

**The First Day of  
the Seventh Month**

by

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# The First Day of the Seventh Month

## 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)

# The First Day of the Seventh Month

## 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 Jersuallem.

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.

CRANE  
Really?

PUCK  
The crucifixion. The Crucifixion.

CRANE  
Really?

PUCK  
Who knows these things?

CRANE  
Really?

PUCK  
If you want to believe it.

CRANE  
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 pho-  
to-graph-ing --

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-repeat --  
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.

PUCK  
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 --

DAD

How hairy?

PUCK

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

MOM

Gotcha!

PUCK

(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.

PUCK

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

PUCK pinches some hair off DAD's arm.

DAD

Hey!

PUCK

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

MOM

Like a cruller in morning coffee --

PUCK

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 --

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)

-- uuuurrrrggggeeee -- fffffoooooorrrrrr --  
mmmeeeaaannniinnngggg -- feh! He'll find out.

CRANE takes off his robe and skullcap, then gestures off-stage as MOM and DAD bring on the accouterments 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.

DAD  
"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.

To us. MOM

None other. DAD

Well -- MOM

I know. DAD

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.

Your room -- MOM

We did rent it out, once. DAD

But it's back. MOM

Young man worked in the feed mill. DAD

He moved to Alaska. MOM

To live with the Inuit. DAD

Took your father forever to pronounce the name. MOM

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 streeettttched 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.

Makes lawnmower sounds as he mows around MOM and DAD.

DAD  
Even using the hand-clippers around the base of  
the trees.

CRANE  
No weed-whacker for me!

DAD  
I was never that finicky.

PUCK rolls off the board, gets back on it facing CRANE, head down, hands up. CRANE pushes him like a shopping cart.

CRANE  
I went shopping.

MOM  
For hours.

DAD  
The abundance mesmerized you.

CRANE  
Sometimes I wouldn't buy anything -- just walk.

PUCK

They valued him like the village idiot.

CRANE

I was -- what a grace.

PUCK gets off the board, and he and MOM bring large garbage bags to CRANE and DAD, then return with long springy poles from which hang cut-out stars and hold them over CRANE and DAD.

MOM

Garbage night.

CRANE

(to DAD)

Garbage astronomers, you and I -- my father and I would lug the leftovers to the curb --

DAD

Plop, plop -- and loosen our necks --

MOM

Overhead rocked the black star-smear'd 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 --

PUCK  
No pain --

DAD  
Well, to be honest --

PUCK  
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  
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.

PUCK

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.

PUCK

Road trip, Quest Boy. You have three months left and the clock is tick-tick-ticking -- three months left and then the big flush. On.

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)  
eeerrrh! -- 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 corazon  
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.

Doo-dah. PUCK

Curse. CRANE

Doo-doo. PUCK

Deep. CRANE

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

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.