

VANISHING POINT

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Author Agatha Christie vanished for eleven days in 1926; that same year, evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson vanished for three weeks. Amelia Earhart disappeared during her 1937 round-the-world flight. Amelia was never seen again; Agatha and Aimee never spoke of what happened during their disappearances.

Adventure is worthwhile in itself.
– Amelia Earhart

One doesn't recognize in one's life the really important moments – not until it's too late.
– Agatha Christie

It's my story and I'm sticking to it.
– Aimee Semple McPherson

CHARACTERS (IN ORDER OF DISAPPEARANCE)

AIMEE SEMPLE MCPHERSON b. October 9, 1890, in Salford, Ontario.

Charismatic, dynamic evangelist, first known for her extraordinary faith healing in tent revivals across the country. Founded the Angelus Temple in Los Angeles, where she entertained standing room crowds of thousands with her "Illustrated Sermons".

Vanished May 18, 1926, while swimming in the ocean. Reappeared in the desert near Douglas, Arizona, three weeks later, with an outlandish tale of kidnapping. She was investigated, put on trial, but never wavered from her story.

AGATHA CHRISTIE b. September 15, 1890, in Torquay, Devon.

British mystery author, whose 80+ novels became best sellers worldwide. During World War I, the young woman from an upper-class family worked in a hospital dispensary, gaining a thorough knowledge of poisons. On a dare from her sister, she wrote her first novel, The Mysterious Affair at Styles. She became notorious with the publication of her seventh book, The Murder of Roger Ackroyd, which contained a shocking twist. Reclusive, shy, yet with many suitors, she married Colonel Archibald Christie on Christmas Eve, 1914.

Vanished December 4, 1926. Her car was found abandoned in the middle of the night, rolled down an embankment. She turned up eleven days later, in a resort hotel in the north of England, registered under the last name of her husband's mistress. After claiming amnesia, she would never speak of the event for the rest of her life.

AMELIA EARHART b. July 24, 1897, Atchison, Kansas.

American pilot, the first woman to fly across the Atlantic (as a passenger) in 1928. She became widely known as "Lady Lindy", because of her resemblance to Charles Lindbergh ("Lucky Lindy"). Married her promoter, George Palmer Putnam, a publishing magnate, in 1931. Became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic in 1932. Held many other records, including fastest cross-country flight by a woman, distance and speed record for a woman, and first solo flight across the Pacific.

Vanished July 2, 1937, while flying from Lae, New Guinea, to tiny Howland Island, nearing the end of a round-the-world flight. After her last radio contact with the U.S.S. Itasca, she was never seen again.

MULTIPLE CHARACTERS

Through the first act, we see the three women re-enacting scenes from their lives which Agatha is scripting; they are playing and re-playing a ritual game. There is no need for costume changes to delineate the multiple characters – we should see this happen through actor voice and physicality, since the three women are literally play-acting the scenes together in the bare space.

The actress playing AMELIA also plays:

MADGE, Agatha's sister
CLARA MILLER, Agatha's mother
ROBERT SEMPLE, a handsome Irish preacher; Aimee's first husband
A WOMAN healed by Aimee (at the end of "The Heat")
KENNETH ORMISTON, Aimee's radio engineer
NANCY NEELE, Archie Christie's mistress
A MOVER employed by Agatha
REPORTERS as indicated

The actress playing AIMEE also plays:

G.P. PUTNAM, Amelia's promoter, and later her husband
MRS. EARHART, Amelia's mother
A HOTEL CLERK encountered by Agatha
One of AMELIA'S FANS
COL. ARCHIBALD (ARCHIE) CHRISTIE, Agatha's husband
REPORTERS as indicated

The actress playing AGATHA also plays:

MINNIE KENNEDY, Aimee's mother
One of AMELIA'S FANS
A CAMERAMAN
A RADIO ANNOUNCER
REPORTERS as indicated

*Note: McPherson is pronounced "McFURson", not "McFEERson"

ON TIME AND PLACE

Most of the play takes place in “the vanishing point” – an empty void where the three women find themselves after vanishing from the world. There, they play and re-play scenes from their lives, attempting to re-trace their steps and learn how they came to this place – and perhaps find a way out.

This is not stated explicitly until the beginning of Act Two: until then, the audience may think that the playing of multiple characters within the scenes is just a theatrical representation of reality.

The stage directions supply the location and time that each scene takes place – this is for the cast to be able to place them in context. The intent, however, is that the scenes be staged as simply as possible, with swift, fluid transitions. The women drive the changes from story to story.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

Act One

Adventure, Spectacle, Mystery	<i>All</i>
The Atlantic	<i>Amelia</i>
Lady Lindy	<i>"G.P." (Aimee) and All</i>
The Plot	<i>Agatha</i>
The Heat	<i>Aimee</i>
How Do You Do It?	<i>All</i>
Lady Lindy (Reprise)	<i>All</i>
On the Way	<i>Aimee</i>
The Plot, Part 2	<i>Agatha</i>
Tell Us, Mrs. Christie	<i>All</i>
Mysterious Affair	<i>Agatha</i>
All Mothers Do	<i>All</i>
Leave It Behind (Act I Finale)	<i>All</i>

Act Two

Adventure, Mystery	<i>Agatha</i>
Yes to No	<i>Aimee</i>
Afternoon Tea	<i>Agatha and All</i>
Vanity and Gravity	<i>Amelia</i>
How Do You Do It? (Reprise)	<i>Aimee</i>
Point A	<i>All</i>
The Solution	<i>Agatha</i>
The Return	<i>All</i>
Red Herrings	<i>Agatha and All</i>
When I Am the Wind	<i>Amelia</i>
Finale	<i>All</i>

ACT ONE

A bare space in a void. Three chairs. A table with a typewriter and tea set.

AGATHA sits, madly typing. The women are re-starting the ritual of playing through the scenes that AGATHA is writing. Perhaps images of the women are projected in the space: the iconic figures that they have come to be.

AMELIA regards her own image with a sense of bemusement and curiosity. Who is this woman?

(1. ADVENTURE, SPECTACLE, MYSTERY)

AMELIA

THERE'S AMELIA EARHART, QUEEN OF THE AIR.
SHE CROSSED THE OCEANS, EAST AND WEST.
SHE'S ALWAYS FIRST, SHE'S ALWAYS BEST.

PEOPLE LOVE HER CAN-DO SPIRIT:
STOIC, PLAIN-SPOKEN AND FREE.
PEOPLE LOVE A RISK-TAKER.
PEOPLE LOVE A RECORD-BREAKER.
PEOPLE LOVE ...
ADVENTURE!
ADVENTURE!
I NEED ADVENTURE ...

AGATHA

THERE'S AGATHA CHRISTIE, MISTRESS OF MYSTERY.
SHE SPINS HER WEBS OF BLOODLESS CRIME.
SHE'S AT HER PEAK, SHE'S IN HER PRIME.

PEOPLE LOVE HER BRILLIANT PUZZLES:
DEVIOUS, CRAFTY AND SLY.
THEY LOVE HER CLEVER EXECUTION:
PEOPLE LOVE A CLEAN SOLUTION.
PEOPLE LOVE ...

AMELIA

PEOPLE LOVE ...

AMELIA AND AGATHA

ADVENTURE!

AGATHA

MYSTERY...

AMELIA
ADVENTURE!

AGATHA
MYSTERY...

AGATHA AND AMELIA
...MYSTERY...

AIMEE makes an entrance.

AIMEE
THERE'S SISTER AIMEE, LEAST OF ALL SAINTS.
AN EVANGELIST WHO ENTERTAINS,
SHE PULLS YOU IN, SHE TAKES THE REINS.
PEOPLE LOVE HER STRENGTH AND POWER –

ALL THREE
OH, ELECTRIC! THRILLING! ON FIRE!
THEY HUNGER FOR A BURST OF FEELING,
THEY HOWL FOR HER GIFT OF HEALING.

AIMEE
PEOPLE NEED ...

AGATHA
PEOPLE NEED...

AMELIA
PEOPLE NEED ...

ALL THREE
ADVENTURE!

AIMEE
SPECTACLE!

AGATHA
MYSTERY!

AMELIA
ADVENTURE!

AIMEE
SPECTACLE!

AGATHA
MYSTERY!

ALL THREE
...MYSTERY...

AIMEE
(as though reading headlines)
Evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson vanishes. Last seen swimming in the ocean, feared drowned!

AGATHA
Mystery novelist Agatha Christie vanishes, her car found abandoned on a deserted road ...

AMELIA
Aviatrix Amelia Earhart vanishes on the last leg of her round the world flight!

PICTURE AMELIA ALONE IN THE COCKPIT...

AGATHA
PICTURE AGATHA DRIVING THROUGH THE NIGHT...

AIMEE
PICTURE AIMEE ALONE ON THE SHORE,

ALL THREE
HOW DID THEY GET THERE?
WHAT DID THEY DO?
WHERE DID THEY GO?
OH...

AGATHA
VANISHED OFF THAT FOGGY ROAD...

AIMEE
VANISHED IN THE SEA...

AMELIA
VANISHED INTO THIN AIR ... !

AIMEE
IT WAS AN ADVENTURE...

AGATHA
IT WAS A SPECTACLE...

AGATHA AND AIMEE
ADVENTURE, SPECTACLE --

AMELIA
MYSTERY!

ALL THREE
ADVENTURE!
SPECTACLE!
MYSTERY...

And onward into the ritual. AMELIA is waiting outside G.P. PUTNAM's office, 1928. Reporters clamor in the background, but our focus stays with AMELIA.

REPORTER 1 (AGATHA)
Mr. Putnam! Mr. Putnam! Word's out that you're sending a flight across the Atlantic with a woman on board!

REPORTER 2 (AIMEE)
Got any prospects? Who's it gonna be?

REPORTER 1 (AGATHA)
We hear the Diamond Duchess is gonna try again! Think your girl can beat her?

The sound of a door slamming.

REPORTER 1 (AGATHA)
Ah, nuts to you.

REPORTER 2 (AIMEE)
He's dreaming. No woman's gonna make that flight.

REPORTER 1 (AGATHA)
They're all gonna end up like the rest of them ... at the bottom of the Atlantic.

The reporters leave. AMELIA comes forward, holding a letter in her hand. She is confident but wary, carefully considering her next move. She checks through the letter, and stands in front of the unseen office door.

(2. THE ATLANTIC)

AMELIA

“DEAR MISS EARHART...”

“... THREE O’CLOCK TUESDAY...”

AND SO ON AND SO ON...

WELL, THAT’S THE DOOR.

THEY’RE LOOKING FOR A LADY PILOT.

AMELIA, WHAT DID YOU COME HERE FOR?

CHARLES LINDBERGH FLEW THE ATLANTIC

HE LANDED IN PARIS A HOUSEHOLD NAME.

A WOMAN HAS YET TO DO THE SAME.

EVERY WEEK YOU HEAR ANOTHER ONE HAS TRIED.

SOME HAVE LOST THEIR NERVE.

SOME HAVE TURNED BACK.

SOME HAVE DIED.

WHY FLY THE ATLANTIC?

WHY DO SAILORS SAIL THE SEA?

IS THERE SOMETHING THAT YOU’RE PROVING?

DO YOU HAVE TO KEEP ON MOVING

TO BE FREE?

TO BE FREE...

WHY FLY THE ATLANTIC?

WHY DO EXPLORERS BLAZE A TRAIL?

WHAT WOULD YOU BE LEARNING?

AFTER ALL, THERE’S NO RETURNING

IF YOU FAIL.

I WAS AIMLESS, WANDERING,

SEARCHING FOR A PASSION.

NOTHING SEEMED TO FIT.

BUT WHEN I FLY,

I KNOW WHO I AM,

AND WHAT I’M MEANT TO DO.

THIS IS IT!

I WILL FLY THE ATLANTIC,

SET MY COURSE AND SAIL AWAY.

WHAT MAKES ME WANT TO TRY?

AFTER ALL, WHO AM I?

JUST SOMEONE WHO WANTS IT MORE

I NEED TO SOAR

I HAVE TO FLY.

A MAN – G.P. PUTNAM (played by AIMEE) – is behind a desk, not looking up. He's been interviewing prospects all day.

G.P. (AIMEE)
(getting her name wrong)
Emily Eeer-hart?

AMELIA
(correcting him; not shy)
Amelia Earhart.

G.P.
George Palmer Putnam. People call me G.P.
I need a lady pilot to cross the Atlantic. No
woman's ever done it before. Why should I
choose you?

AMELIA
Nice to meet...

AMELIA
I'm good. I've been flying for seven years, got my own Kinner
Airster. Learned all the stunts. I have my pilot's license here.

G.P.
No, no, you wouldn't be flying the plane, Miss Earhart. Bill
Stultz is the pilot. But, you would be the Captain.

AMELIA
The Captain. I wouldn't get to fly the plane...?

G.P.
That's not how it works.

AMELIA
How does it work?

G.P.
Let me get a good look at you...

He stands up, really examines her.

G.P.
My God!

AMELIA
Is something... wrong...?

G.P.
Your hair, your face... you're a dead ringer for Lindbergh!
(with sudden enthusiasm)
Lady Lindy!

(3. LADY LINDY)

G.P.
YOU'LL BE LADY LINDY, QUEEN OF THE AIR

AMELIA
Queen of the air?

G.P.
DAINTY BUT COURAGEOUS, WILLING TO DARE
A NATIONAL HEROINE WITH A BOYISH GRIN
AND A TOUSLED MOP OF HAIR
LOOK AT LADY LINDY, SHE'S THE QUEEN OF THE AIR.

AMELIA
Thanks for the song, Mr. Putnam, but I don't know.

G.P.
You don't need to know. I do. And I can see it all now. Lady
Lindy, the female Lindbergh! The public will eat you up.
(really looks at her)
Stand up straight. And smile.
(reacting to the gap in her teeth)
... with your lips together! Always remember... people are
watching you...

THE LIGHTS SHIFT and now G.P. is with REPORTERS, 'spinning' AMELIA.

G.P.
Here's the scoop, friends: Amelia Earhart has just landed –
the first woman to cross the Atlantic.
(inventing this story)
Y'know, some deck hand looked up and called her "Lady
Lindy" ... that's right! Lady Lindy -- Queen of the Air!!

REPORTER (AGATHA)
Lady Lindy... weren't you scared on such a dangerous flight?

AMELIA
Amelia Earhart. No, I wasn't scared. I love to fly.

REPORTER
What'd you have for lunch?

AMELIA
For lunch? We had chicken sandwiches.

REPORTER

Just chicken...?

AMELIA

Chicken... with lettuce and tomato.

REPORTER

What'd your mother think?

AMELIA

I didn't tell her I was going.

REPORTER wheels around to MRS. EARHART, Amelia's mother, played by AIMEE.

REPORTER

Mrs. Earhart, did you hear your daughter flew all the way across the Atlantic?

MRS. EARHART (AIMEE)

(flat, midwestern. Doesn't get the media circus.)

I thought she'd have more sense than to try it.

REPORTER

Was she always a risktaker?

MRS. EARHART

Well, now that it's all over, I'll have a chance to catch up on my mending.

The REPORTER wheels back around to AMELIA.

REPORTER

What do you think of your new nick-name, "Lady Lindy"?

AMELIA

(completely frustrated)

I'm just Amelia. I don't think I look a bit like Mr. Lindbergh!

MUSIC out. EVERYONE stares at AMELIA in shock. She attempts to save the moment.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

...he's much better looking than I am!

REPORTERS (AIMEE AND AGATHA)
SHE IS LADY LINDY, QUEEN OF THE AIR
QUEEN OF THE AIR
DAINTY BUT COURAGEOUS, WILLING TO DARE
A NATIONAL HEROINE WITH A BOYISH GRIN
AND A TOUSLED MOP OF HAIR
SHE IS LADY LINDY --
SHE'S THE QUEEN OF THE, SHE'S THE QUEEN OF THE,
SHE'S THE QUEEN OF THE AAAIR.

LIGHTS change: AGATHA is at the hospital dispensary where she works.

AGATHA
(Doing careful inventory)
Morphine. Iodine. Strychnine.

Her sister MADGE (played by AMELIA) enters.

MADGE (AMELIA)
Agatha...?

AGATHA
Madge! Come share some potassium bromide with your sister.

MADGE
Potassium what?
(gingerly sitting)
Agatha, how *can* you work here? It's so awfully... dreary.

AGATHA
It's a hospital dispensary, not a booth at a funfair. They prefer dreary.

She goes on with her inventory.

MADGE
I've been bursting to tell you, I've just finished *The Leavenworth Case!* It's marvelous! A real stunner!

AGATHA
(matter-of-fact)
Ah, yes. Wasn't it a shock that it was the husband, after all?

MADGE
(disappointed)
Oh, you already read it.

AGATHA

I read the first ten pages.

MADGE

What... how did you... ?

AGATHA

Whoever wrote that book doesn't know the first thing about cyanide. There *is* the scent of bitter almonds, but only for a moment.

MADGE

Oh, Agatha.

AGATHA

You and Mother and Archie might despise this dispensary, but it has provided me with a frightfully thorough education on ways to poison people.

MADGE

Well, I'm not inviting *you* to tea.

AGATHA hands her a letter.

AGATHA

Post this on your way out, would you?

MADGE

Another letter to Archie? Agatha! You've been married for simply ages, and you still act positively love struck.

AGATHA

It is a war, you know. He needs to know I miss him terribly.

MADGE holds up the book one more time.

MADGE

So. You don't want the book...

AGATHA

(sighing)

It's not really a challenge.

MADGE

If you're so clever, why don't you write a murder mystery of your own?

MADGE exits. An idea dawns on AGATHA as MUSIC begins. AGATHA moves downstage, alone, musing.

(4A. THE PLOT HOTEL UNDERSCORE)

AGATHA

"The hotel. The hotel was elegant, but slightly frayed. Who were the suspicious persons sitting in the lobby armchairs, drawn up before the fire, exchanging knowing glances?"

AGATHA approaches the DESK CLERK (AIMEE).

DESK CLERK (AIMEE)

M'help you, ma'am?

AGATHA

Oh. I, uh, yes, I have a reservation. Christie.

DESK CLERK

Let's see ... here we are. Christie.

AGATHA

Mrs. Archibald Christie.

DESK CLERK

I see you're here for two weeks. Will your husband be joining you, ma'am?

AGATHA

I only wish he could. He's a pilot in the RAF.

DESK CLERK

Bombing the Kaiser, eh? Good man. Now let me just get your key.

AGATHA

(brainstorming again)

"The slightly grubby man ruffled through his desk with a furtive look. What secrets was he hiding? What were the mysterious stains on his hands?"

DESK CLERK

It's ink, ma'am.

AGATHA

Of course. Of course.

DESK CLERK

A walk on the moors will do you good. Take your mind off things.

AGATHA

Yes. I'm here to do just that. Walk on the moors. And ... to write.

DESK CLERK

Write ... what?

AGATHA

A book.

DESK CLERK

A book. Whatever you say, ma'am.

THE DESK CLERK EXITS and AGATHA is alone in the lobby.

(4B. THE PLOT)

AGATHA

Cyanide? Arsenic?

(pause)

Strychnine.

(pause)

A little man. A detective. With waxed mustaches. French?
No. Belgian.

THE PLOT.
THE PLOT.
THE PLOT.
THE PLOT ...

WHERE TO BEGIN? THERE'S THE OLD CLICHÉ, WITH THE HUSBAND WHO WANTS HIS WIFE DONE AWAY WITH. OR THERE'S THE OLD RELIABLE BUTLER, HE DOES IN THE MISSUS AND STEALS ALL THE CUTLERY. NO. NO! THE PLOT. THE PLOT.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

I SHOULD HAVE KEPT
UP WITH MY SINGING AND PLAYING PIANO
AND HAD A CAREER AS A LYRIC SOPRANO
THIS BOOK? WELL I'M SORRY I EVER BEGAN, OH
I CAN'T WRITE A BOOK, WHY'D I BET THAT I CAN? NO!
A PLOT! A PLOT!
I'VE GOT A PLOT!

THAT'S WHAT I OVERLOOKED, THAT'S WHAT I MISSED
TAKE AN ORD'NARY PLOT AND THEN GIVE IT A TWIST.
THERE'S THE OBVIOUS KILLER YOU FIRST SUSPECTED,
BUT IF YOU'RE SKILLFULLY MISDIRECTED,
YOU'RE CAUGHT BY SURPRISE ON PAGE ONE EIGHTY THREE
AND YOU HAVEN'T A CLUE WHO IT TURNS OUT TO BE.
THE PLOT. THE PLOT. THE PLOT. THE PLOT ...

AN ELDERLY WIDOW, NEW HUSBAND, GROWN CHILDREN
AND VARIOUS FAMILY FRIENDS.
A FAMILY FORTUNE, SUSPICION AND JEALOUSY
MURDER IS HOW IT ALL ENDS.

IN A MYST'RY OF COURSE MURDER'S ONLY THE START OF IT
ENTER THE BELGIAN DETECTIVE POIROT!
HE'LL STROKE HIS MUSTACHE
AND HE'LL GET TO THE HEART OF IT
SOLVING THE CASE IN ONE BRILLIANT GO.

NOW THE CHARACTERS ... THE CHARACTERS ...

CYNTHIA, ALFRED AND DORCAS THE MAID,
LAWRENCE AND JOHN AND MARY, JOHN'S WIFE.
AND DON'T FORGET OLD MISSUS EMILY INGLETHORPE,
RATHER A PILL, WHO FELT A BIT ILL,
WENT INTO CONVULSIONS THAT ENDED HER LIFE.
POOR EMILY ...

NOW THE CLUES ... THE CLUES ...
THERE ARE SO MANY, BUT WHICH TO CHOOSE?

A LOCKED BOX, OPENED BY FORCE
A QUARRELING COUPLE THIS CLOSE TO DIVORCE
A MISSING CUP, A FALSE BEARD
A LETTER THAT SEEMS TO HAVE DISAPPEARED
A SIGNATURE FORGED, A DANGEROUS DRUG
COFFEE AND CANDLEWAX STAINS ON THE RUG...

AGATHA (CONT'D)

(Analyzing the most important clues, as Poirot would.)

Cynthia never took sugar in her coffee.

(MUSIC STING)

And why was a fire lit in midsummer?

(MUSIC STING)

And what about the freshly planted bed of begonias?

AND WHAT WAS THE MURDERER'S MOTIVE TO KILL?
AND WHAT OF THE FOOTPRINTS OUTSIDE OF THE SILL?
FROM A PAPER HALF BURNT, POIROT HAS LEARNT
EMILY INGLETHORPE REWROTE HER WILL.
"BEING POSSESSED OF SOUND MIND ..."
"I AM POSSESSED OF SOUND MIND ..."
"I AM POSSESSED ... I AM POSSESSED ..."
"I AM POSSESSED ... I AM POSSESSED ..."

Oh, Archie ...

I am possessed.

BOLD CAPTAIN CHRISTIE
AND SHY LITTLE AGATHA
RAN OFF TO BE MARRIED
ONE COLD CHRISTMAS EVE
ARCHIE, OUR PLOT IS SO AWF'LLY ROMANTIC,
THE KIND OF THING READERS CAN HARDLY BELIEVE.
AND WHEREVER YOU ARE NOW,
I WISH I WERE THERE.
I'M LOST IN A DREAM OF OUR MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR...

...AT STYLES! A TITLE!
"THE MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR AT STYLES!"

WHERE AM I? OH DEAR, I'VE BEEN WALKING FOR MILES.

HMM. NOW, HAVE I LEFT SOMETHING OUT? ANYTHING VITAL?
CHARACTERS, CLUES, A DETECTIVE, A TITLE.
IT'S ALL IN MY HEAD, NO MORE PACING ABOUT.
THE ONLY THING LEFT IS TO WRITE IT ALL OUT.
OH DEAR...

She regards her typewriter.

AGATHA

“The Mysterious Affair At Styles. Chapter One.”

I SUPPOSE THAT’S THE NATURAL PLACE TO BEGIN.
NO STALLING AGATHA, TIME TO DIVE IN.
YOU TOOK THE BET, AND YOU KNOW YOU CAN WIN.

(Typing madly)

PAGE ONE.
PAGE TWO.
PAGE THREE.
PAGE TEN.
PAGE TWENTY, PAGE THIRTY, PAGE FORTY.

GOODNESS, WHAT TIME IS IT?
WHERE DID THE HOURS GO?
DID I HAVE DINNER? PERHAPS I FORGOT.
OH DEAR, IT’S BEEN AGES
BUT LOOK AT THE PAGES
AND PAGES AND PAGES AND PAGES AND PAGES
AND PAGES AND PAGES AND PAGES
ALL FILLED WITH MY PLOT. WHAT A LOT!
ALMOST THROUGH ... ?

(She checks)

NO, I’M NOT.
ON WITH THE PLOT!

BLACKOUT.

LIGHTS UP on AIMEE and MINNIE, her mother (played by AGATHA), sitting on a pew. AIMEE is seventeen and attending her first Holy Ghost Revival. At the altar stands ROBERT SEMPLE, a handsome young Irish preacher (played by AMELIA.) Perhaps we only hear his voice or see his back. He preaches from Acts 2:17.

ROBERT SEMPLE (AMELIA)

“In the last days, God says, I will pour out My spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.”

He continues on sotto voce. *(I will show wonders in the heavens above, and signs on the earth below. Blood and fire and billows of smoke..)*

AIMEE

Mama, let's go home.

MINNIE (AGATHA)

Aimee, stop fidgeting.

AIMEE

It's hot in here.

MINNIE

Settle down and listen to the preacher. You're seventeen years old, for heaven's sake. Act like a lady.

AIMEE

I don't give two figs about church! I have play practice.

ROBERT SEMPLE

(on fire)

Pray with me, brothers and sisters. Pray with me now. Feel the Spirit of the Lord! Feel the Spirit of the Lord come upon you! Open your heart! Open your heart to Him! Feel the fire!

AIMEE

He looks too young to be a preacher.

MINNIE

He knows his business.

AIMEE

He's handsome.

MINNIE

Shhh!

AIMEE

Is he Irish? I thought you told me all Irishmen were Pope-loving drunkards full of whiskey.

MINNIE

I said no such thing, now hush.

ROBERT SEMPLE

(beginning sotto voce under previous lines)

"The sun will be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord ... And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

AIMEE

What's that lady doing? Why's she making those noises?

MINNIE

We don't make fun of believers, Aimee.

AIMEE

I do!

MINNIE

Shush!

AIMEE

Look! The milkman! He's falling down on the floor!

SHE starts laughing.

MINNIE

He's caught the Holy Spirit. Don't point.

AIMEE

Hey milkman! How's it feel?

MINNIE

Aimee Kennedy, sit down and be quiet!

In direct response to that, AIMEE suddenly jumps up and stands on the pew.

AIMEE

Hey! Hey preacher! What if you're wrong? What if there is no God?

MINNIE

Get down from there!

AIMEE

What about Darwin? What about – dancing?

MINNIE

Aimee!

ROBERT SEMPLE

(smiling)

Ah, you like to go dancing...

MINNIE

No, she doesn't.

AIMEE

So what if I do? What's wrong with that?

ROBERT SEMPLE

Good question. How do you know right from wrong?

AIMEE

I don't care about rules. Rules are stupid!

MINNIE

Aimee!!

Beat. AIMEE locks eyes with SEMPLE, staring.

ROBERT SEMPLE

Come. Come to the altar and speak your mind.

AIMEE looks confused, not intending him to take her seriously. She gets down off the pew and slowly moves to the altar. LIGHTS SHIFT and MINNIE FADES AWAY.

(5A. THE HEAT PRELUDE)

AIMEE

I'm here.

ROBERT SEMPLE

And what's your name, now?

AIMEE

Aimee.

ROBERT SEMPLE

God has something in mind for you, Aimee.

AIMEE

I don't know God. I don't know you either.

ROBERT SEMPLE

Robert Semple.

AIMEE

That's your *name*. But I don't know you. Why should I believe you?

ROBERT SEMPLE

Tell me what you do believe in.

AIMEE

(spell-bound now)

I – I don't know...

ROBERT SEMPLE

You are God's little daughter. He's calling to you. Do you hear Him?

AIMEE

I'm listening...

ROBERT SEMPLE

(touching her cheek gently)

Hear Him. Feel Him. Open your heart.

LIGHTS SHIFT. AIMEE is alone onstage.

(5B. THE HEAT)

AIMEE

TOUCH ME, AGAIN, AGAIN, AND NOW,
YOUR HANDS -- MY SKIN,
YOUR FINGERS -- MY SPINE,
TRACE THE LINE OF MY BACK, MY NECK,
UP TO MY HAIR,
MY CHIN, MY CHEEK.
THE AIR, THE SUN, THE MOON EXPLODES!
OH...
OH...

AND JUST THE HEAT.
THE HEAT.
THE HEAT OF THE FIRE, YOUR LOVE, YOUR VOICE,
IT BURNS MY BRAIN, MY BREATH, MY BODY,
MY BODY
MY SOUL, MY SOUL
MY PAST, MY FUTURE --
I'M WHOLE.
I AM WHOLE
WITH YOUR HEAT.
THE HEAT. THE HEAT.

LIGHTS SHIFT and we move forward in time. Now, AIMEE stands in a field, preaching to a small (unseen) group of people.

AIMEE

THEN THE HEAT OF THE LORD BURNED IN MY HEART
 BURNED IN MY HEART
 AND THE PREACHER AND GOD'S LITTLE DAUGHTER
 CAME TOGETHER,
 CAME TOGETHER.
 NOW TO LIVE AS ONE,
 LIVE AS ONE
 TO DO GOD'S WORK,
 TO DO GOD'S WORK.
 THE WILL OF THE LORD TO BE DONE
 THE WILL OF THE LORD TO BE DONE.

BUT THE WILL OF THE LORD WAS NOT MY OWN,
 WAS NOT MY OWN.
 FOR A FEVER ONE DAY CAME AND TOOK MY LOVE
 RIGHT TO HEAVEN,
 RIGHT TO HEAVEN.
 NOW I ROAM THESE LANDS,
 ROAM THESE LANDS ALONE.
 ALONE, BUT WITH
 THE HEAT OF THE LORD IN MY HANDS
 THE HEAT OF THE LORD IN MY HANDS.

AIMEE reaches out to a WOMAN (AMELIA) who kneels, crumpled over, in front of her. AIMEE holds out her hands and lays hands upon the woman.

THE HEAT.
 THE HEAT.
 THE HEAT OF GOD'S FIRE, HIS LOVE, HIS VOICE.
 IT FILLS MY BREATH, MY HANDS, MY BODY.
 YOUR BODY
 MY SOUL, YOUR SOUL
 YOUR PAST, YOUR FUTURE –

The WOMAN (AMELIA) takes Aimee's hand as AIMEE pulls her up. The woman STANDS.

YOU ARE WHOLE.
 YOU ARE WHOLE
 WITH THE HEAT.
 THE HEAT.
 THE HEAT.
 OH...
 OH...

The WOMAN fades away from AIMEE, as AIMEE stands, exhausted but satisfied. MINNIE (AGATHA) has observed the healing.

MINNIE

Did you think I wouldn't find you?

AIMEE

I didn't think you'd come looking.

MINNIE

Everybody was falling all over themselves telling me where the "miracle woman" pitched her tent. Saw your poster: "Revival tonight. Mrs. Aimee Semple McPherson." You got two husband's names and no husband. Widow's one thing, shame about Robert, but does everyone know you ran out on McPherson?

AIMEE

There's work to do, if you want to help. Moving on tonight.

MINNIE

I brought Roberta. Girl ain't seen her mother in two years.

AIMEE

Where is she?

MINNIE

Left her back at the rooming house. Didn't want her to see her mama sitting in the mud.

AIMEE

The Lord doesn't care about mud. He smiles on hard work.

MINNIE

The Lord smiles on people who know better than to pitch a tent on a windy hill.

AIMEE

Every time it blew down, I put it back up myself.

MINNIE

And pitched it right up in the same spot, didn't you?

AIMEE

I want to see my daughter.

MINNIE

Come home with us.

AIMEE

You always said you promised me to God before I was born.

MINNIE

I was a fifteen year old farmgirl married to an old man. I didn't know what I was promising.

AIMEE

You made the promise and He called me. God said, Will you go? And I said, Yes, I'll go. This is where He wants me to be.

MINNIE

Out in the rain and the mud?

AIMEE grabs MINNIE's hands in hers and holds tightly.

AIMEE

Feel this! I had a vision. He came to me, and He put the gift of healing in these hands. I couldn't say "No thank you Lord, not for me, try the next girl!" It's all pouring out of me, His words, His power, His spirit, I can't bottle it up. I can't stop it ... any more than you can stop me.

MINNIE cannot look her in the eye. Finally she does.

MINNIE

Someone needs to see about that rip in the tent.

AIMEE

You can patch the tent while I drive. We can leave tonight.

MINNIE

Aimee! Do you know what you're doing?

AIMEE

I asked God for help. He sent you. That's a miracle right there.

AIMEE bustles away, full of energy. MINNIE is left alone. SHE looks at the sky.

MINNIE

Maybe it'll stop raining soon.

Lights cross fade to AMELIA giving a lecture. SHE is a bit awkward.

(6. HOW DO YOU DO IT?)

AMELIA

So there we were, over the Atlantic. We came out of the clouds and caught sight of a ship below us. Do we have that slide?

SHE turns her back as she looks to see if the slide comes up.

AMELIA

Yes. That's the picture I took.

AIMEE

(yelling from off)

Speak up! We can't hear!

AMELIA

(talking more loudly)

So there we were, over the Atlantic. I was in the back of the plane like a sack of potatoes, on my tummy taking pictures.

SHE chuckles. No one else does.

AMELIA

(laughing it off)

Oh well. Anyway, I was lucky to be invited along. We had an excellent crew. I'm just a dub – that's an amateur flyer. I'm grateful for the chance to fly, and for the chance to speak to you this evening. Thank you.

A beat.

AMELIA

Which way do I go?

REPORTERS (AGATHA and AIMEE) are waiting for her after her lecture.

REPORTERS (AGATHA AND AIMEE)

HOW DO YOU DO IT?

DO WHAT YOU DO?

WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?

WHAT MAKES YOU YOU?

WHERE ARE YOU OFF TO?

GIVE US A CLUE

HOW DO YOU DO IT?

DO WHAT YOU DO?

AMELIA

Well, I didn't really do anything.

REPORTER 1 (AGATHA)

Ha! Ha! Ha! I love it!

REPORTER 2 (AIMEE)

She's selfless!

REPORTER 1 (AGATHA)

Self-deprecating!

REPORTER 2 (AIMEE)

Modern!

REPORTER 1 (AGATHA)

She's funny!

AIMEE AND AGATHA

She wears pants!

AMELIA

I wear pants because they're comfortable. And I have thick ankles.

REPORTER 1 (AGATHA)

Ha! Ha! Ha! I love it! Didja get that Frank?

REPORTERS (AIMEE AND AGATHA)

Thick ankles!

THEY leave her.

AMELIA

(checking through her schedule)

Lecture in Chicago on the 19th. Des Moines on the 20th.

Indianapolis on the 21st. Why am I still talking about a flight that's a year old?

SHE makes calculations in her head, adding up lecture fees.

Pittsburgh. Allentown. Scranton. Then I'll have enough for the new plane.

SHE sees her new plane, and settles in to the cockpit.

My new red Vega. Here we go, baby.

And now SHE is flying.

AMELIA
KEEP IT LEVEL
PULL BACK SLOWLY
THEN CLIMB, CLIMB, CLIMB
CLIMB AND DIVE
BANK AND TURN
CIRCLE SMOOTHLY
THEN CLIMB, CLIMB
IF THERE'S ENOUGH TIME
IF THERE'S ENOUGH TIME
IF THERE'S ENOUGH--

SHE bounces in her seat as SHE comes in for a bumpy landing.

AMELIA
(note to self:)
Work on landings.

AMELIA poses for an advertisement.

AGATHA
“Amelia Earhart drinks Horlick’s malted milk.”

A flashbulb goes off. Now, A more confident AMELIA is reaching the climax of a triumphant speech.

AMELIA
In aviation, women are outnumbered forty to one. But we can change that as more and more of us knock at the door. And when you knock at the door, bring an axe along... you might have to chop your way through!

SHE poses for another ad.

AIMEE
“Amelia Earhart uses Modernaire Luggage.”

Flashbulb. AMELIA, self-assured and poised, is waving to large, far-off crowds in a parade.

AMELIA
(loudly so as to be heard over cheering)
I accept the key to the great city of Duluth!
(parade wave; she has her moves down.)
Helloooo! Thank you!

(Again)
Helloooo! Thank you!

AMELIA

(Turning to the other side.)

Thank you! Helloooo!

SHE poses for another ad.

AIMEE

“Own a replica of the actual hat Amelia Earhart wore, with a ribbon bearing her signature. Only three dollars.”

Flash.

AMELIA

COME SEE LADY LINDY, QUEEN OF THE SKIES
 QUEEN OF THE SKIES!
 HEAR HER THRILLING ACCOUNTS
 OF THE PLACES SHE FLIES
 SHE’S GOT A CLOTHING LINE
 AND SHE’LL GLADLY SIGN
 POSTERS ANYBODY BUYS
 “THANKS! FROM LADY LINDY,
 DARING QUEEN OF THE SKIES”

SO FOLKS, COME SEE AND HEAR
 BUY A SOUVENIR
 OH, THE HATS FIT ANY SIZE
 READ IT – “LADY LINDY
 FEARLESS QUEEN OF THE SKIES”
 GET YOUR PIECE OF HIS’TRY
 SEE THE QUEEN OF THE SKIES

Flash.

AGATHA

Amelia Earhart writes to the faithful readers of Cosmopolitan Magazine.

AMELIA

People often ask me, How do you do it? It’s simple really. Be true to yourself, and make time for what’s really --

AGATHA and AIMEE rush on as young ADORING FANS, shrieking.

AGATHA AND AIMEE

(lines tumbling out excitedly)

Miss Earhart!

AIMEE

There she is! Amelia!

AGATHA

I want to be just like you! I love you!

AIMEE

I have your hat!

AIMEE AND AGATHA (ADORING FANS)

HOW DO YOU, HOW DO YOU DO IT?!
DO WHAT YOU DO WHAT YOU DO-DO-DO-DO
WHAT-A-YA WHAT-A-YA THINKING?
WHAT WHAT WHAT MAKES YOU YOU YOU
YOU YOU YOU YOU?

AGATHA

WAH WAH WAH WAH WAH WAH?

AIMEE

DOO DOO DOO DOO DOO DOO
DOO DOO DOO DOO!

AIMEE AND AGATHA

HOOOOOOOOW
DO YOU DO IT?
DO WHAT YOU DO?

AIMEE

I bet you're gonna win the Women's Air Race!

AGATHA

Have you been practicing a whole lot?

AIMEE

She's so good she doesn't need to practice!

AMELIA

Wish me luck girls!

Another ad. AMELIA holds a cigarette.

AGATHA

"Lucky Strikes were the cigarettes carried on the 'Friendship' when she crossed the Atlantic. They're toasted. No cough or irritation. They were smoked continuously."

AMELIA

They told you I don't smoke right?

Flash!

AIMEE

“Amelia Earhart Sportswear.”

Flash!

AMELIA

So there we were, over the Atlantic!

Flash!

AGATHA

“Amelia Earhart Placemats.”

Flash!

AMELIA

Chop your way through!

Flash!

AIMEE

“Amelia Earhart Luggage.”

Flash!

AMELIA

So there we were, smoking continuously!

AIMEE AND AGATHA (ADORING FANS)

WHERE WILL YOU BE FLYING?

WHAT WILL YOU WEAR?

ARE YOU AFRAID OF DYING?

WHO DOES YOUR HAIR?

AMELIA

(Supremely confident)

I'm off to the Women's Air Race!

AIMEE AND AGATHA (ADORING FANS)

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE YOU?

WHAT WILL YOU EAT?

DOES NOTHING EVER SHAKE YOU?

WHAT SIZE ARE YOUR FEET?

AMELIA

See you at the finish line girls!

AIMEE AND AGATHA (ADORING FANS)

HOW WHAT WHERE WHO

HOW WHAT WHERE WHO

HOW WHAT WHERE WHO

AMELIA is flying in the Women's Air race. She tries desperately to handle her out-of-control plane.

AIMEE AND AGATHA (ADORING FANS)

HOW DO YOU DO IT?
DO WHAT YOU DO?
DO WHAT YOU DO?
DO WHAT YOU DO?
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?
GIVE US A CLUE
HOW DO YOU DO IT? HOW DO YOU DO IT?
HOW DO YOU DO IT? HOW DO YOU DO IT?
HOW DO YOU DO IT?
DO WHAT YOU—

AMELIA comes in for an extremely bumpy landing.

AIMEE AND AGATHA (ADORING FANS)

DO!

(7. *LADY LINDY REPRISE*)

NO-LONGER-ADORING FANS

LOOK, IT'S LADY LINDY,
QUEEN OF THE FLOPS! QUEEN OF THE FLOPS!
WHEN IT'S A LITTLE WINDY,
WATCH HOW SHE DROPS! WHOOPS!
YA THINK SHE'LL EVER LEARN
HOW TO MAKE A TURN?
LOOK, THIS IS HOW SHE STOPS (PPBTH!)
THAT'S FOR LADY LINDY, REIGNING QUEEN OF THE FLOPS!

AGATHA

THE WORST I'VE EVER SEEN

AIMEE

YEAH, WHO MADE HER QUEEN

BOTH

WHEN SHE SHOULD BE DUSTING CROPS! HA!
ALL HAIL LADY LINDY
REIGNING QUEEN OF THE FLOPS!

AGATHA

Didja see that landing?!

THEY laugh and walk out.

AMELIA
 NO, I DIDN'T LAND, I DROPPED LIKE A STONE
 I GUESS I FAILED THE TEST
 AND I'M NOT THE BEST
 ONLY THE BEST KNOWN
 GOOD-BYE LADY LINDY
(an idea)
 I'LL FLY THE ATLANTIC ALONE...

(8. ON THE WAY)

AIMEE is driving.

AIMEE
 STOPPING IN SAVANNAH
 SHOUTING TO THE WORKERS
 HANDING OUT THE PAMPHLETS
 PREACHING FROM THE BACKSEAT
 DRIVING TO ATLANTA
 DRIVING TO PADUCAH
 DRIVING TO NEW JERSEY
 MOTHER, CLOSE THE DOOR.

Now, AIMEE is preaching again, a simple, direct sermon.

YOU KNOW, I'M JUST A HELPLESS WOMAN, FOLKS
 AIN'T GOT ME NO BAG OF TRICKS
 JESUS WALKED ON WATER
 ME? I'M JUST GOD'S LITTLE DAUGHTER
 BUT I GOT THE PERFECT FIX:

THE WAY TO SALVATION IS OPEN TO ALL
 SO TURN FROM TEMPTATION AND HEED THE CALL
 YES, LISTEN TO THE WORD
 HEAR WHAT I SAY:
 JESUS IS ON THE WAY...

Her small crowd has dissipated. She sighs and moves on.

AIMEE
 ON THE WAY...

MUSIC picks up. AIMEE is organizing a bigger tent revival, calling out to a crowd of unseen workers.

AIMEE

YOU GO PITCH THE TENT, AND
 YOU INSTALL THE LIGHTS, AND
 YOU SET UP THE SEATS, AND
 YOU GO HANG THE POSTERS
 YOU CAN PASS THE BASKET
 HELP ME MOVE THE PIANO
 YOU GO RUN THE SPOTLIGHT
 MOTHER, WORK THE DOOR!

Preaching again, with more confidence now.

AIMEE

YOU KNOW, I'M JUST A HELPLESS WOMAN, FOLKS
 AIN'T GOT ME NO BAG OF TRICKS
 JESUS WALKED ON WATER
 ME? I'M JUST GOD'S LITTLE DAUGHTER
 BUT I GOT THE PERFECT FIX:

AIMEE launches into her new sermon, sure of herself, learning how to work the crowd.

AIMEE

THE WAY TO SALVATION
 IS A TRICKY ROAD TO FIND
 THERE'S ALL THAT TEMPTATION
 A NIPPIN' AT YOUR BEHIND
 WE ALL KNOW VERY WELL
 IT'S EASY TO GET TO HELL
 BUT IF YOU WANT TO GO TO HEAVEN,
 I'LL SHOW YOU THE WAY

NOW JESUS SAID "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MAKE PEACE,"
 SO GO AND MAKE PEACE!
 HE SAID, "BLESSED ARE THE PURE OF HEART,"
 SO GO AND LOVE!
 HE SAID, "BLEST ARE THE MEEK"
 WELL, I'LL TELL YA THE REST NEXT WEEK,
 AND IF YOU WANT TO GO TO HEAVEN,
 I'LL SHOW YOU THE WAY!

MUSIC changes, becoming darker and heavier. AIMEE decks herself in a shimmering robe. SHE is playing a huge hall now, heading for the stage.

AIMEE
 DECORATE THE HALL, AND
 DON'T FORGET MY PICTURES
 WHO PUT UP THESE CURTAINS?
 WHERE ARE ALL THE USHERS!
 SOMEONE SET THE STAGE, AND
 SOMEONE GET THE MIKES, AND
 SOMEONE CUE THE BAND –
 MOTHER, GET THE DOOR!

A LIGHT hits AIMEE. SHE is in her element, loud and brassy in the spotlight.

AIMEE
 THE WAY TO SALVATION
 IS A TRICKY ROAD TO FIND
 THERE'S ALL THAT TEMPTATION
 JUST A NIPPIN' AT YOUR BEHIND
 WE ALL KNOW VERY WELL
 IT'S EASY TO GET TO HELL...

BUT IF YOU WANT TO GO TO HEAVEN,
 I'LL SHOW YOU THE WAY
 YES, IF YOU WANT TO GO TO HEAVEN,
 I'LL SHOW YOU THE WAY
 SISTER AIMEE IS ON THE WAY!

AGATHA strides on.

(9. THE PLOT, PART 2)

AGATHA
 NOW BACK TO MY PLOT.
 THE PLOT.

THERE'S EMILY INGLETHORPE,
 DEAD IN HER BED.
 BUT THERE'S MORE TO THIS PUZZLE THAN MEETS THE EYE.
 OUR LITTLE POIROT HAS SOME QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:
 NOT ONLY WHODUNNIT BUT HOW AND WHY?

JOHN OR LAWRENCE OR CYNTHIA – WHO?
 AT LAST POIROT CRIES OUT, “MON DIEU!”
 IN THAT COMICAL WAY, UNMISTAKEABLY HIS,
 POIROT DECLARES, “ZE MURDERER IS---“

WHILE I'M THE FIRST TO AGREE
 THAT SOME RULES NEED BENDING,
 YOU'RE MAD IF YOU THINK THAT I'LL SPOIL THE ENDING.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

WE ALL LOVE A MYSTERY, AND WHAT IT SHOWS IS THAT
PEOPLE CAN'T SEE WHAT'S RIGHT UNDER THEIR NOSES
WE LAY OUT THE SUSPECTS AND CLUES TO THE CRIME
BUT THE FUN IS IN GETTING IT WRONG ALL THE TIME.

IT'S PUZZLES AND TRICKERY, READER BEWARE!
A MYSTERY WRITER WILL NEVER PLAY FAIR.

NOW BACK TO MY BOOK. IT'S A BOOK.
I WROTE A BOOK. A BOOK!
I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER WRITE MORE THAN ONE
BUT IT CERTAINLY HAS BEEN FRIGHTFULLY FUN.
LET'S SEE, THE PLOT, THE CRIME, THE CUP, THE LOCK,
THE STAIN, THE WILL, THE BEARD, THE MAID,
THE LETTER, THE KILLER, THE BELGIAN DETECTIVE, THE END.
GOOD HEAVENS, I'M DONE.

ARCHIE (played by AIMEE) enters. It is a few years since last we saw AGATHA in the dispensary;
the Christies are living in a small London flat.

AGATHA

Archie darling. Home already?

ARCHIE (AIMEE)

For once they let the junior partners go at a decent hour.
Where's my little Rosalind?

AGATHA

Shh, darling, she's with the nursemaid.

ARCHIE

(lightly)

Ah yes, the Christies can't afford a motorcar or entertain their
friends properly, but they shan't go without a nursemaid.

HE sorts through the mail.

AGATHA

Someday we'll have a motorcar and a real house instead of a
flat. Somewhere lovely out in the country.

ARCHIE

(laughing)

And we'll golf all day.

AGATHA

No golf for me, darling.

ARCHIE

I need someone to play with. Where will you be? Cooped up inside writing another book?

AGATHA

One was quite enough, thank you. I can't imagine doing all that again.

ARCHIE

(as he opens a letter.)

Darling. Something from your publisher.

HE scans the letter. He reads it excitedly.

"My dear Mrs. Christie..." "... enclosed," cet'ra, cet'ra "... serial rights for The Mysterious Affair at Styles ..."

HE pulls out a check.

Twenty five pounds!

AGATHA

Hardly seems worth the effort.

ARCHIE

I am proud of you, you know.

AGATHA

Any other letters? Anything from Mother?

ARCHIE

They're all bills. Tiresome.

AGATHA

We're in over our heads.

ARCHIE

We'll sort it out.

AGATHA

(doubtful)

We always do.

ARCHIE

(thinking out loud)

Darling ... have you ever thought about selling Ashfield?

AGATHA

I grew up in that house. My mother lives in that house.

ARCHIE

All alone in that rambly pile.

AGATHA

That's my childhood. My life.

ARCHIE

Darling, it could solve the problem.

AGATHA

(suddenly snapping, fiercely)

I can't! We can't. We can't sell it!

ARCHIE

We won't. We won't.

A beat.

AGATHA

Do you suppose ... if I wrote another book, I could get a bit more money for it this time round?

ARCHIE

(helpful)

A best seller, if you can manage it.

AGATHA gets that look in her eye. SHE steps downstage as reporters clamor for her attention.

(10. TELL US, MRS. CHRISTIE)

BRITISH REPORTER 1 (AMELIA)

It's a best seller!

BRITISH REPORTER 2 (AIMEE)

She's a genius!

BRITISH REPORTER 1 (AMELIA)

The Queen of Crime!

BRITISH REPORTER 2 (AIMEE)

The Duchess of Death!

BRITISH REPORTER 1 (AMELIA)

The Mistress of Mystery!

AGATHA squints into bright lights as she is pelted with questions.

BRITISH REPORTER 2 (AIMEE)

Hold up your book, so we can get that in the picture.

AGATHA

Oh, these lights are rather blinding, aren't they.

BRITISH REPORTER 1 (AMELIA)

Tell us, Mrs. Christie...

BOTH REPORTERS

(spoken in rhythm)

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS?

AGATHA

(spoken in rhythm)

WHERE DO I GET MY – HMMM, NOT A CLUE.
I NEVER-- I REALLY -- I DON'T – WELL, I *DO*.
IT'S MORE THAT I -- WELL, IT'S ACTUALLY – NO.
I'D HAVE TO SAY, WHEN I BEGIN, THAT I – OH.

(beat)

It's a mystery.

AMELIA becomes KENNETH ORMISTON, the recently hired radio engineer at Aimee's Angelus Temple. KENNETH is sitting bleary eyed with a cup of coffee and perhaps a newspaper. He has radio headphones around his neck. AIMEE bustles in, perhaps toweling her wet hair, full of unbelievable energy.

AIMEE

Knock knock! Mr. Ormiston? You in here? Let's get cracking. We've got a show to do.

KENNETH (AMELIA)

Whaa – oh, morning, Sister. Kenneth Ormiston.

HE leaps to his feet, and hold out his hand formally.

AIMEE

Oh, sit down.

KENNETH

Nice to finally meet you.

AIMEE

Mother says you're the best radio engineer money can buy.
Let's see if you're worth it. *(Checking the wall clock)* 5:57.

KENNETH

Three minutes to air, cutting it close.

AIMEE

You're still new. You'll get used to me. Let's pep it up, pep it up!

AIMEE finishes toweling her hair and gets ready at the mic while KENNETH flips switches and tries to gulp some coffee.

KENNETH

Too early for me. A man needs his java.

AIMEE

Who needs coffee? Try a few laps in the ocean, that'll wake you up. Just came from my swim.

KENNETH

Good way to drown yourself, the riptides down there, they'll pull you right under.

AIMEE

Oh, not me, I'm stronger than any old tide. When the waves are pounding me, I love it. It's like Jacob wrestling with the angel. A good clean fight.

KENNETH

I wouldn't want to go ten rounds in the ring with you, Sister.

AIMEE

I thought all you Irishmen could box. C'mon. Put up yer dukes. Let's go. Bareknuckle. Best one wins.

KENNETH

You win.

AIMEE

I always win. I gotta fight you a little to find out who you are.

KENNETH

I'm the best engineer money can buy.

AIMEE

And you're all mine.

KENNETH

(signaling the mic)

You're on.

AIMEE

This is Sister Aimee speaking -- !

AGATHA is on the telephone to her publisher.

AGATHA

This is Mrs. Christie speaking. Well, it's about the book jackets. Yes. No, in point of fact I am not happy. It has no connection with the plot. It looks like a man on a golf course having an epileptic fit in his pyjamas.

Can it be changed, please? Thank you. Yes, that's all.

AIMEE, on the radio.

AIMEE

Dear ones, it was only five years ago that I came to Los Angeles, with ten dollars and a tambourine. But I had a vision, the Lord told me he would build me a house, and a temple. No one believed me – ah, no one but you, dear friends, you gave your pennies and dimes and dollars to build the magnificent Angelus Temple.

I wish you could see it now, friends. Five thousand soft velvet seats, the sun shining through the stained glass windows, the biggest domed ceiling you've ever seen. And a-way up on top of the building, a fifty foot revolving cross lit with neon lights. If you have never been to our glorious temple, why friends, you should come, come and see it for yourselves. Services every day, healing services on Tuesdays, and every Sunday night a new "illustrated sermon." All the stories of the Bible, brought to life before your eyes, why friends, you have never seen anything like it. The choirs of Heaven and the fires of Hell, sinners and saints, shepherds and sheep, the fleshpots of Egypt, angels of Paradise and earthly temptations. Just last week I was the Queen of Sheba, and this week, why, bring the little ones, as we spin the tale of Goldilocks and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

Bless you friends, for you gave me all this. It's all anyone could want.

AGATHA, on the phone.

AGATHA

Actually, no, that's not all.

I thought about changing the title. "The Man in the Brown Suit." It sounds a bit drab. Let's say, "The Mystery of the Man in the Brown Suit." Well, no, it's a thriller more than a mystery. "The Mysterious Case of the Man in the Brown Suit." "Murder in the Hyde Park Corner Tube Station." No. "Death on the High Seas." No, it sounds like there will be pirates. "The Mystery of ... " "The Murder..." "Death..."

A pause.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

“The Man in the Brown Suit.” Yes, that’s all. Goodbye.

AMELIA speaks to reporters.

AMELIA

Here’s the scoop, friends. We’re gearing up for my solo flight across the Atlantic. Amelia Earhart. Alone. Nobody else. This time boys, I’m flying the plane.

AIMEE

The Heavenly Airplane! Look at it go!

AIMEE is performing in an illustrated sermon. She has two toy biplanes on long rods – she makes them swoop in a WWI-style dogfight.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

What’s in the gas tank? Faith! What are the wings? Forgiveness! Who’s in the cockpit? Jesus! Let’s all get aboard the Heavenly Airplane and fly!!

But - ! What’s this - ??! The airplane from *Hell!*

What drives the engine? Sin! What turns the propeller? Temptation! Who’s the pilot? The Devil!

Jesus - ! The Devil - ! Jesus - ! The Devil - ! Who will win?

Jesus’ plane dramatically shoots the devil’s plane down.

AIMEE

Everybody set your course for salvation!

AMELIA

(To reporters)

That’s ridiculous. Any rumors about me and Mr. Putnam are just rumors. He’s married. Next question. I said, I’m not going to talk about rumors.

AIMEE and MINNIE talking business as AIMEE prepares for another long day. MINNIE has papers AIMEE is signing.

AIMEE

I’m not going to talk about rumors.

MINNIE

Everyone else is doing plenty of talking.

AIMEE

They're *just rumors* Mother, for heaven's sake. Kenneth's a handsome man.

MINNIE

Mister Ormiston is married.

AIMEE

And I never want to be married again, so that takes care of that. What's next? When are the new lights being installed?

MINNIE

Soon.

AIMEE

When?

MINNIE

Drink your coffee.

AIMEE

When?? When??!!

MINNIE

You need a tonic for your nerves.

AIMEE

I need a good swim.

MINNIE

Swim tomorrow.

AIMEE

Or a quick drive.

MINNIE

Work to do.

AIMEE

What's next?

MINNIE

The choir director said he'd quit if we don't raise his salary.

AIMEE

So raise it.

MINNIE

I fired him.

AIMEE

Mother!

MINNIE

I can direct the choir. Save some money.

AIMEE

You? I'll do it.

MINNIE

You need to work on a new illustrated sermon. Last week's, well, hmmmph.

AIMEE

What about last week's?

MINNIE

Wasn't up to your usual.

AIMEE

Mother!

MINNIE

Just telling it plain.

A standoff for a moment.

AIMEE

I'll need a camel, some monkeys and a duck.

AMELIA on the phone with mechanics.

AMELIA

It's a *brand new plane*, what is taking so long? Well, when *will* it be ready? *Soon?* When?!! We already announced the flight! I can't wait forever.

AGATHA, sitting at her typewriter, on the phone with Archie.

AGATHA

Oh, I won't be waiting up for you, darling, that's so sweet, I'll just be *up*, I'm still not finished. Just clattering away.

(correcting a typing mistake)

Blast it ... C-Y-A-N-I-D-E.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

Yes... yes ... (*typing*) “bulging eyes and mottled blue skin...”
Just knock on the door of the study when you come in.

Simultaneously we see KENNETH discovering AIMEE in the radio room.

KENNETH

Sister. What you are doing in here?

AIMEE

Working. Go away.

KENNETH

Is there a two a.m. broadcast I don't know about?

AIMEE

No one comes looking for me in the radio room. Close the door.

KENNETH

(*coming closer to AIMEE*)

Whatcha workin' on?

AGATHA

(*laughing*)

Oh, I'm not telling. The plots always come out wrong when I tell you about them before I'm done. You know that.

AIMEE

(*muttering to herself*)

Jonah and the Whale. The parting of the Red Sea. Moses... Noah... we could build water tanks ... a flood onstage...

KENNETH

Ah, a new show.

AIMEE

It's a *sermon*. Not a show.

KENNETH

Oh I don't know about that, ya got sparkly lights, jazzy music, dancing girls...

AIMEE

There's no dancing girls.

KENNETH

Maybe there should be.

AIMEE

(getting an idea)

I could be ... Eve in the Garden of Eden. Alone in Paradise.
Dancing.

SHE dances while AGATHA speaks. KENNETH watches appreciatively.

AGATHA

Dancing? Where would we go dancing? "A smudged fingerprint on the..." No, we'll think of something to do, we'll have the whole weekend to ourselves. Won't that be fun.

AIMEE

(the dancing is freeing her brainstorming)

I could be Delilah ... I could be Salome ... I could be Jezebel.

KENNETH

Dancing like that, you sure could.

AGATHA

Of course I love you. You know I do. Awfully. More than anything. Yes, well ... goodnight.

AGATHA hangs up. She sits at the typewriter but now no thoughts come. AIMEE and KENNETH are dangerously close.

AIMEE

You should go home to your wife.

AGATHA

Oh, Archie.

KENNETH

Maybe I should.

THEY dance while AGATHA sings.

(11A. MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR PART 1)

AGATHA
THERE IT IS AGAIN
THAT FUNNY LITTLE TINGLE
ERASING EVERY SINGLE
THOUGHT THAT'S IN MY MIND

YOU COME IN AND I'M POSSESSED
YOU WILL NEVER LET ME REST
YES, YOU'RE ALWAYS THERE
A MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR
YOU AND I

AMELIA
G.P. There you are. I've been all over the house looking for
you. I'm ready.

G.P.
Isn't it bad luck for me to see you before the wedding?

AMELIA
I'm not superstitious.

G.P.
Maybe I am.

AMELIA
Everyone's here.

G.P.
That's a nice suit.

AMELIA
Something white and fluffy didn't seem right. This is more
who we are, don't you think?

G.P.
You know I actually do love you.

AMELIA
I have something for you.

SHE hands him a letter.

G.P.
Oh how sweet, you haven't written a poem in a long time.

AMELIA

It's not a poem. Just some thoughts I needed to get down on paper before we go through with it.

G.P.

Thoughts...?

AMELIA

My ideas about... how this could work.

G.P.

"You must know again my reluctance to marry ... I feel this move just now to be as foolish as anything I could do..."

AMELIA

Earhart marries her promoter. Aren't we foolish?

G.P.

"I will not hold you to any medieval code of faithfulness to me. Nor will I consider myself bound to you."

AMELIA

Most husbands would be thrilled.

G.P.

"I cannot endure the confinement of even an attractive cage."
A cage?

AMELIA

I'm being honest.

G.P.

I see.

AMELIA

Maybe you and I will make it work. In a new way.

G.P.

And if we don't?

MUSIC IN.

AMELIA

If we don't – after a year, let me go.

G.P.

Do you love me?

AMELIA

It's time. Yes.

(11B. MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR PART 2)

AGATHA

MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR
THIS OVERWHELMING FEELING
COMES AND LEAVES ME REELING
WONDERING WHAT'S REAL
WHY DOES LOVE CONCEAL WHAT'S TRUE
THEN SUDDENLY REVEAL IT, TOO?
THIS IS LIKE A DREAM
WHERE MY SENSES SEEM TO LIE!

OH, I SHOULD HAVE RUN AWAY
LISTENED TO THE ONES WHO'D SAY
"THIS IS MAD, THIS IS WRONG"
I MADE MY MIND UP EVERY DAY
TO LEAVE YOU – BUT I HAD TO STAY
FOR YOUR PULL WAS TOO STRONG

PULL ME IN YOUR ARMS AND LET ME FALL AND DISAPPEAR
HERE....

MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR
OH, THE WAY YOU HOLD ME
LIKE THEY ALWAYS TOLD ME
LOVE AFFAIRS WOULD BE.
WILL THERE BE A PRICE TO PAY?
WILL THE MYST'RY FADE AWAY?
NO, IT NEVER WILL
WE SHOULDN'T LOVE, BUT STILL,
WE DO.
WILL I EVER SOLVE
THE MYSTERY OF YOU?

AMELIA and G.P. step forward, ready to shake hands.

AMELIA

(a bit stiffly)

G.P., I hope you don't mind that I wanted to fly the Atlantic
all on my own.

G.P.

Take care of yourself, darling.

AMELIA

I'll call you when I land in Paris. Goodbye, now.

THEY shake hands.

A CAMERAMAN (AGATHA)

(from off)

Do it again. There was something on the lens.

AMELIA

G.P., I hope you don't mind that I wanted to fly the Atlantic all on my own.

G.P.

Take care of yourself, darling.

AMELIA

I'll call you when I land in Paris. Goodbye, now.

THEY shake hands.

A CAMERAMAN

Do it again.

G.P.

What am I paying you for?

AMELIA

We'll do it again.

A CAMERAMAN

Can we have a kiss from the newlyweds? Who shakes hands with his wife?

AMELIA

G.P., I hope you don't mind that I wanted to fly the Atlantic all on my own.

G.P.

Take care of yourself, darling.

AMELIA

I'll call you when I land in Paris. Goodbye, now.

AMELIA moves to kiss G.P. on the cheek; G.P. turns and becomes AIMEE at the microphone.

AIMEE

(tearful, raging, manic, paranoid)

Lies! Yes, dear ones, there are so many lies circulating about Angelus Temple and Sister McPherson. They say I charge money for healing services -- that is a lie. They say I pay fake cripples to act out fake cures. Lies! Lies! Lies!

So many lies and rumors, lies so vile that I can't even say them over the radio. I know you don't believe these lies. I know you won't let the liars destroy us. And so my friends, as midnight draws near, I pray that you find restful sleep, and know that we are here at the Temple, praying around the clock, through the long dark hours, praying for you. This is Sister Aimee, saying good night.

AIMEE is drained, near tears. She probably has not been outside the church in days, even weeks.

KENNETH

All right, you're done. See you bright and early.

AIMEE

I need to work.

KENNETH

You need to sleep.

AIMEE

I can't.

KENNETH

Why not?

AIMEE

There are people everywhere. Lined up. Thousands.

KENNETH

Make 'em wait.

AIMEE

That's not how it works.

KENNETH

How does it work?

We hear MINNIE, distantly.

MINNIE

(off)

Aimee?

AIMEE obediently starts to exit.

KENNETH

Stay here.

AIMEE

I can't.

KENNETH

Come on Salome, let's see a little dance.

AIMEE

No.

KENNETH

Let's dance.

He twirls her.

AIMEE

(laughing)

No, no, no.

KENNETH

I know what you need. You like the ocean. We'll run off to Mexico. Swim till we're all worn out. Squish our toes in the sand and drink tequila all day.

AIMEE

Yes, yes yes! Let's go. Right now!

There is a moment where they stand very close.

MINNIE

(off)

Aimee!

KENNETH

Of course, we'd have to bring my wife along.

HE laughs. SHE doesn't.

AIMEE

(getting it)

Of course. You were joking.

MINNIE

(off)

Aimee!

KENNETH

You have people waiting outside.

AIMEE

I always have people waiting outside.

(she steels herself.)

Yes, Mother. What's next?

As AIMEE leaves, AGATHA enters. AMELIA becomes NANCY NEELE. THEY are in the garden of AGATHA and ARCHIE's new country home. There is a table set for tea. AGATHA is all askew, agitated and preoccupied. She is speaking to NANCY, who is cool as a cucumber and regards AGATHA with puzzlement and perhaps a bit of condescending pity.

AGATHA

"What's next?" "What's next?" "How can you follow such an ingenious twist?" "How will you dazzle us next?" Well – I don't know! How did I ever write a book in the first place? How did I write six? My best ideas come when I'm doing the dishes. Only... now I have someone to do the dishes for me.

NANCY (AMELIA)

(trying to change the subject)

Oh, Mrs. Christie, what a lovely garden.

AGATHA

(remembering her duties as a hostess)

That's so kind of you to say, Miss Neele. We're so pleased with everything. Lovely country air, so good for Rosalind. She's always running about. Somewhere.

NANCY

(all she can think of to say)

Lovely. Lovely.

AGATHA

Won't you sit down? I'm so glad you finally had a free weekend to come and stay.

NANCY

Well, Mrs. Christie, I certainly –

AGATHA

Come come, you must call me Agatha.

NANCY

And you must do the same.

AGATHA

... call you Agatha?

NANCY

(flummoxed)

Er... no ... Nancy.

ARCHIE, played by AIMEE, enters. HE crowds in to the table as well. Throughout, NANCY is unruffled.

NANCY

Such a beautiful house. What a curious name, "Styles."

ARCHIE

Named it after her first one, you know.

NANCY

Of course, how dim of me. "The Mysterious Affair at Styles." Wonderful.

AGATHA

Oh, did you like it?

NANCY

Yes, of course, I've read all your books.

AGATHA

(shyly pleased)

Really?

NANCY

(brightly)

Well, no. Not *all*. None, actually. But I've certainly meant to. I'm not much of a reader, I'm afraid.

AGATHA

I can't imagine you have the time. You're quite the golf champion, I hear. And what a godsend you are. If not for you, Archie would be dragging me all over the golf course, and we'd both be miserable.

ARCHIE

Quite.

NANCY

Oh, Mrs. – Agatha. How funny you are.

AGATHA

(suddenly intent)

Interesting. The left hand.

NANCY

Pardon?

AGATHA

I'm fairly certain you're right-handed. I saw you both on the golf course. Yet you hold your tea cup with your left hand.

NANCY

I'm – sorry – did I -- ?

ARCHIE

Agatha, she's not a character in one of your mysteries.

AGATHA

(thrilled to have an idea at last)

No, not yet. But -- ah – mmm. And then – yes, the color of the fingernail polish gives it all away – excuse me, I must – mmm. Yes.

SHE hurries into the house. A moment. ARCHIE places his hand on NANCY's.

NANCY

She knows.

ARCHIE

She doesn't. She doesn't know anything.

NANCY

Oh, Archie.

ARCHIE pats NANCY'S hand and sips his tea; AMELIA bounds up out of her chair, waving to roaring crowds.

AMELIA

I made it! A little off course, but I made it!

IRISH REPORTER (AIMEE)

(as though calling to a crowd)

There's Amelia Earhart, Queen of the Air! She crossed the Atlantic, solo!

AMELIA

I made it! I made it! Where am I?

IRISH REPORTER (AIMEE)

Lookin' a little pale there Miss Earhart.

AMELIA

I just flew *fifteen hours* non-stop across *the Atlantic*.

IRISH REPORTER (AIMEE)

Miss Earhart, tell us, how d'ya do it?

AMELIA

I just kept pushing through. I'll tell you the whole story – an exclusive.

(selling the story)

It was a close call this time, the engine was on fire, the wings were icing up, there was a fuel leak dripping down my back. And just when I thought I couldn't go any farther–

IRISH REPORTER (AIMEE)

So what's next?

AMELIA is stunned into silence.

IRISH REPORTER (AIMEE)

What's next, Miss Earhart?

AMELIA

What's next?

(pause)

I'm going to fly around the world.

AGATHA enters, carrying a tray with tea things, as AIMEE exits.

AGATHA

Time for tea, Mother.

AMELIA becomes CLARA, AGATHA's mother.

CLARA (AMELIA)

Around the world! How exciting.

AGATHA

Not a trip around the world this time, Mother. Only to Egypt.

CLARA

Ah, Egypt. Remember the season we spent in Cairo when you were a girl...? I can picture you in the hot, hot sun, a smile on your face... you were so happy there.

AGATHA

Was I...?

CLARA

Now, I hope you haven't left everything to the last minute. You must remember to pack an extra --

AGATHA

Mother. Archie decided we shouldn't go, in the end.

CLARA

You must be so disappointed. It's all you've talked about for weeks. And what about my little granddaughter?

AGATHA

Oh, Rosalind didn't mind at all. She'll still be with her father.

(beat)

It's funny. I don't seem to -- understand her, not the way Archie does. I'll try to play with her, and she'll say, "Mummy, your games are silly."

CLARA

Ah, children. You were always an odd child, with your games and imaginary friends and fanciful ideas. No one ever knew what you were thinking.

AGATHA

You did.

AGATHA looks away.

CLARA

Are you well? You look pale.

AGATHA

(after a moment)

It's the dream. Every night it's the same. We're having tea, just as we are now. Madge and I. Everything's fine, and then – there he is! The Gunman, with his musket. No one notices him but me, and I try to call out, but no one hears me. He turns toward me, and I see his face – and it's Madge! The Gunman is Madge! Or, Archie. Sometimes it's Archie. And sometimes, it's you, Mother. You're the Gunman.

(beat)

The tea's a bit cold.

CLARA

Oh, Agatha.

AGATHA

I'm used to the dream by now.

CLARA really looks at AGATHA.

CLARA

You know, Agatha... you can always come home.

AGATHA looks at her mother, wanting to accept.

CLARA

You, and Rosalind.

AGATHA

Rosalind is happiest with her father.

Beat.

More tea, Mother?

CLARA becomes AMELIA pacing, furious, holding a newspaper, berating her mother, AMY EARHART (AIMEE). MRS. EARHART is busy with a task – mending, knitting, laundry, etc. She barely looks at AMELIA, flat and disengaged.

AMELIA

Mother, you have no right to criticize me. In the papers!

(reading)

“Don't ask me about Amelia, I never see her anymore. All this stunt flying, it's just foolish vanity.”

MRS. EARHART (AIMEE)

Well.

AMELIA

How many times have I asked you, please don't talk to the press! Do not even say yes or no. No one cares what you think.

MRS. EARHART

You missed Pidge's birthday.

AMELIA

I have to lecture to raise money. A lot of money.

MRS. EARHART

Second year in a row.

AMELIA

It's a flight around the world.

MRS. EARHART

Other people have already flown around the world.

AMELIA

But I'm going around the equator, I told you that.

MRS. EARHART

Oh, Amelia. Take some time to stop and settle down. Stay on the ground for a while.

AMELIA

Mother, I'm a pilot. Stop expecting me to live some other life.

MRS. EARHART

Well, if I thought you were happy--

AMELIA

(exploding)

I'm happy! Is that message coming through, loud and clear?!

MRS. EARHART stops and really looks at her. She regards her for a moment.

(12. ALL MOTHERS DO)

MRS. EARHART
DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING?
YOU'RE IN THE NEWS
YOU'RE ON THE SCREEN.
IS THIS REALLY YOU?

YOU SAID IT WAS YOUR DREAM TO FLY.
NOW YOU'RE JUST ... ANGRY.
I WONDER WHY.
I WORRY
ALL MOTHERS DO.

AMELIA turns away from her mother and becomes AGATHA'S mother, CLARA.

CLARA
Agatha, I know there's something terribly wrong.
Is Archie...?

AGATHA
Mother, you don't understand.

CLARA
DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING?
YOU'RE THIN AND PALE,
YOU'RE FAR AWAY.
HOW CAN I GET THROUGH?
I KNOW WHAT IT IS YOU FEAR.
PLEASE LET ME HELP YOU.
I'M ALWAYS HERE.
I WORRY.
ALL MOTHERS DO.

AGATHA turns away, and becomes MINNIE.

MINNIE
Aimee, stop!
(sings)
DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING?
YOU'LL BE DISGRACED
YOU'LL RUIN US!
I WORRY...ALL MOTHERS DO

ALL THREE MOTHERS
ALL MOTHERS DO IS LIE AWAKE AT NIGHT
ALL MOTHERS DO IS PRAY.
WANTING TO ALWAYS KEEP YOU IN SIGHT
LETTING YOU SLIP AWAY.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING?
 OPEN YOUR EYES
 WHY CAN'T YOU SEE?
 I WAS ONCE LIKE YOU.
 THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO OR SAY
 I'M SO AFRAID YOU'LL LOSE YOUR WAY

MINNIE
 I WATCH....

MRS. EARHART
 I WISH...

CLARA
 I WORRY...

ALL THREE
 ALL MOTHERS DO.

CLARA AND MRS. EARHART
 ALL MOTHERS DO.

AGATHA reacts to the news of her mother's death.

AGATHA
 Mother...

CLARA
(fading away)
 ALL MOTHERS DO...

A telephone rings. AGATHA looks up.

AGATHA
(barely able to keep a thought)
 Yes? Yes, this is Mrs. Christie... yes, I know I missed the
 deadline... I can't think about the book right now, I can't
 think... I have to – I have to go away, pack up my Mother's
 things, clear the house... *I can't* – I don't know when... soon...
 yes, when I get back ... soon. Soon.

A beat.

THEN, AGATHA turns – and now she is at ASHFIELD, her mother's house.

A MOVER (played by AMELIA) stands before AGATHA.

MOVER (AMELIA)

The whole house. All packed up. Not a thing left, anywhere.
We do a thorough job, you can count on that.

(holds out a clipboard)

So. Ma'am? If you could sign here...

AGATHA

(in her own world)

All Mother's things, packed away...

The MOVER shoves the paper in front of Agatha. AGATHA stares at the paper, frozen.

MOVER

Yes. Now just sign your name.

AGATHA looks at the pen, stares. She cannot remember her own name.

MOVER

Just your name. Are you all right, ma'am? Mrs. Christie?

AGATHA

(hearing the name)

Christie... Mrs. Christie...

THE MOVER (AMELIA) gives AGATHA a strange look, then FADES AWAY.

AGATHA turns and sinks back into her chair. LIGHTS SHIFT; time is passing. She is immobile.

ARCHIE (AIMEE) ENTERS, moves to AGATHA.

ARCHIE

(gentle, sympathetic)

Agatha, darling. It's time to get on with it. It's been months.
I'm worried. You won't write, you won't take calls from your
publisher... I don't see why you should go to pieces over this.
Be reasonable. Every woman loses her mummy at some point.

(in frustration)

You're thirty-six years old, for God's sake. Buck up, Agatha.

AGATHA stands and becomes an announcer on the radio.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (AGATHA)

There she goes, ladies and gentlemen, there she goes. Amelia
Earhart is about to take off from Honolulu on the first leg of
her round-the-world flight.

AIMEE

No, no, no, no, no...

AIMEE is kneeling, rocking, muttering, hiding in the radio room. MINNIE looks on as KENNETH joins her.

MINNIE
Mr. Ormiston, at last.

KENNETH
What's wrong?

MINNIE
It's Aimee. She won't come out.

KENNETH
Oh, she'll come out eventually. She always does.

MINNIE
She ran away right in the middle of a healing service. And there's a hundred more waiting. She's lost her senses!

KENNETH
("I'll handle it")
All right, all right.

THEY approach AIMEE cautiously, coming up on either side of her.

KENNETH
Sister ...?

MINNIE
Aimee? Aimee, it's your mother.

KENNETH
We need you to stand up, and come with us.

MINNIE
(pouncing)
You're coming with us!

THEY each grab one of her wrists. AIMEE struggles, fights them, twisted between them like Samson pushing against the pillars or a saint in agony. AIMEE throws her head back and lets forth a long, loud, guttural cry, a scream of frustration. She pulls away from them and flees.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (AGATHA)
She's cracked up! She's cracked up! Amelia Earhart botches her takeoff. What a wreck! That round the world flight is sure to be cancelled.

AMELIA is mid-argument with G.P.

AMELIA

I didn't crash on purpose! The shock absorber blew! It wasn't my fault! The plane was too heavy!

G.P.

Guess you finally figured out the law of gravity applies to you, too. Let's call it off.

AMELIA

No no no! I know! I'll change direction. We'll go west to east.

G.P.

No.

AMELIA

Why not?

G.P.

I'll tell you why not: Howland Island. You'd be leaving the most dangerous leg for last.

AMELIA

So?

G.P.

We'd have to get a whole new crew.

AMELIA

Fine. Do it.

G.P.

Don't you get it? No one has faith in you anymore.

AMELIA

I'll go alone.

G.P.

You can't go alone. You need a navigator.

AMELIA

I'll make it. I always do.

G.P.

That island is a tiny speck. You get off course by one degree, you miss it by a hundred miles.

AMELIA

I *know*! I've flown both oceans before! Alone!

G.P.

You headed for Paris. You hit Ireland. Lucky for you Europe's a continent.

AMELIA

Go to hell.

AGATHA discovers a letter on the table.

AGATHA

“Agatha. Do not try to find me. There's nothing to hide anymore. I've gone away for the weekend – with Miss Neele. Nancy and I will be staying with friends. Don't humiliate yourself by coming here and making a scene. You know, not everyone can be happy.”

AMELIA

Fred Noonan.

GP

Noonan? He's a drunk.

AMELIA

He'll do it. He needs a job.

GP

I don't like it.

AMELIA

Get Noonan in here. And a photographer.

(13. LEAVE IT BEHIND: ACT ONE FINALE)

AMELIA

ADVENTURE! ADVENTURE!
PEOPLE LOVE ADVENTURE!
PEOPLE LOVE ADVENTURE!

(Speaking to reporters)

Ladies and gentlemen of the press, I know what you might have heard, but it's all going gangbusters now – just had a little hitch. My round the world flight is back on track.

AMELIA
 I'M GOING A DIFF'RENT DIRECTION
 ONE SMALL CORRECTION.
 I CHANGED MY MIND
 I CHANGED MY MIND

(To mechanics)

Gather round boys. You've done a great job fixing 'er up. But with those extra fuel tanks, we're still a little heavy. Something's gotta go. You know what we don't need? The extra radio antenna. I'm never gonna use it. I always got by without the radio before. Get rid of it.

LIGHTEN THE LOAD
 WHO NEEDS MORSE CODE?
 LEAVE IT BEHIND
 LEAVE IT BEHIND

I'll make it. I always do.

AGATHA is in her car, driving through the night.

AGATHA

(seething, mocking ARCHIE's letter)

Nancy. Nancy Neele! "We're away for the weekend."
 "Staying with friends!" You can't leave me behind so easily.

AMELIA is flying.

AMELIA

MIAMI...
 BRAZIL...
 THE ATLANTIC.

AGATHA

"Don't humiliate yourself by coming here and making a scene!" Don't make a scene ... ! We'll see about that!

AMELIA is heading back to her plane, working a line of well-wishers, shaking hands.

AMELIA

Goodbye! Thank you. Goodbye! Thank you.
 Thank you. Goodbye!

STATE DINNERS AT EACH LANDING
 ALL THIS GLAD-HANDING CAN BE A GRIND
 LEAVE THAT BEHIND.

AMELIA

We're still heavy? You know, the heaviest thing in here is the damn life raft. And if we go down in the ocean, a parachute's not gonna help. Get rid of 'em both.

DON'T TEMPT FATE
GET RID OF DEAD WEIGHT
LEAVE IT BEHIND
LEAVE IT BEHIND.

SENEGAL...
KHARTOUM...
GWADAR.

AIMEE, shoes in her hand, stands looking at the sun setting over the sea.

AIMEE

LOOKING OUT OVER THE OCEAN
WATER'S CALM, SKIES ARE CLEAR.
WISHING I COULD BE ANYWHERE BUT HERE.
WISHING I WERE FROZEN,
WISHING I WERE NUMB.
I'LL SWIM,
I'LL SWIM UNTIL I NO LONGER CARE.
I'M ALMOST THERE,
I'M ALMOST THERE.

AMELIA

KARACHI... CALCUTTA...
RANGOON... SINGAPORE...
NEW GUINEA.

FORTY DAYS OF STRAIGHT FLYING
TIRED BUT I'M TRYING
I'M FLYING BLIND
I'M FLYING BLIND.

AMELIA is in New Guinea, on the phone to G.P., the night before her last takeoff.

G.P.

What? Amelia, speak up. I can't hear you.

AMELIA

(code word for: "He's drunk.")

We've got ... personnel problems.

G.P.

Noonan's drinking? Okay, shut everything down.

AMELIA

Tomorrow we head for Howland. We're so close.

G.P.

Close? You're not close. Stop. Now!

AMELIA

I've got one good flight left in me. This is it.

We now see all three: AMELIA, in her cockpit, AGATHA in her car, AIMEE on the beach walking slowly into the waves.

AMELIA
HOWLAND ISLAND
HOWLAND ISLAND
HOWLAND
HOWLAND

AGATHA
ARCHIE...
ARCHIE...

AIMEE
FROZEN, FROZEN
FROZEN, FROZEN
FROZEN, FROZEN

AMELIA

Earhart calling U.S.S. Itasca. Earhart calling Itasca. Have been unable to reach you by radio. We must be on you but cannot see you. Itasca. Itasca. Report!

ARE YOU THERE? ARE YOU THERE?
I'M LEFT BEHIND. I'M LEFT BEHIND.
EACH MISTAKE, EACH WRONG STEP
LEAVE IT BEHIND, LEAVE IT BEHIND.

AIMEE / AGATHA

LEAVE IT BEHIND...

AMELIA

I'M ALMOST THERE
I'M SO CLOSE
I'M ALMOST THERE
ALMOST THERE

AGATHA/AIMEE

ALMOST THERE
ALMOST THERE
ALMOST THERE

ALL THREE

ALMOST... ALMOST... ALMOST...WHERE?

AMELIA

WHERE?

AGATHA

WHERE?

AIMEE

WHERE?

AMELIA
LEAVE IT ALL BEHIND
ALL THE PAIN
ALL THE FEAR

LET IT ALL
DISAPPEAR
Earhart calling Itasca!
We are running north and south!
We cannot see you! We cannot see you!

ALL THREE
DISAPPEAR!
LEAVE THE WORLD BEHIND, SET ME FREE.
I CAN'T SEE, I CAN'T SEE
I CAN'T SEE!

AGATHA
ALL THE PAIN AND
ALL THE FEAR
AGATHA/AIMEE
ALL THE FEAR

I DISAPPEAR
...DISAPPEAR
...DISAPPEAR

Projections of headlines appear: "AGATHA CHRISTIE: VANISHED" "AIMEE SEMPLE
MCPHERSON: VANISHED" "AMELIA EARHART: VANISHED"

BLACKOUT.

END OF ACT I.

ACT TWO

We hear music from the last moments of Act One; then “Adventure, Spectacle, Mystery” begins again. AGATHA, AIMEE and AMELIA reappear from the shadows.

They take their place and begin their ritual again.

(14. ADVENTURE, MYSTERY)

AMELIA
THERE’S AMELIA EARHART, QUEEN OF THE AIR...

The lights blink as though we are skipping forward in the number.

AGATHA
SHE SPINS HER WEB OF BLOODLESS CRIME
SHE’S AT HER PEAK, SHE’S IN HER PRIME...

Skipping forward again.

AGATHA
PEOPLE LOVE...

AMELIA
PEOPLE LOVE...

BOTH
ADVENTURE!

AGATHA
MYSTERY...

AMELIA
ADVENTURE!

AGATHA
MYSTERY...

BOTH
MYSTERY...

The chord for AIMEE’s entrance strikes. She does nothing. A moment. AMELIA and AGATHA look at one another. This has never happened before. AGATHA sings sotto voce to cue AIMEE.

AGATHA
THERE’S SISTER AIMEE, LEAST OF ALL SAINTS...

Music stops.

AMELIA
What's the problem?

AGATHA
(gently)
It's your turn. That's your cue.
(To AMELIA)
She's never missed a cue before.

AMELIA
Well now we'll have to start over.
(to AIMEE)
You'd better not screw it up this time.

The music starts again.

AMELIA
THERE'S AMELIA EARHART, QUEEN OF THE AIR...

Skipping forward.

AMELIA
ADVENTURE!

AGATHA
MYSTERY!

AMELIA & AGATHA
MYSTERY!

Chord. AIMEE does nothing.

AMELIA
I can't believe it.

AGATHA and AMELIA advance on AIMEE, reminiscent of MINNIE and KENNETH advancing on her during her breakdown.

AGATHA
My dear. We all agreed. We're replaying our stories. From the beginning.

AMELIA
That's how it works.

AGATHA

We need to understand what has happened to us. What brought us here.

AMELIA

I need to get back.

AGATHA

We all need to get back. I've been looking for clues, every time through. The cause and effect...

AMELIA

How can she not know this?

AGATHA

...why did we vanish? And once we know why and how - then I'm sure we can find a solution.

AMELIA

We're so close.

AGATHA

(to AIMEE)

The answer must be right in front of our noses. It's in the telling, and the re-telling, and the re-telling. And we *will* re-tell these stories until we have a solution.

AMELIA

From the top!

AGATHA

Places!

AIMEE doesn't move.

AMELIA / AGATHA

Do you know what you're doing?

(15. YES TO NO)

AIMEE

No.

(beat)

No.

AIMEE

I HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN
WHAT I WAS DOING
I ALWAYS HAD A PLAN
I LAID OUT THE PLAN
PEOPLE FOLLOWED THE PLAN
AND WE ALL MARCHED FORWARD
DOING THE PLAN
BUT WHAT I PLANNED SLIPPED FROM MY HAND
WHERE DID IT GO?

WIND IN MY HAIR
DRIVING 'CROSS THE PLAIN
ENDLESS JOY
IN THE MUD AND THE RAIN
WHO STOPPED ME? I DID.
OH, I'M TIRED
MY SPIRIT SLOWLY VANISHED
DRAINED AND UNINSPIRED.

I WON'T GO BACK TO THAT WHOLE MESS
BEHAVING
AND CAVING
AND SAYING YES

WHEN I MEANT NO
NO, NO
SAY YES TO NO
NO, NO
SAY YES TO NO.

IF I'M A SAINT
SAINTS NEVER BLEED
THEY SAY YES
FILL EV'RY NEED
SO I GIVE, I GIVE
FORGET THE COST
I FORGOT HOW TO LIVE
AND NOW I'M LOST

I WANTED FREEDOM
BUT I BUILT MYSELF A CAGE
I PREACHED LOVE
GOT SWALLOWED UP BY RAGE
WHO'S TO BLAME? I AM
WHY GO ON?
GOING ROUND IN CIRCLES
SISTER AIMEE'S GONE

AIMEE (CONT'D)

CAN'T TELL THESE STORIES ONE MORE TIME
WHAT ARE WE DOING?
STEWING, STEWING
OH I'M ---

I'M SAYING NO
NO, NO
SAY YES TO NO

NO, NO
SAY YES TO NO

NO, NO
SAY YES TO NO

NO, NO
SAY YES TO NO

NO!

NO!

AIMEE stands triumphant.

AMELIA
(she can't let go)

We have to retrace our steps.

AIMEE

No.

AGATHA

But – people are waiting for you.

AIMEE

No.

AMELIA
(exploding)

Everyone's waiting for *me*. Lining up on city streets.
Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people.

AIMEE

Hundreds? Try thousands.

AMELIA

Right! Thousands! Marching bands. Ticker tape parades.

AIMEE

I've had parades.

AMELIA

I met the president.

AIMEE

I met Gandhi.

AMELIA

I met the Pope.

AIMEE

I might as well *be* the Pope.

AMELIA

I have a fan club.

AIMEE

I have a religion.

A beat. AMELIA stalks away.

AMELIA

(fuming)

We have to retrace our steps.

AGATHA

(a flash of realization)

Retrace our ... Yes! Yes! Of course! Why didn't I see it? It's a maze. A trap! We retrace our steps... don't you see? We always *retrace our steps*, so of course they always lead to the same place.

It's so clear! It's so simple. We must choose an alternate path!

Start with the same characters ... the same dilemma ... but change one detail and the end result is entirely different.

(MUSIC IN – AFTERNOON TEA)

For example ... it happens in the library instead of in the drawing room. Instead of footprints in the vegetable garden, you find fingerprints on the mantelpiece.

Instead of cocktails after dinner, it's

(16. AFTERNOON TEA)

AGATHA

AN AFTERNOON TEA PARTY
NOTHING TOO FANCY
JUST ARCHIE AND NANCY AND ME
SQUEEZE IN IF YOU'RE ABLE
I KNOW THAT THIS TABLE'S
A TRIFLE TOO CROWDED FOR THREE

TEA, TEA, A SPOT OF TEA
A PIT, A POT OF NICE HOT TEA
HOW TO CURE ADULTERY:
A LITTLE ARSENIC IN ARCHIE'S
AFTERNOON TEA

NANCY (AMELIA)

Lovely, lovely.

ARCHIE (AIMEE)

Agatha doesn't know! She doesn't know anything!

AGATHA

BOIL THE WATER, HOT THE POT
STEEP BUT NOT TOO STRONG
GUESTS OF HONOR HAVE ARRIVED
DON'T KEEP THEM WAITING LONG

SERVE IT WITH EXPEDIENCE
SUGAR, LEMON, CREAM
WE HAVE ALL THE INGREDIENTS
TIME TO LET OFF STEAM

ALL THREE

TEA, TEA, A SPOT OF TEA
A DRIP, A DROP OF TIP TOP TEA
OH, HO WHAT'S THE REMEDY?

AGATHA

A LITTLE ARSENIC IN ARCHIE'S AFTERNOON TEA

How many lumps would you like, my dear?

AGATHA (CONT'D)

POUR THE TEA, FILL UP THE CUP
IT'S MY SPECIAL BLEND
WE'LL TOAST YOUR LIVES TOGETHER
HOWEVER THEY MIGHT END
A BROKEN PLEDGE, A WEDGWOOD CUP
PASS THE TREACLE TART
A KNIFE, A FORK, A SPOON, THE TONGS
AND LOOK A POISON DART!

ALL THREE

TEA, TEA, A SPOT OF TEA
A JIG, A JAG OF MAGNIF TEA
HAD YOUR FILL OF INFIDELITY?

AGATHA

A LITTLE ARSENIC IN ARCHIE'S
AFTERNOON TEA

TAKE STRYCHNINE IN YOUR OOLONG
AND THE SEIZURES WON'T LAST TOO LONG
AND OF COURSE LAPSANG SOUCHONG
CAN DISGUISE A BITTER TASTE
SIP BELLADONNA WITH DARJEELING
AND SOON YOU'VE LOST ALL FEELING
AND YOU'RE STARING AT THE CEILING
HA, HA! YOUR TEA WAS LACED

OUT POP THEIR EYES IN GREAT SURPRISE
THEY LAUGH UNTIL THEY CHOKE
THEY GASP FOR AIR
FALL OFF THE CHAIR
I THINK THEY GET THE JOKE

THEY WRITHE AND MAKE A RACKET
WHILE I TAKE ANOTHER SCONE
UNTIL FIVE MINUTES LATER
IT SEEMS I'M QUITE ALONE [IT SEEMS MY GUESTS HAVE GONE]

ARCHIE DOESN'T LOOK WELL
IN FACT HE'S TURNING BLUE
THE TEA IS COLD, THE CREAM IS SPOILED
AND NANCY'S RANCID TOO...OOO!

DO YOU THINK I'M BEING HASTY?
PERCHANCE I'VE LOST MY GRIP
STILL REVENGE COULD BE QUITE TASTY
I'D LOVE TO HAVE A SIP OF

ALL
TEA, TEA!
LOVELY, LOVELY TEA
TIT FOR TAT, A SPLAT OF TEA
YES SIR, A PERFECT RECIPE!
A LITTLE ARSENIC IN ARCHIE'S
AFTERNOON TEA!

AMELIA walks away a short distance. She turns. We think at first she is talking to the others, but she is caught in her own loop.

AMELIA
I know what you might have heard, but it's all going gangbusters now – just had a little hitch. My round the world flight is back on track.

AGATHA
What's next?

AMELIA
I'll tell you the whole story – an exclusive. The engine was on fire, the wings were icing up, there was a fuel leak dripping down my back.

AIMEE
What's next?

AMELIA
Here's the scoop, friends--!

AGATHA
What's next?

AMELIA
I'm going to fly around the world.

AIMEE
Don't you get it? No one has faith in you anymore.

AMELIA
A solo flight! Alone. Nobody else.

AGATHA
She's cracked up! She's cracked up!

AIMEE
What's next?

AMELIA

This is different!

AGATHA

What a wreck!

AMELIA

This time I'm going to make it!

AIMEE

That's not how it works.

AMELIA

How does it work? How does it work?!!

(17. VANITY AND GRAVITY)

AMELIA

IN THE COCKPIT OF MY SILVER ELECTRA
I THOUGHT I COULD PROTECT A DREAM
BUT LIKE ICARUS ASCENDING ON BEAUTIFUL WINGS
I HEARD LAUGHTER FROM THE GODS
"SHE IS VAIN AND FOOLISH
TO THINK THAT SHE COULD BEAT THE ODDS"

VANITY AND GRAVITY
TWO OPPOSING FORCES
YOUR DREAM KEEPS YOU UP, KEEPS YOU GOING
THE WORLD KEEPS SLOWING YOU DOWN

VANITY AND GRAVITY
I WAS PULLED IN TWO DIRECTIONS
OUTWARD EXPECTATIONS
INNER AMBITION
I DID WHAT I DO:
I KEPT PUSHING THROUGH
AND I LEFT GRAVITY BEHIND

VANITY IS FORWARD MOTION
STRENGTH AND POWER AND DRIVE
VANITY SETS ME APART
VANITY IS WHAT IT TOOK TO BE
THE FIRST, THE LAST, THE ONLY
MADE ME SPECIAL
MADE ME SEPARATE...
MADE ME LONELY...

VANITY
SOON IT HAD CONSUMED ME

AMELIA (CONT'D)

SEEMINGLY AN ENGINE
 PUSHING ME HIGHER
 SECRETLY PULLING ME DOWN

IN THE COCKPIT OF MY SILVER ELECTRA
 I THOUGHT I COULD PERFECT A DREAM
 BUT LIKE ICARUS ASCENDING
 ON WISHFUL WINGS
 ON SELFISH WINGS
 THE GODS WERE CRYING NOW
 "SHE EXPECTS PERFECTION
 WHAT THE WORLD WILL NEVER QUITE ALLOW"

HOW CAN I LIVE IF I DON'T SUCCEED?
 IF I FALL BEHIND AND LOSE THE LEAD?
 HOW CAN I UNDO
 WHAT I'VE ALWAYS DONE?
 TO LOVE THE RUNNING OF THE RACE
 EVEN IF I HAVEN'T WON?

PULLED IN TWO DIRECTIONS
 BY VANITY AND GRAVITY.

AIMEE moves to AMELIA, responding. She sings gently, like a lullaby, eventually cradling AMELIA and performing a laying on of hands.

(18. HOW DO YOU DO IT REPRISE)

AIMEE

HOW DO YOU DO IT?
 DO WHAT YOU DO?
 WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?
 WHAT MAKES YOU YOU?
 THE ONE THING THAT MAKES YOU,
 BREAKS YOU TOO.
 HOW DO YOU DO IT?
 DO WHAT YOU DO.

WE NEED THE HEAT
 THE HEAT
 THE HEAT OF THE FIRE,
 THE LOVE, THE VOICE
 THAT BURNS YOUR BRAIN, YOUR BREATH
 YOUR BODY
 YOUR BODY
 YOUR SOUL
 YOUR SOUL

AIMEE (CONT'D)

HOW DO YOU DO IT?
DO WHAT YOU DO?
MAYBE THE TRUTH IS
THE DOING *IS* YOU
THERE'S NO EXPLANATION
BUT WE KNOW IT'S TRUE
GOT TO GET TO IT.
GOT TO GET TO IT
AND DO
WHAT WE DO.

AMELIA – recovered, inspired -- sits in the pilot's seat of her plane, as in “How Do You Do It?”
AIMEE and AGATHA, willing to play this game, climb in behind her. AMELIA prepares a takeoff.

(19. POINT A)

AMELIA

KEEP IT LEVEL
PULL BACK SLOWLY
THEN CLIMB, CLIMB
CLIMB...
CLIMB!

ALL THREE

CLIMB!
CLIMB!
AND FLY!

MUSIC changes. THEY fly. A magical transformation. Stars and galaxies.

AGATHA and AIMEE gaze in wonder at the night sky above them and the earth below them, while AMELIA pilots the plane.

AIMEE

The moon -- !

AGATHA

The stars -- !

AIMEE

Look down there -- !

AGATHA

Everything looks so different.

AIMEE

Smaller.

AMELIA
But where are we going?

AIMEE
Anywhere!

AGATHA
An adventure!

AGATHA
THE LOST LAND OF ATLANTIS

AIMEE
ATCHISON, KANSAS

AGATHA
ATLANTIC CITY

AIMEE
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

AGATHA
ANCIENT ANTIOCH

AGATHA & AIMEE
OR ASSYRIA

AMELIA
APRIL IN ATHENS IS PRETTY

ALL THREE
THE ISLE OF AVALON
MEANDER ALONG THE AMAZON
ARCADIA, ASGARD, ALASKA
OR AFRICA
POINT A

AMELIA
DOWN UNDER IN AUSTRALIA
FRESH AIR IS GOOD FOR WHAT AILS YA

AGATHA
ARGENTINA

AIMEE
ARIZONA

AMELIA
ALABAMA

AGATHA & AIMEE
AMSTERDAM

ALL THREE

POINT A
POINT A
POINT A

PEOPLE NEED RISK TAKERS
PEOPLE NEED RECORD BREAKERS
PEOPLE NEED
PEOPLE NEED
PEOPLE NEED...

NO! I NEED
ADVENTURE
SPECTACLE
MYSTERY!

ADVENTURE
SPECTACLE
MYSTERY

MYSTERY! SPECTACLE! ADVENTURE!

AMELIA begins to bring the plane in for a landing.

ALL THREE (CONT'D)

ADVENTURE... OH...
ADVENTURE...

(20. THE SOLUTION)

They are back on the ground. AGATHA steps out of the “plane” they have created.

AGATHA
THE SOLUTION IS SIMPLE
THE MARRIAGE IS OVER
ARCHIE'S UNHAPPY
AND HE OUGHT TO BE FREE
THE SOLUTION IS SIMPLE:
IT'S UP TO ME

WHEN YOU REALLY SEE
WHEN YOU REALLY LOOK
LIFE CAN'T BE LIKE A BOOK
WHERE THE GUILTY ARE PUNISHED
AND FOR THE REST LIFE IS GOOD

AGATHA (CONT'D)
LIFE CAN'T BE LIKE THAT
DON'T YOU WISH THAT IT COULD?

THE SOLUTION IS SIMPLE
THERE'S REALLY NO MYST'RY
ANGER IS POISON
IT POISONED ME
THE SOLUTION IS SIMPLE
THE SOLUTION:
AGATHA, TIME FOR TEA

As AGATHA toasts the others, flashes envelop them. They have returned to their lives, in the glare of popping flashbulbs. The sounds of an excited mob hubbub, reporters.

(21. THE RETURN)

AGATHA
Yes, it's Mrs. Christie, I'm back!

AIMEE
Sister Aimee has returned!

AMELIA
I made it! I always do.

AGATHA
I'm sorry, could you repeat the question?

AMELIA
What's that now? Say again?

AGATHA
(repeating the question as she stalls for time)
Where have I been?

AMELIA AND AIMEE
What happened to me?

AGATHA
Well of course one would wonder that.

AIMEE
Now that's a stumper.

AGATHA
WHERE HAVE I--?

AIMEE
WHAT DID I--?

AGATHA
WELL, I CAN'T SAY.

AMELIA
I SORT OF—

AGATHA
I NEVER—

AIMEE
I'M THINKING, OKAY??!!

AGATHA
IT'S MORE THAT I—

AIMEE
ER...

AGATHA
IT'S ACTUALLY--

AMELIA
WELL...

AGATHA
I'D HAVE TO SAY, THAT IS, I REALLY—

AIMEE
OH HELL.

More flashes. They have come back to the vanishing point.

AGATHA
That was unpleasant.

AIMEE
Wasn't ready for that at all.

AMELIA
What do we tell them?

AIMEE
(a bright idea)
 I know. The truth!

THEY consider this. THEY laugh hysterically.

AIMEE
 No, no, no.

AMELIA
 We need a cover story.

AIMEE
 Yes!

AMELIA
 So what's our story?

AIMEE
 I don't know!

AMELIA
 Think of something.

AIMEE
 I can't.

AGATHA
 Ah, but I can. It's simply another plot... with characters...
 concealed motives ... hidden intentions ... how scrumptious.

(22. RED HERRINGS)

AGATHA
 RED HERRINGS AND AN AIRTIGHT ALIBI
 WILL GET 'EM OFF YOUR SCENT
 THEY WON'T KNOW WHERE YOU WENT
 OOH OOH, A FALSE CLUE OR TWO
 AND THEY'LL MISCONSTRUE
 YOUR TRUE INTENT

RED HERRINGS AND AN AIRTIGHT ALIBI
 WILL THROW 'EM OFF THE TRACK
 THEY'LL NEVER CRACK THE CASE
 MY FRIEND, THE RIGHT EXCUSE
 WILL SEND 'EM ON A WILD GOOSE CHASE

AGATHA (CONT'D)

(Indicating AIMEE)

LET'S CONSTRUCT THE MISSING CHAPTER
LET'S ASSUME SOMEONE KIDNAPPED HER
HAD HER TRAPPED IN SOME DILAPIDATED SHACK
AND THEN HER CAPTORS WRAPPED
HER HANDS AND FEET

THEN THIS IS WHAT YOU DID
YOU FOUND A RUSTY TIN CAN LID
AND THEN YOU SAWED AND CUT THE CORD
AND BOWED YOUR HEAD TO THANK THE LORD
AND BEAT A FAST RETREAT

A RANSOM NOTE
AND ROPE BURNS ON YOUR WRIST
WILL CONVINCED ANY SKEPTICAL ATHEIST

AIMEE

SAND! SAND! SAND! SAND!
AS FAR AS THE EYE COULD SEE!
THERE I WAS CRAWLING THROUGH THE DESERT
FLEEING FROM THAT PRISON OF A SHACK
THE SUN BEAT DOWN
I DON'T KNOW HOW I MADE IT
IT'S FAITH THAT GOT ME THROUGH
IT WAS MIRAC-
ULOUS

AGATHA

(Still British)

Kidnapped? As district attorney I'd be very interested in
knowing where this "shack" is.

AIMEE

YES, OH YES
I'LL GLADLY LEAD YOU TO IT

If only I hadn't been blindfolded!

AGATHA

YOUR STORY'S RATHER HARD TO BELIEVE

AIMEE

Really?

AGATHA

WHERE FOR INSTANCE
DID YOU GET THESE BRAND NEW CLOTHES?

AIMEE
ALL I KNOW IS ONE
SAID HIS NAME WAS "STEVE"
THAT'S RIGHT
AND THE OTHER SAID HER NAME WAS "MEXICALI ROSE"

AGATHA
And how is it you weren't severely dehydrated?

AIMEE
THANKS TO GOD

AGATHA
And how is it you found your way back through the desert
alone?

AIMEE
THANKS TO GOD

AGATHA
You were seen frolicking on the beach with a married man!

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY
TO THE CHARGES YOU'RE A FRAUD?

AIMEE
My story is as true today as the first time I told it.

AGATHA
YES, RED HERRINGS
AND AN AIRTIGHT ALIBI
WILL DISGUISE THE MOST OBVIOUS PLOT
TIE A TANGLED KNOT
THE INVESTIGATION'S HAMPERED SINCE
WE TAMPERED WITH THE EVIDENCE
THE FACT IS FACTS ARE NOT
WHAT YOU THOUGHT

Now take my case...

AGATHA (CONT'D)

DISTRAUGHT
OVERWROUGHT
NERVES SHOT
DRIVING TO CONFRONT MY HUSBAND
AND HIS MISTRESS NANCY NEELE
BUT THE CAR
SPUN ABOUT
BUMPED MY HEAD
I BLACKED OUT
AND THEN HOW DID I FEEL?
AMNESIA!

ALL THREE

AMNESIA!
IT'S ALL A BLANK
I'D LIKE TO THANK AMNESIA
AMNESIA

AIMEE

(interrogating, skeptical)

So. You were in an accident. And you *somehow* managed to find your way to a resort hotel.

AGATHA

Did I ?

ALL

(an explanation)

AMNESIA!

AIMEE

And you registered using the name of your husband's mistress.

AGATHA

Did I?

ALL

(Oh, the tragedy of it)

AMNESIA!

AIMEE

You publicly humiliated your husband!

AGATHA

Did I?

AIMEE

You landed on the front page of every newspaper!

AGATHA

Did I?

AIMEE

Have you anything to say?

AGATHA

Buy my next book.

ALL

AMNESIA, AA-AA-AAH
WITH RED HERRINGS AND AN AIRTIGHT ALIBI
YOU CAN'T BE PLACED AT THE CRIME
BUT IF YOU'RE THE PRIME SUSPECT
ERASE YOUR TRAILS
THEY'LL CHASE THEIR TAILS
AND WASTE THEIR TIME.

AMELIA

All right – how about me?

AGATHA

The best explanation, my dear, is no explanation at all.

AGATHA takes AMELIA'S aviator scarf, and "plays" her.

AGATHA

I MAY OR MAY NOT
HAVE FLOWN ON A MISSION
WHERE I MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE SPIED
I CANNOT CONFIRM OR DENY
IT'S CLASSIFIED

AGATHA AND AMELIA

I MAY OR MAY NOT BE A GOVERNMENT PAWN
I MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE FACTS TO HIDE
NO COMMENT, NO COMMENT
IT'S CLASSIFIED

AMELIA

I MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE FOLLOWED A PLAN
WHERE I MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE FLOWN TO JAPAN
WHERE I MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE CRASHED ON SAIPAN
WHERE I MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE NEARLY DIED
EITHER WAY I CANNOT SAY
IT'S CLASSIFIED

ALL
SMOKE SCREEN
SUBTERFUGE
CONSPIRACY
COVER UP
IT'S CLASSIFIED

OH, RED HERRINGS
RED HERRINGS
AND AN AIRTIGHT ALIBI
LET THE RUMORS FLY
A CLUE OR TWO THEY'LL MISCONSTRUE
CAUSE SOME DOUBT AND SOME CONFUSION
WATCH THEM JUMP
TO THE WRONG CONCLUSION
LET THE RUMORS FLY

That's my story and I'm sticking to it!

MUSIC STING. Sounds of a hubbub. AGATHA, still wearing the aviator scarf, turns and walks into the glare of popping flashbulbs, returning to her life.

AGATHA
Yes, it's Mrs. Christie. I'm back. Can you repeat the question?
No, I'm afraid I can't recall. Amnesia.

Archie. Darling. You look so worried. Shall we have some tea?

There is the sound of rapturous applause. AIMEE soaks it up, returning to her life.

AIMEE
Sister Aimee is back! Kidnapped! Left for dead! Wandering through the desert! But I have returned! I love you all. Love you, love you, love you. Hello, Mother. Did you miss me?

AMELIA speaks to an enormous roaring crowd.

AMELIA
Hello! Thank you! Hello! Thank you! Thank you! Hello! It was rough going there, but I'm back. I made it. I always do!

Cheers. AMELIA waves. She catches a question from a reporter and responds enthusiastically – her energy building to the end of the speech.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

What's next? Well, now I'm going to do things a little differently. I'll have time to relax. I'll write a book! I'll get to spend time with G.P. ... I'll do all the things I've always wanted to do. And then I'm sure there are bigger and better things in store. I've got years and years ahead of me. Years and years!

Cheers. And then an abrupt shift. Silence. AMELIA steps forward into a spotlight. Time has shifted (as described below.)

AMELIA

So there we were, over the Atlantic. We came out of the clouds and caught sight of a ship below us. Do we have that slide?

SHE turns her back as she looks to see if the slide comes up.

AMELIA

Yes. That's the picture I took.

It is November, 1958, thirty years (and a few months) since the *Friendship* flight. Amelia, now 61, is speaking to a sparse audience in a small lecture hall. AMELIA is warm, positive, nostalgic but happy.

AMELIA

Why am I still talking about a flight that's thirty years old? It was a different time then. When I climbed aboard the *Friendship* with Bill Stultz and the others, we truly didn't know whether we would live or die. It was a time of risk-takers, of having the courage to fly into the unknown, of taking chances that many called foolish. But I didn't think about that – how “important” that flight might be. I was just so, so excited to be there, like a sack of potatoes, on my tummy taking pictures.

These days, the skies are crowded. Now we have jets: just last month, Pan Am began regular service across the Atlantic from New York to London. One hundred and eleven passengers were on the first flight. Flying has become safe, comfortable and routine. Isn't that wonderful?

Well, if G.P. were still with us, he'd be standing over there pointing at his watch and telling me to “wrap it up, Amelia, wrap it up.” So I will.

SHE holds up a copy of her autobiography, with her picture across the cover.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

And of course my publishers want me to mention this little item one more time – my life story – *Lady Lindy, Queen of the Air* -- hot off the presses. Nice picture, eh? I guess I do look a little like Mr. Lindbergh.

Well -- thank you all again for coming. I was grateful for the chance to fly, and for the chance to speak to you this evening. Thank you.

Polite, sparse applause. AMELIA looks around.

AMELIA

Which way do I go?

The spotlight turns off. A moment while AMELIA gathers her notes at the lectern. A WOMAN approaches. It is AGATHA. AMELIA doesn't notice her at first.

AGATHA

Amelia.

AMELIA

(not recognizing her)

I don't believe we've met.

AGATHA

No one would believe we've met.

SHE comes closer. SHE pulls out AMELIA's aviator scarf.

AMELIA

Agatha...

AGATHA

Yes.

AMELIA

How ...?

AGATHA

Don't try to explain it. Who can explain a dream?

AMELIA

I've read all your books.

AGATHA

Really?

AMELIA

Really.

AGATHA

I just sent my latest off to the publisher. That makes fifty. Actually, no, is it – hmm, let me – of course if you count – but no, that really doesn't – yes, fifty. And still they're hopeless about the book jackets.

AMELIA

And you remarried.

AGATHA

Oh yes. An archaeologist. The perfect sort of husband. As you grow older he only becomes more interested in you.

AGATHA picks up the copy of AMELIA's book.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

Ah, there's Amelia Earhart, Queen of the Air.

AMELIA

Oh, it's nothing really.

AGATHA

Lovely bookjacket.

AMELIA

I'm sure it's not much compared to your books.

AGATHA

But it's all true. An adventure. My puzzles ... I mean, it's all a bit silly, isn't it? I entertain people. It's not life or death. Well, it's death.

AMELIA

I did have fun writing it. What a relief to finally finish it.

AGATHA thoughtfully flips through AMELIA's book.

AGATHA

You know... most of my books, once they're finished, I put them away and never think of them again. Loose ends tied up neatly. Mystery solved.

But others ... I can't help going back to them ... wondering what else I might have done. What improvements could be made. Picturing other endings ... better endings ...

AGATHA hands the book back to AMELIA, who stares at it. A thought comes to her.

(23. WHEN I AM THE WIND)

AMELIA

WHEN I FLY
I DON'T CARE HOW MUCH IT COSTS
I DON'T CARE IF MY PICTURE WILL BE IN THE PAPER
THERE'S NOTHING I WANT
NOTHING I NEED
THAT'S WHEN I AM THE WIND

OH, WHEN I FLY
I DON'T CARE WHERE I GO
THERE IS NO END IN SIGHT
WHEN I AM THE WIND.

The world begins to change around them – transforming back to the vanishing point.

EVERY PART OF ME IS WORKING
I FEEL NOTHING... AND EVERYTHING
I MOVE IN ALL DIRECTIONS
I FORGET ABOUT MY SENSES
A MINUTE IS FOREVER
IT'S CLEAR
AND I CAN FINALLY SEE
WHEN I AM THE WIND

AIMEE joins them. AMELIA sings to them all.

AMELIA

ALL THE HEROES
THE SAINTS AND THE SEERS
THE EXPLORERS AND THE CREATORS
HAVE THIS EXTRAORDINARY PASSION
WE DO NOT KNOW
WHAT WE'LL DISCOVER

WE CAN'T SAY WHERE WE'RE GOING
OR EXPLAIN COMPLETELY
WHERE WE'VE BEEN
BUT OUR ADVENTURES
GIVE THE WORLD
SOMETHING TO DREAM ABOUT
SOMETHING TO BELIEVE IN

AMELIA (CONT'D)

AND IF ONE DAY
SOMEONE LOOKS TO THE STARS
AND WONDERS WHAT SHE SEES
SHE'LL FEEL THE BREEZE
THAT'S WHEN I AM THE WIND
THE WIND...

AIMEE

(to AMELIA)

Let me get a good look at you. Oh yes ... the Queen of the Air.

Music begins. AGATHA goes to the typewriter. SHE writes a new ending for AMELIA.

AGATHA

Amelia Earhart was never found. I do not say she was "lost," because she wasn't lost. She knew exactly where she was headed.

Some clues were left to tantalize us ... to throw us off the trail. A shoe, a piece of twisted, rusted metal ... a fragment of bone. But Amelia herself went on ... flying ... exploring. A marvelous adventure.

(24. FINALE)

AMELIA

THIS IS HOW I WRITE MY STORY
MY FINEST HOUR

ALL

MY FINEST HOUR
ALL THE HEROES, SAINTS, AND SEERS
EXPLORERS, AND CREATORS
HAVE THIS EXTRAORDINARY PASSION
WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT WE'LL DISCOVER
WE CAN'T SAY WHERE WE'RE GOING

AMELIA moves off, disappearing.

AIMEE AND AGATHA

OR EXPLAIN COMPLETELY
WHERE WE'VE BEEN

AMELIA

(from off, or in silhouette)

BUT OUR ADVENTURES GIVE THE WORLD
SOMETHING TO DREAM ABOUT

AIMEE AND AGATHA
SOMETHING TO BELIEVE IN

ALL
BELIEVE IN
ADVENTURE, SPECTACLE

Mystery...

THE END

PERUSAL