, aren't they?

PETER: They are, they really are.
Enter JOHN.

JOHN: She's run away. She's left me.

ABIGAIL: What?

JOHN: JANET. She's gone. She's walked out on me.

ABIGAIL: Really?

JOHN: I was just saving my data. And I looked up, and she wasn't there. It was strange. I didn't hear the door, or anything: she just wasn't there. I looked everywhere, everywhere in the house, but she'd gone. Gone. She's left me.

ABIGAIL: That's terrible! JOHN? PETER? Where is everybody?

MABEL: What's happening?

ABIGAIL: We must do something! Where's Mabel?

JEN: This is crazy! Things have not been right, since that stranger came to the village!

NEIL: That's right!

DAN: The stranger!

GEOFF: It's to do with that stranger!

GIOIA: Find him!

GEOFF: Or her!

JEN: We must find the stranger!
the bus stop on the road to nowhere

MABEL: Ooooh. What's happening?

STRANGER: You've arrived Mabel.

MABEL: Arrived?

STRANGER: Yes. Welcome.

MABEL: Where am I?

STRANGER: It's the bus stop. Welcome to the bus stop.

MABEL: But I've never been here before. I don't know where I am

STRANGER: On the contrary. You've never left. And there's no need to worry. I know where you are

MABEL: You do?

STRANGER: Yes, Mabel. I really do.

MABEL: Do you know everything? Everything about me, I mean?

STRANGER: Yes Mabel. I do.
pause

MABEL: You mean . . . ?

STRANGER: Yes
silence
Mabel leaves. Janet arrives.

STRANGER: Ah Janet. Dear Janet. Welcome.

JANET: I had to come here. I had to leave.

STRANGER: And now you've arrived.

JANET: I suppose I have. It wasn't love, you know. Not real love. Not like this.

STRANGER: What was it then?

JANET: I don't know really. A next step. A necessary next step.
pause

JANET: The next thing to do. A wedding. A house. An obvious next step.

STRANGER: And why John?

JANET: He was there. He was available. Keen. And . . .

STRANGER: And?

JANET: He reminded me of something. Someone. Some ...
She looks at the stranger oddly

JANET: Someone . . . some memory . . . some time . . .
some perfect fit.

STRANGER: And?

JANET: There was no "and". It didn't work out. You know
how it is.

STRANGER: Yes, actually Janet, I know exactly how it is.

JANET: So I've come to be with you now. I mean this is the
real thing isn't it? Love, I mean.

STRANGER: And what will you give up for the real thing?

JANET: Everything. Absolutely everything.

STRANGER: Really? You mean it?

JANET: Of course I mean it. How can you even ask?

STRANGER: Then go.

JANET: What?

STRANGER: Go.

JANET: Where? Why?

STRANGER: You'll know where. And you'll find out why.

JANET: But -

STRANGER: Start in any direction. They all lead to the same
place
Janet leaves. John enters

STRANGER: She isn't here John.

JOHN: You know where she is?

STRANGER: She's on her way.

JOHN: Here?

STRANGER: Home.

JOHN: Our home?

STRANGER: Home.
pause

JOHN: She's bloody well going to apologise you know.

STRANGER: What for?

JOHN: For messing me about. For betraying me. For leaving. For leaving me. They all do it. I'm the talk of the village.

STRANGER: All?

JOHN: Sooner or later.

STRANGER: And you?

JOHN: What do you mean?

STRANGER: Will you apologise?

JOHN: Me? What for? I didn't leave.
The stranger looks at him.

STRANGER: I have to tell you something John. Are you listening?

JOHN: Yeah yeah

STRANGER: Really listening

JOHN: Yeah yeah.

STRANGER: Perhaps you may never see her again.

JOHN: What?

STRANGER: She may be dead by now.

JOHN: What?
The stranger leaves

JOHN: Don't go. Don't leave me.
He hesitates, then leaves too, passing Jeannie who is entering

JEANNIE: Where am I? What's this?

STRANGER: It's the desert Jeannie - remember?

JEANNIE: Yes, I do. What are you doing here? And why is there a bloody bus stop in the middle of the desert?

STRANGER: I'm here to show you what the desert is really like. Have you not noticed Jeannie?
Jeannie to audience

JEANNIE: Well, the cheek of it. That's my line. Love or no love, we needed to get that straight. So I gave him a look. My special look. The look I reserve for people who . . .

She turns back to the stranger

JEANNIE: You remind me of someone, you know.

STRANGER: Do I Jeannie?

JEANNIE: Yes. Yes you do. Well, quite a few people actually.

STRANGER: Ah. Now you're getting there

JEANNIE: Where?

STRANGER: Love, Jeannie. Love.

They both leave

The vicar enters. He is still the godfather of soul

STRANGER: Welcome

VICAR: Is it really you?

STRANGER: Is it really you?

pause

VICAR: I don't know. I don't know who I am anymore

STRANGER: Well that's progress

VICAR: Is it?

STRANGER: Isn't it?

VICAR: I don't know. I don't know anything. I was the godfather of soul there. For a while. Till I went pop.

STRANGER: Who did you used to be? Before you were the godfather of soul I mean.

VICAR: I know who I was then. I was - I am - the vicar of Burnt Coker. I am 39 years old. I have a first class degree in theology from Exeter College. I am hoping to find a wife. A wifely wife. I . . .

STRANGER: Go on -

VICAR: I had a troubled childhood. I buried myself in my studies and turned to the church when my parents divorced and I found great comfort in . . .

STRANGER: Go on -

VICAR: I am the sort of person who likes to be useful. I am considerate and a good cook and a tidy person with a tidy mind and – I can't go on - it's nonsense -

STRANGER: It is, isn't it. So who are you really?

VICAR: Heaven only knows. (He laughs) Well, now, that's a relief.

Vicar leaves. Mabel returns

MABEL: I didn't want to give her up you know

STRANGER: Yes. I know

MABEL: I didn't know what else to do you see

STRANGER: Yes. I see

MABEL: I was only fifteen. I didn't know what else to do. They said it would be for the best. They meant to be kind

STRANGER: Yes. They did. Perhaps they even were.

MABEL: Perhaps.

pause

MABEL: Do you know where she is? Is she alright?

STRANGER: Yes, Mabel. I do know where she is. And yes, rest assured, she is alright

MABEL: Could you . . . could you take her a message from me?

STRANGER: Yes, I could.

MABEL: Would you?

STRANGER: I would be happy to. Tell me what it is you want me to say.

MABEL: I don't want you to say anything, actually. I want you to sing. You know, that song I used to sing her.

MABEL leaves. The Stranger sings:

when sunshine dazzles i would shelter you
when twilight hovers, i would comfort you
i'd be the light when darkness falls
when morning beckons i would borrow you
holding you close to me
keeping you safe with me
knowing that you have to grow now
watching you watching me
loving you loving me
knowing it's time for you to go now
so go well
go in peace
but go
so go well
go in peace
but go

Alice arrives.

STRANGER: Ah. Alice.

ALICE: Sorry

STRANGER: No need.

ALICE: What?

STRANGER: No need to be sorry.

ALICE: There's every need.

STRANGER: Not here. Not now.

ALICE: Where am I?

STRANGER: You're on the road, Alice. On the road to nowhere.

ALICE: Really?

STRANGER: Really.

pause

ALICE: You mean it?

STRANGER: I mean it

ALICE: Nowhere? Nothing to do? Nothing to prove?

STRANGER: Exactly. Precisely. The imaginable zero. Right here.

ALICE: And no-one to . . .

STRANGER: No-one.

Alice is on her way and about to leave. She turns back.

ALICE: That song.

STRANGER: Yes

ALICE: For me? From my...

STRANGER: For you. From her.

ALICE: Thank you.

3.4 a trick of the light

VICAR: Who are you?

STRANGER (FEMALE): An illusion.

STRANGER (MALE): A mirage.

STRANGER (FEMALE): A dream.

STRANGER (MALE): A reflected image.

STRANGER (FEMALE): A celestial city.

STRANGER (MALE): An echo.

STRANGER (FEMALE): A reflection of the moon in water.

STRANGER (MALE): A bubble.

STRANGER (FEMALE): A trick of the light.

MABEL: I think *I* know who you are.

STRANGER (FEMALE): Do you?

MABEL: Yes, I do.

STRANGER (FEMALE): Who am I, then?

MABEL: I think—I think—I think you are—a blue chameleon!

4 signless

4.1 an intangible emanation

Crowd hubbub.

HOFMEYER: Ladies and gentlemen, I can now give you the results of my investigations.

CROWD VOICES: *Rhubarb noises.*

HOFMEYER: The mystery is solved. There is no mystery.

CROWD VOICES: *Hubbub.*

HOFMEYER: I have found the missing persons!

CROWD VOICES: *Hubbub.*

HOFMEYER: They were discovered in different parts of the village, wandering about in a confused state.

ALICE: The moon: the shadow of the moon.

VICAR: Hallelujah!

JANET: Oh, love, love.

MABEL: The blue thingy. Chameleon. You know.

JEANNIE: Love, and loss.

HOFMEYER: But what I did not find was: this mysterious stranger. I therefore concluded that: there was no such person.

CROWD VOICES: *Hubbub.*

ALICE: But: the moon!

HOFMEYER: An illusion. An optical illusion.

JANET: My love!

HOFMEYER: Fantasy. No more, no less. The blue chameleon? Nonsense. Pure nonsense. And the Celestial City? There is definitely, definitely, no such thing. The

whole village has been subject to a collective hallucination. Everything can now return to normal.

JANET: Oh. Is that it?

JOHN: I'll turn the computer off.

JANET: Will you?

JOHN: Yes. Often. Say the D word.

JEANNIE: Oh, Mabel

MABEL: Oh, Jeannie

JEANNIE: It was so nice, being in love

MABEL: With a chameleon?

JEANNIE: Yes. But it was so nice

MABEL: I love you, you know.

JEANNIE: You do, don't you.

MABEL: Yes. I do.

JEANNIE: That's nice too.

ALICE: The moon is still there.

VICAR: And so is the city

CROWD VOICES: *hubbub*

WI LADY: Ladies and gentlemen please! Please! We must allow Professor Hofmeyer the final word.

HOFMEYER: There is a moon. It even has a reflection. But the celestial city? There is no such thing.

CROWD VOICES: *hubbub*

WI LADY: Ladies and gentlemen we will now close with the usual communal singing.
"And did those feet in ancient times, walk upon England's mountains green..."
Initially a groaning rendition of the first few bars of Jerusalem, which turns into a transforming anthem: the village becomes a Celestial City in dance and song. HOFMEYER attempts to prevent

*this, but is caught up by the music, throws away
his stick, and does a dazzling solo dance.*

you gotta believe in the dream, baby
you gotta believe it enough
you gotta believe in the theme, baby
somesuch dreamin all the way
you gotta take care of your dream, baby
you gotta take very good care
somesuch dreamin
somesuch dreamin
somesuch dreamin all the way
somesuch dreamin
somesuch schemin
somesuch beamin
from ear to ear
where is love?
tis not hereafter
here is love
in somesuch laughter
somesuch somesuch loving all the way
somesuch somesuch loving every day
hey hey hey