



## *Love Story of the Century*

by Märta Tikkanen

Translated by Stina Katchadourian

Adapted by Clare Venables

This is a scanned copy of the script for **Monstrous Regiment Theatre Company's** 1990 UK premiere production of Märta Tikkanen's *Love Story of the Century*. In this stage adaptation by Clare Venables, the single narrative voice in Märta Tikkanen's verse novel (1978) about her marriage to an alcoholic, translated from the Finnish by Stina Katchadourian (1984), was split between two female performers.

Further information about the show can be found in its **Productions** page on the company's website: [www.monstrousregiment.co.uk](http://www.monstrousregiment.co.uk)

The script for this production was published in *Monstrous Regiment: A Collective Celebration*, edited and compiled by Gillian Hanna (Nick Hern Books, London 1991). We are grateful to the publisher for permission to reproduce material from this book. The following pages were scanned directly from this published text, with no changes.

A copy of the original typescript, upon which the published text was based, is held in the Monstrous Regiment archive at the V&A's Theatre and Performance Archives. All requests for permission to perform the play should be addressed to the author's agent at the Helsinki Literary Agency ([www.helsinkiliteraryagency.fi](http://www.helsinkiliteraryagency.fi))

*Love Story of the Century* ©1978, 1991, 2022 Märta Tikkanen

Translation ©1984, 1991, 2022 Stina Katchadourian

All rights reserved

# LOVE STORY OF THE CENTURY

by Märta Tikkanen  
adapted by Clare Venables  
from the translation by  
Stina Katchadourian

MÄRTA TIKKANEN was born in Helsinki, Finland, in 1935 and still lives there. She belongs to the Swedish speaking minority of Finland and writes her books in Swedish. They are translated into Finnish. She has a BA (fil.kand.) from the University of Helsinki (Swedish Literature, Swedish Language, English Language) and has worked as a journalist, a High School teacher of Swedish and as the Director of an Adult Education School. Since 1979 she has been a full-time writer. She was married to the artist and writer Henrik Tikkanen who died in 1984. She is the mother of two sons and two daughters.

She has published ten books and edited two anthologies. The most successful books are *Man Rape* (1978) and *The Love Story of the Century* (1978). Together they have been translated into sixteen languages, the Scandinavian languages and Finnish, English, German, French, Spanish, Japanese, Serbian, Estonian, Dutch, Greek and Greenlandic. She has also written some plays and several of her books have been dramatised. *Man Rape* was filmed by Jörn Donner in 1977.

## A note on the production

Like the original poem, the piece is a fluid emotional journey. The narrative is not a linear or literal account of a woman's life, but a complex and contradictory internal dialogue. In order to dramatise this the woman is played by two performers, GILLIAN and MARY, who compliment, contradict, challenge and react to one another as the woman's story is told. Although they frequently observe, or are aware of one another, they avoid direct contact. It is only finally that they can comfortably acknowledge each other.

The set is a grey room; two walls set at a right angle to each other, with three tall sets of shutters. On the stage right wall the shutters are open to reveal a large window. On the upstage wall both sets of shutters are closed. Behind one is a cupboard in two sections. The main section is filled with books, empty alcohol bottles, and various household items which are used during the piece. The top section of the cupboard conceals a mass of white roses. Behind the third set of shutters is a second large window which remains hidden until the end of the play.

The room is sparsely furnished; a table and two chairs. On the table is some paper, a pen, and a half eaten bowl of rice crispies. A vase and a bunch of white roses are set downstage on a pile of books. There is a pile of large stones in the corner. Along the upstage wall is a trail of small objects – a bag, some broken toys, a book. Everything in the room is devoid of any real colour – clear glass bottles, grey and brown books, faded toys.

*Love Story of the Century* by Märta Tikkanen was adapted for the stage by Clare Venables from a translation by Stina Katchadourian. It was first performed by Monstrous Regiment on 8 February 1990 at the Strode Theatre, Street, transferring to the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh on 13 February 1990. Its tour ended on 24 March 1990 at the Chapter Theatre, Cardiff.

It was performed by Gillian Hanna and Mary McCusker

*Directed by* Debbie Shewell

*Designed by* Moggie Douglas

*Lighting Design by* Tina MacHugh

*Original Music by* Joanna MacGregor

*Technicians:* Lizz Poulter and Greta Millington

*Administrators:* Rose Sharp and Carin Mistry

*Photographer:* Sean Hudson

*Graphic Design:* Jo Angell at Paton Walker Associates

*Daylight. GILLIAN sits at the table, writing. Behind her, crouched on the stones, is MARY. They are dressed in dark clothes that are similar but not identical.*

GILLIAN. My mother's grandmother  
used to write secretly during the night  
at her white Empire desk  
  
but her diary  
could never be published  
it was too indiscreet  
and at seventeen I was not allowed to read it.

I read it of course  
but thought it was boring  
I did not understand what she was all about.

Why did she not get a divorce  
from that domestic tyrant?

A couple of times a year  
my mother got her attacks  
her forehead seemed high and she looked past us  
with a strangely shrill and monotonous voice  
she avoided our  
anxious and irritated questions.

A few days later  
when someone could get her to speak  
she would always say the same thing –  
that she did not have a desk  
where she could sit and write.

Father was sitting with tears in his eyes  
in his study  
arranging the pencils in order of length.

But she knows we don't have the space  
 for yet another desk he said  
 now that you're all growing and need your own nooks.

When yet another day had passed  
 mother came out with her usual forehead  
 and said in her usual voice  
 that father was so kind  
 and that she had been silly again  
 and she hugged us all.

We heaved a sigh of relief  
 and everything continued  
 and everyone could go on doing their homework  
 at their respective desks  
 and, occasionally, take a break to talk  
 to mother  
 sitting there in the easy-chair of the living room  
 which opened up to other rooms, and was telephone-room,  
 coffee-room, and parlour.

My mother held her typewriter  
 in her lap  
 when she wrote.

MARY (*interrupts screaming in rage and pain*). Nobody ever  
 hit me.

Nobody ever hit me  
 and never was I  
 physically afraid  
 that someone might  
 hit me

until you hit me  
 the feeling  
 of being deserted  
 with no turning back  
 with no options  
 not to have strength  
 not to have control  
 not to be able to do anything  
 not to be able to do anything.

MARY *gets up and picks up the bag from the floor. She goes to the table  
 and starts to pack the bag with the small items lying around – the cereal  
 bowl, the toys, some stones.*

*GILLIAN moves away from her, and busies herself with arranging the roses in the vase.*

GILLIAN. For me it was easy  
to begin with  
one would simply love.

MARY. But then everything  
gets only more difficult.

Then the question comes:  
Why don't you leave?

GILLIAN. Innumerable times I've been  
on my way

if this drinking bout isn't  
the last  
then I'll leave

if his malice affects  
the children  
then I'll leave

if he also starts  
to lie  
then I'll leave  
and if he ever uses force  
on me  
then I'll leave

when the children can no longer  
take it  
then I'll simply have to.

*During this, MARY has unpacked the bag and returned the objects to their original places.*

MARY. And all of it happened.  
Still, I didn't leave.

Why?

*GILLIAN opens the cupboard to reveal rows of bottles. She lines a large number of them up on the floor and feverishly arranges and re-arranges them. MARY watches her, snatching some of the bottles away each time she speaks, and stacking them against the back wall.*



GILLIAN. An alcoholic's wife  
 that's someone  
 who is always wrong  
 whichever way she turns.

If she understands and understands  
 and forgives  
 and smooths things out  
 and keeps the relatives at bay  
 and quiets the children  
 and admires  
 and comforts  
 and believes and believes and believes  
 and hopes

MARY. then she is a self-righteous bitch  
 who's always so goddamn perfect  
 and wonderful

an almighty one  
 who thinks she can move mountains  
 and offer forgiveness for every sin.

Good God  
 one could vomit  
 when one sees her shining face.

GILLIAN. And if she asks and pleads  
 and hides the bottles  
 and pours out half through the window  
 and into the flower pots  
 and refuses to lie to the relatives  
 and blame it on the stomach flu once more  
 for the colleagues  
 and turns a deaf ear  
 to the five hundred and ninetieth round  
 of the unhappy childhood  
 and the unforgettable war  
 and the jealous colleagues

MARY. then she is a dangerous one  
 scheming and vindictive  
 and I'll be damned  
 if it isn't she  
 when it comes right down to it

who gets those conspiracies  
going all around  
and the slander and the mudslinging campaigns.

It is of course she  
who is behind everything.  
Who else knows so well  
all those details that get thrown  
into one's face  
she it is who's sitting there like a spider in the web  
all puffed up with malice, Jesus.

GILLIAN *crouches over her remaining bottles, protecting them.*

GILLIAN. And if she realises  
that she has her own life  
to live  
and that, anyway, she can't ever live  
someone else's life  
and not carry someone else's burdens  
even if she wanted to  
ever so much

MARY. then she is a hard devil  
a goddam careerist  
who gets herself involved in anything  
and with anyone  
only not with the person who's closest to her  
and who needs her the most  
and whom she has promised, moreover  
to love for better for worse  
now we're through with the better  
as soon as things get somewhat worse  
now she's all over the place  
and dedicates herself to all kinds of nonsense  
and mostly to herself  
and her own success  
whatever that might be, hell

MARY. but somebody else has to pay the price  
remember that  
although she probably won't give a damn  
the bloody bitch.

GILLIAN. And if she finally gives up  
 and stands there alone  
 with her torn nerves  
 and the children's torn nerves  
 and a thousand pangs of conscience  
 because she loved too little  
 or even loved too much,  
 because she did this and not that  
 which might have saved everything,  
 if she had been human enough  
 to understand a little better

MARY. then one can bet one's life  
 that soon she'll have found  
 the next man  
 to put her claws into  
 and torture and pester  
 and dominate  
 and play guardian angel to  
 until nothing else remains  
 for that poor devil either  
 but the bottle . . .

MARY *kicks the bottles over, angrily.*

*A beat.*

GILLIAN *goes to the cupboard and gets out a wadge of notes, which she carefully arranges in nine piles on the floor.*

GILLIAN. I'm reading my notes  
 from nine books  
 on alcoholism

I recognise everything  
 I know  
 that the person who's grown up without love  
 doesn't think  
 that love exists.

I know all the tricks  
 needed to satisfy  
 insatiable demands  
 more and more and more  
 it's never enough.

I gradually get to know  
 the rules of the game  
 only too well  
 now coddled  
 now bawled out  
 feeling guilty about everything  
 and nothing  
 and above all about the drinking  
 the glory of the hangover  
 that finally provides punishment, longed for  
 and staged.

*MARY sits at the table flicking through a book.*

MARY. I'm reading my notes  
 about the controlling wives  
 of alcoholics  
 who must have a weak man  
 to keep down  
 and to hate through the kids  
 so she herself won't go under  
 and I read about how the wife  
 ingeniously seeks to thwart  
 all improvement.

*She rips the pages from the book and throws them on the floor.*

*GILLIAN scrabbles around the floor, trying to retrieve the screwed up pages. She gives up.*

GILLIAN. I get extremely tired.

Why is it  
 that I'm holding on  
 if, in addition,  
 it is I  
 who sit here  
 and prevent you  
 from becoming  
 human?

MARY. Such an honest account  
 of alcoholism  
 say the wise men in the book review sections.

Strange, that none of them  
 feel there's something missing -  
 like the smells,  
 for example.

The sharp penetrating brandy smell  
 that stabs you in the gut  
 as soon as you come through the door.

The lukewarm bulging stench  
 of cognac diluted by gastric juices  
 when you've vomited it all up.

MARY *empties the dregs of a bottle onto GILLIAN's notes.*

Rough redwineink  
 sour whitewinebelch  
 sweet slush of sherry  
 gooey vermouthe.

MARY *takes a bowl from the cupboard and empties it onto the notes. It is full of vomit.*

But most disgusting of all  
 the smell of putrid hops  
 you breathe over me  
 when for the five thousandth time  
 you think beer enhances your sexual power.  
 The smell of rancid dregs hovering above everything  
 in the bedroom  
 after you've passed out with your clothes on  
 across both beds.

the saliva  
 that beerbrown runs down across your chin  
 The diarrhoea that follows  
 without fail  
 can be felt in the house for several days  
 along with that drastic purge  
 which makes your teeth so white.

Just that  
 Just the smells.

*A beat. GILLIAN moves away and sits on a chair by the cupboard.*

GILLIAN. Of course it hasn't escaped me  
 that there is

a rather nasty  
aspect  
to this thing:

You're lying there  
blabbering  
with your clothes on  
unless I take them off.  
Now I can use  
whatever tone of voice I prefer  
when I prevent  
those who call you  
from speaking to you.  
Now you can't reach me  
with some nasty sarcasm  
which drives me to despair  
because I know  
why you're saying it –  
  
you are scared  
of me!

GILLIAN. Now you realise  
that if you're going to make it  
through this  
one more time  
it'll depend on  
my giving you  
the medications  
exactly when you need them  
  
that I don't give you  
more booze  
just when you claim  
you simply can't  
do without it  
that I see to it  
you ingest  
salt and proteins  
when the electrolyte balance is disturbed  
that I call an ambulance  
and don't let you  
have your way  
when you refuse to lie down on the stretcher  
despite the fact that you just asked  
to be admitted to the hospital

MARY. and that I sit there, then  
 and hold your hand  
 just when I really don't want  
 to hold your hand  
 or even see  
 you at all.

GILLIAN. Somehow  
 it is quite awful  
 all of this –  
  
 to have the upper hand  
 the power  
 and to be quite pleased  
 about that.

Most awful to know  
 that both of us  
 realise it.

MARY. Somehow  
 it is quite awful  
 all of this –  
  
 to have the upper hand  
 the power  
 and to be quite pleased  
 about that.

Most awful to know  
 that both of us . . .

GILLIAN (*interrupting*). You're telling me  
 how you fell asleep on the landing  
 resting your head on your dog many nights  
 how you biked around and cried  
 when your dog died  
 that the dog meant more  
 to you  
 than your father and your mother  
 who were never home or sober  
 and who did not know  
 what they wanted you for.

It is sad  
 and you cry.

MARY. I'm sitting in the chair opposite you  
 and I've got time to think a lot  
 because the story is not short  
 and it isn't the first time  
 I'm hearing it.  
 You talk  
 and I sit and wonder  
 why you don't say anything  
 about the nights when your kids  
 haven't dared to go to sleep  
 but have sneaked around the corner  
 and spied on you -  
 Dad hasn't started drinking again, has he?

How's Dad?

Are you really sure he won't drink  
 tonight?

While you're crying yourself to sleep  
 because you feel sorry for yourself  
 who had a father who was  
 an alcoholic

I sit wondering when  
 my hatred  
 will burn you  
 to white ashes

while you're lying there, sobbing  
 without thinking for one second  
 that your kids, too, have  
 a father.

GILLIAN. Kids  
 are not usually the ones  
 who'll take responsibility when something happens.  
 In our family  
 the seven-year-old took the bottle of red wine  
 and hid it, half-emptied, behind the policeman's back  
 once when you were drunk at the wheel.

MARY. Kids  
 don't hide their jealousy  
 they pinch their siblings, take their  
 toys, tell on each other.



In our family  
 kids have had to put up with  
 your tearing a favourite book apart  
 slandering their friends  
 and mocking the socialism they believe in.

GILLIAN. Kids  
 don't normally protect  
 they are the protected ones  
 as long as they are helpless and small.  
 In our family  
 the kids are the ones  
 who protect and comfort you  
 when you're racked by fears  
 and need the strength of others.

MARY. Kids  
 should gradually grow  
 into the adult world  
 learn to give and take  
 and experience but master fear.  
 In our family  
 everything was there in excess from the start  
 but their tenderness grew all the more  
 for you, the child  
 so early given them.

GILLIAN. She crawls into my lap  
 smelling of sleep  
 downy baby hair on her neck  
 words stumble eagerly:

MARY (*as a child*). Guess what.  
 I had such a strange dream last night.  
 I dreamt that I was drinking one whole week  
 and I drank and drank  
 and got all dizzy  
 but then I went to the doctor  
 and the doctor took a blood test  
 and then I went home to my house  
 and then I drank another whole week  
 and then I got dizzy again.

Guess what  
 then I suddenly noticed  
 that I'd become a wolf.

I was ferocious and wild and crazy.  
 I only wanted to fight  
 but then my wolf daddy was coming  
 and we rolled in the grass  
 and were biting each other  
 but then I bit him to death you know  
 and then I stopped fighting right away.

MARY *moves abruptly to the table, sits down, and stares at GILLIAN.*

GILLIAN. At the breakfast table  
 she tells her dream again  
 to everybody  
 all the way to the wolf daddy, there she stops abruptly  
 quickly smiles at me from the corner of her eye

MARY. and that was it,

GILLIAN. she says and continues to nibble her rice crispies.

MARY *takes a man's shirt from the back of the chair. She stands at the table, folding and smoothing the shirt, repeatedly shaking the shirt out and folding it again. GILLIAN sits on the chair by the cupboard, writing.*

MARY. Earlier  
 you were nasty and sardonic  
 only when you drank.  
  
 Nowadays you are  
 even nastier and more sardonic  
 when you are sober.

GILLIAN. One would think that you wouldn't  
 need to drink  
 now that you can be nasty anyway.

MARY. It begins on about the second or third day  
 of your hangover  
 when you're starting to realise  
 who you are  
 and where you are  
 and that you have a family  
 that has been walking around you  
 like ghosts  
 or accusations  
 or like distorted monsters  
 as long as you were drinking.

At that point you think  
it's time  
to take everyone to task.

GILLIAN. discipline at the table  
the cushions of the sofa must be straight.

MARY. I guess I can still  
take your remarks  
about the cleaning

GILLIAN. because nothing is working  
in our house.

MARY. ok, it isn't perfect  
but then  
there have been other things  
to think about the last few days

GILLIAN. and obviously it is only me  
who does any cleaning at all  
in this house.

MARY. I actually have never seen you  
touch a vacuum cleaner  
ok anyway about the cleaning

GILLIAN. you cannot handle the children  
at all.

MARY. That's when I feel  
the explosion coming.

MARY. But when the kids  
get roughed up  
if one of them happens to forget  
that it's impolite to reach  
at the table  
or serve himself before you  
when they are told  
that they are impossible, horrible  
and spoiled  
and should be ashamed  
and sent from the table  
and that you won't have anything to do with them  
as ill-bred  
and degenerate as they are

then my patience runs out  
 and then I let it spill out  
 it's really the limit  
 to strike out at them  
 when they've been putting up with everything  
 everything  
 for ten days  
 and have helped and comforted  
 and held you  
 and been  
 deeply unhappy  
 for your sake  
 and that now it is they  
 who have to suffer the consequences  
 of your violent guilt  
 and your need to put some order  
 in your life.

*She hurls the shirt against the wall, then throws herself against the wall  
 and stand shaking.*

SHAME ON YOU.

GILLIAN *continues to write, furiously.*

GILLIAN. And all this anger  
 that I cannot heap on you  
 direct and unpadded  
 now that you're having trouble anyway  
 in managing to face the world  
 and when the worst finally is over  
 and you are on your way back  
 to life.

All this anger  
 will have to take this detour  
 but you're the one it's aimed at  
 and it surges over you

and I truly hope  
 that it will drown you forever

AMEN.

*She takes the piece of paper and rolls it up very tightly, grabs a bottle, and  
 stuffs the 'message' into it. Suddenly she realises what she is doing. She  
 stops, aware that MARY is staring at her. Their eyes meet for a moment  
 before they break from each other.*

*Night. Dull light in the room.*

*The sound of heavy rain.*

MARY *picks up the bowl of rice crispies from the table and moving to the window sits on the ledge and eats them.*

GILLIAN *picks the shirt up and carefully folds and smooths it on the table.*

MARY. You must be strong  
people  
occasionally say  
to me.

GILLIAN. There was a letter:

I assume  
that you'll survive  
in spite of everything  
that was enough.

MARY. And I think about  
all that's happened  
- maybe  
I'm strong.

Yes, I suppose that's it  
I suppose I'm strong.

Strong people don't bend.

GILLIAN. They break.

*GILLIAN leaves the shirt on the table and turns to the flowers and books.*

If I hadn't loved you  
so immensely  
and if I had not always believed  
your words  
about this being the last time  
definitively and irrevocably  
the very last time  
that you drank  
then perhaps it would have been easier  
to put up with  
the times that followed.

But you see I always believed  
in what you said

and loved you  
 and was convinced that  
 you really wanted nothing else  
 but to stop drinking  
 and never start again.  
 That actually seemed  
 completely logical  
 because who would voluntarily  
 want to go through the hell  
 that you went through every time  
 and in addition each time always seemed  
 a bit worse  
 than the previous god-awful time.

*She sits with her back against the wall.*

*A beat. Daylight returns. MARY sits at the table.*

MARY. Sometimes when I despaired  
 I would ask you  
 why you hadn't quit  
 though you had promised for sure  
 that you would  
 the previous time.

Then you answered  
 that you really  
 hadn't wanted to stop  
 deep down  
 that time or any other time.  
 But, you said, now you wanted to  
 in a really different  
 and completely new way.  
 Now you really  
 never again  
 wanted to drink.  
 And did I believe you?

GILLIAN. Of course I believed you  
 now that you wanted  
 really deep deep down.  
 And I loved you, didn't I?

MARY. As time went on  
 I guess I really no longer  
 believed you  
 when you assured me

that you would stop  
 but I noticed  
 that I'd been going around  
 hoping anyway  
 because each time  
 I got so terribly  
 disappointed.

Of course one should  
 neither believe nor hope  
 only just love  
 and be just as  
 surprised  
 and grateful  
 each sober evening  
 after a sober day.

GILLIAN. But that's not the way it is  
 no, it's not like that at all.

MARY. When I no longer believe  
 and no longer have the strength to hope  
 I don't give a damn  
 whether you're sober  
 or drunk.

I step over you  
 when you lie there, drunk  
 I keep the kids at a distance  
 move my mattress  
 sleep on the floor in another room  
 continue  
 with my work.  
 I live my life  
 and the kids live theirs.

*She stands and takes the chair over to the cupboard.*

yes, you're bothering us  
 the hours you're awake  
 stumbling around  
 nagging  
 but you don't concern us

MARY *sweeps the shirt off the table.*

you are no longer  
 part of our lives.

*She drags the table over to the cupboard, and using the furniture, barricades herself in.*

Now you may believe and hope  
completely by yourself  
we're fed up with  
being disappointed  
we no longer exist.

GILLIAN *looks at her.*

GILLIAN. Of all the ways  
we have tried  
this one seems to be the only one  
that really works.

MARY. Only too bad  
it came too late  
for me.

So it was  
my indifference  
you needed  
while my love apparently  
only hurt you.

GILLIAN. So it was  
my indifference  
you needed  
while my love apparently  
only hurt you.

*A beat.*

GILLIAN (*brightly*). At one time  
I was hiding bottles  
and quickly emptying  
dregs  
into flower pots and ashtrays  
and through the window  
as soon as you turned your back.

Nowadays I don't give a damn  
The quicker you pour the stuff into yourself  
the sooner you'll pass out.

Besides, it isn't necessary  
to wait long anymore  
since you get drunk



on just a few drops  
and vomit right away  
and pass out.

Practical.

One saves both time  
and money.

MARY. You work methodically  
and finish your jobs  
for the two weeks ahead  
and set up only unimportant meetings  
that you've never thought of going to  
you calmly lay away a supply  
of everything that you might need  
in order for a binge to proceed  
pleasantly  
and according to plan.

You get brandy  
a superior kind for the beginning  
and then an inferior one, cheaper,  
an emergency ration of beer  
and light beer from the supermarket  
and finally you ask me  
to renew your prescription  
of that drastic purge and your sleeping pills.

Then suddenly you find yourself  
with a glass in your hand  
voicing your surprise  
over your metabolism  
which demands that you start drinking  
on this ordinary weekday morning  
completely without warning.

You who are such a bohemian  
and absolutely can't remember  
a phone number,  
you never miss one single detail  
when you are preparing  
for your unexpected  
drinking bouts.

*She goes to the window and closes one of the shutters. There is daylight outside but the room is now dark, like a sick room. From the window*

MARY watches as GILLIAN tiptoes toward the cupboard and gets out a child's tea set. GILLIAN sets out the tiny cups and saucers and has a 'tea party'.

GILLIAN (*whispering*). Now I don't have to  
 be scared anymore  
 one of them says  
 that he'll start  
 drinking  
 now that he's started  
 we can only wait  
 till he stops.

Now I don't have to  
 come home for dinner  
 on time today  
 says another  
 now that he's drinking  
 he won't notice  
 if I skip  
 dinner today.

Bye,  
 I'm leaving  
 says a third  
 takes off  
 gets home only  
 after dark  
 whispers on the sofa  
 half an hour  
 now that for once  
 we've got time  
 just the two of us.

To a fourth one  
 I read a double-length story.  
 I can well afford to do it  
 since he has  
 passed out  
 and doesn't sit there  
 hoping it'll be his turn  
 sometime.

I myself have a nice long  
 telephone conversation  
 where I don't have to be careful

with my words  
 or my inflections  
 now that there's no one  
 pricking up his ears  
 to listen  
 and try to  
 misunderstand.

Then I stay up  
 half the night  
 and write and write and write  
 now that there's no telling  
 what I'm up to  
 and when I don't first  
 have to go to bed  
 and wait  
 until he's sleeping.

MARY. As long as we are this far  
 the second day or so  
 into a drinking bout  
 when he can still sleep  
 and while no devils  
 chase him yet along the walls  
 all of us are doing  
 pretty well.

GILLIAN *angrily sweeps the tea set off the table.*  
*Together they confront the husband, MARY advancing gradually*  
*downstage, challenging.*

GILLIAN. You're so goddamn perfect  
 you hiss  
 so damned flawless  
 always so strict  
 and demanding  
 restrained superior  
 you always accuse me.

MARY. Yes  
 I accuse you  
 for the fact  
 that you don't see me  
 as the person I am  
 but are trying to shape me  
 according to your needs

into someone who is never wrong  
and who therefore cannot create disorder  
in your authoritarian world.

GILLIAN. into someone who demands that you  
know your place  
when you yourself don't want to stay put  
but don't dare to leave  
either

MARY. into someone who wants to force you  
to look yourself in the eyes  
and admit  
that you don't want to be responsible  
for your life

GILLIAN. into someone who erects barriers  
around you  
so that you feel you have a freedom  
above and beyond

MARY. into someone who'll only raise her eyebrows  
when you hurl your invectives  
against the world  
that's always against you

GILLIAN. into someone who'll furnish the arguments  
you know are correct  
and that you therefore don't dare  
to listen to

MARY. into someone who accuses  
when your guilt overwhelms you  
and the only thing that can lighten your burden  
for a while  
is punishment and suffering.

GILLIAN. Still a five-year-old, you're asking me  
to be the one you never had  
fifty years ago -  
Your Mother, the Almighty.

*A sudden light change. MARY stands rooted to the spot in a shaft of light. GILLIAN throws herself into the corner. She crouches on the stones, trying to protect herself.*

MARY. In slow motion  
 you raise your hand  
 that will strike me.

Many thoughts  
 pass through my mind  
 before your hand  
 reaches me.

The thought  
 of all women  
 in all times  
 who have known this second  
 the one before the hand strikes

the fear  
 that paralyses  
 making me unable  
 to get away  
 bite kick flee  
 I can't open my mouth  
 I don't scream  
 the feeling  
 of being deserted  
 with no turning back  
 with no options  
 not to have strength  
 not to have control  
 not to be able to do anything  
 not to be able to do anything

and finally  
 the incredible  
 in what's happening to us –

it is inconceivable  
 it won't happen  
 it can't happen

you  
 cannot hit  
 me.

*GILLIAN flinches, as if from a violent blow. Crouched on the stones, her position mirrors MARY's at the start of the piece.*

MARY. Even before your hand  
 reaches me  
 I already know:  
 this comes to us not  
 from lack of love  
 but from love's despair  
 still  
 it is hard to comprehend  
 impossible to forget.

GILLIAN. Nobody  
 could have begun life more secure  
 than I.

Nobody  
 could have been more hopeful  
 than I.

Nobody  
 could have loved more devotedly  
 than I.

Nobody  
 could have been more unsuspecting  
 than I.

Nobody nobody  
 could have been  
 more fateful  
 for somebody else  
 in her all-embracing understanding  
 in her self-effacing forgiveness  
 than I.

*A long beat.*

*In the darkened room a crackly recording on 'I can't give you anything  
 but love' is overtaken by harsh piano music.*

*Dull daylight gradually returns.*

MARY. For me it was easy  
 to begin with  
 one would simply love  
 I love you so immensely  
 you said  
 no one has ever been able to love like me

I have built a pyramid of my love  
you said.

I have placed you on a pedestal  
high above the clouds.

This is the love story of the century  
you said

it will last forever  
in eternity it will be admired  
you said.

I had difficulty sleeping  
the first seven hundred and thirty nights  
after I'd realised  
how immensely you love  
your love.

GILLIAN. We moved in together  
not because we  
wanted to  
but because we  
couldn't help it.

It probably wasn't at all true  
that you fell in love  
with my blue striped cotton dress  
because I looked so innocent  
which I was  
or that I became deeply enamoured  
of your brilliant expressions  
and your genius  
which hit me  
twenty years before it hit the world.

MARY *takes a stack of framed photographs from the drawer in the table,  
and sets them out on the floor, the vase of roses at the centre like a shrine.  
The photographs are all of the same man – the husband.*

GILLIAN. but only that  
your needs fit mine  
– to need and to be needed –  
and that both of us  
completely lacked  
all sense of moderation.

Thus, at the starting point  
we were  
completely equal

if later on things went wrong  
 the fault was  
 entirely our own

MARY. if later on things went wrong  
 the fault was  
 entirely our own.

GILLIAN. This is the love story of the century  
 you said  
 it will last forever  
 in eternity it will be admired.

MARY. you said  
 you said  
 you said

GILLIAN. my blue striped cotton dress

MARY. your brilliant expressions.

GILLIAN. I love you so immensely  
 you said.

MARY. how immensely you love

GILLIAN. your love.

MARY. You who love  
 can't you some time  
 try to tell me what it is you mean  
 when you say  
 that you love me?

GILLIAN. Early on  
 I hid my vulnerability  
 from you.

Why would I want to hurt you  
 by showing you  
 how much  
 you had hurt me

that way I managed to prevent  
 both you and me  
 from growing.

You who love  
 can't you some time



try to tell me what it is you mean  
 when you say  
 that you love me?

MARY. You are asking me  
 what you mean to me  
 and suddenly it seems  
 difficult  
 for me to answer.

GILLIAN. You were my yearning  
 to take and to give  
 one single huge answer to my need  
 to be needed.  
 You were the one I wanted  
 to stand equal with  
 and to have confidence in  
 the one I wanted to trust  
 and never let down  
 whatever happened.

You were a challenge so enormous  
 it seemed inevitable  
 you were a task  
 which was too difficult  
 and therefore necessary  
 and you were the one I wanted  
 my children to look like.

You were every possibility  
 and development and future  
 you were mutual struggle  
 and the impossible hope  
 for change.

You were fathomless  
 and I was fathomless  
 and together we would drown.

*MARY is rummaging through the cupboard. She opens the top section  
 and a cascade of white roses falls around her.*

MARY. But somewhere along the years  
 something has happened.

Today you are the person  
 I live with.

*She kicks at the roses at her feet.*

Dialogue is no longer possible  
 we have lost the language  
 we have no dictionary  
 we can't even read a text  
 and the rules of grammar we have never learned  
 – we improvised as we went along

now mouths jabber without sound  
 arms gesticulate  
 feet stamp their emphasis  
 we throw up our arms  
 we still grasp nothing.

But still for some time  
 we will keep on trying  
 in despair and hopelessness

until finally we realise  
 that we have already given up  
 a very long time ago.

Oh yes, we know each other so well  
 only too well  
 for us to remain silent is also  
 a message  
 confidence has a thousand ways  
 to show  
 that it doesn't exist  
 treacherous solicitude  
 stabs you in the back  
 the mustard gas of suspicion  
 creeps insidiously along  
 the ground  
 filling each crack  
 with its stench.

All the words  
 that we throw out  
 which should be communication  
 are camouflage  
 but neither of us  
 still manages to hide  
 anything  
 from the other.

MARY is kneeling by the piles of notes covered in vomit.

Even honesty  
is a weapon  
in our hands.

We'll never get away  
from each other.

*She lets herself fall head first into the mess on the floor. GILLIAN looks at her as she lies there.*

GILLIAN. For me it was easy  
to begin with  
one would simply love  
there was nothing to it  
to love  
when one had always been surrounded  
by love  
and when one had learned early on  
that love was the biggest  
and the happiest  
and the best there was.

As long as it was love  
things went well.  
But then it became hate  
and hate was not allowed  
when I was little.

What are you supposed to do  
about a hatred  
that mustn't exist?

You don't use any dirty words.  
You don't swear.  
You don't hit.  
You don't shout.  
And by no means do you slam the door.  
You don't make any faces.  
Of course you don't throw  
anything.  
You try to be really friendly  
when you're hating.

You swallow your hatred  
eat it up

don't show it  
never admit it.

For me it was not easy  
to hate  
but the disastrous thing was  
not to do it.

*She looks at MARY, waiting for her to respond.  
Finally MARY responds.*

MARY. But the disastrous thing was  
not to do it.

*GILLIAN opens the shutters. The room is flooded with bright daylight.  
MARY slowly gets up. Fetching an old towel she dries her hair.*

GILLIAN. One whole day  
we keep squabbling  
  
that I never told you  
that you should have helped me  
with the kids  
and the house  
that of course I told you  
and told and told and told you  
but that you never listened  
or understood  
or cared to  
understand  
what I was trying to say

that you never tried to read  
my five hundred page letter to you  
when you were away  
because you couldn't see  
how it might contain anything  
that would be as important  
as the fact that you returned  
to me

MARY. that the only thing you apparently  
needed  
was my body  
not me  
not my thoughts

that you never seemed to have had  
any use for  
by the way

that in case it really only  
was the body  
then by God  
the world is full  
of other bodies

that if that's the case  
well do as you please  
go go go.

You hoist the sails  
of your old tub  
and steer it  
seething with anger  
into the reeds.

I'm chopping up kindling  
so the splinters  
fly  
I stick out my tongue  
at you.

GILLIAN. I hate you I hate you I hate you  
I can only imagine  
how you're cursing  
and repudiating me  
and my body and my thoughts  
out there on the bay.

When you return  
you sit quietly on the rock, sneer ironically:  
'Since I only seem to utter  
stupidities  
I guess I'd better  
just  
shut up.'

MARY. By all means  
byallmeans byallmeans

I go in and start  
dinner

I always I  
of course I  
and dinner.

GILLIAN *looks out of the window.*

GILLIAN. I chance to look out  
see those sad eyes of yours.

I walk around you  
on the shore.  
You idiot, I say  
you goddamned stupid idiot.  
I give you a kiss.

You stupid jerk, you say  
reluctantly  
give me a kiss  
seven thousand volts  
you rush off and pull in  
four pikes  
from the sea  
give a lecture  
on Van Gogh and Georgia O'Keeffe  
talk talk talk.

We talk  
talk talk.

MARY. Well my goodness  
how we must  
love each other.

I feel  
that you have failed me  
since you've had  
no use for me the way I am  
but rather have made me into a spiritual being  
who doesn't have character traits  
or thoughts or a voice  
but who only exists as a casing  
around the enormous selfish  
masochistic  
love  
that turns its back to the world.

*She kicks at the heap of roses.*

You feel  
that I have failed you  
that I have been in sympathy  
with your enemies  
that I do not want to see  
your intentions  
that I do not receive  
your love

which exists only for me  
and never has needed anything else  
in the world.

GILLIAN. I don't know  
how I'll get over  
my disappointment.

You don't know  
how you'll get over  
your disappointment.

MARY. So here we stand  
showing off  
our disappointments  
and struggling over  
whose are the greatest  
and the heaviest.

GILLIAN. Actually, it is  
only now  
that we fail.

GILLIAN *retrieves the man's shirt. She hugs it.*

While I was away  
you used to go to her in the mornings  
and sleep with her  
and tell her about yourself  
but you wanted to be loyal to me  
you said  
so you lied to me when I came home  
and said that you'd only been chatting a bit  
about your job mainly  
with her.

You only did that because you felt  
 so loyal towards me  
 and you didn't want me  
 to get upset.

She and I  
 used to meet sometimes  
 and occasionally talk on the phone  
 and we also talked about you  
 and how you felt  
 that you wanted to be loyal  
 and so you lied

*MARY sits at the shrine of photographs. Carefully she snips the heads off the roses one by one with a pair of scissors, and puts the stalks back in the vase.*

GILLIAN, and a pretty long time passed  
 but then I asked you  
 why  
 you think it's better to lie  
 and you said you loved me so much  
 that you wanted to be loyal to me  
 you understand that, you said.

I said I really did not understand  
 why you slept with her at all  
 if you loved me so much  
 that you even wanted to be loyal to me  
 and then you said  
 oh well one's got one's erotic habits  
 as you know, you said

and then you asked me how I knew  
 that you slept with her  
 and I said that we talked about that too  
 when we met  
 or talked on the phone together  
 and you got extremely upset.

That goddamned liar  
 you said  
 doesn't she have any feelings at all  
 about loyalty?



MARY. Feel contempt for women, you?  
 Never in this world  
 have you heard anything  
 so absurd.

You who've always only appreciated  
 the women  
 you've had, well,  
 dealings with.

Felt contempt for them  
 you really haven't ever.  
 Not even the whores  
 have you felt contempt for  
 you say  
 proudly.

Not  
 even  
 the whores  
 you said.

*A round starts, gradually at first, each woman building her own rhythm. GILLIAN beats the back wall with the man's shirt. MARY stabs at a photograph with the scissors. Their anger mounts with each line, building to a scream of rage.*

GILLIAN.	}	Keep your roses
MARY		clear the table
		instead
		keep your roses
		lie a little less
		instead
		keep your roses
		listen to what I say
		instead
		love me less
		respect me more.
		Keep your roses!

*They stop abruptly. MARY has completely destroyed the photograph. Silence. The two women cannot look at each other.*

MARY (*calmly*). How can I explain  
 the paradoxical fact  
 that I need a job  
 that takes too much of my time  
 because I have you  
 who take the rest of the time.

As long as I've got the job  
 I have a context  
 to belong to  
 a connection with some of my dearest friends.

As long as I've got the job  
 I would at least have accomplished something  
 this day of my life  
 regardless of what you look like  
 this particular day.

As long as I've got the job  
 I've got the way there and back  
 which is my own.

GILLIAN. Seventeen minutes in the bus  
 when I have time to read  
 or turn a poem over in my head  
 or just mull over something difficult  
 connected with the place  
 that's just demanded  
 all of me  
 before the next place  
 that demands all of me  
 would have devoured me.

As long as I've got  
 my demanding stimulating  
 numbing job  
 I've still got some place  
 where I can be  
 without you  
 so that I'll have the strength  
 to come home again  
 to you.

MARY. Keep your roses  
 clear the table  
 instead

keep your roses  
lie a little less  
instead

keep your roses  
listen to what I say  
instead

love me less  
respect me more.

Keep your roses!

It is not by the great shortcomings  
that love is killed  
love expires  
from quite small and almost imperceptible  
faults.

When you all these years  
without ever noticing  
let me handle  
responsibility and garbage  
by myself  
love has trouble  
surviving.

About ten years ago  
when in desperation  
and with my reserves of strength as a young mother  
almost depleted  
I tried to talk to you  
about doing your share  
and taking responsibility  
for what is  
both of ours  
you never listened to me  
but said  
that I was petty  
making a fuss  
when you were so busy  
creating a name  
for yourself.

GILLIAN. What I never understood was  
why you insisted  
on saying

that you loved me  
 when you did not even notice  
 that pretty soon  
 there would be  
 nothing left of me to love.

MARY. You forced me into a compartment  
 where I never belonged  
 you put a mask over my face  
 which gave you the expressions you needed  
 as an answer.

GILLIAN. A sunny and protected Mediterranean harbour

MARY. a repulsive creature who drove her husband to his death

GILLIAN. recipient of seven ejaculations in one night, carefully  
 registered and accounted for

MARY. a nodding doll who'll deliver infidelity when necessary

GILLIAN. a flower-pot to sow brilliance into

MARY. a laying hen that hatches beautiful children with the  
 proper genes

GILLIAN. an ornament which moreover is useful, offers orgasms  
 and admiration  
 a mirror and an echo, sounding-board and background

MARY. a fence without which no freedom exists on the other side

GILLIAN. a hole and an understanding and a forgiveness  
 and fourteen or forty-four or four hundred and forty cunts  
 without face or personality.

MARY. Elevated to a pedestal among the clouds, worshipped and  
 threatening,  
 or else trodden underfoot in utter contempt

GILLIAN. but they were never my expressions  
 behind the mask was never me

MARY. never ever  
 the person one stands equal with  
 every ordinary day

GILLIAN. never ever  
 the person one stands equal with  
 every ordinary day

MARY. What sort of influence do I have on you  
 when I've made you believe  
 that all the thoughts I think  
 are hostile towards you?  
 How can you have gotten the idea  
 that my road to freedom  
 goes over your body?  
 Who gave you the thought  
 that my life  
 is death for you  
 and the death of our love?

GILLIAN. How loudly must I shout  
 how wordlessly breathe into your ear  
 for you to grasp  
 what I'm trying to tell you -

MARY. I don't threaten you  
 my freedom does not hurt you  
 my love does not trample you  
 it does not fight against you  
  
 but for us

GILLIAN. How slowly do I have to talk  
 for you to hear -  
  
 it is very very urgent now  
 if we're going to survive.

MARY. Long have I felt  
 the danger  
 that's hanging over you and me.  
 Many times I have wondered why  
 it hasn't yet  
 fallen down on us  
 and crushed us.

GILLIAN. The Chinese write  
 the word 'crisis'  
 with the sign for 'danger'  
 and the sign for 'possibility'.

*The room darkens. It is early morning, just before dawn. The room is lit only from the window.*

*MARY lights a cigarette, and paces restlessly by the window. GILLIAN is huddled in the corner.*

MARY. I was sitting next to my mother  
 holding her hand  
 when her light blue eyes grew dim.

That moment I promised her  
 that I would never  
 say what she had said:  
 I haven't had the chance.

What I will say  
 if I have to, is:

I didn't take the chance.

The older I get  
 the more I love  
 my mother  
 the more I miss her  
 the better I understand her  
 the more of her characteristics  
 I find to my surprise  
 in myself.

I would like to write  
 about my mother  
 and about my mother's grandmother  
 and my maternal grandmother  
 and my paternal grandmother  
 and my father's grandmother.

GILLIAN. I would like to write  
 about the mothers.

I would like to write  
 about their legacy  
 and what they saw and knew and felt  
 all they were able  
 to put up with  
 all they believed in and hoped for  
 and loved.

*GILLIAN fetches a pen and paper and an open can of beans from the cupboard. She settles herself on the table, ready to write.*

MARY. They had been married nineteen years  
 and every Wednesday night  
 she packed his black bag  
 for that's when he went to the other one

and when he returned home again  
 on Saturday  
 she unpacked his black bag  
 and put his clothes to soak

but one night  
 she ran out into the forest  
 and thought that she would die.

When the children found her in the morning  
 she said that she wouldn't pack the bag  
 never ever again  
 will she pack his bag  
 and she'll never see him again.

He cried a bit  
 because he would gladly have continued  
 to live with her  
 from Saturday to Wednesday each week  
 and then of course  
 there was that laundry  
 that winter she thought  
 she would die.

When the delivery-boy from the florist came  
 in the spring  
 with twenty red roses on their anniversary  
 and a card that said  
 THANK YOU FOR TWENTY HAPPY YEARS  
 she said nothing  
 but took the roses  
 and tore every leaf off them  
 and smashed  
 the stems  
 and slowly and resolutely  
 she dumped everything on the delivery-boy.

GILLIAN *wolfs the beans down straight from the can. She stops suddenly, caught in the act.*

GILLIAN. Sister

you say you're a compulsive eater  
 and emotionally undernourished  
 and your equilibrium a refusal to pry deep  
 sister.

I eat compulsively

to be able to stand my great common sense  
 and my big feelings sit forlornly beside me  
 all my feelings  
 and I  
 through the nights on my sofa.

MARY. What is happening to us?  
 Did you know her? The one who shot herself  
 last Tuesday  
 at dawn  
 after a sleepless night?

All her acquaintances  
 were surprised  
 and upset of course  
 but most of all surprised.

GILLIAN. She who was so strong  
 She who was always happy and outgoing  
 very active in the community  
 and the whole big family.

She seemed to have got over that thing with her husband that  
 he left her  
 that she was left alone in a house that was too big  
 an impressive house, nine rooms  
 the finances apparently were a bit of a problem  
 the house was hard to sell.

MARY. but she had got over it everyone says  
 and seemed strong and happy like before  
 and had started working full time  
 seemed to be in fine shape last autumn  
 say people who knew her.

I never even met her  
 and I know nothing of her last night  
 or the spring or the summer and autumn  
 or all the white nights of this past winter  
 when it snows and snows  
 and snows  
 throughout the nights

GILLIAN. but her dawn  
 sister  
 both you and I recognise.



*Cold dawn light, which builds to daylight. GILLIAN kneels on the floor, poised to write.*

MARY. When I wake up in the morning  
a poem sits in my head  
singing.

I'll write it down right away  
so I won't forget it  
it's got such a good rhythm  
that poem.

*GILLIAN looks up from her work. MARY rushes round the room setting the furniture to rights, laying and clearing the table.*

GILLIAN. I'll just  
fix some tea and eggs and cereal  
set the table  
eat with the others  
clear the table and clean up  
put things back in the fridge  
find something  
to occupy big and small ones  
when it rains  
and then make myself a pot of coffee  
I can enjoy  
while I'm sitting  
at the typewriter.

MARY. How was it again that it started  
that poem?

GILLIAN. Someone gets angry  
because I said  
that I'm the one who runs  
everything in this house  
another one because I hadn't  
covered the ping-pong table  
and then it rained  
last night

one comes and wants to  
talk.

What is it that you're writing  
all the time?

two start a fight  
 one is crying  
 needs lots of hugs to feel better  
 then three sit and draw pictures  
 and talk constantly about  
 what they're drawing.  
 What do lilacs look like?  
 Does it go straight out  
 on both sides  
 and at the top too  
 in lilacs?

then they sing  
 three different songs  
 at the same time.

MARY *moves to the window.*

MARY. That's when I go outside to pick  
 a branch of lilacs in the rain  
 and hope that perhaps it  
 might find the rhythm  
 for my poem.

Lilacs do grow straight out  
 at the top  
 but those flowers couldn't care less  
 about my  
 poems.

I won't allow  
 my work to take time  
 away from my family  
 this I promised myself  
 when I escaped from suburbia  
 just in time.

That's why I smooth out the lines  
 on my forehead  
 when I go through the doorway  
 in the evenings  
 the smoother my forehead  
 the more tired I am.

GILLIAN. That's why I often smile  
 when I'm home

the more I smile  
 the bigger the troubles I've got  
 to deal with on the job.

That's why I read stories  
 with a mild voice  
 and sit for hours on bedsides  
 and listen to ABBA  
 The more I'm predicting scores  
 of ice-hockey matches  
 the more absorbed I am  
 in my own problems.

MARY gets a cardboard box from the cupboard and puts it on the table.

MARY. I almost totally manage  
 to hide from my family  
 the fact that I, too  
 have a life of my own  
 to live.

*She takes a bright bowl of oranges from the box and puts it on the table.  
 The colour is startling in the colourless room. She takes one from the bowl.  
 As she moves away GILLIAN comes to the table and takes an orange.  
 orange.*

GILLIAN. Without those  
 who share my working-days  
 it would be hard for me  
 to work  
 impossible  
 to live

In a world of  
 greyish white  
 greyish blue  
 greyish brown  
 a hostile world  
 a rejecting world  
 which at best could be said to be  
 on guard

were her brown eyes.

Together  
 we bought  
 two yellow cups with orange designs

a tentative beginning  
 in order to conquer  
 the greyish white chill in our office.

Sometimes  
 things went well  
 then we got ourselves  
 – wild with joy –  
 the yellow curtains  
 in a room that we made  
 green as sea water.

Sometimes everything stood still  
 or went  
 backwards.  
 Then we shed salty tears together into the yellow cups.

But always when the going was really tough  
 it still was she and I  
 only she and I

the yellow cups  
 and her brown eyes.

*GILLIAN slips the orange into her pocket. She goes to the cupboard and takes out another box. In it is a small portable typewriter. She sits hugging it on her lap.*

*MARY begins to set up an area for herself to write in. She chooses the objects she wants – a few books, one photograph.*

MARY. Every day  
 that I lived with you  
 I did so  
 because I wanted to.

Every time  
 that it was you  
 and no one else for me  
 it was because it was you  
 I wanted.

Always  
 when I came back to you  
 it was because it was  
 together with you  
 and no one else  
 that I wanted to be.

Only  
 when you dare to believe  
 that this day  
 and all other days  
 are a free choice for me  
 – you or not you –  
 can you and I go on  
 living  
 together.

GILLIAN. Though I'm aware  
 that people die  
 from lack of other people.

I almost cannot stand  
 the shouts and voices  
 laughter and talk  
 demands and love  
 closeness and crowding  
 everything that spills over me  
 every second.

Shrewd and cunning  
 revolutionary and bold  
 I then struggle for my right  
 to those hours of solitude  
 on the sofa  
 in the middle of the night.

*MARY writes her poems on pieces of paper which she sticks to the walls.  
 Hugging the typewriter, GILLIAN is still unable to write.*

MARY. Happy  
 about people  
 I get close to  
 love them to pieces.

You warn me –  
 people simply are not  
 that wonderful.

Doesn't bother me  
 at all  
 so much more reason  
 to love  
 until I get disappointed.

Naive  
you say.

That's right  
I say.

go on loving.

GILLIAN. They think it is courage  
which makes me  
choose the struggle

compulsion it is  
to try to change things.

They think it is my will to fight  
that makes me  
choose the challenge.

dread it is  
that everything will just continue.

They think I am thick-skinned  
because I struggle and challenge

cry is what I do

can't help doing what I'm doing.

MARY. Everywhere  
I looked for you  
who were everywhere  
in my world.

I tried to change  
my world  
so it would fit you  
looked for you everywhere

but the one I finally found  
was myself.

GILLIAN. It is time  
for us  
to scrap  
our guilty conscience, sisters

this society  
lives  
off our guilty conscience

no need at all  
to bother about  
oppressing us  
as long as we  
oppress ourselves.

This is enough

MARY. What would happen . . . ?

GILLIAN. Now it is time  
to scrap  
our guilty conscience, sisters.

Now we have  
got to  
allow ourselves

the disappointment  
the anger  
the rage  
the hate.

MARY. What would happen . . . ?

GILLIAN. When we're done hating  
we'll get up  
and go.

What's done  
while the hands are still shaking  
in indignation  
in anger  
is perhaps not the greatest  
or eternal.

MARY. What would happen . . . ?

GILLIAN. step by step  
we are making progress  
that's the way it is.

MARY. What would happen.  
If I could suddenly speak  
so you could hear  
and understand?

What would happen  
 if suddenly we would  
 dare  
 to trust each other?

What would happen  
 if neither of us  
 ever again  
 lied?

step by step  
 we are making progress  
 that's the way it is.

GILLIAN. When the ground is heaving  
 I take small small steps  
 almost entirely  
 imperceptible ones  
 maybe then I can  
 maintain my balance.

MARY. When the seconds  
 pile up  
 and then come rushing over me  
 all at once  
 I am very severe with them.  
 I have to be.  
 One by one, one by one  
 they get permission to pass me  
 and the endless hours  
 until morning.

*MARY opens the third set of shutters. The second window is revealed.  
 The room is flooded with daylight.*

GILLIAN. When pages and passages  
 and sentences  
 seem impenetrable  
 I take the words  
 one after the other  
 and hold them up to the light  
 so they become  
 transparent.



MARY. Then I gather together  
the miniscule remains  
of my courage  
and whisper quietly.

*The two women are finally able to look at each other, easily and comfortably. For the first time they speak directly to each other.*

GILLIAN. but only to those  
with their ears close to the ground  
and who

are

MARY. slowly

GILLIAN. creeping

MARY. forward

GILLIAN. like

BOTH. me

*GILLIAN starts to type rapidly as the lights fade.*