VIGILS

Scene 1

The Widow stands by the window, waiting.

Widow: It's been two years since you died.
It was fall, like it is now, and the leaves had already fallen.
Not that much has changed. I still drink gin and tonic. I still believe happiness never really lasts, and I still love you.
I've tried my best not to. I've tried so hard to forget.

Soul: I know you've tried.

Widow: Every day I wake up and think maybe today is the day I won't remember. And it never is. Every day is the same.

Soul: Today is different.

Widow: Yes, today I'm waiting to be picked up for my first date since you died.

Soul: Are you nervous?

Widow: I told myself I wasn't going to be. But I am. I don't think I can make small talk any more.

Soul: So make big talk.

Widow: What's big talk?

Soul: Ask him if he thinks happiness really lasts. Ask him if he believes in an afterlife. Ask him if he thinks each person's soul is judged for the things they do on earth.

Widow: Nobody wants to talk about that stuff on a first date.
That'll totally freak him out.

Soul: Fine. Talk about the weather. Talk about whatever you like.

Widow: Do you think you're going to be judged for what you did on earth? *(a baby cries. Only the soul hears it.)*

Soul: I don't know. *(The Body appears. In fireman outfit.)* I hope not. *(The Body runs from one side of the room to the other and chops down a door. It climbs through. The baby stops crying. The Wooer appears at the door looking nervous holding flowers. He wears a suit and tie, which he is unaccustomed to. He knocks on the door.)*

Widow: He's here.
(Calling.) I'll just be a minute! I just got out of the shower!

Wooer: *(Calling)* Take your time! *(Outside the door the Wooer sprays breath-freshener in his mouth. He checks his hair. He makes sure his underarms don't smell.)*

Soul: You didn't just get out of the shower.

Widow: I don't want him to think I've just been sitting here waiting.
He'll think I'm pathetic.

Soul: No he won't.

Widow: Let's practice my small talk. So, did you catch the game last night?

Soul: No. I don't have any eyes. I'm a soul.

Widow: No. That was small talk. I'll start over.
So, did you catch the game last night?

Soul: Yeah. It sure was a good game.

Widow: That's what I thought. But I think their defense is slipping.

Soul: I think the best defense is a good offense.

Widow: I have to disagree with you.
I think a team with sound defense, while not as flashy as a team with a high-powered offense, is more rooted in the fundamentals of the game and therefore the better team.

Soul: You make a very good case for the importance of defense. I change my opinion.

Widow: That was pretty good small talk. Let's try the weather. You go.

Soul: So. Fall sure came early this year, huh?

Widow: Sure did. My husband died in the fall. So when I see the leaves fall I think of his death. Even though it's been two years already it seems like only yesterday he was alive and he held me in his arms and we were happy. *(She starts crying)*

Soul: Maybe you should avoid talking about the weather.

Widow: I'm not ready for this.

Soul: Yes you are. Just open the door.

Widow: What if I start crying?

Soul: Say you have to powder your nose.

Widow: Powder my nose. Got it.

Soul: Open the door.

Widow: Wish me luck.

Soul: You don't need luck.

Widow: Wish me luck anyway.

Soul: Good luck.

Widow: Thank you. *(She opens the door.)* Sorry that took so long.

Wooer: It was worth the wait. You look beautiful. *(The Wooer kisses the Widow on the cheek. She blushes.)* Hey.

Soul: What's up?

Widow: Are those flowers for me?

Wooer: Yes, they are. I bought them from my cousin who's a professional florist.

Widow: They're beautiful. I love roses. *(She puts the roses in a vase.)*

Soul: That's not true. You love marigolds.

Wooer: You don't love roses?

Widow: I love marigolds and roses.

Wooer: You don't have to pretend to love them. I asked my cousin what kind of flowers to bring and he asked me, "Do you like this girl?" and I said, "This isn't a girl, this is a woman," and he asked me, "Do you like this woman" and I said, "You better believe I do," and he said, "Buy her twelve long-stemmed roses," so I did. It's not like I have a personal affinity for roses. I was just going on his say-so because he's a professional florist...

Widow: Can I fix you a drink?

Wooer: I would love one, but I don't know if we have the time. I heard Chez Genevieve is stingy about their reservations.

Widow: We have reservations at Chez Genevieve?

Wooer: I hope that's okay.

Widow: That's more than okay. It's just such an extravagance.

Wooer: I'm gonna pay for dinner and everything, if that's what you're worried about.

Widow: It's not.

Soul: It's where we got engaged.

Wooer: Oh. Then we'll go somewhere else.

Widow: Don't be silly.

Soul: Those reservations are impossible to get. And I barely even remember when I proposed.

Widow: You don't remember when you proposed?

Soul: *(Sotto)* Of course I do. I was just saying that to make it less awkward.

Wooer: *(Sotto)* This might be rude, but can we talk about this not right in front of your husband's soul? It's weirding me out.

Widow: Of course we can.

Soul: I should be getting in bed anyway. *(The soul gets in the box, which hopefully doesn't look too much like a coffin).* I hope your date goes well.

Widow: Have a good night's sleep.

Soul: I'm glad it's you. You were always my favorite.

Wooer: Thank you... sorry, I don't know what to call you anymore.

Soul: Soul is fine.

Wooer: Thank you, Soul.

Widow: Good night. *(The widow kisses the Soul on the head, as you do with a child.)*

Soul: Good night. *(The Soul ducks down. The Widow locks the lock with a key from around her neck.)*

Wooer: Let's seriously just go somewhere else.

Widow: Those reservations are impossible to get.

Wooer: I just thought you would like something fancy. And since I'm not exactly the fanciest guy, I asked my cousin, a different cousin, a real estate broker who knows everything about nightlife; I asked him, "What's the fanciest place in town?" and he said "Chez Genevieve, but it's hard to get into" And I thought that's what you would want. Me, I'm more of a simple kind of guy. I would be fine just eating tacos down at Ernesto y Ernesto.

Widow: You mean at that little taco shop down by the river.

Wooer: That's the one. The guys who run it are two brothers, both named Ernesto, which is where they got the name.

Widow: You really don't mind if we skip Chez Genevieve? *(The Wooer takes off his tie and puts it in his pocket.)*

Wooer: Do I mind? I hate wearing a tie. To tell you the truth, I can't even tie one. I had to ask my cousin to tie it for me.

Widow: The florist or the real estate broker?

Wooer: A different one. A kindergarten teacher.

Widow: I wish I had more family. Because that's all you have in the end.

Wooer: I don't know if that's exactly true.

Widow: That's what people say anyway. I wouldn't know. My husband was my only family and he's been dead now for over two years. He died at the beginning of fall, just like it is now. But I guess you already knew that.

Wooer: I guess I did.

Widow: Excuse me. I have to powder my nose. *(She goes quickly into the bathroom.)*

Wooer: Take your time. Ernesto y Ernesto are open late. *(The Wooer pokes around the room. Checks out the view from the window. The picture of the dead husband. Calling into the bathroom.)* You two ever thought about having any children?

Widow: *(Calling back)* What? *(They speak loudly through the door until she comes out. You get it I'm sure.)*

Wooer: You said he was your only family. I was just wondering if you two ever thought about having children.

Widow: I had a miscarriage a long time ago. Sometimes at night I think I can hear my baby crying.

Wooer: I'm so sorry. I had no idea you had a miscarriage.

Widow: It's not your fault. How could you have known?

Wooer: I know, but I'm sorry anyway.

Widow: Thanks. That's sweet of you to say. *(The widow comes back, sort of fresh but sort of streaky with make-up.)*

Wooer: You look really beautiful. Did I already tell you that?

Widow: You did.

Wooer: Oh. Sorry. Sometimes when I get nervous I repeat myself.

Widow: You don't have to apologize.

Wooer: I'm not very good at small talk.

Widow: You're not?

Wooer: No. I can't stand it when people talk about sports or gossip or the weather.

Widow: Me neither.

Wooer: I just wanted to tell you have tonight means a lot to me.

Widow: It means a lot to me, too.

Wooer: You don't have to say that.

Widow: I'm not just saying it.

Soul: *(From inside the box.)* She's not!

Wooer: You can hear us, Soul.

Soul: Sorry. I should have pretended that I can't!

Wooer: *(Quietly)* Can we get out of here?

Widow: *(Quietly)* Yes. I can't wait to meet the Ernestos.

(He offers his arm. She takes it and they go. The lights fade. Once they're black we hear a baby crying. And smoke some out from under the door. The Body appears in fireman outfit.)

Soul: I could hear a baby crying inside so I broke down the door. *(The body breaks down the door. Goes inside.) .)* Even though it couldn't understand me, I call out to it. I say, "Hold on. I'm coming." *(The Body comes out into a smoky room.)*

Body: Hold on. I'm coming.

Soul: My last thoughts: People will call me a hero. I'll say humbly:

Body: I'm just doing my job.

Soul: I think about my wife. About the way her face looks in the morning, before she's awake. The way her lips curl down. I think *Where is that baby?*

Body: Where is that baby?

Soul: I wonder where there is a judgment of souls for what they did on earth. And if there is, I wonder whether I'll go to heaven or to hell. *(The baby stops crying.)*

Body: Don't stop crying! Let me hear you cry!

Soul: My last thought is about the big red spot on Jupiter, which somebody told me once is actually a huge storm, twice as big as the earth.

Body: That is one big storm.

Soul: And then the roof falls on me. *(The roof collapses. The lights go to black, except for on the soul.)* And my body dies. *(Lights go down on the Body. Lights up on the Body and the Widow. They go to sleep.)*

Soul: We're sleeping. Look at how she stole the covers. Seriously. She was a different person when she was asleep and that person was evil. *(The Widow steals the covers. The Body gets ready for work. He turns on the shower and brushes his teeth.)* This is the morning after a fight.

Body: I don't know what you want me to say.

Widow: I don't want you to say anything.

Body: I said I was sorry.

Widow: I heard you.

Soul: We were never good at fighting.

Body: I apologized. You're supposed to say it's okay.

Widow: It's okay.

Body: You have to mean it.

Widow: But I don't.

Body: Screw this. I have to get ready for work. *(The Body goes into the shower. The Widow gives him the middle finger once he's in the shower.)*

Soul: That was not one of my finer moments. I should have told her I loved her. But instead I sang a song in the shower. *(The Body sings a song like "Killing Me Softly." In the shower.)*
I never had much of a voice, but I liked the way my voice sounded echoed on the tile. *(The Widow puts Kleenex in her ears. The Widow appears aged about seventeen. She wears a poodle skirt. Music rises.)*
This is the first night I laid eyes on my wife. At the Valentine's dance in high school. I walk across the room and ask her to dance.

Body: Do you want to dance or something?

Soul: She says yes.

Widow: I guess so. *(They dance).*

Soul: I couldn't think of anything to say. How was I supposed to know this was the woman I'd spend the rest of my life with? All I knew is that I was happy. I said so.

Body: I'm happy.

Soul: She said, "me too."

Widow: Me too.

Soul: I ask her if she wanted to go outside *(The Body whispers into the Widow's ear, who giggles. They leave.)*
A couple of months later she got pregnant and we got married. But then she had a miscarriage. And I thought do we still have to be married? But I felt bad asking for a divorce. She was depressed and I couldn't leave her. We stuck it out and some days were good and some days were bad. *(Lights go down on the Body. Lights up on the Widow and the Wooer.)*

Wooer: I was just wondering if you two ever thought about having children.

Widow: I had a miscarriage a long time ago. Sometimes at night I think I can hear my baby crying.

Soul: This is earlier tonight. You remember, it was near the beginning. These memories come in no particular order.

Wooer: I'm so sorry. I had no idea you had a miscarriage.

Widow: It's not your fault. How could you have known?

Soul: How could he have known?

Wooer: I know, but I'm sorry anyway.

Widow: Thanks. That's sweet of you to say.

Wooer: You look really beautiful. Did I already tell you that?

Widow: You did.

Wooer: Oh. Sorry. Sometimes when I get nervous I repeat myself.

Widow: You don't have to apologize.

Soul: His sincerity is not an affectation.

Wooer: I'm not very good at small talk.

Widow: You're not?

Soul: He cares for my wife.

Wooer: No. I can't stand it when people talk about sports or gossip or the weather.

Widow: Me neither.

Soul: For the first time I can hear hope in my wife's voice.

Wooer: I just wanted to tell you that tonight means a lot to me.

Widow: It means a lot to me, too.

Soul: She can be happy without me. She can forget me.

Wooer: You don't have to say that.

Widow: I'm not just saying it.

Soul: And from inside the box I yelled: you remember: She's not!

Wooer: You can hear us, Soul.

Soul: From inside the box I yelled: Sorry!
I should have pretended that I can't!

Wooer: *(quietly)* Can we get a doubt of beer?

Widow: *(quietly)* Yes. I can't plate to feet the Ernestos.

Soul: I don't think that's what they said. But I couldn't hear them. They were talking so quietly and I was in the box.

(He puts his arm out. She takes it and they leave.)

Soul: And she takes his arm and they leave and eat tacos down by the river. The Ernestos' story is amazing, and the tacos are delicious. He's nervous and charming. She laughs at his jokes.

She forgets about me for minutes at a time. For minutes at a time she's happy. Her memory of me is already fading. *(The regular lights come on. The Wooer and the Widow are home from their date. The Widow carries a plastic bag with leftover tacos.)*

Widow: The soul is sleeping. We have to be quiet.

Wooer: "We have to be quiet" is a funny thing to say. Don't you think?

Widow: What?

Soul: This isn't a memory. This is really happening. I'm in my box. You didn't see me. *(The Soul slips into its box.)*

Wooer: I'm just saying that if the point is to be as quiet as possible then we probably shouldn't say anything at all. Sorry. I talk when I get nervous. It's been a long time since I've been in a room with a woman after a very nice dinner. *(Awkward silence. She takes the tacos and puts them somewhere.)* Did you know that over twenty-five hundred left-handed people a year are killed from using products made for right-handed people?

Widow: No.

Wooer: Did you know that if you counted twenty-four hours a day it would take thirty-one thousand, six hundred and eight-eight years to reach one trillion?

Widow: No I didn't know any of those things.

Wooer: Did you know that I'm going to kiss you know? *(He pulls her close and kisses her. She breaks away.)* I'm sorry. Did I do something wrong?

Widow: I'm sorry. It's just fast.

(Silence.)

Soul: Is it time for my hug?

Widow: Not yet.

Soul: When?

Widow: Soon.

Wooer: Listen, I'm going to get going.

Widow: Are you sure? I could give it a hug and then we can keep talking.

Wooer: It's getting late.

Widow: Did you catch the game last night?

Wooer: What game?

Widow: No game in particular.

Wooer: I had a really nice time.

Widow: Do you want a taco for later?

Wooer: I'm good, thanks.

Widow: I'd still love to see you again. Please call me.

Wooer: Yeah. I will Definitely. Bye. *(He slips out very quickly.)*

Widow: Bye.

Soul: I'm proud of you.

Widow: But it ended so badly.

Soul: It's a beginning. *(She unlocks the box.)*

Widow: It's time for your hug.

Soul: Oh good. I've been waiting. *(They hug).* Thank you.

Widow: You're very very welcome. *(After awhile, she kisses him on the head good night. The Soul goes back down into the box. The Widow goes to her closet and takes her nightgown off a hook. A baby cries. Smoke fills the room. The lights fade on the widow. The Body enters in fireman outfit and breaks down the door.)*

Body: Hold on. I'm coming. *(The Soul is out of the box.)*

Soul: I'll say humbly:

Body: I'm just doing my job.

Soul: Where is that baby?

Body: Where is that baby?

Soul: Is there a judgement of souls for what they did on earth? Will I go to heaven or to hell? *(The baby stops crying.)*

Body: Don't stop crying! Let me hear you cry!

Soul: My last thought is about the big red spot on Jupiter, which is a huge storm, twice as big as the earth.

Body: This is one big storm.

Soul: And then the roof falls on me. *(The roof collapses.)* And my body dies. And I was on the way to my final judgement. *(The Soul starts to fly up toward the final judgement.)* But my wife caught me. *(The Widow grabs onto the Soul.)*

Widow: Gotcha.

Soul: Let me go!

Widow: Not quite yet.

Soul: And I told her This isn't right. A soul is not supposed to stay on earth after the body dies.

Widow: I'm sorry. I need you.

Soul: I told her that I need to go.

Widow: I just need to remember for a little while. *(Lights fade on the Widow.)*

Soul: It's been more than a little while. And I can't forget anything that I ever did in my entire life. And I don't know whether what I did was good or bad. Whether what I accomplished on earth was of any good to anyone. *(The baby cries. The Body enters.*

Body: Hold on, I'm coming! Where is that baby? *(The baby stops crying.)* Don't stop crying. *(He looks around)* That is one big storm. *(The roof collapses. The sun comes up. The Widow is restless asleep in bed.)*

Soul: The sun is rising. It's the morning after my wife's taco date. This isn't a memory. This is happening right now. *(The Soul has a rope made of bedsheets.)* She forgot to lock the lock on my box. I've been waiting for this day. *(The Soul ties the bedsheet rope to the box or something solid.)* And then I do the worst thing I've ever done.
I leave. *(The Soul opens the window and throws the bedsheet rope out. It climbs out. We hear the sound of the ocean. The alarm goes off.)*

Widow: Put the snooze on, honey. *(She wakes up.)* Honey? Oh. You're dead. *(The Widow turns the alarm off herself. She gets out of bed with a yawn. Goes to the Soul's box.)* Wake up lazybones. *(The Widow finds out the lock is undone. She opens the box. Sees the bedsheet rope hanging out the window.)*
Oh no. *(She pulls the bedsheet rope all the way in. She sticks her head out the window. She brings her head back in. She closes the window, slowly.)*
Okay.

Okay.

Okay. (*She goes into the bathroom and turns on the hot water in the sink. She takes out a razor blade and closes the bathroom door.)*

Scene 2

Later that morning.

The Widow has bandages on her wrists and blood on her nightgown.

Wooer: Did you ever stop to think what effect this would have on anyone else? There are so many people who care about you in this town. There's everybody down at the firehouse. And your neighbors. People at church. I had a cousin who killed himself once. It rocked the foundations of the entire family. *(The radio on his shoulder crackles with information. He doesn't respond.)* Please say something. What are you thinking about?

Widow: I was remembering when I was a little girl and I spent the whole summer on my knees in the dirt planting marigolds in my grandfather's garden. They were his favorite flower.

Wooer: That's a start. Tell me more about the marigolds.

Widow: They're an annual, part of the daisy family. The dried petals were once used for coloring butter.

Wooer: Hold the phone. What's an annual?

Widow: An annual is a plant that germinates, flowers, sets seed and dies within one year. A perennial is a plant that lives for a few years, some of which die back to ground level in winter and survive as underground bulbs.

Wooer: And your grandfather's favorite flower was the marigold.

Widow: And mine. And my husband's. Whenever we had a fight he would bring a marigold wrapped in white paper. That's what he called me when he was feeling cutesy. Marigold.

Wooer: My friends used to call me Pope Pius II.

Widow: Why did they call you that?

Wooer: I really have no idea.

Widow: Would you have been sad if I died?

Wooer: What?

Widow: You talked about people at the firehouse and at church and my dead parents. But would you have been sad?

Wooer: I would have been destroyed. I love you, don't you know that?

Widow: No. I didn't.

Wooer: I do. *(And then the top of the ladder appears in the window. Captain O'Reilly appears with the Soul in tow. Captain O'Reilly has a moustache.)*

Captain O'Reilly: Get in there! *(He gets the Soul inside. The Soul's costume has some holes in it. It's been through a couple of bad scrapes.)*

Wooer: Where'd you find it?

Captain O'Reilly: Couple of roofs over. It was talking to the pigeons.

Soul: They're very good listeners.

Wooer: Thanks, Captain. I can take it from here.

Widow: You're going straight to bed.

Soul: But it's still morning.

Widow: I don't care what time of day it is. *(The Widow puts the Soul in the box.)*

Soul: Can I just say in my defense that you are the one who left the lock unlocked. Maybe you unconsciously wanted me to leave.

Wooer: She tried to commit suicide because you left.

Soul: Really?

Widow: Yes, really.

Soul: I didn't know. How could I? *(She finally closes the lid.)*

Captain O'Reilly: May I say something here?

Widow: Of course you may.

Captain O'Reilly: Souls are not really meant to stay on this earth after their time is up. Maybe you should think about letting it go.

Widow: I have, thank you.

Wooer: She knows what you're saying, Captain.

Captain O'Reilly: I don't mean to get personal or nothing. I think you're afraid to let yourself love somebody else because that person may in turn die, like your husband died. And I think that's the real challenge in life, to love in spite of that fact that the object of your love is going to wither and die, just like you yourself are going to wither and die.
But I think you are selling your heart short. You can love again. If you just let yourself.

Widow: I'm trying.

Captain O'Reilly: I know you are, darling. I know you are. *(Captain O'Reilly wraps the Widow up in a big hug. After a bit he releases her.)* I hope you don't feel that hug violated your personal boundaries.

Widow: Not at all. It was very nice.

Captain O'Reilly: We've just had a couple of lawsuits is the only reason I mentioned it.

Wooer: She's not gonna sue, Captain.

Widow: I'll sign a waiver.

Captain O'Reilly: No need for that. It's just some people don't like getting hugged. That's the lesson I learned.

Wooer: I'll take it from here, Captain.

Captain O'Reilly: Okey dokey. I'll be in the truck. You taking the ladder or the stairs?

Wooer: I'll take the stairs.

Captain O'Reilly: Coming down. Who needs a hug? *(Captain O'Reilly climbs down the ladder and the ladder disappears.)*

Wooer: Can I take you out on another date?

Widow: If you want to.

Wooer: I do.

Widow: Then yes.

Wooer: What about Friday?

Widow: Friday's fine by me.

Wooer: I've got tickets to the opera. How does that sound?

Widow: That sounds great.

Wooer: Because I love the Ernestos, but I want to take you out to something real classy. *(Information cackles on the shoulder radio. The Wooer talks into the radio curtly.)* Ten-four. I'll give you a hug in a minute. *(He puts the radio back.)* I'll pick you up at seven.

Widow: I'll be here.

Wooer: *(Quietly, so the Soul doesn't hear.)* Do you mind if I kiss you?

Widow: *(Quietly, too)* You don't have to ask.

Wooer: Goodbye.

Widow: Goodbye. *(The Wooer goes out the door. The Widow sits on the Soul's box, sadly, if anyone can sit sadly. A baby cries.)* I hear my baby crying. *(The lights fade, except for on the Widow.)* The one I miscarried. *(She looks for the baby).* I look for it. Where are you, Sam? Keep crying. Momma's gonna find you. *(The baby stops crying.)* But I can never find it. *(The Body enters).*

Body: It's okay.

Widow: This is after the miscarriage. He brought me a marigold wrapped in white paper. He said, "We'll have another one. We'll have ten more." *(The Body has a marigold wrapped in white paper.)*

Body: It's okay. We'll have another one. We'll have ten more.

Widow: But we never did. They said I couldn't have any children. *(The lights change to the morning. The Widow lies in bed reading a book. The Body gets ready for work. He turns on the shower and brushes his teeth.)* This is the morning he died.

Body: I don't know what you want me to say.

Widow: I don't want you to say anything.

Body: I said I was sorry.

Widow: We had a fight the night before. We were never good at fighting. *(To the Body)* I heard you.

Body: I apologized. You're supposed to say it's okay.

Widow: It's okay.

Body: You have to mean it.

Widow: But I don't.

Body: Screw this. I have to get ready for work. *(The Body goes into the shower.)*

Widow: "Screw this. I have to get ready for work." Those are the last words he ever said. To me. *(The Body sings in the shower.)* And in the shower he sang his song. He wasn't much of a singer. That morning I put Kleenex in my ears because I was so mad. This is what I wish I had said to him: *(She goes into the bathroom.)*
Through the ups and downs, this is a richer life than I ever imagined for myself. You know how perennial flowers pretend to die every year? I just wanted to tell you that I am a flower and you are the sun and your absence is winter and without you I'm dead. *(Pause.)*

Body: Thanks. *(She closes the shower curtain.)*

Widow: But I didn't say any of that. Instead I put Kleenex in my ears. *(She puts Kleenex in her ears.)* And I can't ever forget those last words. *(The lights change. Some old rock and roll rises. Different than the first high school dance. You'll see why, or I hope you do. It's not that obvious I suppose. But not that hard*

to get, either. Somewhere in the middle.)
This is the first time we met. It was at a dance in high school. Look at how handsome he used to be. *(The Body appears ready for a high school dance.)* These are the first words he ever said to me:

Body: Hey, you wanna dance?

Widow: It began so simply. I said no. "No, thank you." But he kept at it.

Body: Why not?

Widow: I don't feel like dancing.

Body: You don't have a gimp leg or anything?

Widow: I'm perfectly healthy. If you must know. I used to be a ballerina.

Body: So you don't mind dancing.

Widow: I love it.

Body: So it's me you don't like.

Widow: That's right.

Body: Did you ever notice me? I mean, 'cause I noticed you. In the library. You're always reading. Why do you read so much?

Widow: Because I like to pretend I'm somebody else.

Body: That's kinda sad.

Widow: I don't think it's sad. I think it indicates that I have an active imagination.

Body: Why don't we imagine we're in a book and I'm somebody you're in love with and you really want to dance with me?

Widow: That was twice as charming as it needed to be. I said fine. Fine. And we danced. *(They dance.)* He put his arms around me. *(The Body whispers into her ear. She giggles.)* I got pregnant. And we got married. He joined the fire department to support the baby instead of going to college. But I lost the baby. *(The baby cries. The body appears with marigolds wrapped in white paper.)*

Body: It's okay. We'll have another one. We'll have ten more. *(The Body leaves. The Widow searches for the baby.)*

Widow: Where are you, Sam? Keep crying. I'm gonna find you. Keep crying. *(The actor playing the Soul comes on as the Widow's grandfather.)*

Grandfather: Stop all the crying.

Widow: That's my grandfather. I'm eight years old. It's the summer. I'm in his garden.

Grandfather: Stop all that crying and let me show you a thing or two. *(The baby stops crying. The Widow puts on a sun hat. Gets down in the dirt with her grandfather.)* Plants have a life cycle. Flowers grow and die the same time every year and that makes them easier to love than people.

Widow: Grandpa?

Grandfather: Yes?

Widow: Do you know when you're going to die? Because I have school in three weeks and then I turn nine and I have my birthday party to go to.

Grandfather: No, I don't know when I'm going to die.

Widow: Would you tell me if you did?

Grandfather: Of course I would.

Widow: But you know when this marigold is going to die.

Grandfather: In the fall, but I can't say for certain. It might get stepped on by a little girl I know.

Widow: That was one time! Wouldn't it be nice if people died in the fall, too? Just like flowers.

Grandfather: Yes, it would be nice. Come on, let's go inside and get us a glass of lemonade.

Widow: He died two years later. I didn't really understand he was dead until they told me I couldn't go to his house for the summer. *(The grandfather is gone. The Body is back to the morning he died. To the fight.)*

Body: I don't know what you want me to say.

Widow: I don't want you to say anything.

Body: I said I was sorry.

Widow: I heard you.

Body: I apologized. You're supposed to say it's okay.

Widow: It's okay.

Body: You have to mean it.

Widow: I do mean it. I'm so sorry that we got into this fight to begin with. I love you so much.

Body: *(They hug. The Widow doesn't let him go.)* What's gotten into you?

Widow: Nothing.

Body: Seriously. I gotta get to work. *(He kisses her on the head.)*

Widow: Tell me you love me.

Body: I do.

Widow: You what?

Body: I love you.

Widow: Call in sick.

Body: But I'm not sick.

Widow: We could just lie in bed all day and eat figs.

Body: Figs?

Widow: It sounded like what lovers do in bed.

Body: We're not lovers, we're married.

Widow: Please.

Body: I'm sorry. *(He goes into the shower. Sings. She listens.)*

Widow: He was such a terrible singer. Even though I miss him, I'll never miss his singing. *(She goes into the bathroom and undoes the shower curtain.)* We had happy times, didn't we?

Body: Of course we did.

Widow: You could always make me laugh.

Body: I tried to.

Widow: I wish I could remember the happy times.

Body: I'm sorry. We're not in control of what we remember and what we forget. *(He closes the shower curtain and sings. The Wooer appears in fireman clothes.)*

Wooer: Something happened. There was a baby trapped in a house. Your husband wouldn't leave. He's a hero. *(The Wooer leaves.)*

Widow: And I went down to the house where my husband died. And I saw his soul leave his body and try to get to judgment or wherever souls go after they leave the earth. *(The Soul begins to fly toward judgement.)* But I caught it before it could go. *(She catches the Soul.)* Gotcha.

Soul: Let me go!

Widow: And I put it in this box. *(The Widow puts the Soul in the box.)* Get in there.

Soul: This isn't right. A soul isn't supposed to stay on earth after the body dies.

Widow: I'm sorry. I need you.

Soul: And I need to go.

Widow: I just need to remember for a little while. And then you can go. *(The Soul cries.)* And a little while became a little longer. It's been two years since you died. It was fall, like it is now, and the leaves had already fallen. Not that much has changed. I still drink gin and tonic. I still believe happiness never really lasts, and I still love you.
I've tried my best not to. I've tried so hard to forget.

Soul: I know you've tried.

Widow: Every day I wake up and think maybe today is the day I won't remember. And it never is. Every day is the same.

Soul: Today is different.

Widow: Is it? Is it really different?

Soul: You're going on the first date since I died.

Widow: A date that turns out badly and doesn't help me forget.

Soul: You forget for a few minutes here and there.

Widow: But then I remember the rest of the time.

Soul: It's a beginning. *(The Body appears in a tie.)*

Widow: *(To the Soul)* I have to go. More memories.

Soul: I understand.

Body: Well, let's see if it still fits. *(The Widow puts the sport coat on the Body.)*

Widow: Perfect.

Body: I look okay?

Widow: You look so handsome.

Body: Are you ready to go?

Widow: I am.

Body: I hope you're ready to shake that ass 'cause I'm in the mood to boogie.

Widow: Let's go. *(Music rises. They're at the fireman's ball. I don't know how the hell you're going to show that. I don't think it really matters, actually. Anyway. Maybe there's a mirror ball, that's all I'm saying.)*

Soul: Welcome to the downtown Holiday Inn for this year's Fireman's Ball. *(They dance. Not a slow dance. A fast one. The Body is going for it. Whatever that means. The Wooer appears. They all dance together. The Wooer tries to do the Electric Slide.*

~~*He's not so good. Everybody laughs. Everybody's happy. After a while, the song is over.)*~~

Widow: No. I want to remember this some more.

Body: Sorry. ~~*(He goes with the Wooer.)*~~

Soul: That was a happy memory.

Widow: But it's over.

Soul: Nothing lasts forever.

Widow: I know. *(The Wooer appears, dressed like he was in the beginning.)*

Wooer: I had no idea you had a miscarriage.

Widow: It's not your fault. How could you have known? *(The Body appears back at the fight.)*

Body: I don't know what you want me to say.

Widow: I don't want you to say anything.

Wooer: I know, but I'm sorry anyway.

Widow: Thanks. That's sweet of you to say. *(The baby cries. Only the Widow hears it.)*

Soul: So make big talk.

Widow: What's big talk?

Body: I said I was sorry.

Widow: I heard you.

Wooer: You look really beautiful. Did I already tell you that?

Widow: You did.

Soul: Ask him if he thinks each person's soul is judged for the things they do on earth. *(She begins to look around for the baby. More and more frantically.)*

Wooer: Oh. Sorry. Sometimes when I get nervous I repeat myself.

Widow: You don't have to apologize. Where are you Sam?

Body: I apologized. You're supposed to say it's okay.

Widow: It's okay.

Soul: Fine. Talk about the weather.

Wooer: I'm not very good at small talk.

Widow: Come on, darling. Keep crying. Momma's gonna find you.

Wooer: I can't stand it when people talk about sports or gossip or the weather.

Widow: Keep crying!

Body: You have to mean it.

Soul: I don't know. I hope not.

Wooer: I just wanted to tell you that tonight means a lot to me.

Body: Screw this. I have to get ready for work.

Widow: Momma's gonna find you. *(The Wooer leaves like he's leaving with the Widow on their date. The Body goes into the shower. The Soul goes into its box. The Widow stays behind looking for the crying baby. Which stops crying.)* Don't stop crying, baby. I want to be a momma to you. Don't you know that? If I could just find you I could be your momma. *(The Body brings a marigold wrapped in white paper.)*

Body: It's okay. We'll have another one. We'll have ten more.

Widow: But we don't.

Body: We could adopt.

Widow: We never did that either. And then one day you died.

Body: I'm sorry. Everything dies sooner or later. *(The Body goes.)*

Widow: And I try to forget. I have to forget. *(The Wooer appears dressed up for their date for the opera. Sport coat. Tie. New, sort of tacky alligator shoes. He knocks on the door with a tappity-tap-tap. He has marigolds.)* Who is it?

Wooer: It's your handsome date.

Widow: This isn't a memory. It will be soon but right now it's happening.

Wooer: I hope you're ready for some *Rigoletto.*

Widow: It's one week later. I'm going to the opera. I take a deep breath. *(She takes a deep breath.)* I open the door and he kisses me hello. He says I look stunning. *(The Wooer kisses her hello on the cheek.)*

Wooer: Hello. You look stunning.

Widow: And he says this time he brought marigolds.

Wooer: This time I brought marigolds.

Widow: I say: "They're beautiful."
And they are. *(She sets them down.)* And he offers me his arm. *(He offers his arm.)* And I take it. *(She takes it.)* He asks, "Shall we go?"

Wooer: Shall we go?

Widow: And I say, "We shall." We shall. And we go to the opera and I have a much better time than I expected. *(They leave. She holds his arm tight.)*

SCENE 3

The Wooer and the Widow barge in the door, making out. With backlighting, they work their way towards the bathroom. She lets him go in first to mentally prep herself. She's about to go to the bathroom when the Soul starts crying in the box.

Soul: Is it time for my hug?

Widow: No. It's not.

Soul: I'm sorry to break up your party.

Wooer: *(In the bathroom.)* What's taking so long?

Widow: Five minutes. Three. Please. I almost forgot you. This is what you want.

Soul: I'm scared of being judged for what I did on earth.

Widow: What you did on earth was good. You were a hero.

Soul: I was just doing my job. If I thought that roof was going to collapse, I would have left that baby.

Widow: But you didn't.

Soul: I wanted to get divorced after your miscarriage.

Widow: I know.

Soul: You knew that?

Widow: And I would have let you go, but I couldn't be alone.

Soul: How did you know?

Widow: I don't know. I just knew.

Soul: And you don't think that makes me bad.

Widow: It doesn't make you great, but I don't think you're going to go to hell.

Soul: No?

Widow: No.

Soul: Thank you. Because I've been so worried.

Wooer: Come on, Marigold, don't be shy.

Soul: Oh, come on man!

Widow: Shhhh. Can we talk about this later?

Soul: Of course. Are you nervous?

Widow: No. I'm excited.

Soul: I'm happy for you. Can I have a hug? Even if it's not time yet. A hug to give you away.

Widow: Just a quick one. *(She unlocks the box and the two of them hug.)*

Soul: Why don't you let me go?

Widow: I can't do everything in one night.

Soul: Make a clean break. That's the best way.

Widow: I never thought so. I always took my Band-Aids off slowly and got into the ocean inch by inch. I don't like clean breaks.

Soul: I would feel better if I wasn't here. *(The Wooer comes out in a robe. PS, he's jacked).*

Wooer: What's the problem?

Soul: There's no problem.

Widow: I'm coming.

Soul: She's going to forget me! *(The Soul cries).*

Wooer: Why is it crying?

Soul: I'm not crying. I'm laughing.

Wooer: So what's it gonna be? Is it the Soul or me?

Widow: I need to take this slow.

Wooer: You should choose me. I'm here, I'm in this room, I'm alive.

Soul: He's got a good point.

Widow: If I have to choose right now I choose the Soul.

Soul: Damn.

Wooer: I understand. *(He collects his clothes from the bathroom and is about to go.)*

Widow: Can I take a rain check?

Wooer: I don't know. This hot and cold thing is really getting to me. I've waiting so long for someone to love. And I think you're the someone I've been waiting to love, but the problem is I don't think you're ready to be loved, you know what I mean?

Widow: I do. I'm trying real hard.

Wooer: I know you are.

Widow: I'm sorry if I hurt you.

Wooer: You did. Hurt me. But it's okay. I don't blame you.

Widow: Can I have a kiss before you go?

Wooer: No. I'm sorry. You can't have a kiss. I think it would hurt too much. *(The Wooer's about to go.)*

Widow: Sorry. But that was my husband's robe.

Wooer: Oh. I'll mail it to you. *(He exits.)*

Soul: Is he gone?

Widow: Yes. He's gone.

Soul: Did he take my robe?

Widow: Yes, he took your robe.

Soul: Damn. So it's just you and me again.

Widow: Yes. It's just you and me.

Soul: I'm guessing it's not time for my hug.

Widow: Not even close.

Soul: You're never going to let me go, are you?

Widow: I don't know. Maybe not.

Soul: I'm going to try to escape now.

Widow: I figured.

Soul: You could let me go.

Widow: I could.

Soul: But you won't.

Widow: No.

Soul: Are you ready?

Widow: As ready as I'll ever be.

Soul: Here I go. *(The Soul tries to make it to the window. It's the Body. He comes from the shadows. He talks slowly, because he's not so good with words. What are you gonna do? He's just a Body.)*

Body: My fingers bleed. My back aches. This play hurts me. Somebody told me about a man named Syphilis who had to roll a boulder up a hill all day every day and when he got to the top the boulder fell to the bottom and he had to start all over again.
I am Syphilis.
This play is my boulder. I push it scene by scene, and I think maybe I can take a rest. But then I have the fight with my wife. And then the baby I can never find starts crying and I have to break down the door. The smoke burns my eyes and my heart breaks, because I never find it.

(We hear the fight between the Soul and the Widow. It's crazy. The Widow drags the Soul in. She's bleeding. Her hair is all messed up. The Soul's costume is ripped to shreds. She takes a pill. She washes it down with some gin. The Body enters.)

Body: You two had quite a skirmish.

Widow: Gives new meaning to wrestling with a soul, huh?

Body: That's not funny.

Widow: It wants to go so badly.

Body: So do I. This play hurts us both so much. It hurts you too. *(The Soul wakes up.)*

Soul: Did I win?

Widow: No. You got your ass kicked.

Soul: Damn.

Widow: Let's keep going. Let's do a happy memory of a simple morning. *(The Widow gets into bed.)*

Body: I'm really not in the mood.

Soul: And I just got my ass kicked.

Body: But you do not have to talk.

Soul: But I have to watch.

Widow: I'm waiting.

Soul: She's waiting.

Body: Fine. But do not expect me to enjoy it. *(The Body gets in next to her. The alarm goes off.)* She turns off alarm

Widow: Snooze it, will you, honey?

Body: We've got to get up.

Widow: You get out of bed first and then I will.

Body: It's your turn.

Widow: It was my turn yesterday.

Body: We'll both go together.

Widow: On the count of three.

Body and Widow: One, two, three.

Widow: You didn't move.

Body: You didn't either.

Widow: Okay, for real this time.

Body and Widow: One, two, three. *(They both leap out of bed.)*

Widow: ~~I'm tired~~. This was a mistake.

Soul: ~~That's~~ That's not your line. Try again.

Widow: I'm going to the store. Do you want raisin bran or Rice Krispies?

Body: Raisin bran. I need more fiber.

Widow: Crunch or creamy peanut butter?

Body: Crunchy. No. Creamy. No. Crunchy. Dammit.

Widow: I'll get both.

Body: Good idea.

Widow: I can't go on.

Soul: ~~You can try.~~

Widow: You're dead. You don't want to be here.

Soul: I haven't wanted to be here for two years.

Body: Neither have I.

Widow: I'm sorry.

Body: Now she's sorry.

Widow: This was a mistake. You were right.

Soul: I have to say I told you so.

Widow: It's been two years since you died. I still believe happiness never really lasts, and I still love you. But now, I'm ready to forget. Everything ends sooner or later.

Soul: And this is how this ends. I say goodbye and you say...

Widow: Goodbye.

Soul: And the Body says...

Body: I hope for nothing. I fear nothing. I am free.

Soul: Nope.

Body: Between grief or nothing I will take grief?

Soul: Try again.

Body: Goodbye?

Soul: Good job. *(The Soul takes off.)* And I fly. At first I'm scared of what's to come. I fly over the whole earth. And even though I don't have eyes I see everyone. And what I see makes me laugh *(The Soul laughs.)* I laugh not because it's exactly ha-ha funny. Maybe I laugh because I'm scared.
But maybe it's because there's nothing else to do. *(The Soul laughs.)* And I leave the earth and fly past Jupiter and whoever judges souls judges that I get to go to heaven. So I fly to heaven, where there are no memories or pain or sickness or sadness or hunger or disease or hatred or fear.
And all I do is laugh. *(The Soul disappears above the ceiling, laughing.)*

Body: Well, that's my cue. *(He opens a door in the floor of the stage.)*

Widow: Are you going to be okay down there?

Body: Sure. I get to lie in the dark all day every day all night every night. I get to rest. *(The Widow hugs the Body.)* Thank you for the hug. I needed it.

Widow: You're welcome.

Body: And I go under the earth where I rest, the only exertion I make is when I push up a couple of marigolds. As I go, I sing for old time's sake. *(The Body goes down through the door, singing. It closes the door behind him.)*

Widow: And then I am finally alone. *(She is alone.)* And I breathe. *(She breathes.)* And my heart beats. *(Her heart beats.)* Out of reflex. Out of no will of my own. And then I sleep. *(She lies down to sleep.)* And I dream that I'm flying. *(She flies.)* I fly above the neighborhoods and places I've lived. I fly above all the people I have ever known. I fly past the cemetery where my husband is buried. And then I fly home.
I go to my empty bed. *(She flies gracefully into bed.)*
(The sun rises.)
And then the sun rises and it's another day. *(The back wall disappears. There is a sea of orange marigolds and perfect white light.)* I wake up and I feel reborn. *(The Wooer enters. He knocks on the door five times so we know it's him.)*

Wooer: And I enter and go to the door and bang on it and say: "I'm sorry about last night." And then you open the door.

Widow: And I don't answer. I just get ready to go.

Wooer: And we kiss. And I say I'm sorry. And we accept the changing nature of life, and the inevitable loss that accompanies change, and we love each other in spite of the fact that we're both going to die, most likely without cause or warning. Hey. What are you doing? Are you committing suicide again?

Widow: No. I found a way out.
There's a sea of orange marigolds. There were there the whole time but I never knew it.

Wooer: What am I supposed to do?

Widow: Remember.

Wooer: But we didn't spend enough time together. I don't have enough memories.

Widow: They'll have to do.

Wooer: That's not fair.

Widow: I'm sorry. But I found my way out. I'm leaving.

Wooer: Fine! Take the easy way out. But not me. You hear me in there? Not me. *(The Wooer exits. The Widow looks at us. She goes to the edge of the room. She puts a foot into the marigolds.)*

Widow: Goodbye. *(The Widow walks out the back of the set. She walks into the marigolds. The Wooer appears at the door like he did in the beginning, looking nervous holding flowers. He wears a suit and a tie.)*

Wooer: I knock on the door. *(He knocks on the door.)* And you say, "I'll just be a minute! I just got out of the shower!" And I say, "Take your time!"
And I spray breath-freshener in my mouth. *(He sprays breathe-freshener in his mouth.)* I check my hair. *(He checks his hair.)* I check my armpits. To make sure they don't smell. *(He checks his armpits to make sure they don't smell.)* And I think, "This is it. I've been waiting my whole life for this. Waiting for somebody I can love."
"After tonight I won't have to wait anymore."
"After tonight my life can finally begin." *(The Widow disappears in the flowers. And the perfect light gets brighter and brighter. Until it fills the whole stage and covers the audience, too.)*

END OF PLAY