

DAY-PIECE

[At the centre back of the room, almost, just left; a chair – back, no arms. A glass of water sits beside its leg, just left, - filled not quite to rim, a half an inch left clean – on ground. A tumbler, short, a little wide, thin rimmed, (crystal), as yet untouched.

(They) sit upright on the chair, facing forward. Back not quite touching the chair's own. Sit, feet together, knees close, not quite touching, an inch between, forward, unmoving, at rest. Look down, gaze directed at lap, the script, held in both hands. Pause.

Shift gaze upward, out, resting eyes forward for a moment. Back down now, returning to paper.

Adjust the glasses lightly on the bridge of (the(ir)) nose, right hand lifting from page, to gently hold between thumb and fore finger the upper and lower rim of the right eye's lens. Lifting from the bridge to just above, resting now near the corners of (the(ir)) eyes. Lower hand back to page, straighten paper and grasp lightly on bottom right hand edge. Rest.

Right index finger, from paper, lifts, thumb pushing paper upon itself, up on sheet below, as if to turn the page. Stop short, lift thumb, paper falling back in place, replacing thumb back to position, right hand bottom corner.

Look up again, forward, straight, a second. Return gaze to paper.

Begin reading:]

“The stage, set sparse.

She sits, at almost centre, left, in a low, comfortable chair. Perhaps velvet. To her left a table, bedside in size, though a little taller. A reach from the chair. Upon the table, on the back left corner, a vase of fresh cut flowers – violet - sits, stems trimmed; their vase transparent, crystal.

Curtains, hung, only here, cover only this set, most the (bare) stage lays unhidden. Drawn open to either side of the set (not stage) upon start.

Dimly lit in entirety, a lamp hung from ceiling, reaching a few inches, just, above her head, for her to view.”

[Shift slightly, back curving a little, beginning to graze the back of the chair.]

“She wears glasses, pink. Delicate with thin, metal framing. Simply dressed; a skirt (to knee), a pullover.

She sits, feet together, knees close, not quite touching, an inch between, forward, unmoving, at rest. Arms uncrossed, each hand on lap, left on left, right on right, at rest.

Looks ahead, straight, her gaze soft, unfocused – though sure.

Adjusts the glasses lightly on the bridge of her nose, her right hand gently holding between thumb and fore finger the upper and lower rim of the right eye's lens. Lifts from the bridge – where the glasses have slipped slightly – to just above, resting now near the corners of her eyes.

Lowers her hand down to her side, rests. Pauses. Rests.

[Cross legs, right over left, right foot at lift off ground, facing forward.

(They) shift in seat, very slightly.]

Looks, slow. Head turns slightly, away from the vase. Stops. Returns to original position, forward.

She takes off the glasses, left hand; folds in lap, both. Pauses. Then places them beside her on the table, lifting them in left hand, up, to the left, laying them down close, on the front right hand corner. Crosses legs, uncrosses; right over left and back again.

Shifts, very slightly.

Head turns, very slightly, in the same direction as before, when she wore the glasses. Stops. Returns to original position.

Shifts in seat, very slightly.

[Shift, slightly.]

Moves hand upward to the left, as if to take the glasses. Stops short. Head turns slightly, toward hand, glasses, to the left, then back again. Drops hand into lap. Stops, again.

Hand up, again, to the left, reaching further than the last, past glasses to the flowers.

She lifts the vase from table. Brings to lap. Inhales. Legs, open slightly, their gap here widens slightly, a little, to hold. Rests, vase in lap, lightly pressed between legs - held in both hands.

[Turn page with (the(ir)) left hand, grasping the right hand bottom corner and lifting it over the top left until it lays flat, behind the next.]

She shifts slightly; the vase's water shifts, slightly.

Takes a hand from the vase, left. Steadies with the other. The vase's water shifts, slightly. Left arm lifts, again, her hand, again, taking the glasses from table, holding them close to her chest. Takes right hand now from the vase, steady still, just, between only legs. Legs tauten, clutch tight the vase; hands now gone.

The vase's water shifts, slightly.

Right hand grasps one glass's arm, the other; left. Right over left they unfold.

She puts on the glasses, pink, hands resting a second each side of her face, at the edge of each lens before dropping to lap, slow, hands laying on lap once again, left on left, and right on right. Rests.

Stops. Looks, slow. Head turns slightly. Stops. Returns to original position, forward, gaze unfocused, soft –

[Adjust glasses again, as before.

Uncross legs, right back over left to rest right foot flat on floor again, next to left.]

NIGHT-PIECE

[Red Allen's solo in Billie Holiday's 2/18/1937 recording of Sentimental and Melancholy plays, ahead of reading]

[(They) lower the script, hands down, laying it on lap, to rest, then taking hand, left, from position on the bottom corner of the paper's edge, lift, to the left, and down again, reaching for the glass, right hand holding (all the while) the right hand paper's edge.

Take hold of glass, lift, back now to right, up, (they) bring to lips a moment. Sip. Rest, glass a little below mouth, arm bent.

The glass's water shifts a little.

Then back, to left, lean arm down, placing water down, as before, on ground, to the left of the chair's front leg.

The glass's water shifts, a little.

Return arm up, to lap, placing thumb and forefinger back around the paper, lift, (the(ir)) gaze directed down, at script again.

Begin reading:]

she sits, in the chair, vase between legs, clung soft in thighs, stems hidden, water calm, hands on lap, left on left, and right on right. Here, as before.

Save for the lamp hung from ceiling, - reaching a few inches, just, above her head - the chord now pulled, now on, well-lit.

[Move hand upward to the left, as if to take the glass. Stop short. Turn head slightly, toward hand, glass, to the left, then back again. (They) drop (the(ir)) hand into lap. Stop, again.]

Behind the glasses frame, she squints, adjusts, her eyes, to light. The glasses glare a little. She lifts her hand, right, up, to face, to rest above her eyes, on forehead - thumb touching just the right eye's lens, palm outstretched, flat – a screen. She shifts, slightly. Pauses.

She moves her hand back, down to lap, right on right. Squints. Shifts in chair, leans right, back leaving the chair's own, tilting to side, she stops.

The vase's water shifts, right, pauses. She pauses.

Lifts her hands from lap, together, eyes fall to vase, hands grasp, each side its own, legs widen, their grasp slackens, her hands lift.

In hands on vase's neck, from shoulders up, the flowers rise, they hide her face, a second. Then back, hands to right to the front of the chair, down, she places the vase on the floor.

[Shift, slightly]

The vase's water shifts, slightly.

Her feet now flat on the floor, she stands; weight lifts, up, hands lift up, and to the side, each hand to side its own. Turns, from front to face the chair, then bends, back down, a little, hands down a little, she places hands on sides of chair, pulls, forwards, slightly. Out of the glare of the lamp.

Unbends, stands straight, facing still the chair. Back now, to front, she turns, her feet together, knees close, not quite touching, an inch between. She sits.

Arms uncrossed, each hand on lap, left on left, right on right, at rest.

Crosses legs, right over left and back again. Rests.

[Turn page with left hand, grasping the right hand bottom corner and lean it left until it lays flat, upon the last.]

[Adjust glasses a little, lifting slight from bridge to brow, with right hand up, fingers close around the right lens frame, then down, to rest.

With left hand, forward, stretching down, she takes a book from rest on ground, – now visible, now reachable, the chair pulled forward – the stage, beside the chair to left, in front she lifts to lap, she reads.

Only to herself, for only a moment, a piece of text on page, of a princess finding her violet. Then closes the book, left hand on cover, front, shut, left edge to right, left page to right, together.

Placing it behind her on the table, she lifts in left hand, up, to the left and back, behind the chair, straining a little, laying it down, on the front right hand corner, at an angle, slight.

Returns hand to lap, a moment. Pauses.

[Left hand, forward, lift from page, then down, to lap, to lift a handful grab of clothing, down, a little.]

She adjusts her glasses just a little, lifting slight from bridge to brow, with right hand up, fingers close around the right lens frame, they rest now close to each eye's corner. She rests. Pauses. Rests.

Then reaches, back, to the right, both hands clutch for the vase which sits at back aside the chair, now lifting up, hands on neck, back round to front, to lap, legs a gap an inch between, pressed, hands hold glass each side, the stems between.

Rests.

Stops. Looks, slow. Head turns slightly. Stops. Returns to original position, forward, gaze unfocused, soft

[Uncross legs, as before.]