**The Restless Ghost of Emma Crawford**

A Play by August Mergelman

**Characters**

(2-4 women, 1-3 men)

Emma Crawford

Wilhelm Hildenbrand

Alice Crawford

Madame Crawford

Pauline

Mr. Potter

Miss Hubbard

Eastern Wind

Western Wind

Southern Wind

Northern Wind

Billy

Isaac

Voices

A talented pianist and nature enthusiast, partial to spirituality, and unfortunately stricken with tuberculosis.

An accomplished engineer and Emma’s dear friend.

Emma’s eccentric sister.

The mother of Emma and Alice.

The reverend’s wife and the town gossip.

A kindred old man, slightly enamored of Madame Crawford.

A Kentucky girl and the eventual Mrs. Hildenbrand.

Spirits who torment Emma in death.

Adventurous young boys.

**Time**

The Turn of the Century

**Place**

Manitou Springs, Colorado

**Piano Music**

Piano music, live or recorded, underscores dialogue and provides segues between scenes. Musical selections should complement both the period and the mood of the play.

**Casting**

The cast may range from a minimum of a three to a maximum of seven. Besides Emma, there should be a gender balance among the actors. Offstage voices, whether live or recorded, may be renamed, renumbered, and/or synthesized in any number of ways according to the production concept. In a cast of three, Emma may double as Alice. In a larger cast, lines belonging to the Eastern and Western Winds may be given to the Southern Wind.

**SCENE 1**

%

*SETTING: The crest of Red Chief Mountain.*

%

*AT RISE: Lost in thought, EMMA slowly walks through the center isle of the theatre toward the stage. A montage of voices, underscored by piano, explains recent events in Emma’s life.*

%

Doctor: Do pardon, Madame Crawford, this unwelcome diagnosis.

 # There is no social status that concerns tuberculosis.

%

Man: She plays piano beautifully.

%

Woman: She learned it from her mother.

%

Doctor: Consumption favors no young person over any other.

%

Woman: In damp and crowded Boston streets, contagion only breeds.

%

Doctor: A bit of mountain air is just the thing her body needs.

%

 # *[Piano music—scales.]*

%

Man: A prodigy, indeed. Young Emma’s talent will be missed.

%

Madame: A cool and arid climate? Well, we’d better start a list.

%

Alice: We’re traveling to Colorado?

%

Woman: Oh, that sounds like fun!

%

Alice: But what of all the balls? The season’s only just begun.

%

Madame: Be quiet, Alice. Don’t you know your sister’s health comes first?

%

 # *[Clamor. Voices run together. A waltz.]*

%

Woman: Miss Crawford, your must have a chat with Mr. Hildenbrand.

 # He helped to build the bridge connecting Brooklyn and Manhattan.

%

Wilhelm: Charmed.

%

Emma: The famous New York Bridge?

%

Woman: The Brooklyn Bridge, my dear.

%

Emma: Of Course. You worked in what capacity?

%

Wilhelm: As engineer.

%

 # *[Clamor. Voices run together.]*

%

Wilhelm: Miss Crawford, you’re girl of charming grace and modest carriage.

 # Humbled now, on bended knee, I ask your hand in marriage.

%

 # *[Clamor. Voices run together.]*

%

Doctor: In dry, unfettered mountain air, your daughter can be nursed.

%

Woman: They say the springs have minerals.

%

Madame: Whatever’s best for her.

%

Woman: The waters are medicinal.

%

Doctor: I’m afraid there is no cure.

%

# *[As the DOCTOR’S final line reverberates, EMMA sits and closes her eyes. The force of her concentration and the gentle whisper of the EAST WIND silence the cacophony. She grins as she releases a sigh of relief.]*

%

East Wind: Congratulations, Emma. You have finally arrived.

 # Upon this sacred mountain crest, your soul shall be revived.

%

 # *[Clamor. Voices run together. Silence. Blackout.]*

%

**SCENE 2**

%

*SETTING: The parlor of the Crawford home.*

%

*AT RISE: MADAME CRAWFORD glances fretfully through the window curtains. Occasionally, she interrupts her frantic pacing and muttering to call for her younger daughter, ALICE, who is upstairs, unseen.*

%

Madame: I haven’t seen her since this morning. Now it’s getting late,

# And much too dark to… Alice!...

 # *(looks up, waits for response.)*

# How my daughters aggravate

 # My weary nerves…. I’d better fetch my coat and lantern… Alice!

%

Alice: Mother, I can see the…

%

Madame: What?

%

Alice: Aurora Borealis.

%

Madame: We live too far south. Put down that telescope at once,

 # And help me.

%

Alice: Over Red Chief Mountain.

%

Madame: No, my darling dunce!

 # You’re pointed south.

%

Alice: I am?

%

Madame: The lights are called the Northern Lights,

 # Because they’re North!

%

Alice: But I see violet ribbons, oh so bright,

 # And over Red Chief Mountain. Wonder how they came to be.

%

Madame: We’re going out in search of Emma!

%

Alice: Why do you need me?

%

Madame: She may be in a spot of danger!

%

Alice: She can hold her own,

 # Unless, of course, she tumbled down and broke her collar bone.

 # Suppose that she’s been ambushed, and she’s…

%

Madame: I am not amused!

%

Alice: Small wonder she we would run away, the way we’re both abused.

%

 # *[Knock at the door.]*

%

Madame: Now, who could that be?

%

 # *[Enter WILHELM.]*

%

Madame: Oh, thank goodness. Mr. Hildenbrand,

 # Come in.

%

Wilhelm: Good evening, Madame Crawford. Are you well?

%

Madame: Just grand

 # In all regards, expecting one.

%

Wilhelm: And what could that be?

%

Madame: Emma.

%

Wilhelm: Is she feeling under the weather?

%

Madame: I wish our dilemma

 # Were so very simple. She’s been missing since this morning.

 # She didn’t even pack a lunch, just left without a warning.

%

Wilhelm: Her infirmed condition—that’s outrageous!

%

Madame: I concur.

 # Perhaps you’d like to join us while we go in search of her.

%

Wilhelm: Oh course, I’d be obliged to…

%

Madame: Alice!

%

# *[MADAME CRAWFORD looks up and waits a moment for a response. Enter EMMA, unseen.]*

%

Madame: Really it’s a sin…

%

Emma: The way she disrespects her mother.

%

Madame: Emma! Where’ve you been?

%

Emma: Good evening, Mother. Mr. Hildenbrand, I trust you’re well.

 # I saw you there outside. I thought it would be rude to yell

 # Your name.

%

Madame: That so? You thought it would be rude to shout his name,

 # Yet I’ve been shouting yours for hours!

%

Emma: Mother,…

%

Wilhelm: When I came

 # From town, I should have noticed you.

%

Emma: But I was not in town,

 # For you were coming up the hill as I was coming down.

%

Madame: Our guest must be appalled at your behavior.

%

Wilhelm: I’m relieved

 # To see her safe and sound.

%

Madame: Where have you been?

%

Emma: You won’t believe

 # Me if I tell you.

%

Madame: Tell us anyway.

%

Emma: I just descended

 # Red Chief Mountain.

%

 # *[MADAME CRAWFORD and WILHELM gasp.]*

%

Madame: Oh, my heavens!

%

Emma: That’s why I’m so winded.

%

Madame: I’d prefer to hear that you’ve been gambling with pirates,

 # Not jeopardizing your good health.

%

Emma: I knew you’d be irate,

 # And I don’t blame you. I took wanton risk of life and limb.

 # Can you forgive my reckless nature?

%

Madame: Don’t ask me. Ask him.

 # It’s clear that my opinion counts for nothing.

%

Emma: Oh now, Mother,…

%

Madame: I am of no consequence. Seek pardon from another,

 # Such as Mr. Hildenbrand. Perhaps he has some clout

 # That I am lacking.

%

Emma: Mother, really…

%

Wilhelm: I am still in doubt

 # That she went up the hill at all, so I do not have cause

 # To scold your daughter.

%

Madame: You’re no help.

%

Emma: And I am at a loss

 # To hear your disbelief.

%

Wilhelm: Miss Crawford, you just said yourself

 # That we would not believe you.

%

# *[Realizing that her own words are being used against her, EMMA sighs and playfully rolls her eyes.]*

%

Emma: It’s so tedious to delve

 # Into the details of a conversation’s recent past,

 # And must you be so literal?

%

Wilhelm: A product of my caste.

 # We engineers comprise a calculating band of brothers.

%

Emma: Does that include the questioning of feats achieved by others?

%

 # *[WILHELM shrugs. Silence.]*

%

Emma: Mother, you believe me.

%

Madame: Oh, I’m staying out of this.

 # When you two quarrel, far away is where my proper place is.

%

Wilhelm: Quarrel?

%

Emma: Mother, you began this quarrel?

%

Madame: I confess.

%

Emma: Do you believe I climbed the mountain?

%

Madame: Anybody’s guess.

%

 # *[WILHELM enjoys a quiet laugh.]*

%

Emma: Alright, my doubting Thomas, we have advantageous weather

 # At our leisure. You and I shall make the trek together.

%

Wilhelm: Well, that would keep the local gossips busy—goodness knows.

%

Emma: Did I say something scandalous?

%

Wilhelm: Miss Crawford, you propose

 # A most ungainly time for such a monumental hike.

%

Madame: Young fellow, with my blessing, take her anywhere you’d like!

 # Good evening, Jack. Good evening, Jill.

%

Wilhelm: *(amused)*

 # Good evening.

%

 # *[Exit MADAME CRAWFORD.]*

%

Emma: Never mind

 # Her wicked sense of humor.

%

Wilhelm: Pardon?

%

Emma: Years have not been kind.

%

Wilhelm: She’s charming.

%

Emma: Which is why you came, and I should not have let her

 # Go to bed and leave you stranded.

%

 # *[WILHELM kisses EMMA’S hand.]*

%

Wilhelm: Ah, but you know better.

 # You’re the one I’ve come to see.

%

Emma: I’m pleasantly relieved,

 # And yet it seems more usual that callers are received

 # Before the dinner hour.

%

Wilhelm: I’ll admit that I’ve come late,

 # But I was… somehow…

%

Emma: *(intently)*

 # Tell me, Wilhelm. Do not hesitate.

%

Wilhelm: It just seems foolish.

%

Emma: What does?

%

Wilhelm: Nothing.

%

Emma: Nothing that mundane,

 # Prosaic words can suitably describe.

%

Wilhelm: I simply came

 # To call on you.

%

Emma: You came, but by what force?

%

Wilhelm: No, Miss Crawford.

 # Superstition has no place when intellect can offer

 # Explanation that is rational, empirical,…

%

Emma: Oh, leave it to an engineer to view a miracle

 # Beneath a microscope. I should have known a railroad man

 # Would disregard phenomena he fails to understand.

%

Wilhelm: From engineer to railroad man, I’m hastily demoted

 # In your merciless esteem.

%

Emma: I’ve never sugarcoated

 # My opinion.

%

Wilhelm: That I know. In every sort of topic

 # Whether politics or art, you make me feel myopic

 # And obtuse.

%

Emma: Oh, I do not. You’re patronizing me.

%

Wilhelm: I must admit to several times that you have helped me see

 # The merits of the opposition. Now, I too respect

# The cause of preservation.

%

Emma: Oh?

%

Wilhelm: Why shouldn’t we protect

 # The natural beauty that surrounds us?

%

Emma: Still, you are inclined

 # To clear so many timbers for a scenic railroad line.

%

 # *[Awkward silence.]*

%

Emma: Forgive my frankness.

%

Wilhelm: Never. You present it with such grace,

 # And once the tracks are laid, I do expect to see your face

 # Upon the summit of Pikes Peak.

%

Emma: I’ll never board that train.

%

Wilhelm: Oh, I know that. I meant that you would climb, come snow or rain,

%

Emma: I’d come on foot?

%

Wilhelm: You’d hop on one, to prove your fervent zeal.

%

Emma: To greet you?

%

Wilhelm: No, in protestation. I know how you feel

 # About our desecration of that mountain. You’ll be dressed…

 # Just like a suffragette or temperance leader.

%

Emma: *(giggling at the thought)*

# How you jest.

%

Wilhelm: And shouting righteous slogans.

%

Emma: Oh?

%

Wilhelm: And waving clever signs.

 # “The lips that speak of industry shall never mix with mine!”

%

Emma: Say, that one’s not too bad.

%

Wilhelm: *(with a bow)*

# It is the gift that I bestow

 # Upon your movement.

%

Emma: Thank you.

%

Wilhelm: You’re most welcome.

%

Emma: Tell me, though,

 # How you would have me forging through the rain and sleet and snow…

%

Wilhelm: And on one foot.

%

Emma: Precisely, and above the timber line,

 # When I can’t climb a single hill?

%

# *[WILHELM is chagrinned.]*

%

Emma: Your sentiments, not mine.

%

Wilhelm: Miss Crawford, I was reticent to…

%

Emma: Yes?

%

Wilhelm: Believe the story

 # That you told me—not at all to mitigate the glory

 # That you rightfully are due—but if I did believe

 # You conquered Red Chief Mountain, I would have to be naïve

 # Enough to think that you were well—in fact, completely freed

 # Of any trace of illness.

%

Emma: *(with a distant gaze)*

 # That’s a lovely thought, indeed.

%

Wilhelm: A thought in which my stoic mind forbids me take delight.

 # We’d both be fools to let our hopes ascend to such a height.

%

 # *[EMMA reflects.]*

%

Wilhelm: I hope my words have not offended.

%

Emma: *(grinning)*

# Nothing of the kind;

 # However, your sincerity and tenderness remind

 # Me of the—let’s just say—*experience* that, well, I could’ve

 # Had, had I ascended Red Chief Mountain. Would

 # You be so patient as to hear me tell it?

%

Wilhelm: Tell away.

%

 # *[The wind blows.]*

%

Emma: It started with a passage that I read the other day,

 # About the mighty winds that blow in cardinal directions.

 # They don’t just move clouds along, they offer us protection…

%

Wilhelm: All this time, I thought we sought protection from the wind.

%

 # *[EMMA does not reciprocate his amusement. The wind blows.]*

%

Wilhelm: Forgive me.

%

Emma: Mr. Hildenbrand, it’s clear you’ve never listened

 # To the winds—I mean, with every fiber of your being.

 # You would be amazed to know the things the winds can bring.

 # The awesome natural forces that so thoughtlessly reduce

 # The tallest trees to twigs can also let us mortals choose

 # The little thing that shape our lives, and our eternal spirits.

%

 # *[WILHELM grins.]*

%

Emma: But you dismiss each paranormal theory when you hear it.

%

Wilhelm: No, Miss Crawford. When you speak, it matters not your text.

 # Your storytelling makes me wonder what will happen next.

%

Emma: Shall I go on then?

%

Wilhelm: I insist. I simply have to know

 # Exactly how you spent your wishes.

%

Emma: Wishes? Goodness, no.

 # The winds do not grant wishes and perform such petty tasks.

 # No, one does not address the winds. One listens, and they ask

 # Us what we think. They seek to gain our points of view

 # In matters that concern our fates.

%

Wilhelm: So what did they ask you?

%

Emma: It started here, on our veranda, just before the sun

 # Had reached the window sill. I thought I’d have a bit of fun

 # And listen for the Eastern Wind. My heart was not yet in it,

 # Till I felt vibrations, like the pedals of the spinet

 # When the lowest tones reverberate, and send a shiver

 # Through your bones. Before too long I heard the gentle quiver

 # Of a voice. It must have been my own, or so I thought

 # Until it called me by my name, a quirk to which I’m not

 # Disposed. Well, at this point, I didn’t care to listen longer,

 # But when I tried ignoring it, the voice grew even stronger

 # Till I knew that my response was most imperative.

%

Wilhelm: Response to what?

%

Emma: The Eastern Wind’s insistent and persuasive

 # Proposition that I climb the mountain.

%

Wilhelm: Why not just

 # Decline?

%

Emma: My mind said, “No,” to which my heart replied, “You must.”

 # I found it was impossible to disregard the call,

 # So out I went. I barely took the time to fetch my shawl.

 # As up I went, my ears were full of voices from the past,

 # A dissonant cacophony of voices, till at last,

%

East Wind: Congratulations, Emma. You have finally arrived.

 # Upon this sacred mountain crest, your soul shall be revived.

%

Emma: I reached the very top. The noises faded once I closed

 # My weary eyes.

%

# *[The EASTERN WIND, through the effect of filtered light, mechanical puppetry, or leitmotif, establishes its identity.]*

%

Emma: Without delay, the Eastern Wind disclosed

 # Its presence with a gentle breeze,…

 # *(remembering her initial surprise)*

 # A sort of invitation.

%

Wilhelm: Weren’t you there already?

%

Emma: Yes. Imagine my elation

 # When it asked me if I’d like to come a second time.

%

Wilhelm: Which must explain your eagerness to make another climb

 # To prove me wrong.

%

Emma: Although we didn’t have to go tonight.

 # In fact, we may delay our climb until the time is right.

%

Wilhelm: Perhaps you favor warmer weather.

%

Emma: No, an older age.

 # At sixty-eight, my diary may need a thrilling page.

%

Wilhelm: I envy your tenacity.

%

Emma: Today’s exhilaration,

 # It would seem, has propagated my rejuvenation.

%

 # *[WILHELM laughs.]*

%

Wilhelm: Your new enthusiasm is alarmingly contagious.

 # May only years of frolicsome adventure ever age us.

%

Emma: I accept!

%

Wilhelm: I’m not surprised. You’ve spent the livelong day

 # Accepting every challenge, great or small, that’s come your way.

%

Emma: Your estimation of my eagerness is much inflated.

 # When the second question came my way, I hesitated.

%

Wilhelm: Ah, your second wind? Do tell.

%

Emma: The West, to be exact.

%

# *[The WESTERN WIND announces its unique presence.]*

%

Emma: Our conversation’s topic made me think of you, in fact.

%

Wilhelm: You’ve piqued my interest.

%

Emma: There I sat, surveying my surroundings,

 # People in the town below, ephemeral as groundlings.

%

Wilhelm: So you thought of me?

%

Emma: *(dismissing him with a wave)*

 # Not yet. The Western Wind declared

Emma: # Itself by asking me if Red Chief Mountain should be spared

*(continued)* The burgeoning expansion of the busy town below.

%

Wilhelm: The wind already knew you’d never dream of saying, “No.”

%

Emma: You might be pleased to hear that my response was more subdued.

 # I said, “As much as possible.”

%

Wilhelm: Just what does that exclude?

%

 # *[EMMA thinks.]*

%

Emma: No houses, no hotels. It shan’t be plundered, plowed, or mined.

%

Wilhelm: Not even just a little train yard?

%

Emma: Nothing of the kind.

%

Wilhelm: You clarified your answer for the wind—I take it.

%

Emma: No.

%

Wilhelm: It seems you may have left a loophole.

%

Emma: It may well be so.

%

Wilhelm: It also seems the mighty winds may be preoccupied

 # With that which only may concern a certain mountainside.

 # I thought you said the winds were sympathetic, yet I fail

 # To see their sympathetic side. The things they offer pale

 # Compared to things concerning average human beings.

%

Emma: True.

 # They didn’t speak too much of me, and yet they spoke of you.

%

Wilhelm: I beg your pardon.

%

Emma: Once I knew the Western Wind had lifted,

 # There I sat, until another wind discreetly drifted

 # Toward my ear.

%

# *[The SOUTHERN WIND indentifies itself.]*

%

Emma: It was a warmer wind, with Southern charms.

 # I recognized it instantly; the dialect disarms

 # A Yankee girl without a fighting chance.

%

Wilhelm: It was flirtatious?

%

Emma: I should say it was, indeed, but don’t be cross. The gracious

 # Wind caressed my blushing cheek, positioning my view

 # At one point in particular.

%

Wilhelm: What point exactly?

%

Emma: You.

 # At three—or was it four o’clock?—you stopped to smoke your pipe.

 # A smudge upon the window caught your eye, and when you wiped

 # It clean, you noticed Red Chief Mountain, at which time, the thought

 # Of me surprised you.

%

 # *[Struck with amazement, WILHELM raises his brow.]*

%

Emma: Have I blundered?

%

Wilhelm: You have not.

 # I would, however, clarify you often cross my mind,

 # And furthermore, my Dear, your eyes could make an eagle blind,

 # Comparatively speaking. Maybe you had some assistance.

%

Emma: Oh?

%

Wilhelm: A telescope could help one see at such a distance.

%

 # *[EMMA laughs at the accusation.]*

%

Emma: I just tell you what I witnessed, not how I was able.

 # What’s it matter, anyway? You know it’s just a fable,

 # After all.

%

Wilhelm: But even men of science aren’t uncouth

 # Enough to know that every fable hides a grain of truth.

 # Until I’ve heard the role I play in this one, Madame Aesop,

 # Your discussion with the wind is nothing more than gossip.

%

Emma: Patience, Mr. Hildenbrand. I’ll tell you what transpired

 # In our discourse. After all, the Southern Wind inquired

 # Of your own potential as a husband.

%

Wilhelm: Husband? Whose?

%

Emma: It’s odd that you should ask. The wind would only let me choose

 # Your future as a husband—not a word about the bride.

%

 # *[WILHELM grins, enjoying the bittersweet irony.]*

%

Emma: I only tell you what occurred, our history aside.

 # I didn’t mean to open any wounds.

%

Wilhelm: Who says you did?

 # I’m vexed that you refuse my hand and yet refuse to rid

 # Yourself of… my distinguished company.

%

Emma: I never will!

%

Wilhelm: Though you’re the one who brought the topic up tonight, I still

 # Expect to hear myself proposing to you yet again.

 # I tell myself that I must hide my wounded pride, but then

 # Redundancy is indignation I am not above.

%

Emma: You speak to me of marriage but you never speak of…

%

# *[WILHELM turns toward EMMA and waits for her to finish.]*

%

Emma: Forgive me. I misspoke.

%

Wilhelm: You didn’t end what you began.

%

Emma: I didn’t?

%

Wilhelm: Don’t be coy. I know that your attention span

 # Is not as short as that.

%

Emma: Perhaps you have an inclination

 # Of my words unspoken.

%

Wilhelm: My depraved imagination

 # Runs amuck. Perhaps you’re growing weary of me.

%

Emma: Never!

%

Wilhelm: Or you’ve found yourself another suitor.

%

Emma: Aren’t you clever?

%

Wilhelm: Have you?

%

Emma: You know very well that I would never marry

 # Any man but you.

%

 # *[WILHELM stares blankly.]*

%

Emma: You find my words surprising?

%

Wilhelm: Very.

%

Emma: Splendid.

%

Wilhelm: Why?

%

Emma: It proves to me we all leave words unsaid.

%

Wilhelm: Don’t tell me ambiguity is something that you dread.

 # You’re known to be ambiguous yourself.

%

Emma: I can’t rebut

 # Your claim.

%

Wilhelm: Have I left words unspoken?

%

Emma: Yes!

%

Wilhelm: Please tell me what.

%

Emma: If you don’t know already, I won’t say.

%

Wilhelm: I should have known as much.

%

Emma: Please tell me why you’re grinning so.

%

Wilhelm: You haven’t lost your touch—

 # Impossible as ever!

%

Emma: Beg your pardon!

%

Wilhelm: Oh, but wait!

 # I’ve made a breakthrough.

%

Emma: How?

%

Wilhelm: Permit me to evaluate

 # The evidence aloud.

%

Emma: Please do.

%

Wilhelm: You’ve told me that you wouldn’t

 # Marry any man but me.

%

Emma: That’s true.

%

Wilhelm: But then you couldn’t

 # Bring yourself to tell me what you told the Southern Wind,

 # In answer to his question.

%

Emma: What?

%

Wilhelm: You thought you might offend

 # Me.

%

Emma: How?

%

Wilhelm: The wind asked you if I shall ever marry.

%

Emma: True.

%

Wilhelm: And you said “No, he never shall.”

%

 # *[WILHELM slaps his knee and reclines in satisfaction.]*

%

Emma: Was that your little breakthrough?

%

Wilhelm: A bit of “Yes,” a dash of “No.” It keeps you undecided.

%

Emma: I must admit I’m baffled by the logic you’ve provided.

 # To think I’d be so cruel to make you live a bachelor’s life.

 # What right have I denying you the burden of a wife?

 # The truth is that I answered “Yes.”

%

 # *[WILHELM shrugs.]*

%

Wilhelm: I’m pleasantly chagrinned,

 # And here’s a feather for your cap—I’m jealous of the wind.

%

Emma: There! That proves I’ve opened wounds.

%

Wilhelm: And packed them good with salt.

%

Emma: I think we’re acting foolishly, and this is all my fault.

 # I’m toying with your heart, and there is nothing I want less,

 # When you’re the one to whom I have such longings to confess.

%

Wilhelm: You mean there’s more?

%

Emma: There’s so much more that dwells within my heart.

 # With all the clamor of the day, we didn’t even start

 # To scratch the surface. I want so much more than wild-growing

 # Mountain tops and wedding vows. The winds, with all their blowing,

# Never took the time to ask me what I really want.

%

# *[EMMA sighs and stares into the distance. WILHELM draws closer to her side.]*

%

Wilhelm: Well, that’s because they know that I’m your rightful confidante,

# And you must tell me every word, omitting not a phrase.

%

Emma: It started when we lived in Boston, long before the days

 # Of my… condition. Mother played piano, as did I.

 # Though she had more intrinsic talent, I would always try

 # To emulate her. She gave students lessons through the day,

 # But I received the most attention. Often she would say

Emma: That I’d perform in public concerts by the age of ten.

*(continued)* Well, I was really twelve, but it was still so thrilling then.

 # The audience applauded warmly. I can hear them still.

 # So gay it was,… I wanted to conceal that I was ill,

 # But one day, I just couldn’t play, and Mother spent her time

 # Presenting me to specialists. In fact, the reason I’m

 # Alive today is that she sold each part and parcel we could spare,

 # And moved out West, where I could breathe the unpolluted air.

 # She left so many things back East, society and wealth,

 # And so did Alice—bless her heart—and all to save my health.

 # Such selfless acts of sacrifice were made, and I regret

 # That I may never live to give the grace I freely get.

%

 # *[After a moment of silence, EMMA turns to WILHELM.]*

%

Emma: You’re silent. I don’t blame you. Look at me. As I unfurl

 # My heart to you, I must appear to be a silly girl.

%

Wilhelm: Miss Crawford, at this moment, I am clay at your disposal.

 # Thank you for assuring me that each of my proposals

 # Was worth making, though each one an act of subjugation.

 # What I’ve learned from you has been my highest education.

%

 # *[EMMA tries to hide her grin.]*

%

Emma: Now I’m feeling bashful. We should quickly change the subject

 # Else I blush.

%

Wilhelm: Which suits me fine because you’ve been neglect

 # To tell me of your conversation with the Northern Wind.

%

# *[EMMA is silent. Outdoing all three of its counterparts, the ominous NORTHERN WIND makes itself known.]*

%

Wilhelm: Oh, come. All four must play their roles before your tale can end.

%

Emma: You needn’t humor me. I know how cynical you are.

%

Wilhelm: You may as well divulge the rest. I’ve weathered it so far.

%

Emma: If you insist, I’ll tell you what transpired, though I fear

 # You’re apt to disapprove of that which you’re about to hear.

%

Wilhelm: I’ll be the judge of that.

%

Emma: The air was absolutely still,

 # And yet, I grabbed my scarf because I felt a sudden chill.

 # As I began to tie a knot, it filled up like a sail

 # And wrapped around a branch, where it was carried by a gale.

 # Before I could untangle it, the North Wind seized my hand.

 # My senses and my faculties were in the wind’s command.

 # Whereas the North Wind’s counterparts would whisper what they said,

 # The Northern Wind transcended words, and spoke to me, instead,

 # In thoughts already fully formed, and tempered with emotion.

 # The spoken word is but a brook, and this was like the ocean.

 # The question draped my body like an early autumn frost.

Emma: To translate what I felt, I fear that words are at a loss.

*(continued)* It showed to me a darkness that was infinitely vast.

 # To enter it, a spirit has to disavow its past.

 # The black, uncharted mystery evoked a sense of awe,

 # Which turned to dread when my deliberation had to draw

 # To its conclusion,… so I thought.

%

Wilhelm: You didn’t have to choose?

%

Emma: I don’t recall that I accepted, nor did I refuse.

%

Wilhelm: But what was being asked of you? You haven’t told me that.

%

 # *[EMMA takes a moment to form her words.]*

%

Emma: “Would I embrace the darkness?”

%

 # *[Silence]*

%

Wilhelm: I’m afraid to know just what

 # That might entail.

%

Emma: That is my sentiment as well.

%

Wilhelm: Is darkness evil? Is it death?

%

Emma: I wish I could tell

 # You what the darkness represents, but like I said before,

 # The North Wind was, by far, the most elusive of the four.

%

Wilhelm: You don’t recall how you responded?

%

Emma: Now it’s coming back…

 # It bid me not to answer for the moment, and the black

 # Formation drifted.

%

Wilhelm: To return again?

%

 # *[EMMA thinks for a moment.]*

%

Emma: I know it will,

 # But for the moment it moved on and left me on the hill.

%

Wilhelm: And how will you respond when it returns?

%

Emma: I do not know.

 # I only knew with certainty that it was time to go.

%

Wilhelm: But what about your scarf?

%

Emma: Oh, drat! I knew I would forget it.

 # Such is life. It is an insignificant regret.

%

Wilhelm: The only one you’ve had today?

%

Emma: I’d say that is correct.

 # From start to end, I felt the strange affair was somehow perfect,

 # Even though I also felt the venture was unwise.

 # Just now you saw me acquiesce when mother criticized

 # My reckless actions. I don’t blame her. She has taken pains

 # To save my health, and if she found her efforts were in vain,

Emma: I’d think myself a most ungrateful daughter—a disgrace.

*(continued)* Her voice pursued me down at my accelerated pace.

 # I heard her warning under my own breath.

 # She scolded me for tempting fate and courting early death,

 # And nodding in agreement were the gravestones, all in rows,

 # That line the graveyard wall.

 #  *(with a shiver of repulsion)*

 # Oh, how my apprehension grows

 # To such a fever pitch if I so much as think about

 # A place so wrought with death. Alas, there was no other route.

 # When I was climbing up the hill, I never even gave

 # A thought to where I was. I noticed not a single grave.

%

# *[EMMA drifts in thought.]*

%

Wilhelm: You’ve mentioned that you dislike graveyards.

%

Emma: Wilhelm, promise me

 # That should I meet untimely death, my resting place will be

 # As far away from bone yards as a resting place can get.

%

Wilhelm: You needn’t speak of such unpleasant topics.

%

Emma: You forget

 # How truly close to death I came when I took ill last spring.

%

Wilhelm: That’s all behind us.

%

Emma: Don’t dismiss me.

%

Wilhelm: Will you never bring

 # The subject up again if I agree to your request?

%

Emma: That’s fair enough.

%

Wilhelm: Then I’ll make sure your body’s laid to rest…

 # On top of Red Chief Mountain.

%

 # *[EMMA releases a startled laugh.]*

%

Emma: There’s no need to be absurd.

%

Wilhelm: I challenge you to find a place to be interred.

%

Emma: Alright… The garden. Never mind. It’s but a postage stamp.

 # Our relatives in Boston own some land… No, much too damp.

%

 # *[With a hearty laugh, WILHELM rises and goes to the door.]*

%

Emma: You’re laughing.

%

Wilhelm: I imagine that the winds found you amusing.

%

Emma: Why?

%

Wilhelm: You have a funny way about you when you’re choosing

 # Your own destiny, or mine, depending on the case.

%

Emma: The fault is yours. You challenged me to find a better place

 # To spend eternity.

%

Wilhelm: And should you ever find a better

 # Spot, you’ll have to tell me all about it in a letter.

%

Emma: I’ll tell you so in person.

%

Wilhelm: Don’t you leave me in suspense.

 # I’m counting on your letters to relieve the Eastern pretense.

%

Emma: Of course! You’re off to in New York City soon! It slipped my mind.

%

Wilhelm: But I’ll return to Manitou in no time.

%

Emma: You must find

 # The time to write me back.

%

Wilhelm: Miss Crawford, I would never dream

 # Of doing otherwise.

%

Emma: Is this our last goodbye? It seems

 # So sudden.

%

Wilhelm: This goodbye is not our last, but just the same,

 # Goodbye.

%

 # *[WILHELM kisses EMMA’S hand.]*

%

Emma: You’re always welcome here.

%

Wilhelm: I’m always glad I came.

%

 # *[WILHELM releases EMMA’S hand.]*

%

Wilhelm: Your absence has already left me longing for your touch.

%

 # *[Exit WILHELM.]*

%

Emma: And someday, Mr. Hildenbrand, you’ll tell me just how much.

%

 # *[Blackout.]*

%

**SCENE 3**

%

*SETTING: The writing desks of WILHELM and EMMA divide the stage.*

%

*AT RISE: WILHELM and EMMA exchange letters. Any combination of conventions, including voice over, pantomime, or tableaux, may be employed; however, the characters should not be reading their own words aloud as they write.*

%

Wilhelm: My Dear Miss Crawford, I already miss your lovely face

 # As fervently as I desire to fly this dreary place.

 # On Friday, I had dinner with a fellow engineer,

 # Whose temperament is so like mine, he’s something of a mirror.

 # As we exchanged our compliments, I couldn’t help but think

 # Of all the men who’ve died—or worse—who’ve suffered to the brink

 # Of wishing they were dead, and all because we didn’t know

 # That rate of change in atmospheric pressure must be slow.

 # It’s common now to call their illness “caisson’s disease,”

 # And every year, complaints of it relentlessly increase.

 # I wonder if the Brooklyn Bridge was really worth the pain

 # Of all the men who never will be quite themselves again.

 # Miss Crawford, I resent the fact you’ve made my mind alert

 # To ethical dilemmas from which others just avert

 # Their disbelieving eyes, and yet as much as I resent

 # The way that you have tainted my perception and my judgment,

 # I am ever grateful that you’ve helped me understand

 # The beauty of dissention. Warmly, Mr. Hildenbrand.

%

Emma: My Dearest Mr. Hildenbrand, You flatter me again.

 # Such undeserving words of praise you heap on one who spends

 # Her time surviving to the best of her ability,

 # And since you’ve brought to light the subject of humility,

 # It pains me to admit that I have partially conceded

 # To your humorous advice. Reluctantly, I’ve heeded

 # All the merits Red Chief Mountain has to recommend it.

 # After all, eternity’s forever. Why not spend it

 # In the arms of beauty? Though I know that you’re delighted

# That you’ve won, you need to know that I have not decided

 # As of yet, to make your flippant and absurd suggestion

 # My desire. The feasibility is still in question.

 # Still—the fact remains—you dared me find a better spot

 # To rest in peace, and after weeks of trying, I have not.

 # The whole of old New York must be aglow with your bravado.

 # All the same, be well. Your humbled friend in Colorado.

 # P.S. I’ve read about the Brooklyn Bridge, and I can’t lie—

 # I wish I had the chance to see it stretch across the sky.

 # It benefits so many people. You’re too quick to scold

 # Yourself. From all I’ve heard, it is a wonder to behold.

%

Wilhelm: My Dear Miss Crawford, I’m obliged to chide you for the way

 # You’ve broken our agreement. You told me you never say

Wilhelm: Another word of burial, yet you devoted nearly

*(continued)* Half of your last letter to that sordid topic. Clearly,

 # You owe me another letter, only free of such

 # Unsavory material. To read such things from one

 # I love so… Love.

%

# *[WILHELM sighs and then chuckles quietly, reflecting on the truth behind his folly. With hesitation, he crumples the letter and sets it aside. After a moment, he searches his writing desk.]*

%

Wilhelm: I need more paper.

 # *(finding an empty shelf)*

# Perfect! I have none.

%

#  *[Again, WILHELM can only laugh at his predicament. He stares blankly at the crumpled ball of paper. WILHELM fades as ALICE appears. She sits at a desk and writes. MADAME CRAWFORD finishes her evening rounds.]*

%

Alice: My Dearest Mr. Hildenbrand,… That greeting’s so old-fashioned.

 # She should use a greeting that is modern and impassioned.

%

# *[MADAME CRAWFORD places her hands on ALICE’S shoulders. Perhaps they exchange a glance in a mirror above the desk.]*

%

Madame: Alice, you will write the letter just as Emma said.

%

 # *[With a sigh that turns into a grin, ALICE agrees.]*

%

Madame: And don’t be long. It’s getting late and time to go to bed.

%

 # *[After a tender show of affection, MADAME CRAWFORD retires.]*

%

Alice: My Dearest Mr. Hildenbrand, as you can probably tell,

 # This letter’s not in Emma’s hand, for she has not been well.

 # Her illness isn’t serious, but she has not the strength

 # For any sort of task that may entail substantial length

 # Of time to finish. Naturally, it almost breaks her heart

 # To find that she’s incapable of ending what she starts,

 # And that’s why I insisted that she let me write a letter

 # In the words that she would use if she were feeling better.

 # She agreed, but Mother added several strict conditions—

 # That I make no mention of religion, politicians,

 # Idle gossip,… I forget the rest, but suits me fine.

 # Not one of those selections is a favorite of mine.

 # The topics Mother recommends, however, are so few.

 # How long can I go on about the state of Manitou?

 # The weather has been frigid. It’s December, after all.

 # The Thursday of Thanksgiving, several families came to call,

 # Including that of Dr. Bell, and… I can’t say his name,

 # For he was once our mayor. Politicians aren’t fair game,

 # And that concludes the callers, all except the reverend’s wife,

 # And that entails religion, not to mention that she’s rife

 # With idle gossip when she visits mother. *C’est la vie*.

 # Excuse my French. I’m trying to improve it, for you see,

Alice: I’ve recently embarked upon the writing of a play

*(continued)* About the painter Jacques-Louis David. I shall portray

 # His wife. They were remarried when he fled his native France

 # To Brussels, where he painted his *pièce de résistance*,

 # *The Death of Socrates*!

 # *(presenting the famous Socratic pose)*

# At least, I’m fairly sure that’s where.

 # Regardless, when it opens, I would like to see you there.

 # Well, anyway, we miss you something awful.

 #  *(after taking a peek over her shoulder)*

# Don’t you dare

 # Tell Emma, but her recent state has given us a scare.

# There is, however, much that you can do to lift her spirits.

 # Give her something to look forward to. She’ll love to hear it

 # When our mother reads your letter. Will you do that, Mr.

 # Hildenbrand? Sincerely, Alice, Emma’s younger sister.

%

# *[MADAME CRAWFORD reads the letter to EMMA, who is weak but clearly delighted.]*

%

Wilhem: My Dear Crawford, I’m so very homesick. Tell me—Is it

 # Trimmed with holly branches there? I hope so…

%

Madame: …I hope so. When I visit

 # You the next time, I shall have the most exquisite gift.

 # Of course, you’ll try to modestly refuse, but when I lift

 # The lid, the sight of it will simply overwhelm your senses.

 # I return soon. You should try to sharpen your defenses.

 # Also, when I call, we ought to play a game of cards,

 # With Alice and your mother, too. Please give them my regards,

 # Your sister’s letter, incidentally, was amusing and…

 # Informative. Be well. Yours Truly, Mr. Hildenbrand.

%

Voice 1: A letter came for Mr. Hildenbrand.

%

Voice 2: No longer here.

 # He left today.

%

Voice 1: A week too early?

%

Voice 2: So it would appear.

%

Voice 1: I guess we’ll have to forward this to him.

%

Voice 2: To no avail.

 # He’ll hear the news in person while the letter’s in the mail.

%

 # *[Spotlight on a letter and a candle. The wind blows.]*

%

Voice 3: The North Wind’s picking up again.

%

Voice 4: It is that time of year.

%

Voice 3: They say that when the North Wind blows, a tragedy is near.

%

 # *[Sharp gust. The candle is snuffed out.]*

%

Patrick: Mr. Hildenbrand, the office hasn’t been the same

 # Since you’ve been gone. We miss you, and it really is a shame

 # About Miss Emma Crawford. Such a lovely girl she was.

 # Perhaps it’s not my place, but I am writing this because

 # We’re counting on your leadership and engineering skill

 # To take the dear departed up that godforsaken hill.

 # Oh, I don’t mean no disrespect. In fact, I have to say

 # I didn’t think we’d find six men, but when she passed away,

 # A dozen fellows volunteered. I guess it goes to show

 # How dear she was to everyone, including me. To know

 # That I can carry out her dying wish relieves the sorrow.

 # I hope you can join our expedition by tomorrow.

 # If you can’t, you’ll be with us in spirit, anyway.

 # Sincerely, your devoted friend and servant, Pat O’Day.

%

 # *[Blackout.]*

%

**SCENE 4**

%

*SETTING: The memorial service at the Crawford home.*

%

*AT RISE: Understandably grief stricken, ALICE and MADAME CRAWFORD comfort each other. Utterly despondent, WILHELM is beyond comfort. The voice of the REVEREND emerges. When he quotes EMMA, her voice may fade in over his.*

%

Reverend: Friends and neighbors, here we are, united in our grief,

 # Remembering our love for one whose altogether brief

 # But meaningful existence, ended only days ago.

 # She lives again in perfect peace the earthly do not know.

 # The earthly who admired her are far too great in number

 # To be named, and yet, our loved one, in the agitated slumber

 # Of her final days, remembered those who loved her best.

 # The words that you’re about to hear, I read at her behest.

%

# *[When the REVEREND quotes EMMA, her voice may fade in over his in order to emphasize her sincerity.]*

%

Reverend: “My younger sister Alice, since the moment of your birth,

 # You’ve been a pest, a protégé, and endless source of mirth.

 # You’ve tried your hand at many things—astronomer, dramatic

 # Orator, and séance hostess. You defy emphatically

 # The image in which people of convention try to make you.

 # I applaud your spirit. May convention never break you.”

%

 # “Mother, though you’re reeling over what I’ve just told Alice,

 # I have never doubted you’re the sovereign of the palace

 # We call home. The truth is I have always been in awe

 # Of your majestic air and the authority you draw

 # From others. Since we traveled West, the people whom we know

 # Refer to you as ‘Madame,’ though you’ve never bid them do so.

%

 # *[Mourners laugh quietly.]*

%

Reverend: Disciplined and nurturing, you taught me how to play

 # Piano with the grace that you embodied every day.”

%

 # “And lastly, Mr. Hildenbrand, you stood beside your friend,

 # In spirit—although not in flesh—until the very end.

 # Our tête-à-tête’s were vigorous, though never heavy handed.

 # Neither one of us denies that we have been expanded

 # By our verbal sparings. True—we have left words unspoken,

 # But we’ve never made a single promise that was broken.”

%

 # She now concludes her final words with general advice:

%

Emma: For anyone who’s ever called to make a sacrifice

 # To benefit a loved one, maybe even just a stranger,

 # Yes, there will be hardship, and uncertainty, and danger,

 # But the gift you’re called to give is worth it. Please believe

# The word of one whose lot in life is only to receive.

%

# *[Following the service, PAULINE engages in her favorite genre of conversation—gossip.]*

%

Pauline: …And wasn’t that the most peculiar service you’ve attended?

 # I should think that pious people may have been offended

 # By the lack of—shall we say?—the customary rites

 # That normally attend a Christian funeral service. Might

 # I add the burial was even more unusual

 # Than anything that was remiss about the funeral?

 # At least a dozen pall bearers took her up the hill.

 # They labored through morning, afternoon, and evening. Still,

 # The only reached the midway point before it grew too dim,

 # And so they just went home and left her, all except for him.

 # *(after pausing to look over her shoulder.)*

# Of course, you’ve heard that Mr. Hildenbrand has not been well

 # Since he received the news. It’s more than just a passing spell

 # From which he suffers. It’s an utter discombobulation.

 # Of his faculties. The only trace of animation

 # Is a distant sadness when he holds the handkerchief

 # That once belonged to her. He found it crumpled like a leaf

 # Along the pathway. Heaven knows why it was there?

 # But those who walked beside him claim he knew exactly where

 # It lay, as if she left it in the spot for him to find.

 # A bittersweet memento to assuage his tired mind.

 # He lingered through the evening, a prisoner of his heart.

 # The second day, the men agreed to make an early start.

 # They found him where they’d left him, in the same austere composure.

 # Surely, he went home, or he’d have perished from exposure.

 # Anyway, they reached the top by early afternoon.

 # Without ado, they shoveled through rocky earth, and soon

 # The baleful task was done, illegally, of course,…

%

 # *[Banging of a gavel]*

%

Voice: The vote of “yes” becomes unanimous by show of hand—

# No body may be buried, but on designated land.

%

Pauline: But no one ever mentioned that—so great was the remorse

 # Surrounding her untimely death. What makes it twice as sad

 # Is how the grief has overtaken Mr. Hildenbrand.

%

# *[Blackout on PAULINE. A light reveals WILHELM, still seated at the funeral service. He pulls the handkerchief from his pocket and holds it to his cheek. His expression, however, does not change. The lights fade to black.]*

%

**SCENE 5**

%

*SETTING: The crest of Red Chief Mountain.*

%

*AT RISE: Reclining in a chair, EMMA sleeps.*

%

East Wind: Awaken, Emma.

%

 # *[The wind blows. EMMA grimaces.]*

%

West Wind: Listen, Emma.

%

 # *[The wind blows. EMMA weakly opens and closes her eyes.]*

%

East Wind: Listen and behold.

%

 # *[The wind blows. EMMA is awake.]*

%

West Wind: Your soul is yet alive although your body’s pale and cold.

%

Emma: Who’s there?

%

East Wind: The Eastern Wind.

%

West Wind: The Western Wind.

%

Emma: Well, I was sleeping.

%

 # *[EMMA closes her eyes, but a sharp gust of wind alarms her.]*

%

Emma: Goodness sake!

%

East Wind: You summoned us. Your soul is in our keeping.

%

Emma: Always?

%

West Wind: No. Until your four commands have come to pass,

%

East Wind: And only one—the first—has come to pass.

%

Emma: A trick!

%

West Wind: Alas,

 # You have returned to Red Chief Mountain.

%

Emma: Yes, but I am dead.

%

East Wind: But, nonetheless, you’re here now.

%

Emma: You distorted what I said!

%

West Wind: It was your dying wish.

%

Emma: Not my original intent,

 # For only when I knew my death was near did I relent.

 # I knew that my return would be a tragic twist of fate,

 # You’ve had your sport; so let me rest in peace now.

%

 # *[EMMA closes her eyes, but her peace is soon disturbed again.]*

%

East Wind: It’s too late.

 # You called upon our powers.

%

West Wind: There are three remaining tasks.

%

Emma: I didn’t even get to choose the questions I was asked!

%

East Wind: Perhaps you should have been more careful.

%

Emma: How could I foretell

 # That I would be the prisoner of the grave in which I dwell?

%

West Wind: You needn’t be so cross.

%

East Wind: This change is really not so bad

 # As you may think it is.

%

West Wind: There is much power to be had

 # In your new state of being.

%

East Wind: You can make your presence known

 # To members of the living.

%

Emma: Why? To tell them I’m alone,

 # And cursed to wakeful sleep,…

%

 # *[EMMA notices for the first time that there are no stars.]*

%

Emma: Beneath a sky that’s void of stars.

 # Are there no constellations to relieve the passing hours?

 # Or does the void reflect my spirit—smoke without a flame?

%

West Wind: Though you may feel alone, you’ll find that time is not the same

 # For you as for the living.

%

East Wind: Since the day that you were buried,

 # Many children have been born.

%

West Wind: And many couples married.

%

Emma: Married... Wilhelm... He must never wed.

%

South Wind: You’ve made your choice.

%

Emma: Who speaks?

%

South Wind: The Southern Wind.

%

Emma: Ah, yes. I recognize your voice.

 # I hope you’re not as cruel as East and West have been.

%

South Wind: Afraid

 # That you may come to think I am.

%

Emma: Of course, I died a maid,

 # And that means he must marry someone else, for I agreed

 # When you asked me if he should be a married man.

%

South Wind: Indeed,

 # He may be married soon enough. He hasn’t as of yet.

%

Emma: It’s been so long.

%

South Wind: You want to see your Wilhelm. You forget

 # Exactly what he looks like.

%

Emma: Can I speak to him again?

 # Is there a way?

%

South Wind: The only way to speak to mortal men

 # Is with permission. They must call upon you.

%

 # *[EMMA hears the distant murmur of children’s voices.]*

%

Emma: I recall

 # The lurid games that Alice used to play before the nightfall.

 # She would hold a séance and pretend that she could hear

 # The voices of the dead.

%

South Wind: Perhaps your sister was sincere

 # In her endeavor.

%

Emma: Alice… She’s my only chance,

 # And I must wait for Alice and the proper circumstance.

%

South Wind: But you forget that time is hardly what it used to be.

 # It’s most unkind to those who live, but not to you and me.

%

Emma: I feel it.

%

South Wind: What?

%

Emma: I feel a gentle tug upon my spirit.

%

South Wind: Someone must be calling.

%

Emma: Who is?

%

South Wind: Listen, and you’ll hear it.

%

 # *[Blackout.]*

**SCENE 6**

%

*SETTING: The parlor of the Crawford home.*

%

*AT RISE: Listening in the archway MADAME CRAWFORD hears the humming of a séance in an adjacent room. She sighs and rolls her eyes.*

%

Madame: Not another séance.

# *(trying in vain to ignore the commotion.)*

#Alice, must you do that now?

%

Alice: *(offstage)*

# Do what?

%

Madame: You take me for a fool. It’s disconcerting how

 # You think that you can feign dismay whenever I confront

 # You.

%

# *[MADAME CRAWFORD awaits ALICE’S response, which does not come.]*

%

Madame: Who was being summoned?

%

Alice: Emma.

%

Madame: Emma? Now I’m stunned!

 # It’s one thing when it’s Mary Queen of Scots or Genghis Khan,

 # But Emma?

%

Alice: Mother, really, it’s been years since she’s been gone.

 # Perhaps you’d like to join us.

%

# *[MADAME CRAWFORD’S tone changes considerably.]*

%

Madame: Us? Who’s with you?

%

# *[MR. POTTER enters the room from the drawn curtains of the archway.]*

%

Madame: Beg your pardon,

 # Mr. Potter.

%

Mr. Potter: Madame.

%

Madame: I was headed for the garden

 # On the chance there might be something suitable for dinner.

%

Mr. Potter: Last I checked, your squash was big as last year’s ribbon-winner.

%

Madame: That’s so kind of you to say.

%

Mr. Potter: I wish you’d join our séance.

%

Madame: Oh?

%

Mr. Potter: You have a way of heightening the ambiance.

 # It is the hallmark of a perfect lady.

%

Madame: How you flatter

 # This old woman.

%

Mr. Potter: Lovely woman.

%

# *[MR. POTTER kisses MADAME CRAWFORD’S hand. She squirms.]*

%

Madame: All this idle chatter

 # Isn’t helping… conjure up the spirit of my daughter—

 # Is it now? Come in here, Alice! You and Mr. Potter

 # Would be more… secluded here, and likely undisturbed.

%

# *[Enter ALICE, wearing and expression of annoyance and carrying various “tools of the trade.”]*

%

Madame: Now, isn’t this room better than the parlor is?

%

Alice: *(blankly)*

# Superb.

%

Madame: And now, if you’ll excuse me,…

%

Alice: No excuses. Run and hide,

 # But don’t touch that piano!

%

Madame: *(momentarily at a loss for words, stunned by her daughter’s audacity)*

 # I was on my way outside.

%

 # *[Exit MADAME CRAWFORD.]*

%

Mr. Potter: I wish she would play something. It would add the perfect touch.

 # She plays piano beautifully.

%

Alice: Entirely too much.

 # She plays it to remember Emma—morning, noon, and night.

%

Mr. Potter: A husband would appreciate her splendid talents.

%

Alice: Quite.

%

# *[ALICE offers MR. POTTER her hands. He takes them. They close their eyes and resume their humming.]*

%

Alice: Eastern Wind, you bring with you the sun’s illumination.

 # Bring us opportunity and wealth’s proliferation.

 # Western Wind, you represent security and home.

 # Help us in preserving that which we already own.

 # The Southern Wind, we thank you for the love that you have offered.

 # We thank you too for beauty.

%

Mr. Potter: And the lovely Madame Crawford.

%

Alice: Mother would be flattered.

%

Mr. Potter: Only fault is she’s so fickle.

 # Don’t repeat that.

%

Alice: No.

%

Mr. Potter: Shall we continue?

%

Alice: It’s your nickel.

 # Northern Wind, we fear you, for we know you can be cruel.

 # Your bitter cold brings death, and yet the promise of renewal.

%

Mr. Potter: I hope that that concludes the guests. We won’t have any room

 # For Emma. Isn’t she invited?

%

Alice: She’ll be coming soon.

%

 # *[A gentle wind blows.]*

%

Alice: My elder sister Emma, you were taken in your prime.

 # You had so much to give, but you were gone before your time.

 # It is with good intentions that we call your soul’s revival.

 # Please join us now.

%

 # *[The wind blows.]*

%

Alice: The wind you’re hearing heralds her arrival.

%

Mr. Potter: But how can we be sure that it is not coincidence?

 # Not every act of nature can entail significance.

%

 # *[A vase breaks in another room.]*

%

Mr. Potter: Take that, for instance—Could it be that we are misconstruing

 # What it means? It might just be imagination’s doing.

%

Alice: Valid point, indeed, and I’ll explain it to you thus—

 # The dead have no imagination. That belongs to us.

%

Mr. Potter: The dead have no imagination?

%

Alice: Ah, but they believe,

 # Whole-heartedly, the dreams of which living do conceive.

%

Mr. Potter: *(realizing)*

# They live inside our dreams?

%

Alice: Our dreams provide the architecture.

 # They reside in. Their reality is our conjecture.

 # So, you see, without imagination, that the dead

 # Could never stoop to trickery.

%

Mr. Potter: I’ll ponder what you’ve said.

 # Has Emma joined us?

%

Alice: Almost. I can sense that she is near.

 # We’re waited on you, Emma. Let us know when you are here.

%

# *[After a brief silence, the rousing tune of “She’ll Be Comin’ Round the Mountain” clamors in the adjacent room. For a moment, ALICE and MR. POTTER look at each other in amazement. Soon, however, ALICE grimaces while MR. POTTER enjoys a hearty laugh and even joins in.]*

%

Mr. Potter: “She’ll be comin’ round the mountain, She’ll be coming round the mountain,…”

%

Alice: That’s Mother being witty. I’m afraid she’s mischief prone,

 # *(loudly)*

# For I asked her specifically to leave that thing alone!

%

Mr. Potter: You think the music scared off Emma?

%

Alice: No. She’s used to Mother.

%

Mr. Potter: Good. So now what?

%

Alice: Well, it’s customary that we offer

 # Her the opportunity to pass a message on—

 # That is, if she has one to pass.

%

Mr. Potter: I thought that she was fond

 # Of someone in particular. I can’t recall his face.

 # He came to town to work on something. Wasn’t that the case?

%

# *[The tune of “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad” emanates from the adjacent room. ALICE sighs and rolls her eyes while MR. POTTER is once again delighted, perhaps enough to join in singing.]*

%

Alice: Mother, I am warning you—if you don’t cease to play,

 # We might have Mr. Potter come to call here every day!

%

Mr. Potter: He helped to build the Pikes Peak railroad. Wilhelm Hildenbrand.

%

Alice: If she had final words for someone, he would be the man.

 # She always tried to get the final word in, I recall.

%

Mr. Potter: Their courtship ended bitterly?

%

Alice: It never was at all.

 # It never fully blossomed.

%

Mr. Potter: Well, then she has much to say.

 # She’s female, after all.

%

Alice: It’s now or never, Emma.

%

 # *[Silence.]*

%

Alice: Play!

%

 # *[Silence.]*

%

Alice: And silence… For a tepid courtship, that is somehow fitting.

%

 # *[Mr. Potter shrugs.]*

%

Alice: Mr. Potter, I could never charge you for this sitting.

%

Mr. Potter: Nonsense. I have never heard such music from a ghost.

 # Perhaps she may continue playing?

%

Alice: I am but the host.

 # As sponsor of the séance, you are well within your rights

 # To ask her what you seek to know.

%

Mr. Potter: Then, Emma, please delight

 # Me with your music.

%

 # *[Silence]*

%

Alice: More specific.

%

Mr. Potter: Something that would please

 # Your charming mother.

%

# *[Beethoven’s “Für Elise,” from one who is clearly a master piano player, emanates from the adjacent room.]*

%

Alice: How convenient. Mother’s favorite piece.

%

# *[The lights fade on ALICE and MR. POTTER. The mysterious lights above Red Chief Mountain dance to the music. After listening to the piece, ALICE is struck by something eerily familiar about the music. She smiles.]*

%

Alice: Exasperating!

%

Mr. Potter: Yet you are betrayed by your own smile.

%

Alice: I thought that I heard Emma play—so similar the style.

%

Mr. Potter: We did hear Emma play.

%

Alice: Oh, you’re a sport to play along,

 # But I’m afraid this séance was a travesty.

%

Mr. Potter: You’re wrong.

 # I found it well worth every penny.

%

Alice: Tell you what I’ll do—

 # Invite you back, but free of charge.

%

Mr. Potter: I’d be delighted to.

%

Alice: You must return on Tuesday. It will be a special night.

 # Miss Katharine Bates will join us.

%

Mr. Potter: From the college?

%

Alice: Yes, that’s right.

 # She recently composed a poem that had me moved to tears.

 # It’s bold and patriotic, but the words are very queer.

 # *(trying to remember)*

# “For amber waves of grain… For purple mountains majesty…”

 # I think it should be violet. That word *purple* is ungainly.

 # The rest of it is lovely, yet she cast it off as rubbish.

 # “Nonsense,” I told her. “That poem is good enough to publish!”

 # *(with a shrug)*

 # Well, really, what do I know?

%

 # *[Enter MADAME CRAWFORD, holding vegetable.]*

%

Madame: Yes, I wonder that myself.

%

Alice: My mischief-making mother, just as clever as an elf.

%

Madame: And what did I do?

%

Alice: Don’t be coy. Suffice it now to say

 # Your wicked sense of humor, once again, has had its way.

%

# *[Exit ALICE. Still laughing, MR. POTTER kisses the hand of MADAME CRAWFORD.]*

%

Mr. Potter: Oh, don’t mind her. A bit of cheer is what this old man needs.

 # Good evening, Madame.

%

 # *[Exit MR. POTTER.]*

%

Madame: I was in the garden pulling weeds.

%

# *[After taking a look around, MADAME CRAWFORD sits at the table and looks ups. After an awkward sigh, she decides to just come out with it.]*

%

Madame: I’d swear that I just heard you, Emma, playing “*Für Elise*.”

 # If that’s indeed the case, then one of us is not at peace.

 # So tell me—Is there something that you long to know?...

%

 # *[A gentle wind places an idea into MADAME CRAWFORD’S head.]*

%

Madame: Or see?

 # I’ll help you if I’m able.

%

# *[From the piano in the adjacent room comes “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.” Her expression of surprise quickly turns to annoyance.]*

%

Madame: Alice!

 # *(not seeing Alice at the piano)*

# Alice?... Goodness me!

%

# *[MADAME CRAWFORD takes a moment to compose herself. She leaves the room humming the tune, trying to discover its significance.]*

%

 # *[Blackout.]*

**SCENE 7**

%

*SETTING: The crest of Red Chief Mountain.*

%

*AT RISE: Gazing longingly toward the sky, EMMA reclines in her usual spot.*

%

Emma: If Mother could ignite the stars for my sake, she would do so,

 # But even Madame Crawford cannot make the heavens glow.

 # Of course, the chance to play again was most exhilarating.

 # Sadly, though, the whole event fell short of satiating

 # My desire to express a feeling… I can’t name.

 # For failing to communicate with Alice I should blame

 # Myself alone, for I neglected to identify

 # The message that I truly wanted to present. If I

 # Am ever fortunate enough to have the chance again,

 # I’ll be the wiser.

%

West Wind: Emma. Emma Crawford.

%

Emma: Ah, my friend,

 # The Western Wind. At least, I hope this is a friendly visit.

%

West Wind: I’m afraid I bring disturbing news to you.

%

Emma: What is it?

%

West Wind: Long ago, I asked you in the mountain should be free

 # Of industry and settlement.

%

Emma: To which I did agree,

 # At least, I think. What were my words exactly? I forget.

%

West Wind: You said, “As much as possible.”

%

Emma: Ah, yes. Shall I regret

 # That I was not unyielding in my answer? Have you found

 # Another wicked way in which to twist my word around?

%

West Wind: The men below will answer.

%

Emma: I see shovels,… and an axe.

%

Whatever are they building?

%

West Wind: They are laying railroad tracks.

%

Emma: For industry?

%

West Wind: For recreation.

%

Emma: Oh, they go too far.

 # They pay respect to Mother Nature with another a scar

 # Upon her brow. Have they not thought of what they’ll do

 # With all their scenic railroads when there’s nothing left to view?

 # I wonder if they’ve even heard of me—the men who labor.

 # Is any one of them aware that I will be their neighbor?

%

West Wind: Don’t you know you’re something of a legend?

%

Emma: That’s absurd.

%

West Wind: In fact, it is with great regret that you’ll be disinterred.

%

Emma: Be disinterred? How dare they even think it! I won’t stand

 # For being so insulted and defiled at their hands.

%

West Wind: You do not have a choice about it.

%

Emma: Make them go away!

%

# *[Two dark and faceless figures move EMMA.]*

%

West Wind: They’re moving you.

%

Emma: But this new spot they chose is naught but clay.

 # Do they not see the southern slope is desolate and fallow?

 # Why have they stopped digging? My new grave is much too shallow.

 # I could find a better spot without so much as trying.

 # There were several solid acres, just where I was lying,

 # Yet they chose to put me here, of all forsaken places.

%

 # *[A train whistle blows. The quiet murmur of a crowd is heard.]*

%

Emma: Who are all these people with their panic-stricken faces?

%

West Wind: The passengers aboard the maiden voyage have arrived.

%

Emma: They aren’t exactly jovial.

%

West Wind: They’re glad that they survived.

%

Emma: Was there some sort of mishap?

%

West Wind: No, but something unforeseen.

 # The grade exceeds the threshold of the average human being.

 # The engineers did not expect the line to be so… thrilling.

 # Few are brave enough to board it, even fewer willing

 # To return.

%

Emma: I see such mortal danger in their eyes.

%

West Wind: A failing that will bring the train’s eventual demise.

%

Emma: It only serves them right. I hope the engine is derailed.

%

West Wind: No need to curse them now. The business has already failed.

%

Emma: Good Heavens. What a waste of human ingenuity.

 # The venture is defunct before it reached maturity.

%

 # *[The EAST WIND emerges.]*

%

East Wind: Defunct, and then abandoned.

%

Emma: They are heedless of what follows

 # In their wake.

%

West Wind: The mountain’s yours again.

%

Emma: But it’s a hollow

 # Sort of victory, indeed. The living lead their lives

 # So carelessly. Their folly stirs my senses and revives

 # My deepest longing to express my righteous indignation.

%

East Wind: You must find the source of your consuming agitation.

%

Emma: I fear that I’m forgotten, though I’d like a second chance

 # To speak my mind. It is unfortunate that happenstance

 # And fickle fancy hold the key to my capricious fate.

%

West Wind: But there are other means at your disposal.

%

East Wind: Do not wait

 # For mortal men to call upon your spirit.

%

West Wind: Take command

 # Of your own destiny at last.

%

Emma: But I don’t understand

 # How I might dwell within world that is material.

%

East Wind: You have within your reach both powers of ethereal

 # And earthly magnitude.

%

Emma: In whom?

%

West Wind: In us.

%

East Wind: We offer you

 # Our talents.

%

Emma: But I fell for this before. In fact, I rue

 # The day I beckoned you.

%

West Wind: You mustn’t be so quick to judge

 # The breadth of our abilities.

%

East Wind: Nor should you hold a grudge.

%

Emma: Why not?

%

West Wind: The mighty winds possess significant dominion—

 # Indirectly—over every juniper and piñon

 # On this mountain.

%

Emma: Oh?

%

East Wind: It is unfortunately true

 # That you may be a distant memory to those who knew you.

%

West Wind: Others won’t invoke your apparition, but they’ll love it

 # When they see you in the flesh—

%

East Wind: That is, what’s left of it.

%

 # *[EMMA thinks for a moment, and then grins mischievously.]*

%

Emma: Just what would such a thing require?

%

West Wind: Really, nothing much.

 # A little gust of wind to bring the rain clouds.

%

East Wind: Just a touch

 # Of lightening.

%

West Wind: Thunder.

%

East Wind: Hail.

%

West Wind: And then a drizzle.

%

East Wind: Shower.

%

West Wind: Fountain!

%

East Wind: Then torrential rain!

%

West Wind: Enough to take you down the mountain.

%

Emma: What will I do then?

%

East Wind: You’ll be discovered in repose.

%

West Wind: And don’t you think you’ll be the talk of town?

%

Emma: Well, I suppose,

 # But will they even know me?

%

East Wind: Yes, of course.

%

Emma: And naturally,

 # I’ll have to be reburied. Is there any guarantee

 # That I will be returned to Red Chief Mountain?

%

 # *[There is no answer.]*

%

Emma: No, there’s not.

 # The only thing of value I possess now is this spot.

 # *(still not hearing a response)*

 # I know you demons well enough that I can translate silence

 # As the seed of treachery to come. Our strained alliance

 # Always seems to leave me disappointed…

 # *(with a sign of resignation)*

 # Which is why…

 # I hate myself for being duped again. Although I try

 # To rise above your carnival of base temptation,

 # One last time, at least, I’ll feel the wild anticipation

 # Of the false rewards you offer. Here I go again.

 # It’s better that I just enjoy my last indulgence than

 # Lament the dreaded outcome.

%

West Wind: Are you ready?

%

Emma: Now you ask!

 # You’ve never asked before. I’m always at the mercy of the tasks

 # That you deceitfully attribute to my benefit.

%

East Wind: The time is now or never, Emma.

%

Emma: So? Get on with it

 # Before I change my mind! You said yourselves it’s nothing much.

 # A little gust of wind to bring the rain clouds. Just a touch

 # Of lightening.

%

West Wind: Thunder.

%

East Wind: Hail.

%

West Wind: And then a drizzle.

%

East Wind: Shower.

%

West Wind: Fountain!

%

East Wind: Then torrential rain!

%

Emma: Enough to take me down the mountain!

 # Wee!

%

 # *[Blackout.]*

**SCENE 8**

%

*SETTING: The crest of Red Chief Mountain.*

%

*AT RISE: BILLY and ISAAC emerge.*

%

Billy: C’mon, you slowpoke! Hurry up!

%

Isaac: But I can’t barely take

 # Another step. Our coming here was all a big mistake.

 # These railroad ties are crumbling. They’re not meant for us to climb.

%

Billy: Oh, don’t be such a mama’s boy. Folks do it all the time.

%

Isaac: The heck they do!

%

Billy: They do! Remember crazy Mr. Russell?

%

Isaac: What about him?

%

Billy: He climbs up here, just to build his muscle.

%

 # *[ISAAC pauses to consider the validity of the assertion.]*

%

Isaac: That’s the dumbest thing I’ve ever heard and ever will,

 # ‘Cause we’re the first—and probably the last—the climb this hill!

 # The sign said anybody trespassing will be severely

 # Persecuted.

%

Billy: Prosecuted.

%

Isaac: I don’t care! I’ve never

 # Been in trouble with the law, and I don’t want to go

 # To jail.

%

Billy: Oh, nothin’s gonna happen, you big sissy, so

 # We may as well keep going. We’ve already come this far,

 # And nothing bad has happened.

%

Isaac: Hey, an empty railroad car.

 # They must’ve left it up here when the incline went kaput.

%

Billy: And what’s inside that box?

%

Isaac: What box?

%

Billy: The one beside your foot.

%

Isaac: It’s got a piece of metal on it.

%

Billy: What’s it say?

%

Isaac: It’s dusty.

 # “Emma Crawford.” Something else below, but it’s too rusty.

%

Billy: These must be her tools.

%

Isaac: Let’s see.

%

Billy: There might be something there

 # That’s valuable. Go on, now.

%

Isaac: I don’t want to.

%

Billy: Why? You scared?

%

Isaac: I bet it’s full of rats.

%

Billy: Why don’t you open it and see?

%

Isaac: Alright already, Billy. You just watch me.

%

# *[Rusty hinges creek; BILLY and ISAAC scream for their lives as they flee.]*

%

Billy: Wait for me!

%

 # *[Blackout.]*

**SCENE 9**

%

*SETTING: Three separate and nondescript playing areas.*

%

*AT RISE: The three areas, each its own pool of light, contain the frozen figures of PAULINE, ALICE, and WILHELM. VOICES emerge from offstage.*

%

Voice 1: Do you remember Emma Crawford?

%

Voice 2: Isn’t she the ghost

 # On top of Red Chief Mountain, searching for the love she lost

 # Before she died?

%

Voice 1: Last night she stepped her efforts up a notch

 # With all the rain we had.

%

Voice 2: How so?

%

Voice 1: She rode that splintered box

 # Of hers to nearly halfway down the mountain.

%

Voice 2: Oh, my word!

%

# *[PAULINE, now considerably older, is busy doing what she does best.]*

%

Pauline: …And there she was, in all her glory, halfway to the base

 # Of Red Chief Mountain. Seems she never knew her proper place,

 # If you ask me. In fact, her grandiose request for what

 # Was arguably a pagan burial put her in that rut,

 # Or so to speak. I knew her mother well—God rest her soul.

 # On Sundays I would come to call. Sometimes I’d spend the whole

 # Of Sunday afternoon, recounting all the passing week’s

 # Events for Madame Crawford, for a Christian shepherd seeks

 # The far most reaches of the fold. I never did convince

 # Her to attend a Sunday service—no, not even since

 # The passing of her daughter Emma. That was years ago.

%

Voice 3: Do you remember Emma Crawford?

%

Voice 4: Just from what I’ve heard

 # From older folks. If I remember right, she likes to haunt

 # The top of Red Chief Mountain.

%

Voice 3: Well, she took a little jaunt,

 # And now she’s at the bottom.

%

Voice 4: Mercy. How did she get there?

%

Voice 3: Her ghost is known for being ornery—prob’bly on a dare.

%

Pauline: …But Emma’s ghost may have to learn that fame can ebb and flow,

 # For not to be outdone, her younger sister, Alice, still

 # Resides in town. She’s renting Red Stone Castle, on the hill,

 # Not far from where they found her older sister following

 # The posthumous excursion down the slope. On Halloween,

 # You might remember, Alice planned another séance, though

 # It never reached fruition. I imagine that you know

 # About the scandal. Seems a man who came to call discovered

Pauline: Alice lying on the parlor floor. Her knee was covered

*(continued)* All in blood. Confused and dazed, she claimed a gun discharged,

 # And then the gentleman smelled smoke, so naturally he barged

 # Into the bedroom, where the bed sheets had been burned,

 # But Alice always claimed it was an accident. We learned

 # It was a suicide attempt much later, in the papers.

 # I am not at all surprised—in light of all her capers—

 # Alice plans to go back East. She’s hoping to resume

 # Her fledgling occupation as an actress. I assume

 # She dearly needs the money, for in all the time she spent

 # In Red Stone Castle, Alice never paid a month of rent.

%

Voice 5: Do you recall the Crawfords?

%

Voice 6: By their notoriety.

%

Voice 5: At one time, both were in the circles of society.

%

 # *[PAULINE sighs and shakes her head.]*

%

Pauline: Disgraceful. In her suicide attempt, she maimed her knee.

 # Let’s hope, at least, she’s learned her lesson in anatomy.

%

Voice 1: Do you remember Alice Crawford?

%

Voice 2: She’s not still in town!

%

Voice 1: You’ve heard about her scandal?

%

Voice 2: She may never live it down.

%

Pauline: Of course the papers here in Manitou were very kind.

 # The Denver press, however, went hog wild with the find.

%

# *[ALICE appears, her head shrouded in a mantle, her face illuminated by a candle.]*

%

Alice: My sister, your notorious legend will reverberate

 # For generations yet to come—you show-off, you… I hate

 # To steal your thunder, but it seems I caused a bit of scandal

 # Of my own, but rest assured it doesn’t hold a candle

 # To the stir that you’ve created. My affair is much

 # Too tedious to ever be compared to yours. As such,

 # I shall not bore you with it.

 # *(confessing)*

# Yes, a lack of money plays a part,

 # And—you know me—a fit of dark despair is at the heart

 # Of what… the papers printed.

 #  *(escaping the painful memory)*

# Emma, grant me this request—

 # I beg you to discover why your soul is not at rest.

 # You’ve seen how bouts of sadness have afflicted me in life,

 # But only since your passing have I sensed that sort of strife,

 # In you… You were not always well, but you were full of cheer.

 # You must find peace, or it will be the worse for you, I fear.

%

Voice 7: Do you remember Emma Crawford?

%

Voice 8: I was just a child.

 # Ain’t she the ghost who’s angry ‘cause her body was defiled?

%

Voice 7: She died when she was twenty-nine.

%

Voice 5: At nineteen years of age,

 # She passed away.

%

Voice 6: She never married?

%

Voice 5: No. She was engaged

 # To Mr. Hildenbrand.

%

Voice 6: I thought their friendship was platonic.

%

Voice 1: Guests had come from far and wide.

%

Voice 3: So tragically ironic

 # That she died before her wedding.

%

Voice 4: On the *day* before?

%

Voice 3: I think that’s how the story goes.

%

Alice: *(grinning and shaking her head in dismay)*

# The stuff of local lore.

%

Pauline: Now, there was something else that I forgot to say. Ah, yes.

%

# *[The spotlight reveals WILHELM, looking much the same as he did the last time he appeared.]*

%

Pauline: Remember Mr. Hildenbrand, so many times a guest

 # Within the Crawford home? When Emma passed away, his heart

 # Went with her. His mathematic mind became the only part

 # Of him that functioned normally. So many years went by

 # That those who knew and loved him best had ceased to even try

 # To rouse his mute emotions. “It was hopeless,” they would say.

%

# *[With a blank expression, WILHELM takes the red scarf from his pocket and holds it to his cheek. The wind blows, stirring in him a spark. He looks at the scarf with awareness for the first time and weeps. The spotlight on WILHELM fades to black.]*

%

Pauline: A man who worked beside him at the railroad, Pat O’Day,

 # Received a letter recently, with shocking news inside—

 # The once despondent fellow may have found himself a bride.

 # Before their wedding day, they plan a trip to Manitou.

 # They’ll likely pay respects to Emma Crawford at her new

 # Location, in the cemetery, though she did request,

 # In life, specifically, that she would never come to rest

 # In such a place as that, but if it’s folklore one believes,

 # Emma’s ghost resides on Red Chief Mountains, where she grieves

 # The desecration of her grave. They say her spirit’s carried

 #

Pauline: There by force of wind, now that she’s been reburied

*(continued)* Somewhere else, while others claims it’s somewhere in between

 # The graveyard and the mountain that her ghost is also seen.

%

Voice 9: You ever hear of Emma Crawford?

%

Voice 10: She’s the phantom bride.

 # They buried her atop Pikes Peak, along her husband’s side.

 # One January, she was carried by an avalanche…

%

Voice 11: A cloudburst in the summer washed her through the Greenwood Ranch.

%

Voice 9: They found her on the hillside.

%

Voice 10: She was in her crimson gown.

%

Voice 11: The flood deposited her body in the heart of town.

%

 # *[Blackout.]*

**SCENE 10**

%

*SETTING: The crest of Red Chief Mountain.*

%

*AT RISE: Enter EMMA.*

%

Emma: I’ve studies every tree upon this mountain, near and far,

 # But never since my death have I so much as seen a star.

%

# *[The wind blows gently. EMMA grins.]*

%

Emma: You don’t fool me. I recognize your breath against my cheek…

 # The Southern Wind… You brought me here. Please tell me why you seek

 # My company this evening.

%

 # *[The wind blows gently.]*

%

Emma: Don’t be shy. I know it’s you.

%

South Wind: Afraid I don’t bring very pleasant news.

%

Emma: You never do.

 # You bring it—oh, so beautifully—however, I confess,

 # But tell me if you can. Do you bring news of Wilhelm?

%

South Wind: Yes.

%

Emma: Has he become a married man, or is he yet engaged?

%

 # *[The wind blows gently.]*

%

Emma: It doesn’t matter either way, for you cannot assuage

 # The pain of knowing that he’s married.

%

South Wind: They are not yet wed,

 # And if they never marry, it will change what lies ahead,

 # For you. She wants to visit you.

%

Emma: My body isn’t here.

%

South Wind: She’s heard it said by many folks in town that you appear

 # Most often on the peak of Red Chief Mountain.

%

Emma: I don’t doubt

 # Their claims.

%

South Wind: Your recent fame invigorates your soul.

%

Emma: Without

 # The added benefit of easing my frustration.

%

South Wind: A soul that rests in comfort has no cause for animation.

%

Emma: It sounds like perfect bliss to me.

%

South Wind: Be careful what you say.

 # A soul’s forever gone when it completely fades away.

%

 # *[EMMA cringes and looks in the distance.]*

%

Emma: It baffles me that death is still among my greatest fears…

 # It never once occurred to me I’d be among my peers

 #

Emma: If I were laid to rest inside the dreary bone yard gate,

*(continued)* Austere and cold, where stand the crumbling headstones I so hate,

 # But I’m the only one who stirs.

%

South Wind: As far as you can tell.

 # You simply aren’t aware of others.

%

Emma: Others stir as well?

%

South Wind: Of course they do, but few of them with your intensity.

%

Emma: I’ve no more knowledge of the feelings of humanity

 # Than when I lived. It seems that now I’m only partial to

 # The people whom I knew and loved in life.

%

South Wind: That much is true.

%

Emma: I feel that Mother’s gone. I feel it only by her absence…

 # And as for Alice… Alice… Even over such a distance

 # I can recognize the bitter sorrow that you feel,

 # Compounded by humiliation from the sad ordeal

 # Of your attempted suicide. You’re pensive and creative,

 # Therefore disregarded in a world so quantitative.

 # I know that you cannot hear me, but I’m begging—please

 # Do not attempt a second time… You only have two knees.

%

 # *[EMMA grins. The wind changes.]*

%

Emma: I never thought I’d smile again.

%

West Wind: Your humor will dissolve

 # When she appears.

%

Emma: The Western Wind… I know if you’re involved

 # That something foul is imminent. It thrills you so to taunt

 # Me when calamity is near.

%

West Wind: She’s coming.

%

Emma: I don’t want

 # Her here tonight. If you were kind, you’d warn her not to come.

%

East Wind: We have no means of warning her.

%

West Wind: You talk as though you have some

 # Plan to do her harm.

%

Emma: You know full well that I do not

 # Possess the means of harming anyone... although the thought

 # Has certainly occurred.

%

East Wind: And we could certainly arrange it.

%

Emma: Oh?

%

West Wind: Her climb is arduous. A shame if she should hit

 # A spot of nasty weather.

%

East Wind: Wet enough to slip and fall.

%

West Wind: A steady gust of wind so fierce that no one hears her call.

%

Emma: I’ve heard such talk before, and I am well aware of what

 # You have in mind.

%

East Wind: We thought you would.

%

West Wind: It’s very wicked, but

 # In spite of that, it has an unmistakable appeal.

%

Emma: Imagine her contemptible audacity. I feel

 # Insulted by her gall already.

%

East Wind: Put her in her place.

%

Emma: I wish that someone would.

%

West Wind: Or something.

%

Emma: I can see her face.

 # She’s lovely, but her flower’s fading. Not as young as I

 # When I knew Mr. Hildenbrand. She certainly is spry

 # For someone so advanced in years.

%

East Wind: Her suitor’s even older.

%

Emma: What of that?

%

West Wind: A shame if she should slip upon a boulder.

%

Emma: What care I of her?

%

East Wind: You may pretend to be dismissive,

%

West Wind: But be warned—your opportunity is…

%

Emma: What’s that missive

 # In her hand?

%

East Wind: It’s nothing too important.

%

Emma: It’s a letter.

%

West Wind: She’s drawing closer, Emma.

%

East Wind: Now’s the time to act.

%

Emma: Permit her

 # To ascend.

%

West Wind: She only means to do you harm.

%

Emma: I can’t be sure of that.

 # I simply have to know what she is holding.

%

East Wind: You’ll regret

 # Your hesitation.

%

Emma: I’m afraid I’ll have to take the chance.

%

West Wind: There is no good to come of your permitting her advance.

%

 # *[The WINDS disappear. MISS HUBBARD advances]*

%

Miss Hubbard: Good evening, Emma… I was thinking, with a bit of luck,

 # I’d catch you here. Your rugged mountain leaves an old Kentucky

 # Native breathless... Are you here this evening? I was told

 # You might be here. I almost headed back. I felt so cold

 # And fearful as I made the journey. Now I feel much better.

 # I am here because I wanted to present a letter

 # That I found in Wilhelm’s bureau. He is not aware

 # That I am here this evening, but I simply had to share,

 # With you, in his own clumsy words, the way he used to feel.

 # I think his one regret is that he kept these words concealed.

 # I don’t know why he did, but I suppose he had his reasons.

 # He once said to me that when you died, you took the seasons

 # With you, and from everything he’s ever shared with me

 # About the long lament your passing caused him, I agree.

%

# *[As MISS HUBBARD reads the letter, a spotlight reveals WILHELM, who fades in and finishes the monologue.]*

%

Miss Hubbard: My Dear Miss Crawford, I’m obliged to chide you for the way

 # You’ve broken our agreement. You told me you never say

# Another word of burial, yet you devoted nearly…

%

Wilhelm: …Half of your last letter to that sordid topic. Clearly,

 # You owe me another letter, only free of such

 # Unsavory material. To read such things from one

 # I love so… Love.

%

# *[WILHELM sighs and then chuckles quietly, reflecting on the truth behind his folly. With hesitation, he crumples the letter and sets it aside. After a moment, he searches his writing desk.]*

%

Wilhelm: I need more paper. Perfect! I have none.

%

# *[Again, WILHELM can only laugh at his predicament. He stares blankly at the crumpled ball of paper. Finally, he reaches for it and tenderly tries to unfold it. Unsure of himself, he resumes writing.]*

%

Wilhelm: Well, Miss Crawford, there you have it—words I’ve left unspoken,

 # Written here in my own hand, an accidental token

 # Of my taciturn affection. You might ask yourself

 # Why this confession’s been so long residing on a shelf

 # Within my heart. Of course, I might just claim I lacked the nerve

 # But that response is sorely incomplete, and you deserve

# The truth.

 # *(pausing to choose his words carefully)*

# You are so beautiful, and yet so delicate.

 # To see to your protection I would gladly dedicate

 # My life. What better way could I provide for you than as

 # Your husband; hence, my numerous proposals. Marriage has—

 # As you well know—a number of responsibilities,

 # Providing your protection, shelter, and necessities.

 #

Wilhelm: I’d make a perfect husband, yes, but I could never be…

*(continued)* Your lover… though my love for you consumes me,… for you see…

 # *(reluctant to be so blunt)*

# A widower wears black today, and wedding clothes tomorrow;

 # A lover with a broken heart… is left to drown in sorrow.

 # If you died today, I can’t be sure that I’d recover;

 # But I am certain I would not, had I become your lover.

 # You may never read this, but I hope you understand…

 # I love you…

%

Miss Hubbard: …Your Devoted Servant, Wilhelm Hildenbrand.

%

# *[With both tenderness and sadness, WILHELM carefully folds the letter and places it in his breast pocket. The lights come back up on the scene at Red Chief Mountain.]*

%

Miss Hubbard: To know that his forgotten words have finally been said

 # Relieves a heavy burden; still, I hope what I just read

# Has not upset you.

 # *(surveying the view)*

# As a ghost, you’re famous here, you know.

 # As I was climbing up, I saw the most mysterious glow.

# Perhaps your ghost, I thought. No telling where you’ll venture next.

 # They way your coffin roared through town has everyone perplexed.

Emma: *(grinning)*

# Yes.

%

Miss Hubbard: Good evening, Emma. I must make my way back down.

 # Perhaps your gentle ghost will see me safely back to town.

%

 # *[Exit MISS HUBBARD.]*

%

Emma: I dreaded that encounter so. Will wonders ever cease?

 # It’s over now, and I have never felt so much at peace.

%

East Wind: The peace you feel will soon dissolve.

%

Emma: Can you not let me feel

 # It for a moment longer? Wait a bitbefore you steal

 # It from me.

%

West Wind: It is not our doing?

%

Emma: Whose then?

%

East Wind: You will know

 # When it arrives.

%

Emma: The North Wind.

%

 # *[The wind blows.]*

%

Emma: I can feel its presence now.

%

West Wind: We tried to warn you.

%

Emma: Warn me? But of what?

%

East Wind: The consequences.

 # You would have to face.

%

Emma: What fault have I to censure?

%

West Wind: Offences

 # You committed in your weak, permissive actions.

%

Emma: Perhaps I can atone.

%

East Wind: To gain the North Wind’s satisfaction

 # You must earn it.

%

Emma: At what cost?

%

West Wind: You need to seek revenge

 # Upon the living.

%

East Wind: It is not too late.

%

West Wind: Your fate will hinge

 # Upon this fleeting opportunity.

%

Emma: I must be cruel?

%

East Wind: Compassion is for living souls.

%

West Wind: The sentimental fools

 # Who dared to desecrate your grave.

%

East Wind: Who mock you now in death.

%

West Wind: The North Wind has arrived.

%

East Wind: Be mindful.

%

Emma: I can feel his breath.

%

 # *[The wind blows.]*

%

Emma: The North Wind,… I’ve offended you. The other winds have told

 # Me so.

%

 # *[The wind blows.]*

%

Emma: I recognize this state. I’m standing at the threshold

 # Of the blackness that engenders nonexistence.

%

West Wind: You may be abandoned in the blackness.

%

Emma: Never.

%

East Wind: Vengeance

 # Is the only other option.

%

Emma: So, the time has come

 That I must take the North Wind’s offer.

%

West Wind: Do what must be done.

%

Emma: Or shall I plunge myself into the blackness?

%

East Wind: She has nearly

 # Reached the mountain’s base.

%

Emma: I have no cause to bring an early

 # Death to one who’s never harmed me.

%

West Wind: You will not exist.

 # If you do not exact revenge at once.

%

East Wind: Will you enlist

 # Our help to make her falter?

%

West Wind: We can make it so.

%

East Wind: But we must have approval from you now.

%

 # *[EMMA closes her eyes and takes a deep breath.]*

%

Emma: My answer’s “No.”

%

# *[Blackout.]*

%

**SCENE 11**

%

*SETTING: Darkness.*

%

*AT RISE: Starting with a pin spot, light emerges slowly.*

%

Emma: Is this how nonexistence comes to pass? Am I to linger

 # Here for centuries?

%

East Wind: A century is but a finger

 # On the hand of time,…

%

West Wind: And there are many hands.

%

East Wind: The star that shines before you now is but a grain of sand.

%

# *[EMMA is awestruck by the beauty in front of her. The now benevolent forms of the FOUR WINDS are slowly manifest.]*

%

Emma: The star that shines before me?

%

West Wind: At its side there shines another.

%

Emma: Yes. I know them well.

%

East Wind: Who are they?

%

Emma: Father… That’s one’s Mother.

 # She’s annoyed with me. She thinks it’s rude to stare, but Father

 # Thinks I’m wonderful. He’s proud to have me as a daughter.

%

West Wind: Before you passed away, you gave your loved one’s sage advice.

%

 # *[EMMA’S voice fades in.]*

%

Emma: For anyone who’s ever called to make a sacrifice

 # To benefit a loved one, maybe even just a stranger,

 # Yes, there will be hardship, and uncertainty, and danger,

 # But the gift you’re called to give is worth it. Please believe

 # The word of one whose lot in life is only to receive.

%

East Wind: In life, you had so much to give.

%

West Wind: Of time you were deprived.

%

East Wind: In death, you risked your comfort that another may survive.

%

West Wind: A sacrifice.

%

Emma: To think I could have murdered her.

%

 # *[The WINDS are silent. EMMA smiles, realizing she’s been tricked.]*

%

Emma: I never

 # Had the power—did I?

%

 # *[Again, the WINDS are silent.]*

%

Emma: Oh, you winds must think you’re clever.

 # How much of my experience was pure hallucination?

 # I’m afraid to ask.

%

East Wind: The truth is that imagination

 # Is a gift exclusively bestowed upon the living.

%

West Wind: They tell stories ghosts themselves cannot help but believing.

%

Emma: I must have been so gullible.

%

East Wind: A quality of youth.

%

West Wind: But now, in your maturity, behold the gift of truth.

%

 # *[EMMA is chagrinned to see the truth in front of her.]*

%

Emma: The boys who found my body…

%

East Wind: Just a few remaining bones…

%

West Wind: The rusted nameplate from your coffin resting on the stones.

%

East Wind: In time, your legend had you crossing Ruxton Avenue.

%

West Wind: The living souls believed the tale.

%

Emma: And I believed it too.

%

East Wind: The living love explaining things that cannot be explained,

%

West Wind: But don’t be cross—

%

East Wind: It takes so much to keep them entertained.

%

West Wind: They are such kindred spirits,

%

East Wind: And their mortal minds are supple.

%

Emma: I see Wilhelm… and his wife. They make a lovely couple.

 # I give them my blessing now, whatever that is worth.

 # And Alice,… but she’s fading.

%

West Wind: They are creatures of the earth.

%

Emma: And I don’t live there anymore.

%

East Wind: You’ve made the leap at last.

%

Emma: I could have made it earlier.

%

West Wind: But look what’s come to pass.

%

East Wind: A man confessed his love to you.

%

Emma: Though many years too late.

%

West Wind: They say it’s better late than never.

%

Emma: *(with a grin)*

 # It was worth the wait.

%

East Wind: The darkness wasn’t death.

%

West Wind: Nor evil.

%

East Wind: It was bravery.

%

West Wind: Embracing darkness freed you from the bonds of slavery.

%

East Wind: You learned so many lessons.

%

West Wind: You chose mercy over spite.

%

East Wind: And through a single, selfless act,…

%

West Wind: Your star shines twice as bright.

%

 # *[The night sky is now alive with stars.]*

%

%

END OF PLAY