

**Context: Genevieve is blind and very old.**

*A minute after the lights come up on the audience Genevieve slowly feels out from behind the curtain and gropes her way to the edge of stage.*

GENEVIEVE

Hello. Hello.

*She teeters on the edge of the stage, almost falling off.*

GENEVIEVE

Don't go yet.

Stay five more minutes.

I'm going to tell you a story but I'm going to do it in under five minutes. Does someone have a watch?

*(if no one responds immediately)*

Does someone have a watch?

*She waits for someone to shout "yes." Then:*

GENEVIEVE

All right. Good.

So you'll time me and when five minutes are up you'll shout STOP and then I'll stop. All right?

All right?

And then you can take a little break and go to the bathroom.

All right.

When I went mad I went mad in seven stages!

*One:* I dreamt of scorpions every night for a month. Scorpions crawling closer and closer to me across the floor. Every night a little closer.

*Two:* I kept hearing a name inside my head. Paluba? Ich—Irck—Stack—Irkewicz. Ichthyowitz. Irkthowicz. Irkthy...kowcowicz. Icktho--Irzykowcowicz. Irzykowski. I'd never heard this name before in my life.

*Three:* one morning I awoke to the sensation that the scorpions were now inside my head. I felt them moving around, rooting through my brain matter. Occasionally they would bite me but only when I angered them.

*Four:* I noticed that my breasts were slowly shrinking and that a tiny penis was growing between my legs. I knew that God was doing some kind of experiment on me but I could not figure out for the life of me what that experiment was. I prayed it was all for the best.

*Five:* the scorpions in my head disappeared but they were replaced two weeks later by the knowledge that tiny men were colonizing my brain. Workers. They were drawing up some sort of plan, chatting, drawing lines across my skull. At one point two hundred Benedictine monks entered my right ear, took a tour of my head, and then exited out the left.

*Six:* I became aware of an unus mundus. I felt a deep but also disturbing connection with the soul of every person and every object that had ever existed. Not just the souls of

departed conquistadors but also the soul of a picture frame, a toy trumpet. Sometimes I could see souls or sense souls but I also became able to taste and smell souls.

*Seven:* I realized that this was all the work of my ex-husband, not God. I became aware that he had replaced God in the celestial sphere. There had been some kind of battle between John and God and John had won. I was now in a godless world. John's world. I had a vision of God's soul, a dead soul, the corpse of a soul, floating down a muddy river.

*Pause.*

GENEVIEVE

I went mad and then I was 45, which was older than I thought I'd ever be, and then I was 50, which was older than I thought I'd ever be when I was 45, and then on the night of my 57th birthday I went blind and I stood naked in the middle of my bedroom and all of a sudden I was at the center of the universe, facing out. No more trying to get in anyone else's head. Oh, what does she think of me? What does that man bagging my groceries think of--nope. It's just me! Alone in the universe! Standing in the center of my own life. I can't even look in a mirror. It's just me and my thoughts and sometimes I have no thoughts at all. Sometimes I just lie in bed in the morning and think about nothing. Imagine that.

Before you take a break, imagine that.

Sitting in the center of your own life with no thoughts at all about what other people are thinking.

They can think whatever they like.

You can all think whatever you like about me.

*(to the person timing her)*

See? And it hasn't even been five minutes.

*She exits, finding her way back to the opening in the curtain. And now Intermission Two really begins.*