

CEILI HOUSE

BY COLLEEN CURRAN

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CEILI HOUSE

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CHARACTERS

JEROME LAMBERT

CHRISTOPHER STRACHAN

FREYA BRADY

DYMPHNA NI MURCHU

CELESTE BARBIZON

Chan eil eol air an t-slighe  
th' aig fiarachd cham a' chridhe  
's chan eil eol air a' mhilleadh  
do 'n tarr gun fhios a cheann-uidhe.

Chan eil eolas, Chan eil eolas  
air crìch dheireannaich gach torachd  
no air seoltachd nan luban  
leis an caill i a cursa.

(Coilltean Rathasair)

There is no knowledge of the course  
of the crooked veering of the heart,  
and there is no knowledge of the damage  
to which its aim unwittingly comes.

There is no knowledge, no knowledge,  
of the final end of each pursuit,  
nor of the subtlety of the bends  
with which it loses its course.

(The Woods of Raasay)

-by Sorley Maclean

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June 1st. The setting is the garden of Coburn House. Coburn House is an old large, yellow brick and quite ivy-covered dwelling. It is surrounded by an overgrown garden and Woods which lead down to the lake. The back entrance of the house is visible as well as a potting shed. At rise JEROME LAMBERT, a drifter is standing by the stone garden bench and table. At first sight he looks dangerous. But he does what one would not expect. He sings.

JEROME: (sings) Salut demeure, chaste et...

(HE's forgotten the rest. He pushes down play button on an old cassette player on stone bench, It plays an incredible opera singer singing: "Salut demeure, chaste et pure ou se devine la presence d'une" JEROME pushes stop button)

JEROME: (speaks) et pure." D'accord.

(HE begins again)

(sings) Salut demeure, Chaste et pure

(A sound at the back door of Coburn House, hE stops singing and goes into potting shed with cassette recorder. CHRISTOPHER STRACHAN, a young man of great charm comes out of Coburn House into the garden. He is followed by FREYA BRADY, a polite, gentle woman in her mid thirties who has been described as non-descript more than once in her lifetime.)

CHRIS: And this is the Garden.

FREYA: It's very... Abundant.

CHRIS: You can do something about that.

FREYA: Yes.

CHRIS: Not you personally of course. Get somebody in.

FREYA: Is there funding for a gardener?

CHRIS: Not yet. There's barely enough funding for you.

FREYA: Um. Did you hear something before?

CHRIS: What something?

FREYA: Singing something.

CHRIS: No.

FREYA: It's probably just me.

CHRIS: Maybe. It's really terrible how Linus Barden let all this go to seed. If he hadn't left Coburn House to the Preservation Trust for a Museum, I would have bought it.

FREYA: Really?

CHRIS: Oh yeah, I love it. What a place to raise a family. Not that I'm married yet or anything.

(HE seems embarrassed by this disclosure)

All this land and the Woods to explore and the lake down there.

FREYA: (delighted, In literary reverie) And the Little Meadow of the Dancing. And Hilary's Hill. The Wooded Fens.

CHRIS: Yeah all the literary hot spots from the Rebecca Coburn books.

FREYA: Yes.

CHRIS: How long do you think it will take you to get the Papers in the Collection in order?

FREYA: Oh I don't know. They're so out of order.

CHRIS: Yeah. They're pretty disorderly. But who knows what could be in there. Maybe some correspondence from some of the Famous Authors she ran with in the Twenties Paris crowd.

FREYA: That would be tremendous!

CHRIS: Especially if you could prove that anything was going on.

FREYA: Pardon?

CHRIS: With her and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Or Hemingway. A little scandal. A little romance. We all think Rebecca Coburn was pretty circumspect and decent, right?

FREYA: Yes.

CHRIS: Boring. Dull, Dull, Dull, Dull, Dull. Oh come on, you know what I mean.

CHRIS: People like a little scandal. Even those Bronte Sisters got up to somethings, I'll bet.

FREYA: Their brother Branwell certainly did. And Charlotte did have that liaison of sorts in Brussels---

CHRIS: See? It makes them hot, accessible, more interesting.

FREYA: I'm afraid that's not what I'm hoping to find in all those papers of the Rebecca Coburn Collection.

CHRIS: You want that missing last novel, right?

FREYA: Yes. It's only a theory, I know. A faint hope---

CHRIS: It's a great hope! A missing manuscript will get the Coburn Museum on the literary map. And maybe a million dollars at a Sotheby's auction. That Mark Twain Huck Finn thing they found in somebody's

attic?

FREYA: We wouldn't sell it...

CHRIS: A million dollars for the Museum? We wouldn't be scrounging after Heritage Canada and Museum Assistance funds to pay for your salary and Restoration.

FREYA: That's true. Let the excavation begin.

CHRIS: Mrs. Barbizon and all the Volunteers will be here when you need them.

FREYA: Good. Thank you so much for recommending me, Mr. Strachan. And for everything you did.

CHRIS: I did nothing. You're perfect for this position.

FREYA: I know a great deal about Rebecca Coburn but---

CHRIS: Stop fussing. You're gonna be terrific at this.

FREYA: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Strachan.

CHRIS: Um. Could you stop calling me Mr. Strachan? I think I'm younger than you are.

FREYA: How old are you?

CHRIS: Twenty-eight.

FREYA: You're younger.

CHRIS: But not by that much, I'll bet. I'm Christopher or Chris, o.K.?

FREYA: Of course. And I'm, well you know, Freya.

CHRIS: All that Mr. Strachan, miss Brady stuff is Madame President Barbizon's terrain. She'll be by one of these days. She's very enthused about this project. We all are. And I gotta admit, It's gonna score me a lot of points as a good corporate citizen.

FREYA: I can't wait to get started.

CHRIS: Well, enjoy your new home, your new job. And if there's anything I can do to help you settle in, let me know. (hands her his business card) Me and the Allante are at your disposal, miss Brady.

FREYA: Thank you.

CHRIS: Nobody's gonna recognize this place once we're done with it.

(HE exits. FREYA BRADY stands in the garden, thankful for her good fortune, SHE sits down at the stone garden table for a moment then heads up the stairs to the House as JEROME exits from potting shed with garden sheers. SHE turns and sees him, Cannot speak)

JEROME: Hello.(Pause) I'm the gardener.

FREYA: No you're not.

JEROME: But I could be. It's up to you.

FREYA: But you're not the gardener now. You don't come with the house.

JEROME: Not yet. But I could.

FREYA: Where... Did you come from?

JEROME: There.

FREYA: Were you out here before that, Singing?

JEROME: Yeah.

FREYA: (amazed) That was you?

(JEROME retrieves cassette recorder from potting shed.)

JEROME: And Nicolai Gedda. I'm training to become a Tenor in my spare time.

FREYA: Isn't being a Tenor something you are or you aren't?

JEROME: Hey it's something I'm trying.

FREYA: Is gardening something you're trying as well?

JEROME: I will if you want me to.

FREYA: I don't know...

JEROME: That guy said you should get someone.

FREYA: When funding became available.

JEROME: How you feel about bartering?

FREYA: What would I have to barter?

JEROME: The gate-keeper's cottage. Or whatever you call that place.(HE points off) I get to keep living there and I work on your garden for free.

FREYA: You've been living in that dwelling?

JEROME: Yeah. But I'm no squatter. I'll leave if you say so.

FREYA: How long have you been there?

JEROME: Long enough to get a library card.

FREYA: That's a recognized address?

JEROME: The Librarian thinks so.

FREYA: Do you have any experience as a gardener? With the outdoors?

JEROME: I've slept out in it a lot.

FREYA: I don't know. Let me weigh this proposal, would you? I'll give you an answer in the morning.

JEROME: O.K. You sure need a gardener.

FREYA: Yes I am aware of that. Are you aware that this estate is being

turned into a Museum to honour Rebecca Coburn?

JEROME: Who's she?

FREYA: She lived here from 1926 to 1931. She wrote three novels in this house. However while it was good for her writing, she was unable to keep a proper Salon.

(FREYA has pronounced Salon quite badly.  
JEROME pronounces it correctly)

JEROME: Salon?

FREYA: Get-togethers for literary and artistic people. She also met her future husband, the financier Arthur Beaconsfield---

JEROME: Is she dead?

FREYA: Yes. She passed away in 1962. I'm here to be the Curator of her Museum at Coburn House.

JEROME: O.K. Well if you don't want to throw in a Parc Safari African Tour with it, you take my offer. You'd impress the bosses if you got going on the garden right away.

FREYA: As I said, I will give you my answer as soon as I've---

JEROME: Yeah. O.K. lady.

FREYA: I'm Freya Brady.

JEROME: (French pron.) Jerome Lambert.

FREYA: You're Francophone?

JEROME: I'm everything. I'm also (English pron.) Jerome Lambert.

FREYA: You're perfectly bilingual then?

JEROME: Yeah.

FREYA: (terrible French accent) C'est formidable. Je parle Francais aussi.

JEROME: Eh bien. C'est chouette.

FREYA: C'est what? Chouette.

JEROME: Dear. Sweet. Good. Cute. It's also like a noun. If you say Ma Chouette, It means my cutie pie, my sweet thing.

FREYA: Oh I guess my French isn't as good as I thought. I hope you can bear with me if I brush up on you.

JEROME: Sure. If you decide you do want a gardener manque.

FREYA: Yes. A demain.

JEROME: Matin?

FREYA: Yes. Tomorrow morning. Thank you very much. Goodbye.

(SHE enters House, hE waits then pushes play button of cassette recorder and exits off toward gate-keeper's cottage)

Scene two

The next morning. JEROME is working in the potting shed, he's taken out old garden tools and pots. DYMPHNA NI MURCHU an Irishwoman in her late fifties who's gypsy or old hippie in appearance is picking berries from the garden. FREYA opens kitchen window.

FREYA: Excuse me.

DYMPHNA: (not stopping) For what?

FREYA: You're picking berries from the bushes.

DYMPHNA: I am. Yes. Aren't you observant.

FREYA: This is private property.

DYMPHNA: I know.

FREYA: It's the grounds of the Rebecca Coburn Museum.

DYMPHNA: I'm all too aware of that.

FREYA: Then why are you picking berries here?

(FREYA comes out of House, she carries some Coburn Papers)

DYMPHNA: Because they're ripe. Why do you think? And who would you be? One of the adoring fans?

FREYA: No.

DYMPHNA: You're not here to pick the berries.

FREYA: No.

DYMPHNA: Because you'd be out of luck. Linus said they're all mine.

FREYA: This isn't Linus Barden's property anymore.

DYMPHNA: No. But the berries are still mine. And the mint. And when they're ready, all the apples in the orchard.

FREYA: Oh I'm afraid not. I don't know what Linus Barden said---

DYMPHNA: Yes you do. I'm just after telling you. He said they were all mine.

(FREYA puts her hand on vine where DYMPHNA is picking)

FREYA: Please. I really don't want to have to call the police.

(JEROME comes out of potting shed, DYMPHNA leaves, taking her buckets of berries into the Woods)

JEROME: You let her have whatever she wants. She's a gypsy or something. I seen her here before. Chanting.

FREYA: Oh my.

(HE puts a rake into wheelbarrow)

FREYA: You've been working.

JEROME: Yeah. It's a big job. A big, big job.

FREYA: And it's yours if you want it. Providing---

JEROME: You gimme carte blanche. I don't know what I'm doing yet but I got an idea in my head here. You ever heard that story about the sculptor and the elephant?

FREYA: I don't believe so...

JEROME: This sculptor has a big block of marble and he's gonna make an elephant out of it. So this other guy asks this sculptor how's he gonna do that. And the sculptor says "I cut away everything that's not the elephant".

FREYA: Oh.

JEROME: I see all this as my hunk of marble. And you gotta let me find the elephant.

FREYA: I'll let you providing---

JEROME: For starters, how do you feel about hedge animals?

(HE moves his hands in the air fashioning animals)

FREYA: You mean a topiary?

JEROME: But only animals. No babelle froo-frooey neat round trees.

FREYA: Could they be animals from Rebecca Coburn books?

JEROME: Are her books about animals? Like Peter Rabbit, Mr. Toad, Babar?

FREYA: No her animals are animals. Though they serve as metaphors and familiars. Many of them live in the Wooded Fens.

JEROME: The Wooden Fence?

FREYA: Wooded Fens. You get to them through the Forest by the Path of Dreams. It's in her first novel Meadow of the Dancing. "The path wound round and down, down into the wooded fens where the Li-Li dwelled in the tangle of trees that sometimes shared their secrets."

JEROME: "The Li-Li"?

FREYA: Yes. They have a profound mystic connection to the heroine. Oh yes, the magic places she immortalized are all here! The people who come to Coburn House will want to walk along The Path of Dreams to the Wooded Fens.

JEROME: You want me to find all the "magic" places from the book in this mess?

FREYA: Yes.

JEROME: I could do that.

FREYA: And I'd like you to make sure that Rebecca Coburn's readers find the flowers she mentions in the books.

JEROME: I can do that.

FREYA: Good. I'll get you a copy of Meadow of the Dancing.

JEROME: You don't have to do that.

FREYA: You already have one?

JEROME: No.

FREYA: Then how will you know which flowers we need?

JEROME: You can tell me.

FREYA: Oh, you have to read the book.

JEROME: No I don't.

FREYA: (trying to be firm) Yes you do.

JEROME: I don't want to.

FREYA: I'm afraid... I have to request that you do.

JEROME: I'm not reading some Woman's book.

FREYA: It's not only a woman's book. It's a magnificent work every Canadian man, woman and child should read.

JEROME: Not this Canadian man. You can tell me what flowers you want.

FREYA: You can read the book. Unless... Oh, I'm sorry. Do you have a reading disability?

JEROME: Not yet. Look, lady---

FREYA: Freya. I am the Curator here and I think I have the right to request that everyone who works here be familiar with the Works of Rebecca Coburn.

JEROME: This is Censorship.

FREYA: It is no such thing.

JEROME: Yes it is. You're censoring me from reading what I wanna read by making me read what I don't wanna read.

FREYA: You have to read the book if you wanna... Want to work here.

JEROME: No way, no way! You're not telling me what to read! You're not wasting my time! I don't want this job that bad!

(HE throws off his work gloves and stomps off. FREYA retrieves them and puts garden tools and pots back in shed, DYMPHNA returns from Woods, calls to Freya in House)

DYMPHNA: I'll save you the trouble of the call to the police. And once you've stuck them all back on the vines, you can return my buckets.

(FREYA comes out of potting shed)

FREYA: No. Please keep them.

DYMPHNA: Why? Because you can't remember each one's exact former location? Take them back. There's not enough there to be of any use to me.

FREYA: Then pick some more.

DYMPHNA: Why? Do you need a witness?

FREYA: I'm sorry I was so harsh before.

DYMPHNA: That was harsh?

FREYA: Yes... I'd like you to have the berries.

DYMPHNA: I use these for my jams. I sell them.

FREYA: Oh how nice.

DYMPHNA: I need the money.

FREYA: Oh then please take them all. Especially if they were a Linus Barden Endowment to you.

DYMPHNA: Linus and I were Twin Souls. One of these days he'll be back here. In the metaphysical sense.

FREYA: Of course.

DYMPHNA: Oh he was a marvelous man. All that and a seannachie (Pron. Shawna-key) a story-teller as well. We had some times here! They may call it Coburn House but it was always a Ceili\* House to us.(\*kay-lee) A house of song and music and dance! With seisins (Pron. sesh-oons) every chance we got! Sometimes I didn't get home for days. Ohhh, why'd you get me started, I'll be crying next. When it was a Ceili House, it was magical. Linus may seem gone but I know he's here waiting for me with the others.

FREYA: Which others?

DYMPHNA: The genii loci. The little local saints. The powers who live in the oak trees. They're all over the place. Oh am I'm scaring you?

FREYA: No. It's rather... Fascinating.

DYMPHNA: But you don't believe.

FREYA: Yes I do. Rebecca Coburn called them the Li-Li. I'm the new Curator Freya Brady.

DYMPHNA: Dymphna ni Murchu. (PRON. DIMP-NAW NEE MOOR-COO)

FREYA: Pardon?

DYMPHNA: Dymphna ni Murchu. I went back to the Irish spelling. In Ireland Dymphna was a very popular patron saint.

FREYA: Of what?

DYMPHNA: Nervous women. Mental illness or Truth depending on which story you go with.(PAUSE) So I can help myself to the bushes?

FREYA: Please do.

DYMPHNA: Thanks. You've...made tea.

FREYA: Ah... Yes, would you care to join me?

DYMPHNA: Why do you think I brought it up?

(FREYA goes into house, THEY talk as she gets tea and brings it to stone garden table)

DYMPHNA: If you're the Curator, you'll be the one to make something of the papers then?

FREYA: Yes I have the entire Rebecca Coburn Collection including everything from the Archives.

DYMPHNA: Linus thought he'd spend his retirement writing the definitive biography of her.

FREYA: Yes so Christopher Strachan told me.

DYMPHNA: Little Mister Strachan. Star of the Merchants Row.

FREYA: Do you know if Linus Barden kept his biographical work in a special place?

DYMPHNA: Oh never in one place, all over. Such disorganization, such scatalogicalness! Sign of True Genius. It'll be quite a search for you but it'll be worth it. Don't overlook a thing.

FREYA: I won't.

(DYMPHNA makes a noticeable effort not to get too close to the House, she is wary of it. SHE sits on stone garden table as FREYA pours the tea)

DYMPHNA: I'll be happy to give you a hand with the papers anytime. I've a lot of experiencedeciphering bad handwriting. I taught school.

FREYA: (politely) I'll remember that.

DYMPHNA: So you must like her books?

FREYA: Of course. Don't you?

DYMPHNA: They're alright as marginal, mystical writing.

FREYA: They're not marginal.

DYMPHNA: Yes alright so the first one was hailed as a literary masterpiece, the Canadian Wuthering Heights. Then what happened? The same thing over and over.

FREYA: Yes. Masterpiece after masterpiece. Six months ago three hundred people attended a lecture about The Unsuspected Genius of Rebecca Coburn. She deserves to be a Giant in Can Lit.

DYMPHNA: Were you the one giving this lecture?

FREYA: No. But that's where I met Christopher Strachan. It was a Women in Literature Conference.

DYMPHNA: Were you presenting a Paper at the Conference yourself?

FREYA: No.

DYMPHNA: You're not at all what I thought they'd choose for this job. Not one of them dry, Sniffy academic types. You did some sort of research on her?

FREYA: No.

DYMPHNA: Ah, you had to be interviewed by the Museum Board, you don't need me going after your credentials.

FREYA: No.

DYMPHNA: Were you a professor before this?

FREYA: No.

DYMPHNA: I was I told you. But not in your Groves of Academe like Linus.

FREYA: Yo're not teaching anymore?

DYMPHNA: No. I took early retirement.

FREYA: You're very young to be retired.

DYMPHNA: I look young for my old age. Come by for a meal this week. I'll tell you a few indiscreet Rebecca Coburn Stories.

(SHE sees someone in house)

T'ra.

(DYMPHNA exits into Woods as CELESTE BARBIZON comes out of Coburn House. She's in her 40/50's, extremely well dressed and coiffed)

CELESTE: You didn't hear me ringing the doorbell, I guess.

FREYA: No. Who are you?

CELESTE: I'm Celeste Barbizon.

FREYA: Madame Barbizon.

CELESTE: Celeste, please.

FREYA: Won't you... Come down?

CELESTE: (coming down stairs into garden) That woman who was just here?

FREYA: Dymphna ni Murchu.

CELESTE: No. Paddy Murphy.

FREYA: She told me her name was Dymphna.

CELESTE: Now it is. "Irish spelling". She was Paddy Murphy when she taught at the high school. She could have been the principal someday if she hadn't gone into her White Witch Drunken Druid phase.

CELESTE: If you don't mind a suggestion, don't encourage her to drop in. She's got far, far too much time on her hands now. Her husband died, a very bad car accident, some storm, bad tires they said. She fell completely to pieces and started into all her causes and then started fooling around with Linus Barden and dragged him down to her Lower Druid Depths. This estate became a party house for all kinds of itinerant musicians and IRA type people. Linus became a hopeless alcoholic and died. Now Barden's gone and so is Paddy Murphy's social life.

FREYA: She did say it was a Ceili House.

CELESTE: That's over with, thank goodness! I'm not saying that I know that many Irish people but she's not what you'd expect, is she? Did you see that movie The Quiet Man? The scenery was magnificent and everyone was so cheerful and charming except when they were fighting or John Wayne was dragging Maureen O'Hara across the fields and throwing her dowry money in a furnace. Those are the Irish people you want to meet, with their pipes and their stories. Not the sort that's drinking and bad tempered cranky with causes.

CELESTE: I was so sorry to miss meeting you at your interview but I was in Europe. When I was in France---luckily my French is good and the kind they don't turn up their noses at, they treat the Quebecers like dirt I hear---I got to Paris and dropped in on some of Rebecca Coburn's haunts when she was living there in the Twenties. We'll have you over one evening, you'll have to see the video.

FREYA: Oh that will be nice.

CELESTE: Mr. Strachan said you might find us some love letters from F. Scott Fitzgerald amidst all those Papers.

FREYA: I don't know...

CELESTE: Dig, Dig, Dig, right? Is that tea?

FREYA: Yes but---

CELESTE: May I?

FREYA: I'll get you a cup.

CELESTE: No problem. Don't bother, please.

(CELESTE wipes cup with Kleenex)

CELESTE: I'm here for a nice, long chat.

FREYA: I'll put the kettle on.

(FREYA enters house, CELESTE pours tea, drinks it, TOO STRONG, decides to throw it away, looks a round, tosses tea in flower bed. SHE then begins to look through Papers Freya left on table, JEROME returns, to get his work gloves, catches CELESTE snooping)

JEROME: What are you doing?

CELESTE: I'm one of the Friends of Rebecca Coburn.

JEROME: You are?

CELESTE: A very good one actually.

JEROME: You must have been a real little friend of hers when you met.

CELESTE: I never met her personally. The Friends of Rebecca Coburn is the Literary Society.

(JEROME finds his gloves in potting shed)

CELESTE: Are you a friend of Miss Brady's?

JEROME: Yeah even though I've met her personally.(PAUSE) I'm the gardener.

CELESTE: The gardener? I didn't know about this.

JEROME: Now you do.

CELESTE: You're going to landscape for us?

(JEROME tries to ignore her, goes back to shed, is mad some things have been put back)

JEROME: Did you put all my things back in here like this?

CELESTE: No. About the garden, could I make a suggestion?

JEROME: No.

(FREYA returns with another tea pot)

FREYA: Jerome, have you met Mrs. Barbizon?

JEROME: Sort of.

CELESTE: He tells me he's going to be the gardener.

FREYA: He is? Yes, ahmm, he is.

JEROME: You messed up my system.

FREYA: It looks untidy out here.

JEROME: Now it looks "untidier" in here.

(HE enters shed)

CELESTE: Mr. Strachan never mentioned a gardener.

FREYA: Well, no. He doesn't know about Jerome yet.

CELESTE: You hired him?

FREYA: Yes.

CELESTE: Oh. Well, the estate certainly needs a gardener. I don't mind taking tea in the pampas but I'm not so sure about the other Friends of Rebecca Coburn.

FREYA: Are they all planning to take tea with me?

CELESTE: Eventually. Oh no rush. We're here to help you. You tell us when you want us.

FREYA: That can't be for quite some time I don't think.

CELESTE: What?

FREYA: Mr. Strachan said that the Volunteers would be available once the Papers were catalogued---

CELESTE: You can't do it all. All those papers, the documentation, yes. But everything else, leave that to us. The Bookstore, the Tea Shop.

FREYA: Here?

CELESTE: Of course. It's a Literary Museum. They stand or fall by their tea shoppes. We've commissioned book bags. They celebrate the Feast of her Centenary. January 29th, 1894-1994. The same day we'll open Coburn House.

FREYA: You want to open the Museum next January?

CELESTE: Well... Yes. Mr. Strachan said so.

FREYA: He did?

CELESTE: I think so. When would we open it? Later and miss her Centenary?

FREYA: But that gives us six months.

CELESTE: Well... Yes. That's long enough isn't it?

FREYA: I don't think so.

CELESTE: Oh. When do you think we can open our museum?

FREYA: I don't know.

CELESTE: For the opening ceremonies, we thought we'd go with a Twenties Gilded Age theme.

FREYA: I don't think The Twenties---

CELESTE: We could dress as famous people she knew in Paris. I'd love to come as Zelda Fitzgerald.

FREYA: Excuse me but is your interest in Rebecca Coburn a literary one?

CELESTE: I've read all the books if that's what you were getting at.

FREYA: I'm sure you have. It's only that it seems that you regard the Museum as a Social Club.

CELESTE: Well... Yes.

FREYA: I wasn't aware that this is what the Friends of Rebecca Coburn had in mind.

CELESTE: (coldly) Well... No. I wasn't at your interview. In any case they're only suggestions. You are the expert after all. The Scholar.

FREYA: I didn't mean to upset you.

CELESTE: You didn't. May I use your phone?

FREYA: Certainly.

(As CELESTE enters house, JEROME comes out of shed)

JEROME: You told her.

FREYA: We won't be ready to open in January!

JEROME: Who's gonna come all the way out here in the winter? Hey I could get a hose and freeze the topiary animals. Winter Gardens. Ice Castle over there---

FREYA: We can't open in January. But you've decided to stay despite "No way, no way!"

JEROME: Artistic temperament. It goes with becoming a Tenor.

FREYA: Your temper is a recent development?

JEROME: No. I got a problem being told what to do, O.K.

FREYA: I'm not very good at management. Three people have lost their temper with me already.

JEROME: Hey, I'm not mad at you anymore.

(CELESTE BARBIZON pops her head out door)

CELESTE: (charming) I'll be off now. Thanks so much for the tea. Call me. We're the only Barbizon in the book.

(CELESTE goes back into house)

JEROME: She's not mad at you anymore.

FREYA: Oh yes she is. But I have to be firm.

JEROME: Oh yes. Look, I'll read your book. But after that, once I clip all the Meadow of the Dancing stuff, the rest is mine. O.K.

FREYA: Fine. Find your elephant.

JEROME: And this shed here is my terrain. Don't mess around in here. Don't touch.

FREYA: I won't. I have enough to contend with in that house. It's so terribly disorganized, it's almost discouraging.

(JEROME looks on ground, points)

JEROME: (He sings\*(c) J. Van Heusen/S. Cahn) "Just what makes that little ol' ant, think he'll move a rubber tree plant, anyone knows an ant can't move a rubber tree plant, but he's got---?"

FREYA: (says it) High hopes.

JEROME: Sing it. "High hopes, she's got---"

FREYA: (sings) "Highaaa hopes. She's got high apple pie

JEROME: (with her) In the sky hopes!"

(He has done a soft shoe dance while singing and notices he's killed the ant)

JEROME: Don't forget that.  
(heading into Woods) So where are these Wooded Fens?

FREYA: Follow the path, almost to the lake.

(JEROME pushes the wheelbarrow now filled with garden tools into the Woods. CHRISTOPHER enters, observes FREYA)

CHRIS: How very pleasant and settled in you look. Taking tea in the garden.

FREYA: Would you like some?

CHRIS: No thanks. I can't touch caffeine after 10 a.m.

(Notices tea cups and tea pots)

You on the other hand have no problem with it.

FREYA: I've had visitors.

CHRIS: I know. Mrs. Barbizon called me.(shows off his pocket phone) I'm only a phone call away.

FREYA: Of course.

CHRIS: She upset you?

FREYA: There were a few misunderstandings.

CHRIS: I'm afraid she's a Society Dame with a little power bordering on megalomania. But do you know where our initial finding came from? The money that makes your salary possible now?

FREYA: No.

CHRIS: The Barbizon Foundation.

FREYA: I'll live on my savings til the grants come through.

CHRIS: You will not. Their money was for the Museum and that's what you're here for. You're dedicated, this is your raison d'etre, that's why you're perfect for this position, am I right?

FREYA: Yes.

CHRIS: I know Barbizon is a pushy person but humour her, alright? She's very good at lunching. She's great at writing grants. And you don't want her nit-picking the few little white lies we had to put in your C.V.

FREYA: No.

CHRIS: And I'm sorry but you can't let people like Dymphna ni Murchu

think this is still her stomping ground. Why do you think Linus Barden never got around to writing the Coburn biography?

FREYA: Because he was in awe of the material?

CHRIS: Because he was a drunk. When they were together, this was nothing but a bawdy house.

FREYA: A Ceili House.

CHRIS: Yeah. Yeah. A Ceili House. And oh right, you've hired a gardener?

FREYA: Yes. Jerome Lambert. He can live in the gate-keeper's cottage in exchange for keeping up the grounds.

CHRIS: You only got here yesterday.

FREYA: You want me to work fast. This garden needs immediate attention.

CHRIS: Yes but there are people in the village Celeste could recommend.

FREYA: Who'll work for free? I was hired to be the Curator, wasn't I? That does mean I am in charge of some decisions?

CHRIS: Yes of course, I'm sorry.

FREYA: And the garden is a major concern. Especially since it and the Woods will let us recreate places in the Coburn books.

CHRIS: Will they? O.K. Sounds good to me.(PAUSE) That's a great colour on you.

FREYA: It is?

CHRIS: Yeah. It brings out... I don't know. Everything I guess.

FREYA: (embarrassed) Thank you.

CHRIS: (sees Jerome's cassette recorder on stone wall) Whooaa where did this come from?

FREYA: It belongs to Jerome.

CHRIS: (has turned it over, reads label) It belongs to the County Library. This is an antique!

FREYA: Not really.

(JEROME has returned from Woods)

CHRIS: (laughs) What's it for?

JEROME: Music.

CHRIS: Who's this?

FREYA: This is Jerome Lambert.

CHRIS: You're... The gardener?

JEROME: Yeah. And that's my record player.

CHRIS: His Master's Voice. Does it still work?

JEROME: Yeah.

CHRIS: Ever heard of CD?

JEROME: Ever heard of Laser Digital Implants?

CHRIS: (only to FREYA) I've even gone compact disc in the Allante.

JEROME: What's the Allante?

CHRIS: A two seater Cadillac. All leather interior. Rag top. Convertible.

JEROME: How many payments you got left?

CHRIS: (to FREYA) You ever need to go anywhere, call me. Will I be in the way if I drop in once in a while to see how you're doing?

FREYA: No. Please do.

CHRIS: Great. (pleased, smiles at her) A bientot.

(CHRIS leaves)

JEROME: You don't need his Allante to get around.

FREYA: I'm not going anywhere.

JEROME: You could be, sometime.

FREYA: I'll phone him on his car phone.

JEROME: No you won't.

FREYA: I might. I don't drive.

JEROME: Hey come on.

FREYA: I don't. I never got my license.

JEROME: Why not? It's a basic skill. Everybody should know how to drive. How you gonna be independent?

FREYA: You don't need a car to be independent.

JEROME: But it helps. Big shame. You got wheels but you don't drive.

FREYA: I don't have wheels.

JEROME: Oh yes you do. You never looked in the garage yet, eh?

FREYA: No. It has a car?

JEROME: A Zephyr.

FREYA: Is that a good make?

JEROME: Front and back seats. Four doors. A trunk. Not much rust.

FREYA: I have a car. I had no idea.

JEROME: There are all kinds of things this place has got you don't know it's got. Yet. Come on.

(FREYA follows him off to see car)

## Scene three

One week later. The garden has been somewhat transformed. The grass has been cut. More stone lawn ornaments are visible. A sundial, a statue. And something that looks like a monolith. JEROME is working on a hedge rabbit for the topiary. FREYA is sorting through papers and reading. SHE has set up her office on the stone garden table. The grocery box she's taking papers out of today advertises Five Roses Flour and has bright red roses on it.

JEROME: Hey, Frey, speak now.

(HE moves away from hedge so she can view it)

FREYA: Oh I like it. Very much.

JEROME: You're not just saying that.

FREYA: No. It's lovely.

JEROME: It's not too big for a rabbit?

FREYA: No.

JEROME: It's important for the foliage to harmonize.

FREYA: Mais oui. Je comprends. En tous cas---

(JEROME knows she wants to speak French again, he's not happy)

JEROME: Yeah.

FREYA: Je sais que tu as des idees fixe pour le jardin mais peut-etre tu peux faire les autres choses?

JEROME: Other things for the garden like what?

FREYA: Les humains? Un tasse de the?

JEROME: Assez!

FREYA: Tu n'aime pas mes suggestions?

JEROME: Je n'aime pas your French.

FREYA: I thought you welcomed the chance to use your other language.

JEROME: Not when I have to hear it spoken at me like that!

FREYA: It's not...my grammar?

JEROME: Your accent. You're murdering the French language.

FREYA: I am trying my best.

JEROME: Don't you have any ear for it? Can't you hear how bad it sounds?

FREYA: (very hurt) No. You're such snobs about how it should sound.

JEROME: Why shouldn't we be?!

FREYA: Your criticizing me is unfair! You're half and half. You learned

French at home, I learned it in school. I love the language. I'm sorry I have such a tin ear.

(FREYA buries her face in her Papers, won't look at him, he rolls up a newspaper)

JEROME: I'm sorry. It's not your fault both your parents are English. You've got passion. For language. Not a lot of people have that as much as you. Do.

(HE softly hits the bush with the rolled up newspaper)

FREYA: What are you doing?

JEROME: Beating around the bush.

FREYA: Why?

JEROME: It helps it grow. Gets the sap flowing and the flowers, fruit and foliage going.

FREYA: I hope so.

JEROME: Hey, I'm the one reading the horticulture books. And the Rebecca Coburns.

FREYA: Yes. I'm very proud... Ah, pleased.

JEROME: "It was the spring of springs." What a corny way to begin a great book.

FREYA: Actually, you're not the first to make that criticism of her beginning.

JEROME: I'm not, eh? Good for me. I must be astuter than I thought.

FREYA: Upon reflection some years later she said that she---

JEROME: Yeah, yeah. Too late to reflect when the deed's done. You thirsty?

FREYA: Parched. I'll make tea.

JEROME: Ah no more tea. How about a beer?

FREYA: Me? Beer? Here?

JEROME: Yeah. It's June, it's hot, it's your own backyard.

(HE hands her a beer from a small cooler)

FREYA: (uneasy) Well, alright. Thank you.

(HE has a beer, too. Clinks bottles with her, joins her at table)

JEROME: All that doesn't bore you?

FREYA: No.

JEROME: Can I look?

FREYA: As long as you're careful.

(JEROME roots around in Five Roses box, sees

something, reads it inside box, laughs)

FREYA: What's so amusing?

JEROME: (taking out a manuscript, reads aloud) "Il etait le printemps des printemps." Even in French she starts corny.

FREYA: Have you found the translation manuscript of Meadow of the Dancing?

JEROME: I guess so. That's sure "it was the spring of springs" in French.

(HE hands her Manuscript)

FREYA: It's handwritten.

JEROME: And it's old. Did she write it in French, too?

FREYA: No. French is only one of the nineteen languages her book was translated into.

JEROME: This'll look good under glass. A lot of stuff scratched out, eh?

FREYA: Yes. The grammar is strange and the translator's used the passe simple a great deal.

JEROME: And how about a great deal of different flowers?

FREYA: No. That's not possible.

JEROME: Oh yes it is. Hey I know. You made me read this book in English. The Path of Dreams is lined with sunflowers, larkspur and jacob's ladder. That's what I'm planting. But what's it lined with in French?

FREYA: (reads)"les nappes violettes et jaunes, des petunias blancs et les marguerites".

JEROME: Different flowers. Different French. More like France. For the European translation, maybe.

FREYA: The only French translation was the French Canadian edition. With the same flowers, I'm sure. This is very odd.

(DYMPHNA enters from Woods)

DYMPHNA: Yes tis. (dismayed, regarding rabbit) Who did this?

JEROME: Me. It's a rabbit.

DYMPHNA: It's a sixty year old Juniper bush.

(SHE hands FREYA two jars of jam)

DYMPHNA: Coals back to Newcastle.

FREYA: Thank you. One for each of us.

DYMPHNA: You never came round for a meal.

FREYA: I've been very, very busy.

JEROME: That's true. She's been very, very busy.

DYMPHNA: I'll believe the organ grinder not the monkey, thanks. Bet you've heard plenty of gossip about me. Celeste Barbizon's been here. Out with it. What have you heard?

FREYA: (chooses the least one) That you're a Druid.

JEROME: She's a Druid?

FREYA: No...

DYMPHNA: Yes.

JEROME: Sure, of course. She's Irish. She talks to trees.

DYMPHNA: So do you. I've seen you.

JEROME: To help them grow, nothing else.

FREYA: You are a Druid. How very interesting.

DYMPHNA: It's all human sacrifices and Stonehenge to you, is it?

FREYA: Yes.

JEROME: I'll call on you when I need advice for the rock garden.

DYMPHNA: It's serious business, bucko.

FREYA: Are there any other Druids around?

DYMPHNA: More than you'd think. Though there's very few of us in our Lodge of Theosophists. There's me. And Joan Hardy.

JEROME: The Librarian? The one with all the hair?

DYMPHNA: Ahmm. And of course Linus.

JEROME: (to FREYA) The guy who owned the house was one, too?

DYMPHNA: (near monolith) Where do you think we hold our celebrations of Summer Solstice?

JEROME: Not here?

DYMPHNA: In this very garden. Of course now you've tarted it up. Though it certainly does show up the Druid Folly.

JEROME: It's part of your ceremony?

DYMPHNA: All of it was. Do you think all these stones got here by themselves?

JEROME: Don't Druids use altars?

DYMPHNA: Sometimes

(SHE and JEROME realize the altar potential of the stone garden table, move away from it)

DYMPHNA: Don't be ridiculous. Our Lodge doesn't do sacrifices.

FREYA: I'm so glad.

DYMPHNA: And I'm glad all my Druid activity's out in the open now.

JEROME: I'm not.

(JEROME looks at his watch, then at sundial)

JEROME: Gotta go.

DYMPHNA: Coward.

JEROME: I got work in the village to go to. For money. You can't eat the scenery you know.

(HE starts to leave then says)

JEROME: Bye, Freya.

(HE EXITS through Woods, DYMPHNA hands FREYA his empty beer bottle)

DYMPHNA: I'd love a drink.

FREYA: Oh... Alright. There's another beer here. And I think I could find something even stronger in the house---

DYMPHNA: I was thinking more along the lines of lemonade and a biscuit. They tell you I'm a drunk?

FREYA: Yes.

DYMPHNA: Have you heard of the Pioneers? In Ireland.

FREYA: The early Druids?

DYMPHNA: No. The Pioneers in Ireland take the pledge. Not to drink. I pledged at eighteen.

FREYA: Oh.

DYMPHNA: Ask that young know it all Strachan if he ever saw me drunk any of the times he was sniffing around here trying to woo Linus into selling Coburn House to him.

FREYA: But how could someone who pledges not to drink---

DYMPHNA: Be around someone who was? By being totally besotted. I was mad about Linus Barden. You can't imagine how I felt about him, you can't know unless you've been that far gone in love yourself.

FREYA: Of course. You said he was your Twin Soul.

DYMPHNA: He was the one who told me it was time I embraced my Druid life. When my husband died I needed a way to become spiritual again. I'd lost faith in the Catholic Church, nothing it did, more a matter of what it didn't do. It hit me right in the middle of Mass, Suddenly I thought: I don't believe any of this. Just like that. Frightened me nearly to death. But being a Druid gives me guidance and inspiration and it's made me less contrary, if you can believe that. The saints are still with me. And my friends and relatives in heaven. And my genii loci. When I need to talk to my husband or... Linus, it's good to know I can. Would there be anybody you talk to the way I do?

FREYA: I sometimes talk to my grandmother that way.

DYMPHNA: Linus must be happy to know someone like you is sorting through those Papers now. But why your great interest in Rebecca Coburn. It didn't begin as an Academic one, Did it?

FREYA: It began as a great deal of reading. Aloud.

DYMPHNA: So where were you at before you came here? You've not a chance of keeping anything secret from a Druid. I'll tell you that now.

FREYA: I was a Live-in Care-Giver. I took care of a series of elderly women in their homes.

DYMPHNA: That's not really a job for a young woman.

FREYA: No. But that's what my job history for the last nine years has been. I wasn't at all the graduate student, assistant professor the Museum Board was looking for. I'm an amateur scholar. Everyone else who applied must have asked for more money.

DYMPHNA: Ahh, what more could they want, you're even sorting through her papers in French.

FREYA: Jerome came across it first.

DYMPHNA: (reads) "Il etait le printemps des printemps."

FREYA: Meadow of the Dancing in translation.

DYMPHNA: And isn't it in terrible shape? Not even typed. This looks more like an author's working manuscript." Par Sophie Cantois Millotte." How's that for a French name?

FREYA: Extremely. And rather conceited too. No sign of the author's name on it. Just the translator's.

DYMPHNA: Are you good with French?

FREYA: I have a B. A. In Modern Languages. With a minor in literature.

DYMPHNA: And tell me, is this the most interesting thing you've come across in a week?

FREYA: Oh no.

DYMPHNA: Any private correspondence?

FREYA: Quite a few pieces.

DYMPHNA: Anything by Linus?

FREYA: Yes some of his own research has surfaced.

DYMPHNA: It has? You know I'd be happy to help you with it if you bring it all out here.

(Sound of a large van arriving off)

FREYA: It's in too many boxes. Still it's not so terrible in the House anymore. I've established something of a system, I've got the boxes in different rooms---

CELESTE: (calling from off) Hello.

DYMPHNA: Oh no, It's Barbizon.

(CELESTE in a nautical ensemble enters)

CELESTE: Hello.

DYMPHNA: Hello Celeste.

(CELESTE notices beer, looks at FREYA)

CELESTE: Hello Paddy. How are things?

DYMPHNA: Just grandiose, Celeste. How are things your end?

CELESTE: Very good thank you.

(FREYA takes beer bottles into House)

DYMPHNA: I brought Freya some of my jams. So she could test them out for the Coburn House shop, See? I thought we could put wee little labels on them and call them Wooded Fens Jems.

CELESTE: (sweetly) We're not ready to open the shop yet, Paddy.

DYMPHNA: They'll keep til you are, Celeste.

CELESTE: Til January 1994?

DYMPHNA: That's not when you're opening?

FREYA: (through kitchen window) Perhaps.

CELESTE: I'm trying to talk Freya and the Friends into a Theme Party for the opening.

DYMPHNA: Sort of what my people do with James Joyce for Bloomsday?

CELESTE: Yes.

DYMPHNA: Maybe you'd like me to do my Molly Bloom soliloquy party piece?

CELESTE: No thank you. Still it would preferable to the Bachanalian antics you've gotten up to here every June. With your dungeons and dragons bedsheets and pillow case party hats.

DYMPHNA: That you'd be sure were handwoven if we'd let you join.

CELESTE: I was merely inquiring!

DYMPHNA: Inquiring? You offered to provide the banquet!

CELESTE: Some cold cuts and cheeses is by no means a banquet.

DYMPHNA: We're not a Society looking for members of the bourgeoisie! Ahh, I can't be bothered talking to you! (to FREYA) Take this.

(SHE hands FREYA an olive green/salmon pink stone, CELESTE inspects JEROME's cooler)

FREYA: What is it?

DYMPHNA: Unakite. It encourages self-empowerment and brings balance and control of our lives back to us.

CELESTE: Can you spare it?

(DYMPHNA looks at sundial)

DYMPHNA: Is it that time already? I've a meeting.

CELESTE: Of Druids?

DYMPHNA: Native Land Claims. We're looking into Melrose and Connaught.

CELESTE: What? That's where our property starts.

(DYMPHNA laughs)

FREYA: Goodbye. And thank you.

(DYMPHNA enters into Woods)

CELESTE: She goes out of her way with that Druid gypsy thing to torment me. And she's obviously drunk to be saying I wanted to be a Druid. All I wanted to do was watch. That's all. Really.

(Off a van horn blares)

CELESTE: And they're by the hour too!

FREYA: Who are by the hour?

CELESTE: The moving people. I came across some pieces for the Museum. For restoring the rooms to the way they looked when Rebecca Coburn lived here. It's taken me the whole week but I even found an exact replica of her desk in this photo.

(She shows photo to FREYA)

FREYA: Which rooms were you planning to restore?

CELESTE: Most of them. Don't worry, you go on with your work, we won't disrupt anything.

(SHE waves her arms in direction of moving van)

FREYA: But I'm trying to work here.

CELESTE: Yes I did notice that. If you don't mind a suggestion, Should you be out here with such precious papers?

(CELESTE picks up French translation manuscript)

CELESTE: Something as precious as this. (looks) Ohh, It's in French.

(FREYA takes manuscript away from her)

FREYA: Excuse me... But the papers are my domain, are they not?

CELESTE: Yes.

FREYA: And as the Curator, I could ask you to bring the furniture another day when it's more convenient.

CELESTE: You could but you won't. I'm only dropping these pieces off then I'll leave you alone. You won't even notice we're here. Over this way boys.

(Moving people are having trouble, Do not enter)

CELESTE: (realizes they aren't coming) This way. Oh, Don't carry it that way---oh no, no, no!

(SHE rushes toward them, we hear a crash)

VOICE: (off) Sorry.

#### Scene four

Six days later. Late afternoon. JEROME is singing "salut, Demeure, Chaste et pure" over and over from inside Coburn House. CHRISTOPHER STRACHAN is in the garden which now has another hedge animal (a bear) in the topiary. CHRISTOPHER is sitting on an old lawn chair by stone table, he's quite fed up. He can't stand JEROME's singing any longer, gets up from his chair and shouts:

CHRIS: "Salut demeure, chaste et pure"! It's not so hard to learn!

(JEROME looks out kitchen window)

JEROME: I'm not learning it. I'm perfecting it.

(JEROME closes window, FREYA arrives, walking on from gate-keeper's entrance. SHE carries a string bag filled with vegetables and a cloth bag of books and cassettes from the Library)

FREYA: (smiles) Hi!

CHRIS: Where have you been?

FREYA: Out.

CHRIS: I expected you to be here.

FREYA: We needed groceries.

CHRIS: Of course.

FREYA: I had to go to the Library.

CHRIS: And are those books for Rebecca Coburn research purposes?

FREYA: One of them is. Is something very much the matter, Christopher?

CHRIS: I don't know. What is that gardener doing in the kitchen?

FREYA: Cooking dinner I hope.

CHRIS: What do you know about him?

FREYA: Enough.

CHRIS: And Paddy Murphy alias Dymphna ni Murchu.

FREYA: Why are you asking?

CHRIS: Because the people you have chosen to associate yourself with are...

FREYA: What?

CHRIS: People with priors.

FREYA: No they're not.

CHRIS: They both have police convictions. Jerome Lambert was picked up for vagrancy.

FREYA: How many times?

CHRIS: Once.

FREYA: Once.

CHRIS: And he has no gardening experience.

FREYA: (proudly) Look at this garden now and say that.

CHRIS: (looks) He has no gardening experience. He is getting his formal training at our expense.

FREYA: What expense? He works for free. The money saved can be put into the Museum.

CHRIS: If we have a Museum.

FREYA: We will.

CHRIS: In six months, Freya?

FREYA: I didn't think that was carved in stone.

CHRIS: Now it is. I'm sorry. It's all my fault. I was the one who brought up the possibility of the Museum opening for the Centenary. I guess I sold it to them too well.

CHRIS: It's Madame Barbizon. She says it has to open for the Centenary or her money's gone.

FREYA: I'm cataloguing the papers as quickly as I can.

CHRIS: By spending evenings away?

FREYA: One evening. One dinner out.

CHRIS: But not at Celeste Barbizon's, oh no, It has to be at the White Witch of the North House. I heard that other members of the Coven were there, too.

FREYA: If you mean Jane Hardy, the Librarian---

CHRIS: And her baby.

FREYA: Yes, She brought Tess...

CHRIS: Father unknown. Did Dymphna tell you why she took early retirement?

FREYA: Yes.

CHRIS: The School Board strongly requested her to. Because she's a political agitator. And very likely a member of the IRA.

FREYA: That last accusation's untrue.

CHRIS: You would think so. You're going to sell her jams and crystals at the Coburn House shop!

FREYA: Dymphna suggested that to bother Celeste Barbizon.

CHRIS: She did a pretty good job then. Because Mrs. Barbizon was pretty bothered. She was also really impressed with the beer bottles all over the place.

FREYA: That is an incredible exaggeration.

CHRIS: There was drinking going on?

FREYA: Yes. But Dymphna wasn't drinking.

CHRIS: Right.

FREYA: I was. One beer.

CHRIS: You were drinking? Oh that's a great thing for Madame President to see the lady Curator doing when she pops by.

FREYA: I didn't know she'd be popping by with a moving van.

CHRIS; I guess not. Look one beer is not a crime but people talk around here.

FREYA: I've noticed.

CHRIS: You're a woman living all alone in this big house. With that guy living right over there.

FREYA: I feel safer because he's around.

CHRIS: I don't. I didn't expect the gardener to be his age.

FREYA: What age did you expect him to be?

CHRIS: 80. (laughs) Alright so I'm jealous.

FREYA: Of whom?

CHRIS: Him.

FREYA: Why? He has nothing.

CHRIS: He has you around all the time. He's doing alright. You don't know how often I've wanted to drop in here.

FREYA: Why didn't you? Everyone else did.

CHRIS: You have all this research.

FREYA: I'm not totally obsessed. I do take breaks.

CHRIS: Yes. To take driving lessons. In Linus Baden's Zephyr.

FREYA: I'm getting pretty good.

CHRIS: But you know if you ever need someone to drive you around, there's me and the Allante.

FREYA: I want to drive myself around.

CHRIS: Sure of course you do. Look, I'm sorry I lost my temper before. I'm a little stressed.

FREYA: Would you like to stay for dinner?

CHRIS: No thanks. When we have dinner together, I'd like it to be just us.

FREYA: Alright.

CHRIS: (turns on heels as he is leaving) Ahh. You know anything about Contra Dancing?

FREYA: No.

CHRIS: They're having one this Saturday.

FREYA: Is it a Benefit for a Central America?

CHRIS: (laughs) No. It's line dancing. Like Square Dancing, Sort of. But they've got regular dancing in between.

FREYA: Sounds very nice.

CHRIS: Old fashioned but yeah it's a lot of fun.

(FREYA expects him to say something more, Silence, then JEROME opens door, through screen)

JEROME: It's ready! It's cooked! We gotta eat.

FREYA: Thank you.

CHRIS: I'm be off then. Bon Appetit.

(CHRISTOPHER exits. JEROME comes out of House with a dinner tray, hands it to FREYA as he sets the table)

FREYA: Not yet. I haven't made the salad.

JEROME: Too late. This has been really ready for ten minutes. I thought Strackum would never leave.

FREYA: Strawn, it's pronounced Strawn.

JEROME: Then why doesn't he spell it the way he says it? Eh?

FREYA: I asked him to stay for dinner.

JEROME: I know. Why?

FREYA: He seems lost and lonely. And shy. It's sad the way he mentions his material possessions to impress me. I don't think he has anything except them and his work.

JEROME: A guy like that has plenty of friends.

FREYA: I don't know.

JEROME: If he's got no friends, It's his own fault. I forgot a candle.

FREYA: I'll get one.

(FREYA's left a book from the bag on table,  
takes the rest in)

FREYA: (as she exits) Joan Hardy got you some more music tapes.

JEROME: Great. (with book) Hey, She got your French Meadow of the Dancing.

FREYA: (calling from House) Yes! Les Pres de Danse. Lise-le.

JEROME: Non, merci. Un fois en anglais, Ca suffit.

(FREYA returns from House, She has a small  
candle, a large box and the French translation  
manuscript)

JEROME: What did we say about bringing your work to the dinner table?

FREYA: Just one look: I want to see if they did change the  
flowers and the French in the published edition.

JEROME: Later.

(HE moves manuscript and goes for box)

FREYA: That's not work.

JEROME: What is it?

FREYA: A present.

JEROME: Who for?

FREYA: You. Open it after we eat.

JEROME: What'd you get me a present for?

FREYA: You'll see.

JEROME: It didn't cost you a lot, Did it?

FREYA: Not a penny.

JEROME: (picks up box) Oh good. It's not books. I thought it was more  
Rebecca Coburns for me to read.

FREYA: No. Stop guessing. Later.

(JEROME pours some wine)

JEROME: This Al fresco dining's a good idea.

FREYA: Yes it is.

JEROME: It's way more fun than eating alone.

FREYA: Yes.

JEROME: A good chance for an exchange of culinary skills.

FREYA: Yes.

JEROME: A good chance for civilized conversation.

FREYA: Yes.

JEROME: You ever been married, Freya?

FREYA: (almost stricken) No.

JEROME: Never?

FREYA: No.

JEROME: Why are you all shocked I asked.

FREYA: I'm not shocked.

JEROME: We covered past working experiences and education the other night.

FREYA: I know. This subject seems much more personal that's all. This is delicious.

JEROME: Sorry I asked.

FREYA: I'm sorry I reacted the way I did.

JEROME: It's no big deal.

FREYA: Yes it was.  
I almost got married.

JEROME: (does not want to hear this) But you changed your mind.

FREYA: No he did. He left me at the altar.

JEROME: What? No. No way. He didn't leave you at the altar.

FREYA: Well, no. We never got as far as the altar. He never showed up at the Church. Like a fool I gave him the benefit of keeping two hundred wedding guests waiting ninety-six minutes.

JEROME: You weren't a fool. Anybody who'd leave you at the altar would have to have a good, terrible reason. Like a car wreck, Sudden amnesia, kidnapping.

FREYA: Like being totally cowardly, Spineless and cruel.

JEROME: That's so terrible. I never met anybody had that happen to them.

FREYA: We're a rather exclusive club.

JEROME: It's so terrible. It's like something in a book. Hey it was in a book. The Dickens one. The lady who gets dumped and sits around in her wedding dress the rest of her life. With the moldy wedding cake covered with mice.

FREYA: Miss Havisham.

JEROME: Yeah her. And it happened to Molly in WinterTide. That Rebecca Coburn one. Molly's in her wedding dress when she gets the telegram he married somebody else. I'm sorry. It's your life. And I'm treating it like it's a book.

FREYA: I wish it was.

JEROME: Well, yeah. When was this?

FREYA: Nine years ago. Next week.

JEROME: How long did it take you to get over it?

FREYA: It's not something you get over.

JEROME: Of course it is.

FREYA: There are no support groups for spurned brides.

JEROME: There must be people you can talk to about it. You can't let it warp out your life.

FREYA: It wasn't warped, It was changed.

JEROME: That's why you spent nine years taking care of old ladies.

FREYA: I needed to be away from everyone. I was depressed.

JEROME: Of course you were depressed. But...gee. Did you ever speak to him again?

FREYA: Oh yes. Richard phoned me three days later. From Jamaica. He'd gone on our honeymoon alone.

JEROME: He call to apologize?

FREYA: No. To explain so he could live with himself after what he'd done. It had to do with his own self-esteem.

JEROME: Did you tell him off?

FREYA: I was still in shock.

JEROME: Later when you were out of shock.

FREYA: There was no point.

JEROME: No point? You turned yourself into Turtle Ostrich Woman and hibernated your life away. That's probably why you took this job, So you could run off and hide again. You're depressed, you're angry, you're abandoned. Yeah, So they're setbacks. You get over it. You don't let your life go.

FREYA: Don't you judge me. You let your life go.

JEROME: Yeah. But I got it back! And everyday I'm changing it. And becoming a new and more interested person. Look at me here. I'm learning about Opera and Gardening. And Literature.

FREYA: And becoming a Tenor.

JEROME: Yeah. One of these days this can be my calling card, too.(hands her a business card)

FREYA: (reading card) "Sean Phelan. Tenor. Sings at wakes and weddings and every fancy ball."

JEROME: I got it from a guy I met in a bar. I got a pretty good voice, you heard me.

FREYA: Yes but... You'd have to get a good reputation and a repertoire.

JEROME: I'll get them. I like my life the way it is now. I'm a Free Man. I'm not in debt. I go where I want. I only got a responsibility to me.

FREYA: Don't you ever get lonely?

JEROME: That's an awful personal question.

FREYA: You asked me if I'd ever been married.

JEROME: That's a Fact not a state of being. Do I get lonely living like this? Yeah sometimes I get lonely as hell but I cope. It's O.K.

FREYA: I asked because I find myself so alone so much of the time. And it's not a life choice I made.

JEROME: This one was made by me because of circumstances.

FREYA: But you can choose not to roam so much. Never putting down roots.

JEROME: Hey, I'm putting them down here. With this place.

FREYA: Yes. You've done wonderful work. That's why I thought you deserved this.

(SHE hands him the present, hE opens box, It's a Harris Tweed jacket)

JEROME: Heyy.

FREYA: Isn't it beautiful?

JEROME: Yeah.

FREYA: I found it.

JEROME: Where?

FREYA: In the House.

JEROME: It was the dead guy's?

FREYA: It belonged to Linus Barden, yes.

JEROME: And there's more where this came from, eh?

FREYA: Certainly. If it fits.

JEROME: (gives her back jacket) You don't give a man another man's clothes.

FREYA: It's not Charity.

JEROME: What is it then?

FREYA: It's a find.

JEROME: Well let it get lost again.

FREYA: Certainly. Go around in old clothes til you can make enough money to buy new ones. Which is stupid because that House is full of them. I'm not expecting you to wear it if it doesn't fit. I didn't

mean to insult you.

JEROME: Well you did.

FREYA: Then I'm sorry. (PAUSE) I had it cleaned before I gave it to you.

JEROME: Well I should hope so.

FREYA: Proof right there (shows tag) in case you have any doubts.

JEROME: I don't. (takes jacket back) I'll think about it.

FREYA: (still angry) Good.

JEROME: I could go out in public in this.

FREYA: Yes. You do that.

JEROME: You going to that Contra Dance he was talking about?

FREYA: I don't know.

JEROME: If you do, Can I go with you?

FREYA: Can you go with me?

JEROME: Yeah. Can you let me take you to that Dance?

FREYA: Ah, alright. Yes.

JEROME: I thought Mister Strackum was going to ask you when he brought it up so subtly.

FREYA: So did I.

JEROME: What were you gonna say if he did?

FREYA: Yes I suppose.

JEROME: If he comes back to ask you tell him next Saturday's Dance Card is filled. Cause Jerome Lambert's one hell of a Dancer.

(JEROME gets up and dances, he's right)

FREYA: So is Freya Brady.

(HE thinks she will demonstrate, She does not)

JEROME: Hey you're not gonna demonstrate?

FREYA: Oui. Mais il faux que t'attendes le samedi prochaine.

JEROME: Until Saturday then.

(They toast, he blows out the candle, then clears table and enters house, FREYA gets manuscript and French book from library: Les Pres de Danse, while she does this JEROME emerges from House, Sees her with her research, looks at her for a moment and then exits with tweed jacket to his gate-keeper's cottage)

FREYA: (checks manuscript against translation) The flowers are different. "It was the spring of springs." (reads from manuscript) "Il etait le printemps des printemps." (reads from translation) "Il n'y a jamais eu un tel printemps." The beginnings are different. (with manuscript) Par Sophie Cantois Millotte. (with translation) Traduction fait par Helene d'Youville. The translators are different. No, there's some mistake. (SHE looks through manuscript, Flips to last page and finds a message there, reads:) "Mlle Coburn, Ca ce'est mon opus seule et final. J'espere avec toute mon coeur que vous l'aimera." Miss Coburn, this is my only and last work. I hope with all my heart that you like it. " What is this? What's going on here?

END OF ACT

## ACT TWO

Scene Five.

The next morning. DYMPHNA is making human bag-pipe sounds and chanting in Irish. She stands in the middle of a circle she has made. She holds a branch with oak leaves and waves a large stick.

DYMPHNA: Talamh (TALAV) Aer (AIR) Tine (Schina) Uisce! (ISCHKA)  
Go raibh na spioraid liom!(GORO NASPIRID LIAM) Brid

(BREEDA) Fiachla (FEARLA) agus (AWGUS) Padhraig!  
 (PORIG) Gearoid (GAROIJAA) agus (AWGUS) Linus! (LINUS)

(FREYA comes out of the House, Carrying  
 Papers, She's startled by DYMPHNA's  
 hitting the ground with her stick)

FREYA: Oh please don't do that!

DYMPHNA: Do what?

FREYA: Curse the grounds you walk on.

DYMPHNA: I don't cast curses.

FREYA: Of course you don't. It looked like you were. To me.  
 Sorry.

(DYMPHNA brushes away the invisible circle  
 she has made with the branch of oak  
 leaves)

DYMPHNA: I'm trying to call my voices in. Because I haven't  
 been able to get a hold of Linus.

FREYA: Well, It's probably too sunny a day.

DYMPHNA: That's got nothing to do with it.

FREYA: Are you going to be finished soon? I have a lot of  
 work to do.

DYMPHNA: Then do it. I'm done in with mine here today. You look  
 terrible, you know. Did you not sleep last night?

FREYA: Not very well, I'm afraid. I came across something---

DYMPHNA: What?

FREYA: A note at the back of that manuscript Jerome found.  
 Joan got me Les Pres de Danse.

(FREYA shows DYMPHNA Pres de Danse)

FREYA: And I was comparing it to the manuscript, It's all  
 very confusing, there seem to be two different  
 translators with two different translations. That's  
 how I came across this.

(DYMPHNA reads note in manuscript silently)

DYMPHNA: What's she mean this is her "one and only work"?

FREYA: I'm not sure.

DYMPHNA: "I hope you like it with all my heart."

FREYA: Then I found some correspondence from Sophie Cantois  
 Millotte, the translator whose name is on this  
 manuscript. It's got the same urgent tone. "J'ai besoin  
 d'une response aussi tot que possible!"

DYMPHNA: I need an answer right away. (reads more of letter)  
"C'est ma raison d'etre!" "It's my reason for being"?  
Rebecca Coburn had a very dedicated translator.

FREYA: I know. She writes that it took a long time to  
complete and almost took every fibre of her being.

DYMPHNA: Such carrying on, what's she think it is, the Book of  
Kells?

FREYA: I think she did! Look, "Repondez madame. Je vous en  
soupli!"

DYMPHNA: If only she'd been that so concerned about the state  
of her translation manuscript.

FREYA: Yes. Perhaps she was very sickly. She died very young.  
(hands DYMPHNA a newspaper clipping) "Vingt-neuf ans."

DYMPHNA: Her Obituary?

FREYA: She died in Provence.

DYMPHNA: France?

FREYA: Yes. The year's not written here.

(CHRISTOPHER STRACHAN is at the back door, Comes out  
of House)

CHRIS: Would you leave us alone please?

DYMPHNA: No. We're having an interesting discussion here.

CHRIS: I think ours will be more interesting.

(CHRISTOPHER laughs at her Druid branch and stick)

DYMPHNA: I doubt that if you're holding up one part of it.  
(DYMPHNA exits though Woods)

CHRIS: You said I could drop by.

FREYA: Yes.

CHRIS: I thought you might chance a driving lesson with me?  
Out in the countryside. With lunch somewhere to  
follow?

FREYA: Oh, I don't know.

CHRIS: Is something bothering you?

(FREYA takes manuscript and French translation  
and opens each to the first page)

FREYA: They're different.

CHRIS: That's a problem?

FREYA: Yes. (picks up Manuscript) This is a translation of  
Meadow of the Dancing.

CHRIS: Rebecca Coburn's first book.

FREYA: (with book) This is supposedly the only French translation of it.

CHRIS: Les Pres de Danse.

FREYA: (with book) This one by Helene d'Youville is Canadian French.  
(with Manuscript) This one by Sophie Cantois Millotte is France French.

CHRIS: Different names and different French?

FREYA: Yes. (reading from book) Look. "Il n'y a jamais eu un tel printemps." Completely different from this manuscript.

CHRIS: Is it ever old looking.

FREYA: Yes, that's why I thought it was the original translation in 1930.

CHRIS: But it's not.

FREYA: It's obviously another one.

CHRIS: I don't understand. She wrote Meadow of the Dancing in...?

FREYA: 1928. Here at Coburn House.

CHRIS: And it got translated 1930.

FREYA: As Les Pres de Danse.

CHRIS: By this Helene d'Youville.

FREYA: Yes.

CHRIS: Then what's with this France translation by Sophie Cantois Millotte?

FREYA: Perhaps Rebecca Coburn planned to have one for France.

CHRIS: Yeah?

FREYA: That's the reason for these letters.

CHRIS: You found letters?

FREYA: They're from Sophie Cantois Millotte to Rebecca Coburn asking about her manuscript.

CHRIS: (with Manuscript) Cantois Millotte only wrote her name on this. Is that usual?

FREYA: It seems rather ego-centric for a translator. But Rebecca Coburn must have cared about her. She kept her death notice.

CHRIS: What year?

FREYA: It doesn't say. (HE takes the Obit)

CHRIS: (looks it over) 1926.

FREYA: There was no date.

CHRIS: But look here: "Mort de Valentino." Death of Valentino. He died in 1926. I remember. Not personally. Or should I say I know. I'm the Trivia Kid. Valentino died the year Talkies were invented. It was this big irony.

FREYA: She couldn't have died in 1926. How could she write a translation for a book that wasn't written yet? Rebecca Coburn came here in 1926.

CHRIS: And wrote Meadow of the Dancing here published in 1928.

FREYA: (with manuscript) So this translation would have to be from 1929 at least.

CHRIS: (with Obit) But she died in 1926...

FREYA: Before Rebecca Coburn came here to write she lived in Paris.

CHRIS: That's how she'd meet translators like Sophie Cantois Millotte.

FREYA: Or writers like Sophie Cantois Millotte.

CHRIS: What?

FREYA: (with Manuscript) Maybe this was first.

CHRIS: What do you mean?

FREYA: Maybe Rebecca Coburn passed another author's book as her own.

CHRIS: You think Meadow of the Dancing was stolen?!

FREYA: I don't know! I could be wrong. I want to be wrong.

CHRIS: I hope you are. I mean how are we supposed to open a Museum to an author who plagiarized somebody else's book?

FREYA: Calm down. Please.

CHRIS: O.K. O.K.

FREYA: I have to verify it.

CHRIS: You sure do.

CHRIS: It's an incredible discovery though.

FREYA: No it's terrible.

CHRIS: That stupid woman, why did she keep all this evidence?

FREYA: Please we have to be absolutely sure.

CHRIS: Oh yes. Because once this gets out...

FREYA: Rebecca Coburn is finished.

CHRIS: What'll we tell the Society?

FREYA: Nothing until we're certain.

CHRIS: Sure. Of course. I'll keep them all away from you. How long do you need?

FREYA: I need to do a thorough analysis. I have to compare these two translations with the Rebecca Coburn original.

CHRIS: If it is the original.

FREYA: It could be a great coincidence, that's all. The first few pages are similar, that's all...

CHRIS: How can I help you?

FREYA: By not saying a word about this.

CHRIS: No worry. It'll have to come from you.

FREYA: I'll call you as soon as I know.

CHRIS: Will that be sometime later today?

FREYA: No. This can't be rushed.

CHRIS: Do other people know about this manuscript?

FREYA: Yes. Dymphna. Celeste Barbizon saw it.

CHRIS: That Jerome, too?

FREYA: He was the one who found it. He noticed that the flowers were different.

CHRIS: So all these people know about it?

FREYA: They only know I have a manuscript and a book I want to compare it to. I requested it through the library.

CHRIS: So Joan the Librarian knows too?

FREYA: Yes. But that's it.

CHRIS: Six people know about this lost manuscript? Oh no big deal! We can keep this quiet.

(CELESTE BARBIZON arrives)

CELESTE: Keep what quiet?

CHRIS: Madame Barbizon!

CELESTE: What's the big secret?

CHRIS: If we told you, it wouldn't be a big secret anymore would it? Keep up the good work, ms. Brady. (to CELESTE) Great to see you, Madame Barbizon.

(CHRIS exits)

CELESTE: Come on, what's the secret?

FREYA: Nothing.

(FREYA makes move to put away manuscript)

CELESTE: You've found something juicy!

FREYA: No.

CELESTE: Some billet-doux from Hemingway or F. Scott Fitzgerald?

FREYA: No.

CELESTE: No proof of anything wrong with Rebecca Coburn? Like manic depression? Minor drug addiction? There must be more to her than just being a Famous Author. Look at our very own L.M. Montgomery with her unhappy marriage.

FREYA: I haven't found anything.

CELESTE: No evidence of Rebecca Coburn being a Serial Killer? (laughs) Oh, no nothing like that! Just a few peccadillos to liven her up, get those people whirling through the Museum turnstiles!

FREYA: Mrs. Barbizon...

CELESTE: Celeste, please.

FREYA: Celeste Please I have a great deal of work to do--

CELESTE: I'm bothering you, that's what you're really saying. I've left you alone for a week!

FREYA: I do appreciate the effort you made.

CELESTE: (under her breath) It was a beer garden the last time I called.

FREYA: No it wasn't.

CELESTE: Yes, yes Mr. Strachan explained. But I was worried. Paddy Murphy was here with you and all I could envision was her diverting you with boozy afternoons.

CELESTE: You know she and Linus were Lovers so by rights she thinks he should have left Coburn House to her. She'd love you to find some codicil to the will so she'd get it for herself. If the Museum failed.

FREYA: Why? She has a charming home of her own. What would she want with this one?

CELESTE: Druid World, IRA Headquarters, who knows? But she's not going to get her way is she, Freya? As long as you get going on these papers and we open by January 1994? You are clear on the concept, aren't you, Dear? You do know what we want?

FREYA: Do you? In all your travels have you ever been to a place that celebrated Literature?

CELESTE: Not gone in, no.

FREYA: They are truly wonderful, Close to sacred places. To know that a great book was created in that place by that author. It's a mystical experience. And Coburn House could be that sort of sacred place. A Canadian Literary landmark.

CELESTE: Why are you so agitated?

FREYA: I'm not agitated.

(JEROME enters garden)

CELESTE: You are so. It all started with Mr. Strachan and I've Got a Secret. If you won't tell me, he will. I'll find him after my Shiatsu. (to JEROME) Aurevoir.

(CELESTE exits)

JEROME: Why you acting so cagey?

FREYA: (with manuscript) Because of this. (with book) And this!

JEROME: Because?

FREYA: (with manuscript) It seems to prove that Rebecca Coburn plagiarized Meadow of the Dancing.

JEROME: Really?

FREYA: "Really"? You're not shocked?

JEROME: No. It happens all the time.

FREYA: Not with my favourite author! Not with one of the best books ever written in Canada!

JEROME: I say she did it.

FREYA: I say she didn't.

JEROME: Well, of course you'd say that about your beloved Rebecca Coburn. And you'd be the one to protect her.

FREYA: Why would I protect her if she stole someone else's book? The raison d'etre of a poor, Sickly, trusting, Dying young author in France?

JEROME: The book's still good though, eh? Whoever wrote it?

FREYA: Not if it was stolen! That taints it! And if the book was stolen, what does it make Coburn House?

JEROME: Not the number one choice for Museum of the Year.

FREYA: If this is true, what does that make the Wooded Fens? And Hilary's Hill?

JEROME: And all the work I did clearing the Path of Dreams!

FREYA: It's all a lie. All those enchanted places are somewhere in France. How could Rebecca Coburn have done something like this?

JEROME: It was easy. It made her famous.

FREYA: This can't be true.

JEROME: Then prove it. Do what you gotta do. This is a Herculanean Task you've got here. But you can do it.

FREYA: Yes.

JEROME: And you better not leave that thing out here if it's what you think it is.

FREYA: Oh no. You're right.

JEROME: That's the kind of stuff you gotta do in the house. Go! God speed little one.

(JEROME watches her enter house and then sings)

JEROME: "C'est elle! la voici, la douce creature,  
 Jetee au fond d'une prison  
 Comme une vile criminelle!  
 Le desespoir egara sa raison!"

#### Scene Six

Saturday night.

Freya comes out of the House. She is dressed for the dance in a quite lovely tea gown. She's very nervous. SHE walks down into the garden. Attempts to sit in a casual pose but fails.

FREYA: No. I shouldn't be waiting here. Jerome should call for me. No he shouldn't. I shouldn't be going! I should be working! How can I have a good time? I won't have a good time.

(SHE heads back up the stairs to House. As SHE opens door CHRISTOPHER is standing there)

Oh! Hello.

CHRIS: Sorry. You didn't answer the front door, It was open. I thought you might be working away upstairs.

FREYA: No. I should be---

CHRIS: You look sensational.

FREYA: Oh thank you. So do you.

CHRIS: That's some dress!

FREYA: Yes it is.

FREYA: I found it in the house.

CHRIS: Was it one of Rebecca Coburn's?

FREYA: I don't know.

CHRIS: It's perfect for going to a Dance. That is where you're heading?

FREYA: Yes.

CHRIS: Good. Me, too. The Allante's out front. Shall we?

FREYA: Thank you. But it's such a nice night we're walking.

CHRIS: No we're not. We're driving.

FREYA: The Allante's only got two seats. And I'm going with Jerome.

CHRIS: You're going with Jerome?

FREYA: Yes.

CHRIS: You're kidding.

FREYA: No.

CHRIS: I was the one who told you about this dance.

FREYA: Yes. And Jerome was the one who asked me to go with him.

CHRIS: But you can't go with him.

FREYA: Why not?

CHRIS: Because I wanted you to go with me. Do you know how this looks?

FREYA: (looks at his suit) Very smart.

CHRIS: Don't be facetious, you know what I mean.

FREYA: Me and the gardener?

CHRIS: Yes. It doesn't look good.

FREYA: Oh please.

CHRIS: I mean it. You can't go on dates with people who are involved with the Museum. Especially not him.

FREYA: Why not?

CHRIS: Because he's scruffy. No one will take you seriously. And because if you could date Museum people you would have gone with me. I would have asked you.

FREYA: But taking me to a Dance would make me look like what? Your mistress?

CHRIS: It could be misconstrued that way.

(FREYA laughs)

It's not funny.

FREYA: What did you think people would construe of you driving me to the Dance?

CHRIS: That I was doing you a favour.

FREYA: And we'd be going to the Dance together but not really?

CHRIS: It's a question of protocol. It is. You don't seem to understand how things work here. Or how I feel about you. You can't go with him.

FREYA: Yes I can.

CHRIS: I'm the one you should be going with.

FREYA: You didn't ask me.

CHRIS: Couldn't you tell I was inviting you when I mentioned it? I think I was pretty obvious.

FREYA: Not obvious enough for me, I'm afraid.

CHRIS: You're going with him after what we're going through together? Knowing that this entire project might be in jeopardy?

FREYA: It's been a terrible time for me, too. I haven't stopped working.

CHRIS: What about all your jaunts in the jalopy all over the countryside?

FREYA: We drove to the University twice. So I could do research on charges of plagiarism.

CHRIS: Research, research! You're stalling, Freya.

FREYA: I am not.

CHRIS: Did Jerome go searching through the book stacks with you, too?

FREYA: No. He was doing his own research. He visited nurseries and seeds stores.

CHRIS: You're not really going with him tonight, are you?

FREYA: Yes I am.

CHRIS: You're breaking my heart if you wanna know. I can't stop you from going with him. Just don't have a good time.

(HE exits)

(From the direction of the gate-keeper's cottage  
JEROME is singing, he enters and sings)

JEROME: Salut! Demeure chaste et pure  
salut, demeure chaste et pure  
ou se devine  
La presence d'une ame innocente et divine!

Que de richesse en cette pauvreté!  
 En ce réduit, que de félicité!  
 Que de richesse/que de richesse  
 en cette pauvreté  
 en ce réduit que la félicité  
 C'est là! oui! C'est là!

(FREYA applauds)

FREYA: Thank you, that was wonderful.

JEROME: Really?

FREYA: You're becoming a Tenor really well.

JEROME: That cavatina aria was for you.

FREYA: Where was it from?

JEROME: Faust.

FREYA: (worried) Ohhh.

JEROME: That was Faust's song to Marguerite when he finds her cottage in the woods.

FREYA: Isn't Faust the one about the Devil?

JEROME: Yeah. But people always think Faust is the name for the Devil but they're wrong.

FREYA: Oh.

JEROME: The Devil's the other guy. But even though she chooses Faust it all turns out real bad for Marguerite. You know (sings) "Anges purs, anges radieux" that's from there too.

FREYA: Is it? The song you sang before was lovely.

JEROME: You look beautiful.

FREYA: Oh. Thank you. You do, too.

JEROME: (meaning Tweed jacket) This old thing? You're not the only one who can find presents in this place.

(HE goes into potting shed, Comes out with a small box)

FREYA: Jerome, I don't think I can go.

JEROME: You're getting out of this house tonight. You've been going crazy for a week with that manuscript thing. You deserve a night off. For you. (hands her the small box)

FREYA: (opens box, It's a corsage) You made this.

JEROME: Yes. I invented it. The topiary corsage. It's a bird in some roses.

FREYA: (Cries) It's lovely.

JEROME: Why are you crying? There's nothing you're allergic to is there?

FREYA: No.

JEROME: If there's anything in there you don't want or clashes with your dress, I can fix it.

FREYA: No it's perfect like this.

JEROME: Good.

FREYA: (kisses him on the cheek) Thank you.

JEROME: (kisses her on the cheek) You're welcome.

(A moment. Then THEY kiss)

FREYA: (Composed again) It's a very lovely corsage.

JEROME: I hoped you'd like it.

FREYA: We should be going I guess.

JEROME: Ah, yeah. Sure. No work tonight.

FREYA: All right.

(HE twirls her around, THEY begin to dance to only music they can hear and then we hear it, too as they do a wonderful dance. THEY exit through rose trellis. DYMPHNA emerges from Woods, She waves her talismans)

DYMPHNA: (chanting) Talamh Aer Tine Uisce!

(She goes to the door, Is afraid to enter, gathers strength by chanting)

DYMPHNA: Go raibh na spioraid liom!

(SHE enters the House)

#### Scene Seven

The next morning. JEROME is working on the weeds in the garden. FREYA comes out of the House. She's brought her work in the Five Roses box.

FREYA: (smiles) Good morning.

JEROME: Morning. Freya, last night...

FREYA: Yes?

JEROME: I wanted to stay with you.

FREYA: I wanted you to stay. But it was very fortunate that you left when you did. One of us had to be sensible.

JEROME: Yeah.

FREYA: Things were getting very---

JEROME: Yes.

FREYA: And if times weren't what they are---

JEROME: Freya...

FREYA: No it's good that nothing happened. Much as I would have liked not to be sensible, It was good that we were.

JEROME: Maybe what didn't happen wasn't just sensible. Maybe it was for the best.

FREYA: Oh yes last night of course it was. That doesn't mean---

JEROME: Yeah I think it does.

FREYA: What?

JEROME: I think it's gotta stop there.

FREYA: Why?

JEROME: Because we're not two people who should get involved.

FREYA: Why not?

JEROME: Because of the kind of person you are.

FREYA: And what kind is that?

JEROME: A good person. You're a good woman, Freya.

FREYA: (insulted) A good woman.

JEROME: You're not the kind a man has a cheap affair with.

FREYA: Yes I am.(reconsiders) Why do you think it would be cheap? Do you have a history of those sort of relationships?

JEROME: No. But I know a man like me's not right for you.

FREYA: I think you're very right. What was that all about last night then?

JEROME: It was great. But there are better men for you than me.

FREYA: There is no one better for me right now than you. And I'm not this strongly attracted to you because you happen to be around or because I'm desperate.

JEROME: I know that.

FREYA: And I don't think that's what your attraction to me is.

JEROME: It isn't. But I'd be using you. 'Cause I can't stick around and make a commitment---

FREYA: I see. Never mind.

JEROME: No, let me explain. It's... Yeah, yeah, I got it. You're a delicate flower.

FREYA: (insulted) A delicate flower?

JEROME: And I'm a weed.

FREYA: You are not a weed.

JEROME: Yes I'm a weed. I'm a tumbleweed and we roll on.

FREYA: Because you were born a Ramblin Man gentle on my mind rolling stone good old boy cowboy.

JEROME: Yeah. All those guys who are wrong for you. And you don't need another man who'll run out.

FREYA: I am not a delicate flower, M. Lambert. And had anything happened last night you would not have been the first man I'd been with since my fiance abandoned me at the altar.

JEROME: Hey you don't have to tell me these things.

FREYA: Yes I do. I've had two affairs since Richard. One was a liaison with the grandson of one of my elderly ladies, the other a brief but enriching encounter with another member of the Bronte Society during the weekend of the Annual Meeting.

JEROME: Well sure. You had something in common with them.

FREYA: Not that much.

JEROME: So what have we got? We can talk to each other. We can really dance. And we're really strongly attracted.

FREYA: All extremely good reasons.

JEROME: We're too different. You're smarter than I am.

FREYA: So? You can catch up.

JEROME: You do think you're smarter.

FREYA: In some subjects, I am. Not everything. Certainly not in the ways of the street and the world.

JEROME: You'd try to change me.

FREYA: You'd try to change me.

JEROME: (with papers) It wouldn't work. See this is typical. You come out here to discuss us and you bring your work.

FREYA: You brought yours!

JEROME: It was already here!

FREYA: I didn't think we'd be discussing "us" like this. But since you brought the subject up: we have a great many things in common. Our relationship has tremendous potential. Oh why am I trying to convince you? Do you think I like being this attracted to you? Being this almost out of control? Making up lies about meaningless affairs I never had? There was no grandson, there was no Bronte professor. You are not what I imagined I'd go for. But here you are and you should know I want us to get involved. Whatever it costs us emotionally. So what if we don't work out, maybe we will.

JEROME: But we won't. Why are you making this so difficult for me? I told you how I feel and what I am. And you don't wanna listen. Because you don't wanna believe anything's wrong with people you like.

FREYA: What are you talking about?

JEROME: Your Rebecca Coburn, you found out she stole somebody's book, you've got all this proof and you still won't believe it. Just like you don't wanna believe I'm all wrong for you. It can't work, Freya. We're too different. You're way different from me. I'm way different from you...

FREYA: What are you really trying to say?

JEROME: Goodbye. That's what I'm trying to say.

(JEROME exits off into Woods)

FREYA: You're not the only one who's afraid, you know.

(FREYA throws his work gloves after him, Sits down at table, CELESTE enters)

CELESTE: (entering) Morning.

FREYA: Good morning, Celeste. What do you want?

CELESTE: Your opinion on these.

(SHE plunks down book)

CELESTE: Wallpaper patterns circa 1890-1926. For the restoration?

FREYA: Of course.

(FREYA is very upset, Stays seated)

CELESTE: This one looks almost identical to the one in this photo of her at her desk. Am I keeping you awake?

FREYA: (yawning) I didn't get much sleep last night.

CELESTE: (laughs) Oh. I heard you two had a really good time.

FREYA: Yes... We did.

CELESTE: You didn't just go to the Dance, you were the Dance. And Jerome got up and sang with the Band? I'm sorry I missed it! But we had a Gala for the Symphony we had to show at. We're Patrons.

FREYA: How good of you.

CELESTE: How good for you.(laughs)

FREYA: Why are you laughing?

CELESTE: I'm sorry. It's just that it's like a French film. You and the garden man. And why not? We can't always wait for our intellectual equal can we? Believe me I'd change places with you.

FREYA: No you wouldn't.

CELESTE: Has Paddy Murphy been by yet today?

FREYA: No.

CELESTE: She will be, tomorrow's Druid Day! I suppose she'll be holding it here?

FREYA: I don't know.

CELESTE: But wouldn't she love to get all this for Druid World. For anything! Her AIDS Hospice. A shelter for the homeless or battered women. Maybe even a place for unwed mothers, her friend Joan Hardy isn't married. The father was married to somebody else, she didn't know, that's what they said, he left her with a two week old baby girl. How she supports them on that library salary.\$18,000 a year. Who could live on---

FREYA: STOP IT.

CELESTE: What?

FREYA: All this gossiping.

CELESTE: It's not gossip. It's true.

FREYA: You have no proof.

CELESTE: Yes I do.

FREYA: No you don't.

CELESTE: Paddy Murphy said it should be an AIDS Hospice or a women's shelter. I have witnesses to those decrees.

FREYA: What about everything else? Do you think when you're spreading stories about her? Or anyone else?

CELESTE: If we don't talk about each other, what will we talk about? And why are you so offended? Talk is cheap.

FREYA: No talk is costly. You think you know what happened here last night after a Dance you didn't even go to!

CELESTE: I heard you had a good time.

FREYA: Is that why you're here this morning? To see how good a time? Can't wait to give everybody a report? Until we can tell juicy stories about the Famous Author, we'll settle for the Curator.

CELESTE: I don't have to listen to this.

(CELESTE gets up to leave)

FREYA: How would you like it if I told people you dropped in at the gate-keeper's cottage on your way home?

CELESTE: But... That wouldn't be true.

FREYA: Talk is cheap.

CELESTE: No one would believe you.

FREYA: One person might. And that's all it takes.

CELESTE: But you wouldn't make up a story like that.

FREYA: I could.

CELESTE: I could fire you.

FREYA: Who'd sort all the papers to get your Social Club going?

CELESTE: Do you think I come here because I want to gossip?

FREYA: Yes.

CELESTE: I'm trying to help you. So I can be part of something. Do you know how hard it is to be me, here? I need this Museum to be a success as badly as you do, Freya. Please. Just tell me. What do we need to do?

FREYA: We need plans. We need to discuss which rooms we'll restore, which rooms will house the manuscripts. We probably need a designer or an architect.

CELESTE: I know oodles of them. (thinks) Jeffrey will work pro bono.

FREYA: Then see when he's bono next month and we'll have a meeting.

CELESTE: You mean that?

FREYA: Yes.

CELESTE: Fabulous. Parfait! I'll be back before then though.

FREYA: I'm sure you will.

CELESTE: (with letters) Ohh, what are these?

FREYA: Letters from the translator.

CELESTE: Nothing of cause celebre yet?

FREYA: Please don't touch.

CELESTE: Sorry, habit. I'll let you get back to your work.

FREYA: If you would.

CELESTE: Ah if you don't mind a suggestion... Those colours don't go together.

(CELESTE exits, DYMPHNA emerges from Woods)

DYMPHNA: Good riddance.

FREYA: You've been waiting for her to leave?

DYMPHNA: Of course. Our favourite pastime is Avoiding Each Other.

FREYA: What were you doing in the House last night?

DYMPHNA: I wasn't near the House.

FREYA: (she hands her a pink stone) I found this.

DYMPHNA: Rose quartz. The Love stone. It helps us love ourselves and others

more completely.

FREYA: Was I meant to find it?

DYMPHNA: No. It's a sign I should be out with my secret.

FREYA: When I got back from the Dance I noticed that some of the papers had been moved. Tell me you're not looking for another copy of the will.

DYMPHNA: I'm not.

FREYA: Was this the first time you've been in the House?

DYMPHNA: Yes. I was looking for something.

FREYA: What?

DYMPHNA: Some word, some message from Linus. We weren't friends at the end. There was an awful row.

FREYA: About what he wanted to do eventually with Coburn House?

DYMPHNA: Yes. He was drinking and said some tremendously cruel things to me. And I said some terrible things right back. We never talked again. Then he went and died that terrible way, all alone. That's why I could never go in the house. But last night I got desperate to have some word from him. Because of tomorrow.

FREYA: Druid Day.

DYMPHNA: The Summer Solstice. I'm to be made the Arch Druidess. But we won't be holding it here. The spirit is weak.

FREYA: Whose?

DYMPHNA: The spirit here. It's not been good for a while now. It's not a Ceili House anymore for me. My voices are gone.

DYMPHNA: Something is very bad here. It's almost overpowering sometimes. This is not a good place anymore. So we'll be celebrating the Solstice down in the Woods by the beach.

FREYA: You're very welcome here.

DYMPHNA: By you but not by something else. You're invited to celebrate with us. At dawn.

FREYA: Thank you.

DYMPHNA: It's a great honour. One that Celeste Barbizon can't buy. Bring yer friend.

FREYA: I'll be alone.

DYMPHNA: No. But you and Jerome, I saw you dancing together here last night.

FREYA: It was the first date I've had in nine years. Jerome made me a corsage, he sang me an aria.

DYMPHNA: Ohhh. He's a dark horse, Isn't he? Singing you opera? It's not what you'd expect. He seems to be such a rough type.

FREYA: He's leaving me. I mean Coburn House.

DYMPHNA: No.

FREYA: It's for the best. It will leave me more time to concentrate on the Collection.

DYMPHNA: (thinks) You know sometimes passionate energies being thwarted can disrupt a spiritual plane. No, It's not that. It's something much worse.

FREYA: Like a secret?

DYMPHNA: Or Linus telling me I'm unwelcome? He may have been my Twin Soul but he's left me a Lost Soul. Here, take this.

(DYMPHNA hands her a sky-blue stone)

FREYA: Turquoise?

DYMPHNA: Sacred to native people, highly spiritual. Protects from Evil.

FREYA: I don't need this.

(CHRISTOPHER is at the door)

DYMPHNA: It's himself again.

CHRIS: Go peddle your voodoo somewhere else.

FREYA: Chris...

DYMPHNA: I have to be off home, I've a bigger doll to make.(to FREYA) Dawn now. And take this Love stone back. You never know. But don't use it around him.

(DYMPHNA exits into Woods)

CHRIS: (paces then says) I'm very disappointed in you.

FREYA: Why?

CHRIS: Your behaviour, It's so irrational.

CHRIS; I expected you to be proper. And last night I heard it was Fred and Ginger all over the dance floor.

FREYA: They only cleared the floor to watch us dance once. You missed it.

CHRIS: But I heard you two put on a pretty good show. And it's quite obvious to everybody what's going on.

CHRIS; Your first public appearance and you show up with the lawn man. Are you involved with him?

FREYA: That's none of your business.

CHRIS: Yes it is. He's bad for your reputation. Your credibility. Freya, you have to be careful not to make yourself... Cheap.

FREYA: No chance of that.

CHRIS; You can't get involved with him.

FREYA: We're not indentured servants at Coburn House.

CHRIS: I should have spent more time here with you.

CHRIS: But then I'm not every woman's fantasy, am I? I'm not the dangerous drifter who arrives in town out of nowhere.

FREYA: Don't insult me.

CHRIS: I'm sorry. But you must have noticed I'm interested in you.

FREYA: Yes. Why?

CHRIS: Why what?

FREYA: Why are you interested in me?

CHRIS: Why shouldn't I be?

FREYA: Because I'm not the sort of woman you drive around in an Allante.

CHRIS: Yes you are. And I could be the sort of man you'd drive around in a Zephyr. I could.

FREYA: I'm honoured.

CHRIS: Don't be honoured, be interested.

FREYA: I'm perplexed.

CHRIS: You must be if you're attracted to him.

FREYA: Jerome is leaving.

CHRIS: He is? Oh good. Good. We'll get in another lawn man. A seasoned professional. Somebody old. (He laughs) So how about lunch next week?

FREYA: What?

CHRIS: To talk about the Museum. Nothing else. I promise. "If I can help one heart that's breaking, I shall not have lived in vain."

FREYA: Emily Dickinson.

CHRIS: Slightly reworked for you. I'm sorry about the way I acted last night.

FREYA: But perhaps you were right, I have been stalling on my findings for the manuscript.

CHRIS: If it's any consolation, if it's true, you're going to be famous.

FREYA: No. Rebecca Coburn is going to be infamous.

CHRIS: So when do we go public with this? Please let's say tomorrow at the latest.

FREYA: Tomorrow?

CHRIS: Yes.

FREYA: All right. Now if you'll excuse me...

CHRIS: Sure.

(FREYA enters HOUSE with Five Roses box,  
CHRIS is about to leave when JEROME enters  
to say goodbye)

CHRIS: Hear you're leaving us. Thanks for all your work,  
you've done a great job. Bon Voyage, Bonne Journee,  
Hasta la vista and all that.

(JEROME watches CHRIS leave. Then he goes  
up the steps to the door, wants to knock  
but can't.)

JEROME: (Speaks) Salut, demeure, Chaste et pure.

(HE leaves, exits through Woods)

Scene eight

Dawn. June 21st.

There is distant chanting off. CHRISTOPHER STRACHAN enters the garden. HE  
knocks on the back door of the House. By the time FREYA comes to the door,  
never having been to bed the night before, CHRIS has looked down toward the  
beach.

CHRIS: There's a bonfire on the beach.

FREYA: They're greeting the Summer Solstice by the lake.

CHRIS: Who's "they"?

FREYA: Dymphna and the local Druids.

CHRIS: So you phoned.

FREYA: Two minutes ago--

CHRIS: Yeah, yeah. You said you'd reached some decision.

FREYA: Yes. We can go public once we take this material to  
the Women's Studies program at U. of T.

CHRIS: Why?

FREYA: Qualified academics have to confirm this.

CHRIS: And if it's true, they'll claim they discovered it.  
And it will look like we tried to cover it up.

CHRIS: You have to make the announcement to our people first.

FREYA: But if I tell them what our suspicions are they could  
assume it's true.

CHRIS: But it is true, Isn't it, Frey?

FREYA: It looks very bad, yes. Looks. That doesn't mean it's true.

CHRIS: Did you take all this time to come up with no conclusion?

FREYA: It's all too neat somehow. How did Linus Barden never come across this?

CHRIS: Look at the state of the house when you got here.

FREYA: Maybe he did come across this.

CHRIS: And ignored it?

FREYA: Or didn't and someone murdered him?

CHRIS: That's very cloak and dagger, Freya.

FREYA: I haven't had any sleep. What if it's a fake?

CHRIS: Freya...

FREYA: No, really. What if it is a fake and someone wanted to make us think Rebecca Coburn plagiarized her first and most famous book. And they planted this fake manuscript here.

CHRIS: Why would anyone do that?

FREYA: Celeste could have done it in a misguided attempt to give Coburn House some notoriety. She's always asking me if I've found anything. She's just been to France, She might have hired someone to create this document.

CHRIS: She wouldn't go to that much trouble.

FREYA: Or Dymphna. She went into the house secretly. She speaks French. She could have gotten a fake manuscript, too.

CHRIS: Why would she do that?

FREYA: To get Coburn House. Is there anything in the will that says the House reverts back to her?

CHRIS: No. You could suspect everybody. That Jerome guy even. He speaks French. He took off on you.

FREYA: Yes.

CHRIS: And he's the one who found the manuscript, right? Maybe he was planted here to make sure you'd know what you found.

FREYA: You're making fun of me.

CHRIS: Ahuh. Yes it must be Jerome because he found "les nappes violettes, des petunias, des marguerites."

FREYA: How did you know that?

CHRIS: You told me Jerome noticed that the flowers were different.

FREYA: I never told you which ones.

CHRIS: I saw the manuscript.

FREYA: You didn't read that page.

CHRIS: I must have because I remembered.

(SILENCE)

I did. I have a very good memory.

FREYA: The Trivia Kid, eh? 1926 Le Mort de Valentino.

CHRIS: Yeah.

FREYA: Chris.

CHRIS: What?

FREYA: You planted this manuscript so I'd find it.

CHRIS: I did what?

FREYA: A French manuscript that I'd be sure to note was odd.

CHRIS: Don't be stupid.

FREYA: I'm not stupid. I'm right. You set me up. You met me at that Conference, knew I was the perfect candidate. You got me to apply for the position, made sure I got it and then waited for me to come across this manuscript. How long did you think it would take me to find it?

CHRIS: At least a month.

FREYA: I'm pretty good then. I found it in a week.

CHRIS: I put it in a pretty box with red roses all over it.

FREYA: Did you throw in your romantic interest for extra insurance?

CHRIS: Yes. But that wasn't difficult. I am quite attracted to you.

FREYA: Thereby giving the pathetic spinster a chance at fame and romance after years of obscurity.

CHRIS: No.

FREYA: Why? Why would you do this? Tell me. Please.

CHRIS: I want Coburn House.

FREYA: You orchestrated this incredible hoax just to get a house?

CHRIS: I don't want the House. I want the land it's built on. But it's not for sale.

FREYA: But it would be once the village had been turned against it, am I correct? Why have heritage protection when this wasn't the setting for a famous novel after all?

CHRIS: Why should it have heritage protection anyway? A

ladies romance novel was written here so the land's untouchable. That's a disgrace. That's a waste. Do you know what this land could be used for? Houses. Homes for people. A summer resort. Maybe industry that would create jobs. Yes so some trees get razed, the water gets a little dirty. At least the earth's resources are being used for people. Not a walk-in mausoleum.

FREYA: And you think it's right to destroy an author's reputation to make yourself rich?

CHRIS: Yes! She's had Fame. She's dead. It's our turn.

CHRIS: Don't be such a loser anymore, Freya. When I make the deal it's gonna be at least sixty million dollars. 10% of whatever I make is yours.

FREYA: I don't want it.

CHRIS: Come on. All you have to do is come forward with the manuscript and say she stole it. That's all. The land will come up for sale within three months, easy.

FREYA: And in that time---

CHRIS: You'd be famous for your literary find.

FREYA: Chris, if I discovered it was fake, the literary experts would too.

CHRIS: But not until Rebecca Coburn's reputation was sullied enough to get the village to give up on Coburn House.

FREYA: Followed soon after by them discovering that the manuscript was a fraud and that I lied to get this job.

CHRIS: By then you'll be rich.

FREYA: I'll be in jail.

CHRIS: It's white collar crime. Rich people don't go to jail.

FREYA: And poor people like me don't lie.

CHRIS: Not unless they want to stay poor people. Don't be stupid. Of course you'll lie. Six million dollars.

FREYA: No.

CHRIS: Alright. O.K. 15% of everything.

FREYA: No.

CHRIS: That's my final offer, Freya.

(SILENCE)

CHRIS: You're not going to ruin this for me.

FREYA: Yes I am.

CHRIS: I've worked too hard for this. It's gonna come off.

FREYA: No it's not.

(FREYA makes move toward path, she carries Manuscript)

CHRIS: Where are you going?

FREYA: To burn this.

CHRIS: No you're not.

(CHRIS blocks her way)

FREYA: Get out of my way.

CHRIS: They won't believe you.

FREYA: I'm the Rebecca Coburn expert, you're not. I'm the one with the B. A. in Modern Languages.

CHRIS: You're the one who lied on her C.V. You're the one with the drifter boyfriend who ran off.

(FREYA moves away from path toward exit through rose trellis)

FREYA: I'm not afraid of you.

(CHRIS blocks her way again)

CHRIS: It's your word against mine. I'll tell them you found this manuscript and refused to believe the truth about your beloved author. And tried to conceal it but I stopped you. See how complicated it can get? When all you have to do is say you found it and it's bona fide.

FREYA: No.

CHRIS: You're crazy.

FREYA: You're crazy.

(FREYA attempts to go into HOUSE, CHRIS blocks her way)

CHRIS: You have to do what I say. I can ruin you.

FREYA: I'm going to ruin you.

CHRIS: They'll believe me. Barbizon/Amazon and all her small town stooges.

FREYA: Let's go see her right now. Let's call another meeting.

(FREYA crosses around stone table to leave via side of House, CHRIS blocks the way, She attempts to cross to rose trellis again, CHRIS throws garden chair there)

CHRIS: Why'd your boyfriend run off? Did you have a big fight first? He's a pretty dangerous guy. (CHRIS picks up garden shovel) And there are so many other weird loser people hanging around you besides him. There's a whole beach of Druids down there.

FREYA: You think you can kill me with a shovel?

CHRIS: Yes. And don't worry, I'll wipe my fingerprints off. And Jerome's are all over the place.

FREYA: You think you'd get away with this?

CHRIS: Nobody knows I'm here. This will be great for me, really. The lady curator horribly murdered by the gardener.

(HE lunges at her jumping on and across stone table and stumbles, SHE smashes him on the head with the manuscript, hE falls back, She runs, Falls on garden steps to Path, Drops manuscript as he picks up shovel to hit her and it lodges in table, he pulls shovel out, She grabs a rake as he lunges at her with the shovel she crosses it with the rake and kicks him. CELESTE has crept in, She stands on the garden wall and jumps on his back. FREYA takes rake and shovel away and rushes back to assist CELESTE. The two of them are attacking CHRIS as JEROME rushes on, During all this the following is said)

FREYA: (yells) NOOOOOOO!

CHRIS: Madame Barbizon!

FREYA: Jerome!

(JEROME joins the pile-up, Directs it toward the potting shed, DYMPHNA arrives in full Druid regalia)

CELESTE: Paddy!

(Everyone except DYMPHNA, who opens the door, ends up in potting shed, JEROME pulls FREYA and CELESTE out, then by mistake CHRIS who says)

CHRIS: Where did all these people come from?

(JEROME throws CHRIS back into the potting shed, JEROME locks the door)

CELESTE: Is it locked securely?

JEROME: Yes.

CELESTE: Paddy, what exquisite embroidery!

FREYA: (to JEROME) Are you alright?

JEROME: Yeah, yeah, are you?

CELESTE: Were you hiding in the Woods, too?

JEROME: Yeah.(to FREYA) Did you know Strackum's been sitting out there in his Allante Mobile all night?

FREYA: You were watching him?

JEROME: From my place. I left but then I came back late last night. I never trusted that guy. And I couldn't leave you. I'm yours, If you want me.

FREYA: Oh yes.

(There is a sound of crashing from the potting shed)

CHRIS: (inside) Heyyy.

DYMPHNA: So what's all this ballyhoo at this time of the morning?

FREYA: Chris tried to kill me.

JEROME: (remembers something) Oh.

(JEROME exits to Woods)

DYMPHNA: What?! He didn't.

CELESTE: It's true Paddy.

FREYA: He planted this manuscript in Coburn House---

CELESTE: So Freya would find it and tell us Rebecca Coburn was a book thief.

DYMPHNA: Was she now?

CELESTE: No. It's a forgery he thought would bring him millions. This notoriety can only be good for us, you know Freya. (She crosses to potting shed, kicks the door) My small town stooges, eh? You snake!

CHRIS: I never said that. You're mistaken.

(We hear familiar voices in the Woods)

FREYA: (from Woods) You think you can kill me with a shovel?

CHRIS: (from Woods) Yes. And don't worry I'll wipe the fingerprints---

(JEROME pushes STOP button)

JEROME: His Master's voice.

FREYA: It's all on tape?

(CHRIS speaks through broken pane in potting shed window)

CHRIS: Taping our conversation is against the law. You think they'll accept that in court?

JEROME: Never trust a man who doesn't pronounce his name the way he spells it.

DYMPHNA: I've got to get back to the Solstice. I'm missing the best part.

CELESTE: Ohh, can I watch?

DYMPHNA: You were watching, I saw you hiding up there in the Woods!

CELESTE: That's how sincere I am about wanting to be part of it. And if I hadn't been here, Freya might have gotten killed.

FREYA: It's true.

DYMPHNA: Alright. Move it then. All of youse.

CELESTE: Thank you, paddy. Ah, Dymphna. Do we need a sacrifice of some kind?

CHRIS: (thinks this may mean him) Noooo.

FREYA: We have this. (She shows manuscript) Dymphna, this was the rotten evilness that kept it from being a Ceili House.

DYMPHNA: Yes. (She touches it) It is. (delighted, she throws it on the ground) Linus is back! My voices are back! My power is back! Let's go. What about his nibs?

CELESTE: He'll keep. (SHE crosses to JEROME and he gives her the cassette tape) And you leave him to me. Barbizon/Amazon. Attempted murder. And Fraud. He's going to be in prison for a long, long time. (to CHRIS in potting shed) I know a lot of people in the judicial system, buddy boy.

DYMPHNA: Good. Let's go. (to CELESTE) And not one suggestion out of you.

(CELESTE follows DYMPHNA into Woods, CHRIS continues to plead from potting shed)

CHRIS: You can't burn that manuscript!

FREYA: Oh yes we can.

JEROME: Advocating burn burning, Freya!

FREYA: Me of all people.

(FREYA and JEROME have both bent down to pick up manuscript at the same time)

JEROME: Yeah you of all people.

CHRIS: Do you know how much it cost me?!

JEROME: It's gonna cost you even more than that.

(FREYA and JEROME kiss)

CHRIS: You Jerome. Listen. You too Freya. 25% each! Barbizon didn't hear all that much, I'm sure. Everyone hates her, they'll believe us.

FREYA: We're going now, Chris.

CHRIS: Jerome! Fifteen million dollars. At least.

FREYA: Fifty years in prison, at least.

CHRIS: In this country? Ha. I won't serve a day. I won't.

JEROME: Christopher, wasn't there an easier way? Why didn't you just burn Coburn House down?

CHRIS: That's Arson!

JEROME: Eh bien.  
Allons-y ma chouette. It's the solstice of solstices. And it's going to be the Bonfire

FREYA: Of bonfires.

(THEY take manuscript and exit into Woods)

December 9,1991

148 Abbott Avenue  
Westmount  
Quebec  
H3Z 2J9

Brian Quirt

Canadian Stage  
 26 Berkeley Street  
 Toronto  
 ontario  
 M5A 2W3

Dear Brian,

Here's **CEILI HOUSE** in its latest form.

I've tried a lot of new things and the ending is now very busy and something of an Audrey Hepburn meets the Marx Bros. with O. Henry and Mystery! thrown in.

And I've tried to make everyone---except Christopher--seem guilty. And Christopher is, I hope, less suspicious and more of a possible romantic interest this time round.

We shall talk, I expect. (I am gone Friday to Sunday).

See you next Monday! I am rushing off to photocopy this and hope it turns out, If it doesn't I will have to send the original. The new ribbon I bought was nowhere to be found today, nowhere. So I had to rely on very old faithful.

Sincerely,

Colleen Curran  
 (514) 989-2345

encl.

CHRIS: There's no way there'll be a Museum.

FREYA: Good morning.

CHRIS: Barely. Have you been out here all night?

FREYA: I got going and I couldn't stop til it was completed.

CHRIS: I appreciate you calling me as soon as it was. But did it have to be so early?

FREYA: You've gotten some sleep at least. We worked through the night.

CHRIS; We worked through the night?

FREYA: Yes. As you can see by lantern and mosquito light.

CHRIS; By We you don't mean Dymphna ni Murchu?

FREYA: On the eve of the Summer Solstice? Never. She had to greet the dawn down by the lake today because something's kept this from being a Ceili House anymore. You can see the Theosophists Ceremonial fire from here. Look.

CHRIS; Who are all those other people with her?

FREYA: Druids. Other Druids.

CHRIS; Oh. If it wasn't Dymphna, who was it then?

FREYA: I brought in a French expert. Jerome Lambert.

CHRIS: I thought he was leaving.

FREYA: So did I.

CHRIS: He helped you with this?

FREYA: Yes.

CHRIS; Where is he?

FREYA: He's not here.

CHRIS: Where did he go?

FREYA: (sadly) I'd rather not say.

CHRIS: Are you ready to go public with this?

FREYA: I don't know if you want me to.

CHRIS; We have to if it's true.

FREYA: It looks really bad, Chris. It would mean the end of the Museum. The end of Rebecca Coburn's reputation.

CHRIS; I can see why you'd want to protect her.

FREYA: Why would I want to protect an author who stole someone else's book?

CHRIS; You wouldn't. But you think she's so important to Canadian literature.

FREYA: She is. And she would be ruined at the mere mention of this. All this documentation should be confirmed by a literary expert.

CHRIS: You're one.

FREYA: Not really. I'm an expert on her books because I've read them all, I've done a great deal of research and I truly admire her work but I think this would have to go to an academic professional to be confirmed.

CHRIS: Oh sure. Then he'll claim he found it. He'll make the announcement to the world.

FREYA: That's fine by me.

CHRIS: Don't undermine your own opportunities. The official statement should be made by you. It should be given to the Society.

FREYA: Yes but when I do, what happens? Rebecca Coburn is destroyed and a book that has been respected for sixty years becomes infamous.

CHRIS: It's a literary disgrace and it'll be something of an embarrassment to the village but you're not the kind of person who'd keep this discovery secret.

FREYA: No, I'm not. If I found something like this I would have to tell. I'd also be able to tell. Because I have such a strong appreciation for her work as well as some experience with other languages. If I came across a French manuscript I'd be able to spot the discrepancies.

CHRIS: Which you did.

FREYA: Yes. It would be unfortunate for Rebecca Coburn that I was hired.

CHRIS: Look, Frey I am really upset about what this discovery but I'm here now because you said you knew.

FREYA: I do. It all looks very bad. And if I went forward with the information placed before me and said that I had proof Rebecca Coburn was a plagiarist the story would be told all over and could never be taken back.

CHRIS: Are you afraid you'll lose your job if you tell?

FREYA: I know I will. There won't be a Coburn House Museum.

CHRIS: Because there doesn't deserve to be if this is true. That won't mean you won't be offered a position somewhere else. Very likely at a university.

FREYA: I don't even have an M. A.

CHRIS: They'll probably give you an honorary doctorate for this discovery.

FREYA: And all I have to be able to say is I found proof that Rebecca Coburn, one of Canada's most famous and respected authors stole her first novel.

CHRIS: Yes.

FREYA: I can't do that.

CHRIS: You're not here to protect Rebecca Coburn.

FREYA: I know I'm not. I'm here to find the manuscript. That's why it's so important that I be so above reproach. Since I'll be the one pointing a finger. But how can I when there's a shadow of doubt?

CHRIS: I thought you said you were sure.

FREYA: I should be, Shouldn't I? The evidence looks so damning. Please pardon me if I don't always make sense, I've haven't had much

sleep in the last 32 hours.

CHRIS: But you sure or not? You got me here.

FREYA: And you got me here. Such a wonderful job to have it turn into something so potentially terrible. To think I would discover that Sophie Cantois Millotte brought her manuscript for advice only to have Rebecca Coburn translate it and pass it off as her own when she died! It's much too awful to contemplate. I'd rather think any other possibility was true.

CHRIS: But there aren't any other possibilities.

FREYA: Yes there were when I supposed the Sophie Cantois Millotte manuscript was fake.

CHRIS: Fake?

FREYA: Yes. And that it was planted at Coburn House for me to find. Who wound up being the gardener here but Jerome Lambert one of those perfect Canadians who speaks both official languages. Perhaps he was set up here to make sure I found the Cantois Millotte manuscript. And that when I did I'd know what I'd found.

CHRIS: Is that why he's not here? Because you suspect that?

FREYA: Well he was the one who fished it out of the Five Roses box. He was the one who knew the flowers were from France not Canada. He was the one who said he'd be using me if we spent the night together.

CHRIS: You think Jerome was planted here?

FREYA: The question then: who was he working for? Now who's always hovering around here? Paddy Murphy alias Dymphna ni Murchu. Saturday night Jerome lured me away from Coburn House by taking me to the Dance and who came in and rooted through all the papers: Dymphna ni Murchu. What did I find scattered about the next morning? The letters of entreaty from Sophie Cantois Millotte. But why would Dymphna do such a diabolical thing? If I listen to Celeste Barbizon, It's because she wants Coburn House for her headquarters. It wouldn't bother her to destroy the reputation of an Author who's work she never respected. She's familiar with French and with all those covert I. R. A. activities, She could secure a fake manuscript if she wanted one.

CHRIS: You're sounding delirious now, Frey. You really are tired.

FREYA: Yes I am. I even supposed for a moment when I thought it could be legit that Linus Barden came across all this plagiarism evidence and was murdered because of it.

CHRIS: You're getting sensationalistic and ridiculous.

FREYA: It's to be expected though with all this cloak and dagger sleuthing I did piecing together letters and death notices and unearthed manuscripts. I even thought Linus might have been murdered because the Sophie Cantois Millotte opus was worth a great deal of money. A Dead Sea Scrolls of Literature. But I gave up on that theory.

CHRIS: You should give up on these others, too.

FREYA: Yes. Because they're wrong. But what do you say to Celeste

Barbizon as a suspect? She's been to France and it might be her misguided attempt to turn Rebecca Coburn into a cause celebre. A stolen book, In Mrs. Barbizon's books, might be a terrific tragic flaw! She's always asking me what I've found. But then so have you.

CHRIS: You desperately want to believe it's a fake, Don't you?

FREYA: I know it's fake. Very, very fake. It's all too neat, too well set out, much too obvious. Imagine if I'd be too eager to tell the world what I'd found?

CHRIS: You'd gain a great deal of recognition.

FREYA: That would be something, wouldn't it? For a pathetic spinster like me to receive so much attention after years of obscurity?

CHRIS: Don't put yourself down like that.

FREYA: Why not? You have every chance you've gotten.

CHRIS: No I haven't.

FREYA: The day we got here you pointed out that I was older, poor, unwed, without a career, without a husband, without a baby.

CHRIS: I never meant to.

FREYA: (admiring his skill) Really? You met me at that Conference, charmed me into telling you about my educational background and admiration for the Works of Rebecca Coburn. Then got me to apply for this position and then all you had to do was wait for me to come across the manuscript you'd planted at Coburn House. Dropping in every so often to tell me I had to get through those papers or you'd get in trouble. You also pretended to woo me to throw in a little romance.(PAUSE) I'm right this time aren't I? How long did you think it would take me to find it?

CHRIS: (smiles) At least a month.

FREYA: I'm pretty good then. I found it in a week.

CHRIS: Because I put it in the pretty box with nice red roses all over it. I knew you'd go for it.

FREYA: I did.

CHRIS: My version of female camouflage.

FREYA: Very clever.

CHRIS: You're cleverer than I am. When did you figure it out?

FREYA: Around 5 a.m.

CHRIS: Was Jerome still around?

FREYA: I don't want to talk about him.

CHRIS: I guess he took off when you hit him with your He Was Planted by the Syndicate theory.

FREYA: Wouldn't you?

CHRIS: (laughs, Charmed) I guess not because I'm still here. Alright so I used your favourite author and set you up.

FREYA: Yes.

CHRIS: I guess you know why.

FREYA: Because you wanted me to help you ruin an author's reputation and make sure Coburn House never became a Museum in her honour.

CHRIS; (smiling) And why would I do that?

FREYA: Because you want this house? For your future with your wife and children.

CHRIS; You think I'd pull off a major hoax to get a house?

FREYA: No but you would to get the land it's built upon. All this protected land. Acres and acres of undeveloped country that leads down to the undeveloped shoreline.

CHRIS: But it's not for sale.

FREYA: But it would be once we'd turned the village against it. I'm quite familiar with one way of dealing with shame and embarrassment. You run away. Now a house can't run but it can fall to ruin. "We've got neither love nor loyalty for it anymore, let's sell it." The village wouldn't want the infamy Rebecca Coburn would represent. And all this land would be a symbol of literary disgrace. Why have heritage protection when this wasn't the setting for a famous novel after all?

CHRIS; Why should it have heritage protection anyway? A ladies romance novel gets written here and the land's untouchable. That's a disgrace. Do you know what that land could be used for? Houses! Homes! Maybe industry that would create jobs. Yes so some trees get razed, the water gets a little dirty. At least the earth's resources are being used for people. Not for a walk-in mausoleum.

FREYA: You have an incredible future planned for Coburn House.

CHRIS; Yes. And you can be in on it.

FREYA: Me? I don't know anything about development.

CHRIS; You don't need to. I can't say exactly how much now but when I make the deal it's going to be at least sixty million dollars. After all there's water down there.

FREYA: I know.

CHRIS: We'll draft up an agreement right now. Right here. 5% of whatever I make on the deal is yours.

FREYA: I don't think so.

CHRIS; 7 1/2 %.

FREYA: What would I have to do?

CHRIS; Come forward with the manuscript and say she plagiarized it. That's all.

FREYA: But how long would it take before the land came up for sale?

CHRIS: Not long. Say six months.

FREYA: But in that time---

CHRIS: You'd be famous for your literary find.

FREYA: Really?

CHRIS: And in a year or so you'd collect the first instalment on your 7 1/2 %.

FREYA: It sounds so tempting.

CHRIS: Yes.

FREYA: Can I do that without the manuscript?

CHRIS: No. Why are you asking?

FREYA: (looks off toward fire) Because it's gone. I gave it to Dymphna.

CHRIS: No you didn't.

FREYA: I did. I was confused. One part of me was disgusted with Rebecca Coburn, the other part of me wanted to protect her. I told you I haven't had much sleep, I'm not thinking properly.

CHRIS: So you burned the manuscript?

FREYA: Yes. That way with it gone no one would ever be able to say she stole it.

CHRIS: It cost me 2.5% of the future land deal.

FREYA: Ohh. It would never have worked, Chris. If I found out it was fake, the literary experts would have as well.

CHRIS: But not until Rebecca Coburn's reputation was soiled enough for the village to give up on Coburn House.

FREYA: You know I never thought of that. When they knew it was a hoax who would they think did it?

CHRIS: Not you.

FREYA: They would have found out I lied about some of my credentials to get this job. I'd tell them you told me to but would they believe me?

CHRIS: Will you have to care? You'll be rich.

FREYA: I'll be in jail. I'd be the Fall Guy. My I certainly did seem to be the perfect patsy for this scheme didn't I?

CHRIS: You won't go to jail. You'll be rich.

FREYA: (looks off toward bonfire) All gone.

CHRIS: You're playing games, you wouldn't have been stupid enough to burn it.

FREYA: I was stupid enough to trust you.

CHRIS: (grabs one of the letters) I have this.

FREYA: That's not enough.

CHRIS: I'll tell them you found the manuscript and were such a basket case devoted fan you burned it.

FREYA: I'll tell them you set me up in this job so I could find it.

CHRIS: Come on. Don't be so difficult.

FREYA: You didn't think I would be, Did you? You hate difficult women don't you? Pushy broads. Dames with power.

CHRIS: You've got no power. You're nothing. What have you got without me? See sense.

FREYA: No, you see sense. First off, step down as President of the Preservation Society. Secondly, Stay away from here. And realize that I'm going to be watching you sonny. You are not going to destroy this Museum and you're not going to destroy me.

CHRIS: We'll see.

FREYA: Even if you burn Coburn House down, I'm going to protect its author and this land.

CHRIS: Don't be so melodramatic. I don't have to burn anything. That's what they'd do in one of those Cecily Bronte books.

FREYA: Her name is Emily. Emily Bronte not Cecily.

CHRIS: 8 1/4 %. My final offer.

FREYA: Get out of town. My final offer.

(CHRISTOPHER exits, FREYA stands there alone for a moment. JEROME emerges from potting shed, he hugs her, then he plays the cassette recorder)

FREYA: (voice on machine) Get out of town. My final offer.

JEROME: Pretty good.

FREYA: And very likely against the law and grossly inadmissible.

JEROME: Maybe it's admissible somewhere. You never know.

FREYA: Neither did we.

JEROME: (produces French Ms.) Or we would have burned this.

FREYA: Well, we could have been wrong. The Cantois Millotte manuscript might have been bona fide after all. He might have taken me to court for blackmail or for slandering him with the things I accused him of. But he didn't deny anything. I was right about everything.

JEROME: You were pretty smart this time.

FREYA: Smarter than you. Thinking he might try to murder me.

JEROME: It was possible. These manuscripts are worth big money at auction. Or he might have really wanted this Museum for the village. And

this was gonna ruin it.

FREYA: Yeah, alright. Still when he said he could get sixty million dollars---

JEROME: And he'd give you 7 1/2 % I almost took him up on it. I can't believe you were that incorruptible.

FREYA: (takes Ms.) I can't believe I'm advocating book burning.

JEROME: Yeah. You of all people.

FREYA: Yeah. Me of all people.

(SHE smiles at him then looks down toward lake)

Eh bien.

JEROME: Allons-y ma chouette. It's going to be the Bonfire

FREYA: Of Bonfires.

(THEY take Manuscript and exit into Woods)

THE END

CEILI HOUSE

BY COLLEEN CURRAN

148 Abbott Avenue  
Westmount, Quebec  
Canada H3Z 2J9

(514) 989-2345

NA:

Representation by Patricia Ney, Christopher Banks and Associates, 219 Dufferin  
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(416) 530-4002

CEILI HOUSE

CHARACTERS

JEROME LAMBERT

CHRISTOPHER STRACHAN

FREYA BRADY

DYMPHNA NI MURCHU

CELESTE BARBIZON

Chan eil eol air an t-slighe  
     th' aig fiarachd cham a' chridhe  
     's chan eil eol air a' mhilleadh  
     do 'n tarr gun fhios a cheann-uidhe.

Chan eil eolas, Chan eil eolas  
     air crich dheireannaich gach torachd  
     no air seoltachd nan luban  
     leis an caill i a cursa.

(Coilltean Rathasair)

There is no knowledge of the course  
     of the crooked veering of the heart,  
     and there is no knowledge of the damage  
     to which its aim unwittingly comes.

There is no knowledge, no knowledge,  
     of the final end of each pursuit,  
     nor of the subtlety of the bends  
     with which it loses its course.

(The Woods of Raasay)

-by Sorley Maclean