

DANCING THE GOD

A Drama with Dance in Twelve Scenes

by

Pat Montley

207 Spring Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21093
(410) 252-6074

pat_montley@msn.com



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SYNOPSIS

A lawyer returns to her college to investigate the alleged seduction of a student by her dance teacher. The student's accusation is vehement; the teacher refuses to defend herself. Prompted by the lawyer's questions, the pair re-enact, through flashbacks, the stages of their playful, passionate relationship, reporting different versions of the culminating episode. In uncovering the truth about them, the lawyer is challenged to come to terms with her own experience in the face of what seem to her disarming ideas of education and intimacy. The script calls for six modern dance sequences, four of them choreographed to Rachmaninoff's "Vocalise." All three performers must be dancers as well as actors. Running time: 85 minutes

CAST OF CHARACTERS

- Deborah Pallas, mid-to-late 30's, is a lawyer—straightforward, sophisticated, determined and realistic, but also dedicated and well-intentioned, with a vulnerability she may not be aware of.
- Dana Daniels, mid-to-late 30's, is a college dance teacher and professional dancer—demanding, dedicated, and idealistic, with an intensity and imagination that make her magnetic. She has disarming insight and a haunted quality.
- Colleen Corey (Kali), 18-21, is a college student and dancer—talented, energetic, impetuous, insistent, endearing, exasperating.
- Singer (optional) 30's, Dana's dead lover. She sings the "Vocalise" whenever Dana plays the tape recorder. She is imagined by Dana, seen by the audience, but not by Kali. Unless the singer's voice is of professional quality, a recording would be the better choice.

SETTING

A college dance studio. The present.

SCRIPT HISTORY

Productions: Nebraska Repertory Theatre, Lincoln
 Burbage Theatre, Los Angeles
 Women's Project, Ft. Lauderdale

Contests: Finalist, Actors Theatre of Louisville National Playwriting Contest
 Semi-finalist, Florida Studio Theatre Mini-Festival

SETTING: Bare stage. Center area serves as a dance studio, whose “fourth wall” is a mirror. A cassette player on the floor. Maybe a stool or two. Another acting area is to one side of this.

AT RISE:

Prologue

SINGER sings Rachmaninoff’s “Vocalise.” Unnatural lighting on studio. As if performing a ritual, DANA is dancing. KALI enters, stands in the shadows and, unseen by DANA, watches her dance. Lights fade. In darkness, KALI exits. DANA remains.

Scene 1

Lights up on DEBORAH on another part of stage.

DEBORAH

(Out.)

I like to think of myself as an open-minded person. I have nothing against homosexuals, though of course, I’m heterosexual. I like men. They’re challenging. And they have streamlined bodies. My favorite work of art is Michelangelo’s second David. It’s really Apollo, you know. So clean and simple. I don’t have time to see as much art as I’d like. Well, the truth is I don’t much care for modern art. It’s too...chaotic.

(Beat.)

I chose the law because it’s clear. And comforting. You know where you stand. It’s written down. Codified. In the fifth grade I did a history report on Hammurabi. He became my personal hero. It was love at first judgment. You might say he “courted” me. Later he was replaced by Oliver Wendell Holmes. By then I was a college girl, with more sophisticated taste.

(Crossfade to DANA.)

DANA

(Out.)

I always wanted to be a teacher. Every year new students. Every semester a new start. You get to correct your mistakes...figure out a better way to do it. It’s a life full of hope. I read a French poem once that said hope is a little girl. An appealing image, don’t you think?

(Crossfade.)

DEBORAH

There’s no such thing as a “college girl” anymore. Even eighteen-year-old freshmen are called “women.” And rightly so, of course. They’re making grown-up decisions.

DANA

I love to watch their metamorphosis. Students. To see the braces disappear, the eyes grow confident with understanding, the bones of the face emerge—like questions demanding attention. It's breath-taking to witness that transformation, humbling to play a part in it.

DEBORAH

Although no suit had been filed, the dean asked for my advice when the student first came to her. Naturally I was curious. Things of this nature always provoke curiosity. Why is that?

(Crossfade.)

DANA

They're so curious. At least the ones who haven't been tamed to conform. They challenge you to re-examine all the things you thought you knew. And when they discover something for the first time, they get so excited.

(Crossfade.)

DEBORAH

The student was so excited, so...agitated when she talked about it, it was difficult at first to piece her story together.

(KALI joins DEBORAH. DANA exits.)

Scene 2

Lights brighten on DEBORAH and KALI.

KALI

This is not pleasant for me, Ms. Pallas.

DEBORAH

I'm sure it's not, Colleen.

KALI

I mean, you expect teachers to...to behave honorably. To care about students...I mean really take care that...that they're not hurt.

DEBORAH

Is that possible?

KALI

Well, they don't have to be the ones doing the hurting!

DEBORAH

How did Ms. Daniels hurt you?

KALI

She betrayed me. She was my teacher. I trusted her to know what was best for me. To do what was best for me.

DEBORAH

And instead?

KALI

She turned on me.

DEBORAH

How?

KALI

I was going through a...difficult period in my personal life...a lot of things were happening...I was feeling very vulnerable. She took advantage of that.

DEBORAH

Can you be more specific?

KALI

All right! We were alone late one night in the studio. We danced. She kissed me. She made love to me.

DEBORAH
Against your will?

KALI
You don't say "no" to your teacher.

DEBORAH
Don't you?

KALI
I didn't know any better. She seduced me. I was innocent.

DEBORAH
Did you love her?

KALI
Desperately. And she exploited that love.

DEBORAH
And now?

KALI
I want her stopped. She betrayed me. She could betray others. I want her punished. Do you hear me? She's dangerous! She has to pay!

DEBORAH
How?

KALI
Everyone must know. She'll be shamed.

DEBORAH
And you?

KALI
It wasn't my fault--what happened that night.

DEBORAH
Why don't you try to tell me--as you remember it--just what did happen that night. Why were you in the studio so late?

KALI
The studio's always open till eleven. We all use it for rehearsals. There's a sign-up sheet.

DEBORAH
And Ms. Daniels is always there for coaching?

KALI

No. Just sometimes.

DEBORAH

And no one was signed up for that night?

KALI

Not after nine.

DEBORAH

Except you.

KALI

Well, not exactly.

DEBORAH

What do you mean?

KALI

I wasn't there to rehearse.

DEBORAH

Why then?

KALI

Well, I hadn't seen Dana for a while before that night.

(Beat.)

We had had a sort of argument.

DEBORAH

About what?

KALI

About my going to New York. Eventually I saw that it was adolescent--my staying away like that. So I went back to the studio to apologize.

DEBORAH

And what did she say?

KALI

She wasn't there.

(Crossing to studio, re-enacting the event. Crossfade to unnatural light on studio, but leave dim light on DEBORAH.)

But the studio smelled like her--I mean like she had just been there. And there was a tape in the player, so I guessed she had gone to her office and would be back. I turned on the tape.

(Soft music: "Vocalise.")

KALI (*Cont.*)

It was a woman's voice--a special piece she always danced to when she was alone in the studio.
(KALI turns volume up and starts to dance the dance she has seen DANA do. DANA enters, unseen by KALI, watches her appreciatively for a minute. Then KALI sees her, stops, gently turns off music.)

DANA

(Curious, barely concealing her pleasure.)

What are you doing?

KALI

Trying to find you in this music. Isn't it where you live?

DANA

I've missed you.

KALI

I've decided not to go to New York with Ron.

DANA

Oh?

KALI

Are you pleased? It's what you want, isn't it?

DANA

I want what's best for you.

KALI

I think maybe...you're best for me.

DANA

When did you decide that?

KALI

These last few weeks--when I didn't have you.

DANA

And what is it you want from me?

KALI

Your encouragement. Your understanding of dance. Your discipline.

DANA

I've already given that.

KALI

I want to be as driven as you are. I want you to drive me.

DANA

Isn't it time to drive yourself?

KALI

(Using the fourth-wall mirror, KALI does one of the moves from DANA's dance.)

I want your passion. I want that life force running through me. I want to feel what it's like to be you.

DANA

(Making adjustments on KALI's body.)

Sometimes, when I watch you dance, I think I know what it's like to be you. I know each muscle of your body intimately--its shape and power; I know each curve and movement. I recognize the slightest change in your coloring. I can tell when you have your period and when you've washed your hair. We have a familiarity that most people would find embarrassing. But I find it comforting.

(Beat.)

I know your body better than a lover.

KALI

Than a lover...?

DANA

Does that frighten you?

KALI

I...I've never thought of it that way.

DANA

Haven't you?

(KALI shakes her head "No." DANA gestures towards the tape player.)

How did you know the dance?

KALI

I've seen you do it dozens of times.

DANA

When?

KALI

I've watched at the window. It's a kind of ritual for you, isn't it?

DANA
 Yes.

KALI
 Why can't you finish it?

DANA
 Because if I do, I'll have to let go. And I'm...afraid.
(Beat.)
 But you could help me. Couldn't you?

KALI
 Help you?

DANA
 You know the dance. Do it with me...help me finish...help me let go.

KALI
 Let go of...?

DANA
 Please.

KALI
 You make it sound so simple.

DANA
 It is. As easy as breathing. As pure as motion. It's what you've always wanted. It's why you've watched at the window. It's why you've come back.
(Leading her into starting position.)
 Dance with me.
(Music comes up. They begin the dance. It is a more erotic version of what DANA has danced alone. After a minute, they stop dancing. DANA caresses KALI, then kisses her on the mouth passionately. Lights and music fade out slowly. In darkness THEY exit. Lights up on DEBORAH.)

DEBORAH
 Her story frightened me. A puzzling response considering stranger tales are commonplace in my business. It wasn't so much the seduction itself--that happens often enough on college campuses, though almost all of it is heterosexual. What frightened me was that this insidious kinship had developed in the name of education--that this child perceived a teacher's role in terms of feelings: protection from pain, the bequeathing of personal passion; that these two seemed to be dangerously at home inside one another; that their relationship was unabashedly intimate long before it was sexual. I found it jarring...painfully disillusioning, a threat to the distinctions I held sacred. And that was only the beginning.
(Crossfade to studio.)

Scene 3

Lights up on DANA in studio. DEBORAH enters.

DEBORAH

Ms. Daniels? I represent the college. You don't really have to talk to me. Has your attorney told you that?

DANA

I don't have an attorney.

DEBORAH

My name is Deborah Pallas.

DANA

I know.

DEBORAH

(Taken aback.)

Really?

DANA

You were auctioneer at the College Fund Raiser last spring.

DEBORAH

You remember that?

DANA

You had an endearing way of tilting your head when you were sympathetic to a particular bidder. I used that tilt.

DEBORAH

Pardon?

DANA

In a piece I choreographed for the spring concert.

DEBORAH

(Laughing.)

I'm flattered.

DANA

And I've seen you on campus for the trustees' meetings.

DEBORAH

Well, just to fill out the bio...I'm also an alumna. So I have more than a professional stake in this case.

DANA

So do I.

DEBORAH

Would you like me to recommend an attorney?

DANA

No.

DEBORAH

Surely some advice from--

DANA

(Interrupting.)

I don't want a lawyer.

DEBORAH

Suit yourself.

DANA

Have you seen her?

DEBORAH

(Nodding.)

She's angry enough to drink your blood.

DANA

Did she say that?

DEBORAH

Well, the image is mine, but--

DANA

An interesting choice.

DEBORAH

Would you like to tell me your version of what happened?

DANA

No.

DEBORAH

Are you saying, then, that I should believe her version?

DANA

Believe what you want.

DEBORAH

I'm a lawyer. I deal in fact, not faith.

DANA

Is it always that simple for you?

DEBORAH

Look, Ms. Daniels--Dana--we both know there is no question of criminal activity here. The girl--the young woman--is not a minor. But she could bring a civil suit against you or against the college. I am not your adversary here.

DANA

And she is?

DEBORAH

At the moment she doesn't sound like your best friend.

DANA

Moments pass.

DEBORAH

But in the meantime, you're being called before the board on charges of sexual harassment. You have to defend yourself, or you'll--

DANA

(Interrupting.)

--lose my job. Yes, I know. And probably any chance of getting another one. At least in teaching.

DEBORAH

Don't you care about that?

DANA

I can't tell you how much.

(Beat.)

DEBORAH

Try.

(DANA looks away.)

Are you a good teacher?

DANA

Not for me to say.

DEBORAH

And Colleen Corey--what kind of a student is she?

DANA

Bright, talented...

(With an acknowledging nod of gratitude for the image.)

bloodthirsty.

DEBORAH

How can you joke about the situation?

DANA

But I'm not joking.

DEBORAH

(Uncomfortable.)

Has this ever happened to you before?

(DANA looks at her, insulted.)

Why did you leave New York?

DANA

Too many memories.

DEBORAH

You left a tenured teaching position at Sarah Lawrence because of bad memories?

DANA

That's right.

DEBORAH

What happened?

DANA

Someone I loved died.

(Beat.)

DEBORAH

Oh.

(Beat.)

I'm sorry.

(Beat.)

Was it...someone at the school?

DANA

No.

DEBORAH

It must have been very hard for you--coming to a new city, starting a new job, making new friends. Do you have family here?

DANA

No.

DEBORAH

Anyone?

DANA

No.

DEBORAH

How long ago was it?

DANA

Four years.

DEBORAH

Tell me...what did you do...all alone? How did you deal with...your grief?

DANA

I danced.

*(Lights change as DEBORAH leaves studio area.
"Vocalise" comes up.)*

Scene 4

It is four years earlier. DANA is dancing to "Vocalise." After a few measures, she stops, repeats a movement, varying it somewhat. It becomes clear she is creating or revising the choreography. KALI enters; her appearance suggests she is younger than in Scene 2—a freshman. She watches DANA intently. DANA notices her, stops dancing, turns off the tape player. Music stops.

KALI

Sorry. I knocked, but the music was...I didn't mean to interrupt. Maybe I should--

DANA

It's all right. I need a break.

(Towels off. Drinks from a bottle of water.)

KALI

I...I hope you don't mind. I saw the light.

(Coming farther in.)

It's lovely.

DANA

What?

KALI

The studio. You can see the moon through the skylight. It must be wonderful to have your very own studio.

DANA

Well, it isn't exactly mine.

KALI

Still...I mean you can use it whenever you want.

DANA

That's the great thing about teaching. Fringe benefits compensate for the salary.

KALI

Did you have a studio at Sarah Lawrence?

DANA

They're pretty standard equipment in dance departments.

Are you here a lot at night? KALI

When I'm working on something. DANA

Doesn't it make your day kind of...long? KALI

Yes. DANA

What do you do about dinner? KALI

Eat late. DANA

Doesn't your husband mind?
(*Beat.*) KALI

I don't have a husband. DANA

Oh. KALI

FBI or school paper? DANA

Excuse me? KALI

This interrogation. DANA

(*Embarrassed.*) KALI
Oh, sorry. I didn't mean to be rude.
(*Brightly.*)
You can ask me questions too.
(*DANA laughs.*)
I mean, if you want to. My name is--

DANA

Colleen. Yes, I remember from the class list.

KALI

You remember everybody's name after only two classes?!

DANA

After twelve years of teaching, I've got a system.

KALI

What is it?

DANA

Nothing worthy of the FBI. First time I call the roll, I write something next to each student's name--like "big glasses" or "curly hair."

KALI

What did you write next to my name?

DANA

(Beat.)

"Eyes."

KALI

Just that?

DANA

Just that.

KALI

I want you to write something else.

DANA

What?

KALI

Kali.

DANA

Collie?

KALI

K-A-L-I. Kali. That's what I want to be called.

DANA

Instead of Colleen.

KALI

Colleen is a little girl's name. That's what it means. In Irish.

DANA

And Kali?

KALI

Is a dark Hindu goddess. "The womb and tomb of all life...Creator-Destroyer of the universe." She dances the god Shiva back to life. I saw it in my art history book.

DANA

Quite a role model.

KALI

You're making fun of me.

DANA

I'm sorry.

KALI

I know it probably sounds silly. But college is a new life for me. So I need a new name.

DANA

Then Kali it is.

KALI

Thank you.

DANA

Would you like to learn it?

KALI

What?

DANA

The dance Kali does.

KALI

You know it!?

DANA

Well, I wasn't there for the original performance. But I've seen the picture. And I studied Hindu dance a few years ago.

KALI

Really!?

DANA

I'll show you some of the movements. And you can choose the ones you think you'll need most.

KALI

Need?

DANA

For dancing the god back to life.

(DANA demonstrates a movement. KALI imitates it. DANA makes adjustments on her arms and head. Lights fade slowly. In darkness KALI exits. DEBORAH enters studio.)

Scene 5

Lights up on DANA and DEBORAH in studio.

DEBORAH

So you singled her out from the beginning.

DANA

She came to me!

DEBORAH

Or was drawn.

DANA

How?

DEBORAH

“Eyes.”

DANA

She wanted to milk my spirit.

DEBORAH

Really?

DANA

She was insatiable...unrelenting.

DEBORAH

And you were helpless to resist. Try as you would, you were at the mercy of a persistent, bullying child.

DANA

Do you think she’s a child?

DEBORAH

Not anymore. Is that thanks to you?

DANA

It happens sometimes.

DEBORAH

What “happens”?!

DANA

Growing up. That's what college is for.

DEBORAH

Yes, well she claims to have gotten an education considerably more liberal than the catalogue promises.

DANA

You have a way with words, don't you?

DEBORAH

It's my business. I was off the charts on my verbal GRE's. How about you?

DANA

I dance.

DEBORAH

The strong silent type. Like my last Mr. Right.

DANA

Was he a dancer?

DEBORAH

That's cute.

DANA

What is it you want from me?

DEBORAH

Your version of what happened.

DANA

So you can play judge and jury?

DEBORAH

So I can understand the truth.

DANA

Are you sure that's what you want?

DEBORAH

What else? Look, at my rates, this visit has already cost the college--

(Checks her watch.)

seventy-five dollars. You could talk now and leave enough in the budget for a faculty raise.

DANA
But you donate your services.

DEBORAH
Who told you that?

DANA
Don't you?

DEBORAH
Why would I do that?

DANA
Because you have "more than a professional interest" in what goes on here.

DEBORAH
Look, don't start second-guessing me. I'm not one of your students.

DANA
And I'm not one of your clients.

DEBORAH
Teaching is a power thing for you, isn't it? You love having a studio full of aspiring innocents hanging on your every direction.

DANA
Aren't you overreacting here?

DEBORAH
(Ignoring this.)
Makes you feel smart and talented. Makes you forget you didn't make it as a dancer.

DANA
Who told you that?

DEBORAH
Successful dancers don't have to teach.

DANA
You never heard of Isadora Duncan? Ruth St. Denis? Martha Graham?

DEBORAH
They didn't stop dancing.

DANA
Nor have I.

DANA (*Cont.*)

(*Beat.*)

Not that it's any of your business.

DEBORAH

What would you do without their undying devotion, their naive trust in your infallible judgment, their blind faith that you walk--even dance--on water?

DANA

Is that the way you imagine your clients feel about you?

DEBORAH

I don't seduce my clients, Ms. Daniels!

DANA

Are you sure? Don't they put their disrupted lives, their hopes for justice in your hands? What makes them do that?

DEBORAH

My knowledge of the law. My skill as an attorney.

DANA

That's what you seduce them with. To each her own.

DEBORAH

And what are your...tools of seduction?

DANA

My dancer's skill. My teacher's caring.

DEBORAH

Oh yes, that infamous "caring" you lavish on some of your students, that overflowing "concern" that's made you a legend. I've heard there's no limit to that? Is that true? Does your "caring" from time to time run out of control? How are you on control?

DANA

It's my specialty.

DEBORAH

Really?

DANA

Control is the basis of good dancing technique.

DEBORAH

I've always heard the truly inspired dancer has the ability to let go.

DANA

Never completely.

DEBORAH

Is that a lesson you teach your students.

DANA

I try.

DEBORAH

And how much “control” do you have over their learning?

DANA

It depends on the student.

DEBORAH

What about Colleen? Would you say she’s a student you’ve been able to...control?

*(DANA laughs. Lights fade. DEBORAH exits in dark.
KALI enters.)*

Scene 6

Lights up on DANA and KALI, now a sophomore, whose appearance suggests she is in her "Isadora-Duncan stage." To lively music, they dance a puppet dance, in which KALI is the puppet and DANA subtly controls her. They reach a point at which the puppet rebels in little, humorous ways like raising the right leg when the left leg movement is called for. Finally the puppeteer accommodates the puppet until it is clear that a complete role reversal is impending. They break off suddenly.

DANA

Yes, That's good. The middle section is coming along very nicely. Some fine, subtle touches. But don't give it away too soon. Let your imagination play here--

(Demonstrates.)

Take your time and try to extend this--

(Demonstrates.)

KALI

(Interrupting.)

I can't wait another day. Call him!

DANA

No!

KALI

Please!

DANA

The letters are due tomorrow.

KALI

I'm having an anxiety attack! I'll be dead by tomorrow.

DANA

You may not die before you finish this piece. It still needs a lot of work. And the concert dates are--

KALI

I know, I know, but I can't concentrate.

(Melodramatically.)

My future is suspended in time.

DANA

Your future?

KALI

Well, my summer.

(Parodies her own posturing.)

Will I be an inspiration to the youth of this country--like Isadora Duncan?

(Paraphrasing Isadora.)

I see the children of America dancing, beautiful, strong...a celebration of Democracy!

DANA

(Appreciatively.)

You're incorrigible.

KALI

I'm a young, impetuous beginner waiting for my first break.

DANA

And I'm a middle-aged killjoy here to remind you that "Discipline is--

(KALI joins in to finish the favorite maxim.)

KALI & DANA

--the mother of imagination."

KALI

(Playing contrite.)

You're right. You're absolutely right. You're always right.

DANA

(Dismissing the familiar "contrition" ploy.)

That won't work either.

KALI

O.K. I give up. It's not fair. There's nothing in my repertoire you don't know.

DANA

Expand it.

KALI

Is that a challenge?

DANA

Yes, but save it for later.

KALI

I live in the present! T.S. Eliot says "The dance is the still point in time." Or something like that.

DANA

“The still point of the turning world.”

KALI

Actually, I’m not living in the present. My mind is still back at the audition. I know I screwed up.

DANA

I’m sure you didn’t.

KALI

You weren’t there. How do you know?

DANA

You’re good under pressure. I’ve seen it. So let’s apply a little to *this* project and get--

KALI

The thing is, I never should have danced an original piece.

DANA

Your audition piece was strong.

KALI

Everybody else did a standard routine that showcased their technique. I don’t know what made me think I could be a choreographer too.

(Beat.)

Yes, I do know. It was you.

DANA

Me! I never said a word.

KALI

You didn’t have to. You’re always creating original pieces--for our concerts and stuff.

DANA

So?

KALI

And now you’ve got me revising this stupid puppet thing.

DANA

It was an exceptional first effort.

KALI

Maybe--for a beginning choreography class. But I don’t know why you want to put it in the spring concert.

DANA

Please forgive me for thinking your work is good enough to be performed.

KALI

But it isn't! Puppets! I mean it's so trite.

DANA

Not with the patterns you're using.

(Crescendoing into a mock tantrum.)

But if we don't get to work on the last section, it won't matter if it's trite or not--because it won't be done in time for the concert!!

KALI

(Ignoring this.)

I was so embarrassed. I know Mr. Weston thought it was inane.

DANA

Did he say that?

KALI

No, he just leaned on the table, buried his intense, gorgeous young face in his clipboard and dismissed me with a "Thank you very much."

DANA

That's what directors do after an audition. Why are you taking it so personally? It doesn't mean you won't get the job.

KALI

Well, if I do, it'll only be because of your recommendation. You shouldn't have said all those great things. It probably gave him false expectations.

DANA

Listen to me: the recommendation was no better than you deserved. And if Ron Weston gives you the job, it will be because of your audition. Now if you don't settle down to work, I'll call him back and tell him you're too irresponsible for the job!

KALI

What!?

DANA

You heard me. I said I'd call and tell him--

KALI

(Interrupting.)

No, no...you said you'd call him *back*.

(Beat. Then smiling.)

KALI (*Cont.*)

He called, didn't he?

DANA

(Trying to cover.)

I meant I'd call him again. I called him to get the audition information, remember?

KALI

(Stalking her.)

He called you tonight, didn't he?

DANA

(Evading.)

The letters will be out tomorrow.

KALI

And you know what mine's going to say, don't you? Don't tell me you don't know--you're no good at lying.

(Kneeling.)

Tell me!

DANA

Not until you finish this piece.

KALI

(Throws herself on floor and wraps her arms around DANA's ankles. With exaggerated desperation.)

I'm going on a stillness strike. I won't dance till you tell me! I'm a corpse. I'm catatonic. All my muscles will atrophy.

DANA

(Laughing.)

All right, all right. You've got it.

KALI

(Jumping up.)

Whooooo-eeeeee! I'm in the Ron Weston Young People's Dance Company!

(Dances around the studio in Isadora fashion.)

Three glorious months of dancing and teaching all over the country. I'm Is-a-do-ra!

(Loosely quoting Isadora, while dancing.)

"Children of America, come forth! With strides and leaps and bounds...!"

(Swings DANA around the room. They collapse on the floor, laughing, then gradually calm down.)

DANA

I'll miss you.

KALI

(Suddenly, teasing with mock-accusation.)

You knew all along.

DANA

What?

KALI

You knew when I came in here four hours ago, and you didn't tell me.

DANA

(Teasing back.)

You'd've been no good for work the rest of the night. And you know it.

KALI

(Into the game now.)

And did you plan to tell me at all?

DANA

When we finished working.

KALI

What a heartless, conniving, manipulative, slave-driving, controlling bitch you are!

(Beat.)

I don't know how you'll ever get me to forgive you.

DANA

I do.

KALI

How?

DANA

By taking you out to celebrate.

KALI

Where?!

DANA

The Forum is doing a late screening of--are you ready for this?--*Top Hat!*

KALI

(Gasps with delight. Then jumps up and extends hand to DANA.)

Fred?

DANA

(Letting herself be pulled up.)

Ginger?

BOTH

(They dance and sing in a parody of Astaire and Rogers.)

HEAVEN, I'M IN HEAVEN

AND MY HEART BEATS SO

THAT I CAN HARDLY SPEAK

AND I SEEM TO FIND THE HAPPINESS I SEEK

WHEN WE'RE OUT TOGETHER DANCING CHEEK TO CHEEK.

(Lights fade. KALI exits in dark. DEBORAH enters.)

Scene 7

Lights up on DANA and DEBORAH in studio.

DEBORAH

Colleen is right. You are dangerous. Too dangerous to be a teacher.

DANA

Because I take students to the movies?

DEBORAH

Because you take them! Because you swallow them up. You wanted that girl to love you. You wanted her to look into your eyes and see a great dancer.

DANA

You're right! I wanted her to look in my eyes and see *herself* as a great dancer. I wanted her to love me so much she'd love what I loved. I wanted her to feel the passion I feel in dancing.

DEBORAH

You wanted to indulge your vanity!

DANA

I wanted to give her something of myself. It's what every mother wants.

DEBORAH

Mothers pay the price.

DANA

How would you know?

DEBORAH

Even I have a mother.

DANA

Oh? I thought you were Pallas Athena--sprung, full-armored, from the head of Zeus.

DEBORAH

At least I don't rationalize Aphrodite into Demeter.

DANA

You really have no idea what it's like, do you?

DEBORAH

To get my jollies from molesting little girls? No, I prefer mutual lust with consenting adult males, thank you.

DANA

Are you sure?

DEBORAH

What are you insinuating?

DANA

That your interest might be a little...overzealous.

DEBORAH

How convenient! Anyone who disapproves of your “teaching methods” is just working off her own repression. Or jealousy. Is that it? You think I’m jealous?

DANA

Are you?

DEBORAH

Yes!

(Beat.)

I’m jealous for this school’s reputation! I’m fiercely loyal to this institution. Can you understand that?

DANA

No. My loyalty is to people.

DEBORAH

What is a college but a community of people?

(Beat.)

DANA

Tell me about *your* college days. What were they like?

DEBORAH

Wonderful. I graduated *magna cum laude*. Would have been *summa* if it hadn’t been for one “C”--in art.

DANA

And before graduation?

DEBORAH

What?

DANA

How do you remember your best teachers?

DEBORAH

The best? They were bright and demanding. And fair. They didn't play favorites.

DANA

Except for one.

DEBORAH

Who?

DANA

Marion Dunne.

DEBORAH

(Surprised.)

She told you that?

DANA

Of course not.

DEBORAH

Then how do you--

DANA

(Interrupting.)

I saw you together at her retirement dinner last year.

DEBORAH

So?

DANA

You were surprised when she took your hand and smiled so warmly.

DEBORAH

Forty years of political science majors is a lot to remember.

DANA

But only a few were *magna*--almost *summa--cum laude*.

DEBORAH

(Letting down.)

All right, I was surprised.

DANA

Why?

DEBORAH

Because I wasn't one of her favorites.

DANA

Who were?

DEBORAH

The radicals. You see, her specialty was revolution--American, Russian, French, Chinese, Spanish. She knew everything about all of them. You know the expression "Power corrupts, and--

DANA

--absolute power corrupts absolutely."

DEBORAH

Well, the first time I heard it was in her class, so of course, I thought she made it up.

(DANA laughs.)

She was irresistibly charismatic. I adored her.

DANA

And then?

DEBORAH

One day she persuaded our Socialism Seminar to start an underground newspaper on campus. I think subversion was like good sex for her.

DANA

But not for you.

DEBORAH

Only sex is like sex for me.

DANA

(Laughing.)

So you wouldn't write for the "radical rag."

DEBORAH

As editor of the above-ground campus paper, I considered it a conflict of interest.

DANA

So what happened?

DEBORAH

She took it as a personal betrayal. Oh, I kept getting the A's I deserved, but my politics were pilloried by the rag as kiss-ass conservatism. And she never again had eyes for me.

Eyes?

DANA

DEBORAH

She never looked at me the way she had before.

DANA

Which was?

DEBORAH

I don't know...with a kind of excitement. Challenging me to change and grow. It was as though the only change she approved of was rebellion. And I had rejected that.

DANA

What exactly did you want from her?

DEBORAH

(Beat.)

Approval?

DANA

No more than that?

DEBORAH

I don't know. I guess maybe...to be on the inside.

DANA

Inside what?

DEBORAH

Inside her circle.

DANA

Did you let her inside yours?

DEBORAH

(After a beat.)

Once...once in a rare moment of revelation, I confided in her that I hated my name.

DANA

And?

DEBORAH

She laughed and said: "Change it!"

(Acknowledging this irony with a shrug.)

Her specialty *was* revolution.

(Both laugh gently.)

DANA

Why did you hate your name?

DEBORAH

People called me “Debbie” when I was growing up. It was the era of Debbie Reynolds reruns on late night TV. I was mortified.

DANA

It was also the era of Deborah Kerr reruns.

DEBORAH

The aloof spinster. Just what I needed.

DANA

I watched *The King And I* video thirteen times.

DEBORAH

My father named me Deborah--for the biblical prophet.

DANA

A judge of Israel. Is that what got you started in the Law?

DEBORAH

Certainly not. I’ve never had any use for judgments based on visions and inspiration.

DANA

Why not?

DEBORAH

There are more reliable ways of dealing with the world.

DANA

As I recall the story, Deborah’s intuition saved the day for the Israelites.

DEBORAH

Of course. The Israelites wrote the story!

DANA

(Laughing gently.)

You’re hopeless.

DEBORAH

(Backing off.)

I guess that’s what Marion Dunne decided too.

DANA
Are you sure?

DEBORAH
(Closing down.)
It was a long time ago.

DANA
And now? What do you want now?

DEBORAH
I want to stop you from creating insiders and outsiders.

DANA
What makes you think I do?

DEBORAH
You want me to believe you treat all your students like Colleen?

DANA
Maybe not all my students want to be treated like Colleen. Isn't it possible that a student gets the kind of education she works for? That each takes as much from a teacher as she can handle?

DEBORAH
Like a litter of kittens suckling at your tits.

DANA
Do you do that with everybody or just me?

DEBORAH
Do what?

DANA
Goad me into taking your question seriously, then ridicule my response.

DEBORAH
But you're *not* taking my question seriously. That's the problem. I've been asking you for half an hour to tell me what happened on that night.

DANA
And I've been telling you for half an hour that what happened between Kali and me didn't happen "on that night." It happened in four years.

DEBORAH
Maybe. But it's that night she remembers best.

DANA

No. It's just that night she's chosen to tell you about.

DEBORAH

Why?

DANA

I don't think she *knows* why.

DEBORAH

Do *you* know why?

(Beat. No response.)

Your silence condemns you.

DANA

But I haven't been silent.

DEBORAH

Except about that night.

DANA

I told you--that night isn't--

DEBORAH

(Interrupting.)

--all of it. I know. And you're telling me the rest. But what I can't figure out is why.

DANA

Why I'm telling you the rest?

DEBORAH

Why you're talking to me at all. If you refuse to tell me your own redeeming version of what happened that night, why are you telling me anything? What's the point? Why didn't you throw me out at the very beginning?

DANA

Maybe I am telling you my "redeeming version," as you call it.

DEBORAH

So you admit to being in need of redemption?

DANA

Aren't we all?

DEBORAH

(Ignoring the evasion.)

You do feel guilty, don't you?

DANA

Don't you?!

DEBORAH

No!

DANA

Is that what makes you so ready to cast the first stone?

DEBORAH

I've told you: I am not your adversary here.

(Beat.)

DANA

Maybe I didn't throw you out because...you tilted your head at me.

(DEBORAH is taken aback.)

Or maybe it's because I miss her.

DEBORAH

And I'm your only link with her?

DANA

(Wistful.)

I miss her playful badgering.

DEBORAH

So you'll settle for mine?

DANA

Yours is more like bludgeoning.

(Beat. Then, both smile in a shared release of tension.)

She used to say it honed my warrior's wits.

DEBORAH

For what battles?

DANA

I don't know. She was herself my only "worthy opponent."

(Crossfade. DEBORAH crosses with the light to another part of the stage.)

DEBORAH

(Out.)

I dreamed I was the King of Siam dancing with Anna. But she wasn't an aloof spinster at all. Her long hair was down and whipped softly across her smiling face when she turned her head from side to side in the lively waltz. I could hear the children laughing inside and calling to us. Yes, we were dancing on a kind of veranda that circled the outside of the ballroom. There were many doors leading in. The light and music and laughter beckoned. As we passed each door, Anna tilted her head towards the music and urged me with her body to enter. But each time I pulled back into the dark night and heard myself say: "I am the King of Siam, your only worthy opponent."

(Crossfade.)

Scene 8

Lights up on DANA and KALI, now a junior, in her "Martha-Graham phase."

DANA

(Waving a form.)

I can't sign this!

KALI

Of course you can. Here's a pencil.

DANA

Kali!

KALI

O.K., O.K., I'll forge your signature.

DANA

(Snatches pencil away.)

No you won't!

KALI

Look, you're just having a little PMS. You'll feel much better about it next week. Only registration closes today.

DANA

This is a ridiculous schedule.

KALI

Ron thinks I can do it.

DANA

He's not on the faculty--he doesn't know any better.

KALI

But I *want* to do it. I can't help myself--I'm crazy for education.

DANA

A two-course overload--

KALI

(Interrupting.)

One's an audit.

DANA

And one's an off-campus internship, which means transportation time--

KALI

(Interrupting.)

But it's a great opportunity. And it's only Saturday afternoons.

DANA

Your work-study job is forty hours a month.

KALI

I put in for late shift at the library. I'll be able to do my homework at the desk. Come on!

DANA

Student council responsibilities--

KALI

My constituents depend on me.

DANA

Well, they won't have you if you sign up for this schedule.

KALI

I can handle it.

DANA

And rehearsals besides.

KALI

Of course.

DANA

I won't sign it.

KALI

Sometimes you treat me like a child.

DANA

Only when you behave like one.

(Starts erasing.)

Here's my last offer--

KALI

What was your first?

(DANA ignores the interruption, starts filling out form anew.)

DANA

Keep the student council. But no overload. Two required courses and two electives. That's it.

KALI

And the internship--one-course overload.

DANA

No! The internship on-load--as one of the electives.

KALI

But then I'll only have one course with you.

DANA

You'll live.

KALI

But what about you? How will you survive Tuesdays and Thursdays.

DANA

I'll get a prescription.

KALI

What about my academic freedom?

DANA

It's being curtailed in the interest of your survival.

KALI

Martha Graham says an artist must destroy herself in order to create.

DANA

I doubt she was referring to destruction by course overload.

KALI

She says "There is only one thing in the world and that is the individual."

DANA

"And you are only an individual," she hastens to add, "because you have accepted...[what] others have helped you to receive."

KALI

There's nothing worse than a know-it-all teacher.

DANA

(Holding the form out to her.)

Your revised schedule.

KALI

(Matter-of-factly, without resentment.)

I knew you wouldn't let me.

DANA

Then why put me through that?

KALI

(Taking form.)

It hones your warrior's wits.

(Takes a deep breath.)

Ah! It smells like you in here--like a church after Benediction.

DANA

When were you in a church after Benediction?

KALI

What makes you think I don't go to church?

DANA

What makes you think churches still do Benediction?

KALI

Why do you always answer my questions with a question? It's very irritating.

DANA

Why do you imitate that irritating habit?

KALI

You know what your trouble is? You are a nasty realist with no appreciation for the romantic. I was complimenting you by waxing poetic.

DANA

Mistaking perspiration for incense is not waxing poetic; it's hallucinating.

KALI

(Melodramatic.)

Go ahead--reject me! But mark my words: you'll rue the day.

(Teasing threat.)

I'll start spending all my free time with Ron Weston.

DANA

(Teasing back.)

I thought you wrote him off when he "kept his professional distance" during the company's tour last summer?

KALI

I was very immature then. Who could blame him?

DANA

And now?

KALI

(Dancing.)

I've...blossomed.

DANA

And he's noticed.

KALI

Enough to ask me out.

(KALI jumps up and down and makes excited little clapping and squealing noises.)

DANA

Why didn't you tell me?! When is the big event?

KALI

Well, I need to talk to you about that. These friends of Ron's are moving to New York. So he's throwing them a big party on Saturday.

DANA

And that's when we're scheduled to see Carlos Saura's *Blood Wedding* at the Forum.

KALI

Right.

DANA

Well, maybe we can go to the film next weekend.

(Starting to leave.)

Let me check the sched--

KALI

(Interrupting.)

Tomorrow's the last night. How about tonight?

DANA

I have rehearsal with the Metro.

KALI

Oh.

(Beat.)

Well, I'll just tell Ron I can't make it tomorrow.

DANA

The party sounds like fun. We can do another film next...whenever.

KALI

But Antonio Gades' choreography is supposed to be great. I really want to see it. You do too.

DANA

And so I will. I was thinking of inviting Jessie Venegas to join us tomorrow night anyway.

KALI

Oh.

(Beat.)

Well...are you sure you don't mind?

DANA

It's fine. Go ahead.

KALI

(Starts to leave. Turns and waves registration form at DANA.)

Thank you.

DANA

Have a good time tomorrow.

KALI

Yeah.

(With an uneasiness she doesn't quite understand.)

You too.

(Exits. Lights fade.)

Scene 9

Lights up on DANA and DEBORAH in studio.

DEBORAH

I remember that film.

(Appreciatively.)

A lot of great sexy bodies charged with steamy Spanish passion.

DANA

Is that your critical judgment?

DEBORAH

As I recall, I was much too aroused for aesthetic distance. Is that why you invited Colleen?

DANA

You underestimate her.

DEBORAH

But do I underestimate *you*? That's the question.

DANA

And what's your answer?

DEBORAH

(Beat.)

Look--I'm as tired of this...bludgeoning as you are. If you're innocent, why don't you just say so?

DANA

It's not for me to say.

DEBORAH

You have a right to defend yourself.

DANA

Yes.

DEBORAH

Then why don't you tell the truth.

DANA

You mean the "facts."

DEBORAH

Of course.

DANA

What if...what if it's a fact that I...that I could have done it?

DEBORAH

But if you didn't, that's what counts. The law--

DANA

Isn't everything.

DEBORAH

It's what we're judged by.

DANA

Not really. Not ultimately.

DEBORAH

What then?

DANA

Conscience.

DEBORAH

And where do you suppose the law comes from? Mt. Sinai? It's the great collective conscience.

DANA

(Insisting.)

But some people escape the law, don't they? It doesn't always work.

DEBORAH

Nothing does. But it works sometimes--maybe most times. That's why we have it. Without the law, there's chaos.

DANA

And *with* the law there's chaos! Look around. The world is full of madmen. Teenage boys in uniform blow each other's faces off... children sitting on door steps get shot by drug dealers...old people are tortured in their beds...women are raped in their homes! Stupid selfish idiots...that's what we are! You think your beloved law can change that? You think chaos will go away because you make a few rules. Well, it won't! Because it's part of us!

(Pause.)

DEBORAH

(Realizing.)

You did it, didn't you?

DANA

Yes.

(Beat.)

I made the ultimate senseless gesture.

DEBORAH

What?

DANA

I showed her how to hold the chaos at bay--if only for a moment.

DEBORAH

What do you mean?

DANA

I taught her to dance.

DEBORAH

Dance?

DANA

“The still point of the turning world.”

DEBORAH

Stop it! I'm sick of your metaphors and your deflecting questions and your precious ambiguity! Answer me!

DANA

Ah...you want clarity...order...discipline. That's exactly what I tried to teach her.

(Lights fade. DEBORAH exits in darkness.)

Scene 10

Lights up on DANA and KALI. DANA is clapping as KALI, now a senior, rehearses an abstract piece. There is no music.

DANA

Keep the rhythm! The rhythm!

(KALI stops, frustrated.)

Try it again.

(She does.)

Yes...that's better...now the turn...where's your focus? Up...and snap...in...out...right...5-2-3-4, 6-2-3-4...you've lost the beat again.

(KALI stops.)

Can't you feel it?

KALI

Can I have the music?

DANA

What are you going to do for the pieces that don't use music?

KALI

This one does.

DANA

The rhythm's got to be in your head and in your muscles.

KALI

My muscles are tired. I'm just...I'm a little off today.

DANA

(Concerned.)

Are you sick? What's the matter, Kali?

KALI

Oh, it's nothing. Too much party last night. We had our friends from New York visiting.

DANA

Then maybe you should come back when you have some energy for dancing.

KALI

It's not like I haven't been at it for three hours.

DANA

The concert's next week. I've invited the manager of the Metro. I thought if she could see your work, she--

KALI

(Interrupting.)

I'll be ready. I always have been, haven't I?

(DANA looks at her.)

Why begrudge me a little fun?

DANA

I don't. But we could have scheduled this rehearsal for another time if you knew--

KALI

I didn't know. They were surprise visitors. It was an improvised party. I'm tired and distracted, O.K.? I'm sorry. So beat me with a rubber tutu.

DANA

(Beat. This image gets to her and she starts to chuckle.)

A rubber tutu? Is that like an inner tube?

(KALI starts to dance around as though she were wearing an inner tube. They both laugh softly, a little slaphappy with fatigue.)

I'll talk to the costumer.

KALI

Instead of air, we could fill it with water.

(She demonstrates.)

Or helium.

(She demonstrates. Their laughter crescendos to a merriment greater than the joke warrants, in a welcome release of tension. Then, the tension dissipated, they return to sobriety.)

DANA

(Beat.)

Did you have a good time? At the party?

KALI

I always have a good time with Ron.

(Beat.)

He wants me to go to New York.

DANA

I've been telling you that for months. It's not too soon to start looking at dance companies. I can give you some names of people to--

KALI

(Interrupting.)

Ron wants me to go with him.

DANA

So go with him. It'll be safer than living alone.

KALI

He thinks we should start our own company.

DANA

You and Ron?

KALI

We'd recruit others in New York.

DANA

And how would you live?

KALI

How do other New York dancers live? Wait tables. Give lessons. Start our own school. Ron still has all the contacts from the Young People's summer program. We could be like Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn.

(DANA smiles.)

Why is that so funny? Don't you think I'm good enough?

DANA

After three and a half years, you must know what I think of your dancing.

KALI

I know you're never satisfied with it. I know no matter how good other people tell me I am, you tell me I should be better. I know I work twice as hard as the other students, but it's not hard enough. I know a critical look from you is enough to stop me in my tracks. I know I'll never please you!

DANA

Then stop trying!

(Beat.)

Please yourself! Please the audiences that watch you and rejoice in the human spirit! Please the gods that gave you more talent than I've ever seen in anyone your age!

(Beat.)

Kali, you are good. Good enough to dedicate your life to becoming better. Don't give it up.

KALI

I'm not "giving it up." I'll learn from Ron and we'll--

DANA

(Interrupting.)

Ron has already taught you everything you can learn from him.

KALI

Oh, I see--you're the only one who has something to offer me.

DANA

Not for long. By graduation you will have outgrown me too.

KALI

Spare me your humility.

DANA

Meanwhile, I can help you discipline yourself, fine tune your technique, introduce you to the work of good choreographers, encourage you to create your own—

KALI

Stop running my life! Maybe I don't care about what the gods have given me--I didn't ask for it! Maybe I don't want to be like you--spending my nights dancing alone! Maybe I don't care about disciplining myself and creating...Art. Maybe I just want to be like other women--enjoying my life and creating... children. But you wouldn't know about that, would you?

DANA

Wouldn't I?

KALI

Haven't you ever wanted...simply, to be happy?

DANA

Yes. But happiness isn't simple. I made my choices.

KALI

Why didn't you choose to have children?

DANA

(Looking at KALI.)

I thought I did.

KALI

(After a pause.)

That won't work.

(Beat.)

Look, after graduation, I'm going to New York with Ron. I'm not such a starry-eyed romantic to think it'll all be wonderful--or easy. I know I'll have to make sacrifices. But

KALI (*Cont.*)

then I've had good training in self-discipline, haven't I? I wasn't going to tell you till our plans were more...definite, but, well, there it is. I hoped you would give me your blessing and wish me well. But whether you do or don't, I'm going.

(Pauses, hopefully. When there is no response, she turns and leaves.)

DANA

(Alone.)

I wish you well.

(Lights fade.)

Scene 11

Lights up on DEBORAH and DANA in studio.

DEBORAH
So you thought you were losing her.

DANA
Yes.

DEBORAH
To the inevitable male rival.

DANA
To her fear.

DEBORAH
Her fear of becoming what you are?

DANA
Her fear of not becoming all she could be.

DEBORAH
You'd like to think that, wouldn't you? It gets you off the hook of jealousy.

DANA
Haven't you ever been afraid of failure?

DEBORAH
My track record's very reassuring. I did fail once though: an art history paper. The teacher said I should learn to live with Dionysus. I thought he gave me the "F" because I wouldn't sleep with him.

DANA
And your "last Mr. Right"?

DEBORAH
Oh, I slept with him. And I don't think he would have given my performance an "F."

DANA
But?

DEBORAH
(Shrugs.)
The match was a computer failure. I didn't take it personally.

DANA

Do you ever?

DEBORAH

What?

DANA

Take anything personally?

DEBORAH

What's that supposed to mean?

DANA

It's how you hold your chaos at bay, isn't it? Keeping it all out there. Not feeling any of it.

DEBORAH

Is that any worse than running away from it into...the opiate of art?! You mock me for relying on the law to cope with chaos. But you rely on the law too--the rules of line and rhythm, the strict discipline of mind and muscle. What makes you think we're so different?

DANA

My way is--

DEBORAH

Oh, yes, yes, yes, I've heard it all: "Art transforms life!" "Art distills life!" "Art purifies!" Well, let me tell you something: my lecherous, Dionysian art teacher was the king of chaos. He didn't hold it at bay--he wallowed in it. And that's just what you're doing--wallowing in your dancing and your grief! And it's...it's...unnatural!

DANA

(After a pause.)

You think it would be more...natural if I called the computer dating service?

DEBORAH

I don't care what you do. But leave these students alone.

DANA

Don't let them inside? Don't give them what you never had? Is that your advice?

(No response.)

Is it?

(They lock eyes for a few beats, then DEBORAH breaks away, walks around the studio, breathing deeply, exploring the space for a moment. She stops and turns to DANA.)

DEBORAH

(Genuinely curious.)

Tell me...why do you come here night after night? To this dark, empty place.

DANA

It doesn't feel empty to me.

DEBORAH

What does it feel?

DANA

Expectant. The music is waiting.... The movement is waiting....

DEBORAH

Waiting?

DANA

Yes.

DEBORAH

For what?

DANA

For me to discover it.

(They both stare into the fourth-wall mirror, each exploring her own fantasy.)

DEBORAH

(A statement.)

Like an eager lover looking forward to your coming.

DANA

Like a fire waiting to be kindled.

DEBORAH

You enter breathlessly...it's like arriving at a trysting place. There's a sense of the secret...

DANA

A sense of the sacred...of deep, unsounded spaces...

DEBORAH

Of forbidden bondings...

DANA

Of mysterious energy...

DEBORAH
Of frightening discoveries...

DANA
Of enchanting beauty...
(Pause. Each revels silently for a moment in her own fantasy.)

DEBORAH
What was she like?
(DANA looks at her, puzzled.)
The someone you loved that died.

DANA
(Beat.)
Like home.

DEBORAH
Was she a dancer?

DANA
A singer.

DEBORAH
By profession?

DANA
By religion.

DEBORAH
What?

DANA
She believed singing proved the existence of god.

DEBORAH
You lived together?

DANA
Yes. All three of us.
(DEBORAH looks quizzical.)
She and I and the god she sang into being.

DEBORAH
How did...how did she die?

DANA
She was raped and murdered.

DEBORAH
(Beat.)
What happened?

DANA
I wasn't there.

DEBORAH
And you think you should have been?

DANA
We went out to dinner every Wednesday night...a kind of a ritual mid-week break. But one Wednesday we had an argument. I stormed out of the house alone. When I got back, I found her.

(Pause.)

DEBORAH
A burglar who knew your routine?
(DANA shrugs.)

DEBORAH
Did they find him?

DANA
Does it matter?

DEBORAH
What did you argue about?

DANA
She was preparing for a recital. There was one piece she was singing that she wanted me to dance to.

DEBORAH
(Realizing, looking at the player.)
The voice on the tape.

DANA
I said it was inappropriate--for me to dance at her voice recital.

DEBORAH
And you believed that?

DANA

Yes...

DEBORAH

(Guessing there's more, asks the question.)

But...you had another reason.

DANA

I didn't want to take the time from my own work.

(Pause.)

DEBORAH

Four years is a long time for mourning.

DANA

It sustains me.

DEBORAH

There are other dances besides grief.

DANA

Not for me.

DEBORAH

(Beat.)

I think I understand now.

DANA

Understand what?

DEBORAH

How it happened. *You're* the vulnerable one.

DANA

Me?

DEBORAH

(Gently.)

Oh, yes, you're competent and demanding and talented. But also needy. A wounded god. How could she resist comforting you?

(Beat.)

How could anyone?

(Beat.)

But you were wrong to turn to her for solace.

DANA

Is that what I did?

DEBORAH

She told me--quite graphically--what happened.

DANA

She would be graphic.

(Turns away.)

DEBORAH

But whatever your reason, it was a violation of trust.

(Crossing away from DANA, to other side of stage. Lights crossfade with her.)

Doctors don't seduce their patients. Lawyers don't seduce their clients. And teachers don't seduce their students.

KALI

(Entering DEBORAH's side of stage.)

This one did.

DEBORAH

Are you sure?

KALI

Look--just because I'm a student and it's only my word against hers doesn't mean I'm--

DEBORAH

(Interrupting.)

But it isn't.

KALI

What?

DEBORAH

It isn't your word against hers.

KALI

Was there someone else watching? Did anyone see us?

DEBORAH

Dana doesn't deny your accusation.

(Pause.)

KALI

She...she admits it?

DEBORAH
I didn't say that.

KALI
What then?

DEBORAH
She won't say what happened that night.

KALI
Why?

DEBORAH
You'll have to ask her.
(DEBORAH recedes to an onlooker's position. Crossfade as KALI crosses to DANA's side of the stage and looks at her searchingly.)

KALI
Why?

DANA
Because you know what happened that night.

KALI
But I don't know *why*.

DANA
You wanted something.

KALI
I wanted something.
(Beat.)
Something I couldn't have.

DANA
Kali...
(Pause, as they look at each other intently, until KALI makes her decision to relate the story to DEBORAH. Crossfade as KALI crosses back to DEBORAH's side of the stage.)

DEBORAH
What happened that night?
(No response.)
Kali. What happened that night?

KALI

(As if in a memory...)

I came to the studio....she wasn't there.

(Lighting changes to unnatural for the re-enactment-- same as in the second part of Scene 2. Slowly, ritually, KALI crosses to tape player.)

But the studio smelled like her. I turned on the tape.

(KALI presses button. "Vocalise," as before. As in Scene 2, KALI dances the dance she has seen DANA do. DANA-- who has been facing off--now turns, "discovering" KALI as she did on that night. DANA crosses abruptly to tape player, turns off music.)

DANA

(With controlled anger.)

What are you doing?

KALI

I've missed you.

DANA

(Indicating tape player.)

This is private.

KALI

I know.

DANA

Then how could you--?

KALI

I've seen you dance it dozens of times. Like some kind of ritual. I used to come and watch you at the window.

DANA

Spying on me?

KALI

(Attempting a tease.)

"Nothing worthy of the FBI."

DANA

It's not a joke. It's a violation of my privacy.

KALI

You were right about Ron. He's taught me everything he knows--and it's not enough.

DANA

Oh?

KALI

I'm not going to New York.

DANA

You've had a lovers' quarrel. You'll make up.

KALI

It's not that.

DANA

What, then? What happened?

KALI

Nothing. That's the problem.

DANA

Nothing?

KALI

I mean...not enough.

DANA

What were you hoping for?

KALI

More than just...I mean...well, Ron is a good person. And a talented dancer. And I think he loves me.

DANA

Yes.

KALI

But I want more.

DANA

More?

KALI

Excitement...magic. I want to be known--completely known. And then grow into something else and be known again, and grow again and be known again....

DANA

Give it time.

KALI

After two years, I know--it's not going to happen. I'm never going to really know him. He resists it--and he doesn't even know he's resisting. And I don't think he can ever know me. Not the way you do. You've spoiled me, you see.

(Beat.)

I miss you. I miss looking forward to our time together. I miss coming into this room and feeling my heart expand to fill the space because you're here, smiling back at me. I miss the smell of you--enfolding me, pervading this place, like gardenias on a summer night.

(Beat.)

And I miss being driven. I didn't think I would, but I do.

DANA

You said you wanted to be happy.

KALI

But I'm not. That's the trouble.

DANA

And you think being "driven" will make you happy?

KALI

No. But being driven might help me to be creative. And that could make me happy.

DANA

You said you wanted to create children, not art.

KALI

Well I do. But not just yet.

(With a teasing edge.)

Maybe I'll do the art first...and work up to the children.

DANA

(Ignoring the tease.)

So go ahead and drive yourself if that's what you want.

KALI

I was hoping for a little help.

DANA

So you sneaked in here and--

KALI

I didn't sneak in. The door was unlocked.

DANA

That doesn't give you the right to--

KALI

(Snaps the tape out of the player and holds it up.)

The tape was in the player. Anybody using the studio could have found it.

DANA

(Snatching tape away from her.)

The dance is private! It's mine, do you understand?!

(Turns and slumps down over tape.)

KALI

But you can't finish it, can you?

(DANA is startled by the question. KALI continues, gently.)

I understand--I do. I can't finish the last piece for my senior concert. Because when I do, I'll have to let go...of you.

(Beat.)

What will happen when *you* finish? Who will you have to let go of?

DANA

(Not facing her.)

Stop. Please. This is not something I want to talk about with you.

KALI

Why? Because for once, it's *you* who will be known completely?

(Beat.)

I could help. I could help you let go of her.

DANA

I don't want to let go of her!

(Starts to sob.)

KALI

(Trying to comfort her.)

I could help you finish it. I know the dance. I could do it with you. Let me. Come...dance with me.

(She bends over DANA and kisses her on the mouth.)

DANA

(Gets up.)

No, Kali. That won't help either one of us.

KALI

Are you sure?

Yes.

DANA

(Beat.)

What a hypocrite you are!

(DANA is startled by the accusation.)

Pretending to yourself that's not what you want...what you've always wanted from me.

You don't believe that.

DANA

Don't I?

KALI

You're hurt and angry.

DANA

Stop patronizing me! I'm grown up now--in case you haven't noticed.

DANA

Then act like it.

KALI

(Ignoring this.)

You don't like to admit that, do you? It makes me your equal. Suddenly your feelings have to be acknowledged as something other than a teacher's. Passions that can't be sublimated into dance frighten you, don't they?

DANA

Don't do this, Kali.

KALI

Hitting too near the heart, am I?

DANA

I don't deserve this.

KALI

You deserve...to be alone!

(Abruptly crosses away from DANA, to DEBORAH's side of stage. Lighting returns to normal. Pause.)

DEBORAH

Is that the truth?

Yes.
 (Beat.)
 Part of it.

KALI

DEBORAH
 (Exasperated.)
 Is that what happened that night?!

KALI
 Yes.

DEBORAH
 Are you sure?

KALI
 Do you doubt me?

DEBORAH
 What about the first story?

KALI
 Why didn't she deny it? Why did she keep silent?

DEBORAH
 I don't know.
(KALI looks at her for a full beat, then crosses to DANA's side of stage. Crossfade.)

KALI
 Why? Why did you keep silent?

DANA
 I was waiting for you. To come back.

KALI
 But how could you risk that? What if I hadn't?

DANA
 I don't know. I had to wait...let you come back on your own or...

KALI
 Or I would have lost you.

DANA
 You would have lost yourself.

(Pause.)

KALI

You did seduce me, you know.

DANA

(Beat.)

Should I be sorry?

*(Pause. They look at each other for a long beat. Lights
fade out.)*

Scene 12

Lights up on DEBORAH.

DEBORAH

(Out.)

Now when I think back on it--and I do often--I'm not sure which version to believe. In fact, I'm not sure if Kali told me that second story at all...or if I just wanted her to tell it. I'm finding it so hard to be certain these days. My open mind plays tricks on me. And lately I've been having this recurring dream. It's dark and cold and I'm frightened. Someone is pursuing me down a narrow street--someone I can't see. Suddenly I take refuge in a building with a dome, which I think is a church, but which turns out to be a museum. Inside it's warm as a summer night. I take off my clothes.

(She slowly strips down to a leotard.)

I come to a circular courtyard, a kind of enclosed garden. The glass dome above lets the moonlight through and seals in the fragrance of gardenias and jasmine growing around the edge. In the center is a sculpture--of a nude woman.

(Lights come up slowly on DANA, CS.)

Her face is so...serene. I want to touch it.

(Slowly crosses to DANA.)

As I go towards her, she comes alive and reaches her hand to me.

(DANA extends her hand.)

I take it.

(DANA puts DEBORAH's hand on her face.)

And we dance.

(“Vocalise.” DANA and DEBORAH dance to the end of the music. Lights slowly fade.)

(End of play.)