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FIRST DRAFT of Libretto

THE PROFIT OF DOOM

A musical play in twelve ensembles

(based on the book-length poem, *The Profit of Doom*, 1990)

by

Richard L. Rose

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SYNOPSIS

Program Notes

Marjorie Crawley-Farley, formerly Supreme Prophet and Salvage Leader of the Northern Region before its return to the United States, awakes from her dementia to invoke a Guide to conduct her again through the events that changed her life when she was a teen-aged single mother searching through the ruins of her grandparents' house after a tornado.

The Guide comes, carrying the *Book of Visions* that was written by the first Supreme Prophet, Marjorie's grandfather. He summons an Interpreter, an Opportunist, and a panel of Assessors to re-create the town of Fairall and the great storm that destroyed it, and devastated both the Northern Region and the outlying area of the remaining Mid-Atlantic States. Associated with each of the characters summoned are the features required to reconstruct the places and events that Marjorie has invoked. Using the *Book of Visions* and their reassembled associations, the characters turn the stage into the town of Fairall before and after the terrible tornado and the more destructive flood that followed it.

The Guide then leads Marjorie through the five incidents that changed her life. He assumes the role of a vagrant, homeless man, gliding down the river in a row boat. As he transfers his possessions from the boat to a shopping cart, a detachment of the Security Guard of the Northern Region, who is placing land-mines around the perimeter of the Northern Region, picks him up and confiscates the newly revised *Book of Visions*. The Guide, Interpreter, Opportunist and Assessors will go with Marjorie on her journey, or procession. From time to time, they appear, comment on events, and ask Marjorie questions.

First incident: Marjorie and her mother search the site of her grandfather's house after the tornado has passed through Fairall.

Marjorie returns to town on the day after the storm. She has been abandoned by her husband, Jeff Jencks, when he learns that she is pregnant. She knows that Ida, her mother, will be unsympathetic, so she goes to her grandparents' house. She hopes to talk

with her grandfather, the Supreme Prophet. She knows that he has a message for her. When she arrives, however, she finds Ida half-heartedly searching through the ruins of her grandparents' house. Ida has no affection for her absent husband's parents—particularly Margie's crazy grandfather, the Supreme Prophet, whose behavior compelled Ida and her husband to live outside town. Her reason for coming into Fairall was to find out about her son, Willy Crawley. Because Fairall is the last place she has searched, Ida is now certain that Willy died in the storm. As she grieves for him, she begs Marjorie to walk onto the highway and die with her. It doesn't matter to her that this would also kill the child that Marjorie carries. Marjorie refuses, leaving her mother to do whatever she wants to do.

Second incident: As she rests, Marjorie comes upon the ruins of a church building. Inside, she is surprised to find a worship service.

The Guide reappears, pushing his cart. He watches Marjorie go into the church. At first moved by the hopeful message in such hopeless surroundings, Marjorie is gradually overcome by the grief and paralysis of the worshippers and then disgusted by the venality of the community leaders, who collect an offering for the Board of Faith and Practice on behalf of the church, government, and business in the Northern Region. She sees her husband as he leaves the building with the offering. She follows him as he delivers the collection to a restaurant in Fairall.

Third incident: Marjorie watches a Board of Faith and Practice meeting in the restaurant.

The Northern Region's Board of Faith and Practice meets for lunch at a local restaurant. Marjorie listens to them as they plan to take advantage of the storm's devastation by running repair scams and minimizing payouts on insurance policies. In fact, generating disasters seems to be their major source of income. The Board of Faith and Practice, as the local governing body, even has an "Apocalogeny Division" that studies how to create profitable disasters. They call it "reading the angelic messages."

The Supreme Prophet, however, is not part of any of this. He has his own methods and his own place of business, the Salvage, the largest employer in the region. Because of

his success in making predictions about the weather and other phenomena in his *Book of Visions*, he is left alone by the Board. Lyman Jencks, Chairman of the Board, praises the good record of their Supreme Prophet in predicting disaster and the even better record of the Board in “managing care” for the community. He holds up the newly copy of *The Book of Visions*. He says that the Security Force confiscated it from Tom Farley, a Salvage Yard employee. Jencks assures the Board that, although written in code, the book will soon be translated by the Board’s Apocalogeny Division and put into use to improve profit margins, as predictions have been used in the past. In fact, Jencks looks forward to the day when the Board’s influence will extend beyond the Northern Region.

His son, Jeff Jencks, puts on a Security Force uniform and leaves the meeting. Marjorie follows him outside.

Fourth Incident: Marjorie talks a last time with her husband.

When Marjorie tries to talk to her estranged husband, he is in a hurry to qualify on his weapon at the range so that he will be allowed to go out with his unit. The Security Force prevents people from taking advantage of the storm to enter or leave the region. To keep the cordon tight against outsiders, they lay land mines. Jeff doesn’t want to talk to Marjorie. He calls her pregnancy a betrayal, and then, by “costing it out,” he shows her why their marriage is no longer viable. He quickly boards the truck with the other soldiers going to record-fire. Margie watches them drive off.

Fifth Incident: Marjorie receives the visions of her grandfather and becomes Supreme Prophet and Leader of Salvage.

Tired and unable to find her grandfather, Marjorie rests in a wooded area with her Guide, who leads her to understand that her grandfather has passed his visions on to her so that she can now see what he saw. She can see through others’ eyes. She can feel the urgency about the visions that her grandfather felt. In fact, the visions are simply sharp insights and understandings available to all of us but ignored because we seldom shift from our immediate frames of reference. They are angelic messages from the living beings that surround us on the planet. She needs no translation of the coded *Book of Visions* to reveal that the tornado will be followed by a flood. At the country club above

the town, Lake Klawir has backed up against a weak earthen dam and will soon spill over to sweep away the town, including the protected homes and businesses of the Board members on higher ground. She tells this to Chairman Jencks, and also tells him that Jeff will die in the flood. He holds up his copy of *The Book of Visions* and asks where she gets her information. She tells him that people who need special signs and angels to warn them against themselves will always receive the warning too late.

The Guide leads Marjorie away to his boat. As he gets into the boat, he steps on a land mine and loses his foot. They escape the flood.

Last Assembly: Marjorie returns to her rocker and again puts on the black garment. She is as she was,, but now she is surrounded by her family and the people of the region whom she helped in the years after the great storm. They celebrate her life and work.

When the Guide appears again as an older man with a limp, he is Tom Farley, her grandfather's former employee at the Salvage and her late husband. In her time as Supreme Prophet and interpreter of *The Book of Visions*, Marjorie led the restoration of the region. The Northern Region had originally seceded from the United States during the confusion caused by the sudden inundation of the East Coast. The Federal agencies were strapped for resources and manpower owing to years of wasteful spending on foreign commercial and military adventures. Although the Board of Faith and Practice had formerly seemed to be the official government, however, the unofficial power was the Supreme Prophet and his Salvage operation. Using advanced technologies, this Salvage operation was an extended research incubator program designed to prepare a small population in the kinds of thinking and practices that would be needed to work cooperatively on the planet. The apparent destruction of the Northern Region was actually the conclusion of this incubator project and the release of the Northern Region's population into the larger population of the continent, where the visions of *The Book of Visions* would become common knowledge and the basis of a new level of national and worldwide cooperation. Tom Farley returns to her disordered mind, which is the only place he still lives.

THE PROFIT OF DOOM
LIBRETTO

by

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The Characters

Characters:

Tom Farley –also called the Vagrant. He is a one-legged military veteran who lost his leg by stepping on one of the “Perimeter” land mines around Fairall. He is a story-teller and poet, but also a parts-man and courier for the Ark enterprises. As he is telling the story, he is also the stage manager for the production and often makes directions concerning the sets and action. He has a warm, clear baritone. Range:

Margie –Soprano with clear middle and lower range, able to drop easily to a B. She is no coloratura, but can manage both *bel canto* and music hall.

Chorus –Mostly the various choruses sing in unison (at octaves), with melisma

The Ensembles

Part I

1. Invocation and Assembling the procession
2. Going over the route:
3. The aerial view of the procession
4. The procession begins

Part II

5. Two women and assessors
6. A church

Conclusion of the first section and Prelude to second section.

7. The Fairall Board of Faith and Practice
8. Voix de deux/Voie de deux

Part III

9. The procession turns
10. Whirlwind
11. Aftermath of the storm
12. The procession scatters

The Stage

The aerial view of the procession visible at the beginning of the third ensemble

The Vagrant begins to meander slowly across the stage, humming and occasionally stopping to pick something up. Meanwhile, the assessors return to their original places and roles. The shadow of a helicopter passes over the stage several times, accompanied by the loud whacking noise of the rotor blades. The Overture begins as the Vagrant stares at the departing helicopter. Lights rise on a stage with a wooded area in the background. Stagehands complete the positioning of the flats showing woods divided by a stream that comes from a high dam, visible in the distance. The foreground is divided into three settings, representing:

- Center stage: A street of storm-wrecked houses, church, and other buildings, where small groups of people are trying to retrieve their belongings,
- Stage right: The porch of the Foxglove nursing home, where one patient still sits in her rocker, and
- Stage left: A hotel dining room, where one group is seated at a large table and several smaller groups are eating at tables around them. A sign identifies the group as the Fairall Board of Faith and Practice.

The rest of the town of Fairall is also visible on a backdrop, below the dam and reservoir in the small valley above it. A sign reads, "Fairall, Capital of the Northern Region, Population 163,542." Before and during the overture, the vagrant, dressed in mismatched clothes, including parts of a military uniform, wanders across the stage, pushing a shopping cart from one area to another. Occasionally he picks up an item and puts it into the cart, such as the branch of a blackberry bush that he brings from the wooded area, sampling its berries as he does so. He walks with a limp, sometimes stopping to adjust his artificial leg. Some of the orchestra is also seated on stage. As the vagrant passes, sometimes pointing to the sets or performers like a stage manager, its characters are briefly spotlighted. Holding his arms up to make an "L," the Vagrant becomes the center of a 3-dimensional grid made of light beams. The spotlights are colored differently for each setting, and the light projects through changing grid-screens suggesting the attempt to capture the event in various kinds of plane and three-dimensional shapes, including cusps, butterflies, Serpinski triangles, parabolas, and so on. When he waves his arm, the lights disappear. The vagrant pushes his cart out of the wooded area. When he reaches center stage, still holding a blackberry cane, he begins to sing.

"All are part of the procession..."

--Walt Whitman

Introduction

The aural setting of the procession, lasts--- minutes.

First Ensemble:
Invocation of associations

Invocation

The stars are still visible in the sky as the day dawns. Marjorie, seated on a projection from stage right, is barely visible as a dark shape.

Marjorie Farley: “I see specks.

Specks see me.”

Tom Farley: “You bid me find an open path,

Remake the storm and raise the tree,

The vague shape of a tree appears at center stage. Tom Farley remains out of sight.

But such paths as they wheel and swerve

Can end your hopes or make you free.”

Marjorie: “I see specks.

Specks see me.”

Tom appears as he turns on his flashlight. He stands in front of the porch, aiming his light at the steps.

Tom: “A path now opens, a slim curve,

See, with regret in it. We go

And you will find although

He knew he’d die, he left it so.”

Duet:

“I see specks.

Specks see me.

Someone comes

I want to see.”

As she rises to join him at the foot of the steps, her black cape falls away. She wears a white garment and has become young again.

**First Ensemble:
Assembly of Fairall**

Tom is now fully visible. He is dressed in the flannel and olive drab layers of a homeless vagrant. He pulls a shopping cart from the shadows and begins to set up the stage with props from the cart. After the Invocation Tom is called the Guide, or dadoukos. With his flashlight, he leads the way for Margie to stand in front of the tree, the only visible set except for the porch.

The Assembly

Guide: “If cities sank beneath the sea

And we retreated inland,

Exchanged our cities for a town,

As he speaks to Marjorie, the Guide pulls a lectern from the cart and sets it near the tree. He beckons to someone in the darkness at stage right. The Interpreter, or hierophant, comes to stand at the lectern.

Our states for a region,

Our politics for municipal religion,

And policy for prophecy,

We’d come to Fairall.”

The Guide sets up a soap box and beckons to another figure, barely visible at stage left, but this figure does not come. As the day dawns, the skyline appears on the red-gold horizon, the sky deep blue above it. The trio stands slightly right of the tree at center stage, with the Interpreter at far right, Guide in the middle, and Marjorie near the tree. The only speakers are Marjorie and the Guide. Throughout this ensemble, the Interpreter, Guide and Opportunist address their comments to Marjorie and the audience, not to each other.

Marjorie and the Guide:

*From *The Book of Visions* the Guide takes a sheet labeled “**The First Vision.**” He reads and the others join in. As they read, the stage lights come up a bit, revealing more of the outline of the town and countryside behind them, mostly on scrimms, the Town Limits sign, the sign in front of the Foxglove Home for the Aged, and a political poster, stage left, for “Board Chairman Lyman Jencks.” The Opportunist, who was standing in the shadows at stage left, is now visible. In fact, he looks like the man on the political poster.*

“All things shall wholly pass away
As smoke curls back from burning hay
Or vap’rous words that disappear
Return once they are in the ear.”

Marjorie: “When old men have been called to save,
They’ve come from such a place—
‘Men good at salvage,
At seeing nothing’s lost’¹

As Marjorie speaks, the high, white bluff above the town is revealed. On it is a factory of some kind called Crawley’s Salvage. The Guide hands her the Book. She reads and the others join her from time to time.

“All things on earth shall pass away
And none will notice the decay,
Feelings and dream times go together
While we eat seed corn in warm weather.”

Marjorie looks up from the Book and points to a space behind the tree on the right. A white-frame house appears in the space.

“My father’s father we abandoned here.
A vision (*She holds up the book.*) swallowed his life:

*She takes a second sheet from the Book, the **Second Vision**. As she reads, the Opportunist joins them, standing on his soap box. The Guide joins her from time to time.*

A vision of ‘a path to follow,
A pattern of the whole
Eternal circle of return, reiteration,
And probing past speech to find speech—
Of salvage and preservation.”

¹ Lao Tsu

She points to the Salvage yard on the bluff. It looks a bit like the prow of a ship.

“When old men have been called to save,
They’ve come from such a place.
From such a center, arks are launched
Like buoys, satellites, or doves.”

As Lyman Jencks, the Opportunist, sings, other places on stage become visible, such as signs, buildings, including the church and court house, and a radio tower. The sign in front of the court house reads: “Board of Faith and Practice for the Northern Region, Courts, and Town Hall.” On a hill opposite the white bluff is the spillway to an earthen dam that holds back the lake (Lake Klawir) of a local country club. Part of the golf course is visible near the dam. Signs on some of the businesses become visible, such as Jencks-Hartley Paper Mills, WJKW: The Voice of the Board of Faith and Practice, Jennie’s Mall, New Eden Restaurant, Jencks Realty, Last Times: All the news that fits.

Throughout the monologue, the Opportunist alternates between bragging about how he gets his way and speaking with great conviction, sold on his own promotion.

Opportunist:

“Fairall is a place you’ll always find
Anytime a dam’s about to go
And vendors cheer it on;

He speaks in a soothing tone.

A place where you can fix hearts
To run slaved to your ambition;
Where an appeal or even pray’rful plea
Can always turn a user fee.”

“If you train the mind,
Leave false hopes behind,
Let other aims just scatter
And focus on your way,
With an edge like prophecy
No one’s blame will matter.

Even doom can pay.

He points to a sign above one of the factory entrances: The Apocalogeny Division of the Board of Faith and Practice: "Research into angelic prophecies for a secure tomorrow." Several white-suited technicians enter the plant. The Opportunist points to them.

"Find the kind of guys
With stars instead of eyes.
Give 'em room to putter.
Let 'em dream all day.
Quietly, so quietly,
Check their benches reg'larly.
No one's blame will matter.
Visions pay their way."

Jencks is given the Book. He holds it up and pats it as an example of what he's been saying. He reads a line from the first vision and then comments on it.

"All things on earth shall wholly pass away"

Aside:

You let their mortal fear sink in
Before you make the pitch to save their skin.
Any sold on prophecy
Will also buy your policy:
So even chaos, grief and doom can pay.
Collect, and then be on your way.
Visions always pay their way."

From offstage comes a broadcast team from WJKW, "The Voice of the Board of Faith and Practice." They bring cameras and microphones to record Jencks's comments.

"Don't believe the outer regions,
All their broadcasts and their claims.
Destruction comes to those who listen.

No one will recall their names.

Live in faith and provably secure.

Our cordon's tight. Our holy ways are sure.

“Clear away, return to work now.

None should loiter in the day.

Let outsiders plead to enter

When storms sweep life and world away.

Live in faith and provably secure.

Our cordon's tight. Our holy ways are sure.”

Marjorie, Guide and Interpreter:

“All things shall wholly all pass away,

Like smoke that curls back as if to stay.

Though we're secure here within our ring,

Visions still come, though we are loitering.

Visions still come, in holy loitering.”

*The Guide takes the **Third Vision** from the Book of Visions. They read from it.*

“The Book assures us that ‘none survives;

None of us rises; none of us thrives,

Unless we reason, and learn to care

For all who share the waters, land, and air.”

Marjorie, Guide, Interpreter, and Opportunist:

| “All things on Earth shall pass away.
| While we are watching, they float away,
| And drift to gather or spread away.
| All things on Earth shall wholly pass away.”
| All things shall wholly all pass away
| Like smoke that curls back as if to stay.
| Though we’re interned here within a ring,
| Visions still come, in holy loitering.”
|
| “There can be no risk of harm if you buy the plan.
| Once you put a premium down,
| You’re covered to the limit of the plan.
| Guarantees against a flood
| (If you are on high ground),
| Believe you can be sealed from harm.
| Believe it, and you can.”

The Opportunist exits, stage left. The Interpreter is spotlighted as he speaks to Marjorie from the lectern. Marjorie and the Guide share a spotlight. As the Interpreter speaks, the town in the background shimmers and begins to fade. By the time that the Guide speaks, only the tree is visible.

Interpreter:

“I am the story and the voices.
I see beginnings and endings,
And make you see,
Through any windows that I use,
To tell the story as I choose.”

The Interpreter exits, stage right.

Guide:

“The mind’s a slippery world to rule
That ever drifts away;
Whose concepts, though we sail them, leak;

Whose players, though they sing and speak,
Becoming what they have to say,
Are tentative, provisional, and weak.”

*The Guide hands Marjorie the **Fourth Vision**, and then leaves her in the spotlight as he goes to stand in the shadow to the right of the tree. Marjorie reads from the Book.*

Marjorie:

““Though we are weak, and drift away,
Yet we can speak, to find our way,
And probe past words to find our speech
Where it is always found: in each.””

Marjorie joins the Guide. The Assessors are now visible, seated at a table to the left of the tree. All of them wear green eye-shades. As they sing, the tree is transformed into a funnel cloud.

Second Ensemble:
Assembly of the Storm

The Storm

Assessors: “Here, for your inspection:
A storm like a great sycamore,
Its crow sweeping upward,
Its eye-wall alive
Like green sheath
On a dead core.

“Here, for your inspection:
Spiral, feeding arms
Drawn from heat and residue,
A temporary being,
Contrary as you.

“Let your mind be calm,
Seeing itself;
Let your species be calm,
Always demanding.
It also flowers from destruction.

“Let your beating, pounding heart be calm,
Seeing itself.
It twists in fear and confusion,
But, streaming into a million branches,
It fills your fingertips with bright understanding.

“Here, for your inspection:
A storm, like a great sycamore,
Its crown sweeping upward,
Its eye-wall alive,
Like green sheath on a dead core.”

The lights come down. The assessors disappear. The storm-tree shimmers mid-stage. A dim spotlight remains on Marjorie and the Guide, who lights her way, stage right, as he speaks:

Guide:

“Every fact, depressing and exact,
In measurements without relief
That flatten moments of belief;
Every detail that we seem to know
Is mind at work upon another show.
Know each player and each part
To find the issue of your heart.”

Third Ensemble:
Surveying the scene
And Searching the ruins

First Incident

The aural setting for this incident lasts ---minutes. See "The Stage" for a description of the scene as the lights come up.

Guide: "For me, as for the rangy bramble stems,
green and tapering, more life is redundant—
a prolonging of form, a widening hunt,
layerings arching in casual systems
over slush and stones and fallen limbs—
a continual grapple for extent—
spreading jagged in sideways ascent.

"Spreading jagged in sideways ascent,
occasions intersect, events divide,
courses alter, watery men decide."

Two soldiers cross the stage, checking the identification documents of those searching the debris. When they smell the vagrant, they walk around him.

"I knew no ships, nor what sea-faring meant,
but sentries found my garden. Then more were sent.
Till dark I hid in bramble with spiny hide:
then, into Pawmack Creek, where mud-dogs slide,

"I slipped a boat, and down the river went.

"Along the banks where we had gone before

He looks at the figure sitting on the porch of the nursing home.

"I floated downstream, guiding with an oar.
Behind me, soldiers pitched a flapping tent
where brambles spread."

Soldiers kneel in the distant woods to talk on their cellular phones and look at their laptop computers. In the foreground, two women are spotlighted: Ida Crawley and her daughter Margie. Their appearance is bedraggled. They scavenge

belongings from one of the wrecked houses, but also watch the homeless man in his camouflaged shirt.

“It was when, berries spent,
the old canes wither and with curling tips
over stone or wood or wire, the new stem slips.

Marjorie: “Who does he talk to? He makes no sense.”

Ida: “That was his trademark, even before the flood.”

Marjorie: “Who does he talk to? He makes no sense.”

Ida: “Someone in his mind,
Someone in the world behind.”

Guide: “Green willow slips rode the stream beside me.
| Where have they rooted, or stuck in dam or nest?”

Women: | “Who does he talk to? Someone in his mind.
| Someone in the world behind.”

Guide: | “We also are rootless, without rest.”

The women return to rummaging through the wreckage as their spotlight dims.

Guide: “The storm that slashed out in a weaving spree
left oozing mains, many a split tree
and car upon its back, and lodged corn canes—
set us adrift –dispersed, dissolving grains.

“More life is redundant: the certain narrows
through which plenties pass, and all’s submerged—
or else a glut releases all submerged
beneath our usual decencies and shows.
Sculling as a water-strider goes,
our paired oars test a surface of events.
We ride a bouncing skin of incidents
and never dip beneath, or should we go,
we find another surface without depth

to meet upon, replay our birth and death,
converge and come apart, conceal and show.

“From act to act, from scene to scene we go,
and skim from part to part till what endures,
Residual, derives from what injures.”

Fourth Ensemble
Searching the ruins

The vagrant pushes his cart stage right to the Foxglove Home as the two women come into the spotlight, center stage. He goes up the steps and sits down beside the patient on the dimly lit porch. The two women stare searchingly into the audience.

Ida: “Where’s your grandma’s house?
Where is the garden?
Your Aunt Edna gave no weed a pardon—
Gone are marigolds, planted in April,
All a poor house holds: piled in a mud hill.”

Marjorie: “Here’s the back porch upended—
Gran’s old bumpy white bedspread.
On it I would whisper
Prayers to have a sister.”

Ida: “Margie, God gave you a brother—
You for me and Willy for your father.”

Soldiers, survivors and others who have been looking through the wreckage re-group to form the assessors’ chorus. Although they do not wear the green eye-shades, it is obvious that they are the assessors because they stand at the assessors’ table, where the eye-shades were left.

Assessors:

“Houses all upended,
Gardens left untended,
Things scarce begun ended,
Life turned inside out—

“What we were’s past now,
Useless to ask how,
All things passed away now:
Why save, trust or pray?

“Like darting fish gleaming,
Who we once were goes streaming
Into our dark dreaming.

Who are we now?

“Is there a tomorrow?
Frozen fast in sorrow,
We’re only what we borrow,
And we’ve given out.”

Marjorie: “You always take up Willy’s part.
It’s like I’m never in the room.
You never listen to me.
You seem to look right through me.
It’s why I couldn’t stay.”

Assessors:

“Gardens left untended,
Arguments never ended,
Youth making its escape,
Age blazing its return—“

Ida is so intent on her scavenging that she does not look up at Margie as she speaks but talks back over her shoulder as she fills her bag with mementos.

Ida: “Margie, you can be such a bother.
You say that every time you leave us.
Some day you will know why
I mold and shield you--
If you ever have a daughter.”
Nothing Willy ever tries goes bad—
Even those mushrooms in our garden, morels, puffballs..
And trilliums, the wild self-heal, rattlesnake lily,
And big-eyed salamanders.
Anything grows for him.
He got it from Edna, not from me.
It’s like he sees into things.
And run—he can run forever.
Coach always wants him.
Even when it rains,
When it rains, rains, rains—
Even today there was a meet.
He took your father’s truck early this morning.

It's like he sees into things."

Assessors:|"Gardens..."

Marjorie:|"You always..."

Ida:|"Some day you will..."

Marjorie: "This time it was different.
This time, when I left,
Only Grandma knew it was to marry Jeff.

Ida: "Jeff Jencks? The Chairman's son?"

Marjorie: "Yes, Mama, the Chairman's son.
Don't worry, Mama! The Chairman doesn't know.
You don't have any more to mold!
Jeff left me once he knew I carried his child,
Tossing me away like an empty bottle.
That's what I'm molded for.
Not that I wanted any more of him,
His dismal trailer and his creepy apartment
Furnished by dead tenants.
Once he made the Security Force,
He'd drunk all of me he could stomach.
Grandma said I could stay with her..."

Margie looks helplessly at the remains of her grandmother's house.

Ida: "Margie, now is not the time.
We need to talk. But not now.
Your grandma was rescued.
You've got to find the things she'll need.
And I haven't heard from Willy since he left.
I know why.
As for Edna—
Maybe Edna didn't make it.
We need to talk, but not now.
You know what I'll say anyway.
Willy's gone. You know what I'll say.

You go on. Unless you want to come with me.
Come with me to the highway
Where the trucks go out, filled with men.
Come with me to the highway
Where Willy's gone."

Ida pulls Marjorie's arm. Marjorie shakes off her mother's hand and pulls away. Margie stares at the ruins, bows her head, and pulls a piece of garden trellis from the rubble. The lights dim as the two women face the audience and join in the closing chorus.

All:

"Is there a tomorrow?
Frozen fast in sorrow,
We're only what we borrow,
And we've given out."

Lights dim on the Assessors, who finally disappear. Ida wanders offstage, disappearing into the audience. Marjorie remains in the spotlight, her head bowed.

Second Incident

A doorway is all that remains of the church. The Interpreter, now called the Preacher, hangs an “open” sign on the door and goes inside to stand behind the lectern. Worshippers join him, also passing through the door. Marjorie follows them inside. The Opportunist, now called Lyman Jencks, and several others with him, also come over from their meal in the hotel restaurant to enter the church, but they simply walk around the door and stand partially inside, partially outside, apparently waiting for something. The preacher passes a collection basket.”

Preacher: “The storm came forth to judge us.”

People: “You, O River, judge us.”

Preacher: “It takes and gives away.”

People: “It takes, leaving us behind.”

Preacher: “A higher power above us”

People: “Some other kind of mind—“

Preacher: “Now summons you to pray.”

As he speaks, the Preacher passes the bowl around for additional offerings. The congregation digs in its pockets. Jencks and other members of the Board of Faith and Practice nod approvingly.

Preacher:

“Your offerings buy you worship care—
One worship unit, as is fair:
A scripture and a prayer,
A blessing and a warning.”

He reads interpretively from the second chapter of the Gospel of Mark

Preacher: “Four friends brought a crippled man
But could not enter for the crowd.
They climbed the roof and let him down,
Their faces bright as morning.”

As he says this, he waves at the congregation, whose expectant faces are looking up at him. Then he pretends to be the crippled man:

“I cannot leave the place I stay.
I cannot move or find a way—
Even open up a window,
Or find a face I know.

“If there were friends to guide me in
And wait for healing to begin,
I’d have the time to learn and grow.
Friends, make the roof a window!”

Preacher and People:

“Forgive us, Lord. We are paralyzed,
Our strength unrealized.
If you but touch our lives,
We will be free.

“And give us, we who are paralyzed,
Grace to achieve surprise,
Power to give and touch,
Power to make free.”

Marjorie: “If there were one to lower me
Into his presence, I might be
Forgiven just enough,
Just enough to open windows.”

People: “Forgive us...”

A spotlight shows the Guide, looking much older and seated on the porch steps, Above him, on the porch, the woman in the dark cape is rocking. The light dims slightly on the church group. The Vagrant has removed his false leg and seems to be tightening a strap on the end of it as he speaks. The people in the church are visible only in silhouette.

Guide: “Some people always want forgiveness,
Seeing specks that none can see;
Then they can get back to business

Of screwing you and me.

“What kind of people rings themselves with land mines?

He waves his leg toward the church.

“What kind of people makes their coin from prayers,
Closes eyes to look for signs;
Denies their lives are theirs,
All to see specks none can see—“

The woman suddenly moves and speaks in a faltering way.

Woman: “I see specks, specks see me...”

The Guide waits expectantly for her to finish, but she says no more. He finishes the rhyme for her.

Guide: “I see someone tomorrow
I don’t expect to see.”

Woman: “The moon, the moon sees the one...”

Guide: “The one I want to see.”

Congregation:

“Forgive us, Lord. We are paralyzed,
Our strength unrealized.
If you but touch our lives,
We will be free.”

Guide: “The paralyzed want freedom.
The free want to be served.
The window that you see from
Makes starlight flat or curved.

Woman: |“Star light, Star bright
|First...”

Guide: |“Love’s light, last light

| Least light shining,
| I reach to bring you near
| But always you are only near.

Some of the Assessors have gathered behind their table. They are studying some of the forms stacked on the table as they speak, as if engaged in an audit.

Assessors:

“For the soapy trickle of blood
At the heart’s diking flood
Over, trespassing age
(Never properly feared),
We thank thee, God.

“Alone in our ways
In a tangle of days—
Least certain when finding
What always was there:
Guide us, God; yet amaze.”

END OF THE FIRST SECTION

PRELUDE TO THE SECOND SECTION

During the Prelude, the stage turns clockwise, bringing the hotel dining room scene to center stage but leaving the other settings still visible. The backdrop, showing the lake and dam high above town, does not move. The aural setting lasts -----minutes.

Third Incident

As the people leave the ruined church, Jeff Jencks looks into the offering basket and nods at the Preacher as he reaches in to help himself. The preacher, smiling weakly, appears fearful. Jencks follows his father and his two associates to the restaurant, now center stage. They are joined by some construction and recovery workers, who are wearing helmets, medical scrubs, ball caps and tool belts. Some of them carry clipboards and wear the logos of various businesses –roofers, contractors, plumbers, siding and insurance salespeople, etc. The table is already set for them. A waiter sets out a sign that reads “Reserved for a Working Lunch for the Board of Faith and Practice and Associates in this time of crisis.” Jencks gives the waiter money from the collection plate. Marjorie has followed Jeff and the others. Jeff sits at the table with his father while Marjorie watches from behind a curtain at the window

Jencks: “That was the sermon the people need now.”

Diner 1: “They’ll buy our windows, roofs and doors.”

Diner 2: “And I like the way he brought the river in.”

Jencks: “You mean the case insurance won’t allow?”

Diner 1: “No matter how much water pours—“

Diner 2: “Yes, the flood plain regs that never were put in—

Laughter.

Opportunists’ chorus: “Leave everybody out again.”

As they begin their “working lunch,” Jencks and the others lay papers and plat maps on the table. The contractors and rescuers at other tables around them eavesdrop on their conversation. Jencks strikes the table with a gavel.

Jencks: “Managing our giving
Takes a careful plan.”

He points to the thick prospectus being given to the Board members by Jeff.

“Every rider needs to pay the fare.

Schedule benefits to disappear as risks arise.
Comfort only comes from managed care.
Focus on the outcome,
Subdivide the fees,
Make crumbs of actions rates you can compare.
Ring up every effort; we only optimize
When no procedure's missed—
Or living heir.”

Opportunists' Chorus:

“Managed care, managed care.
It begins with market share.
Nothing in let out –
Give the regs no clout.
Every rider cuts the cost we bear.
When you cost it out,
Comfort only comes from managed care.”

Jencks: “Keep the premiums coming
While you're paying out.
Nothing drives the market like a storm.
Every stub of building
Left a smoldering rout
Keeps your credit plump and cash flow warm.

“Every paid procedure
Goes into the score;
Every brief transaction's priced in tiers.
Summing up the minutes
Spent completing forms
Compensates you in retirement years.”

Opportunists' Chorus:

“Managed care, managed care.
It begins with market share.
We providers know
Just how far to go.
Let the heavens pour!

Our helipad's top floor!
Comfort only comes from managed care.”

Jencks lifts the confiscated Book of Visions for the Board to see.

Seventh Ensemble:
Voix & Voie de Deux

Fourth Incident

Jeff and Marjorie meet outside the hotel. (Samba-like rhythm to “inside-out” theme):

Jeff: “When I said you were mine,
Didn’t we leave the trailer
And take a place in town?
I did all you wanted;
Then you let me down.”

Marjorie: “When you took what was mine
Back in your father’s trailer
And promised me forever,
I did all you wanted
Just to be together.”

Reprise of “Managed Care” theme, beginning in samba form:

Jeff: “Friendship’s just procedures.
You can cost them out –
Obligations, benefits in tiers.
Measure out the time you spent,
The promises come due,
And every pay-out made or in arrears.”

Marjorie:
“Your vow’s a unit-friendship,
And contract, lip to lip,
A coupon for affection,
And measurable esteem.
In terms for our inspection,
You left nothing in to slip.
And nothing’s left that’s even worth a dream.”

Jeff: When we cost it out,
The settlement should pay in days, not years.
Now I must be going.
To record-fire and qualify...
Duty to the Guard, keeping outer sympathizers out...

The group inside the restaurant can be heard outside.

Opportunists:

“Inside out, inside out—
Draw down lives with fees paid out—
Fees for time and fees for care,
Fees for promise of repair,
Fees for roofs that fly away,
Fees for siding made of air

“Inside out, inside out—
Insiders can work it out—
Make a law to spell it out.
Promise dams won’t break.
Just be sure that you provide
That dreamers stay awake
And all insiders stay inside.”

The Fifth Incident

Marjorie watches Jeff go off with the soldiers of the Security Force after shaking hands with his father. The stage empties. Remaining onstage are the woman seated on the porch and the Guide, who stands at the foot of the porch steps, Lyman Jencks, seated at the table in the hotel dining room looking at the Book of Visions. A video projection upstage shows a small boy handing a turtle to a younger Ida. Margie walks toward her mother but stops center stage as the images of her mother and brother dissolve. The Vagrant slowly walks toward her as she sings.

Marjorie: “You never listen to me
Now something’s happened to me
Jeff has gone and I,
I peer from bottles,
Like a specimen fool.
Go on to Willy and his salamanders,
His puffballs and shin-splints,
And his seeing into things--
The twerp. Forget me,
Looking frog-eyed from a bottle.
Forget me and what’s in me.”

She prays:

“Where am I now?
What is my part?
Who prepared my way?
Am I alone—apart?
Or does someone wait for me?
How can I know?”

The Guide touches her shoulder. He points to the lightning in the sky. She runs toward a tree but he pulls her back, saying:

Guide: “Beware of oak,
It draws the stroke.”

Marjorie turns to go under another tree. He stops her.

“Beware of ash,
It courts the flash.”

He leads her to stand under a giant blackberry bush.

“Creep under thorn,
It saves from harm.”

As the lightning flashes around them, the stage grows dark except for the spotlights on Jencks, the woman on the porch and on Marjorie and the Guide. She points to the woman on the porch.

Marjorie: “Soon I must go. I cannot stay.
But what I need to learn still slips away.

Guide: “I can only guide away
From errors that I know,
Like sandbars or undertow.
Only you can row the boat to land.
Only you can finally understand.”

Marjorie: “Guide me, then,
And show me how to go.”

Guide: “Use all your eyes for seeing,
Your fan of peacock eyes.
Every window is frames a knowing.
Embrace the dragon you are fleeing,
Lift its grim disguise.
Engage all arguments,
Embrace all accidents.
It is the game of growing,
The serious game.

Enter the windows:
Every shape and size,
Every consequence,
Every soul’s ordeal they’re showing.

Enter the windows,
The sober game,
The deadly game of growing
And surprise.”

Jencks is dimly spotlighted, shown standing at the table in the hotel dining room and looking out at the gathering storm. He is alone. The window frames him. The Vagrant points to him and Margie reluctantly turns to watch.

Jencks: “This fact embeds in fable:
All’s given, all’s unstable.
The frog becomes a lord,
The knotty branch a sword.

“Rain, rain, go away.
Come again a Saturday...”

Marjorie: “No, no, keep away!
Not this window,
Not this way!”

The Guide brings Marjorie closer to the window.

Guide: “Rain on the green grass,
Rain on the tree.
What shall I be for you?
And what shall you for me?”

She reluctantly joins in the chant. Then the Guide drops out and Jencks takes up the chant.

Jencks and Marjorie:

| “Rain on the housetop,
| But not on me.
| Rain, rain, go away!
| Come again another day”

They speak about predictions, Jeff, the baby, the time to come.

Guide: | “Upon our privacies
| Depend all legacies.
| Through intimate release
| Our grudges wear to peace.

Assessors:

“We wake in a world we never knew,
Though we had lived there all along,
Where all passed away
In a plume of smoke,
Or quick cerebral stroke,
And personal lives became public cases
And feral aims wore human faces
Such is the disorder when in waking dream
The familiar in our lives rises to devour us.
Every edge becomes a precipice,
Every flickering light a flame,
And we find no escape from terrors.

“Alone in our ways,
In a tangle of days,
Least certain when finding what always was there,
Guide us, God, and amaze.”

Ensemble Ten:
Whirlwind

For Antiphonal choruses and soloist:

Chorus 1: “Inside out, Inside out-- **This is incantatory, an
enchantment...**

Let your mind go inside out.

Occupy the mind

Of another kind.—“

“Storm theme” in instruments. **Margie’s 4 foot lines are twisted,
tortuous...**

Margie: “Only a spell that sent me to hell
To live as a flame would make such a claim;
So twist as you will, I resist and will dwell
In my own mind, and keep my own name.”

Chorus 2: “Outside in, outside in—
Simply set your sight within. Or let your sight within?
Occupy your mind
With another kind.

Margie: “/./././ 9
././././ 10
././././ 11
./\-../.\ / 9

Margie: Why would I live, if ever I could,
In the skin of a man who, since he began
To lead us, betrayed us, portraying the good
As his twisted, grasping fist of a plan?

Guide There's part of him alive in you;
To understand, what you must do
Is feel what you already know—
That from the first black flood to flow,
Our fears betray us, and we never reach
Beyond resentment to find grace
Till we find all of us in each.

He takes the Book of Visions from Jencks and places it on the lectern in front of Marjorie.

Pick up on “grey snout from below”, “bee on screen”, and “web” poems in this merkwelt experience.

Chorus 1:

There is no magic here to see,
Just simple, kindred sympathy—
The trusting mind that draws
Kind to kind and wit to pause.
Each brought within the arc
Of understanding by grace
That transforms disputed boundary
To encircling common space

Chorus 2:

There is no magic here to see,
Just study; kindred sympathy,
And dwelling mind that probes and draws
Kind to kind and wit to pause,
And brings each within the arc
Of understanding, making space
Where boundary only made a mark.

Marjorie lifts another page from the Book of Visions and shows it to Jencks. She stands behind the lectern and interprets it without looking at it.

Chorus 1:

Inside, outside from the dark
Comes the radiance and the spark;
Outside, inside you begin.
Find one surface, one vast skin.

Chorus 2: Inside, outside from the dark... (reprise)

Resolution: At the end of this section, Margie is saved from a landmine by a young Tom Farley, who loses his leg saving her.

Now Jencks has a different view of prophecies and predictions. What do you do when they are inexorably fulfilled? --But not as expected, i.e. "all things passed away," but not as they had thought. The profit that you take from them may derive from your suffering, your loss of self, your recovery of soul. "For what profit is it to a man if he gain the whole world but lose his own soul?" The world is not to be gained. None survive without all. Part of the resolution is that Fairall will become a different kind of place. We get this only from allusions by Jencks. Here also are allusions to getting in step with the ecosystem, and the importance of salvage. The resolution includes comfort, kindness, suspending judgment, working matters out, Margie's help and comfort to her mother and Jencks...

Assessors:

None see beyond the flower of the proud,
The wealth, the glow of color, space allowed
To play their proper parts: the posted fields,
Stables, private lake, and current yields—
And nothing of it Given: all by Merit
Claimed –rights to give and to inherit,
The customary, provident fruition.

But yellow, waxy—as such I see the fruit.
The comfortable earning? In its root
A trespass, turning flowers with gray snout
From below. Its crown, that branches out?
A watershed of grievances—still all
Unsevered: Leaves still sunned in golden fall.

“You outlived me, except when I wander through your mind.”

The Last Assembly

Soloists and Assessors:

“That all who breathe and strive should die
Spreads moments to eternity.
The wonder’s not it should be so
But that any of us know.
The wonder’s not in mystery
But in the all-beholding eye

And in the labyrinthine ear
Who dip the brain, so dumb and blind,
In sudden terrors, splintered light;
Who swamp and yet delight the mind.
So all things pass and reappear.

Find wonder in slow talks with trees,
Steadfast in facts. They reach for light,
Each whispering in steamy breath,
Shoving its skins away from death;
Each crowned above with blossoms white,
Below with roots that grip realities.

Like nothing else, but yet like trees,
Whose mind is branching up and down
Between realities and thought,
Both our doing, we are caught.”