The First Day of
the Seventh Month

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CHARACTERS

• Crane
• Puck (can be played by either gender; "he" is used for convenience)
• Mom
• Dad

Except for CRANE, all actors will play multiple roles.

SETTING

• Different places and times

MISCELLANEOUS

• Sound cues throughout
• CRANE will need to learn some sleight-of-hand tricks with the two stones
• Three sets of Chinese balls (use the smaller ones for women)
• Two roundish stones
• Halloween half-masks and candy, bowls; one homemade mask
• Kid's bike, helmet, elbow pads, etc. and kid's backpack with kid's thermos
• Table, chairs for kitchen
• Other props as needed (see text)

Scene 1

Interior of the Church of the Holy Scepter in Jerusalem. CRANE asleep on the ground, covered in flickering shadows. Possibly night sounds, building settling, etc. However set, an incredibly peaceful moment. PUCK appears and hovers over CRANE, inspecting him. CRANE wakes, startled, and backs away.
PUCK
I suppose I should say, "Don't worry." So don't. Worry. Really. Yes, yes -- foggy brain, shake it all about -- go ahead, rub your eyes, first right, then left -- well, left, then right, if you want -- just the way you're supposed to. Dig wax out of ear, pick nose, eat it -- why not, it's natural?

CRANE
Wha -- Huh --

PUCK
Inarticulate sounds -- yes, good. Fog lifting, dim light glowing. Are you scared?

CRANE nods yes.

PUCK
Don't be.

CRANE points at PUCK.

PUCK
Of me? I am not incubus, I am not succubus -- I am -- friend --

CRANE
Friend --

PUCK
-- of a sort --

CRANE
Where am I?

PUCK
You don't know.

CRANE
I don't --

PUCK
The Church of the Holy Scepter. Dateline: Jerusalem. Time --

CRANE
Sshh --

CRANE gestures for PUCK to be quiet, looks around, baffled. PUCK eager to speak.
PUCK
You wonder how you got here -- sorry, just can't stay shut up for long. Look Crane -- yes, that's your name --

CRANE
Crane.

PUCK
Crane -- I know your name -- remember your own name?

CRANE
Crane --

PUCK
(overemphasizing)
Kah -- rane -- Kah --

CRANE
All right!

PUCK
You are here because -- this is what you need to remember, so pay attention -- because you missed the curfew at your hostel and there was no room at another inn.

CRANE
I remember --

PUCK
Yes?

CRANE
-- wandering the streets.

PUCK
Thinking that you had slipped backwards --

CRANE
Yes. Narrow streets --

PUCK
-- slipped backwards in time -- into medieval times --

CRANE
Narrow stone streets of Jerusalem.

PUCK
Winding. Closed off to you.

CRANE
Nothing open to me.
PUCK

Except this church. The Church of the Holy Scepter.

CRANE

(pointing to the stone slab)

And that --

PUCK

Has been your resting place.

CRANE

That stone slab --

PUCK

Well, yes -- supposedly, that is where it happened and why they built this church.

Really?

PUCK

The crucifixion. The Crucifixion.

Really?

CRANE

Who knows these things?

Really?

PUCK

If you want to believe it.

Really.

PUCK

Where they really nailed him --

(mugging fiercely)

-- for hanging around.

CRANE

I slept on --

PUCK

Hope you --

CRANE

-- the spot --

PUCK

-- didn't wake up cross.
CRANE
Then why am I here?

PUCK
You dream in a really boring way!

CRANE
I was nowhere --

PUCK
You don't laugh at my jokes, I don't get to lay down --

CRANE
-- but I am here!

PUCK
-- some subterranean boogie-man fears--

CRANE
Just a simple "why" would be fine.

PUCK
Oh, pardon me as you snap into focus!

CRANE
Here -- why here?

PUCK
(sing-songy)
Religious doubt. You have been having. Crisis of faith. For three years now you have been photographing --

CRANE
Shut up.

PUCK
.quick shift to a regular voice, deep
For three years now you have been photographing religious festivals (you're a freelance photographer -- did you forget that's what you do for a living?) --

CRANE
No --

PUCK
Good -- looking --
(PUCK takes a deep sigh as he recounts)
-- looking for some evidence of the deeper meaning of life. You so normal! So you decide to come to the Ho - Ho - Holy Land. Cheap trip, hostel -- locked out, curfew -- penny-wise, shekel-foolish --
CRANE
You're not much of a demon --

PUCK
And you're a pretty predictable dubitant -- how's that for a word?

PUCK jumps on CRANE's back.

PUCK
'S'not me flattened like an old toothbrush on a stone slab full of doubt and dust trying to dope out "the deeper meaning of life" --
(big yawn)
-- excuse me!
(yawns again)
-- as if it has any.

CRANE shrugs him off.

CRANE
It doesn't?

PUCK
I should tell you? Oh, quit the hang-dog look! You're going to find one, yes or no -- you're just built that way --

CRANE
Do you have a name?

PUCK
For you I'm using Puck. Motherpucker to you.

CRANE
So let me get this straight --

PUCK
No, don't -- don't -- don't re-hash -- re-peat -- re-ca-pi-tu-late -- that bores me, too. Short form --
(yawns again)
-- sorry -- you've got a hunger in your soul to find out what the whole shebang is about. Lucky you -- you've come to rest at a longitude and latitude of --
(carney barker voice)
-- certified death -- marked with a cross -- and maybe -- who knows? -- a usable resurrection. Is that a good thing? We shall see.

Lights change to the beginning of the scene.

PUCK
Now, back to sleep -- you have work to do.
CRANE suddenly collapses into PUCK's arms, who gently lays him back down on the slab, a Pieta moment. The rise of holy music.

MOM and DAD come out, dressed in white. They prepare to lift CRANE so that he is in a crucifixion position; PUCK can help them. They do this so that they end up with their backs to the audience, hunched over, while holding CRANE, who extends his arms across their backs. CRANE should take the classic Christ pose.

All through this PUCK talks.

PUCK
Crane lifted. Crane aloft. Soon the blinding confusion will come, and this Everyman -- this Everyguy -- this unfeathered Crane, will throw his eyes like dice and follow out the bet. Or something like that. Be seeing you.

With a crash of sound and light, it is morning. MOM and DAD drop CRANE to the floor and exit. From off-stage a stagehand throws PUCK a rough cotton robe or tunic and white knit cap, like those worn by some Muslim men. Also thrown a feather duster: he is now the janitor.

Morning sounds, city sounds, etc. PUCK is free to use an accent if he wishes and the feather duster to whatever comic effect.

PUCK
(dusting)
Hey! Hey!
(pokes CRANE with the feather duster)
You -- you're too big a piece of dirt -- hey, you piece of dirt, I can't dust you off. So move! Move! Bless Yahweh, Allah, Ram Baba Das, Baba au Rhum, and the 17 Moon-Hung Buddhas: I always get the worst trash to clean up.

CRANE wakes up befuddled, again, sees the janitor.

CRANE
Puck?

PUCK
What did you call me?

CRANE
Nothing.

PUCK
What did you call me?!

CRANE
I'm sorry -- you reminded me --

PUCK
You swear at me, a stranger?
CRANE
No -- my mistake -- ah --

PUCK
You have to leave -- it is time for you to be
going, going, gone. Tourists, crazies -- like
God has made a few more plagues to add to the
usual ones, like we don't have enough variety on
that list! -- they will fly in soon, and if you
lay there by their feets they will trample you
under, leaving a stain that I will have to get
down on my ancient knees and strike away with
bird spit and my beard -- if I had a beard and
some spit from a bird! So, go! Get on your
ways!

CRANE
Is it true?

PUCK
It?

CRANE
True?

PUCK
I don't like that word.

CRANE
Is it true?

PUCK
That --
(sound of initial "t")
-- "tuh" word -- avoid it. You should avoid it.

CRANE
About Christ --

PUCK
Banish it.

CRANE
-- here -- here!

PUCK
Who knows? I didn't have the job then! Look, it
was all so long ago, and no one took pictures and
gave autographs. But you drop some stone chunks
here, give it a churchy name, spin out some good
relations for the public for a few centuries --
and --
(makes a vocal sound)
-- you got yourself a "true" you get to spread around like the stuff that makes the flowers grow and greases the mouths of lawyers. Cash cow, cash bull, cash sheep --
  (pokes duster under his tunic)
-- they all, you know, giving it to you. But, you -- you look almost smart, friend. Almost wakey-wakey. Almost -- whatever. So don't go fretsome about "true." Eat some breakfast -- after that and a good sit-down on the porcelain throne, the urge will go away.

CRANE
I like true.

PUCK
Then have a big breakfast -- double side of eggs -- coffee like mud -- and a long sit-down because you got a lot to clean out --

PUCK takes the duster and begins to whirl it in circles, like a whirlwind, forcing CRANE to exit -- large sounds of wind accompany. PUCK slows, the sounds die. PUCK smiles and exits.

* * * * *

Scene 2

Almost immediately CRANE reappears on the stage, lost but not scared. Music: Middle Eastern pop. Behind him PUCK, MOM, and DAD push large cardboard boxes, the kind a stove or refrigerator would come in, two or three rows high, or even higher, if possible. Or the shape could be a pyramid -- feel free to experiment. The boxes can be decorated as houses and other buildings if desired.

MOM and DAD are dressed in untacky tourist clothes, with tourist accouterments. PUCK is a tour guide -- he wears the janitor's clothing plus something else, like a sash, preferably outsized, to distinguish him as the tour guide. He exchanges his duster for a riding crop, which he can use to whatever comic effect he likes.

PUCK
Step right this way, right this way! Careful of that -- right, right, just step around it -- around it -- good -- hazard of the streets, some local color, eh? And odor, too! Now step right right this way! Next stop: our historic, our exceptional, our mysterious -- empty tombs -- (in a lower voice)
  -- empty tooombs! --
  (in a louder voice)
  -- come get a taste of the divine and passionate
MOM
(consulting a guide book)
It says here --

PUCK
Oh, madam, please, please --

MOM
What?

DAD
That -- put away that -- me you will insult --

MOM
Sorry --

DAD
Now, look --

CRANE
Where am I?

PUCK
(ignoring CRANE)
Sir, no insult I mean to your lovely wife -- your very lovely cash-paying wife -- but please understand me full as life -- how can you rest your judgment upon a book made by Westerners -- and college students at that? you know what college students are like -- drop by, drink, take a few notes, spread stuff around that we don't need --

(using the crop in an obscene manner)
-- you know -- then bam! gone. Rest upon them to tell you the truth about our home, my home? Feh!

MOM
He has a point.

DAD
On the top of his head --

CRANE
(pointing)
Sun rises in the --

PUCK
I know the truths you need to know about these tombs --

CRANE
And sets --
PUCK
(reverential but mocking)
-- about life in this ancient ancient land as old
as the bones of the earth itself.

CRANE
(pointing)
And sets in the --

MOM
I like the sound of that.

PUCK
You hire me, you hire history itself.

CRANE
But I can't see --

MOM
History itself, Daddy.

PUCK
I am past, present, and futureness -- depend upon
me -- you can put that away for later -- and you
will not go wrongly.

DAD
Watch that thing!

CRANE
Where --

PUCK
(exasperated)
If you would like to conjoin with us, sir, the
tour price is --

CRANE ignores him and wanders to the tombs. During the next lines, he
tries to crawl in one or two of them, not quite being able to fit his
body into the space.

DAD
So you're saying that what it says there is
wrong?

PUCK
Give me the book.

MOM gives him the book. PUCK flips through a few pages, then stabs
with his finger.

PUCK
See, there!

Rips the page out and slams the book shut before DAD can really see.
PUCK
Wrong, wrong, double, triple Dutch wrong.

PUCK tosses the page.

DAD
Hey!

PUCK
No matter -- always these things a little less than as much as they could be --

DAD
You talk a bunged-up English --

PUCK
(handing the book back)
There are always local -- flavors --

DAD
Flavors --

PUCK
For instance, for instance -- this one. I will bet, madam -- open out your book again, lovely wife --

DAD
Hey --

PUCK
(to DAD)
Such a lovely wife! I will wager a lamb's eye in honey that in your book it says --

PUCK points to one of the tombs.

MOM
That one?

PUCK
That one.

MOM
It doesn't say anything about that one --

PUCK
Well, there you are -- how can you trust --

DAD
(looking over MOM's shoulder)
It doesn't?
PUCK
(seeing CRANE)
Sir, please don't --

DAD
After all the money we spent --

CRANE
Empty --

PUCK
So observant -- just like stand -- or squat, if you prefer -- over to there --

DAD
(to PUCK)
So, all right --

CRANE squats down and hugs his knees, conspicuous in making himself small.

PUCK
This tomb -- well, officially -- aha! -- they say here sat St. Arbitron, who retired his sacred buttocks to here to practice hypnolithic meditation --

MOM
Hypno-what?

PUCK
Hyp-no-li-thic --

MOM
(overlapping)
Hyp-no-li-thic --

PUCK
Good!

DAD
You made that up.

MOM
Daddy!

PUCK
I swear on my mother's ankle bones not. Greek root-around for "sleepy stones." You can look it up. He would take two rocks --

Takes two rocks out of his pocket.

DAD
How convenient.
PUCK
-- and swirl them in his hands like this --
(moves them around deftly)
-- and as the sacred stones massaged the points of five divine pressures, he would speak to God --

MOM
Like dialing in.

At this point, CRANE simply falls to one side, putting him into a fetal position. There is a brief pause in PUCK's delivery, then he moves on, still twirling the stones.

MOM
(whispering)
Is he all right?

PUCK
See how he has the spirit taken up, eh?

DAD
See him keel over like broken lawn ornament.

PUCK
This place --
(makes a grand gesture)
-- it has its powers, hey!
(whispering to CRANE)
Get up, dung-beetle!

CRANE pops over onto his other side, still in a fetal position.

PUCK
The spirit moves him!

DAD
I'd like to make a suggestion.

MOM
(warningly, imploringly)
Daddy --

DAD
That we ignore this transfiguration --

PUCK
That is what it is!
(to CRANE, hissing)
Sand flea!

DAD
-- going on at our feet --
PUCK
At no extra charge!
   (to CRANE, hissing)
Earwig!

DAD
Right -- and let Mother here enjoy her experience
of the holy land --

PUCK
(indicating the tombs)
What could be more wholly holy than -- !
   (handing her the stones)
Would you like to --

MOM, with a look to DAD, takes them and begins to move them. DAD
reaches for them, but MOM keeps them, liking the motion very much.
CRANE rolls over onto his knees, still tucked. Reluctantly, she goes
to hand them back to PUCK, who instead folds her hand over them,
indicating that MOM keep them.

MOM
Hypnolithic --

PUCK
Meditation --

MOM
Hypnolithic meditation -- learned a new word!

PUCK
Right here, St. Arbitron's ancient posterior --
looking heavenward --

MOM
His posterior?

PUCK
No, no! While perched -- you know --

DAD
Hard to look heavenward in a cave.

PUCK
On the lip, then --

DAD
His posterior --

PUCK
Yes, of course!

DAD
Wonder if he ever fell off --
CRANE rolls over onto his back, still tucked.

DAD
Fell like a stone --

CRANE slowly falls onto his side.

DAD
Hypnolithically speaking, of course.

MOM
Daddy has his doubts --

PUCK
But -- but --

DAD
Lotsa butts here.

PUCK
Did your book tell you about St. Hirsute?

MOM
No. Do you spell that with a --

PUCK
Died a horrible death for the faith.

PUCK leads MOM over to CRANE. He gently nudges CRANE, who rolls over onto his back, still hugging his knees. PUCK sits MOM on his upraised knees.

MOM
Do you think I should --

PUCK
(to DAD)
Make use of him, eh?

DAD
(to MOM)
Go ahead -- the man obviously has the self-respect of a slug.

MOM
(sitting, looking in the index of her book)
Is that with a "h" "e" --

PUCK
You won't find it there.
(pointing to his own head)
Find it here.

MOM pats CRANE softly, as if to comfort him.
When he refused to deny the existence of the
higher powers --

(pointing upwards)
-- you know the higher powers, eh? -- well, not
pleased. Being a hairy man, very thickety-thick,
they started covering his body in wax --

How hairy?

He was hairy as the top of your head is not.

Gotcha!

(using DAD as a model)
Being a hairy very man, they started covering his
body in wax -- a little here and there, then
riiiiiiiiiippppppppp -- you know, they'd put the
wax on then walk around a little --

PUCK walks around, hands behind his back, a little whistle.

-- then, when they thought he wasn't paying
attention, run up to him and riiiiiiiiiiippppppppppp.

PUCK pinches some hair off DAD's arm.

Hey!

But he wouldn't give up -- give in -- give out --
so they dunked him -- like a baby in a baptism --

Like a cruller in morning coffee --

Like a finger digging out the last lamb's eye in
honey -- into a cauldron of wax made from all the
king's leftover candles, and then --

(with appropriate sounds and gestures, even overdone)
-- well, you can imagine --

MOM gives an involuntary shudder. So does CRANE.
PUCK
Now that story alone is, is it not, worth the price of the tour? But I have more. Now this one, over here --

CRANE starts shaking.

MOM
I'm getting a rush --

CRANE suddenly goes flat onto his stomach. DAD grabs MOM just in time so that she does not fall with him and stands her upright.

DAD
(to CRANE)
You got to get a grip on yourself, son.

MOM
Whew!

MOM takes out the stones and begins twirling them.

PUCK
Good idea.

CRANE
(muffled)
I'm going to die in six months.

DAD
You're talking into the dirt, son.

CRANE repeats himself, louder.

DAD
You're still just making mud.

CRANE flops onto his back.

CRANE
I am going to die in six months.

CRANE raises both his arms, and after a brief hesitation, MOM and DAD give him a hand up -- mimicking the crucifixion gesture in Scene 1. CRANE watches MOM move the stones.

PUCK
No you are not.

CRANE
(to MOM)
What are you doing?

PUCK
In six months you are not going to die --
THE FIRST DAY OF THE SEVENTH MONTH

MOM
Hypnolithic meditation.

CRANE
Does it help you?

PUCK
Because I am going to kill you right now.

DAD
He'd make a better a lawn ornament.

PUCK
Over here we have --

MOM
Help me what?

CRANE
Accept.

(looking at PUCK)
Did you believe his story about --

CRANE makes a ripping sound.

MOM
It sounded a little -- well --

DAD
A little?

CRANE
But you both bought --

DAD
Mom more than me -- as usual --

CRANE
But you some, right, even though you knew -- ? Why?

PUCK
People who are wise --

CRANE
Because --

PUCK
-- don't ask so many "whys"!

CRANE
Because you wanted to believe. Right? Huh? Believe. Right?
PUCK
I am fading into the backwood.

DAD
(to PUCK)
Ground.

CRANE
Because it felt --

PUCK
There goes my lovely hood --

DAD
(to PUCK)
Liveli --

CRANE
Because it felt --

MOM
Because it felt --

CRANE takes MOM's two stones and palms them, making them disappear. He then digs into his pocket and pulls out one -- or from behind her ear, hands it to her.

CRANE
Like that, right?

MOM nods, then DAD.

CRANE
Just like you, I have decided. I have decided.

PUCK
You can't just -- decide something like -- six months.

MOM
Unless --

CRANE
I'm not checking out that way.

Pulls the second stone out of PUCK's ear, wipes it off, hands it to MOM.

DAD
The old "to be or not to be" --

PUCK
Why are you saying this?
CRANE
I don't know -- except --

PUCK
Except what?

DAD
Except what, son?

CRANE
Except that I feel that it's true to say it.

PUCK
Always the true with you.

MOM
Are you really?

CRANE
I think so.

DAD
Die from what?

PUCK
He could die right now if I push him into the street --

MOM
Don't push him, Daddy.

DAD
From what?

CRANE
From "as if" --

DAD
You're going to die from "as if"?

CRANE
I am going to live from "as if."

DAD
What is that?

PUCK
Did I tell you about St. Crane? That tomb right there.

CRANE
As if I know when the end will come --
PUCK
They tied St. Crane up in a fetal position -- he stiffened --

DAD
Let me get this straight: you're going to die --

CRANE
And live.

DAD
-- from a simile?

PUCK
Made him a lawn ornament --

DAD
(to PUCK)
Stop.

PUCK
All right.

DAD
From a simile?

CRANE
Not die. Live.

DAD
By getting ready to die?

CRANE pulls out a standard magician's bouquet and hands it to DAD.

PUCK
We could probably book you into St. Crane's up there if you want. Right now.

MOM
I think I've had enough of tombs.

PUCK
But you haven't heard the best --

DAD
(angrily)
I do not live to die.

CRANE
I don't think I know any other way right now.

DAD
I don't!
MOM

Daddy --

DAD
(to PUCK)
You should watch your clientele better --

DAD stalks off.

MOM
I have to follow him-- I have to.

CRANE
Of course.

PUCK
Off course.

DAD
(from off)
Mother!

MOM
(handing CRANE the stones)
It's all I can do sometimes to keep myself afloat -- in the face of -- the face of things -- to make believe I believe -- to make believe I am still making believe --

DAD
Mother!

MOM
A weakness, he thinks.
(touches CRANE on the cheek)
"As if" -- I know all about "as if" -- may an answer come for you --

MOM leaves. CRANE hands the stones to PUCK.

PUCK
So I won't eat tonight --

The magician's bouquet comes flying onto the stage. They look at it. CRANE picks it up and, with a flourish, presents it to PUCK.

PUCK
As if --

CRANE
Starting now.

PUCK
The circus parade --

CRANE takes a deep breath.
CRANE
The first of my last breaths.

PUCK
Use breath mints.

CRANE looks over the tombs.

CRANE
If you don't mind, I think I'll pass.

PUCK
You look excited -- finally.

CRANE
Is that foolish?

PUCK
You are what you are.

CRANE
No -- no --

PUCK
Such a grin.

CRANE
All that was before -- you "are" what you "are" stuff -- that was nothing -- just verbs of being -- now --

(makes a big ripping sound)

-- action!

PUCK
And you think that will be enough.

CRANE
Becoming fully aware --

PUCK
You mean putting a limit on yourself --

CRANE
What?

PUCK makes the motion of buttoning his lips.

CRANE
Living "as if" I am dying will make me become alive.

PUCK shrugs.

CRANE
It won't?
PUCK shrugs again.

CRANE

C'mon!

PUCK

You want to stop with just that?

CRANE

With what?

PUCK

With that -- with just -- becoming "alive"?

CRANE

There's something past becoming alive?

PUCK

The real death --

CRANE

Not that!

PUCK

That scares you.

CRANE

Before that -- but more than what's now.

PUCK

Yes.

CRANE

Better than becoming alive?

PUCK

Why does the serpent keep trying to sell his apple? You think the Garden of Eden happened only once? You think the serpent is such a bad guy?

CRANE

I have to go.

PUCK

Then begone.

CRANE

You'll see.

PUCK

Prove it.

CRANE

You'll see!
PUCK

Prove it twice on Sunday, then. You want to see your ideas in action?

PUCK sticks the end of the magician's bouquet against his rear and makes a farting noise, and the bouquet, as in a cartoon, looks like the escaping gas. PUCK flies the bouquet around until it lands on CRANE. CRANE starts to exit, holding the bouquet.

PUCK

Where are you going?

CRANE

Home. Yes. I want to go home.

CRANE exits.

CRANE

Home. Well, cholo, no one will ever accuse you of having a wild imagination. Home.

(to the audience)

Quest -- ultimate questions -- body/soul -- deep-rooted urge --

(as if defecating)

-- uuuuuuuuuuggeeeeee -- fffffffoorrrrrrr --

mmmeeeeaaannniiinnngggg -- feh! He'll find out.

CRANE takes off his robe and skullcap, then gestures off-stage as MOM and DAD bring on the accoutrements of a simple dining room in a simple home.

PUCK

So let him go to home. Assuming such a place ever exists.

MOM

Home always exists.

PUCK

Oh ye of such plucky plucky faith!

* * * * *

Scene 3

At home. Dinner-time. MOM and DAD are seated there, DAD with a letter in his hand. CRANE is also seated there, jacket on, small valise by his feet, unnoticed by either. DAD holds the letter tentatively for several beats.

MOM

You can open it.

CRANE

Go ahead, Dad.
DAD
That is what we do with letters.

CRANE
Go.

MOM
And you don't need to be sarcastic.

CRANE
He's really not, Mom.

DAD
That is true. And I'm not being so. Or trying to.

MOM
Isn't in you, that's true.

DAD
Just not -- usual -- a letter -- from him.

MOM
Twists us around a little bit --

DAD
Which makes me sound --

MOM
You do when it comes to him, but I know you're not.

CRANE
Go ahead --

DAD spins it on the table, plays with it.

CRANE
All right -- circle around it a little more -- suss it out -- I understand.

MOM
But it won't open itself.

DAD
Now who's sounding sar[castic] --

MOM
Just stating a fact.

CRANE
Good for you, Mom!

DAD looks at MOM for a moment, then smiles.
"Just stating a fact" --

CRANE
(to DAD)
Ace -- some of your guff back to you --

DAD
Got me on that one.

CRANE
You have -- mellowed, my father.

MOM
So?

DAD
The few letters -- they always had -- surprises in them. Didn't they?

MOM
I doubt this one is different.

DAD
Probably true. So, do we --

MOM
We always opened the other ones. And as I said two heartbeats ago -- won't open itself. Just the facts.

DAD opens the letter, reads.

MOM
Why don't you read it [out loud] --

DAD
This says he's coming home.

MOM
Here.

DAD
Yes.

DAD carefully puts the letter down; MOM spins it so that she can read it.

CRANE
It's not a letter bomb. Literally, that is. Literarily, well --

MOM
Why do you think?
DAD
I don't know. I've never known -- completely -- with him.

CRANE
You're not the only one in the dark.

MOM
But it will be nice.

DAD
I suppose.

CRANE
(spins the letter)
Still circling.

DAD
He's never been mean.

MOM
Or disrespectful.

DAD
That's true, too. Just --

MOM
Just -- Distant.

DAD
That would be a word, yes. His own person.

CRANE
I do want to come home.

MOM
(indicating the letter)
He says he wants to come home.

DAD
Yes.

MOM
To us.

DAD
None other.

MOM
Well --

DAD
I know.
MOM
Who said there was never room for change in the world?

DAD
I never said there wasn't room, only --

CRANE
Hi, Mom. Hi, Dad.

They turn to him slightly and now include him.

MOM
Your room --

DAD
We did rent it out, once.

MOM
But it's back.

DAD
Young man worked in the feed mill.

MOM
He moved to Alaska.

DAD
To live with the Inuit.

MOM
Took your father forever to pronounce the name.

DAD
Kept calling them Eskimos -- wrong. In-u-it. Inuit. He was "into it."

Embarrassed beat.

DAD
It's been a long time, Crane.

MOM puts her hand on DAD's arm. CRANE opens his valise.

CRANE
I've brought gifts.

CRANE brings out two boxes, each holding two Chinese balls. MOM and DAD open the boxes, take out the balls.

MOM
What are they?

DAD
Too small for bowling.
CRANE

This way.

CRANE takes his MOM's gift and shows her how to roll the balls in her hand to make them chime. CRANE encourages DAD to do the same, and a sound cue comes up reinforcing the sounds. CRANE takes out his own set, and the three of them sit there sharing the sound and movements, for a moment untethered to reality or history.

CRANE

According to traditional Chinese medical theory, the ten fingers are linked to the heart and other bodily organs by a lacework of channels through which the vital energy of the body flows. By rotating the two balls on your palm with the fingers, the acupuncture points on the hand are -- stimulated. This encourages an eager flow of blood and vital energy throughout the body.

Eventually they stop and come back to "reality," putting away the balls.

DAD

These are quite -- unusual, son.

CRANE

Not from the five-and-dime, eh, Dad?

DAD

That's a fact.

MOM

We have to ask.

CRANE

And it shall be answered.

MOM

Are you -- ill?

CRANE

On the contrary.

DAD

You're completely healthy.

CRANE

In all the usual ways.

DAD

What about your work?

CRANE

I've put it on vacation. My schedule is clean for the next six months.
DAD
So that you could come home?

There is a change of light, the light for The Domestic Ballet. What follows is the barest suggestion for the choreography of the Ballet, and the director is free to arrange it in any way possible.

PUCK brings on a wagon of some sort with a variety of props that are used in the Ballet. Perhaps barely underscoring the Ballet is a soundscape of "home" sounds: dishes in the kitchen, a lawnmower, etc., but done musically. The four speak to the audience but also to each other -- they are not isolated. They begin with something like a quadrille.

PUCK
They were understandably --

CRANE
Confused.

DAD
We were.

MOM
Because there was something underneath --

PUCK
Almost inhuman --

MOM
In his wish --

PUCK
No one likes too much confidence.

MOM
But at the same time --

PUCK
All too human --

DAD
Which frightened us just as much.

PUCK
No one likes too much vulnerability.

DAD
We talked, late into that first night, turning it over -- yes, it felt as --

MOM
-- as gold to airy thinness beat.
DAD
(overlapping)
-- to airy thinness beat.

PUCK brings two chairs downstage.

PUCK
But not despair in him, you'd have to admit.

DAD
That would have been familiar to us.

MOM and DAD sit.

CRANE
I was calling it a grace.

MOM
A word out from you quite often, yes.

CRANE lays down across MOM and DAD's laps.

CRANE
In my own bed, that first night --
(exaggerating the sound and movement)
-- I streeetttttched my legs down to the
footboard unpacking my adult bones.

PUCK playfully pulls on CRANE's ankles, making cracking, creaking
noises.

CRANE
I felt all my joints air out --

MOM and DAD roll him off, move to the cart and get dishes. They toss
the dishes to each other.

MOM
You washed lots of dishes.

CRANE
(joining the tossing)
Very contemplative, water laving --

Meanwhile, PUCK takes out a skateboard.

DAD
You even washed dishes we hadn't used in a while.

CRANE
Dust in the cabinets.

MOM
The water laving.
MOM and DAD put the dishes away. PUCK lays on his back on the board, CRANE takes his legs and pushes him around. MOM and DAD stand still, arms by their sides.

PUCK
You mowed the lawn.

CRANE
Regularly.

MOM and DAD put the dishes away. MOM and DAD stand still, arms by their sides.

MOM and DAD put the dishes away. PUCK lays on his back on the board, CRANE takes his legs and pushes him around. MOM and DAD stand still, arms by their sides.

MOM and DAD put the dishes away. PUCK lays on his back on the board, CRANE takes his legs and pushes him around. MOM and DAD stand still, arms by their sides.

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MOM and DAD put the dishes away. PUCK lays on his back on the board, CRANE takes his legs and pushes him around. MOM and DAD stand still, arms by their sides.
DAD
Plop, plop -- and loosen our necks --

MOM
Overhead rocked the black star-smeared ocean --

CRANE
At the lawn's edge --

MOM
They stood --

PUCK
Unenlightened by street lights --

MOM
Solid --

CRANE
We would gaze there -- and there --

DAD
Garbage at our feet --

MOM
And my heart would ache to see them so small and --

CRANE
And what?

MOM
So fierce --

PUCK
The way the heat poured out of you both.

CRANE
Evaporating together, hey?

DAD
Deliquesce.

PUCK
Trim the hedges.

DAD
Re-paint the deck.

CRANE
Weed the garden.

MOM
Poke the wasps' nest.
PUCK
Mend the broken-winged oriole.

CRANE
All of it so -- exotic! It was -- to me.

MOM
It was wonderful to see him become so -- ordinary. We were all becoming so deliciously ordinary.

PUCK
But still, at heart -- that airy thinness beat --

Beat as MOM and PUCK let the stars descend. PUCK takes MOM's stars and puts them both back. He takes out a large pile of dominos and puts them on the table.

CRANE
What?

DAD
Which, to be honest --

No pain --

DAD
Well, to be honest --

No gain.

DAD
Kind of got on my nerves.

MOM
Me, too -- a little, honey, ooh, I don't mean to be hurtful --

The three retire to the table and start slamming dominos down as they talk. PUCK occasionally slams one down as well as he speaks.

PUCK
Honesty debuts after kindness and grace wear thin.

Dominos slam: one, two, three.

PUCK
Even the deliciously ordinary --

(to MOM)

-- yes? -- after a while, gets --
MOM

Ordinary --

PUCK

A cage --

MOM
(hurriedly)
-- but it's been wonderful having you here.

DAD
Will you be getting a job?

CRANE
That's not what --

MOM
Not that we mind --

DAD
Well?

CRANE
I'm still sorting things out.

DAD
Things --

MOM
Now --

DAD
(to MOM)
What's to sort out?

MOM
He's in -- crisis. Can't you see --
(to CRANE)
Isn't that right?

DAD
(to CRANE)
Are you in a crisis?

PUCK
(slams one down)
Things were getting testy and tested.

DAD
Answer me.

MOM
Don't push --
DAD
I never pushed enough --

Three quick slams. Then PUCK, after a hesitation.

PUCK
The box of disappointments had now been opened.
Pandora cringes and weeps.

To the staccato of many slamming dominos, the three voices speak at the same time and drown each other out, but all end on the word "despair."

MOM
You pushed too much too hard on him wanted him to be old before his time solid like a stone stones have no feelings he always had feelings he couldn't tell us about a shame I know a poet was in there still in there if he needs to understand why he feels so empty and unsure I know how he feels in my soul cracking against stone I love you but sometimes in raw darkness I ache where you cannot sail and feel despair

DAD
I didn't push enough always this alien to me son hardly couldn't get him to always these ideas in his brain ideas locked himself away with his ideas rebel had to rebel fine for a while young man has to but in the end hated his ideas felt insulted now in crisis I'll tell you what crisis is working till your fingers are crushed to make a home certain and safe have it rejected thinks he can make things right now with his despair

CRANE
All beside the point not what I wanted not about deficits but I have this question about what is worth none of your answers answer anything I have no answers and I am trying to live like a dry river waiting like an empty glass waiting because no waters come down nothing nothing nothing make the nothing sing and I hear no singing I love you who gave me life curse you for delivering me to despair

Final word, final dominos. MOM, DAD, and CRANE walk downstage center. PUCK again hangs out the stars.

MOM
Will we see you again?

CRANE
(to audience)
Home must always be left.
DAD

Son --

CRANE

You will see me again.

MOM

We will see you again.

CRANE

But they were already gone from my mind.

MOM and DAD drift away, take away table and the dominos and the cart. PUCK lowers the stars, and CRANE goes to reach for one. PUCK pulls them away.

PUCK

Nah-uh. Not for you, oh dry river, oh empty glass. You are going to have to go loooong.

Bops him on the head with the pole. MOM comes on with a bag, which she hands to PUCK, then takes the pole and exits.

* * * * *

Scene 4

Light change -- weird landscape. As PUCK talks, he takes material out of the bag that, when donned, makes him look like a cartoon Buddha: big ears, belly, saffron robe, etc.

CRANE

What?

PUCK

How now, my long dark night --

CRANE

I'm fine.

PUCK

-- of the soul?

CRANE

I'm fine!

PUCK

You got no religion, you got no home, you got no rice and beans -- well, you could always twirl your own two balls in your hand -- creature pleasures.

PUCK pulls one stone from CRANE's nose, the other from his rear-end -- hands him both. With resignation, CRANE plays with the stones.
PUCK

That, right there -- that's all you got. Two -- reduced to two facts. Here and now -- entrance and exit -- food in, shit out. All fancified dream flights, angel-winged thought-rockets, sublime imaginings, the cosmic cosmetics of our brains --

PUCK lets out a razzberry, then another.

PUCK

Divinity --

Another razzberry.

PUCK

Soul.

Another, then another, and then PUCK really gets into it, pumping the sound beyond any humor or sarcasm. In-between razzberries, he punctuates with a laugh words like "cosmic," "divine," "angelic." Then PUCK stops just as quickly and continues dressing.

CRANE

(mumbling)

Stupid.

PUCK

Say what, bro?

CRANE

(louder)

I am feeling stupid.

PUCK

Are sta-yoo-pid.

CRANE

Am stupid.

PUCK

Good to know what you am.

CRANE does not respond to the insult.

PUCK

I said -- Sometimes stupid is as good as it gets -- it takes a lot of work to get to the right kind of stupid. Sometimes stupid is a salvation, a good place to get started for a start. Cleansed palate, cleaned clock

PUCK is now completely garbed as Buddha. He gestures, and from offstage rolls in a child's-sized bicycle, with training wheels.
Ah, ready. Emptiness. No mind.
(points to the bike)
What is the sound of one snickerdoodle doodling?

PUCK starts to bump CRANE hard with his belly. His accent changes: mock Buddha-Indian-subcontinent as he recites the lyrics to "Born to be Wild" by Steppenwolf. CRANE protests the pushing but doesn't put up much resistance.

PUCK
Get your motor running. Head out on the highway.
Lookin' for adventure. And whatever comes our way. Yeah darlin' go make it happen. Take the world in a love embrace. Fire all of your guns at once and. Explode into space.

By this time PUCK has backed CRANE up against the bike.

CRANE hesitates, clearly frightened, and there is a moment where he looks absolutely terrified.

CRANE
I can't -- I can't get past -- I thought home would -- protect me -- ahh! -- born between piss and shit -- aren't we? -- gah! -- between excrements -- and it never stops -- can't get past -- it's all worms no rhyme no plan making it up go along exit name then gone as gone as blood dripping from a spike feel alive? alive? what a cheat like thorns alive drinking vinegar alive grace in plural acids alive alive cheat -- cheat -- cheated --

PUCK/BUDDHA bumps him again, but gently, and speaks just as gently.

PUCK
So what? So what, Quest Boy? A common knowledge. Go.

CRANE gets on the bike. A backpack comes flying onto the stage -- a child's backpack. PUCK hooks it on to CRANE's back. Other items come flying on -- a helmet, elbow pads, etc. They should all be child-like in appearance. PUCK gives CRANE a push.

PUCK
See how easily you are pushed around by the forces of fate?

CRANE sits, immobile. PUCK, grinning, pushes him again.
PUCK

See how easily you are pushed around by the forces of fate?

CRANE again sits immobile. PUCK takes one leg, then the other, to show him how to pump.

PUCK

One leg says, Yes. The other says, I will. Little engine that could-thing. What other choice do you have, unfeathered Crane, now that the grinning worm has married the sweet but perishable apple?

Finally, CRANE starts riding on his own, haltingly but steadily. PUCK intones, as if they were holy words, the refrain to "Born to be Wild."

PUCK

Like a true nature's child. We were born, born to be wild. We can climb so high. I never wanna die. Born to be wild --

Pronounce "wild" as it is sung in the song, with the extra beats in the middle of the word.

Lights change, and CRANE begins his journey, biking around the stage. MOM and DAD, also dressed like cartoon Buddhas, enter. They each bring in a large blow-up pool cushion shaped in the shape of a catcher's mitt (or any other figure, depending on what's available) to sit on in a meditative way. One of them also brings this on for PUCK.

Each BUDDHA also has a large manila envelope, inside of which is an oversized copy of the headshot of the actor playing CRANE, and a metal bowl (brass would be nice).

The three Buddhas place themselves upstage, sitting, the bowl in front of them. Music plays -- it would be excellent if something like a Muzak version of "Born to be Wild" could be playing. William Shatner's "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" would work fine as well.

CRANE peddles until he reaches downstage center at some point, then stops, facing the audience. Music stops.

CRANE takes several seconds to look into the audience, making eye contact, saying nothing, perched on his little bike, looking ridiculous, resting. Throughout CRANE's words, the three BUDDHAS will take the headshot out of the envelope and slowly rip it into increasingly smaller bits. They will do this in perfect synchronization, holding the picture overhead, ripping it in half, putting half of it down then ripping the remaining half in half, and half again, and so on until the bits are very small, which are then placed into the bowl. Then the same thing with the second half of the picture.
CRANE

I had become a little crazy, a little -- unloosened. The WD-40 of life had unrusted my hinges. Some of you -- maybe all of you -- know what that's like.

(a rusty hinge)

Erh-ooh, erh-ooh. Brushing one's teeth seems pointless without a future to chew on. Flossing, too. If you erase the word "tomorrow" from Macbeth, why order Chinese take-out and put the left-overs in the fridge for breakfast? The present tense -- it's not called "tense" for nothing! -- the present tense is very, very, very cruel. As are the most excellent teachers. So I started biking cross-country. I had always wanted to. With three months left -- as far as I knew -- and who knew? who knew? -- why not? I took a notebook along that kept a journal of me.

CRANE takes a notebook out of his backpack -- something like the Powerpuff Girls or something similar. Shows it, puts it back.
CRANE
I met amazing people, I did, people charmfull and grace-filled and just plain fucking nice. I also met dunderheads and gruesome narcissists and violent pieces of shrapnel with tongues full of sewers and bitterness. I met a woman who let me bury my nose in a bristling white sheet on her clothesline because I had never smelled sun and wind uncoiling with such incense. I met a man who with others guarded turtles spawning on slaughter-birded beaches. I met a child with one eye, who wore a patch painted with a four-leaf clover in malachite, on a field of cinnabar. I met a grime-soaked beggar who offered me a hard-boiled egg watermarked by his fingerprinted grease -- I ate it. I met a 97-year old woman who drank whiskey before swimming to protect her from germs -- we downed a couple of stiff bolts and swam like renovated dolphins. I met a living Communist. I met cancer calling itself Alice or John as it ate through hope and bone. I met a divinity student wrestling with doubt, I met a doubter at rest with his questions. I met geezers full of prostate worries, running-suited blue-hairs fuming with rose water. I met a young girl, fifteen, pregnant, her life rounded and cracked like a broken earthenware jug. I met a young boy, eyes deadbolted, survivor of his African civil war. I met a guru who believed that the weight of starlight, not gravity, kept us pinned to the earth's lapel. I met officers of the court who made me afraid that justice had expired. I met people named Zonnie Butts and Narka Flocker and Ramzanali Bacchus and Essence Crockett and Gumercinda Narvaez and Darren Zipperer and Heeling Wong and Cohava Dodo and India Mingo and Albania Supple and Reenamaravilla Lavezzari. And through it all --

CRANE reaches into his backpack and pulls out a thermos -- again, kid-like. Unscrews the cup and pours himself a shot, raises it like a chalice.

CRANE
Coffee.  (sips)
Coffee.  (sips)
Coffee.
(sips)
Over coffee, over the dark roasted elixir, over the aliphatics and carbonyls and alicyclics and ketones and aromatic benzenoids -- over the brew, the joe, the java, the mud, the large drip, the brown gargle, the cuppa, the Americano, the black water, the rio -- over all I told them all my story.

By this time the BUDDHAS have finished their tearing of the picture and are sitting quietly. CRANE gets off the bike, if he is sitting on it, puts away the thermos, and as he speaks picks up one bowl and empties the torn bits of one of the other bowls into it, then picks up the second bowl.

As he walks back downstage, holding the bowls, the BUDDHAS stand and, in a holy and dignified but not necessarily serious way begin a slow choreographed Motown routine to accompany CRANE's words.

CRANE begins orbiting the bowls around each other.

CRANE
I would ask to camp out in their backyards if they had one. Or I'd bunk in a park, under a bridge -- wherever they lived. Coffee, talk -- and story.

CRANE puts the two bowls together so that they empty into each other, then nests the full bowl into the empty bowl. CRANE then simply holds the bowl.

CRANE
As I spoke, I realized -- I realized how much I had lost of my fear of the fear of life, how much I had lost of that face that had cringed and crowed on a stone floor in Jerusalem, how much I had lost the taste for anything I had been told was so, so, so important -- money, success, happiness, a youthful boner in old age, a head of full hair -- I would joke to them, "According to the charts, I am a real loser -- and proud of it, by Jesus!" And they would laugh. And there would be a moment --

CRANE takes a lighter out of his pocket -- an unusual lighter -- puts the bowl down, and sets the paper in the bowl on fire.

CRANE
There would be a moment -- a moment -- when the time and space around us would stop --
(sound of brakes)
eeeerrrh! -- hang, inhale, hold --
(takes an inbreath, then lets it out)
-- and my story would lift the dread and fright
and exhaustion from their frames, and their faces
would rise and loom illuminated, like a billowing
bedsheet sun-drying and winded. And then, almost
always they would say -- in the face of the
evidence -- in the face of the evidential "me" --
the evidence that they had a chance for a hurtful
and humbling but exhilarating freedom -- they
would say something like --
(in an accent)
-- "I am so amazed. But I couldn't. I can't.
There's just too much -- " And then the list
would follow. But for a moment, their terror,
their fright at their own heartbeat, went away --

CRANE holds up the bowl and, standing where he is, joins in the last
dancing movements of the BUDDHAS. The BUDDHAS stop dancing and take a
bow. Change of light: colder weather. One BUDDHA gets CRANE's bowls,
and then the three BUDDHAS exit with all props. CRANE gets back on
his bike.

CRANE
I was enjoying my disappearing act -- but it was
getting cold, and time was getting close, so it
was on to home I headed.

At full throttle, "Born to be Wild" comes up as CRANE, head down as if
he's racing, rides his bike in circles.

* * * * *

Scene 5

In the transition, MOM and DAD appear as MOM and DAD, wearing half-
masks of a colorful design and carrying bowls of Halloween candy.
Lights up, music fades out. A doorbell sounds periodically, and MOM
and DAD, each with a bowl of candy, go into the audience and hand it
out as if the audience were trick-or-treaters. Their lines are
suggested -- they can improv responses to the audience if needed.
CRANE comes to a rest, gets off his bike as if he's getting off a
horse, undresses.

CRANE
Halloween.

MOM
Happy Halloween.

CRANE
I had arrived home --

DAD
Hey, there!
CRANE
-- on Halloween -- All Hallows Eve --

MOM
Not too much!

CRANE
-- Nutcrack Night --

DAD
Great face!

CRANE
-- the next day All Souls Day.

MOM
You going to eat all that?

CRANE
How's that for allegory?

DAD
A ghost?

CRANE
The ubiquitous "they" say that anyone born on Halloween has the gift of second sight.

MOM AND DAD
No tricks here -- all treats!

CRANE
'Twas not I. The last night of the sixth month.
My last night of present tense.

CRANE puts his traveling gear to one side, grabs a bowl and a mask, and joins MOM and DAD, ad libbing as needed. PUCK comes on, trick-or-treat bag in hand, mimes ringing the doorbell, with a mask on: he is eight years old. MOM and DAD stay in the audience and watch.

PUCK
Trick or treat!

Taking off his own mask and emptying the bowl into his bag.

CRANE
You're lucky -- my last customer for the night.

PUCK
Oh, great! Thanks.

CRANE
What's the mask?

PUCK takes it off.
PUCK
My mom and dad made it -- mom doesn't like the ones in the stores. They're over there. Little sister -- she can't go by herself. I can.

CRANE
May I?

PUCK
Sure.

PUCK hands CRANE the mask.

CRANE
This is great.

PUCK takes out a candy, eats it.

PUCK
Yeah. You wanna keep it?

CRANE
I can't -- your parents wouldn't like that.

PUCK
Oh, they wouldn't mind. I'm done, anyways. My sister got scared -- so we gotta take her home. What's a navel?

CRANE
A navel?

PUCK
Yeah.

CRANE
It's, uh, your bellybutton.

PUCK
Nah-uh. It's an orange. (disbelieving)

A bellybutton!

CRANE
It's true. Some people look at them a lot.

PUCK
(looking down at his own)
That's stupid.

CRANE
A lot of people do it.

PUCK
Still stupid.
CRANE
What rhymes with orange?

PUCK
Doorhinge! Knew that one! What's a vena cava?

CRANE
I don't know that one.

PUCK
(in triumph)
"Either of the two large veins in air-breathing vertebrates that enter into and return blood to the right atrium of the heart." My friend and me are looking at this plastic model of the heart they got in school, you can take it apart and stuff, at recess we take it outside because the teacher lets us --

DAD
(from the audience)
Hey sport!

PUCK
(yelling)
Just a minute!
(to CRANE)
And his father's a doctor and he teaches me how the blood goes into the --

MOM
(from the audience)
Honey, we have to go!

PUCK
(yelling)
Okay, okay!
(to CRANE, in a rush)
The blood gets mixed up with air and the good blood comes in and the bad blood goes out and the heart goes ka-choom ka-choom a hundred million times a day and at night too and that's how we stay alive doorhinge orange bellybutton bye!

PUCK takes the mask back and races off-stage; MOM and DAD walk slowly back onto the stage.

MOM
Quite a talker, that one.

CRANE
He was telling me all about the good and the bad blood and a doorhinge on your bellybutton.
DAD
Now, that is some philosophy.

A pause as MOM collects the bowls of candy and masks.

MOM
It's nice to have you back. Safe. And sound.

DAD
Your mother was worried with you out on the road.

MOM
So was he!

CRANE
I have a lot of adventures to tell you about.

DAD
Tomorrow, then -- I've got to hit the hay.

CRANE
Sleep well.

MOM
(kissing him)
You, too.

MOM and DAD exit, DAD talking off the bike and other items. CRANE walks downstage center; PUCK enters and comes up behind him.

CRANE
A most ordinary day in the most ordinary way.

Lights to night and sleeptime.

CRANE
I went to sleep "as if" --

PUCK
(overlapping)
"As if" --

As CRANE lies down, PUCK kneels, and CRANE, on his back, rests his head against PUCK's knees, as if they were a pillow. PUCK sings to CRANE a verse of a lullaby, in Spanish, gently and sweetly -- but also with humor where possible.
PUCK

Arrorró mi niño
Arrorró mi sol
Arrorró pedazo
De mi corazón
Arre caballito
Vamos a Belén
Que en Belén acaba
Jesús de nacer

Then there is a pause, and the lights slowly shift from night to the dawn of day. Very slowly PUCK disengages himself, cradling CRANE's head, then unceremoniously lets it fall to the floor with a clunk. PUCK hovers over CRANE, as at the start of the play. CRANE begins to awaken.

PUCK
I suppose I should say, "Don't worry." So -- don't. Worry. Really. Yes, yes -- foggy brain, shake it all about -- go ahead, rub your eyes, first right, then left -- well, left, then right, if you want -- just the way you're supposed to. Dig wax out of ear, pick nose, eat it -- why not, it's natural?

CRANE
Wha -- Huh --

PUCK
Inarticulate sounds -- yes, good. Fog lifting, dim light glowing. Are you scared?

CRANE shakes his head no, gets up not quickly, not slowly.

PUCK
A most ordinary day in the most ordinary way.

CRANE
The first day of the seventh month.

PUCK
And just look at'cha!

CRANE
What should I do?

PUCK
Should do. Shouldn't do.

CRANE
Blessing.

PUCK
Doo-dah.
CRANE
Curse.

PUCK
Doo-doo.

CRANE
Deep.

PUCK
Doo-dah and Doo-doo. Doo-doo and Don't-do -- so many possibilities!

PUCK shrugs his shoulders. They face each other for a moment, then they do a complicated hand-shake routine of their own device. Then PUCK reaches into his pocket and brings out the two stones, which he hands to CRANE. PUCK nods and simply exits. CRANE does the routine again, alone, then stands and faces the audience squarely. Lights begin to fade. Halfway down, CRANE raises his hands; the fade stops, and the lights come back up. He holds the two stones in his palm, and then makes them disappear.

As he does this, PUCK, MOM, and DAD come onto the stage and position themselves in separate places. They are going to mime doors that CRANE will open to exit the stage. CRANE hesitatingly makes his way off-stage in full light, a dance of sorts. The movements should show both blessing and curse, reluctance and expectation. He comes to PUCK as the first door, opens, goes through, closes. And he does the same with MOM and DAD.

When CRANE has left the stage, PUCK, MOM, and DAD begin dancing as the last refrain of "Born to be Wild" starts low and comes up to full. They don't need to dance separately but can partner, bump against each other, etc. At an agreed-upon moment, the music stops and the three ACTORS stop in whatever position they find themselves and look directly at the audience. Music comes up again for several more seconds, then stops. They dance during it and then stop as well. Look at the audience. A couple of beats of the music; dance, stop, look. Then, without the music, they continue dancing, with increasing frenzy and abandon, as lights fade quickly to black.