GIRL IN THE SNOW

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A monodrama in eleven scenes

About nature, and the enormity of creation, and falling in love with the world, and then looking inward, through the great expanses of time and one's own life, to find a home in all this beauty, so intense, and so vast.

by Scott Ordway

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BOOK I

The Fox in the Snow
The Clean Cold Air and the Great Blue Sky
The Mystery of Home

Memory Play No. 1:
I Do These Things Within, In That Vast Court of My Memory

BOOK II

The Owl, Asleep in His Tree
The Grove of Quaking Aspens
The Mystery of Love

Memory Play No. 2:
For Even While I Dwell in Darkness, In My Mind I Can Produce Colors

BOOK III

The Rabbit, Warm in Her Burrow
The Silence of the World

Memory Play No. 3:
And I Come to the Fields and Spacious Palaces of My Memory

Memory Plays adapted
by the composer from
The Confessions of Saint Augustine
English translation by Edward Bouverie Pusey
New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909

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THE SCENE

A young girl wakes up in a small cabin in a forest of snow-covered trees. A fire is burning in the stove. *She is alone but not afraid.*

Our girl ventures outside into the brilliant, sunlit morning, into the deep, fresh, snow. The silence wraps up tight around her. *At first, she remembers nothing, but she is filled with love.*

As she begins her journey, the forest comes alive. In three short books, this is the world she saw.

Scene 1: The Fox in the Snow

Stepping out into the bright, snowy peace, our girl spots a little fox watching her from the edge of the clearing. She takes a step in his direction—not too close—and greets him with kindness and affection.

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Good morning, my friend:
It is a pleasure to find you here,
It is a joy to have you near me.

Good morning, my small friend:
You are luck and you are chance
And you are the very best of what's to come.

Where do you draw your deep breath, my friend?
Where do you close your pretty eyes?

Where do you go when the snow is blowing round and round?
Where in the world do you go to rest your head?

Standing here, alone and alive,
How do I look to you?

Show me your home, my friend:
Show me the place you love the best
And I will follow you.

19 July 2016

Scene 2: The Clean Cold Air and the Great Blue Sky

She wants to wander, and feel the dawn break, and let the world rush in to fill her with love. She looks up and takes a great breath. Then, looking ahead and thinking of the past, she exhales.

~

I remember everything:
The clean cold air and the
Great blue sky. I remember
Taking the first step
Into the bright morning,
Alone but not afraid,
Leaving the warmth of a good room
And walking toward the sun.

"Come with me!" I whispered to the trees;
"Come with me!" I whispered to the little birds;
"Come with me this time!" I whispered to the distant waves,
Far away, where the rivers empty into the sea.

And the trees, so sharp, dark, and so high,
They came with me.

And the little birds, singing with the breath of God,
Which is in them too,
They came with me.

But the distant waves,
Far away, where the rivers empty into the sea,
There, they waited for me.

20 July 2016

Scene 3: The Mystery of Home

Walking through the woods, taking the cold air into her lungs, the girl comes upon a small, brightly lit cottage. Empty, the home seems to have been placed there just for her.

~

Hello! Is anyone there?
Will anyone come out to greet me?
May I address myself to someone
To ask a kind word, or a smile?

Hello! Is this your home?
Is this the place you love the best?
Is this the place you go to rest your head?

Is this, perhaps, my home?
Might I stop here, and through the window watch
The spinning world, lost above the waves,
Buried in the woods, drifting out in space,
Deep in sacred sleep?

Yes! By your kind grace
I will stop a while,
And through the open window
I will show the world my face.

21 July 2016

Scene 4: (Memory Play No. 1): I Do These Things Within, In That Vast Court of My Memory

I do these things within,
In that vast court of my memory.
For there are present with me
Heaven, earth, sea, and whatever
I could think on therein,
And what I have forgotten.

There too I meet with myself, and recall myself,
And when, where, and what I have done,
And under what feelings.

There is all I remember.

And so I speak to myself: and when I speak,
Images of all I say are present,
Out of the same treasury of memory.

St. Augustine, 398 A.D.
Freely adapted for music, 20 July 2016

Scene 5: The Owl, Asleep in His Tree

Our girl leaves the cottage behind, and steps once more into the bright, fresh woods. It is noon and the sun, not so very high in the sky, helps the trees cast their long, beautiful shadows in the snow. An owl, who prefers to live his waking life in darkness, slumbers peacefully, at home in his tree.

~

Good night, my darling:
I cannot see you, but I know you're there,
Sleeping, dreaming, alone above the world.

Perhaps you're dreaming of me?

Or maybe you see a place you've seen before,
And feel the air a different way,
And hear the sound of distant waves,
Falling on the land again,
The great, deep breath of time itself.

But please! Oh, please! Dream of me, too.
I want to feel the air a different way,
And hear the sound of distant waves,
And wander o'er that land again,
And feel the breath of time itself:
The air that holds your wings.

23 July 2016

Scene 6: The Grove of Quaking Aspens

Wandering deeper still into the wood, the girl notices a change in her surroundings. The dark, severe pines have given way to a peaceful grove of quaking aspen trees. They shiver gently in the wind; they speak in a soft whisper; they wrap our heroine in a comforting embrace.

~

Thank you, trees!
Thank you for your warm welcome;
I appreciate your comforting embrace.

I am guided by your soft and thoughtful words,
And careful not to take such things for granted.
These enchanted woods have much to offer
A lost and grateful soul just like my own.

But much like every place I've known thus far,
They also bring a measure of sadness, the deep and
Beautiful sorrow that binds the world together
And keeps our love from turning overwhelming.

This flow'ring grove of quaking aspen trees
Assures me that the world can speak so softly
And tells me things just at the edge of silence,
Where only those at peace could hope to hear.

But oh! how glad I am to find myself
Alive and wand'ring these bright, lonesome woods,
Joined in ecstasy by all creation,
Whispering in closest confidence.

24 July 2016

Scene 7: The Mystery of Love

Pausing to rest in the aspen grove, the girl is overcome with a strong, all-encompassing feeling of friendship. She wants the fox to have plenty of food to eat, the trees to have an abundant supply of fresh, clean water, the owl to sleep a deep and peaceful sleep, and the great blue sky to remain unbroken forever. She gives the world her love.

~

All, I am yours.
I am lost, but I know that
This world was made for me.

I am love,
And I am the goodness of all things.
Let me stay with you.

25 July 2016

Scene 8 (Memory Play No. 2):
For Even While I Dwell in Darkness, In My Mind I Can Produce Colors

For even while I dwell in darkness and silence,
In my mind I can produce colors,
And discern black and white. Nor yet
Do sounds break in and disturb the image
Drawn by my eyes, which I am
reviewing, though they are also there, lying
Dormant, laid up, apart.

For sounds too I call, and they appear.
And though my tongue be still, and my throat
Mute, so can I sing as much as I will.

Yes, I discern the breath of lilies
From violets, though smelling nothing; and I
Prefer honey to sweet wine, smooth
Before rugged, at the time neither
Tasting nor handling,
But only remembering.

St. Augustine, 398 A.D.
Freely adapted for music, 23 July 2016

Scene 9: The Rabbit, Warm in Her Burrow

As the sun begins its slow afternoon transit to the horizon, a small rabbit concludes her day's foraging, and returns, safe and sound, to her burrow. She nestles in comfortably among the leaves, branches, and soft soil. She is content.

~

Go ahead my darling,
Take my love for granted,
Go ahead my darling,
Set your mind to rest.

Did you leave the forest
When you went out walking?
Did you eat the green grass
Growing by the river?

How did you find the world today?
Did you take what you need and leave the rest?
Did you drink from the stream and bask in the sun,
Did these woods take care of you?

Go ahead my darling,
Close your eyes and sleep now,
Let yourself become one
With the home you've made.

I can see you blinking,
Drifting off to sleep now,
Close your eyes and rest, dear,
As the sun goes down.

How long you wandered to find this place!
How long you looked before you knew!
But when you arrived, it set your heart to singing.
When this place appeared, it put your mind to rest.

How long the days can seem,
How cold the nights can feel,
How dark the winter's day,
When you're searching for a home.

Tell me, my darling:
What do you remember
Of those long days
When you were much smaller?

Did you love the forest
As you do today?
And did you find the green grass
Growing by the river?

How did you find the world today?
Did you take what you need and leave the rest?
Did you drink from the stream and bask in the sun,
Did these woods take care of you?

Tell me, my darling:
Will you fall asleep now?
Will you become one
With the home you've made?

Don't forget to dream of
Me as I'm passing
By your graceful burrow,
Out of the cold.

How long you wandered to find this place!
How long you looked before you knew!
But when you arrived, it set your heart to singing.
When this place appeared, it put your mind to rest.

28 July 2016

Scene 10: The Silence of the World

Twilight: the wind dies down, the trees stop whispering, and the little birds conclude their pretty songs. The world is enveloped in a profound silence, a surreal stillness. From the snowy forest floor, the girl can hear the stars calling out to her from behind the deep blue curtain of the sky. In its silence, the universe rings and resounds with the peal of a thousand bells.

~

Everything is always ending.

Only children remember heaven:
The vast stillness, and the emptiness of time.

Oh, would that I could join them there!
Passing from this shining forest
That has taught me, once again,
To love the world,
Leaving these anointed trees
Resounding, together with the birds
And all the living earth itself,
And bringing forth the sacred peal
That rings in silence, there behind
The deep blue curtain of the sky
And all throughout that holy, endless
Night that binds this world together,
A sound that echoes gently
In the ears of those who listen:

"Be still: you are home!"

28 July 2016

Scene 11: (Memory Play No. 3): And I Come To The Fields and Spacious Palaces of My Memory

I will pass beyond this power of my nature,
Rising by degrees unto him who made me.

And I come to the fields and spacious palaces
Of my memory, where there are treasures
Of innumerable images, brought into it
From things of all sorts perceived by the senses.

When I enter there, I require
what I will to be brought forth,
and something instantly comes; others must be
longer sought after, which are fetched
out of some inner receptacle; others
rush out in troops, and while one thing is
desired and required, they say, "Is it perchance I?"

These I drive away with the hand of my heart,
from the face of my remembrance;
until what I wish for be unveiled,
and appear in sight, out of its secret place.

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