

[Before]

*A figure of Certainty, or someone approximating her, reads this script into a microphone. [Certainty takes a moment and a sip of wine] [Enter Audience]*

Certainty: The Audience enter, have entered. They speak in hushed voices, anticipating performance. If Hesitancy muscles in, even the predictable is slim comfort. At the very least they are given seats, a reassuring measure of certainty. [Pause] [Certainty repeats this moment, this drink, this opening and this pause five times] [Pause]

They take these seats in the usual manner. [Audience take seats in the usual manner] Removing from the shrinking gap, between arse and furniture, this sheet of paper. They begin to read, have surely already begun. Their hearts beat a little faster, confusion borne of discrepancies in a faulty timeline. And the threat of implication to which they cannot help but shield/yield. [Pause]

[Inhale] Trying my best to calm down.

[Exhale] Becoming increasingly frustrated.

[Pause] [Certainty waits for Audience chatter to die down]

They've already fallen quiet, my amplified voice presumably demanding their silence. They seem ready to begin, I feel ready. [Pause]

[Certainty coughs] [Audience coughs] [Pause]

How long can this go on for? [Pause] The backs of their heads in perfect alignment, rows of chairs organised as pews, park benches or theatre seats. At first I thought theatre seats, now I'm not sure. [Pause]

[Inhale] Aware of the action of my heart.

[Exhale] I cannot love without trembling.<sup>1</sup> [Pause]

I got this phrase stuck in my head. I got so annoyed no one seemed to notice its insistent repetition.

A promise (threat) of more & more & more. [Certainty repeats this phrase three times]

[Pause]

[The Audience will wait for Certainty to finish speaking] My voice, or rather my words, shift tense. Description crumbling to instruction, careful phrasing laying a ground for the future.

*[When Certainty has had the last word, The Audience will stretch the concertina script across each row, so that every audience member faces the same two page script, on repeat. They will let the first script, this one here, dribble from hand to floor, bypassing arse and furniture altogether]*

The Audience member to the left of each row will take hold of the printed script stacked beside them. Will pass this page along, hand to hand. Until, at a certain point, the script will stretch out, across laps, crinkled scroll.

[Inhale] Don't be alarmed.

[Exhale] We'll simply remain in our seats.

[Certainty pauses] [The Audience follow instruction]

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1. Simone Weil. Quoted from a private letter to Gustave Thibon in his introduction to *Gravity and Grace*.

[Beginning]

*[Certainty inhales, a sharp intake of breath and mark of beginning. The Audience begin to read the below, silently. They do their best to stay in time. A tempo implied in collective uncertainty. The Audience and The Script pool words, a catalogue of attempt]*

Certainty: *[Inhale (aloud)] (Silent)* Just don't worry about it.

*[Exhale (aloud)] (Silent)* I never claimed to be worried.

Certainty: *(Slow and silent)* The flood equalises. Levelling the previously vertical and once-was-diagonal. Inclination subsumed by an aching horizon. The tread of each step is numbed by flatness and disobedient limbs are no longer required to engage in an anthropoid climb. The lateral substance runs off everything. Contrary to material precedent, soil refuses solidity. And the puddles, the puddles conjoin in an undisciplined jostling for space.

*The action opens with First Person Narrator, she refers to herself simply as I. The rest of the cast are also nouns, with capitalised first letters, a grammatical insistence that they are, in fact, characters. First Person Narrator reclines on her side.*

First Person Narrator: *(Silent monologue)* Clumsy and ill at ease when walking, they say I probably couldn't be trusted with heavy artillery. That lurching could have consequences. I shudder at the notion, I shudder at armour, I shudder and say: I could do with a drink.

*First Person Narrator rolls onto her back hoping for sky.*

*(Silent)* We say in unison: we remember a flood.

*[The Audience cast their mind back to a past future...(silent)]*

First Person Narrator: *[Continue (silent)]* Later my tongue tastes like chemicals, tastes chemical, molecules I inadvertently place there. Bitter, metallic flavours. Get water to wash them out, or down. Set reminder to regurgitate for fear of infection. Or simply gulp the undrinkable. Sinking to the stomach and further still. Pooling in acid, in flesh, reabsorb and in transit, in no man's land, almost woman, almost human. Bathing the body the wrong way round, inside-out. Bathed in filth & scree & crag.

*[...and now to a past past (silent)]*

*Some days earlier. First Person Narrator and Bodyguard sitting, right leg loosely folded over left, on hard furnishings. Smalltalk is followed by a discussion of what is really at hand.*

First Person Narrator: *(Silent)* How do you work under these conditions?

Bodyguard: *(Silent)* I simply strive to keep-safe, read the situation and remain at arm's length.

First Person Narrator: What's in your safe-keeping?

Bodyguard: A body.

First Person Narrator: Whose?

*First Person Narrator turns head from side to side (she risks an inhuman rotation) searching and taking stock of the steadily dissolving architecture. First Person Narrator shrugs, acknowledging absence.*

First Person Narrator: *(Silent)* Is there a flood? Or is it already draining away?

Bodyguard: *(Silent)* Draining and taking our words with it. Turn, once more, to historical precedent.

First Person Narrator: Which words? Which history? Which flood?

Bodyguard: Whichever you like, perhaps beginning with what's leaching into your sneakers?

[Continuing]

First Person Narrator: *(Silent)* My sneakers are overcome. I wade shin deep and look down to a below inhabited solely by a number of cats, the only animal known to survive the fall.

Bodyguard: *(Silent)* No that's ahistorical. Forget it, just absolutely avoid the emergency impulse to descend.

First Person Narrator: Levelling at the lowest low.

Bodyguard: Where all liquids level and all good emergencies go to be buried.

First Person Narrator: You always have to have the last word.

*This conversation, itself already falling apart, is interrupted by Certainty.*

Certainty: *[Inhale (aloud)] (Silent)* OK now I'm a little concerned.

*[Exhale (aloud)] (Silent)* Rightly so.

*[Certainty continues (Silent)]* Words blanket a rush of earth so profuse it bottlenecks during drainage while thoughts occur within the tight confines of their skulls.

*[Pause] [The Audience attempt to conjure that far down (the lowest low). They ask: down where? Not even Certainty gives a reply (silent)]*

*Return to the scene with hard furnishings. We find First Person Narrator and Bodyguard. We find the furnishings softening. A soil-like substance rises at increments, currently levelling just below the thigh. Threatening confusion between ground and the coffee Bodyguard dissolves in their mug.*

First Person Narrator: *(Silent)* I cannot love without trembling.

Bodyguard: *(Silent)* I cannot think without quivering in my boots and shuddering at the prospect.

First Person Narrator: Are you saying it's best left unthought?

Bodyguard: I'm saying I'm barely staying afloat.

First Person Narrator: What can't be thought must be discarded.

Bodyguard: Just as what can't be drunk must be flushed away.

First Person Narrator: No! Swallow it whole!

Drink!

Drink! Drink!

Well beyond thirst and until it's all gone.

Bodyguard: But it can't be taken whole, can't be taken piecemeal.

First Person Narrator: How about chewed on endlessly?

Bodyguard: Stuck in my mouth, sinew sick and sticky, chomped on and mulled over.

First Person Narrator: Stewed on for hours, that end up as days, through pure accumulation.

Bodyguard: If only time would synch up with my stomach. It's eating us from below and don't you forget it.

First Person Narrator: How could I forget?

*Certainty continues where she left off.*

Certainty: *[Inhale (aloud)] (Silent)* An itch on the roof of my mouth,

*[Exhale (aloud)] (Silent)* neither tongue nor saliva can cure.

*[The Audience cast their minds and eyes over what they've just read. As if to find some ground on which to stand (silent)]*

*[The Audience turn the script in order to continue reading the reverse. They attempt to divine whether everyone is actually finished? A negotiation with neighbours that avoids the spillage of paper or words (silent)]*

[Continuing]

*Interlude: An argument between Love I and Love II or a bickering-romance-ark.  
The Loves lie tucked up in bed, too old to do much more. They tremble and shudder  
simultaneously, proof of contiguity.*

*[The Audience listen and read simultaneously (silent)]*

Love I: *(Aloud)* Oh Love, don't worry about it.

Love II: *(Aloud)* I never claimed to be worried, you always assume that I'm twitchy. Tea?

Love I: Certainly. There's talk of a flood.

Love II: Not again? What's the story?

Love I: It's a clumsy, short-sighted truth and it is becoming increasingly unstable. Something about rising dirt.

Love II: Different to rising damp? Its huge & swollen & ready to breach its banks?

Love I: There's already a breach, it's already banked, no measure of security could save them now.

Love II: Not even the warmth of a mother's embrace?

Love I: Wager they sink the lot and be done. Where's that tea you threatened?

Love II: I threatened? I promised.

*Sound of tea pouring, sound of slurping, sound of spitting (aloud).*

Love I: *(Aloud)* You've left it brewing too long!

Love II: *(Aloud)* It's undrinkable?

Love I: Your carelessness overstays its welcome. Bitter, metallic brew swaddling my tongue.

Love II: A truth that's difficult to swallow.

Love I: *[Sigh]*

Love I & Love II: *[Sigh]*

*Once again on the now-soft seats, First Person Narrator dusts some dirt from her  
shoulder. She holds her hands aloft to keep them from contamination. A Body is lying  
on her side, head resting on hand, adjoining angular elbow. She too has the support of  
soft furnishings.*

First Person Narrator: *(Silent)* Who's that?

Bodyguard: *(Silent)* Best to ask directly, I'm no fortuneteller nor mindreader.

First Person Narrator: Asking seems risky. Her tongue unconfirmed by the crane of her neck or the roll of her hip.

Bodyguard: It's OK, she's lying down, as good as cowering on folded knees.

First Person Narrator: A lady of leisure, perhaps? Unfazed by our presence, questions, or even this dirt.

Bodyguard: Fazed or not, her body betrays her, she's implicitly vulnerable.

*[The Audience stand, waiting until each individual member is upright before  
continuing to read (silent)]*

Certainty: *(Silent)* They imagine this figure's relaxation, leisure, complete relief. A body reclining lengthways, holding up its head for fear that repose might be disrupted, or worse still, confused with those figures marking marble sarcophagi with representations of relaxation as death. The dead body reborn in leisure. They imagine her pose is indebted to these stone figures, has taken on a gestural loan.

*[Pause][The Audience think for a moment. They reconsider. They reread the above  
passage once more. It helps them relax (silent)]*

First Person Narrator: *(Silent)* Who are you? And what, precisely, are you doing here?

Body: *(Silent)* It hardly seems fair to demand precision, under the circumstances.

Bodyguard: *(Silent)* She's got to find meaning somewhere, you're as good a source as any.

First Person Narrator: *[Turning to address Bodyguard]* Is she your Body?

Bodyguard: Don't be so silly. Mine is right here. *[Bodyguard gestures to their torso and lower limbs with the upper ones]*

Body: We're corporeally distinct, despite some nominal overlap.

First Person Narrator: No, no, no. You know what I mean. *[First Person Narrator whispers suggestively to Bodyguard (silent)]*

The one you're watching over?

[Continuing]

*The conversation on seats is interrupted by Certainty and the dramatic dumping of more soil-like pitch from the sky. It spills like some over-wet cloud unable, any longer, to cling to the notion of vapour. An interruption that changes the course of events and changes Bodyguard's answer.*

*Pitch falls. Pitch drops. Pitch pools.*

Certainty: *[Inhale (aloud)] (Silent)* Dirt inventing a new mass —  
*[Exhale (aloud)] (Silent)* from what once was space.

*Spoken in muffled voices, indistinct words constantly interfered with by earth (silent)*

Bodyguard: *(Silent)* No one's watching anyone anymore. They're more concerned with what's happened, with liquid and with catching their breath.

Body: *(Silent)* Breath is best forgotten, for fear of inviting mineral detritus onto the tongue, causing nothing but coughs and sour expressions.

Bodyguard: Best then to keep our traps shut.

Body: Block the nose and eyes and ears and leave it all to the ends of the fingers.

*First Person Narrator thinks about having the last word. All she can think is —more—*

Certainty: *[Inhale (aloud)] (Silent)* It's all in your head.  
*[Exhale (aloud)] (Silent)* It's all in theirs.

The Audience: *[Inhale (aloud)] (Silent)* It's all in your head.  
*[Exhale (aloud)] (Silent)* It's all in theirs.

*[The Audience resume their seats. They tear their section of the script along its perforated edges, separating neighbouring script and neighbouring audience member. They are given a cup of tea. They are free to leave.]*

*Through flooding : A silent choral reading*

Rosie Isaac  
22 May 2016

*Through Love: Five Feminist Perspectives*  
brainlina  
Next Wave 2016

Certainty - Saskia Doherty  
Love I - Briony Galligan  
Love II - Ben Hjorth

This work was produced and performed on the land of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation.