

STRANGE SHADOWS

A play

by

Deirdre Burton and

Tom Davis

for Lagy Constantinou and Kevin Brown, with love and respect

## CAST

STYLISTS: Tenebris Tanselle, Angelo dos Santos, Lydia McBride

CLIENTS: Katherine, Clarity, Joachim, Marina, Gwen, Dora, Clarice, Katy, Neil, Louisa, Roxie, Angela, Dominic, Janosc, Jean Luc, Angelique, Rachael.

RECEPTIONIST: Bella

SALON JUNIOR: Billie

SALESMAN: Dr Deluxe

BARBERSHOP QUARTET / KINDLY ONES: Megaera, Tisiphone, Alecto and Eros.

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ACT I SCENE 1

DAY

TENEBRIS, KATHERINE

*There are three salon chairs downstage and facing the audience – where the three stylists interact with their clients. There could be three mirror frames hanging in front of the chairs, so that we have the sense that the stylists and clients are talking to each other via the mirrors. Each stylist/client pair is in their own little world when these conversations are happening. There may be a sense of background hustle and bustle of the regular salon activities – people going back and forth with piles of towels and so on. But this needs to be neither cluttered nor time-consuming. It could be quite comic.*

*There is also a receptionist's desk that is separate from these chairs, possibly on a different visual level. It is far enough away from the main action that Bella, the receptionist, can have her own distinct little world of interactions, but also close enough that she can observe, and sometimes overhear, the stylists and their clients.*

*Apart from this, the stage paraphernalia should be as minimal as possible. Forget realistic props wherever you can. Let objects be constructed through skilful mime.*

*The barbershop quartet are invisible to everyone else on stage, and unheard by them. They move as a tightly knit ensemble between the three chairs; witnessing and observing and humming their comments on each section of dialogue. They inhabit a different reality.*

*Billie, the salon's junior trainee, hovers at the side of whichever stylist is talking. She is learning the skills of the job and is soaking in information on all levels.*

TENEBRIS: So what did you say?

KATHERINE: I never know what to say, when they say that.

TENEBRIS: But you have to say something.

KATHERINE: Yes, you do. You really do.

TENEBRIS: So what did you say?

KATHERINE: I said, that's nice.

TENEBRIS: That's nice!

KATHERINE: Yes.

TENEBRIS: That's pathetic!

KATHERINE: Yes.

ACT 1

SCENE 2

ANGELO, CLARITY

ANGELO: One of my clients was telling me, the other day, he has this theory. About hair.

CLARITY: Oh yes?

ANGELO: Yes. He's an old man, a really old man, and he has this long white hair, absolutely white, like paper, only, kind of, shining, you know?

CLARITY: Like Gandalf?

ANGELO: Yes, actually, it is, only shorter, and no beard, just this old wise kind face, looking at me, in the mirror. And the beautiful hair.

CLARITY: How does he have it done?

ANGELO: Straight. Shoulder length. It's really fine, so it's very hard to work with, you could blow it away with a breath, and he's like that too, fine, fragile, delicate, and –

CLARITY: What about the theory?

ANGELO: Oh yes. He thinks hair has memory.

ACT 1

SCENE 3

LYDIA, JOACHIM

LYDIA: I went to university too, you know?

JOACHIM: Really?

LYDIA: Yes. I read English.

JOACHIM: Really?

LYDIA: Yes. I got a first, as a matter of fact.

JOACHIM: Really?

LYDIA: Yes, really. Do you believe me?

JOACHIM: Lydia, I believe everything you tell me. Every word. Especially when you're cutting my hair.

LYDIA: You'd better, it's easy to slip with the scissors, you know, then where would you be?

JOACHIM: Don't even think about it.

LYDIA: So, you want to know, why I'm doing this, don't you?

JOACHIM: Well, yes.

LYDIA: Because I thought I ought to be doing something useful.

ACT 1

SCENE 4

TENEBRIS, KATHERINE

TENEBRIS: So what did he say, when you said that?

KATHERINE: He said, is that all you can say?

TENEBRIS: Oh no.

KATHERINE: Oh yes.

TENEBRIS: So you said, I think you're a really nice person.

KATHERINE: How do you know?

TENEBRIS: And you're really nice looking, and have a really nice personality –

KATHERINE: How do you know this?

TENEBRIS: Did he cry?

KATHERINE: He put his hands in front of his face, and his shoulders shook, and he sobbed. As if his heart would break.

TENEBRIS: Walk away.

KATHERINE: What?

TENEBRIS: Walk away. At that point, walk away. You didn't, did you?

KATHERINE: Of course I didn't! He just told me he l-

TENEBRIS: Don't say it!

KATHERINE: Say what?

TENEBRIS: The word, the L word, don't say it!

KATHERINE: Why not?

TENEBRIS: It's bad luck! I won't have it, in my chair, while I'm cutting your hair, I won't have it! It's too risky! Cutting hair's a chancy business, you know, you don't want to offend the hair gods.

KATHERINE: The hair gods?

TENEBRIS: Shush! Don't mention the hair gods, you'll upset them!

KATHERINE: You are silly, Tenebris.

TENEBRIS: I'm a genius.

KATHERINE: Yes, you are. Anyway, I couldn't walk away.

TENEBRIS: Course you could.

KATHERINE: No, I couldn't.

TENEBRIS: Course you could. You could have turned your back, quit the scene, and he'd have cried a bit more, then he'd have gone and got drunk, and it would all be over. Free and clear. Everyone happy.

KATHERINE: No I couldn't do that.

TENEBRIS: Why ever not?

KATHERINE: I was in bed with him. It was my bed.

TENEBRIS: Ah.

ACT 1

SCENE 5

ANGELO, CLARITY

CLARITY: Memory?

ANGELO: Yes, in the hair.

CLARITY: Memory of what?

ANGELO: All your experiences. Everything. Right back to when you were born. He thought every part of your body, including your hair, had all the memory of all of your life, like a kind of infinite diary, held in the molecules somehow, every single hair has all of it, and when it gets cut and falls off it takes the memory trace with it.

CLARITY: That's ridiculous.

ANGELO: Well, yes. But it's funny, you know, when you work with hair, day in day out, one person after another, your hands on their hair, it is – strange.

CLARITY: How strange?

ANGELO: Well, erm, it's kind of, it's sort of, it's as if you were touching their soul. I know it sounds silly, but that's the feeling you get.

CLARITY: What's my soul like?

ACT 1

SCENE 6

BILLIE

BILLIE: *(She has a long luxuriant pink/blonde wig)* Hair. Hair is your most important feature. It says everything there is to say about you.

Hair care. Hair care is very important. Shampoos, conditioners, gels, dyes, glitters - I could talk you through those for hours and hours. Hair care. Hair care is very important.

My hair says everything about me. It's beautiful isn't it? I will never, ever have my hair short. I curl it, twirl it, caress it, mess it, dress it. Today it's pink. Tomorrow who knows? Highlights. I adore highlights. It's like my life. I adore the highlights. Sensations, colours, change, pizzazz, buzz, I embrace it all.

Your hair is your passport to love and romance. What else can I say?

ACT 1

SCENE 7

BELLA, KATY

KATY: Er, hallo.

BELLA: Good morning. May I help you?

KATY: Oh yes, er good morning erm thank you.

*Pause*

BELLA: Yes?

KATY: I'd like to have my hair cut please.

BELLA: Ah you want an appointment (*looks at diary*)

KATY: Well er actually, could it be sort of soon?

BELLA: Soon?

KATY: Well sort of now?

BELLA: Ah - before you lose your nerve.

KATY: YES! Oh yes! Thank you - yes that's it.

BELLA: Do you know which of our stylists you wish to see?

KATY: Well, my friend goes to Lydia. Can I see Lydia?

BELLA: You could. Lydia is a wonderful stylist. An artist. A poet of hair. But if I may, I'd suggest Angelo. Yes. Angelo is the one for you.

KATY: Angelo?

BELLA: Yes. No doubt about it.

KATY: Why?

BELLA: Take my word for it. Angelo.

KATY: Oh alright. Yes. Thank you. Who are you?

BELLA: Me? Oh I'm just the receptionist.

ACT 1

SCENE 8

LYDIA, GWEN

GWEN: So do you like it, the hairdressing?

LYDIA: I love it. I really love it.

GWEN: How did you know you were going to? Before you started?

LYDIA: You ask good questions.

GWEN: Thank you.

LYDIA: I knew because of Tenebris. Because I would come in here, every month or so, and he would sit me down in that silly plastic gown and I would look at him in the mirror, and his hands would flicker through my hair, so lightly you could hardly feel it, constantly moving, like a spring wind in your hair, and at the same time I felt touched so deeply, so truly, I couldn't believe it. And all the time he'd be talking, his eyes dancing, laughter, teasing, testing you out, setting you up, flirting and, oh, I don't know –

GWEN: You might almost be in l- ow!

LYDIA: Oh, I'm so sorry, it was the hair gods, they don't like the L word.

GWEN: The hair gods?

LYDIA: Don't mention the hair gods!

ACT 1

SCENE 9

TENEBRIS, ANGELA

TENEBRIS: So what does it feel like?

ANGELA: What, when I'm with her?

TENEBRIS: Yes.

ANGELA: It feels like all the songs are true.

TENEBRIS: Yes.

ANGELA: It feels like Christmas morning. Snow outside, and the strange light, reflected from the snow, silently filling the house; and inside, wonder, abundance, joy.

TENEBRIS: Yes.

ANGELA: And the possibility of loss. The terrible possibility.

TENEBRIS: Has she said it, then?

ANGELA: Said what?

TENEBRIS: The L word, has she said it?

ANGELA: No, not yet. But she looks at me, and she touches my hair, and her eyes go soft.

TENEBRIS: That's good. And how long have you been together?

ANGELA: Fourteen years.

TENEBRIS: (*who has seen it all*) Right...

ACT 1

SCENE 10

LYDIA, RACHAEL

RACHAEL: So sweet.

LYDIA: Yes.

RACHAEL: Like a lover.

LYDIA: Is it?

RACHAEL: Yes, a secret lover, always inside you.

LYDIA: Goodness.

RACHAEL: Yes, goodness too; you know, I can feel him, loving me.

LYDIA: Really?

RACHAEL: Yes. A little fire of love, an angel fire, always inside, warming me.

LYDIA: You talk to him?

RACHAEL: Yes, all the time, in secret, I tell him about my life, and what the world is like, and how we will be together, I will give him milk, from myself, and love, and make him laugh, and he will make me laugh, too, it will be wonderful.

LYDIA: And the father, does he feel good about this?

RACHAEL: The father?

LYDIA: Yes, you know, er, the man who gave this baby to you?

RACHAEL: Oh him. Long gone.

LYDIA: Really?

ACT 1

SCENE 11

BILLIE, ANGELO, LYDIA, TENEBRIS

BILLIE: Excuse me Angelo.

*Angelo breaks off from his current conversation*

ANGELO: Mmn?

BILLIE: I'm going to get the sandwiches; what do you want today?

ANGELO: *(not taking his focus off his client)* I'll have what she's having *(nods his head towards Lydia)*

BILLIE: Ok. Right you are then *(makes a note in her little notebook)*. Excuse me Lydia.

LYDIA: Yes Billie?

BILLIE: *(shyly, she's a little in awe of her)* What sandwich do you want today?

LYDIA: *(she stops to think ... runs her mind round the bewildering set of options she knows are available)* Oh - oh god I don't know. I'll have what he's having. *(waving a hand airily, and apparently dismissively, in the direction of Tenebris)*

BILLIE: Ooooookaay. *(Makes another note in her notebook)* Excuse me Tenebris.

TENEBRIS: Yes? What is it? *(He is unoccupied at this moment - dreaming a little - Billie has taken him out of his reverie)*

BILLIE: Sandwich order, Tenebris. What can I get for you?

TENEBRIS: Oh. Oh. *(He's having difficulty coming into everyday reality and there is emotion in his voice when he speaks - longing? heartache?)* - I'll have what he's having.

*He turns to look at Angelo. Angelo glances up for a brief moment - smiles at Tenebris a little distractedly, then gets back to the intense focus on his client.*

*Billie steps forward and addresses the audience.*

BILLIE: That's what they always say. I don't know why I bother asking really. It's not as if they ever say it different. No surprises. Nothing remarkable. It's a responsible job this you know. Well this bit is anyway. What shall I get them do you think? Smoked salmon on rye with rocket and Dijon mustard? Brie and tomato with roasted pine nuts? Cheese and pickle? Ham and pickle? Egg and cress? They're actually very particular actually. Last Thursday it was terrible. I got them tuna mayonnaise with iceberg lettuce in granary. Looked lovely. Yes it did, honest. But he *(indicates Angelo)* left

half of his; he (*indicates Tenebris*) gave his away to a client who came in all of a rush and had no time for lunch; and she (*indicates Lydia*) gave me a lecture on tuna fishing; inhumanity of.

Don't get me wrong. It's not like I get into trouble or anything - well not much anyway - no - I just want them to be happy. That's all. I mean do they seem happy to you?

*The barbershop quartet sing a love song from Tenebris to Angelo. It is clear from the arrangement on stage that this song is in Tenebris's thoughts and is not heard by anyone else. Lighting and effects indicate we are in a reality shift*

TENEBRIS'S SONG:

Tell me Angelo my angel

Tell that you know how much I love you

Tell me Angelo my angel

Tell me I can hope that you love me too.

I want to walk beside you

I'll be the one who cares about you

I'll be the one who holds you

I want to spend a lifetime with you

Tell me Angelo my angel

Tell that you know how much I love you

Tell me Angelo my angel

Tell me I can hope that you love me too.

ACT 1

SCENE 12

TENEBRIS, ANGELO

*Angelo is sitting in Tenebris' chair.*

ANGELO: So I told her about how the hair has memory.

TENEBRIS: You didn't!

ANGELO: Yes, I did.

TENEBRIS: Angelo, you are such a word flirt!

ANGELO: A what?

TENEBRIS: You fall in love with what you're thinking about, and so you don't think!

ANGELO: I know. I know. And then I told her about the soul thing.

TENEBRIS: You never! You didn't tell her about the soul thing!

ANGELO: I did.

TENEBRIS: And she said, Angelo, what's my soul like?

ANGELO: She did.

TENEBRIS: And you said, you're a very nice person, you have a very nice personality.

ANGELO: How do you know that?

TENEBRIS: And then she said, Angelo, what's my soul like?

ANGELO: *(Miserably)* Yes.

TENEBRIS: So you had to tell her, didn't you, you word flirt. Because you have to tell the truth, don't you, with your big black eyes, you idea lover, you truth teller.

ANGELO: Yes. Yes.

TENEBRIS: Did she cry?

ANGELO: Only a little. You tell the truth too!

TENEBRIS: Yes. But I'm better at it.

ANGELO: I know.

ACT 1

SCENE 13

BELLA, NEIL

NEIL: Christ you've got to help me. Look at me.

BELLA: Hmm. Yes. A mess. Who did that to you?

NEIL: A mess! A terrible mess. It was those guys three doors down.

BELLA: Ah, the save five pounds offer.

NEIL: Yes. Oh god. Oh god.

BELLA: You have something on your mind. Tell me.

NEIL: I'm getting married this afternoon. In three hours time.

BELLA: Ah. I see. So you'd like to see someone here as a matter of urgency.

NEIL: Yes. Yes please. Do you think there's anything anyone can do?

BELLA: Tenebris.

NEIL: Pardon?

BELLA: Tenebris. He's the one for you. Take a seat. Are you sure about getting married?

NEIL: What? What sort of crazy question is that?

BELLA: Don't worry. Tenebris can work miracles. He's the guardian of hair.

NEIL: Thank god for that. But why did you ask that question?

BELLA: Which question?

NEIL: The wedding question

BELLA: I didn't ask a wedding question. I asked a marriage question.

NEIL: Is there a difference?

BELLA: Tenebris. Tenebris will see you right. Don't mind me. I'm just the receptionist.

ACT 1

SCENE 14

LYDIA, MARINA

LYDIA: So what do you do, then?

MARINA: I'm a poet.

LYDIA: Really?

MARINA: Yes, really.

LYDIA: I used to read poetry, once. I wrote some, too.

MARINA: What stopped you?

LYDIA: I did an English degree.

MARINA: Ah. That would do it.

*The barbershop quartet sing a love song from Lydia to Tenebris. It is clear from the arrangement on stage that this song is in Lydia's thoughts and is not heard by anyone else. Lighting and effects indicate we are in a reality shift*

LYDIA'S SONG

Show me the way I can say that I love you

Show me the way I can say that I care

Show me the way I can say that I need you

Show me the way I can reach you

Tenebris please hear me

Tell me this; am I in a trance?

Tenebris come near me

Tell me this; do I stand a chance?

Show me the way I can say that I love you

Show me the way I can say that I care

Show me the way I can say that I need you

Show me the way I can reach you

ACT 1

SCENE 15

JEAN LUC, BELLA, ANGÉLIQUE

JEAN LUC: Bonjour messieurs dames.

BELLA: Yes?

JEAN LUC: (*incomprehensible French accent*) Please I need hair cut.

BELLA: Pardon?

JEAN LUC: Please hair cut. (*gestures, waves arms*).

BELLA: Hair cut?

JEAN LUC: Yes, please, I am desperate, in despair, perdu. It is terrible. I am so lonely. I need a hair cut.

BELLA: No.

JEAN LUC: Comment? This is hairdresser, yes?

BELLA: No.

JEAN LUC: But look. Hair. Cutting.

BELLA: No.

*Impasse.*

*ANGÉLIQUE, who is having her hair cut by Tenebris, stands up, somewhat against Tenebris's wishes, and comes over to join BELLA and JEAN LUC. She is wearing the ridiculous plastic cape, and her hair is caught up in clips and half cut. She looks rather odd. And gorgeous.*

ANGÉLIQUE: (*strong French accent*) Can I help?

BELLA: Yes.

ANGÉLIQUE turns to JEAN LUC. It is love at first sight. They are transfixed. They begin to say the following words (They can be translated into french if you prefer) The Barbershop quartet hum a little here. BELLA looks on, impassively. They move closer and closer, talking in beautifully and mellifluously, completely absorbed. Each simple phrase is a declaration of passion. The whole salon watches them.

JEAN LUC: Who are you?

ANGÉLIQUE: They call me ANGÉLIQUE.

JEAN LUC: You are my visiting angel. My guardian angel. Yes.

ANGÉLIQUE: Of course I am. And you?

JEAN LUC: I am JEAN LUC.

ANGÉLIQUE: Of course you are. But what are you to me?

JEAN LUC: I am your knight in shining armour. I am your prince. I am your happy ever after ending. I am the one you have longed for, the one you have dreamed of. I am, quite simply, the one.

ANGÉLIQUE: Yes.

JEAN LUC: Yes?

ANGÉLIQUE: Yes.

JEAN LUC: You agree with me?

ANGÉLIQUE: Why not?

JEAN LUC: You hardly know me

ANGÉLIQUE: On the contrary JEAN LUC. I have known you since before time was. I am your twin soul. Your missing half. Your Other.

JEAN LUC: You are? (pause) You are.

*They kiss. The salon applauds. Tenebris applauds ironically. BELLA just stands there. JEAN LUC and ANGÉLIQUE look around, show embarrassment, and exit, holding hands; ANGÉLIQUE is still wearing the cape and the clips. BELLA gives a 'what did I tell you?' gesture.*

TENEBRIS: Yes, I know. You're just the receptionist.

ACT 1

SCENE 16

LYDIA, BELLA

LYDIA: You know, don't you. You know what I feel about him.

BELLA: Yes my dear.

LYDIA: What do I do?

BELLA: You know, don't you.

LYDIA: Yes, my dear. It still hurts.

BELLA: Yes.

LYDIA: It's a funny thing: the impossible. How did it happen? Why is it allowed? My love was begotten by despair, upon impossibility. It really doesn't seem fair.

BELLA: Angelo was with Mary, you know, his client Mary? The one with liver cancer? He was with her last night and he held her hand until she died. She was 34 years old. Tell me about fairness.

LYDIA: OK, OK, but it still hurts. Nothing like her hurt, I know that, but pain is pain, and I have it.

BELLA: Yes.

LYDIA: And Tenebris has it, the pain, and Angelo has it, doesn't he, here we are in this impossible triangle, and there is no way out, no way out at all.

BELLA: No. Not out. Up. There's a way up.

LYDIA: Up?

BELLA: Up.

ACT 1

SCENE 17

ANGELO, DORA

ANGELO: How would you like your hair today, then, my love?

DORA: Angelo, I leave it completely to you. Make it look beautiful.

ANGELO: It already is beautiful, look, it's like dark gold. Like a river of dark gold.

DORA: Oh, Angelo! You really like hair, don't you?

ANGELO: I love it.

DORA: But it's just this dead stuff, growing out of your head.

ANGELO: What's wrong?

DORA: Pardon?

ANGELO: What's the matter? Something is wrong. Your hair is part of you. It's an important part. It's your so – it's your personality. If you think your hair is dead, then –

DORA: Help me.

*He puts his hands on her head, slow massage movements.  
She exhales, shakes a little, sobs once or twice, relaxes.*

ANGELO: It's better, that he's gone.

DORA: Is it?

ANGELO: Yes, it is. Now you are free.

DORA: He took part of me with him, I will never get it back.

ANGELO: All you have lost is what stops you from growing. Let go.

*She inhales, exhales. Looks up at him in the mirror, opens her eyes.*

ANGELO: Yes. There. You see?

DORA: Yes.

ANGELO: Now I will dress your head in a golden river, and you will be beautiful again.

ACT 1

SCENE 18

JOACHIM, LYDIA

JOACHIM: so why don't you start writing poetry again?

LYDIA: I don't need to. I cut hair, instead.

JOACHIM: Poetry is more important.

LYDIA: There is no difference.

*The barbershop quartet sing a love song from Angelo to Lydia. It is clear from the arrangement on stage that this song is in Angelo's thoughts and is not heard by anyone else. Lighting and effects indicate we are in a reality shift*

ANGELO'S SONG

Lydia, I'm giddier

Than a bird on the wing in the spring about you

Please be mine

Till the end of time

Let me tell you quite clearly

I love you sincerely

I'm hoping that you love me too, oh

Lydia, I'm giddier

Than a bird on the wing in the spring about you

Please be mine

Till the end of time

Won't you tell me that you love me too?

ACT 1

SCENE 19

BELLA, ANGELO

ANGELO: Have you seen her hands?

BELLA: Her hands?

ANGELO: Yes, they're so beautiful.

BELLA: Are they?

ANGELO: Yes, come on, you must have noticed, how light and delicate they are, like a pianist's hands.

BELLA: (*with slight irony*) That's nice.

ANGELO: And her head is full of poetry, did you notice that? You can tell; and she has this distant look, sometimes, with a half smile, and you know that a poem is happening in her head.

BELLA: Ah.

ANGELO: And, Bella, you know, I – I –

BELLA: Yes. I know. You are caught. You turn and burn. You shiver and ache and you can't sleep and you hallucinate her beauty. You stammer and flush. You have – erotic pneumonia.

ANGELO: I do?

BELLA: You do.

ANGELO: Is there a cure, Bella?

BELLA: Oh yes. Dear Angelo; oh yes. The only cure is: up.

ANGELO: Up?

BELLA: Up.

ACT 1

SCENE 20

BELLA, LOUISA

LOUISA: I'm here to see Tenebris.

BELLA: Ah yes. Mrs Gillespie. You'll be seeing Lydia today.

LOUISA: But I always see Tenebris. He's my saviour.

BELLA: Yes. I know. But today you need to see Lydia.

LOUISA: Why?

BELLA: Because you have forgotten how to speak your heart's truth with beauty, wit and resonance.

LOUISA: What?

BELLA: Sonnets. Ballads. Rhyme schemes. Alliteration. Assonance. Dissonance. You name it. Lydia's got it.

LOUISA: Are you mad?

BELLA: No, I'm just the receptionist. Take a seat. Lydia will be with you shortly.

ACT 1

SCENE 21

BELLA, NEIL, TENEBRIS

BELLA: Yes?

NEIL: Where is he?

BELLA: Where is who?

NEIL: Who? The artist, of course. The genius!

BELLA: That would be TENEBRIS, then, would it?

*NEIL bursts past her, and flings himself at Tenerbris's feet, and starts kissing them.*

TENEBRIS: *(to client)* Don't feel *you* have to do this; this is excessive.

NEIL: Thank you, oh, thank you, how can I ever repay you?

TENEBRIS: A little restrained adulation would be perfectly adequate. Modified rapture. I take it you like the haircut?

NEIL: It's amazing. It's just amazing. My whole life has changed.

TENEBRIS: Was it the subtle blonde highlights?

NEIL: I don't know. Everything; it was everything.

TENEBRIS: And the wedding?

NEIL: Wedding? What wedding?

TENEBRIS: You were planning to get married this afternoon.

NEIL: Oh, that. That got called off.

TENEBRIS: Really? Why?

NEIL: Oh, it was my mother in law. To be, that is. Or not to be. She didn't like the haircut.

ACT 1

SCENE 22

JOACHIM, LYDIA

LYDIA: What is your substance, whereof are you made?

JOACHIM: I'll say this for you Lydia, I never know what you're going to say next.

LYDIA: That millions of strange shadows on you tend. There, you could have predicted that.

JOACHIM: Why are you quoting from Shakespeare's sonnets?

LYDIA: It's in my mind, I don't know why. Perhaps it's all the poems in your hair, trying to speak.

JOACHIM: Does everyone have poems in their hair?

LYDIA: Oh yes. Not just the poets, everyone.

JOACHIM: And what are the poems about?

LYDIA: Oh, you know, what are all poems about – death, and – gardening.

JOACHIM: Gardening?

LYDIA: We're not allowed to mention the L word in this salon, Tenebris has a thing about it.

JOACHIM: Why?

LYDIA: I think he was once crossed in – gardening.

JOACHIM: What about you, Lydia, do you garden?

LYDIA: Oh yes. I'm crazy about gardening. I really like to – mulch. I measure my life by the gardens I have lived in. I count out the hours of my days in roses, peonies, in jacaranda and night scented stock.

JOACHIM: Er, are you in any particular horticultural situation at the moment?

LYDIA: Yes, Joachim, sadly, yes, otherwise you would be the first invitee to my – garden party.

JOACHIM: Oh. She takes away, she gives: despair, and hope. Thank you, I think. This garden you are in, is it beautiful?

LYDIA: Oh yes. Like a cactus rose. Nightshade, convolvulus, impossibility. It has a maze. It is amazing. There is no way out. Or, sadly, in.

JOACHIM: You are a strange shadow, Lydia.

LYDIA: Thank you, Joachim.

ACT 1

SCENE 23

ANGELO, JANOSC

ANGELO: You really think so, do you, that the hair has memory?

JANOSC: I know so.

ANGELO: How do you know?

JANOSC: Touch my hair.

*ANGELO tentatively puts his hands on JANOSC's head. As he says the following lines, his face shows a range of emotions:tragedy, joy, grief, pain, complete happiness. They are matched very precisely by the emotions on JANOSC's face - as if they were really seeing each other in a mirror.*

ANGELO: Oh. Oh. The smoke, the burning.

JANOSC: Yes.

ANGELO: The cold. Night time. Escaping.

JANOSC: Yes.

ANGELO: Ah! Your poor arm!

JANOSC: Yes. It is better now.

ANGELO: And—your wife, is it?

JANOSC: Yes.

ANGELO: Never. Never have I felt such love.

JANOSC: Yes.

ANGELO: And -

JANOSC: Yes?

ANGELO: Deeper, deeper -

JANOSC: Yes, go on.

ANGELO: This is you, isn't it, this is you that I can feel?

JANOSC: Yes.

*ANGELO is deeply deeply moved. If possible, tears run down his face.*

ANGELO: Clarity. Lightness. Freedom. Such – *freedom!*

JANOSC: Yes. Thank you. Yes.

ANGELO: How long have you got?

JANOSC: Perhaps a month. My affairs are all in order.

ANGELO: Thank you. Thank you. Who are you?

JANOSC: Just JANOSC. I used to cut hair, once, in another country.

ANGELO: And now?

JANOSC: Now, I am waiting.

ANGELO: Waiting? Waiting for what? Waiting for whom?

JANOSC: Not for anything. Not, now, for anyone. I am just waiting.

ACT 1

SCENE 24

TENEBRIS, BELLA

TENEBRIS: It's embarrassing, that's what it is. Here I am, hairdressing's answer to Michelangelo, I can take someone who walks in here like looking like a refugee from 1975 and send them out with the Sistine Chapel ceiling on their head, I really can –

BELLA: Yes, Tenebris, you can –

TENEBRIS: At the very pinnacle of my creative powers, I am, and all the time inside I'm like a great big soft spaniel, drooling with adoration, it's embarrassing. It's so, what can I say, it's so bourgeois! So uninteresting!

BELLA: *(slightly ironically)* Oh dear.

TENEBRIS: Don't you oh dear me. And - how can he be so straight, and so beautiful? Answer me that. He can even dance, after a fashion. He has taste. It's unnatural. I can't bear it.

BELLA: Does it get in the way of your work?

TENEBRIS: No, that's another embarrassing thing, it actually improves it. As if every head that I transform is a single flower, a rose for Angelo. I have fallen, Bella, fallen fallen, I am falling and calling, and there is nothing but silence. Dear god it hurts.

BELLA: Yes. Oh Tenebris, yes.

ACT 1

SCENE 25

BELLA, ROXIE

ROXIE: Is this the place where Angelo does hair?

BELLA: Does? Does?

ROXIE: You know what I mean. I want an appointment with Angelo.

BELLA: Do you? Not possible I'm afraid.

ROXIE: What do you mean? Not possible!

BELLA: Exactly.

ROXIE: Look, what's going on here? You're a hairdressing salon right? I want my hair done, right? Book me in. Angelo.

BELLA: Not possible. I suggest the establishment three doors down. They have a special offer I believe.

ROXIE: Who the fuck are you?

BELLA: I the fuck am the receptionist. Goodbye.

ACT 1

SCENE 26

TENEBRIS, CLARICE

CLARICE: What do you see in hair, Tenebris?

TENEBRIS: You've been talking to Angelo, haven't you.

CLARICE: Yes, and Lydia. Lydia says that there are poems in hair.

TENEBRIS: Lydia is over-educated.

CLARICE: Angelo says he can feel your soul in the hair.

TENEBRIS: Angelo is a word flirt. So is Lydia: they think words mean something.

CLARICE: Well, they, do, obviously, don't they?

TENEBRIS: Another one! This is my day for meeting word flirts, obviously. I must have offended the hair gods.

CLARICE: I thought you weren't supposed to mention the hair gods.

TENEBRIS: I can mention them, you can't.

CLARICE: Why?

TENEBRIS: Because I'm not a word flirt.

CLARICE: You use words! You use words all the time!

TENEBRIS: Yes, but I don't take them seriously. I don't let them take charge, get above themselves, think they mean anything.

CLARICE: Oh. All right. So what do you see in hair, then?

TENEBRIS: Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

CLARICE: But Tenebris, you're a genius, I come in here feeling like a wet Sunday, and I go out feeling like a visiting angel. That's not nothing, that's everything, you put everything in the hair.

TENEBRIS: Yes, you're right, that's what I mean; everything without limit, everything. Angels, poems, epiphanies, the Holy Ghost and the Folies Bergeres, the whole lot, everything without exception, that's what you get. Feel it, feel it, stop word flirting, can you feel it?

CLARICE: Yes. Oh god. Yes.

TENEBRIS: Feels like everything?

CLARICE: Yes. Oh yes.

TENEBRIS: Which feels exactly like nothing at all?

CLARICE: Oh. Anything you say, Tenebris. Or don't say. Anything.

TENEBRIS: By Jove, I do believe you've got it. The hair gods will be pleased.

ACT 1

SCENE 27

ANGELO, TENEBRIS

*Angelo is doing Tenebris' hair*

ANGELO: You don't need anything, you're absolutely fine.

TENEBRIS: Angelo, don't hold back: transform me!

ANGELO: The last time you were in this chair was four days ago. There's nothing to cut, Tenebris.

TENEBRIS: I want to be different, I want fire and ice.

ANGELO: Tenebris, your hair is perfect.

TENEBRIS: Yes, I know. Give me a massage. I'm worried about Lydia.

ANGELO: Why? Lydia? Why?

TENEBRIS: She's not herself. No, she is herself, too much: that's the problem. She's becoming increasingly Celtic and transparent. She is in danger of vanishing, and permeating the salon with her absent presence. I think she's got the L problem. Gardening, she calls it; she is in a garden.

ANGELO: With whom?

TENEBRIS: I don't know. Some highly evolved being, I expect. It's not good for the salon.

ANGELO: Yes it is.

TENEBRIS: I beg your pardon?

ANGELO: I said yes it is.

TENEBRIS: Angelo, you seem to be contradicting me. You know I don't like that.

ANGELO: Shut up, Tenebris, I know what I'm talking about. That's how this salon works; it is powered by the power of – gardening. It flows in her, and in you, and in me. You are smitten –

TENEBRIS: I deny it!

ANGELO: Not when my hands are in your hair, you can't, you know that – and I am smitten –

TENEBRIS: Are you?

ANGELO: Of course – and she is smitten. All three of us. This salon is a garden, Tenebris, a wild garden, dog roses and juniper, garlic and violets, this place is full of –

TENEBRIS: Don't say it!

ANGELO: Love, Tenebris; it is full of love.

ACT 1

SCENE 28

DOMINIC, TENEBRIS

DOMINIC: It was her eyes.

TENEBRIS: Really?

DOMINIC: Yes, just like in the poems. Exactly like the poems. She was walking down a corridor, thirty years ago, and I saw her eyes. They were the palest blue, like washed denim, like a Siamese cat's eyes, and they shone, and they pierced my heart.

TENEBRIS: (*sceptically*) Your heart.

DOMINIC: Yes. That mythical organ.

TENEBRIS: And it stayed pierced?

DOMINIC: Yes. Like a pearl on a string. It stayed pierced, and still is.

TENEBRIS: And you proposed then and there, I suppose.

DOMINIC: No, of course not, don't be silly, this is the real world. I was married, and then she got married, it was a sort of Dante situation, you know: and then it got really complicated, and then it got – simple. And it's stayed simple ever since.

TENEBRIS: Dante!

DOMINIC: Dante. Italian poet. Wrote the *Divine Comedy*.

TENEBRIS: I know. Very excitable, the Italians. And she is the whole meaning of your life, presumably?

DOMINIC: No, no, of course not. There is my work, and my books, and my daughters, and my meditation and my writing and – I have all sorts of lives, Tenebris, you know that, but all the time she is there, the thread that carries the pearls; she is there, a presence, a definition; deeper than circumstance, Tenebris, deeper than love.

TENEBRIS: And you think maybe she will take you to heaven when you die, like Dante?

DOMINIC: Well, you know; yes. Actually, I think the answer to that is, yes.

*Tenebris stops cutting hair. He is simply staring at the mirror, unseeing. He is crying.*

*The other two stylists sense this: they look at him.*

BOTH: Tenebris! What's the matter! Tenebris!

TENEBRIS: I can't bear it. It cannot be borne. It is impossible. Nothing makes sense.

BLACK-OUT.

ACT 1

SCENE 29

*The salon is empty. All the staff and clients have gone home. Except for one female (who has been dressed as a male) member of the barbershop quartet. He/she steps forward and, peering into the space representing the central mirror frame, combs his/her hair, smoothes his/her eyebrows etc. As this speech progresses she becomes clearly female. She takes off the things that define her as a barbershop quartet member, and dresses in a robe that redefines her as Eros.*

EROS:

I am the one who opens up at night. They look to me to do that. Does that surprise you? Then you don't know me at all. But they do – my friends behind the shadows.

I am not what I seem to be. No, not at all. I am the go-between. The gatherer. The ghost in the machine. The one who welcomes the night shadows. The one who knows their stories. The one who listens.

*She listens. There is a sort of scuffling noise. Subdued laughter. Whispers. Some faint singing. It is the barber shop quartet/Kindly Ones from offstage, preparing to take up night time residence in the salon.*

*Eros steps through the mirror frame to down stage centre and addresses the audience from there.*

No-one knows. No-one knows I don't go home when they do. And no-one knows why. They are all in the dark for now. Though Bella - dear Bella . . . well, you'll see.

*She steps back through the mirror. This signifies a time/reality shift.*

*She turns full circle, gracefully, majestically, in a sort of dance/trance to speak with her night time voice. It is rich. Big. Slow. Behind her, the Eumenides take up their places at their respective salon chairs.*

Alecto

*Pause*

Megaera

*Pause*

Tisiphone

*Pause*

The kindly ones. Together we serve.

They attend my call. It is my calling. We await instructions. We wait.

I am the night watch. I watch. And wait. Here in the velvet dark.

I am their other and they are mine. They do my bidding. I bide their time, not mine.

Tonight, like all nights, is different. Tonight the moment is opportune. The opportunity is momentous.

And when the meanwhile turns generous, that's when the sleepers wake.

Alecto

*Pause*

Megaera

*Pause*

Tisiphone

*Pause*

My kindly ones. Ah. My kind.

*She moves to the side of the stage to watch and wait.*

INTERVAL

ACT 2

SCENE 1

*Night time. The three hairdressers are in the chairs. The barbershop quartet are transformed into the three Eumenides and Eros. The Eumenides (Megaera, Tisiphone, Alecto) stand behind the chairs. Eros stands to one side.*

- MEGAERA: Imagine yourself in the centre of all of the webs of your life.
- TISIPHONE: You see, you are caught, here, and here; a foot, a hand, stretched and pinioned.
- ALECTO: This is your life. How have you used it?
- MEGAERA: Is this the best you can do?
- TISIPHONE: Is it?
- ALECTO: Think of the poems unwritten, the webs unspun.
- MEGAERA: Think of the life, unlived.
- TISIPHONE: The possibilities.
- ALECTO: Think.
- TISIPHONE: And all of the otherness that you have not had, the strangeness unrealised, the things that did not happen.
- ALECTO: Think.
- MEGAERA: The infinite 'if only's'.
- TISIPHONE: Ooh, what vistas open.
- MEGAERA: The things you have not done so far outnumber everything you have been, inconceivably. How can you bear this, we ask.
- TISIPHONE: How can you confront your limitations, the accidents of your being human, the triviality?
- ALECTO: The tough breaks. The compromises. The insignificance of things.
- MEGAERA: How can you bear that? How? Tell me!
- TISIPHONE: This is not, it is not, a rhetorical question.
- ALECTO: Tell me this.
- MEGAERA: Where are you driven back to?
- ALECTO: Tell me now.

TENEBRIS: This is a dream, right? I'm dreaming all this stuff.

MEGAERA: Don't count on it.

TISIPHONE: Not for a moment.

ANGELO: Who are you?

MEGAERA: We are the kindly ones.

TISIPHONE: (*menacingly*) We are very kind indeed.

ALECTO: Our kindness is pitiless, unstoppable.

MEGAERA: We pursue hubris wherever we find it, we root it out.

TENEBRIS: What on earth is hubris?

LYDIA: It's a Greek word, it means pride.

TENEBRIS: Oh, Greeks, I might have known. Greeks can be so difficult. I knew this Greek boy once –

Eros: (*big voice*) Silence!

TENEBRIS: Christ! Who's that?

MEGAERA: She is our master.

TISIPHONE: She is *really* difficult.

ALECTO: It's not good to offend her.

TISIPHONE: Or even mention her name.

MEGAERA: She is Eros, she is (*whispers*) Love.

TISIPHONE: The murderer.

MEGAERA: The shadow.

ALECTO: The breaker of souls.

TENEBRIS: Look, hang on a minute. Have we done something to offend you? I mean, this is just a hairdressing salon, for god's sake. We cut hair, you know, we're good at it, people come back and give us money.

ANGELO: It's more than that.

LYDIA: Much more.

TENEBRIS: Well, OK, it is. But what did we do to get up these people's noses?

EROS: You called me. You called my name.

TENEBRIS: That was you, Angelo, how many times have I told you, you've upset the hair gods.

ANGELO: I don't care.

EROS: You should. You think you can play with love, do you? You think the fire outside the cave is kindly? It will burn you to the bone, it is the searching flame, it is the other, it is the good. Can you face that, I do not think so. The good? No.

TENEBRIS: Listen, sunshine, I can take it. Whatever it is you're talking about, not that I care; no-one terrorises me in my own salon, even in a weird dream.

ANGELO: I'm with you.

LYDIA: Me too. I think.

EROS: What is your substance? Whereof are you made?

ANGELO: (*hypnotised*) I am what I can feel with my hands; I am what words can understand.

TENEBRIS: (*also hypnotised*) I am style, darling; I am the music of what happens.

LYDIA: (*also hypnotised*) Rhymes and reasons, fragments of phrases, poems and stories.

TENEBRIS: (*no longer hypnotised*) So, that's us sorted out then; now, listen, how about you?

EROS: Pardon?

TENEBRIS: What substance are you made of? If you can ask it, you can answer it.

LYDIA: He's right.

ANGELO: Yes, he is.

TENEBRIS: Answer.

EROS: I am the fire round which the planets turn. I am the heat that holds the sun in place. I am the angel of coincidence. I am the rock on which your world is based. The person that you think you are, each of you, the Barbie doll to which you give your love, each of you, it is my plastic plaything. My toy, my dream, mine to discard or destroy. This you that you love, it is fluff, it is fiction. I can blow it away.

TENEBRIS: OK, thanks for the CV, we get the picture. However, if you want to work in our salon, you're going to have to do a bit better than that, I'm afraid.

EROS: What did you say?

TENEBRIS: You heard what I said. There are a lot of people out there who need their hair dressed.

ANGELO: Their hands held.

LYDIA: Their words heard.

TENEBRIS: They need – us. We help them. What do you do?

EROS: I make the world work. I cast the shadow play.

TENEBRIS: And a bloody awful job you do of it, too. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Look at the state the world's in. People dying like flies. Frankly, it's a disaster. Love, are you? The great unmentionable? You want to know why we don't mention your name in this salon? Not because we are afraid of you, don't think that; it's because you are such a catastrophe. Day in, day out, we get people in here, they want to tell us about their lives. And what are their lives? The ruins of love. This cheap pursuit. This lonely unbearable rejection. This hopeless fantasy. This suicidal despair. This utter boredom, where love has failed. Wanting, wanting, longing, wasting their lives because of you. Make me beautiful, Tenebris, they say; change me, so that I can find love. The rare ones who make it, make sense of being with someone else, do it in spite of you; what they have is deeper than love. And us, too, we're not immune, dear god no. Each of us is caught in this bloody dance of yours, this--this *square* dance, this sodding gavotte, this love without hope, your wonderful invention. I reject you, do you hear me, darling, I bloody well will not put up with you. Push off. Get out of our lives. Go. Just – go.

EROS: You know nothing of love. You know nothing of suffering. I will show you.

*Huge flash of light.*

*The stylists are frozen in amazement - a mixture of wonder and shock.*

BLACK-OUT.

ACT 3

SCENE 1

*It is daytime in the salon again. The following day. The three stylists are waking up from sleep in the chairs, and are somewhat startled to see each other. They look in the mirrors and look around them bemused and embarrassed. They pick up towels and soap etc and exit in different directions. When they return, later, they will have freshened up and put on clean clothing. The atmosphere however is different; slightly unreal. This increases as this act progresses.*

*Spotlight on Bella's desk. She is preparing to go out and Billie is standing by her - helping ineffectually.*

BELLA: Billie - can you take charge of the desk for half an hour?

BILLIE: Oh yes. Yes of course.

BELLA: *(As she is going out of the door)* Don't make any more appointments for today - they're in a strange state.

*Billie is delighted. This is real responsibility. A temporary promotion. Billie sits at the desk and tries to be like Bella - which she sort of manages to do. But it's a little girl trying to be a grown up. It's an opportunity for comic mime. Bella has left her spectacles behind on the desk, and Billie picks them up and tries them on - it's obvious that she can't see clearly with them on - she fumbles around. She is still wearing them when Dr Deluxe arrives.*

*Dr Deluxe is a salesman - he sells beauty products. He is middle aged and potentially majestic. He has gone to seed a little - but not much. He has charisma. He has a WHITE suit and a red handkerchief flowing from his breast pocket etc. He has a John Gielgud actorly voice.*

*He comes in, takes Billie by the hand with panache, and immediately gauges the right level of flattery.*

DR DELUXE: Ah the famous beauty, the much renowned receptionist of *Mon Parnasse* - I am at your service ma'am.

*He produces a card with a flourish which Billie can't read, because of the spectacles.*

*Billie tries to explain she's not the real receptionist, but he sweeps her along in a tide of words, and she just melts. She is star struck, stars in her eyes, caught in his admiring gaze, hypnotised.*

DR DELUXE: Oooooooh! *(A low groan of admiration and ecstasy)*

*When he speaks poetry, the barbershop quartet harmonises quietly in the background*

On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set,  
And you in Grecian tires are painted new:  
Speak of the spring and foison of the year;  
The one doth shadow of your beauty show,  
The other as your bounty doth appear;  
And you in every blessed shape we know.

*There is a hiatus. Dr Deluxe lets go of Billie's hand with a light kiss. He sits, crosses one leg elegantly over the other, flicks at miniscule bits of dust on his trousers.*

*Suddenly Billie comes to, and remembers her job.*

BILLIE: Oh oh how may I help you? Were you wanting an appointment?

DR DELUXE: Yes - I wish to converse with the Maestro.

BILLIE: Oh that's Tenebris. He's ever so lovely. When did you want to see him?

DR DELUXE: I am free just at this moment. I can see him now.

*Billie sees that Angelo and Tenebris have returned and are setting up their places ready for the day's work. She goes straight to Tenebris, and Dr Deluxe simply follows her.*

BILLIE: Excuse me Teneb -

DR DELUXE: *(steps right in with a flourish and confidence)* Ah the much admired artiste of hair and maker of make-over mysteries; Tenebris Tanselle. Oooooooooooh! *(A low groan of admiration and ecstasy)*

*He overacts an amazed reaction to Tenebris's physical beauty - the words are spoken with great reverence and beauty. He does full justice to Shakespeare.*

Describe Adonis, and the counterfeit

Is poorly imitated after you;

*He looks around the salon. Sees Angelo, bustling assistants, the barbershop quartet who today are taking part in salon activities, waiting clients maybe.*

DR DELUXE: *(Big gesture to include the whole salon)* Oh wonder, how many goodly creatures are there here, how beautiful mankind is, oh Brave New World that has such people in it.

TENEBRIS: Creatures? What do you mean, creatures?

DR DELUXE: The Bard, dear boy, the Bard.

TENEBRIS: What do you want?

*Dr Deluxe produces his bag and places it ceremoniously on the floor between them. He manages to give the full power and beauty of the following sonnet, whilst still being a salesman of beauty products. Harmonising in the background.*

DR DELUXE: Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,  
But sad mortality o'er-sways their power,  
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,  
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?  
O, how shall summer's honey breath hold out  
Against the wreckful siege of battering days,  
When rocks impregnable are not so stout,  
Nor gates of steel so strong, but Time decays?  
O fearful meditation! where, alack,  
Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?  
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?  
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?  
O, none, unless this miracle have might,  
That . . .

*On the words "this miracle" he brings forth, with a flourish, a large container of hair spray that will feature later - it should be easily recognisable later.*

TENEBRIS: What. Is. That?

DR DELUXE: We are: Deluxe Products: Products Deluxe. We serve beauty, in all its forms. And this is our masterpiece. Our latest development. Why do people come here? Because they want to be beautiful. Why do they want to be

beautiful? Because they want to be loved. Here, in one handy hairspray, is the answer, scientifically tested, made entirely from natural ingredients. Here is: love itself. With this labour saving device, all you need to do is to point and spray, and they will become: lovable. Instantly. No need for anything else! Think of the time you'll save!

TENEBRIS: No. No chance. Are you mad?

DR DELUXE: Beg pardon dear boy?

TENEBRIS: No. No no no. I don't trust you. You are up to something. Get out.

*Dr Deluxe turns - somewhat offended - and bumps into Lydia, who has just entered; towelling her hair as if she's just come from a shower.*

LYDIA: Oh hello, Dr Deluxe. How are you? I thought I was dreaming when I heard Shakespeare just now. But it was you wasn't it? I might have known.

DR DELUXE: Aaaaaaah Miss McBride -

In all external grace you have some part,

But you like none, none you, for constant heart.

*On the words "constant heart" he, a little shyly, gives her a can of his hairspray. She has a soft spot for this man and accepts. NB Billie has been listening intently to all this. Still wearing the spectacles.*

TENEBRIS: (To Dr Deluxe) You! Out! Now! (To Lydia) Give that back.

*Lydia returns the hairspray - a little reluctantly.*

*Dr Deluxe leaves.*

ANGELO: Do you know that – that – charlatan?

LYDIA: Oh yes. That's Dr Deluxe.

ANGELO: Him a doctor! Never.

LYDIA: No, not a proper doctor - he's a doctor of philosophy.

ANGELO: Philosophy?? How can you be a Doctor of that? Does it get ill?

LYDIA: You could say that, yes. He used to teach me at the university. He was my personal tutor in fact.

*She looks after him; a half smile.*

ANGELO: Did you tell him about us?

LYDIA: I told him about Tenebris.

TENEBRIS: Used to teach you? What's he doing selling dubious beauty products?

LYDIA: Oh he got the sack.

TENEBRIS: Why am I not surprised? What did they sack him for?

LYDIA: He wouldn't teach the syllabus; he refused to teach anything except Shakespeare. They sacked him for madness. It's a shame. He really livened the place up.

*Enough said. They return to preparing for work. Billie takes off her glasses and looks after Dr Deluxe. She is enchanted. And she has an idea. She rushes off after him.*

*Spotlight on Dr Deluxe and Billie downstage left. She is buying something from him. We can't hear them. He mimes to her the effects of the hairspray that she will describe to Bella below.*

ACT 3

SCENE 2

*Spotlight on Bella returning to work - surprised to find no-one at her desk. Billie comes in with her purchases - three cans of hair spray. She sits down and tells Bella of her plan.*

BILLIE: Bella, Bella. It's a miracle!

BELLA: Is it?

BILLIE: This man, this amazing man, this poet, this...

BELLA: Salesman?

BILLIE: Well yes, that too - but not just any salesman. He sells *this*.

BELLA: And this is?

BILLIE: It's called "Constant Heart". It's a brand new product. It's the essence of love, you see. It's made from all natural ingredients.

BELLA: Billie, are you sure you know what you're doing here?

BILLIE: It's real magic Bella - it's a genuine love potion. He said so. You spray it on the person you love and they fall in love with you. Isn't that marvellous? Isn't that wonderful? It's going to solve their problems and make them happy.

BELLA: Er - how exactly is that going to happen?

BILLIE: Lydia can spray Tenebris. Tenebris can spray Angelo. And Angelo can spray Lydia. Then they'll all have what they want. It's a miracle.

BELLA: Er - Billie - have you thought this one through?

BILLIE: Wait and see, Bella. Wait and see.

*Billie rushes off excitedly with her three cans of hair spray. Bella is composed. She sits and waits. She knows how to let things unfold.*

ACT 3

SCENE 3

*Lights up on the three stylists*

*They are on a break. They are not used to this. For some mysterious reason, there are no clients. They make little embarrassed overtures to each other, but break off - each in their own little world. They are sitting in their respective chairs. The everyday world is breaking up. Language, time, the salon itself is changing.*

*The quartet is in the background, harmonising; their music suggests strangeness.*

LYDIA: I had a strange dream last night

ANGELO: Lydia - would you...?

LYDIA: Sorry, I'm really tired. Really really tired.

*Pause*

TENEBRIS: Angelo - I've been meaning to ask...

ANGELO: Do you believe in dreams?

TENEBRIS: I - I - I...

*Pause*

ANGELO: Lydia, do you...

LYDIA: I'll...

*Pause*

LYDIA: I think I had a strange dream last night.

TENEBRIS: Tell me. No don't. I...

*Pause*

ANGELO: Tenebris... Tenebris...

TENEBRIS: Something's happened. What's happened?

ANGELO: You've been dreaming.

*Pause*

TENEBRIS: Lydia... do you think there's something odd about today?

LYDIA: What did you say? Sorry. Sorry.

ACT 3

SCENE 4

BILLIE: Lydia, pssst! Lydia!

LYDIA: Oh hallo. What are you doing here?

BILLIE: I've got this for you (*holds up spray can*).

LYDIA: (*distracted, not looking*) No thanks. I'm not hungry. I'm not sure I'll ever be hungry again.

BILLIE: No no. It isn't food. It isn't for eating.

LYDIA: What is it then?

BILLIE: It's... it's... please take it, Lydia.

LYDIA: Oh alright. What do I do with it?

BILLIE: Spray it on.

LYDIA: I don't use hair spray, Billie, you know that.

BILLIE: Not on you. On...

LYDIA: On whom?

BILLIE: Yes, that's it, whom!

*She nods her head meaningfully towards Tenebris. Lydia gazes at her as if she were mad.*

*Billie leaves her examining the spray can distractedly, her mind clearly somewhere else.*

BILLIE: Angelo, pssst! Angelo!

ANGELO: What is it Billie? I'm busy.

BILLIE: Busy doing what?

ANGELO: Busy thinking.

BILLIE: Getting anywhere?

ANGELO: (*sighs*) No. Not really.

BILLIE: (*seeing an opportunity*) Ah – you need one of these.

ANGELO: What is it?

BILLIE: A spray. You spray it.

ANGELO: Where?

BILLIE: Whom.

ANGELO: Pardon?

BILLIE: Whom. Whoooooooooom.

*Billie nods towards Lydia - gesticulates wildly*

*Billie leaves him. Angelo is looking puzzled.*

BILLIE: Tenebris. Tenebris?

*Tenebris stares off into space.*

BILLIE: Tenebris?

*Tenebris turns slowly to look at Billie*

TENEBRIS: Not now. Not now, Billie.

*He turns away again.*

BILLIE: *(clutching at straws)* Here. This is for you. From Angelo.

TENEBRIS: *(paying attention now)* Really? Why? What's it for?

BILLIE: Erm. Oh dear. Erm - it's a spray.

TENEBRIS: Yes, I can see that. What do I do with it?

BILLIE: I think he wants you to spray it on him.

TENEBRIS: What??

*Together Bella and Billie stand and watch the three stylists in what happens next.*

*As if in a dream, Lydia gets up from her chair, stands for a moment behind Tenebris's chair where he is staring bemusedly at his can of spray.*

LYDIA: Tenebris...

TENEBRIS: Mmn? He looks up.

LYDIA: May I?

TENEBRIS: Pardon?

*Lydia in slow motion and reverence takes the lid off her hair spray and sprays Tenebris. It is an act of love. An offering to an idolised being.*

LYDIA: Oh Tenebris.

*Tenebris rises in slow motion - looks at her like they do in the movies - moves slowly forward to embrace her.*

TENEBRIS: Oh Lydia - I love you.

*The BarberShop Quartet sing what was Angelo's song in act one. Tenebris and Lydia do a stagey romantic act - miming to the song as if they were in a musical.*

Lydia, I'm giddier  
Than a bird on the wing in spring about you  
Please be mine  
Till the end of time  
Let me tell you quite clearly  
I love you sincerely  
I'm hoping that you love me too. Oh -

*They stare into each other's eyes. Angelo, in a dreamlike state, gets up from his chair and comes over and sprays Lydia who, puppet-like, whirls away from Tenebris and into Angelo's arms.*

LYDIA: Oh Angelo - I love you

*The BarberShop Quartet sing what was Tenebris's song in act one. Lydia and Angelo do a stagey romantic act - miming to the song as if they were in a musical.*

Tell me Angelo my angel  
Tell me that you know how much I love you  
Tell me Angelo my angel  
Tell me I can hope that you love me too.  
I want to walk beside you  
I'll be the one who cares about you  
I'll be the one who holds you

I want to spend a lifetime with you.

*Tenebris, who has been standing back watching this expressionlessly, in the same dreamlike mode, takes his hair spray and sprays Angelo. Angelo breaks away from Lydia and embraces Tenebris.*

ANGELO: Tenebris - I love you.

*The barbershop quartet sing what was Lydia's song in act one. Tenebris and Angelo do a stagey romantic act - miming to the song as if they were in a musical.*

Show me the way I can say that I love you

Show me the way I can say that I care

Show me the way I can say that I need you

Show me the way I can reach you

Tenebris please hear me

Tell me this; am I in a trance?

Tenebris come near me

Tell me this; do I stand a chance?

*In the same dreamlike mode, Lydia sprays Tenebris again.*

TENEBRIS: Lydia!

*Angelo sprays Lydia.*

LYDIA: Angelo!

*Tenebris sprays Angelo.*

ANGELO: Tenebris!

*Billie rushes into the middle of them.*

BILLIE: Stop! Stop! This is impossible!

*They freeze, in a triangle, with Billie in the middle. Bella stands behind, observing.*

BLACK-OUT.

ACT 3

SCENE 5

*In the darkness there is the sound of bell that indicates the salon door is being opened and closed. Three clients arrive in the darkness and are sitting in the chairs when the lights go up again.*

*The three barbershop quartet actors who have played Megaera, Tisiphone and Alecto are now sitting as clients in front of the stylists. Their long plastic capes hide their barbershop quartet clothing.*

- MEG: I don't know what to say to him Angelo. Help me out. You're always so good with words.
- ANGELO: Imagine yourself in the centre of all of the webs of your life.
- MEG: Webs? Centre?
- ANGELO: Is this the best you can do?
- MEG: I'm not sure - he's a steady sort of bloke.
- ANGELO: Life, unlived.
- MEG: Well - it would change things if I...
- ANGELO: The infinite "if only"s.
- MEG: Oh god - yes.
- ANGELO: The things you have not done so far outnumber everything you have been, inconceivably. How can you bear this, we ask.
- MEG: (*sobs*) You're right. You're right.
- ANGELO: Is this the best you can do?
- MEG: No.
- ANGELO: How can you bear that? How? Tell me!
- MEG: You're right. Thank you. Oh thank you.

ACT 3

SCENE 6

TIZZY: I never meant to hurt anyone.

TENEBRIS: You see, you are caught, here, and here; a foot, a hand, stretched and pinioned.

TIZZY: It's just the way things are, Tenebris.

TENEBRIS: Is it?

TIZZY: What do you mean?

TENEBRIS: The possibilities.

TIZZY: You think I should leave don't you?

TENEBRIS: And all of the otherness that you have not had, the strangeness unrealised, the things that did not happen.

TIZZY: I did have dreams. Once. Long ago.

TENEBRIS: Ooh, what vistas open.

TIZZY: Me, I wanted to save the world. Once.

TENEBRIS: How can you confront your limitations, the accidents of your being human, the triviality?

TIZZY: I don't know. I truly don't know.

TENEBRIS: This is not, it is not, a rhetorical question.

TIZZY: Oh god. You're right. Thank you Tenebris.

ACT 3

SCENE 7

ALEX: I can't go on Lydia. Help me. If this is love . . .

LYDIA: This is your life. How have you used it?

ALEX: I -

LYDIA: Think of the poems unwritten, the webs unspun.

ALEX: I-

LYDIA: Think.

ALEX: I can't. I don't know how.

LYDIA: Think.

ALEX: Tell me, Lydia. Tell me what to think.

LYDIA: The tough breaks. The compromises. The insignificance of things.

ALEX: Yes. That's it. That's it. Thank you. Thank you so much, Lydia.

ACT 3

SCENE 8

*Lights up on the three stylists (frozen as they were before this last interlude with the clients) and Billie. The clients have disappeared - were they ever really there in the first place?*

BELLA: Love? This is not love.

*She claps her hands, and they break out of the dreamlike state.*

ANGELO: Lydia – oh, Lydia. I have loved you for years. When you came into the salon, do you remember, so shy, and so clever too, I had never met anyone like you. And such a dreadful haircut, if you don't mind me reminding you. It was love, then and there, and ever after, Lydia.

For three years, once a month, you sat in Tenebris's chair and his hands and words made you grow like a flower, a blossom of light. It was as if you were writing a poem together, one poem, with one voice. I knew I could never offer you anything like that.

Forgive me, Lydia. I'll leave. I know that you love Tenebris, truly, deeply, as a reason for being. Not me. I'll leave today.

LYDIA: Oh Angelo - how kind you are. But it's not right. You belong here, I don't. And I know that Tenebris will never love me as I love him: he loves you. With me here, it just doesn't work: I want you both to be happy. I'm just a distraction. I must go.

TENEBRIS: Wait. Angelo. Lydia. It's me. I must be the one to leave. I can't bear this – this thing we have any longer. This love, this madness, this absurdity, I can't stand it.

BELLA: Stop! This is not love. Didn't you learn anything last night? Have you learned nothing from Dr Deluxe?

LYDIA: Last night?

TENEBRIS: Dr Deluxe?

ANGELO: The dream!

TENEBRIS: The kindly ones!

ANGELO: The love potion!

LYDIA: Oh god!

ANGELO: Exactly.

BELLA: You're in denial. You've slid slipshod and feckless down a soap opera slide. Listen to yourselves! Me. Mine. I. You. Wanting. Longing. Desperate words. Dull words. This is not love.

*Eros appears and stands side by side with Bella.*

EROS: What is your substance? Whereof are you made?

BELLA: Tell us. Tell us now.

*The following three speeches are made in lighting that suggests we are out of everyday reality and out of regular linear time*

ANGELO: I am the kindness in my hands.

*He holds out his hands to Tenebris - gives him centre stage*

TENEBRIS: I am style and music: I make things change.

*He holds out his hands to Lydia - gives her centre stage*

LYDIA: I am the poems I am yet to write.

*Lydia, Tenebris and Angelo are now in energetic agreement. Made clear somehow by their physical arrangement on stage.*

BILLIE: Stop! I don't understand. What happened to Romance? To red rose day? To the beautiful long white dress and bridesmaid thing? To the till death us do part pledge? The happy ever after promise? The soul mate deal?

*Dr Deluxe reappears*

ACT 3

SCENE 9

- DR DELUXE: A deal? Did someone mention the word "Deal"? Ladies and Gentlemen - I have here the very thing that -
- BILLIE: Oh Dr Deluxe - thank goodness - you're here in the nick of time - you can save the day.
- BELLA: Dr Deluxe - tell us about death. The stage is yours.
- DR DELUXE: Ladies, Gentlemen. Beverley Deluxe at your service. Death, my dear? Why do you wish to know about that?
- LYDIA: Because that's what Shakespeare's sonnets are about, isn't it? Two men, one woman, tied up by love in a complicated knot, all under the shadow of death.
- DR DELUXE: And you think I know about death?
- BELLA: Dr Deluxe, I know who you are. Tell us about love, and death.
- DR DELUXE: Well, if you insist. In the beginning, you see, all there was was: chaos. Just a whirl of stuff, whirling about. After a while, the stuff got bored, and so started to make sense. It became a large - (*he searches for the most appropriate word - extravagant actorly hand gestures accompanying this*) blob.
- ANGELO: (*incredulous*) Blob?!
- BILLIE: Ssshhhh!
- DR DELUXE: (*a withering glance at Angelo*) The blob got more and more sensible, and that was earth. And sky. And that was enough, nice and simple, for a long long time. But a universe of just two things itself gets boring, and so a third thing, from which came everything, was born. That third thing was my friend here: Eros; love. The oldest, the most terrible, the beginning, the creator. As love she loved herself, and so out came life, and flowers, and dinosaurs, and ducks, and all the other things that love is. More and more and more, until that got boring too: nothing but love, you see, just this endless avalanche of more and more things, without any end. Boring. Hence, my dears: me. yes, me, Dr Deluxe. I was needed in order to put a stop to things. To get things in shape. To call a halt. And then things got very interesting indeed.
- And, really, you know, that's all there is; her, and me. Love, and Death. She makes things, and I kill them. They fall from her womb into my cold hands, and vanish; it keeps a nice balance, you see. It's very tidy. And of course very very interesting, because that little space of life, those few moments as you fall from birth to death, are really intense, extremely special; and in that intensity you learn how to love.

But sometimes people forget how short that space is, and get distracted with nonsense, and unlearn how to love. And so I wander about the earth, reciting poems, playing games, and teaching. What I teach is: what love is. My friends the kindly ones here are the advance guard: they are to soften you up a little. But if that doesn't work, then you get: me.

BELLA: Teach us. Teach us the lesson.

DR DELUXE: Oh, the lesson. Well, it's very very simple. It's time, for one of you. I am come to take one of you away. You can choose.

LYDIA: What?

ANGELO: No!

TENEBRIS: *(gets to his feet, starts menacingly towards Dr Deluxe)* Over my dead body!

*Dr Deluxe snaps his fingers, casually. There is a terrific flash and a bang, and Tenebris is frozen and helpless.*

DR DELUXE: *(with casual menace)* That can easily be arranged...

*He snaps his fingers again, and Tenebris unfreezes, staggering slightly. He must not lose his dignity here.*

DR DELUXE: So: which of you is it to be, then?

LYDIA: Me: take me.

ANGELO: No, no: take me.

TENEBRIS: No, it must be me, it must.

BELLA: Now, that is love. But I have a better idea.

*pause*

This is love too.

*Slowly and gracefully she performs a few ceremonious rituals. Each encounter is made with dignity but lightness of touch. The others have no idea what she intends to do, and they accept each gift happily - as if this were what she meant by "this is love too." She takes off her silk scarf and gives it lovingly to Billie. She takes off a necklace and gives it lovingly to Lydia. She takes off a ring and gives it to Angelo. She takes off a bracelet and gives it to Tenebris. She turns to Dr Deluxe and inclines her head in a little, knowing bow of acknowledgement. He indicates subtly that he has understood and acquiesces. She moves to the central chair (it's a swivel chair with a high back) turns the chair so that its back is to the audience, and sits in it.*

BELLA: Angelo, please hold my hand.

*Bemused, he kneels by the side of the chair and rather reverently takes her hand. There is a pause, and she says one word:*

BELLA: Now.

*Her body slumps. We can see limbs collapsed. The chair is still turned away from the audience, so that we don't see her face. Billie, however is standing where she can see Bella's face in death clearly.*

BILLIE: NOOOO!

*Angelo stays holding Bella's hand. Lydia and Tenebris come closer - there is shock, grief, amazement. A powerful sense of unity in this.*

*Dr Deluxe and Eros are looking on. Without emotion.*

BLACK-OUT.

ACT 3

SCENE 10

*Normality. Three clients, three stylists, bustle. Billie is in the receptionist's spot. The stylists are talking to their clients.*

LYDIA: Yes, it was very sudden. We are very sad, here.

ANGELO: Her heart, it was. I was holding her hand. She died smiling. It was wonderful.

TENEBRIS: She has changed our lives.

LYDIA: Sad, and happy, too, in the strangest way: everything is different now.

TENEBRIS: Everything has changed. The hair gods are quite pleased.

LYDIA: It is better: it makes sense. Can't you feel it? What can you feel?

TENEBRIS: Yes, love. Tell me about love.

*Finale: recording of the song 'DID YOU LOVE ENOUGH?' actors carry on the business of stylists and clients. Fade out.*

CURTAIN