

HERTHA.

"I am that which began;
Out of me the years roll;
Out of me God and man;
I am equal and whole;
God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily; I am the soul."

Hertha shuts the door, the waves and wind sound vanish as the scene ends.

Scene 5

Marie's ode to the night.

*At night, alone, still shaking from...from what? Fear? Anger?
She takes out her vial. The tick...*

MARIE. I... I...

I can't breathe.

Can't catch my—my breath. Like I'm drowning in air.
But then I take out the vial. I stare back, that glow. You can't see it during the day of course. But at night the darkness shows you what's been there the whole time. The glow, the gaze, in my hand, by my side.

This is what's left of me.

I grip it, there is a warmth. The very smallest fire, but I feel it. It's there.

Thank god it's there.

*She grips the vial like it's the thing saving her life.
She holds it and her breath steadies. She takes a good breath at last.*

The tick vanishes.

Scene 6

Bird song, seabirds, morning.

They walk to the shore.

The ocean slushes the sand.

The wind is light but constant. It's glorious.

HERTHA. I must say I'm profoundly proud of myself. - **START**

MARIE. This is unsurprising.

HERTHA. I'm hiding the greatest mind in the world at my summer house and no one knows! The woman all those papers are dying to photograph, all those hungry eyes looking out for you and I've tricked them so thoroughly that we can walk to the ocean for a picnic supper like we were absolutely no one of consequence. It tickles me so fully I can't stop smiling. Would you like a sandwich? I've got cucumber.

MARIE. Thank you, no.

HERTHA. How about a dip?

MARIE. A dip?

HERTHA. A dip.

MARIE. A dip is...an activity or a food?

HERTHA. A dip in the water, in the ocean. Let's go bathing!

MARIE. Oh. No no no.

HERTHA. It feels wonderful, I promise.

MARIE. No I couldn't, I can't.

HERTHA. Of course you can, it's a beach, it's what people do.

MARIE. I don't feel that strong today. Once the girls arrive. Perhaps.

HERTHA. Alright. I do love a perhaps.

MARIE. I know you do.

HERTHA. A whole world out there, unknowable if you stay on the shore.

MARIE. I know what you're doing. I'm not going in. And you studied the shore more than anyone. Don't tell me how boring the shore is.

HERTHA. Just because I studied it at an inane level of detail doesn't make it any less boring. Come on.

MARIE. (*Teasing her.*) No no, I'm with the foremost expert on sand in the world, why go into the water and waste all that expertise.

HERTHA. I didn't study *sand in general*, I studied *ripples in the sand*. Fluid dynamics, wave mechanics. The mathematics is very hard.

MARIE. I know it is.

HERTHA. There's a lot of maths in one little wave. I mean I wasn't discovering a new planet but the physics was difficult enough to force them to give me that damn Hughes Medal.

MARIE. It's a very handsome medal that one.

HERTHA. Isn't it? I'm quite proud of that medal in no small part because of all the men that didn't want me to have it. But I do wish they'd put something more impressive on the face of it, you know. All this fuss and the gold and in the end it's just a little man with a mustache.

MARIE. The Nobel is a little man with a mustache as well.

HERTHA. We should get them together and they can all have a little meeting.

Come on. Let's go in. Just to your ankles? Your toes?

MARIE. No, I said no, I don't like the cold, or the wet, or the fashion of ladies' swimwear, and I don't want to because I—I...I have a letter.

HERTHA. Sorry. A letter? A letter prevents you from bathing?

MARIE. Yes. No. I have a letter, in my pocket, it's from Paul, I'm not going in.

HERTHA. Wait wait wait, how do you have a letter from Paul? No one's supposed to know you're here.

MARIE. They don't. He sent it before I left but I'm too terrified to open it. I can't open it, I can't part from it, I'm at a loss.

HERTHA. Let me, would you.

MARIE. No. There's some kind of peace to being in between results that I quite like.

HERTHA. Give it.

MARIE. No.

HERTHA. Marie.

MARIE. No.

HERTHA. If you do it then it's done and if it's lovely we'll laugh and if it's infuriating we'll rip it up and throw it in the water and wish him a plague of some sort.

MARIE. Well I don't want him to die. Unless it's of heartbreak. He can die of heartbreak.

Marie hands her the letter. Hertha opens it.

HERTHA. Well he obviously loves you.

MARIE. Oh god.

HERTHA. And he is very sorry and very worried about you and...

MARIE. What.

HERTHA. Oh. Well. He finally proposed a divorce.

MARIE. *He's getting a divorce? When? When is that happening? I should go back. He has no idea where I am.*

HERTHA. Wait now, just...

MARIE. What. Whatwhatwhat.

HERTHA. He says he's not leaving the children. And not leaving their house.

MARIE. Not leaving the house he lives in *with her*? What kind of divorce is that?

HERTHA. A very symbolic one. Oh shit she's pregnant.

That lands like a boulder on Marie's chest.

MARIE. She's...she's pregnant?

HERTHA. He says he doesn't altogether believe her but—Oh god.

MARIE. His wife is...

HERTHA. What an idiot.

MARIE. Ohhhhhhkay.

A coward and a fool and a dog.

That is...

What does Marie do here? I think she wordlessly, soundlessly reclines all the way back to the ground, facing the sky. Or facing the sand?

Whatever it is is full-bodied and very unexpected for Hertha. —END