

Sue Brannan Walker

## DEATH. DRAMA. DIGITS. DREAM.

### DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- Anne Bronte**      *Warm hands are there, that, clasped in mine,  
the warmer heart will not belie.*
- Joseph Conrad**      *My task, which I am trying to achieve is, by the  
power of the written word, to make you hear, to  
make you feel--it is, before all, to make you see.*
- Leonora Carrington**      *All this may have been a collective hallucination  
although nobody has yet explained to me what a  
collective hallucination actually means.*
- Kahlil Gibran**      *The timeless in you is aware of life's timelessness.  
And knows that yesterday is but today's memory  
and tomorrow is today's dream.*
- Carson McCullers**      *How can the dead be truly dead when they still live  
in the souls of those who are left behind?*
- W.B. Yeats**      *The world's more full of weeping than you can  
understand.*
- John Keats**      *Do you not see how necessary a world of pains  
and troubles is to school an intelligence and make it a soul?*
- Steve Jobs**      We're born, we live for a brief instant, and we die.
- J.D. Salinger**      *I don't exactly know what I mean but I mean it.*



Death is but a dream and life is merely the daydream of death  
--Mike Dickenson

JOSEPH CONRAD

(Conrad walks from the left stage entrance to center stage and stares into space. He waves his right hand about, then gestures with his index finger and thumb as if he were pointing a gun at his chest.)

“We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness. Men alone are capable of every wickedness. The darkness of red borders on black. Is the heart an organ? Variations on America? Or a cage that can’t be opened like a cadaver? Bam!

LEONORA CARRINGTON

(Dressed in flannel knickers and a tight-fitting shirt stands stage left in front of an easel with a paintbrush in her hand).

“Dawn is the time when nothing breathes. Everything is transferred. They say I am crazy. Mad. A spider. Black widow. Do I hear a trumpet blaring in my ear?)

(She throws a pot of paint on the floor, bends down, and smears black with both hands.)

“I’ve always had access to other worlds. We all do because we dream.”

JOSEPH CONRAD

(Still standing center stage as a spotlight plays upon him. He seems unaware that anyone else is present, as if the world were consumed by darkness and no one can see. He wipes his eyes.)

“Little things make all the great difference. When they are gone you must fall back upon your own innate strength, upon your own capacity for faithfulness. Of course you may be too much of a fool to go wrong—too dull even to know you are being assaulted by the powers of darkness. I take it no fool ever made a bargain for his soul with the devil. The fool is too much of a fool or the devil too much of a devil—I don’t know which. Or you may be such a thunderingly exalted creature to be altogether deaf and blind to anything but heavenly sights and sounds. Then the earth for you is only a standing—and whether to be like this is your loss or your gain I won’t pretend to say. But most of us are neither one or the other.”

KAHLIL GIBRAN

(Walks over to where Carrington is smearing black paint on the floor, places his hand on her left shoulder, pulls her up to stand facing him and speaks to her.)

“When you are sorrowful look again in your heart and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.

CARSON McCULLERS

(Enters stage right and sits in a lazy boy chair center stage, takes her right hand, picks up her paralyzed left hand and places it on her missing right breast. She tries to stand but falls back into the chair.)

“There is the lover and the beloved and these two come from different countries. The beloved can be of any description. A misshapen woman, a preacher in love with a fallen woman. The most outlandish people can be the stimulus for love. And the curt truth is that, in a deep secret way, the state of being beloved is intolerable to many. Yes, I tried to kill myself just as my husband killed himself—with sleeping pills. The heart is lonely. A bloody lonely hunter!”

ANNE BRONTE

(Enters stage left and sits in a chair stage right, buries her head in her hands, sighs, looks up and speaks as if to herself.)

“Keep both heart and hand in your own possession. There is always a but in this imperfect world. What a fool you must be” said my head to my heart.”

W.B. YEATS

(Enters stage left. Walks to center stage, stands on the right of Joseph Conrad. The two men turn to face each other.)

“Such monkey business. This love that pitched his mansion in the place of excrement.” (Puts his index finger into Conrad’s chest). “That pet monkey of yours, what did you sell him for?”

JOSEPH CONRAD

(Pokes his finger into Yeats' chest)

“That Steinach operation of yours – and the intimate connection between desire and creativity – didn’t do much to rejuvenate your sexual potency, did it?”

(Yeats steps in front of Conrad, faces the darkness and recites lines from his poem, “The Wild Old Wicked Man. He walks with a cane.)

“Who understands the dark?  
Because I am mad about women,  
who can know  
when an old man’s blood grows cold  
and I can but touch.  
A coarse old man am I . . .  
I forget it all awhile  
upon a woman’s breast;  
words I have that can pierce the heart.”

JOSEPH CONRAD

(suddenly shouting)

Of darkness . . .

JOHN KEATS

(is seated by Carson McCullers, rises and tosses a handful of violets in the air.)

But can death be sleep, when life is but a dream and scenes of bliss pass as a phantom by? The transient pleasures as a vision seem, and yet we think the greatest pain’s to die.

(Pulls a bottle of Claret wine from his pocket.)

“Joseph, my man, I have here a bottle of my favorite Chateau Margeaux. Let’s drink to that monkey of yours. I need him to tear my awful poems to shreds. I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart’s affections and the

truth of the Imagination, but touch, you know, has a memory.”

STEVE JOBS

(Hold up a wine glass that he has pulled from his pocket like a proverbial magic trick.)

“Well, Here’s to the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes... The ones who see things differently — they’re not fond of rules... You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them, but the only thing you can’t do is ignore them because they change things... They push the human race forward, and while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius, because the ones who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world, are the ones who do.”

LEONORA CARRINGTON

(Holds out her paint-smearred hands and wipes them on her flannel nickers)

“Reason must know the heart’s reason and every other reason. There are things that are not sayable. That’s why we have art.”

STEVE JOBS

(Tosses the wine glass in the air)

“We don’t get a chance to do that many things, and every one should be excellent. Because this is our life. You’ve got to find what you love (pauses and looks around. And that is true for your for work as it is for your lovers. )So it better be damn good. And one more thing . . .”

(He is interrupted by J. D. Salinger who wrings his hands, pulls out of his pocket, walks over and pocks it into Steve Jobs chest.)

J.D. SALINGER

“I have scars on my hands from touching certain people. I thought what I'd do was, I'd pretend I was one of those deaf-mutes. That way I wouldn't have to have any goddam stupid useless conversations with anybody. If anybody wanted to tell me something, they'd have to write it on a piece of paper and shove it over to me. They'd get bored as hell doing that after a while, and then I'd be through with having conversations for the rest of my life. Everybody'd think I was just a poor deaf-mute bastard and they'd leave me alone, but when

you're dead, they really fix you up. I hope to hell **when I die**, somebody has sense enough to just **dump me in the river** or something. Anything except sticking me in a goddamn cemetery. People coming and putting a bunch a bunch of flowers on your stomach on Sunday, and all that crap."

## ALIHORNS ASSEMBLING

Assemblage:

ARIEL – Age 9 going on 10

APRIL—Age 12

ANDREW – Age 17 – the first cousin of April and Ariel

ALBERT – A Curmudgeonly Autocrat of apparent ancient age and with alternative facts.

ACT I

APRIL

Ariel. Andy. Come quick! They're in the grove of aspidistra singing!

ARIEL

What is? What are "They"? Looks like horses, but they're not. And they have a horn on their head, but not like an antelope. Shhhh. Listen.

(Beneath Airy Clouds, words loose wind)

For years we had an aspidistra in a flower pot  
On the whatnot, near the hatstand, in the hall  
It didn't seem to grow till one day our brother Joe  
Had a notion that he'd make it strong and tall  
So he's crossed it with an acorn from an oak tree  
And he's planted it against the garden wall.

It shot up like a rocket till it nearly reached the sky  
It's the biggest aspidistra in the world.  
We couldn't see the top of it, it got so bloomin' high  
It's the biggest aspidistra in the world.

The dogs all come around for miles – a lovely sight to see  
They sniff around for hours and hours and wag their tails with glee

So I've had to put a notice up to say it's not a tree  
It's the biggest aspidistra in the world.

APRIL

Look at the clouds Andy. They're right on top of the creatures' heads swirls of cotton candy.

ANDREW

Those are altocumulus clouds. When they swim in the heavenly ocean and pass in front of the moon, a colored ring appears – red on the outside and blue inside.

ARIEL

It's like up is down and down is up – like the ocean is over our head and the sky beneath our feet.

ANDREW

And outside is inside.

APRIL

And the color of dreams like little crystal candies?

ARIEL

And strange single-horned creatures afrolicking. What are they?

ANDREW

Alicorns – a sort of unicorn with angelic wings and azurite eyes. It's like the aurora borealis is only a wind-stream nearby.

ALBERT

The alicorn, the unicorn, the auk or ass or whatever you call the thing is MYTH. It's not real. Annoying, pure-n-tee annoying, the way you're carrying on. Atrocious actually, your behavior.

ARIEL

A lot you know about it. You're a curmudgeon. You smell like crude oil, you do. You might sound gruff, but I'm not afraid of you.

APRIL

All over our yard there are acres of acorns. I picked about a hundred of them last year but couldn't grow a single aspidistra, not one. I hoped to climb one like a beanstalk, climb right up the very tallest one and sail right down into the crowd of alicorns.

ANDREW

We can take the celestial omnibus. It only departs on nights when the old moon holds the new moon in its arms.

ALBERT

Alicorn is an historical Latin word for the horn of a unicorn in alchemical texts, you airheads. They appear in ancient Achaemenid Assyrial seals. It is said that there was medicinal use adroitly attached to the horn that cured allergies, arthritis, ague due to the powder in the horn – but that is fantasy and not fact. I'm in a position of authority, and I am going to ban alihorns, build a structure higher than the highest aspidistra in the world and keep the damn things out – maybe even agitating children who insist in artifice.

APRIL

Albert's acerebral – without a brain. He doesn't believe in wonder and imagination.

ANDREW

Just alternative facts.

ARIEL

And I will teach them, the alicorns, show them how to allemande left, advisedly which is, indeed, an *acacae arte*. Real magic.

ANDREW  
(To April and Ariel)

*Allons-y*. Let's away. I've procured our pink kitty cat travel cards. Aeolus promises fine fresh air. The celestial omnibus is waiting at the foot of the biggest aspidistra in the world.