

# Where to Choose

## *A Dramatic Monologue*

by [Evelyn Hooven](#) (September 2023)



*Self Portrait Looking In A Mirror*, Henri De Toulouse-Lautrec,  
1883

Darryl is a man of about thirty.

(Though the room is sparsely furnished, it has warmth and character.)

I've been uneasy all week long—a rent-hike for my office. It won't be private, will lose its charm. My dream of a special habitat—gone? Is that what's making personal life feel less than joyful?

When I ran from my suburban almost-fiancée, I wasn't in doubt. I'd stopped liking her with her GET, HAVE, MORE. After I left, I retrieved my fiddle, with its imposing bass fiddle, small repertoire. I unearthed my works from a creative writing course. Unacknowledged inner credentials? I began to suspect that such crafts were not matters of high-road, lofty or instruction manual exemplary but just honest work, day in, day out, independent of reward. I wanted better odds of noticeable success. All week-long any suggestion of shabbiness acted as an irritant.

We said we'd announce our engagement with a few friends, champagne—domestic probably, but even if we ordered the best vintage, it would still be offered in that too-thick, merely serviceable glassware.

She's put aside last season's dress, fresh from the next-day cleaners. Through the thin plastic protector, the shadow of a stain not quite gone and a slight pill of fabric, never the best.

This morning she was singing snatches of old songs. One that I remember went:

We ain't got a barrel of money  
Maybe we're ragged and funny

Soon it moves to:

Through all kinds of weather  
What if the sky should fall  
As long as we're together—

(He breaks off)

I should have been flattered but, in fact, felt somehow endangered. Ragged ... and funny? Even if lightly meant, that's slower than the slow lane I tend to fear with her.

Was my old self returning? The one who wanted to go to the prom only with the prom queen? Was I looking for a kinder, more graceful version of my ex, not quite—you.

You love me and the sheer fact of us. For you, that is the treasure. Not loving you that way—not enough—makes me feel like a poster-child for “be careful what you wish for.”

I think there'll have to be, at the least, a postponement. Can we reach our friends on time? At this hour, it's likely. I need now to go off by myself. I'll write you a note. We can meet later and talk—try to talk.

(He looks in the desk drawer for a pen and paper. Stops.)

I have the feeling you've been putting together a few quotes for proposing a toast to our engagement. Here, from John Donne.

Sweetest love, I do not go

For weariness of thee  
Nor in hope the world can show  
A fitter love for me ...

Your margin note here– “The end of all comparisons.”  
Reassuring to you; less so to an inveterate comparison shopper  
like me.

(He leafs through a few more papers. Reads.)

The world was all before them  
where to choose  
They hand in hand with wand’ring  
steps and slow\*

)He emphasizes *slow* and stops.)

No, this doesn’t sound like the slow lane or some never-land  
ideal. They are leaving the garden of Eden together to face,  
to find the world. A different order of going. Is this love,  
itself?

You didn’t see through me. You welcomed me. But I can’t get  
there.

Would I rather feel unworthy than slowed down? How can I know?

This isn’t a postponement but an ending. Time wouldn’t help.

I’ll locate and send to you the most beautiful dress. Regret.  
Severance. Tribute.

\* *At the close of Milton’s Paradise Lost.*

## [Table of Contents](#)

**Evelyn Hooven** graduated from Mount Holyoke College and received her M.A. from Yale University, where she also studied at The Yale School of Drama. A member of the Dramatists' Guild, she has had presentations of her verse dramas at several theatrical venues, including *The Maxwell Anderson Playwrights Series* in Greenwich, CT (after a state-wide competition) and *The Poet's Theatre* in Cambridge, MA (result of a national competition). Her poems and translations from the French and Spanish have appeared in *Parnassus: Poetry in Review*, *ART TIMES*, *Chelsea*, *The Literary Review*, *THE SHOp: A Magazine of Poetry* (in Ireland), *The Tribeca Poetry Review*, *Vallum* (in Montreal), and other journals, and her literary criticism in Oxford University's *Essays in Criticism*.

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](#)