

THE ECHO DRIFT

Libretto draft: August 2017

CHARACTERS

WALKER LOATS – Mezzo-soprano. The inmate; she is tough, confident, resourceful. She appears onstage throughout the piece.

A male actor plays:

GOVERNOR ELLIOT MARSH – A voice of authority, heard from afar. And then, he's a witness onstage.

MOTH – A disembodied insect voice; the kind of sound you can't get out of your head.

The voices may be electronically manipulated.

SETTING

Time and place are both stark and nonspecific.

THE HERSH CORRECTIONAL FACILITY – Where Walker is imprisoned; houses thousands of inmates. White and reflective; high ceilings and echo; metal and rubber.

THE SHIPYARD – The site of Walker's crime, and her previous place of business. Old warehouses, cranes, industrial. Shadows, cold and damp.

THE ECHO DRIFT – A dimension where time is fluid.

PROLOGUE: THE WORLD OUTSIDE

Animation depicts the abstract patterns. The patterns morph, as a visual representation of a city takes shape. It could be the past or future.

We begin at the docks on the edge of town. The shipyard: a murky dangerous place.

Perhaps hear recorded voices: sound bites from the shipyard, quick and distorted, intermingled with the other sounds and music.

VOICES

I'm a man, not a magician.
Stop—right there.
Easy now...
No joking. No negotiating.
Nice and—

A gun shot. Sirens.

*

The visual patterns continue to shift as we move through the city: from the shipyard, down tight alleys, through the city.

Eventually a bird's-eye (or moth's) view of the outside of the Hersh Correctional Facility takes shape: a massive, seemingly endless structure with no windows.

We move in closer. The Hersh takes focus. This is where we land.

PART ONE: WELCOME TO THE HERSH

Bright lights. We see WALKER LOATS in her cell. Perhaps she is working on her clock.

WALKER

Do you ever feel like...
You're talking to yourself?
Talking to the walls?

Here in my *humble* abode...

Her cell is cold, white, antiseptic; a metal bed, simple table, straight-backed chair.

Here at the Hersh—

Maybe you recognize it?

A place infinite in size,
In hours, in unrecorded days.
Endless rows of cells, just like this one.
One after another, after another.
How many? No one knows—

But one *does* know: there are no windows,
Makes it infinitely easier to clean—genius—yes—

The Hersh Correctional Facility is a triumph
Of modern innovation, of human containment...

The soup arrives when the soup arrives,
And the lights stay on: night and day
It's all the same, the same...

Time does not exist at the Hersh,
Only unrecorded days.
That's part of the game here.

But I have won.

With my timekeeping device.
Quite a machine, isn't she?

WALKER shows off her clock.

WALKER

Fashioned from soup spoons, bedsprings,
And chewing gum—my own innovation.

With my clock, I make the hours, I make days—
I'm Walker Loats, inmate number 1-4-3-9...

Intimate with Time, with my embrace,
I have made it mine!

The clock makes a sound.

*

WALKER tinkers with the timekeeping device. She speaks to herself as she works.

WALKER

Turn the key in the arbor hole
To transfer energy to the mainspring
And the barrel on to the wheels.

There it is...
There it goes.
Another spring
In its place.

The hour wheel to the hour hand.
Check the controller. Good!

Turn the key in the arbor hole
To transfer energy to the mainspring—
Transfer energy to the mainspring,
And the barrel on to the wheels.

There it goes. There it goes!

See that? It's eight o'clock if I say it is!

*

She turns her attention back out.

WALKER

I bring Time to the inmates—
Send it to them: one hour, one minute...
Each golden drop, with every click of the wheel.

WALKER

And they reward me:
With caviar and cigarettes—

How do they do that? (*spoken*)

At the Hersh, we have our ways...

And we need Time more than soup, more than air.

I've traded in many things in my life,
But I have never seen a market like this.

*

Back to tinkering.

WALKER

Turn the key in the arbor hole,
Transfer energy to the mainspring.

There it is...
There it goes.

The hour wheel to the hour hand,
Check the controller. Good!

*

Confidentially.

WALKER

Here's a secret. Why I *really* need
This clock—my machine—
This timepiece shows: I have served
My hours, my days and days...
Nearly an eternity at the Hersh.

And so I write letters to the Governor.
I sit with my pencil and I write, each day
To the Honorable Governor Elliot Marsh.

Dear Governor: I'm done here.

An aside:

Why waste time...?

Back to the letter.

WALKER

The clock says so, Honorable Governor,
And now it's time for me to go—
Back to my life,
Back to business, a
Bigwig on the docks!

*

Suddenly, the Governor's voice answers.

GOVERNOR

The docks?

WALKER

Yes, Governor—*Honorable* Governor!
The fog, the salty air—
It's what I speak, what I breathe.

GOVERNOR

Of course. But then...what happened on the docks?

WALKER

Everything happened there!

GOVERNOR

That last night. The shipyard.

WALKER

That's where the deals went down—

GOVERNOR

The night in question.

WALKER

That? That's nothing. It's in the past.
One moment, a slip in the dark of night—
At the shipyard, things happen.
Or maybe...nothing happened at all?

WALKER tries to sell this possibility. The GOVERNOR doesn't buy it.

GOVERNOR

Something happened, Walker.

Time moves forward. WALKER

An incident occurred. GOVERNOR

There's no going back— WALKER

Two *incidents*. GOVERNOR

There is only *now*. WALKER

That doesn't change what happened— GOVERNOR

It was self-defense! WALKER

Perhaps the first time. GOVERNOR

Self-preservation— WALKER

But, the second...? GOVERNOR

I've changed! The clock says so! WALKER

Case closed! GOVERNOR

WALKER looks to the clock, which makes a sound. She rushes to it.

*

To the clock.

Oh no, you don't... WALKER

WALKER

Turn the key in the arbor hole,
Transfer energy to the mainspring,
And the barrel on to the wheels—

Now: go!

She bangs on the clock. An outburst of violence and rage.

Go, I said: Go! Go! Go!!!

It finally starts: relief, a little triumph.

Ah, there she goes...

Very dry.

Don't you hate when that happens?

*

Back to the Governor. His voice is no longer present.

WALKER

There! The clock says
I've changed, it never lies.
Can't you see that,
Dear Governor?

Honorable Governor Elliot Marsh.
Governor...?
GOVERNOR!

WALKER becomes desperate. She paces back and forth.

But—I've eaten my soup!
I've penciled my letters!
What else is there?!?

It's all the same, the same, the same!!!

*

She stops pacing. An aria of isolation, directly to us. She lets down her façade.

WALKER

But really—do you ever feel like...
You're talking to yourself?
Talking to the walls?

Or the roaches, hiding in the walls—
I would talk to them!
Tough insects, roaches,
Masters of survival.
Like me.

Really searching, she asks the universe:

You understand, don't you?
Perhaps you know this, you recognize...

This need, the human need—
It's natural, only human,
I'm told,
The need for:
Some other being
That might be listening.

Distracted, looking around.

Where's my pencil?

She picks it up, sits at her desk.

For one tiny creature...

She begins to write.

Dear Governor.

Back out.

One creature in the universe,
That might listen, that just
Might...answer back.

*

Bang! A bowl of soup has appeared.

WALKER

And what exotic cuisine will it be today?

She gets the bowl, and sits at her desk.

Could it be...soup? It is!

Spreads an imaginary napkin on her lap. Sniffs like a connoisseur.

Mmmm, the scent of the Hersh:
Lead, ozone, and...cream of mushroom!
And to *taste* the Hersh...

Takes a big spoonful, with zeal.

Vinegar, castor oil, chalk, chicken broth—

Let it coat your tongue,
Cling to your lips,
You can never escape it—
It's always the same, the same!

She pulls something out of the soup.

Wait—what's this? A... cocoon?

Of course. The specialty du jour!

She smiles, strangely, and holds it up, suspended in space.

Cocoon.

One last look out to us. Or maybe she's talking to the walls, to herself...?

See that? Now things
Are getting interesting...

Blackout.

END OF PART ONE

PART TWO: THE MOTH

WALKER is asleep on her cot.

Opportunity for a dramatic visual/music moment.

Animation sequence: the cocoon hangs suspended, looming. It begins to undulate: something is struggling inside. The cocoon tears, and a moth emerges from within.

It is strange and creepy and beautiful.

Then: we suddenly become aware of the ticking of the clock, as the Moth is hearing it. The ticking grows louder, almost pulsating. It seems to be hurting the Moth, which responds with each painful strike.

MOTH

Bzzzzzz...

Suddenly WALKER awakens, sitting straight up, as if from a dream or nightmare.

She goes directly to the clock, and begins winding. She is focused, and does not yet see the Moth.

WALKER

Must turn the key...

MOTH

Bzzzzzz....

WALKER

Turn the key...the arbor hole
Transfer energy...mainspring...
Good!

MOTH

Well, hello there...

WALKER

Who's there?!

MOTH

Oh, calmmmmm down...
It's me, dear.
From the soup. Bzzzzzz.
The specialty du jour...
Don't you remember?

The cocoon?
WALKER

I've hatched. Got wings. See?
MOTH

Have I lost my mind?!
WALKER

Don't be so dramatic...
MOTH

You're...a moth.
WALKER

Yes, and you're Walker Loats. Inmate 1-4-3-9, cellblock 1-2-1.
MOTH

Of all the world, how is *this* where I hatched?
WALKER

A moth with grand expectations.
*

WALKER turns back to the clock. The Moth mocks and antagonizes.

What are you doing?
MOTH

Winding my machine...
This is my job here.
WALKER

Oh, your *job*...
MOTH

My *vocation*. I keep Time.
And the other prisoners—
WALKER

Will you turn that infernal thing off!
MOTH

I work hard to keep this going!
WALKER

Don't you know, I *loathe* time?
I'm a moth. It hurts me. Bzzzz...

MOTH

How?

WALKER

My wings, they vibrate, and—
Let's talk about something else!

MOTH

There *is* nothing else here!

WALKER

Do you know how long a moth lives for?

MOTH

Enlighten me.

WALKER

The blink of an eye.

MOTH

Weeks?

WALKER

Days.

MOTH

It's an eternity, I've spent here—
And that's why I'm getting out.

WALKER

Just like that. On your *wings*?

MOTH

The Honorable Governor Elliot Marsh will see to my release.

WALKER

Governor Elliot Marsh!? Why would he do that?

MOTH

He knows I've changed.

WALKER

Have you? MOTH

Does it *really* matter, Moth...? WALKER

WALKER smiles slowly.

Oh...I *like* you... MOTH

The Governor's got my letters
On his desk, neatly stacked.
Just a few more letters,
And I'm back to the docks. WALKER

The shipyard? MOTH

I do business there. WALKER

Did. Past. Bought and sold? MOTH

At a profit. WALKER

At a *risk*. Isn't that right? MOTH

Risk feeds me! WALKER

Ah, but what *else* did you eat there...? MOTH

Not soup. WALKER

Tell me, what did you risk, Walker? MOTH

Everything! WALKER

But did you *really* profit...? MOTH

Yes! That's why I'm going back. WALKER

Even that last night? MOTH

What last night...? WALKER

The *incident* at the shipyard. The crime— MOTH

Let's talk about something else! WALKER

Why? MOTH

You're not allowed to ask about that. WALKER

Why not? MOTH

It's not polite! WALKER

The MOTH's voice splits into three, simultaneously from all around WALKER.

No manners! MOTH – A

Oooo, uncouth... MOTH – B

Shameless. MOTH – C

And it was nothing. WALKER
It's in the past.

MOTH
Oh but Walker, the past is all you've got.
Your glory days...
Don't you remember?

WALKER
Don't I? I can almost *taste* them.

MOTH
Bigwig. Bzzzzzz.

WALKER
That was me.

MOTH
Your business....

WALKER
The profit—
No, the *pleasure*...
Was all mine.

MOTH
And it was sweet, wasn't it?

WALKER
Like candy.

MOTH
Sticky on your lips.

WALKER
I was on top
Of the world!
I made a killing.

MOTH
You did.

WALKER
Yes, I did—

MOTH
More than one.
That last night.
Didn't you?

WALKER

No one crosses me!

MOTH

But he tried, didn't he?

*

WALKER slips into the memory. She sings an aria, moving from confident to vulnerable.

WALKER

That man, he was...
Ichy, boiling, stewed in his fear.
It was non-negotiable, our deal,
We did our back-and-forth
And when he didn't deliver?

I turned my back. I was walking away,
Back to my warehouse—
Away from the murky waters.
And that's when he pulled out a pistol.

"Easy now," I knew his hand
Was itchy, shaky, stewed in fear...

His pistol pointed at me,
What choice did I have?
I ran to him. I embraced him.
And in our struggle, that ecstasy,
The gun went off, into the thick air.

He missed! And I...?
Plunged my knife, again and again.
His body met my blade.
It sank into him and I held it there
Until he stopped...struggling.

I could feel his pulse flicker and fade,
Through the blade, flicker and fade...
What choice did I have?

*

MOTH

You were defending yourself.

WALKER

That's right, I was—

WALKER begins to pace in her cell, back and forth.

MOTH

But then, *you* had a pistol.

WALKER

It was *his* pistol!

MOTH

In your hand.

WALKER

I picked it up—felt its weight.

MOTH

There was a witness, wasn't there?

WALKER

There was...another man.

MOTH

And who was he?

WALKER

No one! A witness.

MOTH

He saw everything, didn't he?

WALKER

Yes! I couldn't risk that.

So I took care of it.

MOTH

You took care.

WALKER

I had to!

MOTH

Such care...but have you no remorse?

WALKER stops moving, holds her ground.

Remorse? Why would you ask that?
WALKER

Oh, Walker Loats.
I see who you are...
MOTH

No, you don't—
You don't understand—
That's life on the docks.
WALKER

You were a bigwig.
MOTH

I was keeping alive!
That's how I did it.
Kept alive. My whole life.
Do you think it was easy?
WALKER

Enlighten me.
MOTH

Defending myself, watching my back.
I always work alone—why?
Because, who else can you trust?
WALKER

I don't know, who *can* you trust—?
MOTH

No one! Everyone is
Out for themselves, I learned
That at an early age:
How to do what *had* to be done.
WALKER

I took the jobs that no one wanted.
Nothing was too small, too mean,
For me, a woman in a world of
Men on the docks, the shipyard—

That's how I started. How I worked
My way—

MOTH

Up, up, up the food chain!

WALKER

And after you do that:
Surviving on scraps,
For a few years, for a *decade*—
Whatever it takes—you don't
Ever want to go back.

MOTH

No, you don't.

WALKER

So I watch out for myself.
Scratch my *own* back—
That's the secret, Moth.
No one, but *me*.

MOTH

And that, my friend, is
Why you're at the Hersh.

WALKER

It's how I'll survive the Hersh!
How I've *always* survived.

MOTH

It's your choice.

WALKER

It's a dangerous world and
Only some of us survive, so
You better be on top.

MOTH

Tip-top, tippity top!

WALKER

What do you know?
You're a moth!
A tiny creature—

MOTH

Oh Walker, you haven't changed one bit.

WALKER
How could I change—
Talking to these walls?

MOTH
You're not here to keep time.
Time is keeping *you*.

WALKER
What do you know—?

MOTH
You're Time's prisoner!

WALKER
I'm just waiting on my soup!

MOTH
Where's your soup?

WALKER
It's late!

MOTH
Yes, dear. So what will you do?

WALKER
Write a letter! To the Governor.

MOTH
And how will you do that?

WALKER
I'll sit right down and—
Where's my pencil?

MOTH
I ate your pencil.

WALKER
Ate it? You can't
Eat my pencil!

MOTH
Why not? There's no soup!
What else is there, at the Hersh?

Nothing, there's nothing else!
It's all the same, the same—

WALKER

Stay away from that clock!!!!

MOTH

I'm going to bed.

WALKER

It's not time for bed—

MOTH

It is, if I say it is!

WALKER

But you just got up?!

MOTH

Leave me alone!

WALKER

WALKER has climbed on her cot now, trying to escape the MOTH.

*

MOTH

Get used to it, Walker.

MOTH – A

That's *life*. Bzzzz...

MOTH – B

Yes-yes... Tragic, isn't it?

MOTH – C

Your life. At the Hersh.

MOTH

There's nowhere else to go. Except...

Oh, never mind.

WALKER takes the bait.

Except what? WALKER

The Echo Drift. MOTH

Where's that? WALKER

It's more than a place, it's a state of things... MOTH

What state? WALKER

Time. Distance. Space.
Accelerated to a higher dimension
That smashes everything into a single event— MOTH

The Echo Drift? WALKER

And there is no end...
And there is no beginning. MOTH

Tell me more. WALKER

Not now. It's bedtime. Nighty-night! MOTH

But— WALKER

I'll tell you tomorrow. If you're lucky.
Are you lucky, Walker Loats...? MOTH

Four-leaf... MOTH – A

Clover? MOTH – B

MOTH – C

Rabbit foot?

WALKER

I loathe moths!!!

In disgust, WALKER pulls her blanket over her head.

The MOTH laughs, a very strange sound. Its movement becomes more and more frantic, flying about the space. The sound and shadows builds to a terrifying spectacle. Blackout.

END OF PART TWO

PART THREE: WHEN TIME STOPS

Lights up. For a moment, all is calm. WALKER emerges from under her blanket, almost like a moth from a cocoon. She stretches like she has slept for a good, long time. She looks around, doesn't see the Moth. Relieved. Maybe laughs. She addresses us.

WALKER

It was only a dream.
I'm not losing my mind—
I'm dreaming of insects!
Flying on wings,
Through my sleep, in the quiet...

Too quiet.

Suddenly, she remembers the clock, and rushes to it. It's stopped. To the clock:

WALKER

My machine!

The MOTH is there.

MOTH

It wasn't a dream, Walker.

WALKER

You!

MOTH

Me... Your resident moth, remember?

WALKER

You distracted me from my job.

MOTH

Who, me?

WALKER

Leave me alone!

MOTH

But, you *need* me, Walker—

WALKER

I need Time! Everyone needs it here,
More than soup, more than air.

WALKER

There will be hell to pay!
No rewards, only retribution—at the Hersh,
We have our ways.

MOTH

Spitting in the soup?

WALKER

You really don't understand this place—

MOTH

I know more than you think.

WALKER turns back to the clock, trying to start it up.

WALKER

Turn the key in the arbor hole...

MOTH

Oh, Walker...

WALKER

Transfer energy to the mainspring—

MOTH

Will you stop?!
Won't you see...?

WALKER

What?

MOTH

Falling from the sky. Look up!
Look around you, Walker Loats!

*

Hundreds of addressed, unopened envelopes have begun to fall. It's beautiful and tragic.

WALKER

Letters....?

MOTH

Your letters. Like broken wings.

My letters to the Governor?
WALKER

Airmail! Aren't they beautiful?
MOTH

WALKER picks up an envelope.

But... Never opened. Never read?!
WALKER

Return to sender.
MOTH

Return to sender?
WALKER

Each and every orphaned one.
MOTH

WALKER picks up more and more envelopes, reading from them.

Return to sender.
WALKER

Your dear, dear letters...
MOTH

Return to sender.
WALKER

Come home to roost!
MOTH

Return to sender.
Return to sender!
GOVERNOR!!!
WALKER

Her plea echoes. WALKER panics. She begins pacing.

He can't hear you...
MOTH

WALKER

But—how can this be happening?!
I thought I was getting out!
How will I get back to my life?!
I need to get back to the docks!

MOTH

Yes, the answer is on the docks.

WALKER

These letters were my way out!
Is no one listening?

MOTH

Isn't that why I'm here,
Your own tiny creature?

WALKER

But—how will I reach the Governor?

MOTH

Ask a moth...

WALKER

I am, I'm asking you—!

MOTH

Make *friends* with a moth.

WALKER

Please.

*

WALKER stops her pacing. She changes tactics, putting on the charm.

MOTH

You said you *loathed* moths, remember?

WALKER

Did I? When did I say that, friend?

MOTH

Yesterday!

WALKER

I have a terrible memory...
And isn't that
A lifetime ago?

WALKER smiles, charming.

MOTH

Oh...I like you...

The conspiratorial warmth between them has returned.

WALKER

So?

MOTH

I'll tell you what to do, Walker.
You want to reach the Governor?

WALKER

Yes—

MOTH

To make him understand—
Exactly who you are?

WALKER

Yes!

MOTH

Then enter
The Echo Drift.
Where things come apart.
And hover in that haze,
Just above the surface...
This is how we travel.

WALKER

How moths travel?

MOTH

And other creatures of the night.
Are *you*... a creature
Of the night, Walker?

WALKER
You know I am.

MOTH
Or you *were*. Once.

WALKER
Oh, I haven't changed...

MOTH
The Echo Drift is your life, out of sequence.
Past, present, future all at once—
At your fingertips.
And you can go anywhere,
And anytime...

WALKER
I'll be free?

MOTH
You will be *you*,
As you really are,
Without anything
To hold you back.
Doesn't that sound sweet?

WALKER
Like candy. There must be a trick.

MOTH
Please, Walker...I'm a moth, not a magician.

WALKER
What did you say—?

MOTH – A
Magician!

MOTH – B
White rabbit!

MOTH – C
Black silk hat!

WALKER
Stop that!

Don't you want to be free?
MOTH

I told you, I want to see the Governor—
WALKER

Then let it go. Let it all go!
Stop keeping a stupid job!
Stop writing letters with
A stubby pencil
Who *are* you?
MOTH

I'm Walker Loats!
WALKER

WALKER owns it. The MOTH is pleased.

Well, hello there...
MOTH

Who else *could* I be?
WALKER

No one!
MOTH – A

Really, dear...
MOTH – B

Loats-Loats-Loats...
MOTH – C

It's always been me—
Me for *me*, Moth.
WALKER

I know, dear, that's how you survived...
A creature of the night, cold-blooded...
MOTH

I do what I *have* to do, don't I?
WALKER

And now it's time to go back—

MOTH

Yes, it is—

WALKER

The Echo Drift is a short cut.

MOTH

Is it?

WALKER

To where you want to go.

MOTH

To the Governor?

WALKER

Oh, yes, to him too...
Kill the clock, Walker.

MOTH

My machine? But I built her.

WALKER

Don't be so dramatic.
It's the only way.
You have to let go of Time.

MOTH

Time is all I have here!

WALKER

But really, it's holding you back.

MOTH

Without my clock,
Days become nights and
Nights stretch on and on,
Under the electric lights—

WALKER

WALKER has begun to pace, back and forth, with more urgency than ever.

MOTH

Keeping you from the chaos of life.
The blood of it! You know that
You're Time's prisoner!

WALKER

No, I *made* Time—I control it!

MOTH

Oh, Walker. You really *have* changed.

WALKER

Me? I'm trying not to lose my mind!!!

MOTH

There you go, dramatic again!

*

WALKER sings an aria, at the end of her rope. She first addresses the Moth.

WALKER

Do you really want me climbing the walls?
Talking to myself?! Because that could happen.
That *could* be happening...

Already I'm talking to insects. To moths!
That arrive in my soup, of course!

What's next? The roaches, hiding in the walls—
Tough insects, masters of survival,
Those roaches. Tougher than Walker Loats.

Or maybe letting go of everything? Of my mind...
Of Time. Clocks and the clockwork soup of life.
Tell me: Is that what comes next?

She turns now to address all of us.

Because there *is* a need, a human need—
You know this, *you* understand:
It's natural, only human,
That need for
Some other being
Some tiny creature,
That might be listening.

WALKER (cont.)

Take that away...and what have you got?

What do any of us become,
Under the burning lights?
How can anyone change,
When all there is...is *you*?

When it's all the same, the same...
Circling back around,
To each of our prisons.

Self-preservation here
Is a fulltime enterprise.
When you're trying not
To lose your mind!

*

MOTH

But, dear, self-preservation
Is what you do best...
So be *you*, Walker.
Just give in to it!

WALKER

But how can I let it all go?

MOTH

Oh, Walker! Must you be
So slooow?

WALKER

Leave me alone!

MOTH

No, I won't! Show us what
You're *really* made of!

WALKER

I said—

MOTH

The roaches and I—
We really want to know!

Inquiring minds... MOTH – A

Roaches! MOTH – B

...want to know! MOTH – C

Stop!!! WALKER

WALKER suddenly hits the clock. As she did earlier, but now with more force. MOTH is pleased.

Well, OK, then! MOTH

There she goes... MOTH – A

Losing her mind! MOTH – B

Bzzzzzz.... MOTH – C

WALKER paces with a fierceness.

That sound! That ticking, that buzzing, in my ear! WALKER

Bzzzzz... MOTH

It hurts me! I can't think!!! WALKER

But can you...Destroy Time? MOTH

What? WALKER

Destroy Time, dear?
Smash it, kill it—let it all go! MOTH

I do whatever I have to do—

WALKER

Yes, you can...

MOTH – A

Oh, yes-yes-yes...

MOTH – B

There's a killer.

MOTH – C

I'm Walker Loats.

WALKER

Then the Echo Drift awaits...

MOTH

And I will be free!!!

WALKER

Opportunity for a music/physical moment: WALKER destroying her clock. Maybe she knocks it to the ground and stomps on it, or uses her chair to smash it.

She builds to a violent frenzy, maybe tearing apart her pillow and mattress, as well. This is what WALKER is capable of. It's terrifying, but fantastic.

*

MOTH has been watching her, pleased. Finally, WALKER has exhausted herself. She buzzes.

The Echo Drift. Don't you see it?

MOTH

I see—distortion.

WALKER

The seams, ripping apart!

MOTH – A

Ah, sweet release...

MOTH – B

Bzzzzz...

MOTH – C

My ears...that noise.

WALKER

Oh, yes-yes-yes...

MOTH – A

Beautiful...

MOTH – B

Isn't it, though?

MOTH – C

What have I done?

WALKER

This is when it happens!

MOTH

*

MOTH fades away. As the Hersh crumbles around WALKER, she looks around, with wonder and exhilaration. The voices surround WALKER: sound bites that seem to come from the walls.

RECORDED VOICES

I'm a man, not a magician.

Here in my *humble* abode.
Turn the key in the arbor hole...
It's eight o'clock if I say it is!

With my pencil: I sit and write.
The clock says so! See?

Cocoon! It's a *cocoon*.
Oh...I *like* you...
What choice did I have?

Are you lucky, Walker Loats...?
More than soup, more than air!
Airmail! Aren't they beautiful?

I thought I was getting out!!!

WALKER takes a deep breath and a step forward, as if off a precipice. Blackout.

END OF PART THREE

PART FOUR: WHERE IT ALL ENDS (AND BEGINS)

A dramatic visual/music moment. The Echo Drift. Colors and shadows, the abstract patterns that we began with. Beautiful, terrifying. WALKER is in the midst of it.

WALKER

Governor? GOVERNOR!!!

WALKER realizes where she is, and breaks into a cold sweat.

Oh, no—no, no, no...
What am I doing here?
Not this! Not that night,
That last night, again and again...

*

The voice is shaky, desperate.

RECORDED VOICE

Stop—right there.

WALKER turns back, slowly...

WALKER

Easy now...
Nice and—

The sound of gunshot.

*

WALKER looks down at her hands.

WALKER

Easy. So easy.
A bloody knife.
Red, cold blood,
All over my hands.

The GOVERNOR has entered, in the fog.

His body met my blade.
It sank into him and I held it there
Until he stopped...struggling.

WALKER

I could feel his pulse flicker and fade,
Through the blade, flicker and fade...

GOVERNOR

You killed him.

WALKER

I had no choice.

GOVERNOR

And that's his pistol—

WALKER

I had a *knife*, not a pistol—

GOVERNOR

Right there, in your hand.

WALKER looks down at her hand, where a gun has materialized. Maybe she's surprised by it.

WALKER

It is.

GOVERNOR

I saw it all, Walker.

*

WALKER now turns, really taking him in.

WALKER

How do you know my name?

GOVERNOR

I never got your letters, but I *know* you.

WALKER

Governor...?

GOVERNOR

The *Honorable* Governor—

WALKER

What are *you* doing here?

GOVERNOR

I stopped for a drink at the dockside bar...
I was on my way home, when I heard a struggle and—

WALKER

This part of town?
Or maybe, a deal of your own.
We're all in this stew together, aren't we?

You're a witness.
This isn't personal, Governor.
This is self-preservation.

GOVERNOR

The circle, the cycle—

WALKER

All I see is red.
All I hear is a bzzzzz,
In my ears...my head...

This is what happens. It's just—

The GOVERNOR disappears into the fog.

WALKER

What I do.

WALKER shoots the gun. The GOVERNOR is killed. Everything is red and silent.

Then, the sound of a distant siren. She looks down at the gun in her hand.

END OF PART FOUR

EPILOGUE: THE WORLD INSIDE

Bright lights. We're back at the Hersh, where everything is the same, except there is no clock. WALKER looks straight ahead. She talks to the audience. Or maybe she's talking to the walls.

WALKER

I'm Loats. Walker Loats.
Inmate 1-4-3-9. Cellblock 1-2-1.
Here at the Hersh.

You recognize this place, don't you?
I know that you've been here before...

All the blocks, the cells, all our prisons look
Very much *the same*...don't they?

The lights stay on: day and night, and
The soup arrives when the soup arrives.

There's no voice here, but my own.
Echoing in my mind, traveling over
My life. What's it for? A voice that no one hears.
In a place where nothing—where no one—
Will ever change.

*

To the Governor.

WALKER

Dear Governor. You asked me once,
In a dream, in a nightmare:
Don't I have *any remorse* at all?

Honorable Governor, I would have to say—
I *would* say—I would tell you...

But I lost my pencil.

WALKER smiles, slowly, enigmatically.

Chewed it, right down to the tip,
When I woke up back here.
In my humble abode, inside these walls,

It's all the same, the same, the same...

WALKER's previous sense of purpose and activity has been replaced with a stillness. This contrasts with the frenzied motion of a moth—this time, an actual insect—that flies around the room, trapped. Opportunity for a visual/music moment. Blackout.

END OF OPERA