

Haruki Murakami's

## Sleep

excerpt

Adapted for the stage by Naomi Iizuka

Created in collaboration with Rachel Dickstein and Ripe Time

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February 2018

Characters:

WOMAN

THE SHADOW

WOMAN's HUSBAND, also plays VRONSKY, the POLICEMAN, the man in the parked car

THE CHILD

THE STRANGER, also plays the old man in the dream

ANNA KARENINA

Place: A stage.

Time: The present.

Director's Note:

In addition to playing distinct characters, the actors embody refractions of the WOMAN as her consciousness and point-of-view shift over the course of the play. These refractions galvanize, catalyze and respond to the WOMAN as she evolves.

The location where the action takes place is literally a box. It evokes both a domestic space and a psychic space. It is at times a prison. It is at times a hall of mirrors. It is at times a portal offering escape. As the WOMAN breaks free of conventions, she pries back the floorboards beneath her own home, fracturing and eventually shattering the space. She is left in uncharted terrain that is both a battlefield and the precipice of a new world filled with possibility.

Note: The piece relies heavily on an immersive sound design and live musical accompaniment. It is nearly scored through with sound. Lights, projections and an interactive scenic /object design serve a vital role in the story-telling experience as the narrative shifts in and out of reality and interior dreamspace. Suggestions of environments (cars, kitchen, dining rooms) are always suggested with gesture rather than literal objects. Actual keys are only used in the final scene so the sound of keys clattering nearly always comes from a combination of amplified live sound foley and recorded sound.

This piece was commissioned by the Joe A. Melillo Fund for Artistic Innovation at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts and Center Theatre Group. It has been collaboratively devised by Ripe Time, conceived and directed by Rachel Dickstein, adapted from the original Haruki Murakami story by Naomi Iizuka from the translation by Jay Rubin. *Sleep* has been built on enormous creative contributions from dramaturg Joy Meads, the original acting ensemble including Jiehae Park, Akiko Aizawa, Brad Culver, Takemi Kitamura, Paula McGonagle, and Saori Tsukada, the creative team of designers including Ji-youn Chang, Susan Zeeman Rogers, Ilona Somogyi, Matt Stine, and Hannah Wasileski, and live trio/composing team NewBorn Trio (Katie Down, Miguel Frasoni, Jeffrey Lependorf.)

*Sleep* received its world premiere at the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Pennsylvania and its NYC premiere at BAM-Fisher in the Next Wave Festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in October and November/December 2017. *Sleep* was produced by Ripe Time (Artistic Director, Rachel Dickstein) in association with Octopus Theatricals (Mara Isaacs, Producing Directing, Ronee Penoi, Associate Director.)

## Prelude

*Light up on the WOMAN as she enacts her daily routine in a room. She goes through the motions in a room that is empty of all objects except for a single chair. She cooks and cleans. She folds invisible laundry. Stripped of familiar props, her gestures seem alien and strange. The WOMAN repeats her actions over and over in a continuous loop. She moves with the mechanical precision of a machine. At regular intervals, she interrupts her pattern and stops as if to look out a window, a question on her face.*

*Behind the WOMAN is a mirrored wall. Her reflection can be seen in the mirror, except it's not a mirror. It's a window. What we thought was her reflection is, in fact, her SHADOW on the other side of the glass. Her SHADOW identically mirrors the WOMAN's movements in an identical room on the other side of the glass. The WOMAN looks towards the SHADOW in the upstage room as if the mirror suddenly falls away. Something cracks open. Sound.*

1.

*We hear a clock ticking.*

WOMAN

17 days. It's been 17 days.

I have a secret.

This is my seventeenth day without sleep.

I don't sleep.

I can't sleep.

It's not insomnia. I know what insomnia is, and this is different.

This happened to me once before – well, something like it.

*A CHILD appears. She is dressed in identical clothes as the WOMAN. As the WOMAN speaks, the CHILD and the SHADOW inhabit her memory in the upstage room.*

WOMAN

I was in college. I remember I went to bed one night, but when I tried to fall asleep, I couldn't. The harder I tried to fall asleep, the more awake I became. This went on for over a month. I would lie awake staring into the darkness, listening to the clock ticking, waiting for the sky to grow light. It was as if I were locked into the core of this intense wakefulness by an enormous force. I was powerless to resist. I drank, I took pills, but nothing worked. I could not fall asleep. I told no one, not my parents, not my friends, not the doctor, no one. But the strangest thing of all: no one seemed to notice.

*The STRANGER appears. She watches the WOMAN. The sound of water dripping. The WOMAN hears the sound.*

WOMAN

I was going through life half asleep, and no one noticed. The drowsiness would overtake me throughout the day at regular, wavelike intervals. I would drop things: a pencil, a fork, a set of keys.

*The STRANGER drops a set of car keys. As they hit the ground, fissures in the floor electrify for a moment and then vanish. The WOMAN turns her head towards the sound. THE CHILD and the STRANGER also suspend.*

WOMAN

The world swayed soundlessly around me, filled with shapes I couldn't make out, surfaces that shifted and buckled. I couldn't get an accurate fix on the things around me – their distance or mass or texture. Nothing was what it seemed.

It was as if my mind were slipping away from my body,  
It was as if my body and my mind suddenly detached and became two separate things.  
My very existence in the world seemed like a hallucination.  
My mind was no longer part of me, but a thing that existed outside of me, watching me.

*The SHADOW appears behind the glass window. She watches the WOMAN intently. As the WOMAN speaks, the sound of water dripping amplifies and escalates. The dripping transforms into the sound of water flowing.*

WOMAN

Somewhere else, somewhere just out of reach,  
This other being,  
A shadow of myself,  
I could feel it just at the moment I began to drift off,  
My fingertips brushing the outermost edges of sleep,  
I could feel its breath, its weight,  
But there was nothing I could do.  
And then one day, it stopped.

*The sound abruptly cuts out.*

WOMAN

I was at the breakfast table, I remember, and I started to lose consciousness. I stood up. I think I maybe knocked something over. Someone spoke to me, I think. I can't be sure.

All I wanted to do was sleep. I just wanted to sleep. I staggered to my room, I didn't even take off my clothes, I just crawled into bed, and just like that, I was out. I slept for twenty-seven hours straight.

*The SHADOW collapses.*

WOMAN

And when I finally awoke, I was my old self again. Well, almost.

*The WOMAN looks towards the place where the STRANGER has been watching. The STRANGER recedes.*

WOMAN

What I have now, it's completely different. Aside from the fact that I can't sleep, my mind is clear as ever, clearer even. There's nothing wrong with me. I just can't sleep. I don't sleep. I haven't told my husband. He doesn't suspect a thing.

2.

*Sound shift. The HUSBAND slams into focus, outside of the box. He enacts his daily routine. He gets dressed. He brushes his teeth. He drives to work. He washes his hands. He examines a patient's teeth. Stripped of familiar props, his gestures seem alien and strange. The WOMAN takes him in.*

WOMAN

My husband. This is my husband. My husband is a dentist. His office is a quick ten-minute drive from our condo. We had to get a loan to open the place. We're still paying it off. Sometimes I think we'll never be done paying it off. And the competition is intense. Lots of people fail. Not my husband. He has more business than he can handle. He's doing very well. Too well.

*As he speaks to the WOMAN, the HUSBAND finishes his work. He washes his hands. He drives home. He eats. He remains outside the box.*

HUSBAND

I work so hard. I didn't want to have to work so hard. But I can't complain. Remember when we were just starting out, how tough it was? Remember? We didn't know if we'd survive.

WOMAN

But we did.

HUSBAND

Yes, we did. One way or another, we survived.

WOMAN

I know why you've got so many patients.

HUSBAND

Oh?

WOMAN

It's because you're so good-looking.

HUSBAND

I know, right?

WOMAN

That's why.

HUSBAND

Because I'm so good-looking. It's not my fault I'm so good looking. What can I do?

WOMAN

Nothing.

HUSBAND

Lucky you.

WOMAN

Lucky me.

*The WOMAN looks at her HUSBAND. As she looks at him, the world begins to shift and unravel in small, almost imperceptible ways. THE SHADOW responds in the upstage room. We iris back into the WOMAN's head.*

WOMAN

But he's not good-looking. That's the thing. It's a joke. It's our little joke because the truth is he's not good-looking at all. He's actually kind of strange looking. Even now I wonder: why did I marry such a strange-looking man. There were other men, better-looking men. Why did I marry him? I wonder. He has nice teeth. He's a dentist after

all. And people like him. He's one of those men everybody likes. All my friends like him. I'm fond of him, of course. I love him. But then there's his face. What is it about his face?

*The WOMAN approaches her HUSBAND watching him through the walls of the box. The music fades away, replaced by the sound of water dripping. THE STRANGER watches from afar, from beyond another wall.*

WOMAN

What makes his face so strange? Once I tried to draw a picture of it, but I couldn't. I couldn't remember what he looked like. It was impossible to remember. How could that be? How can you live with a man for so long and not know what he looks like? I tried to piece together his features in my mind: his eyes, his mouth, his lips – but I couldn't do it. I couldn't remember a thing. Looking at his face was like running into an invisible wall.

*In the upstage room, the SHADOW sees an actual shadow of what might be herself and tries to trace its features. Her actions build to a crescendo.*

WOMAN

It was like running into an invisible wall over and over again.

*The sound of water grows. The SHADOW recedes from view. The sound of water stops. The WOMAN and SHADOW arch back as the sound builds, then right themselves as it cuts out. She is suddenly where she was at the top of the play.*

WOMAN

17 days, it's been 17 days without sleep. Something is happening to me. I can feel it. What's happening to me?

*The WOMAN looks over at where her HUSBAND had been but he has vanished.*

WOMAN

I could say something to him, I could tell him, but what good would that do? No, this is something I have to deal with all by myself. I need to go back. I need to go back to the day this all began. Something happened. What happened? How did it begin? It was just like any other day. Or was it? I need to go back. I need to go back.

*A large shift of music and sound. The WOMAN goes back in time. The sound of an alarm clock ends it. She stops.*



3.

*Light shift. A morning seventeen days ago. The HUSBAND and CHILD appear now inside the box. They're getting ready for the day. Each inhabits their own world, separate and apart from one another, divided by squares of light on the floor.*

HUSBAND

Morning.

WOMAN

Morning.

HUSBAND

Is he coming? What's he doing? *(To SON:)* Hurry up! Time to go! *(TO WOMAN:)* I've got a 9 AM. I'm going to be late. Listen, don't forget to take the car in. You need to get that engine looked at. You don't want to be stuck somewhere and the car not start. It's not safe. What is he doing? What's taking him so long? *(To SON:)* Hey! Time to go! Now! *(To WOMAN:)* I'll be back for lunch, OK? I'll try to be back a little before noon. I have a 1 PM root canal. I tried to reschedule, but I couldn't.

*HUSBAND and CHILD shift in the space as if going about their routines mechanically. The floor light squares illuminate as they move, continuing to isolate them from one another.*

HUSBAND

*(To the CHILD:)*

It's about time. Sleepy head. You ready?

*The CHILD nods.*

HUSBAND

*(To the WOMAN:)*

Take the car in.

WOMAN

I will.

*Again, a shift.*

HUSBAND

*(To the CHILD:)*

Got everything?

*A shift. The CHILD nods.*

HUSBAND

You sure? Think. Are you forgetting anything? Think.

*The CHILD shakes his head.*

HUSBAND

OK, let's go.

*A shift.*

WOMAN

Be careful.

HUSBAND

Don't worry.

*A shift. The HUSBAND and CHILD begin to exit. The CHILD stops, turns around, and runs back to the WOMAN. He hugs her tightly and for too long. He clings to her. She doesn't know how to respond.*

HUSBAND

*(To the CHILD:)*

That's enough now. That's enough.

*The CHILD reluctantly lets go.*

HUSBAND

Come. (to the WOMAN) Take the car in—Don't forget.

WOMAN

I will.

*A shift. The CHILD goes to the HUSBAND. They step outside the box into an invisible car.*

HUSBAND

*(To CHILD:)*

So what do you want to listen to on the way to school?

*The CHILD shrugs.*

HUSBAND

How about a little Mozart?

*Mozart begins to play. The HUSBAND and the CHILD's movements echo one another, waving and*

*driving off. The HUSBAND and CHILD recede from view.*

WOMAN

Like father like son.

*The STRANGER appears, outside the box. She drops a set of car keys. They clatter to the ground. As they hit the ground, fissures in the floor electrify for a moment and then vanish. THE WOMAN looks at the invisible keys. She gestures as if to pick them up. The STRANGER vanishes.*

4.

*The WOMAN turns the ignition of an invisible car. The sound of a car engine. It won't turn over. She continues to try and start the car as she speaks.*

WOMAN

I have an old Honda Civic. It's mine. It's got over 150,000 miles. Sometimes it won't start. The engine just won't turn over. Something gets out of whack. It happens. Everything gets out of whack sometimes. I get out of whack sometimes. You have to be patient. You just have to be patient.

*The engine finally turns over. As the WOMAN speaks, the WOMAN's SHADOW appears. The SHADOW replicates like a cell dividing. Actors who play the CHILD, the STRANGER and the SHADOW transform into different refractions of the WOMAN, identically dressed. They enact her daily routine. They cook and clean. They fold invisible laundry.*

WOMAN

I drive to the market. I buy groceries. I come back home. I clean the house. I do the laundry. I fix lunch. I like to get everything out of the way. Then the afternoon is all mine. Well, almost. First, my husband comes home for lunch.

*The ding of a microwave. The HUSBAND appears. The ensemble pauses and watch him before receding from view. SHADOW remains in the upstage room and sits in the chair.*

WOMAN

Every day he comes home for lunch.

HUSBAND

I don't like to eat out. It's too crowded and the food's no good. Why should I pay for food that's no good? I like to eat at home with you.

*The ding of a microwave. The WOMAN presents the HUSBAND with an invisible plate of food.*

WOMAN

Leftovers. I zapped them.

HUSBAND

Looks delicious. Anyway, it's not about the food. It's about the company.

WOMAN

That's nice.

*The HUSBAND starts to eat.*

HUSBAND

*(with mouth full)* Do you remember when we were first married? Do you?

*Light shift. An earlier time, a happier time. The WOMAN remembers an intimate moment.*

WOMAN

I do. I remember. You'd come home for lunch and sometimes you wouldn't have a patient in that afternoon slot. And we'd go to bed. In the middle of the afternoon, we'd steal away. Those were the loveliest times. Everything was hushed, and the sunlight, the way the sunlight filtered into room, it made everything shimmer.

*Light shift. Slam back to the present. The WOMAN and HUSBAND see each other as they are in the present. The distance between present and past is jarring. They separate.*

HUSBAND

That was a long time ago. We were young. We were so young. It's hard to imagine ever being that young.

WOMAN

We were happy.

HUSBAND

We're happy now.

WOMAN

Yes. Yes, of course.

*The sound of dripping water. The WOMAN clocks the sound. Where is it coming from? A panel in the floor glows. She crosses towards it.*

HUSBAND

Things change. Life changes. That's just how it is. Nothing you can do. What are you going to do? What's the alternative? There is none.

*As her HUSBAND's voice reverberates, she pries back the glowing piece of floor. The STRANGER (unseen by the WOMAN and HUSBAND) transforms the floorboard into the dining room table. The WOMAN searches for the source of the dripping water beneath the table. We see them at the table as if from a bird's eye view. The HUSBAND continues to speak. His voice gradually becomes fainter and fainter.*

HUSBAND

I don't like to eat out. It's too crowded and the food's no good. Why should I pay for food that's no good? I like to eat at home with you. Looks delicious. Anyway, it's not about the food. It's about the company. Do you remember when we were first married? Do you? That was a long time ago. We were young. We were so young. It's hard to imagine ever being that young. Things change. Life changes. That's just how it is. Nothing you can do. What are you going to do? What's the alternative? There is none. Things change. Life changes. That's just how it is. Nothing you can do. What are you going to do? What's the alternative? There is none. Things change. Life changes. That's just how it is. Nothing you can do. What are you going to do? What's the alternative? There is none. Things change. Life changes. That's just how it is. Nothing you can do. What are you going to do? What's the alternative? There is none.

*The WOMAN looks at her HUSBAND across the "table" as he speaks, He is oblivious to her gaze. The space of the table morphs and transforms as if caught in a dream.*

WOMAN

*(Overlapping with HUSBAND's dialogue as the font size gets smaller:)*

He's talking to me and all I can think about are his teeth. He has something in his teeth. He doesn't realize. He talks to me and I don't even hear. I'm thinking about that piece of food lodged in his teeth. It's repulsive. It's grotesque. A piece of rotting food stuck between gleaming white teeth.

*The sound of dripping water grows. The WOMAN can't take it anymore. The WOMAN and the HUSBAND's lines and water sounds end simultaneously as she pushes the table back into the floor.*

WOMAN

You have something in your teeth.

HUSBAND

What?

WOMAN

You have something in your teeth.

HUSBAND

Oh.

*The HUSBAND violently rubs his teeth with his finger. Sound foley amplifies this.*

HUSBAND

Did I get it? Did I? Did I? Did I?

WOMAN

Yes.

HUSBAND

Good. Great. Thanks. Listen, I have to go. I have a 1 PM. Love you.

*The HUSBAND kisses the WOMAN.*

HUSBAND

Love you. Love you.

WOMAN

Love you, too.

*The sound of water dripping. The STRANGER exits the box but continues to watch the WOMAN.*

I need some time. I need some time to clear my mind.

*The STRANGER drops a set of car keys. They clatter to the ground. The fissures in the floor electrify for a moment, slightly longer than before,*

*and then vanish. The WOMAN turns sharply at the sound. The HUSBAND recedes from view like a memory. The WOMAN picks up the invisible keys. The WOMAN sees the STRANGER out of the corner of her eye. When the WOMAN turns, the STRANGER moves just out of view, constantly at the edge of her peripheral vision. The WOMAN turns again. The STRANGER continues to elude her, remaining just out of view. The sound of water dripping grows and transforms into the sound of flowing water*

WOMAN

I need to go for a swim.

*The sound of the car engine. The WOMAN starts to drive. The STRANGER recedes from view.*

5.

*The ambient sound of a swimming pool. The WOMAN and SHADOW arrive and put on invisible swimming caps. A lifeguard whistle. A splash. Bodies cutting through the water. The WOMAN's world becomes a swimming pool. The ripple of blue chlorinated water. The sound of the world muted and faraway. They swim.*

WOMAN

I swim. I swim. I swim. I can feel my heart beating. I can feel my body cut through the water. I can feel my skin, the thinnest layer of skin holding everything in. I can feel it. I can feel the edges of it. I can feel the edges of me. I can feel the place where I stop and something else begins.

*The sound of breathing. The sound of a heart beating. The SHADOW and WOMAN are suspended in water. They look at each other. The WOMAN bursts through the surface of the water.*

6.

*A mirror in the locker room. The ambient sound of the pool. The WOMAN approaches the invisible mirror. She studies the reflection of herself. The*

*SHADOW appears. The WOMAN views her with fascination and wonder.*

SHADOW

What do you see?

WOMAN

I see myself, but I, I don't know.

SHADOW

What? Say.

WOMAN

I don't know what that means.

SHADOW

Do you want to know what I see? Do you? I see a beautiful woman.

WOMAN

I'm not.

SHADOW

You are. You are so beautiful. Your body is so beautiful.

*The SHADOW demonstrates on her own body.*

SHADOW

This. This. This. All of it.

*The WOMAN enjoys her SHADOW's attention. The WOMAN touches herself. For a moment, she loses track of space and time. The sound of breathing grows. The sound of a heart beating. The HUSBAND appears.*

HUSBAND

So how was your day?

*The WOMAN stops. The sounds cut out. The WOMAN turns and sees her HUSBAND. The SHADOW recedes from view.*

7.

*The WOMAN and the HUSBAND are home. Evening. The end of the day.*



Sorry? WOMAN

How was your day? HUSBAND

Good, it was good. WOMAN

What did you do? HUSBAND

Nothing special, same as always: I drove to the market. I bought groceries. I came back home. I cleaned the house. I did the laundry. I fixed lunch. And then I went to the pool for a swim. WOMAN

*The sound of dripping water. Where is it coming from? The woman looks for the origin of the sound. A floorboard begins to glow. She investigates.*

Yeah? And then what? HUSBAND

Sorry? WOMAN

And then what did you do? HUSBAND

Oh. Nothing much. WOMAN

*The CHILD enters.*

He came home from school. He watched cartoons on TV. I made dinner. WOMAN

*The ding of an oven timer.*

Dinnertime! Let's eat. I'm starving. HUSBAND

*The WOMAN presents the HUSBAND and CHILD with invisible plates of food. The sound of water*

*dripping. The WOMAN turns at the sound. Where is it coming from? She pries back the glowing piece of the floor. The SHADOW and STRANGER (unseen) transform the floorboard into a dining room table. As the HUSBAND and CHILD engage in the gestures and actions of dinnertime, the WOMAN searches for the origin of the water.*

#### HUSBAND

Wow. This looks great. This looks really great. *(To the CHILD:)* Did you wash your hands? Are you sure? *(To WIFE:)* Can you pass that? Do you mind? I can't reach. *(To the CHILD:)* Hey! Elbows. No elbows. *(To WIFE:)* I can't reach. I can't reach. *(To the CHILD:)* What did I say? Elbows! Elbows off the table! Now!

*The table begins to warp and expand. It grows in length, snake-like, filling the stage. The WOMAN watches the HUSBAND and CHILD. The world slowly shifts on its axis. The CHILD laughs louder and louder as the HUSBAND's speech progresses. The WOMAN now sees her HUSBAND and CHILD from above as if from a bird's eye view.*

*(To WIFE:)* Looks delicious. What is this? Can you pass that? Do you mind? I can't reach. *(To the CHILD:)* Hey! Sit up. Sit up. I said, sit up. *(To WIFE:)* What is this? What is this? I can't tell what it is. *(To CHILD:)* Hey! Don't play with your food. I mean it. *(To WIFE:)* Looks delicious. What is this? Can you pass that? Do you mind? I can't reach. *(To CHILD:)* What did I say? Eat. Eat. Eat! *(To WIFE:)* He doesn't eat. He needs to eat. Why doesn't he eat? He needs to eat. *(To CHILD:)* You need to eat. *(To WIFE:)* He needs to eat. What is this? What is this? It smells good, whatever it is, it smells delicious. *(Taking a bite:)* Oooh. Hot, hot, hot, hot, hot, hot, hot. *(To WIFE:)* It's hot, very hot. *(Spilling some food:)* Goddamnit! *(To WIFE as he scrubs the stain:)* What a mess. What a mess I made. What was I thinking? I need to be more careful. I need to watch what I'm doing. *(To CHILD:)* Hey! Hey! Elbows. No elbows. Sit up. Sit up. Don't play with your food. Eat. I said, eat! What are you doing? Careful. Be careful. I said, be careful. What's the matter with you? What's wrong with you? What are you doing? What are you thinking? *(To WIFE:)* Can you pass that? Do you mind? I can't reach. I can't reach. I can't reach. I can't reach.

*The sounds grow louder. The WOMAN reaches out as if to contain the chaos. The floorboard magically snaps back into place.*

#### WOMAN

Bedtime!

*All the sounds stop. The world restores to some semblance of normalcy.*

WOMAN

It's bedtime.

*The WOMAN puts the CHILD to bed. She holds his face and looks at him. She kisses him. She tucks him in bed and turns off the light.*

HUSBAND

Bedtime. It's bedtime.

WOMAN

You go ahead. I'll be in in a little bit.

*The HUSBAND recedes from view. The sounds of night. The WOMAN is alone, but mirrored by her shadow. Music.*

WOMAN

And then he goes to bed, just like he always does. It's the end of another day, like all the other days. Each day like the day before and the day before that and the day before that, everything the same. Each day like the next. An endless repetition of days stretching out into infinity, undifferentiated, identical. And yet, this day is different. This night is different.

*The sounds of night intensify. THE SHADOW pulls a bed from the floor boards.*

WOMAN

This is when it all began, this night seventeen days ago. The last night I slept. It begins with a dream. I remember it with perfect clarity. I remember.

*She slips into a bed. We see her and her HUSBAND in bed from a bird's eye view. The world is engulfed in a deep, velvety darkness.*

8.

*The sound of the WOMAN breathing. The sound of water dripping. It gets louder and distorts. The WOMAN's breathing becomes louder. She's gasping for air. The walls of the room dissolve as she suddenly awakes. The sounds instantly cut out. The sound of a clock ticking. The WOMAN looks around her bedroom. Everything is as it always has*

*been. Her HUSBAND is sleeping. The WOMAN sits up in bed. She looks around her room. She sees her reflection in a mirror. She touches her face. The SHADOW appears.*

SHADOW

It's a dream.

*The WOMAN sees the shadow.*

SHADOW

It's just a dream.

WOMAN

It's just a dream.

SHADOW

You had a dream just now, a bad dream.

WOMAN

Just a bad dream, and then I wake up. I wake up. What was it about? I can't remember. I just remember how I felt.

SHADOW

Falling.

WOMAN

I was falling. I was falling and falling. I remember that.

*The sound of water dripping. The WOMAN clocks it. As her HUSBAND sleeps, the WOMAN searches for the source of the water. The SHADOW watches her. The STRANGER appears. The STRANGER inhabits the character of an old man. The CHILD appears, falling. The WOMAN sees the STRANGER out of the corner of her eye. The WOMAN is suddenly pulled out of bed by the vision of the old man as though drawn by some kind of magnetic force. She tries to turn to look at him. She realizes she can't turn her head. She tries to move, but she can't move. Her heart is racing. Her breathing becomes labored.*

WOMAN

It's a dream. I'm dreaming. I'm still dreaming. I must still be dreaming.

SHADOW

What do you see?

*The STRANGER moves into the WOMAN's field vision. The WOMAN can see him now.*

WOMAN

I see a man, an old man.

SHADOW

Who is he?

WOMAN

I don't know. I don't know who he is. He's staring at me. Why is he staring at me? (*To the STRANGER:*) Who are you?

SHADOW

You need to do something.

WOMAN

I can't. I can't. I can't move. Something's happening to me. What's happening to me? I'm afraid. I'm afraid. This is a dream. I'm dreaming. It's a dream. It's just a dream. This is just a dream.

SHADOW

No. No, it's not.

*The sound of water dripping grows more adamant. The sound reverberates as though heard from inside a giant cavern.*

WOMAN

What's he holding? He's holding something, a small, narrow thing.

*The CHILD is revealed on the floor at the old man's feet.*

WOMAN

A pitcher, white like bone. He's pouring water.

*The CHILD's legs and feet are transformed by the invisible water from the pitcher. She writhes and twitches. The sound of dripping water transforms into the sound of flowing water.*

WOMAN

Water –

SHADOW

Water –

WOMAN

A steady stream of water –

SHADOW

Water –

WOMAN

Water –

SHADOW

A never-ending stream of water –

WOMAN

I feel it. Cold. Wet.

SHADOW

Water –

WOMAN

Water –

SHADOW

He keeps pouring and pouring and pouring.

WOMAN

The water keeps flowing. It keeps flowing. I can feel it on my feet, so much water. It won't stop. It won't ever stop. My feet are going to rot. They're going to rot and melt away. My skin will rot and melt away. I will rot and melt away. What's wrong with me? Something's happening. Something's happening to me.

*The sound of flowing water grows. The water becomes a rushing river, a torrent of water. The CHILD transforms into the water. The CHILD spills down across the ground and engulfs the WOMAN's feet. The CHILD swirls around the WOMAN's feet and legs. The WOMAN tries to scream. The WOMAN's face is revealed to be a flesh-colored blankness devoid of features, her eyes, her mouth erased. The WOMAN touches her face, searching in vain for her eyes, her mouth. She*

*panics. She plunges her fingers into the flesh. She rips open a mouth for herself. She pulls the mouth she's made for herself wider. Her whole face becomes a wide, gaping maw. The CHILD's body is similarly cleaved open. The faceless WOMAN screams. The scream is an echo from a faraway place. It reverberates and grows. An explosive flash. Darkness.*

10.

*The WOMAN suddenly awakes. The WOMAN is in bed. The HUSBAND is in bed beside her fast asleep. The WOMAN looks around her bedroom. Everything is as it always has been. The STRANGER is nowhere to be found. The WOMAN touches her feet and her legs. They seem to be fine. She slips out of bed. She looks around her room. She sees the SHADOW. The WOMAN touches her face as if in a mirror. She has eyes. She has a mouth. She checks to see that her face is intact. She runs her fingers across her face. She's trembling. Her whole body is trembling uncontrollably. The SHADOW appears where the walls used to be.*

WOMAN

It was so real –

SHADOW

So real.

WOMAN

I know it was just a dream, but still –

SHADOW

But still –

WOMAN

It felt so real –

SHADOW

So real.

WOMAN

It was a dream. That's all. A dream that didn't feel like a dream.