

MEMORY

The stage is dark and silent - and, for a moment or two, it stays that way - until, suddenly, there is a RAY of LIGHT that seems to peep through the branches of a tree.

A LOUD CHORD sounds and an OFFSTAGE CHORUS of VOICES sing:

FEMALE CHORUS

(Singing.)
DO NOT FEAR ALONE.

MALE CHORUS

(Singing.)
YOU'RE NOT HERE ALONE.

BOTH

(Singing.)
FOR, AS NIGHTTIME FALLS, YOUR MIND WILL SEE...
ME.

The LIGHTS brighten on the silhouette of a tree in a field of tall grass. We can't tell anything about the tree, other than that it has an overpowering, powerful presence. Its silhouette twists and turns in mighty contours up and out into a seemingly endless sky. The LIGHTS rise in the back - a rising sun - slowly, steadily. The figures of PEOPLE are vaguely discernible in the distance - MEN on one side, WOMEN on the other - who sing, as the LIGHTS brighten:

FEMALE CHORUS

(Singing.)
IN A DREAM, I'LL FIND YOU.
COME, LEAVE THE WORLD
A WORLD BEHIND YOU
WHERE
I'M THERE
ARMS TO SHARE
WAITING FOR YOU.

MALE CHORUS

(Singing.)
 IN A DREAM, I'LL KNOW YOU.
 COME, LEAVE THE WORLD
 A WORLD BELOW YOU
 WHERE
 I'M THERE
 LIKE A PRAYER
 WHISPERED FOR YOU...
 YOU.

FEMALE CHORUS

(Singing.)
 FAITH WILL SUPPLY THE KEY THERE.

MALE CHORUS

(Singing.)
 THERE'S MORE THAN EYES CAN SEE THERE.

ENTIRE CHORUS

(Singing.)
 YOU WILL FIND
 I'M IN YOUR MIND
 WHEN DREAMS COME TRUE -
 AND THERE WE'LL BE...

FEMALE CHORUS

(Singing.)
 ME, YOU.

MALE CHORUS

(Singing.)
 YOU, ME.

BOTH

(Singing.)
 US TWO.

FEMALE CHORUS

(Singing.)
 IN THAT DREAM, I'LL LOVE YOU.

MALE CHORUS

(Singing.)
 HEAVEN INFURLED,
 JUST GOD ABOVE YOU.

ENTIRE CHORUS

(Singing.)
 JUST KNOW
 I WILL BE THERE.
 I'LL BE THERE.

By now, the LIGHTS have risen further on the stage, indicating a brilliant twilight. There is a FIGURE standing center stage, underneath the tree, so calm, tall, and unwavering that HE seems to be carved into the bark itself. From amongst the CHORUS of MEN and WOMEN, a MAN and a WOMAN have each emerged on opposite sides of the stage. THEY are simply attired in white garments that flow with the ease of a dream. As the music fades, THEY seem to be lost, searching for something - and then, THEY seem to find it. THEIR eyes collectively light on the tree, as the FIGURE turns to us and speaks, with an all-knowing form of wisdom:

FIGURE

This is a dream - a dream you yourself may have - but a dream nonetheless, for him and for her. They are here together, but they don't know why. Only I know why - but they, they will have to learn. In the process of learning, they will understand - and, when they understand, they will accept - and, when they accept, they will rejoice. That is the path of life, if we are bold and wise enough to take it.

The MAN and the WOMAN approach the tree. The WOMAN seems eager, entranced. The MAN seems more disoriented and confused.

SHE

It looks just like I imagined it.

FIGURE

The tree, yes - it is found in many people's dreams. Very few receive a chance to get so close to it.

HE

I... I don't understand why I'm here.

FIGURE

You shouldn't - because not all should be understood, not yet. Sometimes it takes time to understand.

SHE

Who are you?

FIGURE

The question is who are you - for I am whatever you make me.
(Discretely looking at the MAN.)
Both of you.

The FIGURE knowingly glances at THEM and indicates the tree.

FIGURE

I have stood by this tree for more years than time has room to hold - and here I always stay. I stay and I wait for people, like you, who are blessed enough to come here.

HE

(Not without irony.)
Why are we the lucky ones?

FIGURE

I didn't say you were lucky.

SHE

But then why are we here?

FIGURE

That is a separate question.

HE

So what's the answer?

FIGURE

The answer is up to you - so I would suggest you come up with a good one.

SHE

What would you suggest?

FIGURE

If I were you, I would make it an answer that involves lessons you must learn. Life only lets you live in memories - that is all - but, if you string those memories together with faith and love, they become a story.

HE

So?

FIGURE

So stories have a purpose.

The MAN and WOMAN look at EACH OTHER, as if for the first time.

FIGURE

Good luck.

The FIGURE snaps HIS fingers and the LIGHTS fall on the stage. The stage remains in darkness for a moment.

Slowly, RAYS of LIGHT begin to pierce the darkness from various corners of the stage. They grow in volume - grow and grow and grow - until we can see the outline of the tree again. It is dawn in some open field - no longer in a dream, but here on Earth - perhaps someplace in the Midwest, perhaps someplace else. Regardless, we can feel the openness, the sunniness, the warmth, the breeze - and that's all that matters.

The stage gradually lightens as the MUSIC rises. A brilliant morning is coming alive before our eyes. The tree emerges from the blackness, framed before a bright and glorious sky, standing proudly and beckoning to us in an ambiguous manner. We can barely discern the FIGURE standing almost absent-mindedly in front of the tree, so perfectly does HE match its colors and its contours.

As the LIGHTS continue to brighten, a CHORUS sings:

CHORUS

(Singing.)

DREAMS
COME ALIVE
AND THRIVE
RIGHT UNDER YOUR EYES
FOR WITH WONDER YOUR EYES
WILL FIND DREAMS SURROUND YOU.

DREAMS
JUST NEED
YOUR FAITH
FOR IF YOU STAY BLIND
THEY'LL STAY IN YOUR MIND.

LOOK
LOOK OUT UPON
THIS WORLD THAT GOD HAS GIVEN.
IT'S THE WORLD
GOD GAVE OUR DREAMS TO LIVE IN.

From the corner of the stage, the WOMAN enters, dressed in hiking attire -

tepidly, uncertainly, as if confronting some revered sight. SHE stares intently at the tree. Mesmerized by it, unable to move or say much of anything. SHE stares at it for a moment and then almost impulsively, longingly moves towards it. SHE seems afraid to approach the tree at first, as if approaching some great presence that demands something more than the eagerness and joy SHE can provide - but SHE approaches it nonetheless and lightly touches the bark, as if touching some sacred object.

CHORUS

(Singing.)

DREAMS
COMETH TRUE
IF YOU
PUT TRUST IN YOUR HEART
FOR NOT JUST IN YOUR HEART
WILL YOUR DREAMS ASTOUND YOU.

KEEP
YOUR FAITH
ALIVE
FOR IF YOU BELIEVE
YOUR DREAMS NEVER GRIEVE.

LOOK
LOOK OUT UPON
A WORLD THAT DREAMS RESIDE IN.
THERE'S NO MIND
THEY'RE MEANT TO CROUCH AND HIDE IN.

The WOMAN joyously turns around, so enchanted, so enraptured, as if a weary traveler having found the only rainbow in an otherwise overcast sky. SHE reaches into HER pockets and removes a guide - some hiking guide with pictures - and opens it. SHE eagerly scours the pages and finds a special one in particular that causes HER to stop and stare intently. SHE smiles broadly again and turns back at the tree. Evidently, SHE has found what SHE was looking for. The WOMAN closes HER eyes, as if to envision the tree in a different place, perhaps in the spot that it once occupied in HER mind, nestled in a dream SHE has often dreamt and more often felt - and so, overcome,

SHE turns longingly to the tree and slowly begins to move towards it, as SHE sings:

SHE

(Singing.)
THERE YOU ARE
SO CLEAR NOW
LIKE THE DREAM THAT I REMEMBER.
ONCE SO FAR
YOU'RE HERE NOW
AND TO ME YOU CRY "REMEMBER."

I CAN RECALL
EVERY MOMENT NOW
AS YOUR LEAVES
SHAKE
AND SIGH "REMEMBER."

HE

I'm flattered.

By now, the WOMAN has approached the tree again and is touching its bark - when, abruptly, SHE notices another face staring back at HER. It is the face of the MAN - and not just the face, but the body, too, suddenly standing in front of HER. HE has emerged from behind the tree and is smiling at HER - amused, perhaps - intrigued, perhaps - but, either way, gentle in HIS smile. The WOMAN gasps slightly and backs away. SHE stares at the MAN for a moment in shock.

SHE

Hello.

HE

Hello.

HE

I hope you were talking to me.

SHE

Oh, well... I was talking to both of you.

The MAN turns and looks around, amused, as if inspecting whether someone else is there.

SHE

I meant, the tree - I was talking to the tree.

HE

The tree.

SHE

Y... yes.

HE

Don't worry. I'm not judging. You can talk to anyone or anything you want. Most people I know don't listen anyway. A tree is probably a better option. I tried talking to him myself, actually. I was pouring out some frustrations a moment ago. He hasn't answered back, though.

SHE

Maybe he's just waiting for you to finish talking.

HE

My ex-girlfriend told me I have a problem with that.

The MAN smiles and looks at the WOMAN. SHE just stares back at HIM blankly. We sense SHE is inspecting HIM, turning over thoughts in HER mind. The MAN senses this, too, and rather enjoys it.

HE

What are you doing?

SHE

I'm thinking.

HE

Can you think a little louder?

SHE

No.

A FAMILIAR RING sounds. The MAN reaches into HIS pocket and takes out a cell phone.

HE

Sorry - I hate to be so Twenty-first Century. I need to answer this.

The MAN walks offstage with the phone. The WOMAN can't help but stare wistfully in HIS direction.

FIGURE

Hello again.

The WOMAN jumps with a start. SHE didn't notice the FIGURE beside the tree.

SHE

It's... it's you.

FIGURE

I knew you'd recognize me.

The WOMAN nods, as if too overawed to respond. The FIGURE turns and nods at the tree.

FIGURE

And this?

The WOMAN looks again upon the tree with a childlike wonder. The FIGURE follows HER glance. The CHORUS sings, exposing HER inner thoughts:

CHORUS

(Singing.)
 HERE IT STANDS
 SO NEAR NOW
 LIKE THE DREAM THAT YOU REMEMBER
 AND JUST BELOW
 THERE'S A SOMEONE THERE
 WHO PERHAPS
 YOU
 MIGHT, TOO, REMEMBER.

The WOMAN seems struck by this, just as the MAN returns.

HE

Dropped call. There's bad reception here. Then again, there's bad reception everywhere. Like I said, it's hard to reach people these days. Have you found that, too? Like me - I just tried to reach someone, and I did... sort of. It was my ex. I talked to her and she... Well, no, I really sent words in her direction. That's more accurate. She sent words back in my direction, too. There's just some things we have to work out - technicalities. We didn't really talk, though - not really. I guess you're smart about the tree thing. He doesn't care about reception, does he? He just stands there and listens. I like that. It seems you're good at it, too. You're just standing there and listening - and you're doing a good job with it. I can listen, too - believe it or not - but you need to give me a chance. You need to say something and, watch, I'll listen.

The WOMAN just stares at HIM.

HE

Am I overwhelming you?

The WOMAN appears to say something - or try to - but nothing comes out. Instead, SHE nods a quick "goodbye" - at least we think it's "goodbye" - and exits. As SHE leaves, SHE drops the guidebook SHE was holding behind HER. The MAN looks after HER for a moment, confused but amused. HE finds the woman attractive in HER enigmatic awkwardness. HE waits a moment, as if expecting HER to return - but when SHE doesn't:

HE

Okay then.

The MAN turns and looks at the tree.

HE

Well... at least you can't run.

The MAN notices the guidebook on the ground. HE picks it up and notices the page is turned open to the tree. HE turns around and peers at the tree behind HIM quizzically. Clearly, there is a match between the here-and-now and the picture in the book. The woman came to this tree for a purpose. The MAN thinks on this for a moment and then shakes HIS head in confusion: Why did SHE leave? What did SHE want? Either way, HE gives up trying to understand. HE turns back again to the tree and considers it for a moment.

HE

(Singing.)
THERE YOU ARE
AND WE'RE NOW
LIKE TWO LONELY FRIENDS TOGETHER...
TYING UP LOOSE ENDS TOGETHER.

The MUSIC trails off uncertainly into the air as the MAN's thoughts wander aimlessly. HE looks again in the direction of the WOMAN. HE is clearly intrigued by HER. A FAMILIAR RING sounds again. The MAN sighs and takes out HIS cell phone. HE walks offstage with it, as the LIGHTS FALL.

Gradually, the LIGHTS on the stage shift back and forth - night and day rolling by - time passing. THEY eventually end in a rusty orange tint that suggests a sunset. We have been transported to another time, but the place is the same. The tree before us is as majestic as always.

Meanwhile, the FIGURE has remained immovable under the tree's branches. HE watches the lighting change with a wise and all-knowing glance, as if having experienced this change many times before. Despite this, HE is still able to admire its beauty and its purpose in the universe.

After a beat, the FIGURE notices someone in the distance and smiles knowingly at us. A moment later, the WOMAN enters. SHE is still shy - still timid, still unsure - but decidedly more determined than SHE was in the previous scene. We get the sense that SHE has wanted to come back to the tree for a long time, but somehow, for some reason, SHE has been prevented from doing so. SHE stares at the tree again and nods casually at the FIGURE - not surprised, not shocked - as if HE was bound to be there.

As the music calms, the WOMAN looks back and forth - perhaps looking for someone? Seeing no one, SHE approaches the tree again, when:

HE

Hello again.

The WOMAN turns to find the MAN has entered off to the side of the stage. SHE reacts with less surprise than before, but rather ambiguous discomfort. She knows SHE had to see the MAN again, but rather was hoping that this particular trip would not require any hard work of the heart. Still, we get the sense that, deep inside, the WOMAN expected to meet the MAN and is ready to make the most of this moment with HIM.

HE

You still haven't given me a chance to listen.

The WOMAN just stares.

HE

You're wondering what I'm doing here, I'll bet you.

SHE still stares.

HE

Okay, well, to tell you the truth, I was hoping to run into someone. You see, a few weeks ago - maybe three or four - I was sitting here, moping a bit, minding my own business, when, suddenly, I hear the voice of this woman. She's standing there, talking to a tree, which just so happens to be this one here - so, me being me, I couldn't help but say something - anything, really. I'm glad I did, too, because the woman was very beautiful - or should I say "is?" I remember her well, because, she looked a lot like you. She sounded like you, too - which is to say, not much at all. Even so, we talked a bit - although, really, I did most of the talking - and then...

SHE

Don't you mean you just sent words in her direction?

The MAN looks at HER, amused.

HE

Oh, no - I think we talked.

The WOMAN appears to smile slightly.

SHE

I didn't really say much.

HE

Not with your mouth.

The WOMAN smiles again and turns away. It seems SHE is contemplating what next to say in HER mind. The mental wrestling match is clearly a dramatic one, although we cannot see every fumble. SHE senses the pause is getting a little too loud, too long - and so, as if to offer an explanation:

SHE

I'm thinking.

HE

Can you think a little louder?

SHE

No.

HE

Fair enough. I suppose I put myself at danger by asking that question. You seem to think a great deal. If you start talking about it, you may never stop.

(A beat.)

Then again, I said I'd listen, didn't I?

The MAN crosses HIS arms ("I'm listening now") and leans against the tree. In the chosen spot, however, HE ends up leaning uncomfortably against the FIGURE. The FIGURE doesn't quite appreciate being squashed up against the tree - and the MAN? It's clear that HE doesn't sense the FIGURE at all - but the WOMAN does. As the MAN leans, SHE is almost ready to say something - "Stop!" "Don't!" "Look out!" - but, noticing the MAN doesn't know the FIGURE is there, the WOMAN stops HERSELF. In that moment, there is something SHE understands - something deep and disappointing - as if a dream being dashed upon the rocks. The MAN notices the sadness and steps forward again, freeing the FIGURE, who is very glad to be released.

HE

What's wrong?

The WOMAN turns away, unsure how to express what SHE is feeling, unsure how to convey all the thoughts in HER head. The MAN waits for HER to say something, but SHE doesn't say anything. The MAN sighs to HIMSELF.

HE

You know, there's a thing about silence...

(Singing.)

SILENCE
IS A SONG
WITHOUT A SOUL.
NO MUSIC
AND NO MELODY.
NOT A RHYME
OR ANYTHING
THAT CHARMS THE EAR.
THAT IS SILENCE.

HE (CONT)

WHY START SINGING
 WITH NO MUSIC
 WITH NO FEELING?
 ADD THOSE IN
 AND WE'LL BEGIN
 A SONG.
 I PREFER
 A SONG.

EV'RY HEART
 HAS A SONG INSIDE
 TUNEFUL AND BRIGHT
 OR DARK AND DOLEFUL.
 LET IT FREE
 AND SING OUT TO ME
 AND BRING OUT TO ME
 YOUR HEART IN A SONG.

EV'RY HEART
 HAS A SONG TO HIDE
 TENDER AND SWEET
 OR SOFT AND SOULFUL.
 LET IT FREE
 AND AIR IT WITH ME
 AND SHARE IT WITH ME
 AND I'LL SING ALONG.

SING TO ME.
 SING TO ME.
 SING
 EV'RY PART
 OF YOUR HEART
 AND I'LL SING WITH YOU, TOO.
 WHEN I DO

WE'LL SEE
 IF THERE IS HARMONY
 AND WE
 MAY FIND
 THAT OUR VOICES MINGLE.
 LET'S FIND OUT.
 SING TO ME
 AND WE'LL SEE.

SING TO ME.
 SING TO ME.
 SING
 EV'RY PART
 OF YOUR HEART
 WITH A VOICE THAT CAN SING
 EVERY NEED,
 EVERYTHING.

HE (CONT)

ALL HEARTS LONG
TO SHARE THEIR SONG.
THEY MUST SPEAK.
THEY MUST CONFESS.
A HEART WITH
NOTHING BETTER
THAN A SIGH TO SHARE
IS BARE...
SIMPLY BARE.

YOUR HEART
HAS A SONG WITHIN IT.
DON'T HOLD IT IN
OR WASTE A MINUTE.
OPEN WIDE
AND LET ME INSIDE
AND GET ME INSIDE
AND LEAD ME TO YOU.

EV'RY HEART
HAS A SONG IN IT.
EV'RY SONG
HAS A DREAM BEHIND IT.
AND IF YOU TRY
YOU MIGHT JUST FIND IT.

The WOMAN considers the MAN in
surprise.

SHE

Yes, I... I understand.

The MAN smiles gently at HER surprise.

HE

Before I met my ex, I used to be a musician - although it was nothing special. I just did my best - and that was not enough for me, but not for everybody. My ex wanted me to quit, so I did, and I spent time on a real job. Since then, I talk too much, maybe because it's the only way I can speak now. Sometimes, though, words just won't do - and, you know, I think that's why you're so silent. I can feel it. You have something to say and you're not saying it - and it isn't because you don't want to, but because words aren't good enough - so, in the spirit of that revelation... I'm waiting.

The WOMAN thinks for a woman on what the MAN has said. HE waits for some verdict from HER - a word, perhaps - a nod, a glance - anything that registers SHE has heard HIM... but nothing comes. The MAN shakes HIS head and turns to look at the tree. The FIGURE smiles at

HIM and waves. The MAN, however,
doesn't see HIM. HE stares blankly and
then turns back to the WOMAN:

HE

I guess that answers my question right there.

The MAN smiles sadly and nods a
"goodbye." HE begins to walk towards
the exit, when:

SHE

I've met you before.

The MAN stops, turns - and listens.

SHE

Don't... don't you remember?

The MAN slowly shakes HIS head.

SHE

I was hoping I didn't have to say anything. I was hoping you
would just know.

HE

Women tend to think that.

SHE

No - this is different.

HE

What do you mean?

The WOMAN stares at HIM, wondering.

SHE

You don't remember anything?

The MAN shakes HIS head again.

SHE

(Singing.)
THERE'S A PLACE
WE CANNOT SEE.
IT EXISTS
BETWEEN EACH MOMENT.
IN THAT PLACE
YOU AND ME
WE WERE ONE.

YOU, ME
ME, YOU
AND GOD, TOO

SHE (CONT)

AND A LOVE
THAT
FILLED THE SKY
THE HILLS
THE SEA
THE FIELDS
WITH HOPE.

HURT.
PAIN.
FEAR.
GRIEF.
GONE.
ALL GONE.

FREE
FIN-A-LLY FREE
NAMING THE WORLD
CLAIMING THE WORLD AS OUR OWN -
YOU, ME
ME, YOU
GOD, TOO
AND A LOVE
THAT
FILLED THE SKY
THE HILLS
THE SEA
THE FIELDS
AND MORE
AND OH
WHAT A TIME WE SHARED.

AND THEN IT PASSED
TOO QUICKLY
AND THEN I LOST YOU
AND SO I SEARCHED
AND SO I HAVE FOUND.

The MAN is starting quizzically at the WOMAN.

SHE

You don't believe me.

HE

Oh, no - I believe you. I just don't remember ever having a dream like that. Then again, I've never been good with remembering dreams. It could be hiding back there somewhere, in my mind. Maybe I just need some help dragging it out. I guess that's where you come in... isn't it?

The WOMAN seems mildly encouraged by this and smiles in response. HER mind

suddenly shifts to more serious matters:

SHE

How... how did you now I'd be here?

The MAN smiles and removes a familiar guidebook from HIS pocket.

HE

It has an events calendar - and you circled this date.

The WOMAN can't help but smile, too. In serene silence.

SHE

What did you mean before? You said something about some question being answered.

HE

Yes, that's right.

SHE

What question was that?

HE

Whether we could fall in love, of course.

The WOMAN is struck by this.

HE

Now look - women aren't the only romantics.

The WOMAN manages to smile again.

HE

(Seeing HE is getting somewhere.)
Speaking of romance, what are you doing next Thursday? I know this nice place - very quiet, which you'd like - which...

SHE

(Suddenly, even fearfully.)
Oh, I can't. I'm sorry.

HE

(Hurt by the refusal.)
So am I. I guessed I misunderstood.

SHE

No, it's not that, it's just... I'm not from around here. I had to travel a long time to find this tree. I live a long way away and I'm going someplace even further.

I see. HE

I'm sorry. SHE

For how long? HE

Maybe a year. SHE

Will you be back? HE

Oh, yes. I will. I promise. SHE

(Very disappointed.) HE
Good.

I'm sorry. SHE

This place you're going... does it have any connection to HE
civilization - internet, mail, et cetera?

The WOMAN smiles lightly.

Of course. SHE

Good, so we can keep in touch. HE

Yes, we can... if you want to. SHE

I do. HE

I do, too. SHE

The MAN nods happily.

(Singing.) HE
THERE'S A PLACE
WE CANNOT SEE.

SHE

(Singing.)
IT EXISTS
BETWEEN EACH MOMENT.

HE

(Singing.)
CAN THAT PLACE
DARE TO BE
HERE AND NOW?
ME, YOU
YOU, ME
AND GOD, TOO
AND A PEACE
THAT
FILLS THE SKY
THE HILLS
THE SEAS
THE FIELDS
WITH LOVE.

SHE

(Singing.)
AND SO I SEARCHED
AND SO I HAVE FOUND.

The MAN and WOMAN consider EACH OTHER for a moment. The FIGURE examines THEM both and nods satisfactorily. HE then makes a loud "a-hem" sound, as if to raise a sort of signal. Suddenly, it's almost as if the WOMAN remembers something. What, we don't know. Why, we don't know. We only sense a certain urgency to leave. SHE nods a "goodbye" at the MAN and makes to leave. The MAN, confused, calls after HER:

HE

Wait! You don't even know how to reach me.

SHE

I do - and I will!

The WOMAN smiles and exits. The MAN is left wondering why SHE left - and why so fast. The FIGURE, as if answering, shrugs HIS shoulders and sits down in front of the tree. The MAN thinks to HIMSELF for a moment - utterly perplexed, yet enchanted by the WOMAN - as the LIGHTS fall.